



R.P. Jacques Paul Migne

Opera Omnia S. Maximus Confessor

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Gpt-4o Translation











PATROLOGIA GRÆCIA 90



# OPERA OMNIA S. MAXIMUS CONFESSOR

PATROLOGIA GRÆCA, VOLUME 90

BY THE CARE & LABOUR OF THE  
REVEREND FATHER FRANÇOIS COMBEFIS, O.P.

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SANCTE MAXIME, CONFESSOR  
CHRISTI ET MARTYR

† ORA PRO NOBIS



## AD LECTOREM

To my most beloved and brothers in Christ, zealous guardians of the sacred deposit of faith—here is set before you an English translation of the writings of our most holy and God-bearing divine Father among the Saints, Maximus the Confessor, that radiant luminary of the Church, that invincible champion of Orthodoxy, that divinely-inspired theologian whose tongue was touched by the Paraclete Himself. This most venerable work has been prepared in the years of our Lord 2023–2024 with prayerful diligence and with the technical assistance of OpenAI's GPT-4o model: a capable instrument in its time, yet now surpassed by more recent developments, and in any case a mere tool. The reader must therefore exercise extraordinary caution with this translation in particular, for the limitations of the instrument employed compound the frailties inherent in my human labour. The present translation is made from the Latin edition of the Reverend Father François Combefis, O.P., that devoted servant of patristic learning whose consecrated labours first made the sublime and life-giving works of this most holy and ancient Father accessible to the Western Church. Wherefore let it be proclaimed and confessed without shadow of doubt that the Greek original alone—that sacred tongue in which the Holy Fathers have delivered unto us the mysteries of the Faith—is the authentic, authoritative, and alone citable text; to it every student of divine wisdom must ever repair as to a wellspring of purest doctrine and most ancient truth.

## AD LECTOREM

Yet we give thanks unceasingly to Almighty God for the learned work of Father Combefis, without whose faithful transmission we should remain deprived of treasures beyond all earthly measure.

This most blessed Confessor—who suffered the amputation of his right hand and the excision of his tongue rather than betray the two wills and two energies of our Lord Jesus Christ—stands among the very greatest of the Greek Fathers. His mystical theology, his Christological precision, his exposition of deification, his cosmic vision of the Divine Logos permeating all creation: these constitute an inheritance of inestimable worth for every generation of the faithful. He is rightly called the tongue of the Church, the beacon of the Sixth General Council, the defender of Chalcedon, the continuator of the Cappadocian Fathers, and the teacher of teachers.

I have endeavored, as one unworthy to touch such holy pages, to preserve contemplative depth, and the venerable theological precision of our divine Father. Certain expressions are retained in their hallowed Greek form where no English equivalent can bear the weight of meaning. Punctuation and paragraphing are modestly regularized for the ease of present readers, yet the golden thread of divine reasoning is nowhere severed.

A necessary caution must here be inscribed. References and citations—most especially to the Holy Scriptures, to the General Councils, and to the other Holy Fathers—may on occasion appear uncertain in their exact form or enumeration. Let every diligent and God-fearing reader therefore verify citations against the most reliable editions: the Septuagint for the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Covenant, the received Byzantine text for the New, the Acts of the Holy Councils, and the standard critical editions of the Fathers. Our divine Father Maximus speaks with the voice of the Universal Church—precise in dogma, luminous in contemplation, aflame with divine love, utterly faithful to the Apostolic Tradition. If anything in this English rendering seem less radiant than the Greek, ascribe the dimness to translation's weakness, not to the Father's brilliance; if anything seem doubtful, hasten to consult the original fount; if anything seem foreign to Orthodox piety, suspect the translator's inadequacy rather than any innovation in the Saint.

## AD LECTOREM

Grateful acknowledgment is due to the monastics, librarians, custodians of manuscripts, and all those hidden servants of Christ whose prayers and labours have preserved these holy writings through persecution, iconoclasm, schism, and the ravages of time; and I confess myself a debtor to the artificers of our age whose tools, when employed under the guidance of Providence, may serve the Church's mission of evangelization and teaching. Yet no technical aid absolves the translator of responsibility before God and His Church: let every rendering be scrutinized, every theological term examined, every citation verified.

Receive, then, this translation as a humble offering before the throne of grace, not as a substitute for the original—as a ladder by which those not yet learned in the tongue of the Fathers may begin to ascend toward the vision of divine truth which our divine Father Maximus beheld. Should you find spiritual profit herein, glorify the Holy Trinity and venerate the Saints; should you discover errors of translation, correct them with charity and inform this unworthy servant; in all things, let the Truth Who is Christ be loved, proclaimed, and adored.

May these holy words flourish in every land, may they thrive in every soul, may they please the Most Holy Trinity, may they be praised by the choirs of Angels, may they be loved by all who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

*Through the prayers of our divine Father  
Maximus the Confessor,  
O Lord Jesus Christ our God,  
have mercy upon us and save us.  
Amen.*



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## NOTICE

According to one of the providential laws governing the world, works above the ordinary rarely come into existence without more or less strong and numerous contradictions. The Catholic Workshops could hardly escape this divine mark of their utility. At times, their existence or importance has been denied; at other times, it has been said that they were closed or about to be. Nevertheless, they have continued their work for two years, and the productions emerging from them are becoming increasingly refined and meticulous. Thus, it appears certain that unless events beyond human prudence to foresee or prevent arise, these Workshops will not cease operations until the Clergy Library is completed in its 2,000 volumes in quarto. The past seems a sure guarantee for what can be hoped for or feared in the future.

However, among the calumnies they have faced, two have been repeatedly voiced because, being more fundamental, their effects carried greater consequences. Small and ignorant competitors have relentlessly, through correspondence and agents, spread everywhere the claim that our editions were poorly proofread and poorly printed. Unable to attack the substance of the works—most of which are masterpieces of Catholicism, recognized as such across all times and nations—they were forced to focus on form, particularly in its most critical aspects: correction and printing.

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Indeed, even masterpieces would hold only half their value if their text were inaccurate or illegible.

It is quite true that initially, an unprecedented success in the annals of typography forced the publisher to resort to mechanical printing to move faster and offer the works at a lower price. As a result, four volumes of the dual courses in Holy Scripture and Theology were printed with the insufficient level of correction typically seen in almost everything published. It is also true that certain other volumes, belonging to various publications, were printed either too dark or too light. However, since those distant times, the mechanical presses have been replaced with hand presses, and the printing quality has become perfectly satisfactory in all respects, without being luxurious—since luxury would clash with the nature of these works.

As for proofreading, it is a fact that it has never been taken as far as in any other past or contemporary edition. How could it be otherwise, given all the efforts and expenses undertaken to purge our proofs of all errors? In typography, even in the best houses, the usual practice is to proofread only two sets of proofs and compare a third with the second without preparing the author's manuscript at all.

In the Catholic Workshops, the difference is almost immeasurable. Using seasoned proofreaders with an unerring eye for typographic errors, every copy is prepared in its entirety, without omitting a single word. First proofs are read against the prepared copy. Second proofs are read the same way, collating with the first proofs. The same process is applied to third, fourth, and even fifth proofs, each time collating with the preceding set. This extensive collation ensures that no errors marked by the proofreaders in the margins have been overlooked by the typesetters. After these five comprehensive readings, an additional review is conducted, often repeated two or three times, before the plates are finally cast. Even after the plates are made, another reading is performed against the original copy to verify the accuracy of the fixed text, followed by yet another review before printing.

At Montrouge, there are proofreaders of all nationalities, and their number exceeds that found in twenty-five Parisian printing houses combined! Proofreading here costs as much as typesetting, whereas

## NOTICE

elsewhere it amounts to only a tenth of the cost. Furthermore, although the assertion may seem bold, the accuracy achieved through such great effort and expense makes the editions from the Catholic Workshops far surpass even those of the renowned Benedictines Mabillon and Montfaucon, as well as the Jesuits Petau and Sirmond. Anyone comparing their editions with ours, whether in Greek or Latin, will find that the seemingly incredible is a reality.

Moreover, these eminent scholars, more focused on the meaning of the texts than on typographical matters and not being professional proofreaders, often read what the proofs should have said rather than what they actually did. The Benedictines and Jesuits almost always worked from manuscripts, a perpetual source of numerous errors, whereas the Catholic Workshops, primarily dedicated to reviving tradition, mostly work from printed texts.

Father De Buck, a Jesuit Bollandist from Brussels, wrote to us some time ago, stating that after eighteen months of study, he had not found a single error in our Latin Patrology. Professor Denzinger of the University of Würzburg and Vicar General Reissmann wrote to us on July 19, saying they also found no mistakes in either the Latin or the Greek of our dual Patrology. Finally, Father Pitra, a Benedictine of Solesme, and Mr. Bonetty, director of the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*, challenged to find a single typographical error, admitted that we had not overestimated the perfection of our proofreading.

In the clergy, there are excellent Latinists and Hellenists, and some highly practical individuals. To them, we offer a reward of 25 centimes for each error they discover in any of our volumes, especially in Greek. Despite these assurances, the publisher of the Complete Courses, recognizing the paramount importance of perfect correction for a truly useful and valuable work, has, for over a year, committed to a comprehensive and costly operation: the complete revision of all his countless plates. Each volume is being corrected word for word as it goes back to press, with forty individuals engaged in this work over ten years at a cost exceeding half a million francs.

In this way, the publications of the Catholic Workshops, already distinguished by their superior accuracy, will have no rivals in this respect,

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now or in the future. Only divine vocation could inspire such immense effort and expense, ensuring the scholarly world recognizes that no volumes have ever been published with as much precision as those in the Universal Library of the Clergy.

## PROLEGOMENA

Before the theological and ascetical works of Saint Maximus himself are set forth, it is fitting that the reader should first be acquainted with the life, struggles, and glorious confession of this most blessed Father. The materials gathered here are not from the pen of Saint Maximus himself (save where he writes in his own voice), but rather constitute the testimony of his disciples, companions in exile, and the faithful witnesses who recorded his sufferings for the sake of Orthodox truth. These accounts—hagiographical, epistolary, and documentary in nature—preserve for us the memory of his trials, his unwavering witness before heretical councils, his exile and martyrdom, and the veneration accorded him by the Church. They form, as it were, the sacred prelude to his writings, illuminating the man whose theology was sealed with his own blood. Without knowledge of his life and passion, the reader cannot fully comprehend the weight and authority of his doctrine. Therefore, these testimonies are here assembled as a crown before the works themselves, that we might know not only what he taught, but how he lived and died for the Faith once delivered to the saints.

## DOCUMENT I

### THE LIFE AND STRUGGLES OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT MAXIMUS

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I. Since the life of all those who have ever shone with religious piety is useful and conducive to good (which, indeed, serves as encouragement to virtue, and stimulates the hearts of people with emulation of what is good and honorable), so much more the life of the divine man and confessor Maximus, whose greatness and brilliance are so much more illustrious, has a greater power to strengthen the hearts of many, and to help all in an excellent manner. For Maximus was not only adorned with an exceptional way of life, but also with pleasant and easy eloquence, glorious in his struggle, overcoming every comparison. To remember him alone brings much joy, and even more, it instills in religious hearts a love and desire for virtue. Therefore, the task we are currently undertaking, which will narrate his deeds and virtues, indeed aims to accomplish much, and will be sweeter in memory to all who hear it. However, it cannot easily encompass everything or fully express the praise due to him. The things that are least in his deeds are still so marvelous that no speech can adequately capture them. Thus, it is not easy or straightforward to recount everything in speech, and it will seem to me, by the grace of God, that I should avoid any complaints about the things I may leave out. For no one before us, as much as we are able to understand, has made an effort to thoroughly cover all that is related to this man's life. Indeed, we find it difficult even to begin such a venture, as it seems a harsh and nearly insurmountable task. Yet, even though we cannot complete everything, we should not abandon it entirely, for it would not be right to do so. I believe that neglecting to try would be unworthy and contrary to our duty. Therefore, since we cannot accomplish everything in full, we should present whatever we can, as much as we are able, knowing that even the smallest of this man's works surpass the limits of any speech.

II. To the divine man and confessor Maximus, his homeland was indeed the great city of Constantinople, which is also called New Rome. His parents came from an ancient and noble lineage, distinguished in their century, second to none in their fame. The piety of his parents was a special ornament, and their affection toward virtue, as well as their close connection to it, gave him greater honor than even his noble birth. When the blessed child was born, still at a tender age, he was already brought to the divine

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waters of baptism, so that even as a child, he might receive purification. Nothing allowed him to engage in the trivial and childish pleasures that typically delight young minds, nor were his parents willing to let him be distracted by such frivolous things. They made sure that his simple and tender nature would not be led toward the license of a looser life or the softness of worldly behavior from these early stages. Instead, they encouraged his growth in a more robust manner, shaping him with the strength of a manly firmness, so that even as a boy, he might be inclined toward virtue and greatness. Therefore, he, who was already gifted with an excellent mind, and trained in the proper discipline, although still younger in years, began to show signs of future greatness. Even in his youth, he exhibited certain traits of virtue, which were not obscure but clearly indicated that he was destined for something remarkable. As he grew older, these signs became more evident, as he began to display clearer signs of the virtue he was to embody, and which would shape his future.

III. As for the divine Maximus, it was granted to him to spend his time with teachers and scholars, to attend school, and to prepare himself in all branches of learning. What, then, is necessary to speak of how much knowledge he gathered in such a brief period of time? Indeed, he was very thoroughly educated in grammar and all the other liberal arts that are taught in the curriculum. He also acquired rhetoric and, with the most intense effort, he engaged with philosophy, so much so that he surpassed all others, making it clear that he had mastered every field of knowledge. With equal diligence and skill, he was sufficiently equipped in every kind of discipline; and in each of these, he applied himself equally, drawing on them to enhance his pursuit of virtue. Moreover, he not only studied philosophy and the wisdom that it imparts but also valued it above all other subjects. He knew this discipline, which provides true and certain knowledge, so well that he could contemplate and discuss the nature of the world and its order. He was committed to it, placing more effort into this study than any other. However, he did not engage in this study rashly or without judgment; far from it. He completely rejected any sophistry, anything that was deceptive and inclined toward error. He evaluated and defended doctrines and principles that relied

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on reason, and demonstrated the paths of knowledge that were grounded in truth. For what concern did he have for false propositions? He rejected them completely, and was not inclined to complicate matters with any false logic or reasoning, especially anything that would tarnish wisdom. Indeed, it was a source of admiration for all that he was steadfast in this pursuit of knowledge, and more so in his humility and modesty, which only increased his wisdom. His reputation was not raised by the clarity of his lineage, the excellence of his education, or the grandeur of his virtues; rather, he valued modesty so highly that it was his one true ornament and glory in life. He preferred this above all things, rather than seeking recognition or fame that might be attributed to human accomplishments or greatness.

IV. However, it was impossible for a man of such a remarkable life and excellence to remain hidden, nor could he fail to become known for the common good. Although he daily worked diligently to avoid vain glory, and never became involved in the affairs and concerns of the world, which he believed would greatly hinder his virtue, even though he thought this way and directed his actions accordingly, he was, albeit reluctantly, subjected to and captured by the necessity of his time. This occurred through Heraclius, who, at that time, had control over all affairs, and was overseeing the Roman empire, calling him with the utmost goodwill into his court, and commanding him to be one of the emperor's secretaries. Maximus, being such a great man from a noble family, willingly engaged in all matters within his power, using his position as both minister and helper in the most significant and essential matters. He was exceptionally wise in overseeing his duties and, in his planning, contributed greatly to the royal records. This was fitting for a man of his stature and noble family, as he had the responsibility of managing royal business and the best records. He was most capable of understanding the necessary things and formulating plans with great skill. He was also skilled at speaking and writing efficiently. With his association, both the emperor and the entire court, including the nobles, found great pleasure and satisfaction in his presence, and they were continually astonished by the wonder of his virtue.



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V. Elected as a superior, Maximus finds it difficult to accept the position. However, considering these smaller matters as trivial in comparison to philosophy (such as fame, wealth, and honor, or anything that comes with excessive ambition), and also seeing his faith stained by new teachings, he abandons everything (thinking that his soul would be polluted by such things, and that he would be mired in confusion). He leaves the court, where the heresy of the Monothelites was spreading and causing much harm to the Church, and takes up the monastic life. Having long been inspired by the desire for solitary life, he eagerly embraces the monastic rule. He himself dedicates himself to the monastery, which is situated on a rugged shore and is called Chrysopolis, a place flourishing in the studies of religious life at that time. There, he cuts his hair, puts on a rough habit, and dresses in a coarse cilicium. From that time forward, the blessed man wore down his body with continuous fasting and other forms of bodily affliction. He spent nights in vigil, engaging in intense prayers, and stood in reverence, directing his mind toward God with a straight path, lifting it up and detaching it from earthly matters. He also remained bound by vows, though he had not yet experienced dissolution of them. For, having already embraced the discipline of a more rigorous life and trained himself in various trials and labors based on philosophical principles, he hardly thought of anything else, nor engaged in anything but these spiritual practices. Indeed, although he had many companions in his monastic struggles, he surpassed them all and miraculously excelled above everyone else. So great was his virtue in comparison to the others, that when the community needed a new leader, they urgently asked for him to take on the role of abbot, as they had recently lost their previous leader and superior. However, Maximus saw this position as nothing but a burden and a hindrance. With a determined and resolute mind, he resisted their requests, refusing to yield to their words or to give in to their pleas. But when he saw their increasing fervor, and even some pressure applied to his reluctance, he reluctantly agreed to accept the position of abbot. He did not regard the leadership as a position of power, but rather as an obligation and duty to serve the community as a minister.

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VI. Hence, he was burdened with even greater concern, almost anxious in spirit, as he was not only focused on what pertained to his own actions, nor solely on arranging his own life in the best manner, but also on directing the lives of his subordinates more beneficially, leading them toward the higher discipline, urging them to embrace it. He rightly reflected that those who, being concerned with their own actions and their own affairs, privately cultivate virtue, have full freedom to choose the duties of virtue they wish to undertake, whether great or small, and they may receive leniency, even if they do not perform the greater ones. However, the one to whom the care of souls is entrusted, if he deviates even slightly from the standard of what is expected and perfect, and adopts a gentler discipline, not only does he endanger himself but also puts his subordinates at great risk. For it is necessary for such a one, not only to be the best in every way, but also to continually strive to lead others toward improvement. If it is his duty to guide his subordinates to a better life and to greater virtue by his example, then they must always have his life as a model before their eyes. By his inspection, they will either be encouraged toward virtue or prone to fall into vice. These were the thoughts that continually weighed on the mind of blessed Maximus. Whatever strength remained in his body, he devoted it entirely to the care of his disciples. Therefore, he gave them lessons on virtue, sometimes offering milder instruction, sometimes adopting a harsher tone. At times he gently and kindly imparted doctrine without sharp words, while at other times he admonished them more sternly, with no sweetening of words, adapting to each individual according to his character and nature. This was the attitude of Maximus toward his subordinates, and in this way, he exercised his role as abbot with all his heart.

VII. As previously mentioned, at this time the heresy of the Monothelites was spreading more and more, and it seemed that the impiety of its supporters was growing daily, due to the cleverness and diligence of its promoters. Maximus indeed lamented this and was deeply troubled by it, especially pitying those who were the most wicked authors of the heresy. However, it was not immediately clear what he should do in such a vast and overwhelming evil, which had spread almost throughout the entire East and

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even reached the western parts. Therefore, in the midst of this destructive storm of misfortunes, he found one way to act that seemed most useful: for he had learned that Rome, all of Africa, and other regions, as well as the surrounding islands, were free from this infection. So, abandoning those places, he turned his attention to these safer regions, where he could offer support to the struggling faith and stand with the defenders of the true belief in those places. It was not, however, without difficulty or numerous hardships that he undertook this journey. Yet, he placed the task of the journey above all personal comfort. The monks who were under his care were the ones who urged him to pursue this perfection. Although the separation from them was hard and nearly unbearable, he had no choice but to follow what had been decided, as the circumstances forced him into this retreat, urging him toward solitude. In truth, this part of the story skips over the intervening details, not speaking of the origins of this detestable and rightfully rejected opinion. It is therefore necessary for us to say a few words about it, and then to continue with what follows logically from the argument.

VIII. When Heraclius gained the imperial scepter and Sergius was managing the seat of Constantinople, initially both Heraclius and all the court officials, as well as the entire senate and nobles, were united in the worship of the true faith, professing and preaching that in Christ, who is both God and man, there are two natures, two operations, and two wills. But alas! After many victories over the enemies and brilliant military achievements against the Persians, the doctrine began to shift, and the state of the Church began to deteriorate as well. A large part of the people was drawn away to the opposite side. In fact, Heraclius himself was the author of this change, with Athanasius, the Patriarch of the Jacobites, being the key instigator. He was a man of deceit and a master of confusion, an expert at distorting the truth. He approached Heraclius, while he was stationed in Hierapolis in Phrygia, and maliciously deceived him, using the hope that Heraclius might accept the Chalcedonian Synod and the confession of the two natures united in Christ according to the hypostasis. Heraclius had made this vow—to bring together Athanasius, who had been promised the

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Antiochene see, and others whom he saw as dissidents, under the influence of the council's view. However, due to his foolishness and the instability of his mind, Heraclius ended up adopting a wrong opinion, accepting the two operations and wills of the two natures. This was the position that Athanasius sought to establish. He also persuaded Sergius with various tricks and manipulations, leading him to almost the same position. Moreover, Athanasius was the one who influenced the bishop of Phasis, Cyrus, to support this erroneous view. Thus, they both held the doctrine of the Monothelete heresy, supporting a single will. Heraclius, having summoned both of them—Sergius and the Patriarch—by letter, found that they both agreed with the Monothelete doctrine, maintaining one operation and one will. This led Heraclius, realizing the error of his ways, to abandon his former position and become an advocate for the single will theory.

IX. Indeed, right away, he also reports to the Roman bishop what decrees had been made; namely, that he thought he would be almost violated unless, by his own ferment, he filled the lands scattered everywhere, and shared the contagion of the heresy. For this divine man, seeing the evident error that he was suggesting, and being stirred by the hatred of the wickedness of the wrong opinion, not only refutes and overturns the propositions with powerful letters and refutations that were put forth, but also subjects those who followed his opinion and worshiped it to severe condemnation. Nevertheless, this did not help Heraclius, for he was not lightly stained, as if by mere skin, but had drunk in the wickedness deeply in his very heart. So, in a short time, he attempts to fill Alexandria with the same contagion, sending there Cyrus, the bishop, who shared the same opinion as he did. Through him, Alexandria itself, imbued with the same sentiment, would be weakened and perish in the shipwreck of faith. Finally, Cyrus, meeting with Theodore of Pharan, who was also a fierce defender of the Monothelete error, joins together with him in what they call the hydrography union. I believe that this word signifies a fading and diluted dye, as it were confused, not clearly distinct, and in which no pure color remains undisturbed, truly and plainly empty; in which, therefore, it is altogether permissible to mix and confuse, according to one's will, what

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neither is simple nor double, nor (what is more accurate to say) can either be understood or truly stated.

X. But these, indeed, those who adopted this sense for themselves, became the authors of it and of those misled men; establishing one operation and one natural will; and they gave the Jacobites and the Theodosians an opportunity to boast against our faith, and to hold the holy Council of Chalcedon in ridicule and contempt; for their minds were led astray. Thus, Theophilus calls it, from whom the author (and the rest, very small parts) received it. The same synod of Chalcedon, having been followed by their own, and according to their opinion, they boasted that the opinion of one nature had been adopted. And this was evident from the fact that they taught and believed in one operation, which would never have been the case, they said, unless truth itself had been forced by its shame and had examined the matter more thoroughly.

XI. But when, during this time, Sophronius had assumed the seat of Jerusalem, a man truly renowned for his piety and virtue, all the bishops who were orthodox gathered to him; and with their combined efforts and prayers, they condemned and struck with curses those who believed in one natural operation and one will in Christ. On the other hand, they celebrated with the greatest praise and acclaim those who professed and taught, in addition to the two natures, two operations, and as many wills. And when that most holy man wished to bring forward with greater clarity what had been decreed by him, he made a special announcement about them, first to John (for so he was called), the bishop of the Roman city, and also to Sergius, the bishop of Constantinople, and even to Cyrus, the bishop of Alexandria. He rebuked these men more severely, reproaching them for their wickedness, but he praised John (as was fitting), crowning him with six hundred encomiums.

XII. When Emperor Heraclius heard this, he became afraid, and turning himself around, troubled in mind, he became anxious, tossed about by the heat of these new doctrines, and with his mind overturned, he was unsure how to change this new doctrine which had been introduced. Feeling ashamed of the change, he began to look for a way out of this situation and

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quickly turned to the opposite view. Finally, he was torn between both sides: those who believed in two operations and those who believed in one. The accursed Sergius had persuaded him with his advice, which, as it seemed to him, would be easy and acceptable. He was more inclined to the milder position, fearing that he might completely be separated from the supporters of the single will. Thus, the emperor indulged in the advice given, that he would do what had been settled and what had settled in his mind. Heraclius, thus pleased with the unexpected outcome of the event, confirmed with written decrees and an edict that absurd and monstrous doctrine of opinion. This, when the Severians saw it written in letters, not only in private meetings at home but even in taverns and bathhouses, they mocked, loudly ridiculing it, speaking openly with wild freedom. They boasted that the Nestorians once, the followers of Chalcedon (for we call them such, and those who professed the faith of that synod, although their doctrine had been refuted by us), had repented and turned away from their error, when they had been united in one operation to one nature of Christ; but now, as they regretted what had been rightly understood by them, they had lost both the doctrine of the two natures and the one in Christ. At that time, there was much confusion in the Churches, as both pastors and people had become ignorant, and the leaders and the followers alike were confused. There was no one who understood, nor anyone who sought the Lord. For who in the public could choose what was of greater importance or virtuous, when those in authority were so affected by this, and the highest leaders and prelates of the age, as if by other laws and constitutions, sanctioned impiety, forcing everyone to bow their heads and dividing the Church's seamless tunic into many parts, and those who mocked us and detracted from them, were providing a great harvest of joy for themselves?

XIII. In the meantime, not much time had passed when Sergius, the sower of that erroneous opinion (the hydra with many heads), departed from human affairs, having fulfilled for himself the full measure of vengeance during that age. In place of the deceased, Pyrrhus was soon appointed by Heraclius as his successor, who himself also belonged to the opposing side and opinion, and he held the same beliefs and teachings as his predecessor.

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But since Heraclius himself was soon taken from this life, his son Constantine took control of the empire. With his ascension, Pyrrhus, through notable cruelty and wickedness, along with Martina, a most wicked woman, and one ready for any evil, was struck down by poison. The death of Pyrrhus, having no respect for any opinion, allowed Heracleon, Heraclius' son, to take the imperial scepter in his stead. This was truly a crime worthy of an episcopal office, and fitting for his leniency. Moreover, Heracleon was soon condemned by the senate, who shortly thereafter forced him into the ranks of ordinary citizens. They also expelled the impious Pyrrhus and Martina, with their wicked ways and character, from the royal city. Meanwhile, the audacious Pyrrhus met his punishment, being expelled from both his residence and the city, due to the notorious crime he had committed. Meanwhile, Constans, the son of the late Constantine, ascended to the throne. He appointed Paul of Byzantium as bishop, who was also completely opposed to any proper reasoning, and upheld the doctrine of a single will, supporting the erroneous idea. Indeed, it is necessary to return again to the events of Saint Maximus, whose words themselves provide a subject for this narrative, even though the story has shifted to other matters, the mention of which was already accepted at the outset of this narrative.

XIV. So, this most holy man, seeing the widespread and deeply rooted error in Constantinople, had decided to travel to Rome, as we have previously shown. First, however, while passing through, he came to a meeting with the bishops of Africa. Adding his own words to theirs, and pouring out a stream of divine teachings, he made them more steadfast in the matter of faith. He taught them how they could evade the trap set by their opponents and how to outwit their sophistical arguments. For the most clever man knew full well that much skill in speaking and debating was necessary if they were to defeat their opponents and bring down all their inflated claims against true knowledge. Therefore, even though they were superior in position, their wisdom and understanding were far inferior, so that I need not speak of the man's virtues, or the excellence of his name, which shone brightly in all things. For this reason, they readily yielded to his words and counsel, which were of such great benefit, and they listened

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without contradiction. Indeed, they saw his life as one far removed from worldly practices and marked by exceptional qualities; they were struck by his eloquence and abundance of speech, from which not mere drops, but almost entire rivers of wisdom seemed to flow. Finally, his prudence and the entire character and nature of his soul were so unique that nothing comparable could exist. Therefore, not only those who filled the ranks of the clergy, and all the bishops, but also the people in general, and even the leading figures and magistrates, were all completely dependent upon him, as if suspended from a magnet, or as the stories tell, like sailors drawn to the Sirens by their songs. And since, at that time, it had spread widely, the Roman pontiff had summoned a council of bishops, so that, together with them, they might condemn the absurd doctrine, and Maximus, the divine teacher and guide, led them to do the same. Not only those from Africa, but even those from the islands scattered along the shores, were all stirred to action, diligently fulfilling this important mission, since they all regarded him as their teacher and guide, and a vigorous partner and helper in their work.

XV. Not long after, when John, the bishop of Rome, had passed away, Theodore ascended his throne, a successor to the seat, no less a heretic to the right faith. Meanwhile, Pyrrhus (who had been expelled from the royal city) came to Africa, and meeting with the blessed Maximus, presented his arguments to him. In turn, he received responses from Maximus' mouth. How can I recount the arguments and answers of both, how they were exchanged in the dignity of the matter, or even the plausible and truthful solutions that the holy man provided for each question, or perhaps even the nod and agreement of Pyrrhus, as he accepted the words of Maximus? Pyrrhus, indeed, insisted with great force that Christ had one will, opposing the notion that Christ had more than one will, and argued that it could only be understood in this manner. Maximus, on the other hand, replied that the divine person of Christ, in terms of hypostasis (or personhood), was singular, yet nonetheless distinct in two natures, and thus had two wills. He demonstrated this most forcefully, proving that nothing could be opposed to it. Pyrrhus, however, again introduced a number of absurdities, making the



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argument even more illogical. The holy man rejected these absurdities with clear and reasoned arguments. He stated that if one were to argue that there could be a single will, then in that same sense, one could equally claim that there was only one person, as Sabellius taught, with a single will in the context of that singular person. However, according to the doctrine of the three persons in the Trinity, there are three distinct wills, and thus three natures, as the teaching of Arius holds. For according to the definitions and rules of the Fathers, the distinction of wills implies a distinction of natures, and one is almost always accompanied by the other.

XVI. What is necessary, then, is not to recount all the details of that argument, which, if only taken as part of the discussion, would require an entire speech to explain thoroughly; for such was the long, varied, and intricately reasoned treatment of the debate at that time. Therefore, those who have studied that work, carefully written by the holy man, can more fully learn from it both the sharpness and depth of the questions and answers, as well as the incoherent and self-contradictory propositions of Pyrrhus (or rather, his imprudence and madness). Pyrrhus, despite all his desperate attempts, as the saying goes, placed the ox on his tongue, and acknowledged the weakness of his own reasoning. Although he formulated and twisted many arguments, trying to reach his predetermined conclusions, he achieved no useful result. Finally, pushed to the limit, he begged forgiveness for the things he had said, immediately renouncing his doctrine and the error of the one will, even in writing. He presented his renunciation to the Roman Pontiff, by whom, beyond measure, he was most kindly received. However, the foolish man, utterly lacking in understanding, as though nothing new had happened, settled in Ravenna and, like a dog returning to its vomit, went back to his former errors. Indeed, when he heard the judgment of the divine Maximus and the bishop I mentioned, they formed a unanimous decision against him, and as if he were a rotten, utterly incurable member, they completely removed and cast him aside. Yet even so, he did not stop being shameless. With greater arrogance, he attempted to return to the city of Constantinople and, as a reward for his impiety, took the episcopate again.

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XVII. As for who the instigator was, this was not unknown (for how could he not know, who so clearly displayed the radiant light of truth, as if holding a lamp out in the open?). He quickly commands the holy man to be brought into the royal city, thinking that, once this man was overcome, the rest would be easily subdued as well. Along with him, he also brings his disciple, Anastasius, who bore the same name and shone with equal moral integrity, and another Anastasius, who was (as the Acts reveal) already a legate of the Roman Church and had been heard. Also, the divine Martin, with several bishops from the surrounding regions, was immediately brought to the city of Byzantium. They were thus brought in, as was fitting, being angered by the opposing opinion. However, what pertains to Pope Martin, and how much the impious man raged against him, is evident: filling the man with a multitude of insults and reproaches, degrading him with torturous blows (oh, impious hands!), and finally condemning him to the farthest exile (the place of exile was Cherson). He also committed the same things against his bishops. These details, I say, cannot be fully addressed in this moment, nor can I describe exactly how things unfolded. Those who are familiar with the events of Maximus and the head of the argument will likely recount them soon, either having already spoken of them or, I believe, will speak of them, honoring the man and celebrating his life and deeds. However, our speech follows the purpose for which it was intended.

XVIII. Now, let us consider how this most holy man was subjected to the hands of the most wicked men, captured by them, and made the focus of everyone's gaze. First, when they encounter him, how do these esteemed judges and administrators of the law deal with his case? For no sooner had he disembarked at Byzantium and greeted the city, than those whom the emperor had assigned to this task approached him—men who, by their very appearance, reveal the immense bitterness in their hearts. These men, daringly seizing the holy man, drag him along with bare feet and no cloak, publicly leading him, with his disciple following and lamenting the crime. They then bring him through a disgraceful procession, into a dark and gloomy prison, where they confine him, not even allowing his monastic companion or disciple to remain with him. After several days, they bring the

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just man into the palace, where the entire Senate is presiding, all their eyes turned on him with cruelty and rage. His case is then handed over to the Sacellarius, who outranks everyone in dignity, a man skilled in eloquence and capable of crafting speeches with ease, and who would be well suited to twisting the truth. What evil was omitted? What wickedness or crime was not committed against him? No respect was shown for the venerable man's old age (for he was nearly eighty years old at the time), no regard for the grace reflected in his face, the composure in his posture, or the noble and modest character of his soul. All this was disregarded by the wicked man, who, unable to present any just or reasonable charge against him, simply displayed his own ferocity and moral corruption. Despite his brazen impudence, he ultimately failed, his malignity being exposed and his wickedness made clear. The details of what was said and done to this innocent man, and the false accusations made against him, can be found in the account written by the illustrious disciple of the holy man, who, in his commentary, carefully explains all these matters. Anyone interested can read his work in full for a detailed study. Nevertheless, it does not seem out of place for us to extract a few points from this and incorporate them into our speech, so that, at least, we may not fail to mention these events in our narrative, especially since we are not presenting a continuous account but rather briefly touching upon these matters, so to speak.

XIX. When the wicked Sacellarius had summoned Maximus before his tribunal, he immediately began to attack him with harsh words, threatening him with accusations of treason, calling him a traitor and enemy of the emperors, a destroyer, and throwing all sorts of vile accusations at him. When asked by the Sacellarius what grounds he had for making these claims, and what treason he had committed, the conversation quickly turned to slander. The Sacellarius concocted a false accusation that seemed plausible to him, presenting fabricated evidence and bringing forth perjured witnesses to support his lie. Indeed, he maliciously spread rumors about the most religious man, accusing him of betraying great cities. He claimed that Maximus had handed over Alexandria, Egypt, and the Pentapolis to the Saracens, removing them from the Roman Empire's control and placing

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them under Saracen rule. The Sacellarius alleged that Maximus had a special affinity for the Saracens and was deeply connected to them.

XX. When the holy man had repelled the wicked accusations with the force of irrefutable reasoning, exposing the clear falsehoods and demonstrating beyond doubt that no one, especially Maximus, would seek to capture cities for selfish gain—since he only desired what would be beneficial for them—this impudent man, seeing his calumny refuted, took another route. He began to fabricate stories of dreams, shadows, and apparitions. In these dreams, he invented voices, the sounds of both greater and lesser kings calling him, as well as voices from both the Western and Eastern emperors, echoing through the air. He brought forward more accusers and sycophants. Then, the most religious man, lamenting the situation, said: "I thank my God," he said, "that I am handed over to you, to suffer these accusations of such nature, so that, through these involuntary trials, I might erase the stains upon my life and cleanse myself of my faults." But to respond briefly to these slanders: "I do not look to dreams, nor do I speculate on them, nor do I have time to occupy myself with such vain distractions. And since you have chosen to accuse me based on these claims, and brought witnesses who have heard the words of others, but who have never known them themselves, why then did you not pursue these matters from the beginning, while the accused were still alive? For if you had done so, you would have freed yourselves from a great deal of trouble, and I would have paid the penalties for my crimes." "But, as it seems, this is not how truth works. My accusers, though they may accuse me of dreams, have not set before you the one who searches hearts. I will never come before the Lord and my Master as a Christian if I have fabricated any dream, or if I have entertained such fantasies in my mind or shared them with others for personal gain."

XXI. Then they bring against him a third accusation, which, seeing that it had already been refuted in the second, I did not consider worth inserting in the speech, both because it completely undermines its own credibility, and because it is childish and ridiculous. However, this accusation was not avoided by the noble judges, who, in their persistent fraud, brought forward a certain Gregory, who claimed that the holy disciple

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of Rome had said: "It is wrong and unreasonable for an emperor to be called a priest, as if he had been taught this by his master." But even in this, the holy man was not without defense. He confronted Gregory directly and proved that what had been said then was different from what was now being alleged. "For," he said, "when he came to Rome, the discussion was about the Union, and the matter was being debated, so that we might also adopt a pattern by which the doctrine would be spread and confirmed by many voices. We also had mixed conversations and held meetings, discussing what would be most beneficial and what we deemed useful. Therefore, the new accusations are not mine, nor my disciple's; with whom, by God's witness, I have never discussed such things." "However, there is one thing I can recall saying, and I am aware of it: I did not say this to my disciple but to Gregory himself, who cannot even deny this, unless he denies himself. I said that it is more the role of priests than kings and emperors to define dogmas and raise questions on these matters, since they too are allowed to anoint, lay hands, ordain, offer bread, assist at the altar, and perform any other divine and sacred rites by the authority of Christ. This is what I said then, and I say it again now. Anyone who wishes may absolve or condemn me on this matter. For no man, however much he may suffer, can unjustly harm another."

XXII. From there, when they were left grasping at straws and had nothing more to rely on, those who hoped in lies, they brought forth the just man from the audience and introduced his disciple Anastasius. They began to threaten and intimidate him with words and threats, forcing him to speak ill of his master. They coerced him into saying that Pyrrhus had been wronged by his master, and that he had harmed the man when they had spoken together. It is unclear what falsehoods these deceitful men were scheming and fabricating with such questions. However, Anastasius, contrary to their expectations, responded by saying that not only had he never been treated with anything but the utmost respect and kindness by his master, but that Maximus had received him with the greatest hospitality. Yet, despite his answer, he was still struck with fists and slaps to the head and face.

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Overwhelmed by the force of the blows and the truth of his words, he was again ordered to be imprisoned.

XXIII. Thus, after a repeated hearing, they again sought to intimidate the saintly man, as if his previous defense had been inadequate to satisfy their desires. In a new attempt, they attacked his mind with an even more insidious plot. They accused him of following the doctrines of Origen and of agreeing with him on every point. However, Maximus immediately and easily refuted this weak accusation, boldly asserting that he was completely separated from Origen and from his teachings, and that he had no connection to those who adhered to his views. He declared that he rejected the foolish and absurd words of Origen and that he would never adopt them. Then they turned their questions back to Pyrrhus and the matters that had been discussed earlier. They questioned him as if pretending to seek the truth, but with the intention of deceit. They asked how he had broken communion with the Patriarch, and inquired further into the typology that they were presenting as sacred. They insisted that the very type he rejected was one they were claiming to venerate. They seemed to want to confuse him with complex, entangled arguments and accusations. When these tactics failed to shake his resolve, and they saw that they could not overcome him with their lies or false charges, they resorted to threats, hoping to force him to yield. They even said, "No one can persuade Maximus to give in. He will resist us with every argument and reason, and no amount of torture will make him change his mind."

XXIV. Not long after, some came to him while he was confined in prison. Perhaps they thought that by frequently confronting him and intimidating him with harsh words, they might soften his resolve. They claimed to have been sent by the Patriarch and began accusing him of the following: "Which Church do you belong to? I am using their words. Is it the Church in Byzantium, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, or Jerusalem? See, all these, along with their provinces, are united. Therefore, if you are also part of the Catholic Church, maintain unity, lest you suffer for initiating a foreign and new way, one that no one expects." To this, the blessed man replied, with great prudence and wisdom, as he had done before: "The Lord, when He

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called the Church, called it to a sound and salutary confession; and for this reason, He also declared Peter blessed with a glorious confession. Upon this confession, God declared that He would build His Church. I wish to know that faith and confession upon which all the Churches are united. If indeed the matter has been rightly settled, I will not object."

XXV. In this passage, Maximus is confronted by those who attempt to make a distinction between two operations, which they claim exist due to either union or distinction. These individuals attempt to draw a line between two operations—one related to union and the other to distinction—but Maximus responds with a deep theological objection. They ask him: "Do you say there are two operations because of union, or do you mean that apart from two, there is a third?" Maximus replies: "Do you say there are two operations made into one by union, or do you mean that apart from the two, there is another one?" They insist: "No, there are two operations made into one because of union." Maximus then responds with a profound theological argument: "We are freed from such disputes if we do not mix our faith with any form of substance, for we do not have a true God. For if we confuse what is two into one because of union, and then divide what is one into two because of distinction, neither true unity nor duality of operations will exist. These operations would mutually cancel each other out, and would render the being devoid of true substance or existence, as the Fathers rightly stated. For such a being would lack operation, the very sign and mark of its true essence." Maximus insists that this position does not come from any earthly authority but from the true understanding of the Fathers of the Church, who maintained that a genuine operation is an essential part of true existence. He says, in essence, that the attempt to reduce the operations into mere abstractions would undermine their true nature, rendering the operation and its corresponding being an illusion. Thus, Maximus rejects the attempt to claim that two operations, when conflated into one by union, still retain any meaningful distinction. He asserts the idea that both the operation and the being must be fully coherent with the natural and divine will of God, something he has not learned from any

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human teacher but from the divinely inspired teaching of the Church Fathers.

XXVI. In this passage, we see the culmination of the opposition against Maximus the Confessor, who continues to stand firm in his theological beliefs despite immense pressure. His critics, unable to refute his arguments, resort to declaring that those who refuse to conform to the will of the emperor and the patriarch must be anathematized and face the penalty of death. Theologians and authorities, unable to silence him through rational debate, call for the most severe punishment. In response, Maximus speaks calmly and with humility, acknowledging the will of God in his life: "What has been decreed by God for me, I accept, and whatever end He has in store for me, let it come according to His glory, as it was known before all time." Maximus's response reveals his faith and resignation to divine providence, despite the grave consequences he faces. Following this, the emperor and the patriarch, acting together as those who condemned Jesus in the time of Pilate, decree Maximus's exile. He is taken to a small, desolate town named Bizya (or Bithynia) in the far reaches of the Roman Empire. Alongside him, his disciple Anastasius is also exiled to a harsh and barren location at the very edge of the empire, far from Rome and Christian centers. Furthermore, Anastasius, who had served as an apocrisiarius (a diplomatic representative) for the Roman Church, is sent to Mesembria, a town on the Black Sea, which was known to be a harsh and remote place. This reflects not only the political and ecclesiastical forces against them but also the lengths to which these forces would go to suppress Maximus's teachings. This narrative describes the tragic consequences of Maximus's unwavering theological stance. His exile, along with that of his disciple Anastasius, illustrates the intense opposition from both imperial and ecclesiastical authorities, who sought to silence those who stood for the truth of the faith as they understood it. Despite the injustice, Maximus's response emphasizes his trust in God's plan for him, remaining a steadfast witness even in the face of hardship.

XXVII. Several days passed after Maximus's exile, and during this time, Theodosius, the bishop of Caesarea, and two other prominent figures



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—Paulus and another Theodosius, both holding consular dignity—were sent to him. These men came to Maximus, bringing with them a variety of approaches to persuade or break his resolve. Some used flattery, attempting to soften his stance with kind words, while others resorted to threats, hoping to intimidate him into submission. Additionally, some of them engaged in questions to test him, perhaps hoping to find a chink in his armor through Question. Despite the varied approaches, Maximus remained resolute. His disciple Anastasius, who later compiled a commentary on these events, offers a detailed account of these encounters. However, rather than dwelling extensively on each individual conversation, the focus here is on Maximus's unshakable determination. Maximus, though surrounded by these varied tactics, never wavered. His mind remained firm and unchanging, steadfast in his commitment to his beliefs. No matter how many times he was approached or what methods were used to try to weaken his resolve, his purpose remained solid, and his sense of inner stability unaltered. This section highlights the saint's unwavering courage and his spiritual resilience, emphasizing that even under pressure from various directions, he stayed firm in his faith and convictions. Through these interactions, we come to see not only the persistence of Maximus in his theological stance but also the strength of character that allowed him to withstand such multifaceted efforts to shake him. This unwavering resolve in the face of varied opposition reinforces the theme of divine support and the inner strength granted to those who remain true to their beliefs.

XXVIII. The conversation with Maximus continued as the emissaries, Theodosius and his companions, questioned him further. Initially, they inquired, almost in a friendly or flattering manner, about the state of his situation, perhaps hoping to elicit some expression of doubt or vulnerability. Maximus, however, responded with calm certainty, affirming that his life and its end had been predetermined by God's providence. This was a divine plan, not subject to human will, and thus the events unfolding were in accordance with that higher purpose. The visitors, continuing their questioning, pressed him further: What did he understand by terms like "pre-science," "predestination," and "pre-definition"? Maximus answered by

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distinguishing between human free will and divine decree. He explained that things within our control—such as thoughts, words, and deeds—are governed by our knowledge and foresight, which shapes our virtues and vices. On the other hand, predestination refers to events outside our control, the circumstances that happen to us beyond our will, including adversities and the sufferings we endure, often for the purpose of correction or spiritual growth. After addressing these theological concepts, Maximus, filled with the Holy Spirit, expounded on the nature of suffering and divine justice. He spoke of how trials and afflictions were often sent for the purification of souls, for the correction of sin, or for a higher divine purpose that ultimately leads to spiritual benefit. His words reflected a deep understanding of Christian doctrine and the role of suffering in God's providential plan. However, as the conversation shifted towards the main purpose of their visit, the emissaries once again pressed him to join their communion and to assent to the changes in the Church—particularly the innovations they claimed had occurred. Maximus, ever steadfast, rejected their attempts to lead him into agreement with the alterations they promoted, especially regarding the nature of the faith. He opposed the theological novelties and the confusion they introduced, which he considered to be a deviation from the true doctrine. At this point, Theodosius of Caesarea became more assertive, engaging Maximus in a theological debate, but Maximus remained unyielding in his defense of the traditional faith. He firmly upheld the doctrine of the Church, emphasizing the unity of God's will and the unwavering truth of the teachings he had received. His determination to resist the changes, rooted in his deep conviction, remained strong despite the challenges and pressures from those around him. This section highlights not only Maximus's theological clarity but also his resolute commitment to the truth as he understood it, in the face of considerable opposition.

XXIX. When the holy man, Maximus, had pointed out the absurdity of the arguments presented to him, he demonstrated clearly that if two operations—one divine and one human—were to be attributed to the person of Christ, it would lead to confusion not only in the doctrine of the Trinity but also in the teaching about the Incarnation. He explained that

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such a division in the operations of Christ would distort the faith and lead to the conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity could no longer hold true. Instead of the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ, a new and heretical understanding would arise, where the doctrine of the Trinity might be reduced to a "quaternity" (fourness), undermining the unity of God and Christ. Maximus, following the tradition of the Church Fathers, affirmed that since the divine and human natures of Christ share a single substance, they must also operate in a single, unified way. To suggest otherwise would be to undermine both the essence of the Trinity and the truth of the Incarnation. He rejected the idea of any division between the divine and human actions or wills in Christ, pointing out that such a distinction would lead to a breakdown in understanding the relationship between God and humanity. Moreover, Maximus denounced the false teachers and impostors who were spreading these erroneous doctrines. He warned that no one should follow or accept such heretical ideas, as they were contrary to the true faith and to the teachings of the Church. He saw the attempts to introduce these novel ideas as an act of deception, one that could mislead the faithful and damage the integrity of Christian doctrine. The judges who had been listening to Maximus's defense were struck by the strength and clarity of his arguments. In awe of his reasoning, they fell silent, bowing their heads in submission to the undeniable truth of his words. This moment highlights not only Maximus's theological acumen but also his ability to challenge heretical ideas and defend the orthodox faith with courage and wisdom. The silence that followed reflected their realization of the error of their own position and their respect for his steadfast commitment to the truth.

XXX. Once again, Theodosius, having regained his composure, resumed his questioning with renewed vigor. He presented a series of carefully constructed arguments, believing that these questions, like sturdy fortresses, would be unshakable and decisive. However, despite the sophistication of his queries, they lacked depth and precision, with simple words lacking thorough scrutiny or careful examination of their meaning. Theodosius was essentially attempting to impose his views without due consideration for the complexities of the issue. Among the topics he raised

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were questions about the personal operation of Christ and the relative will of His human nature. These matters required a more elaborate discussion than what could be covered in a brief exchange, but Maximus, with his deep understanding and theological insight, was able to easily dismantle the logic of Theodosius' arguments. Maximus not only refuted these points but also demonstrated that such ideas, if taken to their logical conclusion, would lead to theological errors and confusion. Frustrated by his inability to counter Maximus' clear reasoning, Theodosius changed his approach. Instead of continuing the debate, he sought to appeal to Maximus through diplomacy and friendly persuasion. He suggested that the best way to resolve the controversies and restore peace to the Church would be for them to go to Rome together and work toward reconciliation, joining forces with those in Rome who shared the same spirit and understanding. Maximus, despite his physical exhaustion from monastic labor and the toll of old age, responded with an admirable calmness and wisdom. He questioned the sincerity and effectiveness of Theodosius' proposal, wondering who could claim that such an approach would bring true joy or honor. Maximus' tone was measured, but his words carried an undeniable weight of caution. He expressed his willingness to go to Rome, not for the sake of mere words or empty dialogue, but to address the matter with integrity, ensuring that any actions taken would be rooted in genuine faith and not in empty rhetoric. Maximus made it clear that if any steps were to be taken, they should be grounded in truth, and not driven by superficial agreements or external pressures. His resolve remained unshaken, and he emphasized the importance of approaching the issue with sincerity, ensuring that the unity sought would be based on true Christian doctrine and not mere political expediency.

XXXI. Theodosius, the bishop, seemingly agreed with Maximus' position, affirming his assent with sincerity, or perhaps with feigned agreement. He swore an oath to uphold what had been said, placing his hand upon the sacred Gospels as a sign of his commitment. Yet, as is later revealed, his actions were far from faithful to the vow he had taken. Though he swore before God and man, Theodosius quickly showed himself to be forgetful of the trust placed in him, swayed instead by the will of the emperor and the

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powers that be, abandoning his original pledge. Maximus, on the other hand, remained unwavering in his commitment, his spirit resolute and his mind fixed on the greater good for both those in the East and those in Rome. His heart was set on the journey ahead, and he viewed the proposed efforts as necessary for the benefit of the Church and the unity of the faithful. As Theodosius prepared to depart for Byzantium, he expressed his intention to join with the leaders in the imperial city, to discuss and deliberate on matters of mutual concern. Before leaving, he once again received a token of affection from Maximus—a kiss, an embrace, and a gift of a tunic and a dark-colored cloak. These gestures, though outwardly showing a bond of friendship and goodwill, would prove to be in stark contrast to the betrayal that was to follow. Theodosius left for Byzantium with two consuls accompanying him, and Maximus, though physically distant, remained steadfast in his commitment to the truth, even as the political and ecclesiastical tide seemed to shift against him.

XXXII. On the eighth day following these events, Paulus, another consul with considerable dignity, came again to visit the saintly Maximus. He had received orders from the emperor to show Maximus great reverence and treat him as a close friend, as a familiar member of his own family, and to honor him as such. His instructions were to bring Maximus to Bizya, and then to transport him to a certain monastery in Rhegio, dedicated to Saint Theodore. The following day, two men of patrician rank, Epiphanius and Troilus, arrived, accompanied by Theodosius, the bishop of Caesarea, whom Maximus had expected. Although Maximus had sensed nothing of the deceitful nature of Theodosius, who was unaware that his sincerity was being tested, he awaited confirmation from him. These men came bearing long-winded messages from the emperor, who promised to elevate Maximus in rank and stature—making him "father" and raising him to a position higher than all others, on the condition that he would agree to align with their plans, adopt their decisions, and follow their counsel. Despite all the offers and promises of the emperor, which threatened to stir up confusion and rebellion in both the East and West, Maximus remained resolute. They pressed him with arguments and more temptations, even trying to draw him

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into their corrupt plans with a false and illegitimate rule, but they could not move him. Maximus stood firm in his refusal, maintaining his integrity and purpose. In his response, Maximus declared that not even the virtues of the heavens could sway him from his conviction. He said, "What defense can I offer, not just before God but before my own conscience, if for the sake of fleeting human glory—which has no real existence or truth—I were to abandon the faith I now uphold?"

XXXIII. When the men realized that Maximus had firmly resolved to resist their entreaties, they became furious, especially when they saw that Theodosius had wrongly bound himself by oath to uphold a faith that was in error. These men, consumed with malice, took the opportunity to dishonor Maximus in the most vile and violent ways. Some of them, with wicked hands, struck him with fists, inciting even the lowest servants and followers to join in the abuse. Others slapped him, kicked him, and some even spat in his face—just as soldiers and an unjust mob had done to Jesus. The spitting was so intense that they filled his face with vile spittle, and his clothes were covered in a loathsome filth, releasing such an intolerable stench that it seemed only the most depraved could commit such an outrage. Their hatred was so intense that they would not cease their vile actions until Theodosius, the bishop of Caesarea, intervened, redirecting their rage and urging them to focus on other matters. Despite the brutal treatment, the men, as if nothing had occurred, soon began their questioning again, attempting to ensnare him with more absurdities and nonsensical accusations. However, when they realized their efforts were in vain and that no matter what they tried, they could not break him, they ceased, though not without causing unnecessary hardship.

XXXIV. After a period of time, they brought Maximus to Constantinople, along with his disciple Anastasius, and another Anastasius, whom we had previously mentioned as the apocrisiarius. The men who had been assigned to these tasks were notorious and devoted to their cause, and after placing them under anathema—not only these two but also all the orthodox faithful, both those still alive and those who had already died—they handed them over to the torturers. Their aim was not to take their lives

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immediately but to subject them to tortures that were even worse than death. The prefect of the city received them and led them into the praetorium. There, for the first time, the divine Maximus was bound and lashed with the most severe cords. The cruel and heartless executioners, showing no mercy for the elderly man, for his body marked by years of hardship and the wear of labor, struck him mercilessly. His aged limbs, battered by the tortures, were torn apart with such savage violence that the ground around him was soaked with his blood, and his entire body was left nearly mangled, but still intact, under the relentless assault.

XXXV. Then the monstrous beast, a hideous symbol of cruelty, turned its violent force against the disciple, Anastasius. Afterward, the same fate befell the other Anastasius. Both of them were subjected to numerous blows, their bodies filled with lash marks. A herald was appointed to shout as they were being beaten, declaring, "Those who do not obey royal decrees and persist in defiance are worthy of such punishment!" Despite their suffering, barely able to draw a faint breath, they were dragged into prison, their spirits crushed under the weight of their torment.

XXXVI. Afterwards, the holy man, along with his disciple, was presented once more. His body was marked by lashes, swollen with bruises, and deeply scarred by countless blows. Though he was utterly worn out by these sufferings, the tormentors, driven by malice, decided to subject him to even worse punishments. They viciously severed his tongue, the organ through which divine eloquence had flowed so abundantly, cutting it from the very root at the base of his throat. Their intent was to silence him, to rob him of the power to speak and teach, rendering him mute. But, oh noble Maximus, even in this, you were not truly silenced. You did not cease from your sweet and heavenly speech. For the same God who gave speech to infants and the power of hearing to the deaf, miraculously preserved your ability to speak. You continued to articulate your words more clearly and eloquently than before, speaking with a divine eloquence beyond human expectation.

XXXVII. The same cruel fate was imposed upon Anastasius, the holy disciple of Maximus. They severed his tongue as well, but divine grace

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again intervened, granting him speech in a manner beyond human understanding. Even with the loss of his vocal organ, his words remained abundant and eloquent, surpassing all natural limits. Enraged by this miraculous preservation, the wicked men, unable to content themselves with mere injury, devised new and more unusual tortures. They believed it was insufficient to merely harm the body; they sought to break the spirit completely. With cruel devices, they surrounded the blessed man, binding him tightly and inflicting torture from every direction. With knives and hammers, they cut off his right hand and cast it aside, showing no mercy. Afterwards, they turned their fury toward Anastasius, demanding he suffer the same fate as his teacher. With the same savagery, they severed his hand and tongue, then dragged the two of them through the public square. They paraded them in the forum, displaying their dismembered bodies to the mockery and ridicule of the crowds, taunting them with insults and crude jests. Finally, after this disgraceful public spectacle, they exiled them both, casting them far from the city, accompanied only by the apocrisiarius Anastasius. The only mercy they showed, in their perversity, was that they kept them alive, though far removed from the world they had known, sending them into exile as the final blow to their sanctity.

XXXVIII. Divine justice, though often patient for a time, does not ultimately disregard wickedness. Shortly after, the notorious and evil ruler who had inflicted these torments upon Maximus received the punishment he deserved. Far from his previous domain, in the city of Syracuse on the island of Sicily, he met his miserable end. The hatred he had provoked among the Byzantines due to his vile actions led him to fear even greater retribution. Fleeing with his wife and children, he sought refuge elsewhere. While seeking to bathe for relief, one of his domestic servants, filled with rage, struck him with a fatal blow to his head. The skull was crushed, and the wretched man's life was swiftly taken from him. Meanwhile, Constantine, the son of the deceased ruler, having ascended the throne with Heraclius and Tiberius, recognized the danger of following his father's disastrous path. He chose to avoid repeating the same mistakes, steering clear of further divine retribution. To this end, he gathered the Church Fathers and convened a



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large synod, which would eventually be known as the Sixth Ecumenical Council. There, a major doctrine was affirmed: the two wills and operations of Christ, in His divine and human natures, were to be clearly proclaimed. This condemned those who, through heretical reasoning, sought to introduce the erroneous doctrine of a single will in Christ, anathematizing them as deviant and excommunicating those who spread such false teachings. Similarly, in Rome, Pope Agatho, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had previously taken action, pronouncing anathemas upon the perpetrators of these heresies. Thus, these events marked the beginning of the correction of such errors in the Church.

XXXIX. Thus, as it has been reported, Maximus was led into exile, enduring much hardship along the way. He suffered numerous trials and agonies, unable to sit either on a donkey, in a chair, or a litter due to the exhaustion from his long labors and intense distress. Because of his frailty and the severity of his afflictions, they placed him on a wicker stretcher, and with great difficulty, they carried him through a long journey. Eventually, he was confined to a prison in a fortress called Schimaris, located in the region of Alanis, where he was left destitute of all comforts and support in life. Similarly, his illustrious disciple, also named Anastasius, was taken along, and they were both separated from each other, wandering through various places and ultimately being dragged as far as the land of the Abasgar. It was in these terrible circumstances, after enduring great hardship and fatigue, that one of them—Anastasius, the apocrisiarius—gave up his spirit, though the exact day of his death is not clearly known.

XL. After three years of confinement in the castle of Alanis, Maximus received a divine vision sent from heaven, which revealed the day of his death and called him to the heavenly tents. On the appointed day (the 13th of August), having renounced the earthly things, he ascended to the heavens, truly worthy of the celestial abode. A monument was erected where his sacred body was laid to rest. Three bright flames illuminated the tomb, shining through the nights, casting a marvelous radiance. This brilliant circle of light, filled with awe and wonder, was seen as a sign of God's abundant

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grace toward His servant, displaying His divine favor in the most wondrous manner.

XLI. But to you, O most holy father, great indeed is the present glory and splendor, as the Lord has honored you here abundantly; however, a far greater and much more illustrious fate has been allotted to you there, where you have received the heavenly honors. While you stand in the great Light, you now receive the radiance of the blessed Trinity and the Prince of Light within you, and behold God—an act most marvelous, for through divine union you have become God, deified through divine communion, and attained an indescribable deification. Therefore, having received such glory and clarity, we earnestly beseech you to grant us much assistance, as we, still tossed by the storms of this present life, journey on. May, with you as our guide and leader, we navigate this unstable sea, and find a firm station in the tranquil and eternal port.

XLII. This prayer, O most esteemed father and most loving of sons, is, in fact, completely inadequate to the matter at hand (which, indeed, I know not by my own means). Yet, I trust that it is, in its desire, not inferior to anyone. To have it composed and written, my authority and reason were inspired by the most devout bishop to you—he who, as the chief shepherd of the flock of Myra, was honored both by name and by the splendid integrity of his character. This man, most greatly devoted to your words and doctrine, desiring you most ardently, makes your sweetest name his own and delights in your teachings. In this way, that he may also share in your humble tabernacle, and that you may bestow upon him a reward for his spirit's devotion, he strives to work diligently, persistently, and zealously, ever mindful of his sacred duty. As long as he can provide some good fruit for others in the work of this life, it is in the Lord Christ, to whom be glory and power, now and forever, world without end. Amen.

## DOCUMENT II

### LORD MAXIMUS THE ABBOT ENCOUNTER WITH HIS COMPANIONS AND THE LEADERS

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I. On the day they arrived at this royal city, namely both Lord Maximus and his companion, around sunset, two messengers with ten guards took them from the ship, barefoot and naked. Separating them from each other, they kept them in different guard posts under custody. After several days, they brought them to the palace and stood them before an old man, where the senate and a large crowd had gathered. And when they had placed them in the midst of the seated princes, the chancellor, with much anger and fury, said to them: "Are you Christian?" And he replied, "By the grace of Christ, the God of all, I am Christian." He said to him, "It is not true." The servant of God replied, "You say so, but God knows I am Christian and will remain so." And he said, "How then, if you are Christian, do you hate the emperor?" The servant of God responded, "How is it clear that I hate him? Hatred is a secret desire of the mind, just as love is." And he said to him, "From what you have done, it is clear to all that you hate the emperor and his rule. For you alone have handed over Egypt, Alexandria, Pentapolis, Tripolis, and Africa to the Saracens." And what is the proof of this? They brought forward John, who had been the chancellor of Peter, the former praetor of Numidia in the province of Africa, saying: "Because twenty-two years ago the grandfather of the lord commanded the blessed memory of Peter, having taken an army, to go to Egypt against the Saracens, and he wrote to you, as if speaking to the servant of God, when he, being occupied with the opinion of a holy man, would advise whether he should undertake the expedition?" And you wrote back to him, saying: "You did nothing of the sort, for it does not please God that the empire of Heraclius and his descendants should favor the Roman republic." The servant of God says: "[xxx] If he speaks the truth, he has both the letter of Peter to me and mine to him; let them be examined, and I am subject to the penalties established by law." And he says: "I do not have the letter, nor do I know if he ever wrote to you; however, during that time, all were troubled in the camp." And the servant of God said to him: "If this was being spread around by the rumor of the people, why do you now accuse me falsely? Have you ever seen me, or have I ever seen you?" And he said, "Never." Then the servant of God, turning to the court, said: "If it is just to judge accusers or witnesses, judge: for with

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whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it shall be measured to you," says the Lord of all.

II. And after this, they bring forward Sergius Magudam, who says: "Nine years ago, the blessed Abbot Thomas, coming from Rome, said to me: 'Pope Theodore sent me to Gregory, the patrician, to tell him not to fear anyone; for the servant of God, Abbot Maximus, had a vision and a dream, in which he saw that in the heavens, to the east and west, there were choirs of angels. And those to the east cried out: 'Constantine Augustus, you shall conquer'; and those to the west, in the same voice, said: 'Gregory Augustus, you shall conquer.' And the voice of those to the west prevailed over the voice of those to the east.' To these words, the chancellor cries out: 'God sent you to be burned in the flames of this city.' The servant of God replies: 'I give thanks to God, who purifies me from the involuntary punishment, from the evils I have contracted by will.' However, 'Woe to the world because of scandals. For it is necessary that scandals come; but woe to him through whom the scandal comes.' Truly, it was not fitting to speak such things in the presence of Christians, nor for those who invent such crimes to remain unpunished, crimes designed to please men, who are here today and gone tomorrow." These words were to be said when Gregory was conducting the trials, to insinuate devotion and goodwill toward the emperor. But it would be just, if it seemed right to you as well, that the one who first accused through slander should be compelled to go before Peter the patrician, and this Thomas the abbot, and that blessed Pope Theodore. Then, in the presence of all, I would say to Peter the patrician: 'Tell me, Lord Patrician, did you once write to me about what your chancellor said, or did I write to you?' And if he were to agree, I would be more liable to punishment. Similarly, I would ask the blessed Pope: 'Tell me, Lord, did I ever tell you about a dream?' And if he convinced me, the crime would be his, not mine, for I saw the dream. For a dream is not a thing of the will, but only the law punishes it if it contradicts those who are involved. Then Troilus says to him: 'Are you joking, abbot? Do you not know where you are?' To which he answers: 'I am not joking, but I mourn my life, which has been preserved to this point, so that I might face the danger of such visions and illusions.'

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Epiphanius, the patrician, says: 'God knows, He does well, having these words as a joke, laughing if they are not true.' After him, the chancellor again, with anger, says to him: 'Are all men lying, and you alone speak the truth?' And the servant of God, hearing these words, says with tears: 'You have the power, by the permission of God, both to grant life and to bring death. But if these men speak the truth, then even Satan by nature is God. But if he is not, as he is not, then these men have not spoken the truth. For it is not fitting for Christians to see the coming of God, who is greater than all things, the creator and maker of the universe, the ruler, judge, and savior, unless I have ever narrated such a dream, or heard it from another, except at this very hour from Lord Sergius, a man devoted to the interests of the empire.'"

III. Then they bring forward the third accuser, Theodore, the son of John, who had formerly served as a candidate in the military, by the nickname Chila, who is now the son-in-law of Lord Platon, the patrician, saying: "When we were in Rome discussing the emperor, he mocked and ridiculed what was being said." To this, the servant of God said: "I have never spoken with you except once, with the most holy priest, Lord Theocharistus, the brother of the prefect, regarding the primicerius, when I was ordered by letter to do so. And if I am found to be lying, I will accept the punishment."

IV. After this, they bring forward the fourth accuser, Gregory, the son of Photini, saying: "I was going to Rome to the cell of Abbot Maximus, and while I was saying that the emperor is a priest, Abbot Anastasius, his disciple, said: 'He is not worthy to be a priest.' To whom the servant of God immediately replied: 'Fear God, Lord Gregory; my fellow did not speak anything in this discussion.' Throwing himself on the ground, he said: 'I will endure your punishment, and I will tell you everything just as it was said, and let him accuse me if I lie.' My lord Gregory, coming to Rome, deigned to visit the cell of your servant. When I saw him, as is my custom, I threw myself to the ground, and I adored and kissed him. And I said, after we had sat down, 'What is the reason for the beloved coming of my lord?' He said: 'Our most excellent and God-strengthened ruler, concerned for the peace of the holy Churches of God, has given a command to the divinely honored Pope, and also sent an offering to Saint Peter, urging him to establish union with the

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bishop of the city of Constantinople; and through my humble efforts, his pious empire has deigned to send.' And I said: 'Glory to God, who has made you worthy of such a ministry.' But under what condition and in what manner has he commanded union to be made, with his divinely crowned peace? And he said: 'Under a type.' And I said: 'It is impossible, in my opinion, that this plan will succeed. For the Romans cannot bear to have the clear voices of the holy Fathers taken away alongside the unholy voices of the heretics, nor can they bear the truth to be extinguished with lies, nor the light to be dispersed with darkness. For there will be no God among us, if those things which we have been divinely taught are destroyed.' And you said: 'The type does not destroy the sacred voices, but it causes silence so that we may offer peace.' And I said: 'According to divine Scripture, silence itself is destruction. For God, through David, said: "There are no words nor speeches, whose voices are not heard." Therefore, if neither speaking nor hearing is permitted about the things of God, they are, as Scripture testifies, not to be spoken at all. And you said: 'Do not send me into the wilderness; I consent to the holy Symbol.' And I said: 'How can you be content with the holy Symbol, who receives the type?' You then asked: 'What harm does it do to receive the type and to say the Symbol?' I replied: 'The type completely abolishes the Symbol.' And you asked: 'How so, because of the Lord?' I said: 'Recite the Symbol, and see how it is abolished by the type.' And you began to say: 'I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.' I said: 'Stop, let me tell you how the faith of the Fathers who gathered at Nicaea was taken away. For God would not be the Creator if He had created heaven and earth by natural will and operation, for He created them freely and not by necessity. As David rightly says: "The Lord has done whatever He pleased in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the deep places." But if the cause of dispensation, together with erroneous faith, is taken away, then salvation is lost and destroyed. It is a complete separation from God, not a union of God, as this kind of dispensation has been called. For the infamous Jews will one day say: 'Let us make peace among ourselves by this dispensation and unite; we will have circumcision, but you will take baptism, and let us no longer fight with each

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other.' And this was what the Arians once tried to obtain by offering a petition to Emperor Constantine, saying: 'Let us remove what unites the same substance and what is said to be of a different substance, and let them be united in the Church.' But our divine Fathers did not accept this, and they preferred to suffer persecution and death rather than be silent about the one divine, consubstantial, and superessential deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And when Emperor Constantine tried to persuade them to do so, as many who wrote about those events have reported, no emperor could convince the Fathers of the faith to reconcile with the heretics, but they used their own clear and proper voices to declare and define the doctrines of the Catholic Church. And you said: 'What then? Is not every emperor a Christian and a priest?' And I replied: 'No, he is not; for he does not stand at the altar, nor after the sanctification of the bread does he raise it, saying, "Holy to the holy;" nor does he baptize, nor perform the anointing rites, nor impose hands to ordain bishops, priests, and deacons; nor does he consecrate and dedicate temples; nor does he wear the insignia of the priesthood, such as the stole and the Gospel, as he does the crown and purple of the empire.' And you said: 'And how does Scripture say that the king is both king and priest like Melchizedek?' And I said: 'The one nature of the King of the universe, God, who for our salvation became a priest by nature, was foreshadowed by Melchizedek. But if you speak of a king and priest according to the order of Melchizedek, then consider the rest, that is, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. And notice that from this arises an error: for someone will be found to be God incarnate according to the order of Melchizedek, and not according to the order of Aaron, working our salvation.'

V. But what do we want to discuss at length? During the sacred oblation at the holy table, after the pontiffs and priests, and deacons, and the entire priestly order, the emperors are remembered, the deacon saying: "You are among those who sleep in faith, the laity, Constantine, Constantius, and the rest." Thus, also, the living memory of the emperors is made after the order of the holy men. When the deacon said this, Menas cried out: "You

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have torn the Church." And he replied to him: "If the one who speaks these things, which are sanctioned by the Scriptures and by the holy Fathers, is tearing the Church, what will the Church seem to be doing, when it destroys the decisions of the saints, without which even the Church itself could not be called by name?" Then the sacellarius, turning, cried out to the people: "Tell the Exarch: should such a man be allowed to live, where he holds authority?" And when they led him out, they introduced his disciple. When they demanded that he should speak against his master, as one who had badly treated Pyrrhus, he replied in a quiet and gentle voice, speaking only what was true: "Certainly no one, like he did with Pyrrhus, has treated him this way." They ordered him to shout, but since he did not suffer, those around him commanded that he exceed the proper manner of modest speech and gently subdued him, striking him with fists until he was left nearly dead. Once each of them was sent to his cell, Menas came to him, saying in the presence of the rulers: "God has sent you here to receive what you have done to others, deceiving everyone to follow the decrees of Origen." To whom the servant of God, in the presence of all, said: "Anathema to Origen and his teachings, and to all who hold the same views as he." And Epiphanius, the patrician, said: "It is settled, Lord Abbot Menas, that the complaint brought against you, even if you were an Origenist, after saying 'Anathema,' you have freed yourself from such a crime. Therefore, let this accusation not be brought against him further." Each one was then led back to the place where they were kept in custody.

VI. On the same day in the evening, Troilus, the patrician, and Sergius Eucrates, who was in charge of the imperial table, came to the elderly servant of God. Sitting down, they asked him to sit as well, and said to him: "Tell us, Lord Abbot, the story of the doctrinal movements that took place between you and Pyrrhus in Africa and in Rome, and with what words you persuaded him to anathematize his own doctrine and make an agreement with yours." He recounted to them in order all that he could remember. He added, saying: "I have no personal doctrine, but the common doctrine of the Catholic Church. For I have not spoken any words to have my doctrine called mine." After he had narrated the things said and done, they asked him:



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"Do you not communicate with the throne of Constantinople?" And he said, "I do not communicate." "Why do you not communicate?" they asked. He replied: "Because the four holy councils condemned the nine chapters that were made in Alexandria, and the Ecthesis that was published in this city under the authority of Sergius, and the Typus that was recently, that is, promulgated by the sixth indiction; and because the things they had dogmatized through the chapters were condemned by the Ecthesis, and the things dogmatized by the Ecthesis were abrogated by the Typus; and they themselves have repeatedly renounced their own decisions. Those, therefore, who were condemned by their own measure, and by the Romans, as well as by the Synod that was held after this under the eighth indiction, were deposed and stripped of their priesthood. How then can they carry out a sacred rite? Or what kind of spirit will come to them, those who perform such rites?" And they said to him: "Then will you alone be saved, and all others have perished?" He replied: "The three youths who did not worship the statue, when everyone else worshiped it, were not condemned. They did not look to what others did, but to this: that they did not fall from true piety. Likewise, Daniel, thrown into the lions' den, did not condemn those who did not pray to God, as it was decreed by King Darius, but he considered what was his part: he preferred to die rather than offend God and be beaten by the scourge of his conscience, rather than follow the transgressions of those who would break the law of nature. So too, may God not allow me to condemn anyone or to say that I alone will be saved. Rather, I would prefer to die than to be struck by a terrifying conscience, knowing that in no way have I allowed my faith in God to fall into error."

VII. They asked him: "And what will you do if the Romans seek to unite with the Byzantines? For yesterday the Roman apocrisarii arrived, and tomorrow, on the Lord's Day, they will communicate with the Patriarch. And through this, it will be manifest to all that you have indeed betrayed the Romans." He replied to them: "Those who have come have also brought a grievance against the Roman See, even though they will communicate, because they did not deliver a letter to the Patriarch. Therefore, they will not accomplish anything. Nor can I be persuaded to believe that the Romans will

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unite with them, unless they confess our Lord and God according to both of their natures — that He is in all things, and through whom all things exist, and that His nature, will, and operation are essential for our salvation." And they asked him: "But if the Romans come to an agreement with them, what will you do?" He answered: "The Holy Spirit, through the mouth of the Apostles, even anathematizes angels who proclaim anything other than what has been already declared."

VIII. They said: "Is it really necessary to say that there are distinct wills and operations in Christ?" He responded: "It is absolutely necessary if we truly wish to think piously. For nothing in existence can subsist without its natural operation. The Fathers plainly say that no nature can either exist or be known without its substantial operation. And if a nature cannot exist or be known without its substantial operation, how can Christ, who is both God and man, be known or understood as such, if He lacks both divine and human operations? For, according to the Fathers, if a lion loses the ability to roar, it is no longer a lion; and similarly, if a dog loses the ability to bark, it is no longer a dog. Likewise, if any nature loses the essential property that constitutes its nature, it no longer is what it was." And they said to him: "We truly know this to be the case; however, do not sadden the emperor, who, for the sake of peace and for no other reason, instituted the 'type.' It is not that he wishes to remove anything of what is understood in Christ, but, dispensing with a pastoral sense of reason, he has imposed silence on those words that caused division."

IX. Then, prostrating himself on the ground with tears, the servant of God said: "The kind and pious Lord should not be saddened by my humility. For I cannot grieve God by keeping silent about what He Himself has commanded us to speak and confess. For, as the divine Apostle teaches, it is He who placed in the Church the apostles first, then the prophets, and third, the teachers; it is clear that He is the one who spoke through them. Through all of sacred Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, and through the voices of the holy doctors and councils, we are taught that God incarnate is, in both His divinity and humanity, active in will and operation. For He is known in both the divine and human nature, and He does not fail

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in any of these, except in sin. If, however, He is perfect in both, so that nothing is lacking in either, it is clear that to distort His mystery is to deny what He truly is, not acknowledging Him as He is, along with all the natural properties that belong to each nature."

X. And after a brief silence, some of them, signaling to each other, asked: "How can you show that the holy synods, which are of the Constantinopolitan see, are being rejected?" He replied to them: "Partly it has already been shown through what I spoke in Rome with Lord Gregory, who is of the secretariat. Now, if it pleases the master, that this be demonstrated, let it be ordered that I be granted permission, the unworthy servant of yours, and I will show the books, that they were taken from me; and I will make the matter known to all, without any twisting or distortion of words or meanings." And after having discussed many other matters, they turned to arguments and reflections from Scripture, nature, and art. Delighted and becoming more cheerful, they began to say: "The Lord knows, the discussion has been conducted conveniently, and from now on, we will not trouble you with anything further."

XI. Then Lord Sergius said: "I have often come into your cell and heard you teaching, and God will help you; do not be anxious in mind. There is only one thing that grieves us all, namely, that you are the cause of many being separated from the communion of this Church." The servant of God replied, "Is there anyone who says I told him not to communicate with the Church of the Byzantines?" Lord Sergius responded, "The fact that you do not communicate is a great thunderous voice, by which you deter all from its communion." The servant of God said: "Nothing is more violent than a conscience accusing, nor is there anything more powerful than confidence when it is supported by conscience." But when Lord Troilus heard that the decree was anathematized throughout the West, he said to the servant of God: "Is it right that the name of our Lord is being defamed?" The servant of God replied: "May God forgive those who persuaded the master to make the decree and those who permitted it." They asked: "Who are those who persuaded and introduced it, and who permitted it?" The servant replied: "Those who were from the Church introduced it, but the leaders (i.e., the

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Senate) permitted it." And behold, the corruption of the guilty has been cast upon the innocent, and every heresy has defiled the pure doctrine. But give counsel on what should be done, that he may act as his pious grandfather did. For when he, feeling that some harm had been cast upon him in the West, wrote a letter in which he liberated himself from ecclesiastical reproof, saying these words: "The Ecthesis was not my doing, nor did I command it to be written or carried out." When Patriarch Sergius had drawn up this Ecthesis, five years before I returned from the East, he asked that it be published in my name with my subscription. I consented to his request. Now, when some were trying to spread a false report about this cause, I made it clear to everyone that this was not my decree. I sent this letter to the blessed Pope John, condemning the Ecthesis, in the same terms that I had written to Pyrrhus. From that time, the Ecthesis is said to be Sergius's. Let him do as I did, and his name will remain untainted." At that moment, those who were present remained silent, saying only: "All things are difficult and perplexing."

XII. Having spoken these and other things, and after exchanging mutual greetings, they departed in good spirits. Again, the following Saturday, they brought them into the palace and first introduced the disciple of the old man, along with the two patriarchs who were present. They brought forward the accusers of the old man, Constantine and Menas, and pressed the disciple to agree with the accusations they made against him. However, the disciple, with complete confidence, boldly addressed the Senate: "You are introducing Constantine into the secret chamber of the palace? He is neither a priest nor a monk, but a secular official (tribune of the thymiarchs). It is well known among the Africans and Romans what kind of women he has brought there. Everyone knows the cunning he used to hide himself—sometimes claiming that his sisters were with him, and other times asserting that he brought them so they would not communicate with the Church of Constantinople, lest they be polluted by heretical communion. Indeed, if his banquet fails, and he finds a place where he is not so well known, he will repeat his actions for the sake of disgraceful profit and sordid pleasure. It is a great shame even to speak with him, for those who wish to

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live honorably and piously." Then, when asked whether he had anathematized the decree, the disciple boldly replied: "Not only did I anathematize it, but I also wrote a letter against it." The princes asked him, "Do you admit that you did wrong?" He responded: "May God not allow me to say that what I did according to the proper rites of the Church was wrong. I did only what was right according to the Church's rule." When asked many other questions, and after answering as God had provided, he was led out of the secret chamber.

XIII. They brought in the old man, and Lord Troilus said to him: "Tell us, abba, tell the truth, and your master will have mercy on you. For if we come to legal inquiry, and even find one truth among those things you are accused of, the law will kill you." The old man responded: "I have already said, and I say again, if even one of these things you say is true, then Satan is God. But if He is not God, but a deserter, then the crimes that are laid against me are false and without any truth. However, whatever you wish to do, do it. I will worship God, and I will not be harmed." And Troilus asked: "Did you not anathematize the decree?" The old man replied: "I have said many times that I anathematized it." Troilus pressed: "You anathematized the decree? You anathematized the emperor?" The servant of God responded: "I did not anathematize the emperor, but a decree alien to the faith of the Church." Troilus then asked: "Where were you anathematized?" The old man replied: "By the Roman synod, in the Church of the Savior and the Mother of God." Then the prefect asked him: "Do you communicate with this Church or not?" The old man answered: "I do not communicate." The prefect pressed further: "Why not?" The old man replied: "Because the synods have been dismissed." The prefect asked: "But if they have been dismissed, and sent away, how can they still be recited in the diptychs?" The old man answered: "What use is it to mention the names when the doctrines have been expelled?" The prefect asked again: "Can you prove this?" The old man replied: "If you give me permission and order, I will easily show this to you." At this point, the sacellarius (the treasurer) asked: "Why do you love the Romans but hate the Greeks?" The old man responded: "We are commanded not to hate anyone. I love the Romans because we share the

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same faith, and I love the Greeks because we speak the same language." The sacellarius then asked: "How old are you?" The old man answered: "Seventy-five." The sacellarius asked again: "How old is your disciple?" The old man answered: "Thirty-seven." Then one of the clerics cried out: "The Lord has rewarded you for all the deeds you have done to the blessed Pyrrhus." To this, the old man said nothing in response.

XIV. When such things had been said in the secretarium (a meeting place), none of the patriarchs spoke anything. When the discussion turned to the Roman synod, Demosthenes cried out: "The synod is not valid, since the one who held it has been deposed." The servant of God replied: "He was not deposed, but expelled. For the action carried out under the canonical and synodal records is contained in its own definitive report. However, even if he had been canonically deposed, this would not prejudice those things which are established according to the divine rules, which also align with what was written by the holy Pope Theodore of blessed memory." Upon hearing this, Troilus the patrician said: "You do not know what you are saying, abba. What is done is done."

XV. As far as memory retains, what was spoken and done has passed; and such was the end of this entire ordeal for them: the holy old man was dismissed from the secret council to prison. The following day, which was Sunday, after the council was convened, those who were engaged in ecclesiastical service advised the emperor to condemn them to the bitter and inhumane exile, separating them from one another.

The holy old man was exiled to Bizya, a town in Thrace, and his disciple, Perberis, to a place beyond the reach of Roman imperial authority, where not even a Roman foot could tread. They were exiled without care, naked, having no provisions, completely lacking in food for life, and interdicted from approaching the sea so that no visitation could alleviate their misery. Thus, they were left naked and tormented by hunger, yet upheld only by the hope in God. They implored all Christians, crying out: "Pray to the Lord that He may have mercy on us in our smallness, and teach us, who sail with Him, to endure the danger of the sea, tossed by winds and waves, and yet remain unshaken. Permit us, by His grace, to call out with a loud

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voice: ‘Lord, save us, we perish!’ And let all know that their salvation is granted by Him; let them not trust in themselves, but enjoy great tranquility when the wind and the waves are calmed." God permits a great storm to overtake them, so that their souls may be tested. And in the midst of this trial, they cry out in the spirit of the Passion: "Lord, save us, we perish!" And through their sufferings—hunger, thirst, nakedness, chains, prison, exile, scourging, the cross, nails, vinegar, bile, spitting, blows, and mockery—they endure the passion and death of various kinds. But the end of all these is a resurrection full of light, bringing peace to those who suffered persecution for His sake, and joy to those who were troubled and afflicted for His name.

Their reward is the reception into heaven, where they will be admitted to the Father's throne and the super-substantial, blessed seats above all principalities, powers, dominions, and every name that is named, both in this age and the age to come. May we all, through prayers and intercessions, with the help of the Most Blessed, Venerable, and Glorious Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, and of the holy Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs, attain to these blessings. Amen.

### DOCUMENT III

#### OUR HOLY FATHER SAINT MAXIMUS LETTER TO ANASTASIUS THE HUMBLE MONK

Yesterday, which was the eighteenth day of the month, on which the solemnity of Holy Pentecost was celebrated in Media, the patriarch revealed to me, saying: "To which Church do you belong? To that of Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, or Jerusalem? Behold, all of them, along with the provinces subject to them, are united in communion. Therefore, if you belong to the Catholic Church, unite yourself, lest, being estranged and innovating a way foreign and not useful to the world, you suffer what you do not hope for."

To which I said: "God declared the Catholic Church to be universal, with a right and salutary confession of faith in Him, by blessing Peter, through whom he made a glorious confession. Nevertheless, I will

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learn the confession upon which the unity of all the Churches was established, and I will not reject anything from what was well done.”

And they said: “Although we do not have a commandment regarding this matter, we say this nonetheless so that you may have no excuse remaining at all. We confess two operations because of the distinction, and one because of the union. You assert two made into one because of union, or besides these, I said, another? No,” they say, “but two as one because of union.”

So I said: “The matter is taken away from us if we imagine faith to be without substance and God to be not truly existing. For if we confuse two into one because of union and again divide one into two because of distinction, neither will there be unity nor duality of operations, which always mutually destroy each other and render Him, whose nature includes all, entirely devoid of operation and, moreover, entirely lacking in existence. For that which has no motion inherent to its nature, unchangeable in any way by alteration or mutation of one to another, lacks all substance and truth, according to the true judgment of the Fathers, since it is without operation and virtue substantially signifying it.”

“This, surely, I cannot say, nor have I learned such a rule of confession from the holy Fathers. Do as you will, you who hold the authority to act.”

“Listen, then,” they said: “It seems good to the ruler and patriarch that, through the command of the pope, you are anathematized unless you obey and endure the death which they have decreed. May what was determined by God before all ages come to an end in me, bearing Him glory known before all ages,” I answered them as I heard this. “And so that you may know and, henceforth, pray with greater effort of spirit, I have made known to you what was signified. I ask that you make this known to Lord Thio and the holy Fathers who are with him for the same reason.”

## DOCUMENT IV FROM THE MONK ANASTASIUS



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These things he ordered me to transcribe and make known to your most holy selves, so that, having understood these movements, you might offer prayer to the Lord for our common mother (namely, the Catholic Church) and for us, your unworthy servants, to strengthen all, and us as well, who, persevering in her with us, uphold the orthodox faith proclaimed piously within her by the holy Fathers.

For there is great fear throughout the whole world, as this [Church] is enduring persecution in harmony from all; unless He, who always assists, graciously provides His customary help, leaving at least the seed of piety in ancient Rome, and confirming His unfailing promise made to the leader of the apostles.

## DOCUMENT V

### THE HOLY ANASTASIUS, DISCIPLE OF SAINT MAXIMUS, ADDRESS TO THE MONASTERY AT CALARI

We write many things, even against our will, compelled always to speak. But all things are made known in one word to you, most holy ones. Those who belong to another part, by an unmovable definition, are compelled to uphold the paternal doctrine and the specific profession of the faith, without alteration. However, they are driven by alternating opinions, which are difficult to enumerate and recount. Thus, they have shifted from inconsistency to absurdity, that is, from claiming neither one nor two [wills], to preaching both two and one—meaning three—in one and the same Christ, proposing wills and operations. This is something that neither the Fathers, nor synodal decrees, nor the philosophical discourse has established, nor even the madness of earlier heretics has conceived, knowing it to be vain, corrupted as it is by its own defect.

For if diverse properties naturally characterize substances composed of diverse things, with the diversity of natures not being abolished by the union but rather preserved in the properties of each nature, and both converging into one person and one subsistence, as the holy Council of Chalcedon declares—He who is God from God the Father and man from

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the ever-Virgin Mother—is recognized as the same according to nature, having been born incorporeally and without cause; yet corporeally and with a cause, namely for our salvation. How then is it possible for one and the same person, that is, one and the same Christ, our Lord and God, to be described by two distinct and also naturally distinct properties in certainty of their origin, in which they are, and of what they are?

If indeed the same is also believed through another, that is, through a third [nature], which through duality expresses His wills and operations according to nature, it must necessarily follow that by the identity of the exhibition, dissimilarity of existence is recognized, and thus the same is declared as both two and one—that is, alternately three, whether natural or substantial. But naturally they are not; rather, according to them, they are substantial. Therefore, they aggregate either against Him three substances or as many subsistences, and likewise properties of number: uncreated and created, and neither—that is, nonexistent. For that which does not partake of either nature is nonexistent, such that even by the identity related to it (that is, the third), according to them, two natures are nonexistent, as are His natural wills and operations.

If, however, these are not the same but different from those through which He is believed, they once again proclaim nonexistent things, as though He, being intermediate between both, does not exist in either: uncreated by His own nature, and created in substance and power. They declare this subsistent or composite, as divine-human, or unitive due to the union. But not only, as we have said, do they introduce this nonexistent, which according to none of those things of which He is in His nature, characterizes Him. They also alienate Him from the natural relationship He has with God the Father. It is less to say they also estrange Him from the innate property He has with the undefiled Mother and Virgin.

But the Father has an incomposite and uncreated will and operation, which are substantial and divine; the Mother has a created and human will. Thus, they divide the natures from which He exists, which, through operation and not subsistence, are united to Him. If they dogmatize a single operation due to the union, those who corrupt [the doctrine] by

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division falsely call this operation affective. Thus, giving room for confusion and interpreting this as divine-human operation, they proclaim, like Severus, this as one operation, not two according to union, suggesting it signifies divine and human nature. Thus, they attribute some divine-human nature but not man becoming God to themselves.

Dionysius the Theologian, foreseeing this, did not call this operation one, but, in new divine-human terms, declared Him conversant with us, showing not one divided from the other but both mutually united in their own essence. By this, miraculous passions and authentic miracles are undoubtedly recognized through the appropriate adaptation of His natural actions. They preach all things as double and united in Him, who is of two natures, as our divine heralds and Fathers proclaim.

Refusing to correct their words, they still align their sentiments with the sect of old Rome, forcing emissaries to submit to their doctrine. They preach one over two—that is, three—wills and operations in Christ our Lord, mixing the taste of knowledge of good and evil, as those who derive this from both.

Thus, in great peril, nearly alone is the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God established, for which we pray and beseech the most holy men not to despise this endangered Church but to aid her in her trials. If possible, hasten yourselves to elder Rome for assistance from pious and steadfast men who, like a rock, are our defenders and fervent advocates of the truth. Beseeching them with supplications and tears for all Christians, so that they may obtain reward from the Lord by maintaining orthodox faith without approving innovations beyond what has been defined by the holy Fathers and councils.

Thus, let them complete this great work with zeal and divine assistance, meriting eternal delight with Him who rewards such efforts. We, who are needy and poor, beg you, blessed ones, to pray for us to God, as unworthy servants of yours.

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### DOCUMENT VI

#### DOCUMENTATION OF THE FIRST EXILE AT BIZYA, AS WELL AS THE DISPUTES WITH THEODOSIUS THE BISHOP OF CAESAREA

I. I have deemed it necessary to make these known to all of you who hold to the understanding of the true faith. So that, when you come to know these things more clearly, you may glorify the most gracious God more and more, who grants speech to the opening of the mouths of those who fear Him, lest perhaps the enemies of truth, as is their custom, spread contrary reports and disturb your hearts.

II. Therefore, on the ninth day before the Kalends of September, in the indiction that has now passed, Theodosius, the bishop I mentioned earlier, came to him in his exile (that is, to the fortress of Bizya), where he was being kept. Theodosius claimed to have been sent as an envoy of the patriarch of Constantinople, as he said; and Paul and Theodosius, the consuls, also confessed that they had been directed on behalf of the emperor. Ascending to the Abbot Maximus, whom I mentioned, in the place where he was confined, they sat down and ordered him to sit with them. Present with them also was the Bishop of Bizya. Then Bishop Theodosius said to him: Theodosius. How are you, Lord Abbot? Maximus: As God predestined before all ages for my life to pass through definite trials, so I am. Theodosius. So, has God predestined before all ages what will happen to each one of us? Maximus. If He foreknew, He also certainly predestined. Theodosius. What does this mean, "foreknew" and "predestined"? Maximus. Foreknowledge pertains to thoughts, words, and deeds that exist in us; predestination, however, pertains to things that occur which are not rooted in us. Theodosius. What are those that are within us, and what are those not within us? Maximus. It seems, as my Lord inquires into everything, that He disputes with His servant, testing him in conversation. Theodosius. By the truth of God, I asked ignorantly, with the desire to learn what distinction exists between those things that are within us and those that are not within

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us, and how some fall under God's foreknowledge while others fall under His predestination. Maximus. All voluntary things are within us, namely virtues and vices; those things not within us are the evils that occur to punish sins and are inflicted by God as the author, along with their opposites. For example, neither torturous illness nor joyful health is within us, although the causes of these are. For instance, a disordered way of living is the cause of illness, while an ordered and temperate regimen is the cause of health. Similarly, the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven is the observance of commandments, just as the cause of eternal fire is their transgression. Theodosius. What, then? Is the reason you suffer these evils in exile because you have committed some fault worthy of this tribulation? Maximus. I pray that God limits the punishment for my faults to this tribulation, for the sins I committed by transgressing the justifying commands of His will. Theodosius. Is it not true that, for many, what are called evils serve as tests? Maximus. The testing of the saints is so that through tribulation and the evils inflicted upon them, their souls may be revealed in relation to what is naturally good in mortal life, and along with it, their virtues may shine forth, which were previously unknown. Such was the case with Job and Joseph. The former was tested so that his hidden strength might become evident; the latter was proven so that the renowned praise of his chastity might be celebrated. And whoever among the saints has been subject to such evils in this world that are not voluntary was subjected to them for a certain reason of dispensation. Namely, that through the weakness God permitted to occur to them, or even of which He Himself was the author, they might trample down the proud dragon and deserter—namely, the devil. For patience in trial is the work of all the saints. Theodosius. By the truth of God, you have spoken well, and I confess that I have been edified. I have always sought to have discussions of this sort with you. Yet, the main purpose for which I and my future lords and patricians have come to you, traversing such great distances, is different. We ask that you accept what we propose and bring joy to the entire world. Maximus. What are these things, Lord, and who am I that, by giving assent to what is proposed to me, I should bring joy to the whole world? Theodosius. By the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, what I am

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about to tell you, I and my future lords and patricians have heard from the mouth of our lord patriarch and the pious ruler of the world. Maximus. I beg you, my lords, speak what you wish and what you have heard

III. Theodosius. The emperor and the patriarch request, through us, to know from you what the reason is that you do not communicate with the throne of Constantinople. Maximus. Do you have, concerning this, a mandate in writing from the most pious emperor or the patriarch? Theodosius. You ought not, Lord, to withhold your trust from us. For although I am humble and lowly, I am still a bishop, and these lords of mine are part of the senate. Nor have we come to test you—far be it! Maximus. Whatever the reason or purpose for which you have come to your servant, I will, without any evasion, explain to you the reason why I do not communicate with the throne of Constantinople. However, though it belonged to others to inquire of me the reason for this matter, it is certainly not yours, as you already know it better than I.

IV. You are aware of the novelties that arose during the sixth indiction of the past cycle, beginning in Alexandria through the nine chapters promulgated by Cyrus, who, for reasons unknown to me, became the bishop of that place. These same chapters were confirmed by the See of Constantinople. Other changes as well, including additions and diminutions made synodically by Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paul, bishops of the Byzantine Church, are known throughout the entire world. This is the reason why I, your servant, do not communicate with the Church of Constantinople. Let the stumbling blocks placed by the men I mentioned, along with those who placed them, be removed, as God says: "And remove the stones from the way" (Isaiah 62:10), and let the path of the Gospel be made smooth, clear, and free from all the thorns of heretical perversity, as I myself had found it. Without any need for human persuasion, I will proceed along such a path of my own accord. However, as long as the bishops of Constantinople boast about these very stumbling blocks and those who placed them, there can be no reason, no discussion, no manner of action by which I might be induced to enter into communion with them.

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V. Theodosius. But what evil do we confess, that you have separated yourself from our communion? Maximus. By asserting one operation of the divinity and humanity of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, you confuse the doctrine of both theology (of God as Trinity) and the dispensation (of Christ incarnate). For if the Fathers are to be believed, who say that those who share one operation must also share one substance, you make the Holy Trinity a quaternity. Thus, you declare that His flesh, which became of the same nature as the Word, has exceeded our nature and that of His Mother by an identity belonging to a different nature.

VI. And again: By abolishing the operations and asserting one will of the divinity and humanity, you deprive Christ of the distribution of goods. For if He has no operation, as the authors of this doctrine have decreed, it is evident that even if He wills, He cannot show mercy, since the operation and power of good are removed from Him. Indeed, without that operation, and with it being absent, it is impossible for anything to be equipped to act or work.

VII. Furthermore, you make the flesh, together with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Creator of all ages and of all things within them, and you assert that it was created by nature, or (what is more truly said) that it is devoid of the will of the beginning (for if the divine will itself is devoid of beginning, since it is the essence of the deity, of which there is no beginning), and that it is a recent creation by nature. This not only exceeds all madness but also surpasses all impiety. For you do not merely assert one will, but also a divine will. However, no one has ever conceived the beginning or the end of the divine will: for neither the divine nature, whose substantial will it is, has anyone with sound mind ascribed a beginning or an end.

VIII. But again, you introduce another novelty: namely, you remove all the signs, marks, and representations that signify or establish the deity and humanity of Christ, who, by established laws and types, has neither one nor two wills or operations to be said in Him. This pertains to that which truly has no existence. For no being, whether intelligent, is deprived of the power of will and operation; whether sentient, is deprived of the

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operation of sensing; whether vegetative, is deprived of the operation of growth and nourishment; or whether completely inanimate, entirely lacking life, is deprived of the operation and aptitude called habit. And these things show that all such operations and virtues are placed in a way that they may be perceived by the senses of those living beings that sense, in comparison. For indeed, the operation and virtue of action in them are so disposed that they are subject to perception: to sight, by external appearance; to hearing, by sound; to smell, by a fitting exhalation and vapor; to taste, by certain flavors; to touch, by qualities that create a certain resistance. For just as we say the operation of sight and its action is to see, so too seeing and being seen are what are perceived by sight. The same happens with the other senses. Therefore, no being is entirely deficient in operation or action; but our Lord and God (may He be merciful) is not endowed with any will or operation in either of those aspects by which, in which, or what He is. How can those who worship God and pious men either exist or be called so, who, when you worship the Deity, claim that He has no capacity for willing or acting? For we have clearly learned from the holy Fathers, who say: "For that which has no virtue, neither is, nor has any true existence, nor can any affirmation be made about it."

IX. Theodosius. What was done with a certain counsel and dispensation, you should not take as an established dogma. Maximus. If it is not an established dogma, of those who accept it, who sanctions the type, and the law set, that no will or operation of the Lord is to be said (the removal of which indicates that it is nothing and has no substance, to which these things have been removed), then what is the reason you have delivered me to the barbarian peoples, without God and without honor? Why, then, was I condemned to live in exile in Bithynia, and why were two of my companions—one in Perberis, the other in Mesembria—sent to exile? Theodosius. By the God who will judge me, and when I made this decision, I said it then, and I now say the same: the Type and the harm to the people were wrong. But in order to resolve the matter, there was a dispute between the Orthodox, quarreling over operations and wills. And in order for all to have peace among themselves, some thought it worth their while to silence



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such voices. Maximus. But who will truly accept the dispensation that condemns these voices to silence, which God Himself has commanded to be spoken by the apostles, prophets, and teachers throughout the world? And let us see, great Lord, into what evil this matter, which we are discussing, may lead. For indeed, God has placed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers for the perfection of the saints, saying in the Gospel to the apostles, and through them to those who will be their successors: "What I say to you, I say to all." And again, "He who receives you, receives Me; and he who rejects you, rejects Me." It is evident and completely clear that whoever does not receive the apostles, prophets, and teachers, but rejects their voices, also rejects Christ.

X. Indeed, let us also consider another point. God raised up the chosen apostles, prophets, and teachers for the perfection of the saints; but the devil, on the other hand, raised up false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers, who were chosen against piety, to oppose both the old law and the Gospel. By false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers, I mean heretics, whose doctrine, speeches, and reasoning are perverse. Just as he who receives the true apostles, prophets, and teachers receives God, so also he who receives false apostles, false prophets, and false teachers receives the devil. Therefore, whoever expels the saints together with wicked and impure heretics (take me who speak the truth), clearly condemns God together with the devil.

XI. Therefore, since, upon examining the novelties that have occurred in our times, we find that they have reached the height of evil, see to it that, for the sake of the pretext of peace, we are not found to be suffering from a defection, and preaching that which the blessed Apostle said would precede the advent of the Antichrist. I have spoken these things to you more confidently, so that you may obey both us and yourselves. Do you wish that I, who have these things written in the book of my heart, should have communion with that Church in which these things are preached? I will be their companion, who truly expel both God and the devil together. God forbid that this should happen to me, who for my sake became like me, except for sin alone. And kneeling, He said: "Do whatever you wish with

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your servant." As for me, I will never have communion with those who accept these things.

XII. They were bound to this consistency of words, and with their faces downcast, they remained silent for quite a long time. Then Theodosius, the bishop, raised his head and, with his eyes fixed on Abbot Maximus, said: "We command by faith for our lord the emperor, that through your communion, the Typus will be abolished." Maximus. We are still very far apart, and it makes no small difference between us. What shall we do about the confirmed voice of one will, synodically declared by Sergius and Pyrrhus, aimed at eliminating all operation? Theodosius. The document has been deposited and rejected. Maximus. It was deposited from stone walls, but not from hearts and minds. Let them accept the condemnation of those things which were synodically declared in Rome through pious dogmas and rules. The middle wall has been broken down, and no exhortation will be needed for us. Theodosius. The synod celebrated in Rome did not have the strength to be considered valid, as it was held without the emperor's command. Maximus. If you hold that the synods of the emperors' commands are firm, not however pious faith, then synods contrary to homoousion should also be accepted, as they were held by imperial command. The first at Tyre, the second at Antioch, the third at Seleucia, the fourth in Constantinople under the Arians, the fifth in Nicaea in Thrace, and the sixth at Sirmium. And after these, much later, the second at Ephesus, over which Dioscorus presided. All these were gathered by imperial command, but all were condemned because they irreligiously confirmed impious dogmas. But why do you not reject the one that deposed Paul of Samosata, under the holy and blessed Fathers, Pope Dionysius of Rome, and Dionysius of Alexandria, as well as Gregory the miracle-worker, who presided over that synod, since it was celebrated without the emperor's command? Moreover, who has decreed that only those synods are to be approved that were held by the emperor's command, or that all synods should necessarily be gathered by imperial decree? Indeed, the pious rule of the Church knows and approves those holy and valid synods whose rightness of doctrine has been confirmed. Furthermore, as my lord knows and teaches others, the ecclesiastical rule ordains that synods be

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celebrated twice a year throughout the province, with no mention of royal commands, for the defense of our saving faith and for the correction of all matters that do not align with the laws of the divine Church.

XIII. Theodosius. So it is, as you assert; the correctness of the doctrine approves synods and strengthens them. However, do you not accept the book of Menas, in which he taught the one will and one operation of Christ? Maximus. God forbid. You do not accept, but rather expel all the doctors who, after the holy Council of Chalcedon, fought against the detestable heresy of Severus, and I should accept the book of Menas, which was written after the council? It openly supports Severus, Apollinaris, Macedonius, Arius, and every heresy, and it criticizes the synod. Indeed, it entirely rejects everything that it dogmatizes. Theodosius. What then? Do you in no way admit the one operation? Maximus. Is there any approved Father who speaks of the one operation? And Theodosius brought forth the authorities attributed to the holy Fathers—Pope Julius of Rome, Gregory the Thaumaturge, and Athanasius—and read them aloud. Maximus. Let us fear God, I beg you, and not provoke His wrath by bringing forward the testimonies of heretics. For no one is unaware that these are the impious sayings of Apollinaris. Therefore, if you have others, show them. Indeed, by bringing these forward, you show yourselves truly to labor under the heresy of Apollinaris and his companions, and you are persuading everyone with a corrupt and erroneous opinion. Then Bishop Theodosius presented two testimonies in the name of Chrysostom; after they were read, Abbot Maximus said: "These are the words of Nestorius, who dogmatized two persons in Christ." Immediately, with anger rising, Theodosius said: "You, monk, Satan has spoken through your reckless mouth." Maximus. May my lord not be angered against his servant. And immediately he showed him that these words were indeed those of Nestorius, and where they were found in his books. Theodosius. God knows, brother, these testimonies were given to me by the patriarch. But look, you said some of these were the words of Apollinaris, others of Nestorius. Then, presenting the testimony of Saint Cyril, which says: "One and the same, through both demonstrating operation," he asked: "What do you say to these?" Maximus. There are those

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who show that this was truly added by Timothy of Elura in his commentary on the Gospel, which was compiled by this holy Father. But let it be as you think, that this truly was his opinion. Let us examine the meaning of these paternal words, and we will know the truth. Theodosius. I do not allow that; you must receive the simple words. Maximus. Tell me, I beg you, what is the difference between simple words and those that are varied? Theodosius. To accept the word as it is, and not to search for its meaning. Maximus. You are introducing new words that are clearly foreign to the Church, and even concerning the words themselves, you are introducing laws. If, as you are the authors, the voices of the Scriptures and Fathers are not to be searched, we reject all the Scriptures of both pages. For we have heard David say: "Blessed are those who search His testimonies; they seek Him with all their heart." As if no one could seek God except through searching; and again: "Give me understanding, and I will search Your law, and I will keep it with all my heart." It is as if, indeed, this search leads to the knowledge of the Law; and knowledge urges and directs, so that those who are worthy may keep it in their hearts and fulfill the holy commands that are in it. And again: "Your marvelous testimonies, therefore my soul searched them out." Why does the proverbial saying command us to search parables, enigmas, and obscure speech? Why does the Lord, speaking in parables, want His disciples to understand them, Himself teaching the meaning of the parables? Why, when He admonishes us to search the Scriptures, does He say that they bear witness of Himself? And what does the supreme Apostle Peter wish to teach when he says: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets have inquired and searched carefully"? And what indeed does the divine Apostle Paul say, when he says: "If the gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine on them." It seems that you wish us to be like the Jews, who, with the simple words (only the letter), as you say, like some confused heap of refuse, bury the meaning and are separated from the truth, having a veil over their hearts, so that they cannot understand the Lord, the Spirit, who is hidden in the letter, of which it is said: "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Let my lord be certain that I will never allow

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the word to be received without the meaning that is in it, lest I appear to be a manifest Jew.

XIV. Upon hearing this, Theodosius said: "We must say that Christ has one personal will." Maximus. Let us consider what evil may arise from this and avoid this new and foreign word, which is only the language of heretics, those who introduce multiple gods. For if we say that Christ has one personal operation, it will not agree with the Son, who, in His person, is not in agreement with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Clearly, it will not agree with His operation, which is personal; and it will be necessary, just as we attribute personal operations to the Son, to also attribute personal operations to the Father and the Holy Spirit. According to your logic, the blessed Deity would then have four operations: three distinct persons, in which He exists, and one common operation that signifies the natural unity of the three persons. And thus, according to the Fathers, if we accept their doctrine, we will fall into the error of thinking that the Deity is fourfold (i.e., that we believe in four gods). For they establish that every operation is natural, not personal. If this is the case—and indeed, it is—the conclusion will be that we are saying there are four natures and four gods, each distinct by nature and person. But who has ever seen or understood in their mind an operation proper to each of those which are reduced under some form or under a common definition of nature? For whatever is common by nature cannot belong to the singular nature of one person. For personal characteristics, such as the sharpness of the nose or the appearance of a bald head, are accidental qualities that separate and distinguish them from each other by number. Every man, according to his nature—not as a person—operates according to the most particular and commonly understood categorical reason, such as being an animal, rational, mortal, which are universal and general concepts of human nature. For we all rejoice in the same life, with the same capacity for reason, and the same ebb and flow, for we sit and stand, speak and remain silent, see and hear and touch. These are all common aspects of reason, which are understood in us. Therefore, we should not introduce new terms that have no strength in Scripture, in the Fathers, or in nature, but are foreign and invented by the perverse studies of men. Show

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me, then, if this word appears in any of the Fathers, and we will inquire again into its meaning as said by them.

XV. Theodosius. What, then? Is it not altogether correct to say that there is one operation in Christ? Maximus. From Scripture and the holy Fathers, and in accordance with them, we have not received anything of the sort to be said. But just as we confess that Christ has two natures, from which He is, so we are commanded to believe and confess that His natural wills and operations, according to His nature as both God and man, are distinct. Theodosius. Certainly, my lord, we also confess not only the natures but also the distinct operations—divine, of course, and human—and that His divinity is endowed with the power of willing, as well as the human nature endowed with will. For His soul was not without will. However, we do not say "two" in the sense of introducing a contradiction within Him. Maximus. What, then? By saying two natures, do you introduce a contradiction between them, because they are numbered? Theodosius. Certainly not. Maximus. Then what? Does the number applied to the natures not divide them, but when it is applied to the wills and operations, does it have the power to divide? Theodosius. Indeed, in the case of wills and operations, division has a valid application. The Fathers did not say that division occurred in these, but that there were two, one divine and one human, and that there was a dual and distinct operation. And as they said, so I say, and I speak as they spoke.

XVI. Maximus. By the Lord, if anyone says to you: "One and one," how many do you understand? Or "divine and human," how many do you understand? Or "double and twin," how many do you understand? Theodosius. I know how I understand it; but I do not say "two." Then turning, Abbot Maximus asked the judges: "By the Lord, when you hear 'one and one,' or 'one and the other,' or 'twice two,' or 'twice five,' what do you understand in response to what they say?" And they answered: "Since you have adjured us, we understand one and one as two, and the other and the other as two; twice two as four; likewise twice five as ten." And when Theodosius had heard their answer, he said: "What was not said by the

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Fathers, I do not say." Then immediately taking the book of Acts from the proceedings of the holy apostolic synod, Maximus showed the holy Fathers clearly stating two wills and two operations of our Savior Jesus Christ. And Theodosius, taking the book of Acts, read all the authorities of the Fathers; and then responding, Theodosius the bishop said: "God knows, if this synod had anathematized in the name of the persons, I would have received it with a more willing mind; but to avoid wasting time, I say immediately what the Fathers have said: I affirm two natures, two wills, and two operations. You alone, with us, shall enter into communion, and let the union be made."

XVIII. Theodosius: It will entirely be done, as you say. But pledge your faith to me that you will come with me, if it happens that I am sent. Maximus: Lord, it is better for you to take with you my fellow servant, who is at Mesembria; for he knows the language, and he will deservedly be revered, because for so many years, on account of God and the right faith, which flourishes at Rome, he has endured hardships and evils. Theodosius: We have different disputes between us, and for that reason, I will not willingly undertake a journey with him. Maximus: Lord, since it has once been decided that this should be done, let those things which seem thus be completed in their outcome, and I will follow wherever you command. And with these words, they all rose with joy and tears, and, bending their knees, they prostrated themselves in prayer. Each one kissed the Holy Gospels, the precious cross, and the image of God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and of our most holy Lady, who bore Him, the Mother of God, placing their own hands as well to strengthen faith in what had been spoken.

XIX. Then, when they had spoken a few words to each other about how life should be led in piety and religion, and about the observance of divine commandments, Theodosius the bishop turned to Maximus the abbot and said: "Behold, all the scandals have been resolved and taken away, and peace has been made with God's guidance, and it will happen; but by God, do not hide from me, do you not finally say that there is one will and one action in Christ?" Maximus: "It is not possible for me to say this at any time." And indeed, I say the reason; for certainly, the voice is unheard by the holy Fathers and foreign to them, that the will and the action of the two natures

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should be called one. Then, he who says this encounters an obvious absurdity before him. First, if I call it natural, I fear confusion. Secondly, if I call it personal, I divide the Son from the Father and the Spirit, and I will seem to assert three wills, which do not agree with one another, just as the persons do not. If I say one will and one action as though they were those of one, I am compelled, whether I want to or not, to call one as that of the Father alone, and one as that of the Spirit alone, and in this way, the doctrine will be found to deviate, such that I will be impiously setting up multiple gods. But if I say that it is habitual and in affection, I am introducing the personal division of Nestorius, and finally, I destroy the existence and substance of the willing as unnatural and beyond nature. For what is natural is destruction and corruption, and what is beyond nature, as the Fathers have said.

XX. Theodosius: "Because of the union of our Savior, we must certainly say that there is one will, as Sergius and Pyrrhus wrote, well, as I believe, understanding the matter." Maximus: "I beg you, my lord, accept two of my words concerning this. If, because of the union, one will of God and our Savior has been effected, as Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paulus wrote, then, according to their opinion, the Son will have another will distinct from the Father; who, indeed, will have one will because of nature, but not because of the union, as the Son does; for union and nature are not the same. Secondly, if because of the union, one will of our Savior has been effected, as those authors are, then its cause will certainly be the union, not one of the two natures from which it exists; and clearly, their opinion is that the will will be a matter of affection or love or relationship, not of nature. For affection and relationship, or disposition, are not the nature of truth, as the speech of the union teaches us. Thirdly, if because of the union, as they have confessed, one will of our Savior has been effected, I ask, by what will do they say the union itself was made? For they do not say those things that have been effected by it, if they are guided by any care for the truth, and they wish to avoid absurdity. Fourthly, if because of the union, one will of our Savior has been effected, it is clear that before the union, He either had a multiple will, or was entirely without it. And if He had a multiple will, He made a loss of wills to a single contracted will; and He certainly incurred the stain of change, the



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loss of the multiple will, which was natural. But if He was entirely without a will, nature showed that the union was preferable, from which the will, which was desired by nature, was sought for Him. Again, He seemed subject to change, who, having that which nature did not supply, obtained it by affection, relationship, and union. Fifthly, if because of the union, one will of our Savior has been effected, according to both of the natures from which He is, then God, newly made by will, the same one, remaining eternal in nature because of the union, and man, deprived of the will from the beginning, remaining newly in nature, which is impossible, to say nothing of the impiety. Sixthly, if because of the union, one will of the natures has been made, what is the cause that, for the same reason, one nature of the natures has not been made?"

XXI. In the midst of these things, Theodosius the bishop, with the course of his speech halted and interrupted, said: "What then has been done because of the union, if nothing of these things has been done for its sake?" Maximus: "It has been truly shown to be done in the flesh, God Himself, who is without the nature of the flesh; and He clearly represented the author and creator of all, made a man by nature, not by a change of nature, nor by any diminution of those things that belong to nature, but by the true assumption of the animated flesh in the manner of the intelligent soul; of course, the whole of humanity, which itself, being free from the guilt of the first parent's (or original) sin, is pure by nature. And by this method, which is through a change and exchange (a truly marvelous and wondrous thing for all to marvel at!), God is wholly in humanity, who remains the same fully and entirely in Himself; and the whole man is in the divine, who Himself remains the same fully, without any loss of those things that are proper to Him. For the mutual interpenetration of the natures, and the manner in which they meet each other, and that which belongs to them by nature, according to the teaching of our divine Fathers, was made by the union, not a change of one into the other, nor a diminution or extinction of either; for this is proper to those who, with a perverse mind and sense, make confusion of the union, and for this reason, by various innovations, they introduce

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confusion, and with unstable reasoning and mind, and with a wavering doctrine, they persecute the pious."

XXII. Having heard these things, Theodosius the bishop, with the others who had come with him, seemed to accept what had been said. Then the same bishop said to Maximus the abbot: "I beg you," he said, "what is it that you told us, that no one works as a person, but as a nature?" For the meaning of his statement occurred to me as I reflected. Maximus: "No one works as a person, but as a nature; for example, Peter and Paul work, but not on account of Peter or Paul, but of man (for both are by nature men, according to the common definition, and by the reason of nature): not, however, by their personal difference or the quality of it. Similarly, Michael and Gabriel work, but not on account of Michael or Gabriel, but as angels. For both are angels. And thus, in all nature, which is predicated of many in number as common, not of its own proper operation do we observe. Therefore, one who speaks of a personal operation introduces an infinite number of operations into the very nature, and in the multitude of individuals, which are reduced under it, nature itself is separated from itself. But if we admit that this is correct, with every nature, we corrupt it, as it has its own proper mode of existence."

XXIII. And after these words, with others giving greetings and saying farewell, Theodosius the consul said: "Behold, all has been well done; do you think the emperor will consent to issue the request for a command?" Maximus: "He certainly will, if he wishes to imitate God, and humbly be with Him for the common salvation of all; considering this, for if God, being by nature the Savior, did not bring salvation until He humbled Himself voluntarily, how can it be that a man, being by nature without salvation, either achieve salvation or grant it to others, unless he is humbled?" And Theodosius the consul said: "I hope, with God keeping my memory, that I will speak these very words to him, and that he will agree and adopt this way." In these matters, after embracing each other, they left in peace, with the bishop having given a small amount of money and a stipend to Maximus the abbot, as well as a tunic and a cowl. And the bishop of Bizya immediately took the tunic at that very hour; but in Rhegium, not only did they take the

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money that had been given, but also whatever else they had taken from the charity of others.

XXIV. After those men, whom I mentioned, had left, on the sixth of the Ides of September, in the fifteenth year of the indiction that is now ongoing, Paulus the consul went again to Bizya to Maximus the abbot, bringing a command of this kind: "We command your glory that you bring Bizya, and Maximus the monk, with great honor and respect, and more gently lead him, both because of his old age and failing strength, and because he was once a friend and familiar of my ancestors and was dearly regarded by them, and that you place him in the venerable monastery of Saint Theodore, which is near Rhegium; and you shall come and announce to us. We will send two patricians on our behalf to confer with him about what we have commanded; men, of course, who love us sincerely and are most dear to us. And you will come and announce to us his arrival." Therefore, the same consul, having brought him and settled him in the monastery I mentioned, went off to inform the emperor.

XXV. The next day, Epiphanius and Troilus the patricians came to him, with much pomp and ceremony, as well as Theodosius the bishop; and they ascended to him at the catechumens' entrance of his monastery. After the usual salutation, they sat down, urging Maximus to sit as well. And then Troilus began the conversation with him, saying: "Our Lord has commanded us to come to you and to speak with you, according to what seemed to us to be strengthened by the divine power of His command. But tell us first: Will you carry out the emperor's command or not?" Maximus responded: "Lord, I will listen to what His pious command is, and I will answer accordingly, with the office and response that befits it. For as to what is unknown, how can I give an answer?" On the other hand, Troilus persisted, saying: "It is not possible for us to speak anything unless you first tell us whether you will do what the emperor has commanded or not." When he realized they were pressing him more urgently, and seeing their impatience with his delay, he looked at them all—those with him, men of notable secular military service, and those who shone with dignity—and replied: Maximus the abbot said: "Since you cannot tell your servant what has been revealed to our master and

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emperor, behold, I say before God and the holy angels, and before all of you, that whatever finally my lord has commanded me, concerning any matter that will be destroyed or perish in this world, I will do promptly and wholeheartedly." And immediately rising, Troilus said: "Pray for me, I will go, for this man will do nothing." With much commotion and vehement turmoil, and with great confusion arising, Theodosius the bishop said to them: "Tell him the response, and know what he will say. For it is not fitting to depart without any conversation, either spoken or received." Then Epiphanius the patrician said: "This is what the emperor commands you through us, saying: Since the West and all those in the East who are perverse look to you, and all your people are laboring with factions and disagreeing, unwilling to meet with us concerning the business of faith, may God touch you, that in the type that has been given to us, you may share with us: and we ourselves will go to Chalcedon, and we will offer you greetings; and we will lay our hand upon you, and with all honor, we will introduce you to the great Church, and we will establish with you where you are."

XXVI. Turning to the bishop, Maximus the abbot, with tears, said to him: "Great Lord, we await the day of judgment. You know what has been decreed, and as we have seen, with the holy Gospels and the life-giving cross, as well as the image of God and our Savior, and His most holy Mother, the ever-Virgin Mother." With his face lowered to the ground, the bishop spoke to him in a sorrowful voice: "What can I do, after what has pleased the most pious emperor?" To whom Maximus the abbot replied: "What then was the reason that you, along with those who were with you, touched the holy Gospels, when it was not in your power to ensure that what was said would be ratified, and that the agreed-upon outcome would be fulfilled? Truly, may not all the powers of heaven persuade me to do this. For how can I, not only before God but also before my own conscience, give an account of myself, when for the sake of human glory (which, in truth, has no real existence, being vain and of no fruit), I deny the faith by which its worshippers obtain salvation?"

XXVII. In the course of this speech, they rose up; and all, driven by rage, began to tear, strike, and weaken him with blows and fists, covering him

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from head to toe with spits, the smell of whose filth, until his clothes were washed, gave off a stench that spread far. Then, rising, the bishop said: "This should not have been done; but rather, the response must only be heard from him, and then we must go forward, and report to our most gracious Lord. For matters are handled canonically in another way." And scarcely, after the bishop's advice, was the violent commotion quelled; and when they had again sat down, with mouths filled with insolent insults and dreadful taunts, which no mind could bear, Epiphanius spoke more harshly to him: "Say, you of the most wicked kind, ravenous dog, do you hold us and our city, and even the emperor, in the census of heretics? These things you have spoken? Indeed, we are above you and greater works of a Christian and orthodox man. We confess our Lord and God, with both divine and human will, and also with an intelligent soul, endowed. And every intelligent nature certainly has it by nature, that it may will and act, because the motion of life is its own, and the will of the mind exists as its own. And the power of this will, not only by reason, by which God works, but also by which man works, we deny."

XXVIII. And responding, Abbas Maximus said: "If you believe in this, just as angelic minds and the Church of God, why do you compel me to communicate with the Typo, when I am placed here only to destroy it?" Epiphanius replied: "It was done for the sake of indulgence and dispensation, so that the people would not be harmed by such subtle words." Abbas Maximus responded: "On the contrary, every man is sanctified by an accurate confession of faith, not by the removal of words from the Typo." To this, Troilus said: "I had already told you in the palace that the Typo had not removed the words, but had ordered them to be silenced, so that we might all enjoy peace." Abbas Maximus replied: "To silence or suppress words is to destroy and take them away. For the Holy Spirit says through the prophet: 'There is no speech nor words, whose voices are not heard.' Therefore, speech that is not spoken out loud and proclaimed is not speech at all." To this, Troilus said: "Keep in your heart what you will; no one forbids you." Abbas Maximus responded: "But God has not decided that whatever is for salvation should remain only in the heart, for He says: 'Whoever confesses Me before men, I will confess him before My Father who is in heaven.' Moreover, the

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holy Apostle teaches, saying: 'With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' When God, and the prophets and apostles of God, command that this great and wondrous mystery of salvation for the whole world be confessed with the voices of the saints, it is not necessary to silence the voice proclaiming this, lest the salvation of the silent be harmed."

XXIX. Then Epiphanius, responding in a very harsh voice, said: "Did you subscribe to the document?" Abbas Maximus replied: "Yes, I subscribed." Epiphanius asked: "And how did you dare to subscribe and anathematize those who confess and believe as the Church of the Catholics does, according to the understanding of nature?" Abbas Maximus responded: "Indeed, in my judgment and opinion, we shall bring the mimes and the prostitutes and all the common people to the city, so that each one of them may strike us with blows and spit in our faces." To this Abbas Maximus replied: "As you have said, let it be. If indeed we anathematized those who confess two natures, from which the Lord is, and two corresponding natural wills and operations, who confess the Lord to be truly both God and man, read, my lord, the series of Acts and the document, and if you find, as you say, then do what you wish. For I, and my companions who subscribed, anathematized those who say that there is one will and one operation, following the opinion of Arius and Apollinaris. But we did not anathematize those who confess our Lord and God in both the natures from which He is, and in which He is, intelligent by nature. Therefore, according to the nature of both, He is endowed with the power of will and operation for our salvation." And they said: "If we should be dragged, and act according to the one giving the words, we will neither eat nor drink." "But let us rise, let us have breakfast, and let us proceed. Let us report what we have heard. For there Satan has sold himself." And they rose, and after breakfast, they entered with anger into the vigil of the Exaltation of the precious and life-giving Cross.

XXX. The next day, early in the morning, Theodosius, the consul, went out to Abbas Maximus, whom we had mentioned earlier, and took away all his meager belongings, saying to him, as if in the name of the

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emperor: "Since you have refused honor, honor will flee far from you. Go, then, where you deem yourself worthy to be, with the judgment of your disciples, both those of Mesembria and those of Perberis, who was the notary of our blessed grandmother." Then the patricians, Troilus and Epiphanius, said: "Indeed, we shall also examine your two disciples, those of Mesembria and those of Perberis, and we shall see what the outcome of their case will be." "Furthermore, know this, Lord Abba: if we manage to find even a brief rest from the confusion of the nations, we will unite with the pope, who is now being exalted and growing proud, through the Holy Trinity, and we shall speak with all in Rome, along with all your disciples, and we shall honor you all, each in the place fitting for them, just as Martin was honored." Then Theodosius, the consul, took Abbas Maximus and handed him over to the soldiers, who led him as far as Salembrium.

XXXI. They remained there for two days, until one of the soldiers, having gone to the camp, spread the rumor throughout the whole army that a monk had arrived and was coming, who would blaspheme the holy Mother of God. With those words and the rumor, the entire army was stirred against the aforementioned Abbas Maximus, as though he were blaspheming the holy Mother of God. After two days, the soldier returned and took him to the camp. Moved by the divine will, the praetor (or the praetor's legate) sent someone to meet and approach him, as well as some soldiers, centurions, priests, deacons, and the revered keepers of the sacred signs. When the aforementioned Abbas Maximus saw them arrive, he stood up, bowed to the ground, and knelt, greeting them. They greeted him in turn, bowing, and sat down, ordering that he should sit as well. Then a very venerable old man, with great reverence and humility, spoke to him, saying: "Father, since some have scandalized us and cast this stain upon your holiness, as though you were denying that the most holy Virgin is our Lady, the Mother of God, I adjure you by the holy, consubstantial, and life-giving Trinity to tell us whether this is true, and to remove this scandal from our hearts, so that we may not unjustly be scandalized and suffer some harm." Prostrating on his knees, the old man rose, extending his hands to heaven, and with tears, said: "Whoever does not say that our Lady should be praised with all honor, the

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most holy and undefiled Virgin, and venerable to all intelligent nature, truly the Mother of God according to nature, the one who gave birth to him who made heaven, earth, and the sea, and all that is in them, let him be anathema and cursed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and adored Trinity, and by all heavenly powers, and by all the choir of saints, apostles, prophets, and the infinite multitude of martyrs; and also by the Holy Spirit, now and always, and forever and ever, Amen." Weeping, they prayed earnestly, saying: "May God strengthen you, Father, and grant that you complete this course without offense." After these words, a great crowd of soldiers gathered, wanting to hear the many great words that had moved them. Seeing this, one of the praetor's household servants noticed the large assembly of soldiers gathering, and fearing that a crime might be attributed to them for what was happening with Maximus, (God knows the suspicion), he ordered that he be seized and taken two thousand paces away from the camp, until the gathered men would come who were to take him to Perbera. Indeed, two thousand clerics, overcome by divine love, made their way to him on foot. After greeting him and praying for him, they placed their hands on him and set him on a donkey, returning peacefully to their places. He was then taken to Perbera, where he was held in custody.

XXXII. Moreover, it should also be known that Troilus, when he was attacking Maximus in Rhegium, said that John the Councillor had written to him about the proposed agreement and the union of peace. In the meantime, to prevent this from happening, he had forbidden the petulance and disorderly behavior of his disciples. However, I believe that John the Councillor did not write to Troilus, as I mentioned, but rather to Mena the monk, and then he spoke about it to the court.

XXXIII. Afterwards, having brought them to Constantinople, and after an action had been taken against them, and they had anathematized and cursed Maximus the holy, his disciple Blessed Anastasius, as well as Pope Martin, Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem, and all the orthodox, and all who held the same view, they also brought Blessed Anastasius and, using the same curses and insults against him, handed him over to the judges, saying: "Therefore, you, Anastasius, having been clothed with the mantle of



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malediction and dire curses of all the people, released from canonical hearing and cast out, shall be carried off to the station and seat of hell which you have chosen. He who is with us and governs all things with equal counsel in the most noble and sacred senate, will immediately take up judgment against you, and, as civil laws prescribe, he will justly punish you for your great blasphemies and rebellious intentions. For against you, Maximus, Anastasius, and Anastasius, the present synod has passed this sentence. With the help of the true God, Christ, we declare that it is right and just that you be subjected to the severest penalties, as is appropriate for your blasphemies and wicked actions, although no such punishment exists that could seem fitting for the sins and blasphemies you have committed. We permit the just judge, who will impose greater punishments, to act as he sees fit. For the time being, however, we offer you life as a temporary reprieve, vacating the strict discipline of the law. We decree that, immediately upon your being brought before the most illustrious prefect who is present, your backs shall be lashed in the prefect's tribunal, and the instrument of your insolence (your blasphemous tongue) shall be severed from the bottom, cutting off the means of your blasphemy. And after your bodies have been mutilated for your blasphemies, you shall be paraded through the twelve districts of the city, and then, condemned to eternal exile and perpetual custody, you shall lament your blasphemous errors for the rest of your lives, bearing the consequences of the curses you devised against us." Thus, the prefect, after inflicting further tortures, had their limbs cut off, and, disgracefully parading them through the city, he exiled them to Lazica. Glory be to You, Only-Begotten God, Word of the Father and Consubstantial of the Holy Trinity, who strengthens those who are driven out and suffer for Your sake, both in word and deed, and makes them wise in the Holy Spirit. But those who are Your enemies, and truly the enemies of Your Most Holy Mother, the Ever-Virgin, and slanderers of the truth, You always confound. Glory be to You, Holy Trinity, uncreated, eternal, without beginning, infinite, unchangeable, and supersubstantial and indivisible, our God. Glory be to You, glory be to You, glory be to You, the same and only Blessed Trinity, hope and salvation of all who worship You in the orthodox faith and serve You in truth unto the

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end. O Most Pure and Most Holy Mother, truly the Mother of God, without deceit and truthfully, and after childbirth, still a true Virgin, please Most Holy Mother help us.

### DOCUMENT VII

#### A LETTER FROM SAINT ANASTASIUS TO THEODOSIUS OF GANGRA

The copy of the proper letter of our holy Father and Doctor, Anastasius the presbyter and apocrisiary of the elder city of Rome, a new confessor (indeed, this must be admitted) and a most resolute combatant and martyr for the truth, written along with the appended sacred testimonies and syllogisms, which was composed by the holy hand of his right side, with most admirable intellect, or rather by divine power and grace, after he himself suffered, as well as the Fathers who were with him, in wretched Byzantium, solely on account of the word of truth. This suffering occurred because they refused, or more truthfully, could not, communicate with those in such manifest perfidy and evident impiety, according to Gregory the Great in theology. In his discourse, made against the Arians (b), Gregory declares: “What beasts did we unleash upon the bodies of the saints, that some published their inhumanity, accusing one alone merely so that they might not yield to impiety or be defiled by communion? Thus fleeing, like venom of a serpent, not harming the body but clouding the very depths of the soul.” Moreover, the letter was sent from his third exile, namely in Lazica, to Theodosius, a presbyter of Gangra and monk, residing in the holy city of Christ our Lord

*Inscription. To my lord, most holy in all things, God-honorable father, spiritual guide, and master, Theodosius the presbyter: Anastasius, the least, by the mercy of God, presbyter and monk, servant of the servants of God.*

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### PART ONE OF THE LETTER

I. The memory of the righteous is to be celebrated with praises, as divinely inspired Proverbs 10:7 commands us to do. I, therefore, the least, desiring to presently commemorate in my discourse the memory of those righteous ones, and especially of Maximus—the truly "Great" (for this is what the name Maximus implies)—while being entirely unable to adequately extol their virtue and knowledge, as well as their martyrdom endured for Christ God, have considered it appropriate through this letter to signify to you, God-honorable ones, that which I have learned you most especially desired to know.

II. I make known to you, therefore, that many of the evils inflicted upon us here have been passed over in silence, due to their multitude, the weariness of recounting them, and the unsuitable time for such an account. When we arrived in the land of Christ's friends, the Lazi, on the sixth day before the Ides of June, in the fifth indiction, we were immediately separated from one another by the command of the one who, by fortune, held authority over those present there. They plundered everything—even down to a single needle and thread—that we had acquired for necessary uses, both from you and from other friends of Christ. The most holy man—by whom I mean Lord Maximus the abbot—was unable to sit either on a pack animal or in a wagon because he was infirm. They wove small twigs into a kind of stretcher, bore him on it, and confined him in a fortress called Schemaris, near the tribe of those called the Alans. As for Lord Anastasius the abbot and me, a sinner, they placed us on horses and led us away. They confined him in a fortress called Scotonis in Apsilia, near Abasgia, while I was confined in another fortress named Buculus, in a region called Mesimiana, on the borders of the aforementioned Alans. This fortress, as is known, is now held under the control of the same Alans.

III. Then, after a few days, both I and the blessed Anastasius were taken from the aforementioned fortresses. They sent him to a fortress called Sunias, although he was already half-dead—both from the multitude of

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torments and beatings we endured in Byzantium and from the hardships and afflictions inflicted upon us here. As some say, he died in the middle of the journey; however, others assert that he died shortly after being confined in the fortress of Suania, to which he had been sent. I infer, therefore, that he fell asleep in the Lord around the eleventh or ninth day before the Kalends of August. On the fifteenth day before the Kalends of August, both of us were brought, by order of the ruler at that time, to a place called Mucurisi, to be presented before the army of Christ's friend. By then, as previously mentioned, he was already half-dead, and from that point onward, I did not see him again. They immediately sent him, as stated, to the fortress of Suania, while I was sent to a fortress called Thacyria, near Iberia. From this, I conclude that he fell asleep in the Lord, as has been said, around the eleventh or ninth day before the Kalends of August, in the fifth indiction.

IV. Moreover, the martyr of Christ God, namely the Lord Abbot Maximus, while being held in custody in the aforementioned fortress, received a divine vision. He summoned some of those in the fortress and said to them: "On the thirteenth day of this present month of August, in the fifth indiction, on the seventh day of the week, the Lord will take me." And so it came to pass. Thus, on the thirteenth day of the aforementioned month of August, in the past fifth indiction, on the seventh day of the week, according to his divine prophecy, he departed to the Lord, leaving behind those present.

V. Furthermore, another miracle, divinely manifested at his holy tomb and observed to this day by those who dwell in that fortress and the surrounding region, is worth making known to you, most holy ones, and through you, to all the saints present there, by letter—unto the glory and praise of God, who works wonders in His saints and glorifies them. This miracle consists of three radiant lamps that illuminate the holy tomb of that martyr every single night. These things about this remarkable man and the blessed Anastasius I have briefly recorded for you, God-honorable ones, and through you, for the entire holy Church of God living there in true faith. May you, upon learning these things, glorify God, who is wondrous in His saints.

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VI. Meanwhile, I will also briefly reveal what happened to me, a sinner and the least of men, after these events and the state in which I now find myself. Having spent two months in the aforementioned fortress of Thacyria, lying ill, and having gained a small measure of recovery, the ruler at that time sent me again to the regions of Apsilia and Misimiana, to be confined in the fortress of Phustas. To speak plainly, for seven months, he drove and led me through all the aforementioned regions, naked, barefoot, and on foot, oppressed by cold, hunger, and thirst, intending, it seems, to rid me as well of this life. But I know not what God foresaw in His care for me, a lowly one, for He, in His wise and saving providence, has preserved me until now in this life of many tribulations and miseries.

VII. After a few days, the aforementioned ruler was deposed. Then another succeeded him, and he seemed more compassionate. He led me near his house, taking me from the already mentioned fortress of the Phustuensians. After a year, moved by a diabolical influence, he sent me again to the same fortress. But God, who repays those who repay others, caused the same day that he cast me out, to also cast him out. He became a fugitive in the land of the lovers of Christ, the Abasgi. Upon receiving counsel from the Christian leaders who were there, he decided that it would be better to show compassion rather than continue persecuting me. Instead of receiving my groans, they preferred my prayers. These Christian leaders of the Abasgi, though they did not know me, showed compassion for me. They promised that if I departed from there and was restored to my former position, all that would be needed for my comfort and relief would be provided. Then, after a few days, I don't know how, helped by some unknown means, the ruler was restored to his position. However, he did not fulfill the promises he made to God, nor did he carry out what he had frequently declared to the Christian leaders. Instead, forgetting his promises, he took me from the fortress of the Phustuensians and hastened my transfer to the fortress of Schemaris.

VIII. Meanwhile, as they were leading me to the aforementioned fortress, the ruler was again deposed and became a fugitive, just as he had been before. But God stirred up His Spirit in a man of good zeal, one who

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possesses both the fear and love of God, and truly has a vigilant mind according to God, who now governs the region. Moved by God's condescension and compassion, he led me away from the path to the already mentioned fortress of Schemaris, and established me in a place about five miles away, where I was to be guarded by divine providence, in a truly suitable place for monks, generously providing for my bodily needs. For all these things, may Christ, the true God, through the intercession of her who bore Him according to the flesh, the ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and all the saints, protect him, together with his beloved children, and the honorable and truly praiseworthy mother of theirs, from every band of the wicked and from the multitude of those who work iniquity. May He grant them the nourishment of good things, so that, having all sufficiency, they may abound in every good work. And may He make them worthy of the station that will be at His right hand, and experience that divine and gentle voice, which will say: "Come, you blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was a stranger, and you took me in," etc. Amen. I beg you, most holy ones, to ask for the same in your holy prayers, especially when you pray for the holy and venerable. For they are worthy that you should grant these requests. For they are the true brothers of our holy Christ God, Anastasius.

IX. Finally, Stephen, who is among the saints and the son of the blessed Presbyter John, who was the synarch of that most holy Church, came to this region. As he claimed, at the request of my humility, they received and honored him with all eagerness and joy, granting every assistance according to my request, as one certainly devoted to our holy Christ God, Anastasius. Thus, having received their help, that holy Stephen found me, may the Lord God have mercy on him in the day of judgment. Likewise, may He show mercy to those who sent him, for indeed, he truly performed the work of an evangelist. For just as a spiritual horse has its rider (that is, God Himself, according to the Scripture, which says, "Ascending upon your horses, and your cavalry is health"), Stephen journeyed through all of Lazica, Apsilia, and Abasgia, announcing without fear both the truths of the Gospel and the new teachings that were introduced. He brought benefit and

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salvation to many, and became a cause of peace and consolation for many, and especially for that man. Thus, the wicked name, which the true apostates of the faith had imposed on us, was dispersed and made evident as false. Through the good works that were accomplished during his own visit, that noble man fell asleep in the Lord on the Kalends of January, in the indiction that just passed, among the prince of the Abasgi, a friend of Christ. All those who knew him wished him rest, calling him holy.

X. Therefore, it was necessary for some of you, lovers of God, and those who possess zeal for God according to knowledge, to come here and bear witness to the truths of the faith and to what pertains to truth, so that both orthodoxy might be strengthened and the new teachings might be more fully refuted. In this way, I, the humble one, would also be consoled and refreshed, and those who came would receive a good reward from Christ God, for whose sake this cause exists. And especially since, as I have learned, they come as far as Iberia—why is it, then, that they do not come here?

XI. I therefore beseech you, the most holy ones, if it be possible, to send me, by some faithful man from among those who are coming to Iberia, a copy of the acts that were canonically performed by the holy and apostolic synod, which was celebrated in senior Rome by the sacred command of the holy martyr, apostolic, and supreme pope Martin, so that the sacred dogmas of the holy Fathers, both those of old and those which have arisen now, as well as the abominations of heretics, may be made more evident and manifest here. For this is the only good that even those who unwillingly and unjustly persecute us, and God, accomplish: for they drive us, exiled to various places and regions, so that the orthodox faith of the holy Fathers, which we preach, may be more fully revealed, and that their own heretical and erroneous doctrine may be publicly exposed and refuted, according to the words of the holy Dionysius, Bishop of Athens and martyr of truth, who says: "God knows evil as though it were good, that is, as good; and with Him the causes of evils are virtues, doing good." Truly good is it, as I have said, to manifest and confirm the orthodox faith; but it is also good to make public and refute heretical and erroneous teachings, even though this may be produced through exile and other tribulations. For thus, from the beginning, the word

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of truth was spread, and the impiety of heresy, persecuted by exile and other dreadful sufferings, was overcome by the saints, prophets, apostles, and other teachers.

XII. Therefore, if, as I have requested, you send the holy book, moved by God, and if those who are to bring it wish to come here, they should first meet the most famous and God-protected patrician, and with God, the teacher Gregory, and should receive from him publicly a letter addressed to the worthy patrician and praetor of Iberia, who should then send it on to our Lord and most illustrious patrician and with God, teacher Gregory. Thus, by doing this, you will receive, those who proceed from him, a reward from Christ our Lord.

XIII. Moreover, I have sent with this letter to your most honorable selves, and through you, to the most sacred and orthodox Church that is there, a scroll containing testimonies from the words of the holy Hippolytus, Bishop of Portus Romanus and martyr of our Christ God, so that you may know, through them, how he, in agreement with all the other holy Fathers, ardently preaches the two natures and operations of our Savior Jesus Christ; and may refute those who teach that there is only one operation and one nature of His divinity and humanity, as though announcing the convertibility, commixture, confusion, and division of both natures. Indeed, carefully seek this sacred book of the holy Father, according to the title that stands out with testimonies. For if you find it, you will be able to read many necessary testimonies regarding the same natures and operations of our Savior. This book, brought to us in Byzantium before we suffered, was suddenly taken by our opponents, as is their custom, while we sought to transcribe it in its entirety; and we were unable to take more from it than these eight testimonies.

XIV. What has been hidden from me in the midst of all that has been said, I will not hesitate to declare. This, I affirm, is clear: For when I had been evangelized by the blessed memory of Lord Stephen about the unity and concord that had been established there among all through orthodox confession, both among themselves and with God, spiritually, I was filled with joy, and I, though a sinner, gave thanks for such a great and good mercy



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of God. And I will not cease to give thanks, seeking that this be preserved immovably until the end, to the glory of His most gracious mercy and for our salvation. I greet you, honorable servants of God, and all who are with you, the holy and apostolic Church of God that is there, asking that my name, the sinner and captive, be remembered in the holy prayers directed to God in your sacred and venerable places; and that you would encourage me with your precious and much-desired words, consoling me and praying that I might become worthy to behold your face, though it may seem presumptuous to say so, before I depart this miserable life full of tribulations.<sup>1</sup>

## PROLOGUE OF THE SACRED TESTIMONIES BELOW

XV. The sacred and divinely inspired testimonies, through which we more clearly learn, teach that there are two wills and two operations in Christ, in union and undivided, just as there are two natures, the divine and the human. These wills and operations are fitting and congruent to their respective natures—divine and human—not one as initiated and the other as uninitiated, but both are united in the same Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, who we believe in with the heart for righteousness and confess with the mouth for salvation. However, those who teach otherwise, who perturb the Churches with heretical notions, declaring neither one nor two wills and operations, but making absurd and unstable arguments, are in complete opposition to the pure faith of Christians. For the saints, our teachers and instructors, reject and abhor those who teach a single will and operation, or even a single nature of both the divinity and humanity of Christ. These heretics confuse and divide the understanding of the true nature of Christ, subverting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and denying the mystery of the Incarnation. They claim the unity of Christ's divine and human natures, yet

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Father and martyr Saint Anastasius, the author of this letter, also departed from this life on a Sunday, at the third hour, on the 15th of October, during the feast of the Holy Gathering. His final words, "SANCTA SANCTIS," were uttered in the 10th induction.

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introduce confusion, phantasy, and division into His nature, asserting things that go against the Christian faith. These heretics deny the existence of a will and operation in Christ, reducing His nature to something untrue and contradictory to both His divine and human essence. In doing so, they not only distort the orthodox faith but also reveal the depth of their heretical error.

XVI. Moreover, those who assert a single or two wills and operations in the incarnate dispensation of Christ, advancing a new and fantastical version of this doctrine, not only introduce a heretical opinion into the orthodox and paternal confession, as if mixing water with wine, according to the saying, but they also attempt to preach that Christ has three wills and three operations, and thus they imply that He necessarily has three natures or essences. This is a fallacy, as neither can nature exist without operation, nor operation without nature. These heretics, through their erroneous teachings, distort the clear and established testimonies that demonstrate the inseparable relationship between nature and operation in Christ. The doctrines they promote contradict the necessary unity of Christ's divine and human natures, and thus the very essence of the truth about Christ is perverted.

### OUR MOST HOLY SAINT AND MARTYR BISHOP HIPPLYTUS: FIRST SERMON ON THE INCARNATION AND THE HERESIES OF BERON AND HELICON

XVII. For by the will of God, of immense virtue, all things were made, and all that has been made is preserved according to its own proper, timely and suitable preservation; to Him who is, according to nature, God of immense virtue and the Creator of all things; by the divine will, which made and moves all things, each of the natural things that were made, is sustained by the laws of their nature, remaining immovable. For that which is immense does not receive motion in any way or manner, having nothing to be moved around or about. The mobility of the one who is by nature immense, who is

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untouched by motion, is motionless. Because of this, even according to us, the Word of God truly became man without sin, and performed and suffered whatever belongs to human nature without sin, and enduring the limitation of human flesh for us, He did not undergo any change (a); He, the same as He is to the Father, became the same made flesh for the purpose of His humbling. But just as He was without flesh, He remained wholly free from limitation; and through the flesh He performed what belonged to the divine; showing both aspects of Himself, because He worked in both ways (both divinely and humanly), according to the true and natural substance; that God, who is immense and yet circumscribed, existed and was understood as man, having the perfect essence of both, with His operation, that is, the natural property; from which we know the difference, remaining according to nature, without any change, between them: but not, as some say, according to comparison, that we may say one is greater or lesser than the other, except in what is necessary. For comparisons exist between those things that are of the same nature, and not of those that are of different natures. For to God, the Creator of all things, the Creator; to the infinite, the finite; and to the infinite, the end is not to be compared, since they always and in all things differ naturally from one another, but not comparatively, although an ineffable and indivisible union of both into one subsistence has been made, escaping the full comprehension of all created knowledge. For divinity, as it was before the incarnation, is and remains infinite in nature, incomprehensible, impassible, inconvertible, self-sufficient; and to summarize, the only good of infinite virtue.

### THE SECOND SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XVIII. Therefore, He truly became, according to the Scriptures, not the God of the universe who is changed, but a man without sin, as He alone knows, being the natural Creator of those things which are above the senses; in this same salvific incarnation, adapting to His flesh the operation of His divinity, not limited by it because of His humbling: nor as from His

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divinity, so from His flesh was He naturally born (b), but in whatever He incarnated, He acted divinely. For the flesh was not made the nature of the divinity transferred into nature; it was indeed made according to the nature of divinity as flesh; but what was, even though adapted to the divinity, remained as it was, that is, weak and passible in nature through operation, as the Savior says: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (c); in which He worked and suffered, what belonged to the flesh without sin, the humiliation of the divinity for us, proved by miracles and confirmed by the passions of the flesh in a natural manner. For this reason, the God of the universe became man, that in the passible flesh suffering, He might redeem the whole of our race delivered to death; but through the impassible divinity, operating marvelously through the flesh, He might restore to immortal and blessed life, from which the parent had fallen to the devil: and that the orders of the holy intelligences in the heavens might be confirmed in the unchangeable mystery of His incarnation; whose work is the recapitulation of all things in Him. Therefore, He remained incarnate according to His nature as the immeasurable God, having operation that was related and fitting to Himself, substantially born from His divinity, but through His most holy flesh made manifest in miracles through divine dispensation; that it might be believed that God is, through the weak nature of the flesh, working by Himself the salvation of the universe.

### THE THIRD SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XIX. Indeed, also for me (to explain the paradigm which was said about the Savior), my natural speech is related and fitting, since I am a rational and intelligent soul: of which, according to its nature, the mobile and first virtue, always mobile, exists as speech, naturally flowing from it: which, when uttered in words and beautifully written down in lines, I produce by the tongue when necessary, and by letters in a crafted manner, showing that it is heard, when it exists through those things which are unlike, and does not admit change through those things which are unlike.

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For my speech is not natural to the tongue and letters, although I produce it through them: but it is mine, which according to nature I speak, and through both I pronounce it as mine: from my intelligent soul, indeed, always naturally flowing; but which, through my bodily tongue, as I said, is produced when necessary. Just as, therefore, in us, as much as we can estimate—something that is beyond estimation—through our bodily tongue, inconvertibly, the rational soul's virtue is exercised according to nature; so also in the glorious incarnation of God, through His most holy flesh, in which He would work divinely, the operation of all the divinity, the preservative of all things, would be shown without any conversion, remaining according to nature, although through the flesh it would suffer limitation. For the nature which is generated is not comparable to being circumscribed, that which is according to nature ungenerated; although it was united with it, through conception, which circumscribes the whole power of the mind: and neither would it ever change the natural nature or virtue or operation, until both remain within their own natural inconvertibility. For the movements of the same virtue and efficacy are only those of what is of the same nature, indicating the substance whose natural virtue it is; since substance, of a different nature, could in no way exist or become, without conversion.

## THE FOURTH SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XX. For indeed the mystery of the divine incarnation was found by the apostles, prophets, and teachers to have a twofold and diverse natural consideration in all things; since the perfect divinity and the full power of humanity to be shown. As long as the Word is not one according to the essence of one operation, it will never be the case that the movements of both are known. For, although He was always God by nature, with super-infinite power, He was made man without any stain of sin, as He wished, that is, what He was, as God is known; and yet He is also what He became, as man is known, and to this He was compared to be known, remaining always,

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never falling away from Himself, in whom both divine and human works were done, preserving in both His own nature in an immutable manner.

### THE FIFTH SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XXI. For a certain Bero, and some others, recently, leaving behind the imagination of Valentinus, were ensnared by a worse depravity, saying that the flesh assumed by the Word was made of the same operation and power as the deity, because of the assumption; but the divinity of the same with the flesh of passions and affections, because of the self-emptying; dogmatizing the convertibility, mixture, and confusion, and the change of one into the other. For if the flesh assumed is of the same operation as the deity, it is clear that the nature of God is the same, with the same understanding of God's nature. And if the flesh of the same is made of passions and affections, it is clear that the nature of flesh is the same, with the same comparison of nature to flesh for it to be known. For those things which are of the same virtue and operation, and of the same origin and passions, do not allow a distinction of nature: with confused natures among themselves, Christ will become dual; with divided persons, there will be a quaternity: this is to be avoided most of all. For how will Christ be one and the same, both God and man, by nature? And what substance will He have, who, being made man by a change of deity, and His flesh translated into deity, is God? For if these things pass from one to the other, there is destruction of both in every way. But again, another reason for speech is considered.

### THE SIXTH SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XXII. It has been established and confirmed for the Christians as a pious doctrine: regarding the nature, virtue, and operation, as well as everything else that is fitting and of nature, that God is equal to Himself, and

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that He has nothing that is unequal or less fitting in what belongs to Him. Therefore, as the author Bero asserts, the flesh He assumed was made of the same virtue or operation, and indeed was made of the same nature, with all the characteristics of nature that are devoid of beginning, which are uncreated, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, and if there are any such things, according to excellence, the theological speech contemplates them in the deity. And both underwent vicissitude, neither violating the substantial reason of their nature, but preserving it unharmed. For those who, of different natures, feel the same operation, they bring about a natural confusion and division of the persons, making their natural substance and existence completely unknown and obscured through the change of idioms.

### THE SEVENTH SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XXIII. But if it was not made of the same nature, nor will it ever be of the same operation, then it may appear that it does not have an equal nature nor a fitting operation, and has exceeded all its own natural equality and identity, which is impious.

### THE EIGHT SERMON OF OUR HOLIEST SAINT HIPPOLYTUS

XXIV. In this error, they were led astray, believing that the proper effect of the flesh was made divine by the operation, through which it was manifested in miracles. Through this, Christ, the creator of this universe, according to how God is understood, holds and preserves it, for he did not understand that it is impossible for divine nature's operation to be another, diverse in substance and property, without convertibility. Nor did they understand that it was not the proper nature of the flesh that, through it, divine operation was manifested, but that it did not naturally arise from it. The clear proof of this is evident to them. For I, speaking with my tongue and writing with my hand, offer the same thought through both, which is

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the natural operation of my understanding soul; without showing that it is naturally produced by the tongue or hand, nor is it said that the thought is made by either, due to its manifestation through both. For neither the tongue nor the hand, by the power of thinking, is known by the wise. Just as the most holy flesh of God, because it was assumed and through it the divine operation was manifested, does not want to become the nature of the flesh itself. But he confesses, believing that for our salvation, and to bind the whole universe to unchangeability, the creator of all, from the most holy ever-Virgin Mary, through an inviolable conception without any corruption, formed for himself a soul, intelligent with a body that likewise feels, making man from a nature free of malice: the same fully God and fully man. Fully, at the same time God by nature, and the same fully man; who, through his most holy flesh, operates divinely, although the nature of the flesh is not divine; but by his humanity, which was not of the divine nature, he bore with divine indulgence. He did not operate anything divine with a bare body; nor did he carry anything human that was alien to the divine. Thus, in a new and fitting way, he worked, preserving himself from change by the perfect act of his humanization, so that it would truly be, with no fault or blemish admitted, faith to confirm it. Therefore, Bero, who thinks in this way, as I said, confusing the divinity and humanity of Christ with one operation, dividing the persons, destroys life; he who does not know that the same operation, the identity of persons who are of the same nature, is only to be designated.

### SYLLOGISMS ON THE DIVINE TESTIMONIES OF WISDOM AND OTHERS, AND OF THE SAME SAINT ANASTASIUS

XXV. Behold now this most sacred and great teacher, a faithful witness of the truth, who, in harmony with all the other holy founders of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God, openly confesses and proclaims, with a loud voice, two wills and operations congruent and fitting to the natures—divine, as it was said, and human, uncreated and created—



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according to the unconfused and impartible union, just as there are two natures. This, as the one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, both God and man, he confesses and commands us to confess without hesitation. Moreover, he defines it as most difficult and, in every way, impossible for those who wish to live piously to confess only one will and operation, or one nature of divinity and humanity. Because of this, such a belief is rejected and condemned as impious and foreign to our immaculate Christian faith. And he testifies that we should not do so. For concerning the two natures and operations of our Savior Christ, as I will briefly explain from his sacred words, he speaks clearly: "Each showing itself, as it has operated doubly (both divinely and humanly), according to the same true and natural substance, being both God infinite and man limited, and to be understood as such; each having perfect essence, with his operation, that is, the natural property." And again: "For the flesh was not made the nature of deity, transformed into another nature, but what it was, even to the deity, remained, that is, the flesh as weak and passible by nature and operation, as the Savior said: 'The Spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again: 'In which he worked and suffered, what was of the flesh, free from all sin, confirmed by divine self-emptying through miracles and passions of the flesh.'" And once more: "The mystery of the divine incarnation is known to the apostles, prophets, and teachers to have twofold and distinct natural considerations; since it fully reveals the power of the divine and the human." And again: "In both divine and human works, he operated perfectly, preserving in both the immutable nature of each." And again: "Nothing divine worked bare in the body, nor did he bear anything human that was alien to the divinity. Through this new and fitting method, he worked in both, preserving himself from change in each, to the perfect humanization of his nature, which is truly so, without admitting any fault or blemish, to confirm the faith."

XXVI. Regarding those who teach that there is only one operation and one nature of divinity and humanity in Christ, it is said: "For the created nature cannot be compared to that which is uncreated by nature, although it became united to it through conception, which limits the full power of the

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mind. And neither can the natural virtues or operations be transformed into one nature, until both remain within their own natural, immutable properties." And again: "For the movement of the same virtue and efficacy belongs only to those things which are of the same nature, indicating the substance whose natural virtue it is. For a substance with different properties of nature cannot, in any way, exist or come into being, without a changeability." Again: "Indeed, those things which share the same virtue and operation, and the same origin and passions, do not admit the distinction of nature; when the natures are confused with each other, Christ would become a duality, and the divine persons would become a quaternity: which must be avoided at all costs." And again: "If, as the author Bero claims, the flesh assumed by the Word became of the same virtue and operation as it was, it is indeed of the same nature with all those things that nature is, which is without beginning, uncreated, infinite, eternal, and incomprehensible, and according to the excellence of the theological discourse, to be observed in the divinity: and both underwent change without either losing the essential integrity of its nature." And again: "For those who feel the same operation in things that are of different natures, cause confusion of nature and bring about a division of the persons; their natural substance and existence are completely unknown and obscured by a change in expressions." Again: "If, therefore, it is not of the same nature, neither will the operation ever be the same." And again: "In this error, they have fallen, believing wrongly that the divine operation was produced by the flesh, which manifested itself through miracles; through which Christ, the creator of the universe, as God is understood, holds and preserves all things created. And again: "They did not realize that it is impossible for the operation of the divine nature to be the property of another, different substance, without changeability." And again: "As long as the Word is known to be one according to the essence of one operation, there will never be any reason for the movement of both to be recognized." And again: "Thus, Bero, who believes as I have stated, by confusing the divine and human nature in the operation of Christ and dividing the persons, destroys the life; he does not understand that the same

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operation only designates the identity of the persons who are of the same nature."

XXVII. Therefore, as it has been more clearly stated by this most sacred and great teacher and martyr of the truth (which is the same as saying by the most holy Spirit, who speaks through him), let those who wish to understand carefully attend to it, and especially those who communicate with those who have recently worked innovations. Let them know for certain that those who deny and reject the two natural wills and operations of our Savior Christ, and call the sacred and orthodox confession impious and foreign to the Christian name, those who dogmatize one will and operation of His divinity and humanity, anathematizing those who do not confess in agreement with them, openly and without any covering veil, anathematize the holy prophets, apostles, and teachers; or rather, to speak more truly, they anathematize the most holy Spirit, who spoke in them, and indeed speaks, and they reject and cast away the sacred and orthodox confession delivered to us by Him through them. They assert that it is impious and foreign to the Christian faith and dogma. Moreover, just like the aforementioned heretic, or even more accurately, like all heretics who are deceived in confusion, fantasy, and division, they only refuse and subvert the mystery of the supersubstantial theology and the incarnate dispensation. They confess the quaternity of persons, the holy Trinity, but they introduce one of these persons, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, as lifeless and without intellect or reason, according to how He became man for our sake. They proclaim the convertibility, scattering, mutability, confusion, and fantasy of His two natures, and declare the pure human mother, the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, to be simply a human or some sort of prodigy.

XXVIII. Then indeed, rejecting this, which was evidently dogmatized in him by them, namely one will and one operation, and neither one nor two, that is, neither the divine nor the human will or operation, or desiring to confess some sort of all-encompassing will or operation, they not only show themselves to be unstable and evasive, but also heretics, who have erred in confusion, imagination, and division, and they show themselves to be more impious, demonstrating with their own words and dogmas. For

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indeed those [heretics] wish to have one [will]; but these, however, do not wish to have one will or operation; and therefore they pronounce him as insubstantial and inessential (for it is less to say without will and impotent) according to both natures; while according to the sacred definitions and reasoning, corruption, that is, the destruction and non-existence of nature, the infirmity and defect of natural relationships, operations, and virtues exist: and that which is universally deprived of natural will and substantial operation, neither is, nor is anything, nor is any of its essence.

XXIX. And not only the Son, but also the Father and the Holy Spirit, they assert to be insubstantial and non-existent. For in both of them, the Savior exists in the same substance, that is, of deity, will, and operation, according to what is and is called by nature God. So that subsequently, they describe our Lady, the truly most holy, revered and praised above all saints, as properly and truthfully the Mother of God, ever Virgin, not falsely or deceitfully, but truly; not as the Mother of God, but as the mother of him who, according to them, does not exist in any way. And these, indeed, captivated by such and such great impieties, are propagated through their own dogmas. But those who, together with the two wills and operations, which are piously said of our Savior Christ by the holy founders of the Catholic Church, wish to confess another one, I know not from where they invent it; and they anathematize those who do not confess, according to them, one and two, that is, three wills and operations in him. Nevertheless, these also anathematize the holy prophets, apostles, and doctors, and even above those who spoke in them, indeed, and now through them speaks, the most holy Spirit; and they deny the sacred and immaculate faith delivered to us by him, by adulterating it with new inventions, and they invent another nature in the Savior Christ, besides the divine and human, some foreign nature, and alien to all that is in things, of which they wish to make one will and operation in him. For every natural and substantial will and operation are properties of nature, certainly, which it wills and operates. And every natural operation indicates substance, from which it proceeds and in which it resides. For natural operation is the sign and knowledge of each nature; and every nature is known by the reason of its proper operation, and every

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nature has an operation fitting and defining itself, distinguishing it from others; and the true reason of the definitions of substances and their natural operations is known. And to say briefly, neither is nature without operation, which characterizes it substantially, nor again is will or operation able to exist without some substance, as the divine scriptures proclaim, and nature itself cries out.

XXX. Therefore, those who invent one will and one operation, besides the two, concerning our Savior Christ, are also compelled, by necessity, to invent another nature besides the divine, as has been said, and the human, some foreign and alien nature to all that exists in things, which they apply to him, of whom they want to say that he has one will as already mentioned by them; this is an empty invention of a fictitious thought and a root that differs nothing at all from idolatry. For God, who is also man, existing as Savior, has only two natures and corresponding wills and operations, that is, the divine and the human, as our renowned teachers and doctors affirm, not one and two, that is, three, as the adversaries dogmatize. In this way, they evidently carry out what is once said by God through the prophet Isaiah in reproach, that is: "Your wine merchants mix wine with water." For, as it appears, these, in the manner of wine merchants, adulterating the truth, compel both sects to confess the natural duality of the wills and operations of our Savior Christ, with one will and operation which, by heretics deceived by confusion, division, or fantasy, was impiously dogmatized in him, as if mixing wine with water. This is truly impious and foreign to the immaculate faith of us Christians, who, diametrically opposed, just as their predecessors, fall into error through this method.

XXXI. For it is equally, in diametric opposition, as great an evil to reject and condemn the orthodox faith as it is to agree with heretical opinion, and conversely, to confess and approve of both. For what participation is there between justice and iniquity? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? Or what agreement is there between Christ and Belial? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? The divine Apostle says. And I indeed say the same. What participation or communion,

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or agreement, or part, or consent does the paternal orthodoxy have with the wicked opinion of the heretics, so that one is proclaimed together with the other, or even rejected?

XXXII. And let them also carefully consider this, because if, as the Great One, called from immortality (indeed, the whole chorus of saints), affirms that nearly the faith of our Savior cannot be admitted, as it is something unstable according to its own reasoning. If this is endured, then what is contrary to it, without a doubt, will be sustained, namely the addition. And how will the faith remain further, unchanged by defects or advancements? Let them say, he says to us, those who create faith day by day, indeed, those who make for themselves various gods; because with the word of faith, that which is believed is altered and multiplied by such. Therefore, the adversaries, who make for themselves diverse faiths, without any contradiction according to the quality, quantity, and change of their dogmas, alter and multiply simultaneously what is believed; and they are shown to have made five Christs. One of them has one operation, another has no operation; one has one will, and another has neither one will; yet another has one and two, and one and two, that is, three operations and three wills, as they say. Let them say, if they wish, those who expound such dogmas, and those who communicate with them, in whom such and so many Christs they believe will be made, baptized or being baptized; or whose body and blood they take and distribute: whether it is the one who has one, or the one who has no operation; the one who has one will, or the one who has one and two, and one and two, that is, three operations and wills; and therefore, now by necessity, does he also have three natures? But the voice was not there, and there was no hearing, as the great prophet Elijah says, reproaching the wicked priests and false prophets of confusion.

XXXIII. For whatever they may have said, their words will also carry with them a refutation with impiety, because they do not believe in and baptize the true and truly existing Christ: nor do they take and distribute his body and blood. For the true Christ, who truly exists, both God and man, as our renowned teachers and instructors know, they confess to have two and only two natures, as well as two wills and as many operations, corresponding

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to each other, namely the divine, as has been said and proven, and the human, the uncreated and the created, without beginning and with beginning, they confess in him and command us to confess. But not, as these have now introduced novelties, one and not one, nor two, and again one and two, that is, three wills and operations, they admit him to have.

XXXIV. Moreover, concerning all these things that have been said, they should also certainly know this, that by dogmatizing one and not one, nor two, and again one and two wills and operations, and all with anathemas, depositions, and excommunications, they are clearly shown to be contradicting each other and themselves. And they themselves, by their own words and dogmas, overthrow and destroy themselves and each other, anathematize themselves and each other, and those who communicate with them, and expel and depose them from every sacred dignity and ministry. Likewise, they separate them from the reception of the unblemished communion of the life-giving body and blood of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

XXXV. And we, clearly seeing this, and without any hindrance or veil obstructing us, not only because of the manifold error, but also because of the instability and absurdity and reciprocal nature of such men and dogmas, must keep ourselves with all diligence from their impiety and communion, as many as we wish to be and to be called Christians in truth. For it is foreign to Christians to accept impiety even alongside orthodoxy; or indeed to confess the orthodox faith, but to communicate with those who deny and adulterate it through new inventions. For this reason, the divine law and the apostolic command us to turn away from and anathematize those who, having attempted to teach and introduce anything besides what we have received from Christian men, not only if they are men, but even if they are angels perhaps descending from heaven. And if we do this, and without transgression fulfill the divine command, and possess and confess the sacred and orthodox faith without adulteration or innovation, we will be saved unto eternal life: in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom to God the Father, together with the most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, be glory,

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honor, dominion, and adoration, now and always, and unto all the ages of ages. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

### PART TWO OF THE LETTER

I. It is necessary for those who read the examples of the present sacred epistle, to God the Father, who searches the reins and hearts, to firmly believe, because in it, by the true God Himself, the truth from this epistle, which was written by His own hand, or rather, more truthfully, because of the miraculous sign, was written by the finger of God, the holy father and master of ours, Lord Abbot Anastasius, priest and apocrisiarius senior, and the renowned city of Rome, and the truly great and new martyr, who is truly verifiable, the transcriptions of it were made, written by him (after he suffered, as has been said, in Byzantium, along with his competitor and true philosopher, indeed the great lion and most wise martyr of Christ the true God and our Savior Maximus; that is, when the precious and sacred ones were cut off, and the tongues and hands were divinely moved, while enduring the most bitter torments and blows, by which they shed blood and paraded through the whole city, a suffering so great that no life ever truly endured such a thing. And unless God alone, who is nothing but the one who created all things from nothing and raises the dead, had willed it, they would not have been delivered from such cruelty and such a great waste of blood, nor would they have been given any kind of cauterization, nor any comforting remedy to stop the flow of blood, to preserve them for the sake

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<sup>2</sup> For those who will desire with divine longing and zeal to read briefly declaring those things which are known to few. That is, along with the athletic contests, how many exiles, and in which places and times they endured martyrdom, and the day of faith to God's journey and exhibition, of the holy and deified Fathers of our new teachers, truly confessors and great martyrs; especially that one, who, having set down this letter, wrote with the finger of God. Since indeed he made known the day of those who died before him (namely, of Maximus and Anastasius, his disciples, as it was foretold); but of himself and his brothers, namely Theodore and Euprepus, no one. Moreover, of Martin the supreme and apostolic pope and martyr, who surpasses all things under the sun in his hieratic dignity; and of certain others, whose names are mentioned in the present letter, nor any others, as I believe, in another letter, or person.



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of their adversaries, for they would have delivered their truly holy and blessed souls to God, as they truly desired. All of these things, however, they suffered, not for any other reason, but because of the truly wicked and cruel envy which the ancient enemy, the demon, sowed in them, as he also did to his own Jews, when they could not resist, even for a little while, the wisdom that had been rightly given to them by God, for the sake of the true truth, and only because they did not wish to share with those in such public impiety, without God, their own hands, with which it was severed, and whose trunk remained only (that is, without the palm and fingers), an unexpected sign; when indeed they had gathered two very small and fragile pieces of wood; rather, as I would more truthfully say, by divine virtue and grace, as well as truly divine language, and by invisible means, so that they could speak without hindrance, although it had been severed from the foundation within, just as Lebarnicus, the patrician of Lazica, with terrible oaths, narrated to us, through God's dispensation, becoming an inspector of this same event.

He was doubtful about this glorious and great miracle. Indeed, Theodore the protosecretary of the Praetorian Prefect of Constantinople, before this, also recounted to me, and he, with dreadful oaths, since he was aware of their holy passions, as the lord and master of such matters, glorifying and praising and giving thanks to God for such a miracle and such steadfast virtue. For, just as a dog or a stag, in the rush of thirst or heat, relaxes and gives in to their tongues, so they loosened and handed over their tongues, even their hands, though very small in stature, for the holy and weak in body was Maximus, as is evident to all. Therefore, even more abundantly, their adversaries, wounding their senses, with such alacrity of the saints, inside were truly wicked and inhuman, like wild beasts, cutting them apart.

II. Not only was this epistle written by him in such a manner, but also many other books and volumes of his studies. Of which we, by divine providence, were not only made inspectors, but also, partly by the grace of God, we were deemed worthy to receive a portion from them by His command; and with the same argument and hand, indeed, as more truly

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said, by the finger of God, as it is read that it was done during the time of Moses in Anagni: by the providence and cooperation of the Almighty God alone, who, being a lover of goodness and of men, performs great wonders in His saints, and truly glorifies those who glorify Him, with as steadfast a work as with word and truth; while he was still living in the last, that is, his third exile in Lazica, in the fortress called Thusumes, located above the village of Mochoes, at the boundary of the Apsilian region, to the east of the Pontic Sea, at the foot of the Caucasian mountains, near the region of the friends of Christ, the Abasgians, and the Alani people, almost five signs from the property of Zichachorio, that is, the first house of Gregory, the true friend of Christ, patrician and magistrate of the same region of the Alans. Whose excellent memory is rightly honored in this epistle: indeed, by the force and command of the wretched rulers who before him had governed there, he was transported into the same third exile seven times, into more difficult places and with great tribulation, in the aforementioned fortress Thusumes, where he slept in the Lord; when he also fought the good fight, truly preserved the orthodox faith, and completed the course of martyrdom, on the eleventh day of October, on the first day of the week, at the third hour, while the sacred offices were being said, "Holy to the holy," in the tenth indiction; when he had foretold the day of his holy departure to some who were present with him, three months before; and also through many other miracles, with the cooperation of the most holy and all-effecting Spirit, both there and in his two exiles, in Trapezus and Mezembria, where he performed many deeds, and many were converted to the faith and enlightened.

III. Who, having conversed and endured in this holy and most blessed struggle, that is, bearing the crown of confession and testimony, the aforementioned holy Anastasius, priest and Roman apocrisiarius, from the sixth indiction of the past cycle until the tenth indiction, in all his three exiles, afflicted by various tribulations, needs, and no small or moderate difficulties, remained for twenty years. His disciples, Theodore and Euprepus, brothers and holy brethren, sons of Plutimus, the most blessed emperor of Pistoris, that is, the one who is over all the public bakers, those who pay the annual dues of all schools, called tetransiton, adorned with

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precious riches, various dignities, and divine virtues and chastity, which is greater than all of these, by which they, it seems, also deserved to be honored with crowns and agonies for Christ, since the pure in heart shall see God. After the first exile of their master and ours at Trapezus, after many alms and offerings were made, wishing to flee to Rome, they were immediately captured near Abydus in the same persecution, for the same sole reason, and because they did not wish to be defiled with such evident impiety in the profane and entirely godless imperial type, which had been made by the submission of those who were from the Church of Constantinople, and were stripped, that is, deprived of all the substance they had, and the dignities they held; receiving mortal punishments from the prefect, and being sent into exile to Cherson, where they were often separated from each other by force, and placed in the camps of the neighboring nations.

The younger brother, who, as truly in all respects, was named Euprepes, after completing nine years in this struggle for God's friend, passed away to the Lord in October, on the twentieth day, in the fourteenth indiction. The other, the elder brother, who was rightly called the gift of God, remained from the same sixth indiction until the tenth indiction of the present cycle, that is, until the holy repose in the Lord of their holy father and master Anastasius the priest (who truly was most wretched and orphaned due to the great rarity and lack of the word of truth and all spiritual food, so that now even the prophecy of the Lord concerning the evils of the last times is fulfilled, "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord," as it is written) — still persevering in athletic sweat and struggles, in the same exile of Cherson, the aforementioned brother Theodore, who also honored us with many works of the saints written by his own hand, and to whom we went for visitation and adoration, and the precious memory of Pope Martin the Great and truly universal, the great martyr of truth. Whose miracles, which were done there, he also reported to us, along with the unbearable tribulations he endured. Also given was a part of the holy stole, that is, a facecloth, which had been given to him by the same person, and one of his companions, that is, his trousers (which no one else among men wears, except the holy Roman pope),

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because he too had been exiled there, after he had suffered all the horrors, when he was taken from the city of Rome, who had delivered himself, eager and greatly desiring to suffer martyrdom for Christ, as an imitator and successor of the holy prince of the apostles, Peter, both in the ship and in Byzantium, so that he was openly struck with blows by the enemies of God.

IV. However, worthy of his father, the devil, who perpetrated such a work against him, they stripped him of his clothes and placed the heavy burdens of iron shackles and chains upon his holy neck and precious other limbs. Then, with these iron fetters weighing him down, they dragged him through the entire street in a procession all the way to the prefect's praetorium, with the master of the watch, that is, the first executioner, binding him; and a certain man went ahead with a sword, to chop his body into pieces, as Bucoleon, the detestable sacristan, deliberated and ordered, appropriately named the devouring beast of blood (as though he possessed works filled with beastly madness, in knowledge and counsel of the emperor Constantine, who also established that vile and worst type, Gregory the eunuch and prefect of that wretched city).

And indeed, this would have already been done, as far as his rash eagerness and intention were concerned, unless the protection of the most merciful and kind God had restrained them, and the enemies had not been ashamed of this most robust strength. For tyrants, even the cruel and inhuman ones, often endure this, although they are exceedingly merciless and cruel, according to him who works in them, Satan. They perhaps envied his martyrdom, according to a similar apostate, and the mad delusion of idol-worshippers, that famous Julian, truly wise in evil. Or certainly, by a better God, known only to Himself, who indeed dispenses for the benefit of His plan, and with His immense and ineffable providence protecting him; when he had spent one hundred eighty days in two prisons (namely in the guardhouse and under the custody of the prefect), enduring the greatest tribulation and sickness. Indeed, we were able to learn about all the struggles of his tribulation in the years and beyond, as it is written about him, from the Roman soldiers and his own men, who, suffering many torments, endured exile through various places.

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V. Moreover, he too slept in the Lord, after he had always and only gloriously illustrated the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of our God with the most sacred and true doctrines, synodically. He strengthened the doctrines of the five holy and universal synods: namely, the Nicene, the Constantinopolitan, the earlier Ephesian, the Chalcedonian, and again the Constantinopolitan under Emperor Julian. He also confirmed the holy and most pious dogmas of all the divinely wise and trustworthy Fathers of our faith, and of our true teachers. As those who wish to read with pious love will find in the sacred records of the holy and apostolic, most pious synod, which he celebrated in Rome, since these records have been sent to every place and region, and he clearly manifested and preached the truth: struggling in a good and highly commendable contest, and advancing in the abundant joy to the desired Lord, for whom he poured out his own blood, as much as was in him. On the sixteenth day of September, in the fourteenth indiction, he departed in joy. This is the day on which the honorable memory of the chaste virgin and martyr Euphemia, the faithful contender, is celebrated every year. He was laid to rest among the tombs of the saints in the house dedicated to the ever-praised, most holy, immaculate, and truly glorified Lady, our Mother, who is truly, by nature, the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, called Blachernes, outside the walls, one stage away from the blessed city of Chersonesus. In this holy house, the already mentioned saint Euprepus also rests, near the aforementioned, well-decorated, and truly admirable teacher, who fulfilled the evangelical voice with his deeds, in which it is said: "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

VI. Moreover, the holy and memorable, most wise, indeed divinely wise, and great defender of truth, and co-martyr of the great, who is Maximus (for this, as we previously indicated, the Latin word "Maximi" suggests the name Maximus), whose holy monument, with lamps burning, is shown every night, from the day he is deemed to have fallen asleep, until the present, and forever, shedding light and revealing his confidence, which he holds before God, as the letter commends. We, too, as listeners to his words, have become witnesses to many of the leaders and inhabitants of that place, who with oaths truly proclaimed this miracle with great faith. Among them,

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one of those who saw it with his own eyes is his companion, Mistrrianus, a member of the same Chemareus fortress, who, while vigilant with the soldiers, witnessed this not once nor twice, but many times. He was the first to publicly proclaim these events, and we were unable to go there due to the difficulty of the mountain's ascent, that is, the summit of the Caucasus, the highest mountain on earth, the harsh winter weather, and the confusion of peoples that occurs in those regions. Similarly, Anastasius, his disciple, after the eleventh indiction of the previous cycle, during three exiles — in Bizye, in the Perberi region of Thrace, and in the aforementioned Lazica — endured many hardships and intolerable necessities, and went through such athletic contests for ten years before he passed on to the heavenly kingdom. Saint Maximus, as was said, in the month of August, on the thirteenth day, in the fifth indiction, having foretold his own death in the Lord, fifteen days before it occurred, as previously mentioned; his holy martyrdom for the truth in Christ our God was in the years prior. His disciple Anastasius, on the twenty-fourth of July, in the same indiction, passed on.

VII. Therefore, a most sacred letter, written by his own hand, indeed divinely composed, has been sent to us, together with the supporting testimonies and syllogisms, from the same exile, that is, from Lazica. We have and keep it, along with the divine argument that was given to him, that is, the two sticks of exile mentioned earlier, along with other blessings and gifts of his, and the holy and venerable, as well as all other good things from God, such as the books of his studies and the compositions of his own hand, which are truly sacred praises and the rest.

This was given to us, truly the least of all, that is, to Theodosius and Theodore, humble and sinful brothers, monks without deceit, by Gregory, a monk and abbot of the monastery of Saint John the Baptist in the region of the Albanians, called Batararu, on the twentieth of August, in the eleventh indiction, when we had returned from the region of the aforementioned Lazes. For we had gone there, although we were very sick, poor, and unworthy, according to the custom of visiting them, not only because of the weight of the letter entrusted to us, that is, the instruction of the often-mentioned holy and supreme Apostolic Pope Romanus Martin, personally

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coming to him in that great city of the name, and the certainty of his own hand on those matters which were synodically confirmed, taken from him and heard by the Pope and others who were present. Since he had personally commanded us concerning this, after they had suffered, while they were still in Byzantium in the custody of the Prefect of the Praetorium, called Diomedes, from which we had sent them into the third exile in Lazica, we grieved for them, and in their other exiles and imprisonments, their labor, cares, and not insignificant distress, according to what we could understand through the prayers they had offered to God, with His help, who often delivered us from the wicked hands of the impious, the dangers of the sea, and various storms. We were able to minister even from a small amount that came to us from the blessing of our parents, as in the Lord; indeed, as we may more truly say, by the grace of God, and not from others. But also, for the other contenders and co-martyrs, so that we might be witnesses to their trials and sufferings, which they endured for our true God Christ. Moreover, we became listeners through them, and by divine wisdom and salvation, we were established as teachers of their doctrine, and by God's persuasion, we received their prayers with gratitude. We also carried certain garments that had been torn in their passion, taken with our own hands, along with holy cloths sanctified and marked with precious blood; these had been placed around their holy hands, which had been cut off, for the medicinal purpose of constraining the blood. To embrace both of them and remember them, not without consideration, we meditate upon, because both were proven in the true struggle of the holy and orthodox faith, and in the bond of peace and charity.

VIII. Moreover, an infinite multitude of those who, in the aforementioned unbearable and intolerable persecution, were enduring martyrdom through various beatings and tribulations, both openly and secretly, were, with cunning and craft, presenting these trials in such a way that they were not seen as for the faith, but under the pretext of other causes and damages. So much so that these things were known only to God, the knower of hidden things, and to those who were more diligent, to whom the reason for their suffering was undoubtedly made known. For all these

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matters, we pray and beseech, with both our hearts and our bodies bowed before your feet, as well as with the sense of our hearts and our tears, that you first grant forgiveness for all our shortcomings and our undisciplined actions. We, who as truly faithful, faithfully accept such things, both in certainty and satisfaction, and may we not forget these sacred struggles and pains, which are known by very few and rare individuals with diligence. Now, as has been said, with the pleasure of God, having been partly made aware of these very sights, we feared the peril which arises from negligence. And I say this not for any other reason, but only because of this: how could we presume to write these things and attempt to express the life and praises of such truly marvelous and great struggles and sweat of those most holy men in the Lord? This, because of our fellow's rustic simplicity and complete undiscipline, through which we suffer a lack of eloquence in speech above all.

IX. We consider it sufficient for the great deeds and praises of life if those who, with love for truth and study, wish to read their divine writings, and truthfully, without weariness, the many labors and writings done against impiety and for piety, which, with all diligence and care, we have written, even alongside those writings that come from the abominable writings of adversaries. Although we are humble and truly insignificant above all, nevertheless, according to the virtue that resides within us, we have written these things in various books and volumes, and have handed them over to lovers of the truth, for the glory and unceasing praise and thanksgiving of the Almighty God, and truly marvelous in His saints, as well as the zeal and eagerness of those who wish to struggle for piety.

This is so that, by their confusion and inevitable reproach, the enemies of truth and of the one true God of all may see their relentless actions and oppositions, including the false accusations they bring against us, and the futile and unstable decrees they impose, and absolutely all of their most sacred and pious struggles and sweats, which were inflicted on them by those opposed to us, in various ways. That is, by those who received new, heretical, and all-encompassing inventions, such as Heraclian, Cyriac, Sergio, Pyrrho, Paul, Petritus, and the involuntary workers, or, as I would more



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truthfully say, the new Epicureans, who are utterly devoid of God, as the very writings of things and oppositions show. These writings demonstrate the discernment of those who know how to distinguish between such things. Therefore, let those who come after us, being eager and powerful in the Word, and who have accepted these inventions, give thanks to God and His saints for the debt of gratitude owed: "For give a wise man an opportunity, and he will become wiser."

X. Secondly, through unceasing prayers and supplications, along with good works and tears, you, the most kind and merciful by nature, are pleased to move God, that He may have compassion on our infirmities; and may He, from now on, end the persistent and deceitful, crafty, and deeply entrenched arguments and gravest of all pagan and heretical persecutions. He knows the fragility of our dust and the ease of our fall, due to the extreme fraud and wickedness of those who cause them, so that the tumult may end and the limit of such an atrocious evil be reached. Specifically, the precious blood of those who shed it: just as under the impious and God-forsaken Arians, for the rose-colored blood of Saint Peter of Alexandria, Patriarch and Martyr, was shed. For which reason our aforementioned holy Fathers and true teachers of piety, especially our apostolic and upright Pope Martin, similarly gave himself as a sacrifice for the faithful people, imitating Christ our God, the agonothete (trainer) in all things, and the head of the apostles, Peter, and following him in all respects. His successor, truly worthy, became the one who grants peace and indissoluble unity to His holy churches everywhere. And may He not permit heresy to be stirred up again until the end, both because of the multitude of His mercies and because of the weakness and instability of our nature, which has surpassed all previous generations.

XI. Thirdly, that we may be preserved immovable until the end, not only we, but all the pious, in the truly holy, orthodox, and immaculate faith of our Christian religion, and that we may receive the remission of sins and salvation, we who are truly sinners, servants of all, who are truly orthodox and rightful worshipers of Christ, the true God and our Savior, who truly glorifies Himself magnificently and in truth, to whom all glory, honor,

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power, magnificence in heaven and on earth are due, worship and thanksgiving in the sense of the heart and in truth, with fear and trembling, and also with exultation, according to the prophetic word, together with the immortal and lover of mercy, the most compassionate and most merciful beyond nature, the Father, and the most holy and consubstantial, living and omnipotent Divine Spirit, now and always, and in all and infinite ages of ages. Amen.

### DOCUMENT VIII

AGAINST THE CONSTANTINOPOLITANS AN INVECTIVE  
WRITTEN BY A MONK WITH A BITTER  
HEART IN DEFENSE OF OUR HOLY FATHER MAXIMUS,  
CONDEMNING THEIR TERRIBLE DEED.

Those who do not understand truth as they ought clearly embrace falsehood instead of the truth I was speaking of. For when the mind, through its own negligence, proves unworthy of divine illumination, it becomes filled with ignorance and darkness; it sees light as darkness and darkness as light. And just as an archer who misses the target, even if he draws the bowstring easily toward the mark, sends his arrow astray through error and lack of skill—so too does this person put forth words and works that are twisted, corrupt, and disharmonious, directing them especially against those who have been deemed worthy of the heavenly dewdrops. This is precisely what happened with that most irrational and senseless emperor, as well as with Epiphanius—or rather Apophanius (that is, a man not illustrious but obscure)—one consigned to flames, not a patrician; and also with Theodosius the hyposcopos, not an episcopus (one who looks at earthly things, not a true guardian and watchman). These men mutilated the holy Maximus, that third luminary among theologians, cutting off his tongue and right hand, and they condemned with equal sentence the two Anastasioi, his longtime twin disciples.

For I ask you (as I briefly debate with you through the multitude and serious anxiety of my heart): what did you find contrary to piety in their

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approved and theological teachings—those most beneficial to souls—or in their moral precepts, spiritual knowledge, and divine and august insights that was so discordant in writing that you determined to punish a righteous man with such a terrible punishment, as if he were hostile to Christ and thought ill of Him? You, I say, wicked seed, imperfect abortions, nocturnal birds, intestines of the earth (that is, worms), lazy bellies, powerful gluttons, hawks lustful for women and ravishers of their chastity. Behold, the books of his teachings are in the hands of all mankind, who have admired and still admire them, and will continue to admire them in times to come. Behold his more than four hundred chapters, which I mention not to you who are unworthy, but even to those who are most approved and excellent, they appear outstanding and worthy of the highest esteem. Moreover, let the codex of sentences, or decrees, be honored with silence. For even when things that transcend all power and capacity of nature are praised, some injury grows upon them and they are nearly diminished.

Your right hand deserves more to be cut off, as it is rabid with touch and crime—I dare not say completely polluted—ready and extended for a second and new idolatry. Your eyes deserve to be plucked out, being the most efficient instruments of the devil, messengers of shamelessness, gestures of rabid lust. It would have been fitting for your tongue to be cut out by the roots, as it is raised against heaven and cast down from there, as it nurtures labor and pain, pushes forth lust to the throat, conceives blasphemy, and gives birth to vain things harmful to the needy and drowning them in destruction. Your back deserved to be torn apart, and that chest full of fury, like a vehicle of demons, like a traversed den for serpents, like a shelter for demons, like an archive of impiety.

Such is your boasting, O Babylon proud on seven hills; thus you suckle wicked children who devour the world. You exalt yourself with the slaughter of saints and rejoice in their blood. You have emptied out every righteous blood with generous injury, and will you not fear at all? There is no righteous one whom you have not savagely persecuted, and are you not ashamed? You are proud, and do you not recognize it? You limp, and do you not tremble? You lay snares and play with rhetorical deceits? You slaughter,

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and philosophize? You think you're playing games with the tongue? You slaughter, and philosophize? You cut off the right hand (namely, the truth of God), and with excessive stupidity and without sense you cry out, "Holy things for the holy"? Indeed, inevitable divine vengeance will teach you and yours; but the holy confessors (I might equally say martyrs) will be received into Christ's eternal kingdom. May we too be granted to share in this (even if the wish is somewhat bold) through their peaceful and God-pleasing intercessions. Amen.

## DOCUMENT IX

### THE OFFICES OF ST. MAXIMUS

First Office: Of St. Maximus, Anastasios, and Anastasios, the verses. Tone 4, oblique. Similar. The martyrs, pray to the Lord. Holy Fathers, you have sanctified every city, and illuminated every place; and now, we pray, intercede, so that the light of Christ may dwell in our souls. Holy Fathers, you have cursed every heresy; you have preached piety: therefore, intercede, we pray, so that the light of Christ may dwell in our souls. Holy Fathers, after your limbs were severed, you worked as if no stain had been inflicted on the body, speaking with an eloquent mouth and writing divine decrees with your hands.

Ode 1. Israel from servitude. Having received the treasures of heavenly wisdom in your heart, holy one, through it you enriched the world with your teachings. You exhibited the angelic way of life while dwelling on earth, and became the dwelling of God, holy preacher of Christ; therefore, you became so united with Him. With the burning tongue of the heretics, you set ablaze their blasphemies, blessed man, saving them by proclaiming one Son in two natures. On the Mother of God Rejoice, chaste Mother of God, who once, in the last times, bore the Word of God in the flesh. Rejoice, wall and protection of us all, who venerate you.

Ode 3 Is not the Lord holy? Rivers of blood flow from your precious right hand, and streams of doctrine flow from your chaste tongue, where it had even been severed, clearly and distinctly proclaiming Christ in

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two natures. Your hand did not cease to call out with writings, and your tongue resounded with the trumpet of doctrine, three times blessed theologian; for it was God who moved both and gave the power of effective speech. By your way of life, you were spiritually translated from earth to heaven, holy man, there you dwell in eternal light; therefore, you have also received the heavenly crown. On the Mother of God Women indeed give birth, but the chaste Mother, Virgin, does not remain a virgin, like you, forever. For none of these carried God in her womb, except you alone, chaste Mother of God.

Ode 4. From the Shady Mountain You, Moses, imitated, divine man, you received the tablets of teaching with your mind. Having entered the darkness of the senses, you enriched the light of knowledge abundantly, with the fullness of understanding, you excelled in doctrine. You, Abraham, imitated, divine man, you offered your heart to the Lord, immolating it with the fire of conscience. These, by right, the Trinity made illustrious: these, God fitted for faith, confessing one to another, by His piety, which is founded on certain truth, our confession. On the Mother of God You, the Mother of God, gave birth to the timeless Son in time: incorrupt, chaste, you remained a virgin, after His birth, the Mother of God, always a virgin, who in your womb took on flesh for us.

Ode 5. Rising in the Morning, We Cry Out The sword, Father, did not cut off your freedom to speak; the exile did not extinguish your faith, holy man. Rome proclaims, fully devoted to God, your emulation; and with the sound of the trumpet, the Church brings forth your words, holy man. You preserved your faith unshaken in mind, and lifted your soul to heaven, man of great name. We praise you, Mother of God, the source of immortality; for you poured out eternal life to the world.

Ode 6. From the Belly of the Abyss, I Heard My Cry From the belly of the abyss I heard my cry, and you, merciful and kind, delivered my life from corruption. You, thrice-blessed man, made marvelous your confession, who spoke in you, Jesus, who was your companion in the struggle. You feared not the pride of judgment, nor the sword, nor the threatening fire, holy man, for you were firm in faith. After the end of your

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life, Fathers, you perform miracles, offering invincible proofs of your miracles. On the Mother of God Above reason and understanding, Virgin, you did not endure the nourishment of mothers' breasts, who provide food for all, while you did not. Hymn, Divine Faith By confirming divine doctrine, you were the pillar of right faith, and the support of faith, holy man with divine understanding, who preached Christ, our God, Father Maximus, in two natures and two wills.

Now intercede for us earnestly, that He may grant us great mercy. Synaxarium The contest of our holy Father Maximus the Confessor, who under Emperor Constantine Pogonatus (b), grandson of Heraclius, received the greatest honors from the higher emperors, and was deemed capable of civil administrations and skilled in dictating what should be written, possessing knowledge, moral probity, and great experience in affairs, he was raised to the rank of first secretary and became an associate of the emperor's secret counsel. But because the false and foreign opinions of those who taught one will of Christ in His incarnate dispensation were flourishing, and certain decrees containing such blasphemies were being proclaimed in the public forum and in the major church, the man of God, not enduring to be defiled with such impious traffic, preferred to be cast down in the house of God rather than to dwell in the tents of sinners; and he went to the monastery at Chrysopolis, where he also later became the abbot.

Then, burning with divine zeal as if with fire, he went to Rome, and with blessed Pope Martin, gathered a local synod, and was the author of anathematizing the wicked teachers of the heresy who taught one will in Christ, and to refute them, he sent writings and letters to all parts of the world, in which the weight of reasons and Scripture supported our faith. Returning to Rome with his two disciples, Anastasii, he was demanded by the senate, which, along with the emperor, was laboring under the impiety of heretical views, to be punished, because, while all the other emperors submitted, he alone resisted, and, by opposing letters, he moved others to separation with a contrary opinion. Meanwhile, he was sent to prison in Thrace; and while remaining firm in the orthodox faith, he was mutilated by hand and tongue, and from there was sent into exile in Lazica, where, after

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enduring three years in a frail body, he ministered to his own bodily needs, and after a brief illness, he passed away in the Lord. He was buried in the monastery of St. Arsenius in the same Lazic province, daily performing many miracles.

Ode 7. "Who in the beginning..." You, O man of divine sense, have stained the garment of dignity with your blood, offering this silent and speaking garment as a proof through your teachings and words, Father. Like fire in the temptations, you three, tested by fire, offered your purer faith to Christ, venerable Fathers. "Come now, Fathers full of God," cries Christ, "you who will receive the fruits of your labors and the rewards of victory, so that you may dwell in joy in the eternal tabernacles." On the Mother of God You, O Christ, God of the Fathers, are blessed, who prefigured the mystical image of the Virgin, the burning bush on Sinai that did not burn.

Ode 8. "Who on the holy mountain..." Receiving the ray of divine light in your heart, O man of divine sense, you magnificently shone with the brightness of knowledge, and, Father, you hid the treasure of wisdom in your heart. The robe of your religious life, you made to resemble that of martyrdom, and, O divine man, you gave your holy battles varied adornments, drenched in blood for the sake of truth. Your life, completed with chaste manners and adorned with faith, O venerable Fathers, you have earned heavenly glory, and for this reason, you praise Christ through the ages. On the Mother of God Hail, O gate and animated cloud; hail, mountain, bush, and lampstand; hail, temple, throne, and paradise; hail, blessed one, who bore the Creator of the universe.

Ode 9. "Who was revealed before..." O thrice-blessed man, you taught us the words of eternal life through your unshaken faith and contemplation, who indeed left your confession of the right faith as a guiding principle for the world. Truly, you have been glorified, holy Fathers, by disgrace, scourging, persecutions, and dangers, in bonds and prisons, under the weight of iron, by the sword, and in exile, contending. Holy Fathers, who completed the course of martyrdom with zeal and love, pray earnestly to God and the Lord, that He may deliver your servants from all error. On the Mother of God Moses once foresaw the bush burning but not

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consumed, which prefigured your womb, O Mother of God, a womb capable of bearing God, where the immortal fire was received, and the figure of this was shown beforehand. Exapostilarion: "Unchanging Fire..." You, O Maximus, the trumpet of wisdom, with your sonorous tongue, struck down the host of adversaries, and we, through the books you wrote, now perceive the knowledge of things.

The Second Office: Versicles, Similar to "Quam strenuum inter martyres." He, who with a merciful affection, as it seemed good to Him, became man, with a double will and action, O holy Maximus, you preached, closing the mouths of the impure, teaching the error of the one will and one operation of those who speak in error, the structure and wickedness of the devil, the evil artificer. With the chords of your teachings, Father Maximus, you condemned Pyrrhus, the man of perverse sense (vain and foolish), and you firmly endured persecutions and iron hardships, greatly struck with whips and having your tongue severed. Moreover, the divine right hand, which you always raised to God, with which you wrote the highest decrees. As the swift pen of the scribe writing under the Spirit, your holy tongue, O blessed man, was sharpened in the Spirit, beautifully inscribing upon the tablets of our hearts the divine knowledge of the virtues and doctrines, and the mystery of the incarnation of Him who willed to appear in two substances yet one person to men. Glory.

Tone: Oblique 4 The host of monks, we, your disciples, Father Maximus, revere you; for through you, we have learned to walk the true path. Blessed are you, who ministered to Christ, and by your triumph, you overcame the power of the enemy. You are joined with the choirs of angels, and the ranks of saints and just men, with whom you intercede for us before the Lord, that He may have mercy on our souls. Holy Father, the sound of your virtues and works has gone forth into all the earth; therefore, in heaven, you have found the reward for your labors. You scattered the ranks of demons; you ascended to the ranks of angels, whose life you emulated without complaint. With favor in your memory, may peace be given to our souls. Apology for the Feast and the Saint. Tone: Oblique 4 Rightful leader of the faith, teacher of piety and honor, Maximus the wise, the glory of the



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monks, lyre of the Spirit, holy Father, intercede for us before Christ God, that we may obtain the salvation of our souls.

Ode 1. Tone: Oblique 4 Let us sing to the Lord, by the monk John. Totally, O blessed Maximus, instill the grace of the Spirit into me, flowing from your honey-sweet and most gentle tongue. You bore the image of the burning fire against heresies, O blessed man; for by the zeal of the Spirit, you consumed them like dry stalks. Totally lacking in reason, with the impious mind and will, the doctrine of one will was proclaimed, but by your teachings, Father, it was driven out and refuted. In the Deipara (Theotokos) O Immaculate Mother of God, who gave birth to the eternal Word of God, higher than the natural order of creation, we praise you as the one who provides life to the world.

Ode 5. Mane surgentes clamamus tibi. Maximus, who amassed the knowledge of both earthly and heavenly things, truly earned the name of philosopher. With greater love for the wisdom of Christ, the most perfect imitator of Christ, you, O illustrious Maximus, shone forth. Banished by the madness of the tyrant, you, O blessed man, found solace in Jesus. In Deiparam O Mother of God, who bore the Lord and the Savior, calm the raging tempests of my passions and vices.

Ode 6. Hirmus. Clothe me with the bright garment, O Christ our God, who are clothed in light as with a garment, and show me mercy for the many miseries of my soul. You, O blessed man, offered an unceasing prayer to God and supplication for deliverance from the faults of the body and soul. The fountain of every heresy dried up, O illustrious Maximus, through the blocking of your tongue with your sweet eloquence. Be merciful to me, who alone are good, and through the prayers of your saints, O Christ, pour grace into my heart. In Deiparam O Virgin, who bore the Word in the flesh, we beg you to deliver our souls from the snares of the enemy.

Ode 7. Qui ex Judæa. You proclaimed the one nature of the Trinity, one will, and one operation of the incarnate God, proclaiming two natures, two wills, and two operations. Blessed are you, O God of our fathers. You declared not two wills divided by mental contrariety, but distinct in natural quality, Father, proclaiming that we worship one from the Trinity in two

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substances and wills. Blessed are you, O God of our fathers. You taught us to know two free wills of God, who in His mercy took on flesh, singing of two divine operations. Blessed are you, O God of our fathers. In Deiparam O Virgin, who bore the salvation of our substance, we bless and praise you forever.

Ode 8. Hirmus. Victorious through your grace, O Maximus, your disciples, by their diligent keeping of your commandments, cried out, "Bless the Lord, all you works, and exalt Him throughout all ages." With all my soul desiring Him, who pursued humanity with an immense love, you bore your cross and were nailed with Him, O blessed man. Bless the Lord, all you works, and exalt Him throughout all ages. In Deiparam O Virgin, the daughter of Adam, through whom the fall is reversed, you who bore the Creator of all, we bless you, and we glorify all your works.

Ode 9. Hirmus. He, who was revealed to the lawgiver on the mountain in fire and in the bush, we magnify with perpetual hymns for our salvation. Your blood, O Maximus, still speaks through the ages, accepting divine doctrines with the afflatus of the Holy Spirit. Your hand was severed, but your holy tongue wrote with divine ink, inscribing Orthodox faith in our hearts through the precious blood of your martyrdom. This divine liberty, praised throughout the world, and the burning fire of divine love, you bore, O holy Maximus, pouring out your blood with readiness. You stand before the divine tribunal with the martyrs, having been a companion in faith, Father, that you may intercede for us to the Lord. In Deiparam O Mother of God, our defense and fortress, refuge and defense of those who flee to you, we now ask that you intercede for us, that we may be delivered from our enemies. Exapostilarion Women, listen.

The secret depths of your judgments, O Savior, are known to the Spirit, who, searching deeply, found Maximus in spirit and virtue, rightly called the philosopher, proclaiming the two wills and operations of God incarnate. Therefore, he is splendidly honored today. Month of August 13th. Translation of the body of Saint Maximus the Confessor. Your ashes, O Maximus, move the faithful; for they reveal the places where your body has moved. On the 13th day, you passed from this life.

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### DOCUMENT X ANOTHER ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF SAINT MAXIMUS

The Life of Saint Maximus, following his fragments, presented by the most illustrious Father of the Annals, in the year 640 of Christ and the following years from the version of Peter Marinus and the Vatican manuscripts now published, we present the entire text from the Royal manuscript. I thought it worthwhile to add a few notes for a fuller and more certain knowledge of the matters related to Maximus, except for those points concerning him which are briefly noted at the margins of the two Collations or Auditions, or even more fully discussed in notes on them. For indeed, not all of these are sufficiently exact, and to which full faith should be given, without further scrutiny, as is clearly evident from the aforementioned Collations or public Acts. The great license of the biographers; especially those who, under the guise of praise, do not exactly or fairly record the sacred words and deeds, but rather seek to please by praising, and thus gain veneration through an artfully composed narrative and rhetorical embellishments.

What the author says about his country, birth, education, studies, service at court, and first appointment as a secretarius, or notary, under Emperor Heraclius, should seem to be subject to the greatest exception, as if either written or received by a sure tradition from the author, until some contradictory information arises, whose greater credibility might be established. His youthful diligence, and with such sharp intellect, his intense devotion to the study of letters, is evidence of such great erudition and diverse knowledge acquired by him, as demonstrated by the vast majority of his writings, except for what time's injury may have taken away from us or what is still hidden by those who keep his manuscripts stored away, even now, from moths and pests. His worth at Heraclius' court, his nephew Constans openly declares, when he orders Bizya to be brought to Constantinople, μετὰ πολλῆς τιμῆς καὶ κολακείας, διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν προγονικόν

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ἡμῶν, καὶ γενόμενον αὐτοῖς τίμιον. (with much honor and flattery, because he is our ancestor, and has become honorable to them). Anast. That he is from our forefathers, and was honorable to them.

I make this clearer: That he was a friend and close to my ancestors, and was held dear by them. This clearly aligns with his being the first notary and a secretarius, whose duty was not to be separated from the emperor's side, but to always be present with him. There exist beautiful letters of Michael Psellus, addressed to other prominent men of all orders, and especially to the notaries acting with the emperor in the taxeidion, when he was, of course, traversing the provinces or even leading the army, and indeed when he was outside the royal city: just as to the notaries of Comnenus, as his followers and adherents, and companions in counsel, labor, and expedition, he writes sweetly: Τῷ κορυφαίῳ καὶ τῷ χορῷ· ἣν δὲ βούλησθε, τῷ μυσταγωγῷ καὶ τοῖς μύσταις. (To the top leader and to the choir; and whatever you wish, to the mystagogue and to the initiates). With nearly the same respect in the court, the king's closest advisors, and almost like administrators of the republic, whom we call secretaries to it. In this very role, Saint Nicephorus the Patriarch served, under Emperor Nicephorus, before he was appointed to the seat: from which the court familiarity brought him such sweetness and elegance of style, that we marvel at it in his anti-rhetoric, which allowed him to greet with equal learning and ecclesiastical knowledge, and we lament that this has not been published for the common use of the Church, or his shield, especially since there are splendid manuscripts in the Royal library, Segnier, and the famous libraries of Paris; nor should even those be lacking in Rome: being more highly esteemed by the elders, as they took care to describe it so ambitiously; whereas we, to whom the art of printing is not lacking, from which such great daily results come, have been so disregarded.

Thus, supported by such favor in the prince's court, and his dignity increased by office, he grew weary of the novelty, which Heraclius cherished, and which had already invaded the court, with all things set aside, and sent word to the age. This was likely the cause: for indeed the author of the Life

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places in the appendix part: Ἄλλως τε καὶ πίστιν τότε καινοτομουμένην ὁρῶν.  
(Moreover, seeing faith at that time being tainted by new decrees.)

He might have sought refuge in the monastery, though it was near the city (which was, indeed, situated on the opposite side of the Aegean Sea, across from the shore near Chrysopolis in Bithynia, close to Chalcedon: they call it Scutarim, according to Gillio), a safe station from the waves and tide, and an escape from the corruption of the court and its social habits, as the author calls it (that is, his defilement and contagion), to flee from the court's gatherings and customs. This especially after he had achieved the goal of not being forced by his official duty to favor the more secretive policies of Heraclius. However, I consider this conjecture to be merely the writer's guess. For indeed, Heraclius was not yet so attached to novelty, and the doctrine of the Monothelites had already spread in the court by the time Maximus took on the monastic habit; nor was Heraclius' faction in the court, the one led by the new bishop, more aligned with the clergy and bishops such as Athanasius Jacobites, Theodorus of Pharan, Cyriacus, Sergius, etc. Therefore, to keep himself safe, Maximus not only had to leave the court and city governed by this reforming bishop, but should also flee from his entire diocese, or at least seek refuge somewhat farther afield.

It is uncertain when he exchanged the toga of the court for the monastic habit, the tunic and cilice: however, it is clear that he made this change long before the death of Sergius and the final years of Heraclius, when the flame of innovation broke out in the court and city. This is shown by a letter of his to Pyrrhus the Abbot, when Pyrrhus invited him to join the new movement, which he had accepted, having embraced the novelty with the approval of Sergius, to confirm it by writings. Maximus, however, did not embrace this call, not because he had recently greeted theology or just emerged from the court and the world, but due to his consciousness of his own ignorance (more truly, his supreme modesty, in accordance with his condition) and the rashness of his action, so as not to rush to a judgment. He indeed says: Νεάζειν σε ἔτι πάθεσιν (You are still young in passions), vigentibus ἀκόμα (while passions still flourish) ἔχοντας καὶ κακίαν (and evils); which he always said; thus, indeed, sensing this in himself, even when he had

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reached the highest point of apathy and contemplation, the true third theologian, a great man had taken on the highest theological heights.

For this reason, even as others excuse him, Pyrrhus' judgment is too lenient—he who knew the brilliant gifts of the man and divine knowledge—except for that final point, which clearly highlights his rashness, given the monastic condition he had embraced. Τίς οὕτω θρασύς ὑπάρχει καὶ τολμηρὸς (Who is so bold and daring), ὥστε τοῖς οὕτω κατὰ θεῖαν ψῆφον ἱεραρχικῶς θεσπισθεῖσιν (as to challenge those divine judgments established hierarchically by the bishops)?

Maximus is more generous in his letter, praising Pyrrhus, to whom he even recommends that the monks from Byzantium are sent with the freedom of their friends. Hence, the monks from Sicily were offended by Maximus, especially those loyal to true faith from the West and Africa. In his letter, he defends himself with a very bright explanation, which I present here along with others. For long before the public publication of the Acts of the Ecumenical Council in Byzantium, of which Maximus attributes the crime to Sergius and the Senate, he deflects the blame from Heraclius, who, after yielding to the prayers of Sergius and the clergy of Constantinople and the Senate's indulgence, allowed it to be made public in his name. In fact, it may not have been published at that time, when he gave letters to his friends Pyrrhus, still a monk, and these letters might have been the precursor to the eventual public outbreak in the city, as the hydra of the new heresy had been whispering among the clergy. It awaited the emperor's arrival from Syria (whence its origin and beginning), under whom it would publicly break out in the city. However, it seems unlikely that it had already been promoted in the court, and that the weariness of this matter had shaken Maximus, thus making him seek refuge in the monastery, as his predecessors had been driven to by similar storms, stirred by the proximity of the innovating cleric Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

Maximus confesses in his Dialogue with Pyrrhus that the versatile and unstable nature of Sergius had always been hateful to him; although he hid this and acted with such craftiness that, as observed by the Catholic bishops, he was hardly suspected of it while alive, even being called Patriarch

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by the Reverend memory of John IV after his death. There he excused himself for his predecessor Honorius, and also for Pyrrhus, who had succeeded him.

Thus, it seems that Maximus had one reason for leaving the court, to abdicate his prestigious position and avoid the inner workings of the court in order to enjoy solitude, free from the turmoil and burdens of the world, and to devote himself more fully to God and divine contemplation. This is what the monastic ascetic life particularly fosters, along with the more sanctified institution of the training and discipline of such a life.

This love of wisdom and quietude led him to the Egyptian wilderness, where, along with his son Theodulus, he withdrew to the desert of Mount Sinai, and there, even a spectator of the martyrdom of the holy monks, he remained undeterred in his commitment. He also vividly recorded the contest of the saints in writing. Regarding Maximus's journey to Rome and Africa, the author describes it as though the whole East and West had already been infected by the new heresy, and only in Rome, Africa, or perhaps the neighboring islands, did the old, sound doctrine and faith still persist. Thus, it seems that God, with singular providence and plan, had destined him to go there, yet Maximus was particularly concerned with Africa, having left the places in Asia, including Bithynia and Constantinople itself. This was not driven by the zeal for faith that the author suggests, but rather by fear of the barbarians (the Persians, who were raging in the region, and so even the city of Augusta seemed not to be safe from them), as Maximus himself testifies in various places. In another letter to Jordan the Presbyter, he praises his spiritual teachings and openly expresses how much he desired to return to his homeland. He clearly shows his intention to return once the cloud of barbarian danger had cleared and a certain tranquility and security had returned to those parts.

In the letter, he says: 'Call me to you, and under your wings, if only all the fear of the barbarians, sensed by those who loved life, has truly departed, for I have crossed such vast stretches of sea.' He requests a careful description of the situation there. 'For I am weak in mind and utterly frail, and even in peace, I can hardly think clearly, and out of fear, my mind is

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scattered; I wish to make my journey safely, as my mind and intellect are too imperfect to grasp the divine wisdom that guides the administration of this world.' This and other words express Maximus's modesty.

In a preceding letter to Jordan, written at the beginning of the first indiction (August 2, 642), the holy man, not a Monothelite but rather someone who was seriously disturbed by the heresy of the soul and the resurrection that was spreading in Constantinople, passionately laments this. It is not entirely clear which preceded, but his heartfelt desire for his homeland and the purity of the faith is also evident. He writes: 'For this reason, I mourn even more the separation from you, since the vigilance of your sanctity no longer protects me from afar, and I am left without the episcopate of your paternal holiness, which can lift me from my frequent slips and errors.' In a letter [99] to the bishop Cyriscius (or Cyzicenus), he encourages him to recall his position, 'if he has indeed fled, and the expectation of the enemies has completely disappeared.' He also laments his solitude, saying that, after leaving Africa, others, including George the Presbyter and Hegumenus, had already returned.

This is a pure biography of Maximus, which suggests that, during the general outcry against the faith in Constantinople and the entire East (and even the West), he left for Rome and Africa. The author notes that, having spread the evil to an unimaginable extent, the entire East and West were now caught up in it. The final part of the text seems to be lost, or was removed by Baronius to avoid the impression that the author was misrepresenting the Western Church, which strongly abhorred the heresy, with very few from it accepting such views. It is clearly shown, however, that Maximus thought only of Africa and sought refuge there from the advancing military forces and the Persian invasion. This is confirmed by what was previously stated, and there is no need to add more.

In Africa, Maximus had vigorously fought for the cause of the faith, and, as Pyrrhus, the Patriarch of the Monothelites, had already spread the heresy everywhere by publishing writings and sending them to devoted followers (except those who, like Maximus, had fled with similar fate, and those who, being imbued by it of their own will, in this opportunity, by



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distorting the straight ways of the Lord, increased the fire, and in Africa, having chosen to live there, carried forth the flame), it is certain that Maximus had courageously undertaken the battle, and had most strongly encouraged the Africans, with the emulation of John the Roman bishop, to oppose it. John himself, in his Apology to Emperor Constantine, the successor of Heraclius, when he tried to flatter Honorarium as his patron, clearly declared Pyrrhus' machinations, while he said: "For we have learned, both from various suggestions which came to us in large numbers, and even from personal hearsay, that all the Western regions were scandalized and disturbed by our brother Pyrrhus, the patriarch, through letters sent here and there, preaching new things and contrary to the rule of faith, and hastening to draw others to his successor, which was utterly alien to the mind of the Catholic Father." It seems that the heresy, for a time, had fallen silent, with Heraclius excusing John the Roman pope, stating that it was not his Ecthesis; nor did Sergius more boldly defend it, so that even in this manner the cunning man might retain the title and communion of the Catholic Church.

When Heraclius was removed, and shortly after him, Pyrrhus seemed to act more aggressively, as John indicated in the words of his Apology; having obtained, from the highest dignity of the see, the freedom to promote the dogma, whose foundation and wide propagation, still in lesser matters, he had been a great helper to Sergius. However, when Constantine was shortly removed, Pyrrhus, along with Martina, the stepmother of the deceased, became suspicious of being poisoned, and, in indignation over the injustice of the matter, cast out the other, and after Heraclius, Pyrrhus was compelled to turn his attention to Africa, whether because he was exiled there, or whether he himself had chosen it as a safer province, where he believed he would be more secure, not yet having discovered the tyranny of Gregory the Prefect, which later erupted. Pyrrhus recognized, when he arrived in Africa, how large the part of Maximus had been in Africa, and how much he had alienated Sergius and his predecessor; and how much he had wronged him and continued to wrong him, about which he complains, as if by the ancient right of friendship, in the very

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opening of the dialogue or dispute with him: "Τι σοι κακὸν ἐποιήσαμεν, κύρι Μάξιμε" (What evil have we done to you, Lord Maximus?).

In this dispute, the holy man compelled Pyrrhus to recant and led him to take the journey to Rome, where, after submitting a document, he was reconciled with the supreme see. In this matter, he wanted Maximus to be his companion; just as later Theodosius, the bishop of Cæsarea in Bithynia, when convicted of the same error, urged that the only remedy was to go as a supplicant to Rome, sent by the patriarch and emperor, each with his own name. Pyrrhus knew well how great the reputation of Maximus was in Rome due to his defense of the faith, and relying on this, he hoped that everything would proceed favorably, and that not only would he deserve the communion of the Roman pontiff, but also, with his assistance, he would recover the see. However, not yet fully established in Rome after the invasion of Paul, and what had happened to the living man, who had not canonically ascended the throne.

In truth, it is hard to believe that Pyrrhus went to Rome with zeal for the faith, to profess himself a true Catholic, given that shortly after, in Ravenna, there was another renunciation of faith. There, he learned from the heretical Exarch Olympius that the Roman pontiff's command would not be as effective in recovering the see as the document he had received. For at that time, a new heresy was active in Constantinople, and in this heresy, the authority of Peter's see was undermined, especially under the emperor Constans, who was himself troubled by the heresy, deeply resenting what had been done, and Theodorus the pope had been supportive.

Whatever the case, it was with this victory that Maximus entered Rome; and there was no reason for him to undertake the journey other than this. Unless perhaps the most holy pope Theodorus, who was also Greek, deeply moved by the purity of his doctrine and his most holy life, invited him to Rome, to seek to strike down the growing hydra. For this, Martinus was most helpful in the famous Lateran Synod, in which the Monothelites were fully proscribed and condemned, while the predecessors of the Roman pontiff had seemed to govern and try gentler methods, or at least only to deal with private individuals, such as Theodorus and Pyrrhus, not the whole head

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of the heresy. They sought and condemned the Ecthesis, decreeing that it should be deposed under anathema, and rebuking Pyrrhus who had failed to comply with John's warnings about abolishing it, though not in the solemn manner of judgment, with all the Western bishops sitting together, as Martinus had done.

The letter from Maximus to John the chamberlain, dated the fifteenth indiction, in November, in which the common lady patroness (as he calls her) commands the nuns of the Severan sect to act freely, since they had been reduced and restrained into order at Aquae, from which arose great offense among the Africans, seems to indicate that the brief reign of Martina with Heracleon, her son, was closely involved, so that if anything heavier had happened to the Church at that time, it would not be directed towards the beginning of the Heraclius' nephew, as the illustrious Annals of Paler has stated, but towards Martina. It was indeed easier for Pyrrhus, as a heretic addicted to the teachings of his wife, to support the heresy, which she knew her husband had followed, and had gained the power to support it, even making it possible for the nuns in Africa to do so.

In any case, when Constans took the throne, although a heretic, he still gave preference to the Catholic faith, and his officials referred back to Theodorus the Roman pontiff, who, after gathering a synod of bishops, thought that Pyrrhus' case should be considered. His heresy was already well known, and in his obstinacy, John the Roman pontiff's warnings about deposing the Ecthesis were evident. In this manner, through canonical judgment, he was deposed, and the true bishop took his seat—not through Pyrrhus' death, but by his abdication. Nor had Paul stirred up anything in particular against the Orthodox but had been prompted by the Roman pontiff's opposition, lest the true bishop take his seat, since Pyrrhus' case had not been canonically considered.

How well the most illustrious writer of the Annals, following the Biographer, places the arrival of Maximus into the city and his audience in secret or in the palace hall, in the very year in which Martin was captured and brought to Byzantium, namely the year 650, although Martin, fatigued by a longer journey, and having been detained for a year on the island of

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Naxos (which he himself declares in a letter to Theodorus), did not arrive until the following year, nearly at its close; thus, the same is referred to in the year 657, and from the actions, confused by the bad construction of the antiquarian and its connection (σύνδεσμος – link or connection), it is there repeated, and he makes the beginnings of that contest its ends. Theophanes records Maximus' affairs in the previous year. Concerning Martin, he writes soberly: Τῷ δ' αὐτῷ ἔτει ἐξωρίσθη Μαρτίνος ὁ ἀγιώτατος πάπας Ῥώμης, ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας γενναίως ἀγωνισάμενος, καὶ ὁμολογητῆς γενόμενος, ἐν τοῖς κλίμασι τῆς ἀνατολῆς τελευτήσας. (In the same year, the most holy pope Martin was exiled, having bravely fought for the truth and having become a confessor, he ended his life in the regions of the East). This seems more sober, as the chronographer of Martin's events briefly touches on them, entirely consistent with what has been written by Martin himself and the relation of his exile, in such a way as not to mingle, as he had done earlier, with the persecution of Western bishops, which was scarcely less than his own. For indeed in the year 624 AD, in which he briefly recounts the entire tragic drama of the Monothelite heresy (from which most of his writings are borrowed, except for those contained in the Acts, which the Biographer had literally adopted; a man, namely, from the works of Baronius, who had heard this from those who adhered to the side of Maximus), he wrote: Πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐσπερίων ἐπισκόπων ἐτιμωρήσατο (And he punished many of the western bishops). The author of the Life, describing the most atrocious injustices done to Martin, with the insolence of words, and the savagery of beatings and whips, as well as his exile to Cherson, that is, the most harsh: Τὰ ἴσα δηλαδὴ καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ δράσας ἐπισκόποις (He inflicted the same upon his own bishops). A little earlier: Μαρτίνον τὸν θειότατον, σὺν ἐπισκόποις τῶν ἐσπερίων πλείοσι, θᾶπτον ἐν Βυζαντίδι παρίστησι (The most holy Martin, with many of the western bishops, presented himself more quickly in Byzantium).

But Martin himself says he was brought alone, although he had requested bishops, priests, and deacons to accompany him, nor had Calliopas refused: "Let those from the clergy who are necessary for me come with me; that is, bishops, priests, and deacons; and absolutely, those who seem necessary to me." Calliopas replied: "Whoever wishes to come, let him

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come with good will; we do not make any necessity." Indeed, the most holy priest asked, through imperial letters, which contained his deposition (for this is what the word of Anastasius means, a little harsher, his casting down), for bishops, priests, and deacons, not as companions of his journey, but as faithful fellow-soldiers, with whom, through equal labor and joint counsel, he might defend the recently confirmed orthodox faith of Lateran. Therefore, when he began to argue his case before the tribunal, and the topic of the type (τύπος – symbol or decree) was raised: "When was the type made and sent to Rome by the emperor?" (referring to the fact that he was so vexed and cast down), nothing else was allowed to be spoken. To this, Troilus immediately replied: "Do not bring up matters of faith here; we are Christians and orthodox." Thus, the holy man understood that the evils being inflicted upon him were due to the fact that he had condemned the heretics Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paul: however, Constans presented another pretext, who, in this persecution of Martin, was falsely claiming that it was for the sake of the faith (of the bishop of the first see, the teacher of all) that the heresy should not be erased, but rather increased. Therefore, he intended a charge of majesty, and conspiracy with Olympius, so that, with him removed and a successor appointed, what Martin had seemingly enacted with stricter discipline would more easily be undone. Hence, a new faith was issued, or a mode of reconciliation initiated, about which Maximus wrote to Anastasius, and Anastasius to the monks of Cagliari, in which they all agreed with the apocrisarii of the Roman see in Eugenius, the vicar of Martin in Rome; and indeed with the sense and will of Constans, that the authority of Martin would still be established, and now as the bishop of Rome. For Martin himself says that the tyrant commanded that, once he had crossed into the imperial city, another bishop should be set in his place, which the pontiff rightly asserts: "It has never been done, nor will it ever be done."

For Liberius and Felix, the situation is different; and since Felix, as a true Roman pope, was received, as if Liberius, tainted by the communion of the Arians, had ceased to be the Roman pope, not as Martin, whose steadfastness to the end he courageously endured. Moreover, if there was such a persecution of Western bishops for the cause of faith, why is there no

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record of any contests betrayed, no memory of any such events recorded in ecclesiastical records in Rome or other places? Certainly, the one who wrote about Martin's exile, and who was present at all his labors, reports only this, that when he was dwelling on the island of Naxos, the priests and other faithful in various places would send him small gifts; their bearers would be removed by the guards, and after the gifts were plundered, the bearers, afflicted with injuries and beatings, would be sent away, calling anyone who loved him enemies of the state and traitors: which the author signifies as very troublesome for Martin, not omitting what would have been far worse, namely the exiles and persecutions for the cause of faith of the bishops and clergy of the Roman diocese, if indeed those things had been known. Finally, at the end of Maximus' Collation, or his final Acts, two patricians, Troilus and Epiphanius, indeed threaten that they, together with the pope sitting in Rome at that time and the other faithful of the West, like Martin, would come together at an appropriate place, provided that some remission from the barbarian confusion could be granted. This was Vitalian, now in his third year of the priesthood, or if not, he had already entered his fourth year; however, he was so far removed from suffering anything worse from Constans that he even had been gifted with duties by him; and when he had passed beyond human things, through the efforts of Constans' son, he was inscribed in the ecclesiastical records of the Byzantine Church, namely those seated in that Church by Peter the heretic, whose orthodoxy was approved by the synod. Although Theodorus the patriarch did not think the matter could be borne until the business of the churches was settled; and, perhaps recognizing himself as not equal to the task, he withdrew for a time, leaving the see to George. Finally, Audoenus, a diligent writer of his time, who writes so much about Martin, his bishops, or clergy, suffering the same as he did, does not even mention a word: though he denies the argument, yet in such an easily accessible matter, it cannot fail to carry great authority.

Only the author of the Hypomnestici (Ἰπομνησις – Memoranda), says that Martin's people were not treated any differently than Martin himself; those whom I would wish to be his household, in whom they might have vented their anger conceived against Martin. This same author also

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laments the dreadful persecution, worse than any pagan or heretical one, by which, under various pretexts, reasons, and accusations, the faithful were called to suffer, so that, in the public view, they might be hidden in these matters of faith, just as under Emperor Julian, and so that those who were firm in confession would be deprived of the glory of martyrdom, who, in order not to be defiled by the communion of heretics, would not wish to join with them; and the heretics and clergy of Constantinople, the instigators of all, would drive away the name of the persecutors from themselves. But this was most notably through the East, in the regions subject to the throne of Constantinople; and in those places, it was a crime to think of Rome, as if it were a matter of majesty, as happened in the cases of Theodore and Euprepus, where, taking advantage of the opportunity, they were harshly punished with exile. Indeed, perhaps even the very beginnings of Vitalian were cloudy, with Constans hostile to the Roman See, from his zeal for the novelty recently introduced in Constantinople, which he abhorred, and to which Constans was inclined; and so the patricians could speak according to the emperor's intention, as if universal persecution had been intended, had time allowed. But God removed this by the frequent attacks of the barbarians, and by Vitalian winning the emperor's favor for himself, such was his inclination toward him and the state, as Constantine, the son of Constans, bears witness in the Acts of the Sixth Synod. In that place, it is stated that his name was refused removal from the diptychs (διπτύχοις – "liturgical records"), with Theodorus exerting himself over this matter until the union of the churches was achieved.

And just as Constans accepted Vitalian as the most holy pontiff in Rome and wished him as a friend, so he could accept Thomas as a Catholic in Constantinople: though perhaps Constans did not yet know his faith so well, nor was it fully disclosed, as he was briefly patriarch and could neither send nor receive synodical letters to or from the Roman pontiff, as would otherwise have been proper. It was no longer permitted to "manage (οικονομεῖν – 'administer')," through the power of the emperor, but openly to defend the faith, rejecting the novelty introduced by the patriarch's predecessors. Nor could Maximus, even if he had lived to those times, and

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had been fully Catholic, have communicated with him or the Church of Constantinople after such struggles, until the union of the churches had first been publicly established. From this, it is evident that it is insufficient for the illustrious father of the Annals to argue against this and thereby diminish the Acts of the Sixth Synod.

Anastasius the apocrisiary (ἀποκρισιάρχιος – "papal envoy") himself recalls in that divine letter of his to Theodosius the priest of Gangra (Γάγγρα – "a city in Asia Minor") the union of the churches, which had been accomplished (it is uncertain whether in Constantinople), which he both hopes to be ratified and to endure, while he himself lived in exile, being treated either more mildly or more harshly according to the character and disposition of the ethnarchs (ἐθνάρχων – "rulers") to whom he had been entrusted. Perhaps this happened when Constans, already Catholic or behaving as a Catholic, departed for the West and came to Rome, where he was received with every honor by Vitalian.

The author of the Hypomnestici (ὑπομνήσταικοι – "Memoirs"); namely Theodosius of Gangra, a priest, along with his brother Theodorus, after receiving that distinguished letter of Anastasius the apocrisiary, with the authorities and syllogisms of Hippolytus, reveals this fact, which otherwise would have been obscure through the Βιογράφος ("biographer"), unless even he was unaware: namely, that Anastasius the apocrisiary, like Maximus and the other Anastasius, had his right hand cut off. With his hand thus amputated, thin pieces of wood were attached to the stump, and with wondrous skill, he wrote that very letter. The author of the invective from the Seguer codex also introduces us to this matter, condemning both Maximus and the two Anastasiuses with one and the same sentence. The apocrisiary Anastasius, who had shone with the honor of the priesthood, suffered what amounted to a form of degradation. Baronius is worthy of pardon, as he was unaware of those records and the Anastasius collection. However, the notion that wild beasts spared his right hand out of reverence for the Apostolic See, since he served as its apocrisiary, is frivolous. For what reverence could they show for that See, who had so raged against Martin, its supreme pontiff, and



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who so hated this Anastasius, a vigorous man, skilled in both languages, and a staunch defender of the Roman faith?

Indeed, Theodosius, bishop of Caesarea in Bithynia, otherwise a more humane man, refused to travel to Rome under his leadership and companionship, due to many past conflicts and quarrels with him, preferring instead Maximus as a companion for his journey and aid in his affairs. Maximus had been distinguished at court, a notary of the empress under Emperor Heraclius, when perhaps through shared favors to Heraclius, he was joined in friendship with Maximus. As they were both soldiers of the secular world, so they were comrades in religious and Christian service, not master and disciple. Maximus excelled with greater light of knowledge, becoming a teacher of the world, though he was merely a monk, as he himself says in the Collation with Theodosius. Anastasius was a priest, or if he was a monk, a hieromonk (ἱερομόναχος – "priest-monk"). This is not sufficiently known from the records, beyond which it is neither reasonable nor cautious according to historical faith to invent anything else.

The author of the invective nevertheless writes that Maximus was a disciple from the beginning (ἄνωθεν – "from above"), as was the other Anastasius, suggesting he had long adhered to him. Maximus never calls him a disciple, however, as he does the other Anastasius, but rather addresses him with a more honorable title, "my lord" or something similar. He was evidently a Roman man, as his mastery of Latin reveals, which Maximus acknowledges he lacked. Having spent a long time in the East and at the imperial court, he had also made the Greek language equally familiar to himself. In both respects, Maximus was his associate, and as an apocriary of the Roman Church, he perhaps served as a priest, vigorously defending the faith, whose steadfast defense aroused such envy against him from the Monothelites.

The biographer (Βιογράφος – "biographer") did not mention the severing of Anastasius the apocriary's right hand, possibly because his discourse was not directed at praising the two Anastasii, but rather Maximus. Similarly, the author of the Hypomnestici, who deals chiefly with Anastasius the apocriary and his letter, written with an almost miraculous skill despite his mutilated arm, and the thin wood and splinters attached to it

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for letter-writing, does not record that the other Anastasius endured the same punishment. He only mentions Maximus and Anastasius the apocrisiary. Theophanes, in his *Chronographia*, mentions briefly only Maximus, as if the matter in his case was more remarkable and worthy of the *Annals*. Perhaps the same biographer (Βιογράφος) encountered records in which the repetition of Anastasius's name was lacking, as in the same codex I have presented from Seguiet, where the series suggests that supplementation is necessary, as well as Maximus's name where it was omitted. To not correct such omissions would not be reverence but pure folly, a blindness arising from negligence without any judgment by the copyists.

### DOCUMENT XI ON THE ACTS AND COLLATIONS OF SAINT MAXIMUS

Anastasius the Librarian rendered a double Collation of Saint Maximus in favor of John the Deacon, when he was contemplating a history. This version of Anastasius, along with other matters concerning Martin and Maximus, was published by P. Jacobus Sirmond, ὁ μακαρίτης ("the blessed one"), with an accurate reckoning of the times of various events and deeds, certainly far removed from the calculations of Baronius, derived from the poorly compiled Roman codices.

The unique codex of Maximus's works from the Seguiet Library preserved both Collations distinctly and in proper order, as they are from Anastasius, from which it was permitted to transcribe. The distinguished man, Lucas Holstenius, noted in his writings that it exists in the Vatican codex No. 1646, which perhaps enriched the Vatican Library after Baronius. Baronius barely came across these Collations, embedded but not properly arranged in the *Life of Maximus*, and confusedly incorporated them into his *Annals*, as interpreted by Peter Morinus.

I present a biographer (βιογράφον – "biographer") from the Royal Library, who extracts some details from these works, reports them in summary, and maintains the order of praise while preserving the sequence of

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the Collations. This is unlike the Vatican codex of Baronius, where the sequence is disrupted; whoever that author is, he is certainly imprecise, and no scholar could be deceived by his patchwork upon carefully examining the Collations themselves.

The second Collation references and considers certain matters already mentioned or done in the first. Thus, as Troilus said that he had already spoken in the palace (that is, in the Collation conducted in private), the wording did not extend the expressions but ordered silence to compose peace for all. Hence there: Οὐκ ἐπ' ἀναιρέσει τινὸς τῶν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ νοουμένων, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ εἰρήνῃ. (Not to abolish any of the things understood concerning Christ, but for the sake of peace), etc. Therefore, the prefatory section, attached to the Collation in private either from that Vatican codex or through Morinus or Baronius, is inept. It begins with these words: After much time had passed, and the saint was in exile, the emperor sent for him again and summoned him. Clearly, no exile of Maximus preceded the one at Bizya, which was only decreed after the Collation (or Hearing) in the palace. This took place immediately after Maximus and his disciples were brought to Constantinople—not returning from exile but arriving from where they had been seized—to examine their case, as was similarly done with Martin.

Thus, writes the author of the Hypomnesticon. Similarly, our source and the codex of Anastasius begin quite definitively with these words: Τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἣ προσωρμίσθησαν ταύτῃ τῇ βασιλευούσῃ πόλει ὃ τε κύριος Μάξιμος, καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ (On the day when both Lord Maximus and those with him arrived at this imperial city). From there, Maximus was relegated to Bizya, seemingly under a lighter penalty, though intended to break his resolve. To test this, after a considerable time—several years—Theodosius, bishop of Caesarea in Bithynia, was sent to Bizya along with consuls and candidates of patrician rank, as is often done in such cases. This was the second Collation of Maximus, during which Theodosius was defeated by the force of Maximus's arguments. However, the emperor, disturbed by the resistance of his court flatterers and servants, grew even angrier with Maximus. Not only did Maximus not emerge victorious, but Theodosius himself presided again as judge over Maximus when he was recalled to the imperial city. Theodosius,

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though not entirely devoid of humanity or a sense of righteousness, was inconsistent and excessively (*ἀνθρωπάρεσκος* – "pleasing to men"). His debates with Maximus reveal him to have been almost inept and rather unpolished. It is unclear by what truth a learned man proclaimed him the most learned of his sect and thought him worthy of such praise.

P. Jac. Sirmond's conjecture is pleasing, which, besides the things said, is confirmed by many others, namely, that this first Collation in the palace occurred while Martin was still alive, and while Eugenius was administering the Roman Church, whose legates are mentioned in the Acts as the successors of Vitalian. Therefore, not in the year of Christ 657 according to Baronius, but in 654 or certainly 655, unless perhaps a little earlier. Nor does it matter that Cardinal Baronius refers to the Saracen invasion of Egypt, citing Theophanes in the 26th year of Heraclius, from which, adding the 22 years mentioned in the Acts, one arrives at the year of Christ 657. For long before this, the Saracens had made Egypt tributary, with the patriarch Cyrus negotiating with them; and Heraclius required larger forces to free Egypt from that yoke, which, being unavailable, and the tribute under which the Saracens had agreed being denied, Egypt immediately fell under their power. Add to this that Theophanes reports these events too confusedly, often compressing the events of several years into the span of one; the illustrious father of the Annals does not always agree with him, nor even when he assigns Peter 12 years in the see (as St. Nicephorus and others do). Within these 12 years, the entire tragedy of Maximus and his companions took place, but Baronius confines it to a span of two years.

Thus, following Thomas, John, and Constantine—Catholics by the vote of the Sixth Synod, and having done nothing contrary to the faith—Baronius still holds them heretics and persecutors of Maximus. Hence he speaks freely and almost oracularly: "All these things must be corrected, for it is said that he presided over that Church for only two years." I, given my dullness and lack of acumen, seek records more reliable than these or those of Baronius to read. It seems more likely that Maximus, a simple monk, was captured and taken wherever his adversaries wished than that Pope Martin,

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the supreme pontiff himself, was seized earlier or sent into exile for a longer period before him. It is a light conjecture to suggest that Maximus was captured first or subjected to exile before Martin. The persecutor may have sought to attack the head (Martin) first, and by removing him, it would be easier to seize lesser figures openly, as any plots against Martin (whose cause was equal to Maximus's) would become nearly unnecessary. Thus, with greater plausibility, both Theophanes and our biographer report that many bishops of the West experienced the tyranny of Constans, as if they were some appendage to the same persecution inflicted on Rome. For, because of the primary dignity of the Roman See, the chief part of the persecution in the Roman Synod fell on it. Even though this persecution of the Western bishops seems more supported by conjecture than by certain contemporary records, as we have more fully demonstrated and noted in the life of Martin.

Regarding Maximus, it seems he was captured sooner, whether immediately after Martin or before him. This can be attributed to a particular reason: that he, being a foreign monk and Constantinopolitan, was considered to have stirred up, or was stirring up, the entire West, including Martin himself, against his fellow Constantinopolitans. This was particularly so concerning the charge of heresy brought against them by the decree of the Lateran Synod. Therefore, they boasted that once he was removed, the Romans were immediately seen to agree with them—Eugenius being seen to act somewhat more gently (Anastasius relates that the Romans at one point grew indignant with him for this). Moreover, during this time, apocrisarii (papal legates) were sent to Constantinople, though without letters of communion (communicatoriis), as mentioned in the Acts.

As the following events, namely, the mission of Theodosius to Bizya, the recall of Maximus to the city, and all the subsequent actions taken against him and his disciples pertain to Peter, so the first summoning of Maximus, the Collation or hearing in the palace, and the decree of exile to Bizya pertain to Paul, as if corresponding to his disposition. For it happened in the case of Maximus that he was punished only with exile, and that exile somewhat milder in nature. For in the case of Martin, though treated more harshly by Constans, the emperor was deterred from inflicting death and

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other tortures. The words of the author, who wrote gravely about his exile to the Orthodox of the West and Africa, are as follows: "On the following day, the emperor, leaving to visit the patriarch in the patriarchate (for he was near death), narrated to him what had been done to the most holy man. But Paul, groaning and turning toward the wall, said, 'Alas for me! This, too, has been added to the abundance of my judgments.'" When the emperor asked why he said this, Paul replied: "Lord, is it not remarkable that pontiffs endure such things?" Then he solemnly implored the emperor that what he (Maximus) had already endured should suffice and that he endure nothing more.

These things provide some grounds for conjecture, suggesting that the first hearing of Maximus occurred while Paul was still patriarch and, consequently, before Martin's exile, since Paul was already gravely ill before that event. Whether Maximus was brought to the city before or after Martin is not firmly established, as it is clear that Paul initially raged openly against the Orthodox. Nor was this motivated by a sense of leniency, but rather by a desire to deflect infamy from himself arising from the persecution he had begun, by which such a great pontiff had been so undeservedly treated. For this reason, Paul viewed the ensuing atrocities and the death penalties as unbearable and sought to avert their imposition. Firmly, unless I am mistaken, the conjecture is supported by the author's mention that on the following Saturday, with the Collation in the palace repeated, it is twice noted that two patriarchs were present, who, as if providing a semblance of ecclesiastical dignity, permitted themselves nothing in speech. The very fact that it is said simply "two patriarchs," without any elaboration, clearly indicates that these were the patriarchs and bishops of the place. This is especially evident from the addition of the article: *συνελθόντων καὶ τῶν δύο Πατριάρχων* ("both the two patriarchs being present").

In our language, which is very akin to Greek in articles, this would be rendered as "Les deux patriarches s'y étant aussi trouvés" ("The two patriarchs being there as well"). The author's intent is clear, although he is somewhat unsophisticated, as this phrase does not clearly suggest any other patriarch beyond the city's own patriarch. The wording does not indicate a patriarch of another see, such as Alexandria or Antioch. Morinus does not

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adequately express the Greek phrasing when he translates: "With two patriarchs present at that time." This could mean any two patriarchs, even if the Constantinopolitan was absent. I seem to have translated it a bit more closely as "With both patriarchs present as well," since the word indicates two specific individuals.

At that time, Byzantium saw no two patriarchs other than Paul and Pyrrhus: the former occupied the seat, while the latter had not entirely canonically lost it, having been received in Rome with patriarchal honors by Pope Theodore. To Pope Theodore and other Roman pontiffs, Paul was regarded not as the rightful bishop but as a usurper of another's see. Pyrrhus, however, endured in the hope that, upon Paul's death, he might regain not only his dignity, which he had retained, but also the seat and the exercise of power, as happened for others who were ejected by force—such as Germanus, Nicephorus, and Ignatius. Thus, this occurred when Paul shortly thereafter departed from this life. Baronius was not sufficiently apt: "One of them was the Constantinopolitan bishop Thomas, who presided over that Church at this time." But he (Thomas) presided much later—or even if we were to grant that this final hearing of Maximus was held in the fifteenth indiction, as Baronius suggests, and that Peter's tenure extended to twelve years, as attested by all reliable authors, as I have just touched upon and more accurately detailed in my work on the Monothelite heresy. Even so, it is absurd, as already explained, that no colleague named Thomas can be assigned as patriarch of Constantinople, as this would require two texts to justify itself. The cry of a certain cleric to Maximus—"Ἀπέδωκέ σοι Κύριος ὅσα ἐποίησας τῷ μακαρίῳ Πύρρῳ" ("The Lord has rendered to you all that you did to the blessed Pyrrhus")—with the subsequent observation: "Τοσούτων δὲ λαληθέντων ἐν τῷ σεκρέτῳ οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν τῶν Πατριάρχων ἐφθέγγετο" ("And though so many things were said in secret (or in the hall of the palace), neither of the patriarchs spoke anything") is no small indication that Pyrrhus himself was seated there. The cleric, addressing these words, might have sought to flatter him. Furthermore, the author, through the observation of silence, seems to imply a kind of modesty or even a mask of impassivity (*ἀπάθεια*, "freedom from passion") on Pyrrhus's part. Certainly, one of the

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principal charges against Maximus was the alleged harassment of Pyrrhus. On this matter, even Maximus's disciple Anastasius was interrogated and treated harshly, reportedly beaten more severely because he had testified, as a monk should, to his teacher's innocence and to Pyrrhus's respect and duties—rather than the injury which those slanderers sought to pin on him. Clearly, the dog returning to its vomit (a reference to Pyrrhus) laid the blame on Maximus for the force brought against him. This was because he (Pyrrhus) had gone to Rome and presented a document to Pope Theodore.

Thus, the author recounts a hearing that occurred a few days earlier, and so nothing inconsistent is stated here when it is reported with wonder that neither patriarch said anything. Finally, the words of Troilus the patrician (himself one of Maximus's principal judges, present not only at this first hearing in secret but also later, when Maximus was brought back to the city from Bizya; and who had scarcely been inferior in rank to the chamberlain regarding Martin, and thus could have learned with certainty all that was done in Rome in condemnation of the Typos decree): "Ποῦ ἀνεθεματίσθη;" ("Where was the Typos anathematized?")—and from Martin's response: "Ὑπὸ τῆς συνόδου Ῥώμης, εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Σωτῆρος καὶ εἰς τὴν Θεοτόκου" ("By the Roman synod, in the church of the Savior and of the Mother of God")—provide no slight evidence that this hearing preceded Martin's trial. Similarly, the earlier remarks noted in the preceding days' gatherings: "Ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ κύρις Τρώϊλος ὅτι ὁ Τύπος ἀναθεματίζεται εἰς πᾶσαν δύσιν" ("When Lord Troilus heard that the Typos was anathematized throughout the entire West") plainly indicate a new hearing—not one where Martin's case had been fully resolved in Constantinople or thoroughly disseminated among the judges. Even though he (Martin) had already been seized from Rome, διωχθεὶς ("expelled"), as Maximus rightly observes, and not καθαιρεθεὶς ("deposed"). Anastasius renders it as: "Expelled, not deposed"—oppressed by force and tyranny and driven from his see, but not lawfully or ritually removed according to the canons. From those words of Troilus to Maximus—"Nescis, abba, quid dicas" ("You do not know, abba, what you are saying"), and so on—Baronius's historian connects, rather inappropriately, the true final hearing of Maximus, or the ultimate judgment against him, and



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the sentence of mutilation and final exile. This liberty must be corrected if Baronius indeed held such an opinion or misled an otherwise learned man. Our biographer, adhering to the Acts, rightly preserved the sequence and inserted Maximus's letter to Anastasius concerning the novelty of the events at that time. This was also contained in the Seguiet codex. He continues in proper order: "Καὶ δὴ ἡμερῶν συχῶν ὁ ἀγενομένων" ("And indeed, after many days had passed"), explaining the exile to Bizya and the sentence decreed against Maximus. The codex of Baronius, however, erroneously begins this account with no preface, assigning it to the year 656: "Plurimis autem diebus interpositis, etc." ("After many days had passed, etc."), as Morinus translates. The Acts themselves are far superior, with the indiction itself recorded—namely, the conclusion of the fourteenth indiction, on the twenty-third day of August. Given the many days of exile between the first secret hearing and this endpoint, it is necessary not only to acknowledge that this event did not occur in 657 (according to Baronius's reckoning) but also that several years earlier marked the conclusion of the fourteenth indiction and the year 656 of Christ.

Certainly, the words of the Acts clearly indicate the initial transport to Constantinople by ship, though Maximus's removal from Rome did not necessarily immediately follow. Baronius assigns all these events to the year 650, based on our biographer, whom he believes to have relied on those who adhered to Maximus. I, however, conclude differently: based on the writings or even common accounts of those slightly contemporary to Maximus or even somewhat later, with certain indications proving and verifying this. These matters need not be dragged out further, lest it appear as mockery, given how clear the sequence of events and deeds is. What seemed to need correction in the Baronian version of Morinus: many omissions, lest it exceed the bounds of the paper, and because the new version itself, with only a few marginal notes, as if pointing by a finger, may almost suffice for the sagacious reader. For example, that it confuses (κέλευσιν παρακλητικὴν συμ' Εκθέσει – a command exhorting alongside an exposition), that it omitted (δέησιν – supplication), and also this phrase: (Καὶ ἔβαλον μετάνοιαν, καὶ εὐχὴ ἐγένετο – And they cast [themselves in] repentance, and

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prayer happened). This expression, "El humi reverentia inclinaverunt" (they bowed reverently to the ground), does not please where it was added, indicating the reverence there refers to God, not to a civil courtesy. Anastasius well expressed it as "positisque in terra genibus" (having placed their knees on the ground). The phrase (ἡσπάσαντο – they greeted with a kiss), regarding the cross, sacred books, and images, indicates honor through a kiss and pious veneration, very customary among the Greeks. With this (τιμητικὴ διαθέσει – disposition of honor), they venerate and honor these as prototypes. Thus the matter stood: They all fell in prayer; they devoutly kissed and venerated the Gospels, crosses, and images of the Holy Mother of God, holding sacred images in the same regard as other sacred relics. As John the Presbyter and Vicar of the Eastern Sees says, they are "ἰσοδυναμούσας" (equal in worth). Finally, to attest to the truth of these actions, they laid hands upon them. Similarly, on Good Friday, (μετάνοια – repentance) is joined with (ἀσπασμῶ – a greeting with a kiss) in the adoration of the venerable cross. All this honor for us is (σχετικὸς – relative), namely directed to Him who was affixed to the cross and wrought our salvation on that day.

Thus Constantine, Bishop of Cyprus, rightly relates that the Father (i.e., the author of the Collection) referred to (ἡσπάσαντο – they greeted with a kiss) in the context of adoration. This Calvinist candor cannot deny, with his own sense of Eucharist and interpretation (that to him, it is not the truth but a figure of Christ). Nor can it be denied what the Bishop of Corinth explained—that in the miraculous cloth, the divine particle (τρίς γόνυ κλίνει – thrice to bend the knee, which is adoration), Luke the Thaumaturge commands that it be held with such reverence as not to be touched even by hand. This ancient Latin rite does not seem to imply divine worship for the sacrament but acknowledges the most true body of Christ in both Latin and Greek tradition. It seems a bit harsh what Peter Morinus, following Baronius, renders about Christ: "O soul, purging the sin contracted according to nature from the first parents," as if that sin was contracted by Christ in His nature—which would be a false meaning. The words of Maximus are: (παντὸς προπατορικοῦ καθάρως κατὰ φύσιν ἐγκλήματος – cleansing all ancestral sin according to nature). By assuming humanity, He

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cleansed it from all sin according to nature from the first parents. This was not due to His nature, which was Adam's flesh, but because, being the very flesh of Christ, it is clean, cleansing, and a new creation—the flesh of the new Adam—which wipes away the guilt of Adam's old flesh. In this, as Augustine says, vice had grown in as if by nature.

Anastasius, for (καθάρας – cleansing), may have read (καθαρεύτας – made pure), as he renders it thus: "Clean from all ancestral sin according to nature." Yet he also wrote "cleansing," which thus seems corrupted in him. Otherwise, it would have to be "pure." But in these minor points, it is not worth wasting time. Let the studious and learned man have his praise, whose letters, other works, and relics, from our treasures at St. Honoratus of the Dominican Friars, were published and presented by Mabre Cramoisy. The final hearing held at Rhegium, where it is said that the Patricks ascended to Maximus (ἐν τῷ κατηχομενείῳ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς αὐτῆς μονῆς – in the catechumenium of the Church of that same monastery), is not quite ecclesiastically expressed by Morinus, who renders it "In the catechumenium of that residence." This is how Calvinists habitually translate, scarcely appearing to themselves to use Greek properly if they render the common word (κατὰ τὸ πρόχειρον – according to the commonplace), which all ancient ecclesiastical tradition has consecrated.

Thus, (μονήν – monastery) is used here in a sense peculiar to monasteries, and slightly above, as (τὸ εὐαγὲς μοναστήριον – the pious monastery), in whose church was the catechumenium. The understanding of the Annals' author was not well illustrated when glossing, "Namely, where catechumens were accustomed to be instructed." There were no catechumens among the monks to be instructed; their care did not pertain to the monks but to the churches, which were common (i.e., parish churches) and entrusted to priests and overseers. Their place was not the catechumena but rather the narthex and (πρόναος – vestibule), or the lower part of the temple outside the partition of the faithful and laity, where they listened to divine readings until they were dismissed before the Mass of the Faithful.

Therefore, it is mistaken to believe that (κατηχομενεῖα – catechumena) or (εἰ κατηχούμενα – if catechumens) were certain upper

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chambers surrounding the vast nave of the church externally, with windows and railings providing views everywhere. These were mainly assigned to women in the churches that were common; hence the Latins called them "Matronea." Leo's Novel 73 states: (Ψῆμι δὲ τὸ ἐν τοῖς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ὑπερώοις, ὅπερ ὁ πολλὸς ἄνθρωπος κατηχούμενα καλεῖν ἔγνω, συνοικεῖν τινὰς γυναιξίν – In the upper rooms of the churches, which the common people decided to call catechumena, certain men would cohabit with women). There is an excellent passage in the Life of Saint Basil, attributed to Amphilochius, about a deacon during sacred services who lustfully fixed his gaze on a woman (κατακυπτούσῃ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω – leaning out from above). Upon discovering this, the holy Bishop immediately ordered (βῆλα κρεμασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμένοις – veils to be hung in the catechumena), forbidding women from looking out of the veils during the divine liturgy. He decreed that any woman caught doing so would be expelled from the church and remain excommunicated. In monasteries for men, these catechumena were assigned to the monks themselves or to their guests who desired to hear the divine services more quietly or handle other matters in privacy. These were akin to the diaconicon and other adjacent sacred spaces, which, while possessing their own sanctity, were not as sacred as the church itself. Some were even converted for common domestic use, though marital intercourse was strictly forbidden, as is evident from the cited Novel of Leo. The bishop of Citri in his responses declares: (Κολάζει καὶ τοὺς ἐπιτρέποντας τὴν εἰς τὰ κατηχουμενεία κατοίκησιν – He punishes those who permit dwelling in the catechumena). Meursius similarly erred in thinking the place was so named because catechumens stood there or because catechetical tablets were kept there. However, in later times, when the ancient discipline of the churches changed and was nearly abolished, the catechumena came to serve the same function as the narthex.

Thus, Leo Allatius writes about the narthex of the ancient church, drawing from Simeon of Thessalonica's treatise against heresies: (Ἐξάγονται μὲν οὖν οἱ κατηχούμενοι... – The catechumens are expelled; also those who, after baptism, have lapsed, who, indeed, denied the faith of God, or stained by fraternal blood through murder, or those who have committed other acts

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cutting them off from communion. All these were previously expelled along with the catechumens). However, due to persecutions and constant turmoil, the Fathers deemed it more convenient to expel catechumens, apostates, and murderers while allowing others with only the grace of baptism to remain, provided their repentance was managed privately by their spiritual Fathers. So, those expelled stood in the narthex or even in the catechumena during the celebration of the sacred mysteries. The narthex was called either (τῶν ναῶν ἀρχαὶ – the entrances of the temples) or (τῶν κατηχουμένων ὁ οἶκος – the house of the catechumens), intended so that these individuals might partake of the divine only through hearing and sight. They confessed the faith with their lips and tongue and sang the words of piety but did not stand or pray with the faithful, as they remained excommunicated and separated. Those deemed unworthy to stand or pray during the sacred service were even less worthy to receive the most tremendous communion. Thus, all these distinctions and separations are novelties of discipline and names. All things have succumbed to the mockery of time, gravely observes Allatius. Those advanced (τοὺς προβεβηκότας, meaning 'those who have advanced') of the bands (τῶν βάνδων, meaning 'of the bands'). Anastasius interprets it as 'Primores bandorum' (chiefs of the bands), which is equally obscure. Morinus interprets it as 'chiefs from the clergy,' to which I do not agree. For 'banda,' as Suidas attests, are military standards, and the very military ranks under them. Therefore, the praetor or legate sent forward men of advanced military status and centurions, along with presbyters, deacons, and the religious guardians of the standards (συγνοφύλακας, meaning 'co-guardians'), who themselves seem to belong to the ecclesiastical order. Perhaps with the standards unfurled and with the solemn procession of the Church, they went to him.

Although he was bound and oppressed by the power of the emperor, his name carried great renown; nor was the matter insignificant—the refutation of the accusation of blasphemy against the Holy Theotokos (Ἁγία Θεοτόκος, meaning 'Holy Mother of God'), which, if not refuted, would present Maximus with immediate peril to his life and a grave offense and spiritual harm to the general faithful. That these clerics were Catholics is

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evident from their services to Maximus the Confessor when they perceived his sound faith towards the Most Holy Theotokos. And from those words with which they prayed for him, that God might grant him strength in the struggle and allow him to run the course without stumbling. Moreover, the Catholic nature of the legation is evidenced by the legate's mission to Maximus—a man condemned again to exile and hated by the imperial court—with such pomp under the appearance of honor. It is likely that neither the legate's name nor merits were unknown to him: perhaps due to envy, that domestic official of the praetor ordered Maximus to be removed far from the camps, not only out of fear that some military assembly might occur on his behalf, to whose words they willingly lent their minds and ears. These were orthodox men, those who wrote about the matters of Martinus, who recorded the deeds of Maximus, and Anastasius the apocriary; not to mention Euprepus, Theodosius, and Theodorus, who were even consecrated by martyrdom. Nor the bishops and monks to whom Maximus and Anastasius wrote from prison and even from extreme exile, praising their faith and efforts, so that I do not easily agree with the illustrious author of the Annals when he infers from the silence of others or ignorance of the persecution that only this one seed, Maximus and both Anastasiuses, was left to the East, as if faith seemed to shine at that time in them alone and no others (that is known).

Certainly, they were teachers and leaders of all, upon whom all the faithful throughout the East especially looked, and by whose steadfastness they were strengthened. This I do not deny; those whom Patrician Epiphanius shortly before called *διαστρέφοντας* (meaning 'perverters' or 'those leading astray'), or those who perverted and corrupted the new faith that the Constantinopolitan court and clergy had fabricated with a heretical spirit; that is, those who held fast to the ancestral orthodox faith. Nor do I believe, as some did (Baronius included), that there were so few (or none) of them. For instance, in Milan, where Gervasius and Protasius suffered martyrdom, the Milanese Church had long been established, founded by the Apostle Barnabas. Nor were there none at Agen and among the Nitiobriges, when either Vincentius, Capralius, or Fides, a virgin, fought a noble contest

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even during the times of Diocletian. Likewise in Valentia, Emerita, and Barcinona, where Vincentius (even granting life indulgence to the elderly bishop Valerius of the city), along with one or two Eulalias, suffered martyrdom under Dacian as governor.

Thus, the diligent and sharp-minded historian may conjecture from this that these were the chiefs and leaders of the flock whom tyrannical fury especially targeted singularly or in small numbers; who, once removed, left all the leaders and teachers seemingly obliterated, even though there were many of their imitators left, not of equal renown nor comparable to them. And this aligns with the lament of the author of the *Hypomnesticon*, who mourned the removal of Anastasius the Apocrisiary as if, with his death, all teachers were taken away—those who could with liberty or even force vindicate the orthodox faith throughout the East. Such was also his renown, that even with his tongue cut out, he spoke fluently, spreading the light of faith widely from the extremity of his exile and nurturing the spark of it in the remnants of the faithful throughout the East.

## DOCUMENT XII TO SAINT MAXIMUS PRAISE

The eulogies of Saint Maximus ought to be collected in this place, or even prefaced with other notes, if they were such that few authors and some certain number had pursued them. But since those men who were praised by Maximus hereafter (especially Greeks) wrote about Christ or God, or even ascetical works, and by which morals are formed toward piety, or even by which the mind is spread through the heights of speculations and is most closely united to God and divine things, either praised Maximus expressly, or adopted him as their patron, and enriched and strengthened their own works with his divine senses and opinions, and held him as the one and greatest rule of dogmas; and not only private individuals, but the assemblies of the universal Church itself; it would seem almost superfluous and troublesome to provide here for him what exists as necessary and easy insinuation for the benefit of the reader in others who are of lesser renown

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and not of such great authority. Nor perhaps would that distinguished and most learned antiquarian seen recently in Italy by Emery Bigot wish otherwise, while on a journey undertaken especially for literary purposes, he searches with keen investigation whatever stock of books exists in the city and other places of Italy: to whom he speaks thus: That Maximus is to the Greeks in theological matters what Thomas Aquinas is to the Latins. I will add, without prejudice, something greater, in that he is more ancient by several centuries (and not so few) and has suffered fewer rivals within the very enclosures of the Church and domestic to the faith; for heretics and foreigners alike wished both to have been cast down or won over to themselves. For as Bucer said "Remove Thomas, and I will scatter the Church"; so you may judge in the Acts of Maximus [107] that the judges established all the strength of the Catholics in Maximus alone in such a way that, with him sharing the throne of Constantinople (namely with the Monothelite heretics), they seriously profess and prophesy for themselves that there would be no one who would not share communion with him; and not only in Greece and the diocese subject to the Byzantine throne, but also in Rome and throughout the whole Christian world.

But neither is it pleasing to omit what another antiquarian plays with in Royal codex no. 2962. A copy of it was provided by a man equally learned and most known by his writings, Mr. Du Cange, Royal Quaestor of Amiens. It is a Greek manuscript Lexicon where thus: Φιλαντία, ἡ τοῦ σώματος ἄλογος φιλία τὸ φιλαντος καὶ ἡ φιλαντία, παρ' οὐδενὶ τῶν ἐλλογίμων. Οὐκ οἶδας τι λέγεις, ἄνθρωπε. Τίς γὰρ ἐλλογιμώτερος τοῦ μεγάλου Βασιλείου, ἢ τοῦ ἁγίου Μαξίμου. Philautia, love of the body beyond reason. Indeed the words φιλαντος καὶ φιλαντία exist in no author of purer language. You do not know, man, what you say. Who is more learned in purer language than the great Basil or Saint Maximus? The explanation of the word is entirely Maximus's, and frequent at that, in which I was recently playing with R. P. M. Nicholas accusing me of this vice, and that I was φιλαντος, retaining what pleased me more in the exemplar of S. Thore than what was in the published text of Hilary; I was asking whether in the sense of Maximus or rather of Suidas, to whom φιλαντία is ὑπερηφάνια; which is easy for the proud, who are



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self-loving. Basil in *Regulae breviores*, interrogation 54, *φίλαυτος* is one who so loves himself in mind or body that he fails in duty to his needy neighbor, from which Maximus may have taken it and assigned it more peculiarly to another member (which is better known), as if he wishes a peculiar love. He who thus criticizes the Lexicographer could also have adduced Aristotle, who himself uses both words in *Rhetoric* 1.1 and *Ethics*. But what makes for the praise of Maximus is this, that he joins him to the great Basil and seeks his vote at an equal degree of authority for bestowing the word upon Greece. But even the sophists themselves admired Basil and Gregory, who were first in the glory of secular eloquence.

Maximus himself sometimes also makes what belongs to others his own and inserts them into his own works. Thus certain *νηπτικὰ* chapters of Mark the Hermit are inserted into his theological works, as well as those of Diadochus. The scholia on Dionysius are not his alone; but sometimes one or another of those authors, which others also had contributed effort (such as Dionysius, the rhetor of Alexandria) or even followed him: yet so great is Maximus's glory in that work that it has been recorded in all ancient codices and books under his name alone. But Maximus follows the ancients in those things which he brings forth from himself in such a way that, full of their spirit, he does not make from them as it were centos, as almost scholastics do, and relate them as if selected, but truly shows himself an author and teacher, and brings forth opinions as oracles refined with altogether most certain truth and highest subtlety of his own making; where even when plainer, the style does not seem to have anything perplexing, or the thought anything difficult: as he himself also admonishes in the Prooemium to the chapters on charity to Elpidius, which of all his works are considered purest by Photius; and to which the others I present, received from the Vatican library, are clearly twin, in which likewise there is nothing of allegories (by which otherwise Maximus is not rarely more troublesome), no circumlocutions of words or hyperbata, but the highest thought in pure and simple style. Thus everywhere the reading of Maximus requires a most purified, attentive, and sagacious mind, and also an interpreter in himself; and if anyone cannot nourish himself on his Greek: in which I have grown old, I do not consider

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burdensome, and I ascribe to Providence that so great an offspring should grow for me little by little, nor could it seem precocious and immature: which certainly would have been the case if either I, or the most illustrious clergy of France, and the Archbishop of Toulouse Charles de Monchal of good memory, had favored my first wishes. Now, with God as guide, they will favor, so increased, so heaped up, that no rank, no dignity of the most ample order may be lacking, and they will favor excellently, so that the Roman and Latin theologians may be enriched prosperously enough by the Greeks, whom Maximus himself, a Greek man, confesses to love in the Collation here with the princes *ὡς ὁμοπίστοις*.

In the same sense about the highest wisdom of Maximus, Anna Comnena in *Alexiad* book 5 discourses thus and praises her most studious mother Irene; by whose authority, and her husband's, letters thus flourished at Byzantium: *Μέμνημαι τῆς μητρὸς καὶ βασιλίδος, πολλάκις ἀρίστου προκειμένου βιβλίον ἐν χερσὶν φερούσης, καὶ τοὺς λόγους διερευνωμένης τῶν δογματικῶν ἀγίων Πατέρων, μάλιστα δὲ τοῦ φιλοσόφου Μαξίμου καὶ μάρτυρος. Ἐσπουδάκει γὰρ οὐ τοσοῦτον περὶ τὰς φυσικὰς συζητήσεις, ὅποσον περὶ τὰ δόγματα, τὴν ὄντως σοφίαν καρποῦσθαι βουλομένη· καὶ μοι πολλάκις θαυμάζειν ἐπῆει, καὶ θαυμάζουσα ἔφην ποτὲ πρὸς αὐτήν· Πῶς αὐτόθεν πρὸς τοσοῦτον ὕψος ἐπέβλεψας; Ἐγώ γε τρέμω, καὶ οὐδ' ἄκροις ὥσιν ἀποτολμῶ τούτων ἐπαῖειν. Τὸ γὰρ πάνυ θεωρητικόν τε καὶ νοερὸν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς, ὡς φασιν, ἵλιγον παρέχεται τοῖς ἀναγινώσκουσιν. Ἡ δὲ μειδιάσασα ἔφη· Ἐπαινετὴν οἶδα τὴν δειλίαν ταύτην· καὶ οὐδ' αὐτὴ ἀτρέμας ταῖς βίβλοις ταύταις προσείμι· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἀποσπᾶσθαι τούτων οὐ δύναμαι. Σὺ δὲ μοι μικρὸν ἀνάμεινον, καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἐγκύψασα βίβλοις πρότερον, καὶ τῆς τούτων ἀπογεύσῃ ἡδύτης. Ἐτρωσέ μου τὴν καρδίαν ἡ τῶν ῥηθέντων μνήμη, καὶ ὥσπερ εἰς πέλαγος ἄλλο διηγημάτων ἐμπέπτωκα. Ἀλλὰ με θεσμὸς ἱστορίας ἀπείργει·* I remember my mother and Augusta, when often with dinner set before her, she held a book in her hands and more diligently examined the dogmatic treatises of the holy Fathers, and especially what monuments and lucubrations of Maximus the philosopher and martyr exist for us. For she was eager, not so much to attain understanding of natural questions, as to cultivate her mind in dogma, for whom it was established that she should obtain the fruit of true wisdom. And it often came to me to

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wonder; and wondering I once said to her: how with this sex and nature had she raised her eyes to such height? As for me, I said, I am seized with trembling, and do not dare to hear these things even with the tips of my ears. For the altogether contemplative and intellectual power and subtlety of the man, as they say, brings a certain vertigo to readers. To this she said with a gentle laugh: I know this fear not without praise; and neither do I myself approach these books unmoved and so equally: yet I cannot be torn away from them. But you wait for me a little while, and when you have first applied yourself to other books, you will also taste the sweetness of these. The memory of what was said struck my heart, and as if I have fallen into another sea of narratives. But the law of history restrains and recalls me. These things I myself was playing from Anna, in my vein; from whom, and from her mother, I wish those who pant with desire for Maximus of late and reproach the delays so long deferred would learn to approach, lest if approaching ἀνίπτοις ποσί, as they say, and with unclean ears, they may not sufficiently bear his lights or rise to them, and may attribute this not more to his brilliance, or even to the cloud cast by the interpreter, than to their mind not sufficiently cultivated and purified and exercised [108] for the keenness of more divine senses.

Who has approached Maximus with more fortunate effort, and has more happily and safely flown through the heights of contemplations with him as leader and guide, I know no one other than John Cyparissiotēs (who drew from this the appellation of Wise). His Decades exist, with Francis Turrian S.J. as interpreter, although published only in Latin, in which most divinely, according to Maximus, he elucidates the doctrine of Dionysius in the book on Divine Names, and guards against and opens up the abysses into which the affected majesty of his words and almost Platonic style drove especially Gregory Palamas; and so that from there God was compounded for himself, in whom one thing is in fact substance and nature, another ἐνέργεια, and what our people call Operation and Attributes, which same error he eliminated in another excellent and dense lucubration: and it exists in the Royal library: of which same work one or another λόγος, as he calls it, and into which he divides what he calls θέσεις (that is, books) I present in the

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second volume of my new Supplement, as if bringing aid to my Calchas against the most impure heresy of the Palamites; by which the reader may meanwhile solace his desire in any way until there may be at some time both the ability and will for someone to enrich literary and Christian affairs with all that lucubration (which alone would fill a large volume).

**BOOK ONE**  
**ON THE DIFFICULTIES IN SACRED**  
**SCRIPTURE:A RESPONSE**  
**TO THE QUESTIONS OF THALASSIUS**

This work is from *Patrologia Graeca*, Volume 90. The present translation appears to correspond substantively with the translation found in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Volume 136 — St. Maximos the Confessor: *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture, The Responses to Thalassios*, translated by Fr. Maximos Constas and published by The Catholic University of America Press. While the renderings differ in their verbal expression, as is natural with independent translations, the semantic content remains consistent. Readers seeking a more refined and critically apparatus-supported text are directed to the CUA Press edition, which would likely prove the superior scholarly resource. A brief summary of Fr. Maximos's introduction has also been included, as it provides valuable contextual and interpretive guidance for the work.

**INTRODUCTION**

Saint Maximus, rightly surnamed the Confessor, is to be counted among the principal doctors of the Christian East. Monk and theologian, he set himself wholly to the service of the incarnate Word, defending that in

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Christ there are truly two natural wills and two natural operations, human and divine, united in one hypostasis. For this confession he endured exile, mutilation, and imprisonment, and soon after his death his doctrine was solemnly vindicated by the holy Church in the Sixth Ecumenical Council. From that time his voice has resounded in the Byzantine and Orthodox tradition, so that no one who would know that tradition in its inner truth may pass him over in silence.

Among his writings, the Responses to Thalassios stands with the Ambigua as one of his chief works. It gathers his interpretations of difficult passages of divine Scripture and manifests, in concentrated form, the union in him of scriptural exegesis, ascetical experience, patristic theology, and a philosophically disciplined intelligence, all ordered to the saving mystery of Christ.

## DATE AND LITERARY FORM

The Responses seem to belong to the period when Saint Maximus dwelt in a Greek-speaking monastic community in North Africa, most probably in or near Carthage, some years before the Monothelite controversy broke into full view. They are thus contemporary with his other major writings, such as the Ambigua, the Chapters on Love, and the Mystagogy.

The work is cast in the form of “questions and responses” (ἐρωταποκρίσεις), a literary mode well known in the Fathers. It permits the master to answer concrete queries concerning the sense of Scripture, the life of grace, and disputed points of doctrine, without forcing all into a single continuous treatise. In this way it stands at the intersection of two traditions: the biblical questions-and-answers literature on the one hand, and the monastic conferences and spiritual questions on the other. Saint Maximus consciously joins these two, so that sacred exegesis becomes at once doctrinal instruction and spiritual direction.

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### THALASSIOS THE LIBYAN

The work is addressed to Thalassios, a presbyter and abbot, remembered as “great and divinely wise” and praised as an ornament of the churches of Africa. He was both spiritual father and author, known in particular for the Four Centuries on Love, Temperance, and the Spiritual Life, later received into the Philokalia.

Saint Maximus addresses Thalassios with profound reverence and calls himself his servant, yet the surviving correspondence shows that Thalassios habitually turned to Maximus when confronted with scriptural or doctrinal aporiai. Their relation is best described as a friendship in the Lord, grounded in common monastic praxis and a shared desire to penetrate the mysteries of the Word. The Responses are thus not the offspring of a merely academic concern, but the written trace of a living exchange between two experienced guides of souls.

### OUTLINE OF THE WORK

The Responses contain sixty-five questions, which together treat more than eighty distinct scriptural passages, drawn from both Old and New Testaments. Some receive brief replies; others call forth extensive expositions that are almost small treatises. Certain blocks of questions cluster around particular books or themes, for example, the symbolism of numbers, the unity of human consciousness, or difficult narratives in historical books of the Old Testament.

The difficulties proposed are of many kinds: apparent contradictions between scriptural books or within a single author; obscurities of wording; passages whose literal sense seems morally perplexing or spiritually barren; and symbolic expressions whose deeper meaning is hidden. For Saint Maximus, such obscurities are not blemishes in Scripture, but part of its divine pedagogy, compelling the reader to seek a spiritual sense and to pass from the mere letter to the inner logos.

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### THE PASSIONS AND THE READING OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

A characteristic note of Saint Maximus is his conviction that the wound of the passions is also a wound of understanding. Man was created by the Word and for the Word; his mind and senses were ordered to contemplate the logoi of creatures and the meaning of divine revelation. Through the fall, however, the soul's movements were drawn down toward sensible pleasure and away from God. The senses came to dominate the intellect, and human desire, created for the infinite Good, fixed itself on transient objects.

In such a state, the mind clings to surfaces. It abuses creation by seeking in it only delight, and it abuses Scripture by seeking in it only what flatters, reassures, or furnishes a merely earthly wisdom. The passions thus establish a hermeneutical crisis: the world is no longer read as a book of God, and Scripture is no longer read as a medicine for the soul. The work of exegesis cannot be separated from the work of purification; to read rightly, one must be healed by grace and cooperate by ascetic effort.

### THE STAGES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

For Saint Maximus, divine Scripture everywhere instructs the faithful in a threefold path. First there is ascetic practice, wherein the Christian keeps the commandments, wages war against impassioned thoughts, rectifies the misuse of the passions, and acquires the virtues. By this labor man is brought back from a life contrary to nature to a life according to nature, that is, according to Christ, who is himself the living form of all virtue.

Secondly comes natural contemplation, by which the purified mind beholds the logoi of beings, both in creation and in the sacred page. This is not a discursive science, but a simple and luminous insight into the divine wisdom present in all things. Finally there is theology and mystical



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theology, wherein, beyond every concept and image, the mind is united to God by grace and rests in him in an unknowing that surpasses knowledge. At every stage the incarnate Word is the mediator: he assumed our passible nature, purified the natural passions, and opened the way from letter to spirit and from created sign to uncreated life.

## CREATION AND SCRIPTURE AS TWO BOOKS

In continuity with earlier Fathers, Saint Maximus sees the visible world as a kind of script written by God, in which every creature bears within itself a logos that can be read by the purified mind. He goes further, however, and affirms that creation and Scripture are two books of one and the same divine Author, both bearing the impress of the one Word. Creation is a visible text; Scripture is an intelligible cosmos.

The Word, who is in himself simple and immaterial, “thickens,” as it were, in three ways: in the logoi of creatures, in the letters and narratives of Scripture, and finally in the flesh he assumed from the Virgin. These three manifestations mutually interpret one another. The incarnate Word reveals the true meaning of creation and of Scripture; creation and Scripture bear continual witness to the incarnate Word. To remain at the surface of any of the three is to frustrate their purpose as instruments of ascent.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The hidden center of this symbolic theology is found in Saint Maximus’s reading of the Transfiguration of the Lord. On the holy mountain, Christ’s face shines like the sun and his garments become white as light. The disciples, once purified from the veils of the passions by the operation of the Holy Spirit, behold in those garments both the forms of creation and the words of Scripture, now rendered transparent, through which the glory of the Word shines forth.

Symbols, however, both reveal and conceal. They reveal God in a mode suitable to the creature, and in that very suitability they also veil the

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divine transcendence. The same scriptural and cosmic garments hide the Word from those who read carnally and make him known to those whose sight has been healed. The pious reader must therefore allow himself to be led, through the visible and the written, to the invisible and unspeakable, lest he become an idolater of surfaces who clings to the sign and neglects the reality it signifies.

## PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

Saint Maximus receives the whole patristic tradition of exegesis, especially the Alexandrians, the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and the monastic school of Evagrius, but he reorders it according to the fullness of Chalcedonian and later Christology. For him, Scripture is a divine condescension, ordered to the healing of the passions and to the guidance of the faithful toward salvation in Christ. Its ultimate intention is practical and mystical: to form saints.

Because its Author is infinite, Scripture cannot be enclosed in a single sense; it possesses, in a certain manner, an inexhaustible spiritual fecundity. Yet this abundance is not without order. It is governed by the rule of faith, by the dogmas of the Church, and by the single mystery of Christ. The difficult places of Scripture, the *aporiai*, are placed there to provoke the mind to pass from the letter to the spirit by anagogy, that is, by an upward leading. Typology, allegory, tropology, and even the study of names and etymologies are for him instruments within this one movement, whose end is contemplation of the incarnate Word and the recapitulation of all things in him.

## THE SCHOLIA

After composing the Responses, Saint Maximus reviewed the work and prepared a revised form, adding a new prologue and a series of marginal notes, or *scholia*. In that prologue he himself declares these *scholia* to be part

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of the work's integrity and exhorts future readers and copyists to preserve them in their proper places.

The scholia are numerous and of varied length. Some simply clarify a phrase or recall a doctrinal principle; others contain extended theological remarks. Certain of them, written in the first person and marked by Maximus's characteristic language, can reasonably be judged his own. Others, phrased in the third person, seem to proceed from later disciples who had entered deeply into his manner of speaking and thinking. Already by the early Middle Ages the scholia circulated inseparably from the main text, and later Byzantine compilations freely cite them as part of the Maximian inheritance. For the contemporary reader, they remain a valuable help in approaching a work whose density and depth would otherwise be even more daunting.

## PROLOGUE

### MAXIMOS THE MONK TO THE MOST RIGHTEOUS PRESBYTER AND ABBOT THALASSIOS CONCERNING VARIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

Reason is the natural beauty of rational beings, and the beauty of reason is the precise understanding that rational beings attain in accordance with reason. The beauty of such understanding is a fertile state of mind in which virtue is joined to reason. The beauty of this state is the unerring contemplation of true knowledge, the consummation of which is wisdom, since wisdom is obviously the fulfillment of understanding as well as the perfection of reason according to nature. Reason thus perfected is a pure intellect that, through union with its divine Cause, has acquired a relation transcending intellection, according to which the intellect—having ceased from its multiform natural motion and relation to things subsequent to the Cause, and having reached the ineffable limit—cleaves in a manner beyond cognition solely to the all-blessed silence that transcends intellection. Reason and intellection cannot in any way give expression to this silence, which is

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revealed only to those who have experienced it through direct participation, having been counted worthy of spiritual joy transcending all intellection. The sign of this joy, which is readily discernible and distinctly clear to all, is the soul's disposition of absolute imperturbability and detachment with regard to this age.

Knowing, then, that nothing is more proper to rational beings than reason, and that nothing is more fitting for the spiritual nobility of those who love God than the understanding and exercise of reason—and when I speak of "reason" I am not referring to a reasoned discourse, fashioned through mere rhetorical artifice and cleverly concocted to please the ear through lovely speech, which even immoral men are capable of producing. Rather, I am speaking of the hidden reason that nature—essentially and independently of any learning—possesses by its inner character, which it has received for the unerring examination of beings and for the true comprehension of their inner principles. Once this reason has been well formed by means of the virtues, the Holy Spirit of God naturally becomes its intimate companion, and fashions it into a divine image, according to the likeness of the Spirit's own beauty, so that by grace it lacks nothing of the attributes that belong to the Divinity by nature. For reason is the instrument that with consummate skill gathers together the whole manifestation of the divine goodness, which like lightning intelligibly flashes forth in beings. Through this manifestation, reason enters into the magnificently wrought realm of beings, and bears to the generative Cause of beings (to which reason itself is borne) those who have fully transformed the whole impulse of their innate natural desire, no longer held captive by any of the things sequent to the Cause.

When we take care to honor reason and live according to it, we become expert tamers of all the evil passions. And when we are no longer enslaved by anything contrary to nature, we are shown forth as practitioners of all the divine virtues, stripping away, by means of all that is beautiful, the ugliness arising from the soul's attachment to matter, so that the soul appears in spiritual beauty. For where reason predominates, it naturally prevails over the domination of sensation, in which the power of sin has somehow been

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mixed, and which through pleasure moves the soul to pity for its kindred flesh, to which the soul is related in a union according to hypostasis. It follows that the power of sin—having made the impassioned and pleasure-seeking indulgence of the flesh the soul's natural instrument—diverts the soul from a life according to nature, and induces it to become the creator of evil, which has no substantive existence.

For it is evil when a soul endowed with intellect, through an impassioned attachment to the flesh and the world, becomes oblivious of realities that are beautiful by nature. But this condition is removed when reason is in command and with spiritual understanding investigates the origin and nature of the world and the flesh, directing the soul to its kindred realm of intelligible realities. Into this realm the "law of sin" cannot enter in any way at all, for it no longer has sensation as a kind of bridge conducting it to the intellect, for sensation's hold over the soul has been dissolved and dispersed among the objects of sense perception; and the intellect, having passed beyond its relation to such objects and their nature, no longer so much as even perceives them.

Knowing this, I say, I considered it necessary to include in this present work some additional support in the form of the written scholia that appear in the margins. They complete the beauty of the work. They make the conceptual nourishment offered to its readers all the more delectable, and in general serve to clarify the meaning of the argument. For after the publication of this work, I had the opportunity to read through the whole of it, and found certain places that were in need of clarification, along with other places that seemed to require further reflection, as well as still others that stood in need of a brief supplementary note comment, which this present edition has enabled me to include. Thus it was, as I said, that I wrote these scholia, inserting each one in its proper place.

I therefore ask all readers of this book, as well as those who may wish to copy it, to read the scholia and copy them in their proper place as indicated by the special marks that I have given them, so that the work will be complete in every way, being in no way truncated by any negligence.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. The text refers to the flesh, made capable of virtue by the dispositions visibly impressed upon it, as an instrument joined to the soul to manifest its qualities.
2. Sensation is described as the faculty that transmits to the mind the knowledge gained through reflection on things presented to the eyes, allowing the mind to understand the principles present in them. This faculty is like an instrument for the mind's ascent to intelligible realities.
3. It is stated that charity uniquely unites the minds and wills of those who live according to its principles.
4. When the mind surpasses the essence of things, it is drawn to God without thought or understanding, contemplating Him who exists above all essence, knowledge, thought, or intellect.
5. Divine speech and doctrine, depending on the differing dispositions of souls, produce a variety of gifts in those who receive them.
6. Demons, though invisible to us, stir conflicts in the soul through their interaction with earthly things.
7. It is said that we love vice for the sake of pleasure but reject virtue because it brings pain and difficulty.
8. Just as reason, governing passions and vices, makes sensation an instrument of virtue, so too, when governed by sensation, reason becomes a source of sin.
9. The "bright things" refer to those which fall under sensation.
10. The soul, once freed from natural necessity and affection for created things, and united with God by disposition, gains immovable stability in goodness.
11. By "things," the author refers to the essences of realities. What appear as "things" to us are fluxes and processes which reason evaluates in terms of quality and quantity. The deception of the senses, a tool of sin, lies in their engagement with these fluxes.

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12. Humanity, positioned between God and earthly things, failed to direct itself toward God as its origin and end. Instead, turning toward earthly things, humanity became earthly in nature, thereby justly ignoring God.
13. "Composite knowledge" is the understanding gained through the senses' operation on sensory realities. For example, by nature, the pleasure of generation arises from the process of birth, while pain stems from the process of death.
14. Created things, insofar as they are perceptible, possess spiritual principles when related to the mind, and a natural force when related to the senses. Their perceptions and notions are like the tree in the midst of the heart (which is figuratively understood as paradise).
15. One who is freed from bodily necessity and attachment, and is bound to God in mind, no longer knows the sensations of pleasure or pain through experience.

## GREETINGS FROM ST. MAXIMOS TO THALASSIUS THE RIGHTEOUS ABBOT

You who have separated your mind from the affections of the flesh by reason, and through the spirit have entirely abstracted the mind from sense, O man of God: you have indeed made the former (that is, the flesh) the noble parent of virtues, while the latter (that is, the sense) you have made the perennial source of divine knowledge. As for those of us who have hitherto maintained the interaction of soul and body, allowing their union, you teach us that we should direct them only to the performance of virtue and the most noble duties. You have shown that the sense, through the contemplation of the greatness of external things, may be formed: that it is the flesh, through its very nature and appearance, which receives the reflection of the virtues of the soul. It is through the external appearance that it radiates: so that we may imitate the image of virtue in the model of your life, which presents itself to us.

You also show that the sense, through the images of visible things, inscribes in us the intelligible forms and symbols of their inner truths. By this

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power, the mind is led towards the simplicity of spiritual contemplation, unburdened by the diversity or composition that appears in material things. This method removes all error, and reveals the true way by which we pass to the intelligible and spiritual realms, as it is made clear by your knowledge. Your life, drawing us in by its model, provides us with a clearer path to the divine understanding. The influence of the flesh, guiding the sense through affection, directs the soul through its connection to the divine truths, leading the mind through a noble and firm approach to the contemplation of spiritual matters. It is through the spirit of this eloquence, which is united with knowledge and intelligence, that we explore the mysteries. Your own commitment to the modesty of the mind and senses has made manifest the deeper mysteries of the Scripture, which often seem obscure or doubtful to the reader. You have sent me writings that clarify these points, though I, being unskilled in both virtue and knowledge, request a more profound, spiritual, and written exposition of each chapter and question.

Having received and read the letter, my soul, stunned and overwhelmed with a grave sense, requested your forgiveness for the humility of this service. I openly confess the doubts in this matter, so much so that scarcely even those who have progressed greatly in the cultivation of contemplation, and have almost reached the heights of knowledge and the limits of human understanding, could dare approach it. How much less so for me, who am cast low and afflicted on the ground; and like the serpent from the ancient curse, I seem to find no land other than the land of vices and disturbances, which devours like poison, dragging me in circles of unrestrained desires, like a worm in the foul fluid of lust.

However, when I repeatedly tried to call upon you and was unsure if you would hear, I feared that such a plea might bring harm. I felt as though, by making this request, I might somehow confuse myself with others, though we bear two bodies, we have one soul; and so, my possible hesitation and flight from the task, or disobedience, might seem to be a burden to you. Finally, though reluctantly, I took on this task, which far exceeds my strength: I who, indeed, would rather be marked by the label of rashness and laughed at by the crowd, than that any harm should come to my



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request or diminish its value. For, from those things which come from God, nothing is dearer to those with sound minds, nor more acceptable to God, than the love which unites those who are divided and separated, bringing harmony and identity to all minds, to ensure that they are in peace and concord.

You, then, most venerable Father, grant forgiveness for my rash undertaking, and may others, by your prayers, offer their aid in this. Also, I ask that God, through your prayers, show me favor and kindness; for it was a duty I took upon myself, expecting that through a willing mind, divine favor and grace would be granted to me. I pray that He might breathe upon these words with gentleness (or rather, that He would Himself provide the true answers to every question that I seek). For all good gifts and every perfect gift come from Him, the source and parent of all illumination in the sciences and virtues, which are given to the saints and just men according to their merits. Indeed, I took on this duty with confidence, knowing that through the favor of your prayers, divine indulgence would be granted to me.

To each of the chapters, in order and sequence, as they were written by you, I will append, as far as possible, a brief response to the exact wording, and that response will be certain and definitive, as far as my ability allows, and as divine grace has granted me the gift to understand and speak piously, so that, as much as possible, I do not burden the listener with an overly lengthy discourse. Especially since the discourse is addressed to you, who are truly instructed with spiritual knowledge and are keen observers of the divine matters, and have overcome the afflictions of vices and passions, leaving behind all allurements of nature, and now have gained the role of fair and just leaders, the most just judges, holding reason. And may you place your mind in the most profound silence of divine peace, where, without a known reason, one may only perceive the divine joy, the magnitude of which can be taught only by those who have had the privilege of experiencing it. And those who, in a certain sense, may only need a slight indication of doubt, such as those who embrace divine words that shine with brilliance, and the greatness of the spiritual sense in them, like a flame shining brightly.

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However, if it is permissible for me to use this discourse with you, who, according to the Lord's teaching, have already become the salt of the earth and the light of the world, having advanced through the richness of virtues and the copious flow of knowledge: indeed, by your virtues, may you cleanse the faults of others and, with the light of wisdom, dispel the darkness of ignorance. I beg you, the most holy ones, and all of you who will read my humble work, as is fitting, not to set a limit on the spiritual explanation of the chapters that I offer. For I am far from the deeper understanding of divine matters, and in this regard, I am in need of other teachings. But if there is anything you or others can infer or learn from it, you should rather judge it justly, and hold onto a higher and truer understanding, the work and effect of which is a firm conviction of the mind, those who are drawn by a desire for spiritual wisdom. For divine speech indeed has a nature that reflects, like all kinds of plants, seeds, and various creatures (those, I say, who partake of it), illuminating their minds with the brightness of knowledge according to their pious mode and capacity, and through the cultivation of virtues, bearing fruit through action.

I beg you, the most holy ones, and all of you who are about to read my work, as is fitting, not to set a limit to the spiritual explanation of the chapters. For I am far from the understanding of divine things, and I am in need of the teachings of others. But if you can conjecture anything both from me and from others, judge it justly and hold to the higher and true understanding: whose work and effect is a firm conviction of those who are drawn to the desire to understand spiritual matters. For divine speech has this nature: just as it nourishes all kinds of plants and seedlings, and various creatures (those, I mean, who drink from it), in a pious way and in their own capacity, it enlightens with the brilliance of knowledge, and through the cultivation of virtuous action, it shows its fruit, according to the quality of each virtue and knowledge, promising, and through others, becoming more evident. For it is never confined by the narrowness of one; and, with the native infinity it possesses, it does not allow itself to be contained in one mind.

## INTRODUCTION

Since you have first commanded me to speak about the passions and affections that assail us with difficulty, I will begin by describing how many and what types they are; from what principle they originate, and to what end they reach through their own medium. From which faculty of the mind or part of the body do the individual affections arise, and how they shape the mind in an unexpected manner, leading it to an understanding? And how they infect the soul with wicked thoughts of sin, afflicting the body as well. Each affection has its own power and effectiveness, and its occasions and pretexts; which wicked demons use to devise deceitful tricks: invisible encounters and simulations; and how, through one thing or another, they secretly thrust their influence upon us, and lead the unwary into probable error through fraud. These are subtle, small, and large in their force: some weaker attempts and others sharper: invasions and incursions; the strategies of those who conceal themselves, and their evasions; delays, and efforts resembling those of besiegers, both swift and slow. It is as if, before a tribunal, they present a defense for the mind: these things are carried out even to the mind itself, where decisions are made. Clear defeats or victories occur as a result of these affections and dispositions. For this reason, one soul may allow many affections to approach it, either through its own doing or by working with others. Through this process, without delay, they bring their matters to the mind, secretly igniting that bitter internal struggle; and as with things present before us, even though they are not actually there, we are fatigued by labor and at the same time seek and flee these matters. One of these we endure for pleasure, the other proceeds from pain and distress. Similarly, the extent to which they are present in us; and the various forms they take, as they are made manifest in dreams and through sleep. Whether they are bound by some part of the mind or body, or whether they reside fully within the mind and body: whether, existing within, they attract the mind through the affections, just as those external to us draw upon the body, making their influence felt. And when they besiege from the outside, whether their touch on the body affects the mind, which cannot be observed, imprinting the figures of things in the material world and applying a composed form to it. This form of earthly things is attached to the capacity

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of the mind to imagine. Whether a certain order and sequence of actions, maliciously devised, attempts to draw the mind first into other affections and vices, and then, by recruiting others, wage a battle with the soul: indeed, some lead others, and some follow or stick close to them; or whether they randomly disturb the mind, in any order or by chance, with various affections. Whether, without foresight, the mind permits these things to happen, or if these things result from the mind's reasoning. These are the considerations regarding each individual affection and vice: the reason for neglecting the mind's providence; the means of overthrowing each of the enumerated vices and affections; the works, thoughts, and reasoning by which the soul may be freed from them; and with what the soul will cleanse itself of the stains of conscience. Opposing vice with virtue, driving away the wicked demon, the victory will be won. By mastering the motion of those wicked affections and desires, the soul is freed, so that it may rightly examine what is naturally its own. Through the same reasoning, the soul, freed from vices, in the contemplation of the spirit, will be released from the symbols of the material world and will gather knowledge according to reason. Thus, with these things overcome, it will touch upon spiritual matters, and with a pure mind, it will receive simple notions, freed from any distracting thoughts of the senses. Ultimately, all things will be linked together by the primary reason of wisdom, and the mind will be imbued with simple knowledge. When this is attained, the soul, freed from all things, will be united with God in a union that no words can explain. By this union, which is like a sowing of truth, the soul will receive the doctrine of truth and will no longer be changed by sin. There will be no room for the devil to lead the soul into vice, as it will no longer be deceived by the false appearance of evil, but will rejoice in the true good, which adorns all things.

When, therefore, you have investigated the reasoning and methods of these things, and commanded me to expose their causes in an extended commentary; let the discussion on these matters remain in suspense for the time being, until, with the favor of the Divine, and at a more opportune occasion, it may be pursued in greater depth and examined more thoroughly; while I sense within my mind a certain compunction of such

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force that it would attempt to venture into the vast and deep sea of these matters. For I am not ashamed to admit that I have not yet fully understood the insoluble deceits and arts of the impure demons, since the dust of earthly things obscures the eyes of my mind, and does not allow me to clearly perceive the nature and essence of created things; nor does it allow me to separate from the gathering of things that which appears to be, for they have one purpose, to deceive the sense which lacks reason.

Indeed, to investigate and speak of such matters is undoubtedly the task of those who have advanced greatly in the cultivation of contemplation and are raised in mind; those who, through much experience, are able to distinguish between what is honorable and what is not. And certainly, what is most excellent and noble, they have received from God the ability and power, so that they may not only understand well but also be able to clearly express what they have understood in words. However, lest the doctrine on these matters remain entirely untouched and undeveloped in this work, I will briefly mention something about the origin of vices and affections, and to the extent that it seems sufficient for you and those like you, spiritual men, to perceive the beginning and end of these matters, I will proceed to the exposition of the following chapters.

## THE NATURE OF EVIL

Evil neither was nor will ever be according to its own nature, for it does not have any essence, nature, substance, subsistence, power, or action in the beings. It is neither a quality, nor quantity, nor relation, nor place, nor time, nor position, nor creation, nor motion, nor habit, nor passion, nor affection, which is naturally understood to be inherent in any being. Nor does it truly exist in any of these things by natural necessity. It has no principle, middle, or end. But, as if I were to define it in a compact way, I will say: Evil is the deficiency of the powers that are naturally inherent, of the operation towards the end, and nothing else. Or again: Evil is the erroneous judgment of natural powers, an inconsiderate motion tending toward something other than the end. By end, I mean the very cause of things, which

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everything naturally desires, even though the most wicked person, concealing envy with the appearance of benevolence, leads the human being to desire something other than the cause, as the ignorance of that cause becomes the cause of the effect.

Thus, the first man, having fallen short of the movement toward the end of the natural powers, suffered ignorance through the counsel of the serpent, believing that which was not God to be God—him whom the Word of the divine commandment had ordered to be avoided. Thus, having become a transgressor and ignorant of God, he mingled his noetic power wholly and indiscriminately with sense perception. He drew to himself the composite and destructive knowledge of the passions worked upon by the senses, and he was likened to the irrational beasts and became like them, acting, desiring, and willing in every way the same as they. He possessed an even greater lack of reason, exchanging the natural reason for the unnatural. To the extent that man concerned himself solely with the sense-based knowledge of visible things, he tightened the bond of ignorance of God within himself. The more he tightened this bond of ignorance, the more he clung to the experience of sensual enjoyment of the material things known through sense perception. The more he indulged in this, the more he kindled the love of self born of it. The more he earnestly cultivated the love of self, the more he devised many ways of sustaining pleasure, which is both the offspring and the end of self-love.

Since all evil by nature decays along with the methods by which it is sustained, man discovered through experience that pain inevitably follows every pleasure. Toward pleasure, therefore, he directed his entire impulse, while toward pain, his entire avoidance. He strove with all his power to obtain pleasure and labored with all diligence to flee pain, thinking—though this was impossible—that by such methods, he could separate them, and thus possess self-love joined solely with pleasure, entirely free of pain. Yet, through the passion of pleasure, he was ignorant, it seems, of the fact that pleasure cannot exist without pain. For the labor of pain is mixed into pleasure, even if it seems hidden to those who possess it because of the dominance of the passion of pleasure. That which dominates always reveals

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itself, covering the perception of what lies close at hand. From this, the great multitude of passions and countless evils entered into the life of humankind. From this, our life became filled with much groaning, taking as its honor the causes of its own destruction and, due to ignorance, both discovering and preserving for itself the pretexts of corruption. From this, the one nature was divided into countless portions, and we, who are of the same nature, became, like serpents and wild beasts, mutual devourers of one another.

For, contending over pleasure out of self-love and again striving to flee pain for the same reason, we contrive countless origins of destructive passions. For instance, if we focus on self-love through pleasure, we generate gluttony, pride, vainglory, arrogance, greed, covetousness, tyranny, boasting, insolence, madness, conceit, delusion, contempt, hubris, profanity, levity, dissipation, licentiousness, frivolity, vanity, silliness, mockery, derision, verbosity, untimely speech, obscene speech, and many other such things of this kind. But if the manner of self-love is afflicted more through pain, we generate anger, envy, hatred, hostility, resentment, insult, slander, defamation, sadness, despair, hopelessness, blasphemy against providence, indifference, neglect, dejection, depression, faint-heartedness, untimely grief, weeping, downcastness, lamentation, jealousy, rivalry, contentiousness, and whatever else belongs to the disposition deprived of the causes of pleasure. Further, from the mixture of pain and pleasure arising from certain other causes—this is what some call the composite of wickedness formed from opposing parts—we generate hypocrisy, irony, deceit, pretense, flattery, people-pleasing, and whatever other devices of mixed cunning there are.

To list all of these and speak of them now, along with their specific forms, manners, causes, and circumstances, is intolerable. Their examination is entrusted to the power of God, who grants the ability for each matter to be investigated in its own context.

## ANOTHER EXPLANATION OF EVIL

Now, as I have previously stated, evil is the ignorance of the good cause of all things, which, having blinded the human intellect while clearly

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opening the senses, entirely estranged him from divine knowledge and filled him with passionate knowledge of perceptible things. By partaking of this knowledge through the senses alone, man—like irrational animals—discovered through experience that the sustenance of perceptible things was essential to the maintenance of his physical nature. Consequently, having missed entirely the beauty of the noetic, divine splendor, he mistakenly identified the visible creation as God, deifying it on account of its necessity for the body's sustenance. Thus, regarding his body as naturally dependent on the creation that was thought to be God, he came to love it, as was to be expected, and devoted himself to it with all diligence, focusing solely on the care and attention of the body, worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. For no one can worship the creation without attending to the body, just as no one can worship God without purifying the soul through virtues. In attending to the body through this corruptible service, man became self-loving and, as such, was perpetually involved in pleasure and pain. He continually ate of the tree of disobedience—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—wherein, through sensory experience, good and evil were mingled according to his perception, and he retained this delusional "knowledge."

And perhaps one might say that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the visible creation, and they would not err from the truth. For its participation naturally produces both pleasure and pain. Moreover, since creation also contains spiritual principles (logoi) in the things that are seen, which nourish the intellect, and since it has, again, a natural power that delights the senses but corrupts the intellect, it was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—possessing the knowledge of good when it is contemplated spiritually, but of evil when it is grasped physically. For it becomes a teacher of passions to those who partake of it physically, bringing them into forgetfulness of divine things. This is why God, perhaps, forbade it to man, postponing for a time his participation in it, so that first, as was most just, man might come to recognize his own cause through partaking of grace, and having been sharpened for impassibility and steadfastness by the immortality granted through grace, might, having become god through



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deification, safely and freely, together with God, explore the creations of God and receive their knowledge as a god, not as a human.

Thus, having the same knowledge as God, by grace, concerning beings, with wisdom, and having transformed his intellect and senses towards deification, he would come to understand. Concerning the tree, it must be understood here according to an interpretation that can harmonize with all, while preserving the more mystical and superior understanding for those capable of such mysteries, which we also honor through silence. I mentioned the tree of disobedience briefly now, wishing to show how ignorance concerning God deified creation. And the worship of creation is clearly this: the experience of pleasure and pain in the body within the human race. Through these, the entire mire of evils was introduced into human life, variably and diversely, manifesting in innumerable forms, beyond what words could describe, depending on how each person who partakes in human nature possesses and acts upon the part of their being that pertains to what appears outwardly. I mean the body, which, by its attachment, compels one into slavish servitude through both the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain, giving rise to countless forms of passions as circumstances, situations, and the tendencies toward such things coincide. Through this, one seeks constantly to obtain pleasure for the sake of living together and to remain entirely untouched by pain, pursuing what is impossible and aiming to achieve it through self-love. Around this there arises a kind of mixed knowledge that cannot reach its goal. For, since the whole nature of bodies is perishable and subject to scattering, the more one employs various means to preserve it, the more firmly its destruction is established.

Thus, constantly fearing and unwillingly tending to the beloved, and unwittingly keeping what is not loved through what is loved, one becomes bound to things that cannot by nature remain stable. And because of this, the disposition of the soul changes along with the perishable things, being carried along unstably with what flows, and failing to perceive its own destruction due to the complete blindness of the soul toward the truth. Of all these evils, there is a deliverance and a concise path to salvation: the true love of God according to knowledge, and the complete renunciation of the

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

soul's attachment to the body and this world. Through this renunciation, by casting off the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain, we are freed from wicked self-love. We are elevated to the knowledge of the Creator, exchanging evil for good in a spiritual self-love, separated from bodily affection. Through this noble self-love, we do not cease to worship God, ever seeking the establishment of the soul from Him.

For this is the true worship and truly pleasing to God: the precise care of the soul through virtues. Thus, the one who does not pursue bodily pleasure and does not at all fear pain becomes impassive and, along with the self-love that gave birth to these (pleasure and pain), entirely puts to death all passions arising through and from them, along with the chief source of evils: ignorance. United in intent, these are destroyed together, and the person becomes wholly aligned with what is established, unmoving, and naturally good—always remaining the same and steadfast. Such a one abides completely unmoved with God, reflecting the glory of God with unveiled face, and beholding the divine and inaccessible glory through the luminous brightness that shines within. Of all these evils, there is a deliverance and a concise path to salvation: the true love of God according to knowledge, and the complete renunciation of the soul's attachment to the body and this world. Through this renunciation, by casting off the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain, we are freed from wicked self-love. We are elevated to the knowledge of the Creator, exchanging evil for good in a spiritual self-love, separated from bodily affection. Through this noble self-love, we do not cease to worship God, ever seeking the establishment of the soul from Him.

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face, and beholding the divine and inaccessible glory through the luminous brightness that shines within. Since, therefore, the path of the saved has been shown to us by the Word as straight and easy, let us, as far as we are able, renounce the pleasure of this present life and its pain. Let us also teach those under us to do the same with much exhortation, and let us utterly free and be freed from every design of passions and demonic wickedness. Let us claim only love, so that no one will be able to separate us from God—neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor danger, nor sword, nor any of the things enumerated in that place by the holy Apostle.

Through the active knowledge of love that remains immovable within us, let us receive from Him the eternal and ineffable joy and establishment of the soul. Being deemed worthy of this, let us maintain a saving ignorance toward the world. No longer, as before, with the unveiled face of sensation, seeing the appearance of sensory glory, which is the evident cause of the passions, but rather with the unveiled face of the intellect, freed from every veil of the senses, let us reflect the glory of God in virtues and spiritual knowledge. Through this, union by grace naturally arises. For just as when we were ignorant of God, we made the creation, known to our senses for the enjoyment and establishment of the body, into a god; so too, now receiving the knowledge of God attainable through the intellect by action, and recognizing that the establishment of the soul in being and well-being comes from Him, we shall disregard every sensory experience.

## EDITORIAL NOTE ON THE DOCTRINE ABOVE

Here the divine Maximus is found to agree with our venerable Father Francisco Suárez, S.J., who teaches the same doctrine concerning the nature of evil, in accordance with the Fathers. Thus Suárez writes (DM XI, sect. I, n. 3): “From this principle, however, the Fathers further inferred that evil formally or malice, from which some thing is denominated evil, is not some thing or positive form, nor is it mere negation, but is privation of perfection due in being. The reason for the first part is that every positive

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thing is good, as has been said. The reason for the second part is that a thing is not evil because it does not have more excellent perfection if it is not due to it; otherwise every creature would be evil because it does not have the perfection of the creator. And thus the third part remains, sufficiently confirmed by the sufficient enumeration of parts. And Dionysius confirms this extensively in chapter 4 of the Divine Names, where in this sense he says that evil is not existing, nor is it something, but is privation of proper and suitable perfection and goodness, and again he adds that evil is weakness of good, which comes to the same thing; and St. Basil in the Monastic Constitutions, chapter 3: "Vice," he says, "is nothing but the desertion of virtue"; and in the homily "That God is not the author of evils": "Depravity does not subsist," he says, "nor can we produce its essential substance (that is, real and positive); for privation of good is evil." Similarly St. Gregory of Nyssa, homily II on the Canticles: "There is no other substance of evil," he says, "than separation from good." And he has similar things in the Great Catechetical Orations, chapters 5, 6, and 7; St. John of Damascus, book II on the Orthodox Faith, chapter 4, book IV, chapter 2: "Nothing," he says, "is evil except privation of good, as darkness is of light." St. Athanasius has the same opinion in the oration against the Idols; St. Nazianzus, oration 9, near the end, and oration 38; St. Epiphanius, heresies 24 and 66; St. John Chrysostom, homily II on Acts, near the end; and Justin, questions 46 and 73 to the Gentiles, says that evil is nothing besides corruption and depravation and privation of good. And in the former question he proves expressly that it is not a positive thing; in the latter he excellently confirms that it is not mere negation. Among the Latin Fathers, however, the principal author and confirmer of this opinion is St. Augustine, book XI of the City of God, chapter 9: "No nature of evil exists, but loss of good has received the name of evil"; the same, book XII, from the beginning, and in the Enchiridion, chapter 11: "Things, insofar as they are certain natures, cannot be evil"; and chapter 24, dealing with sin, he says it is the first evil of rational creature, that is, the first privation of good; and in book LXXXIII of Questions, question 7, he says the name of evil is taken from privation of species. The same, book III of Confessions, chapter 7, and book VII, from

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chapter 5 to 16, and book I against the Adversaries of the Law and the Prophets, chapter 5, book I of True Religion, chapter 40, and the book on the Nature of Good against the Manicheans, and book II on the Morals of the Manicheans, and the book on Free Will, last chapter, where he disputes specifically about the evil of fault and says it is nothing and therefore is not from God, accommodating to this that from John 1: "Without him nothing was made," that is, sin. St. Ambrose, book on Isaac and the Soul, chapter 7: "What is malice," he says, "but lack of good?" St. Jerome has the same opinion on Matthew 27, Isaiah 18, Amos 3; St. Gregory, 36 Morals, chapter 24, alias 32, and book I on I Kings, chapter 14, near the beginning, where he speaks specially of the evil of fault. Also St. Fulgentius, on Faith to Peter, chapter 21; St. Anselm, book on the Concord of Foreknowledge and Free Will, chapter 1, at the end, and book I on the Conception of the Virgin, chapter 27, and ex professo, book on the Fall of the Devil, from chapter 7; St. Bernard, homily VI of Advent. And finally St. Leo the Pope favors this, epistle 93, chapter 6. And all theologians embrace this doctrine, especially St. Thomas, in the said question 48, I, and I-II, q. 54, a. 3, q. 71, a. 1, q. 72, a. 1, and q. 2 on Evil, a. 2, and 9, and others In II, dist. 34 and 35, and 40."

### THE CRITIQUE OF PHOTIUS' WORK [P.G. 90]

The divine man and valiant confessor labors to resolve these questions. His speech, however, is long, filled with extended periods, and marked by joyous hyperbatons and growing circumlocutions, not very strict in maintaining the propriety of words. From this, throughout the entire work, both obscurity and difficulty in understanding emerge. The harshness of his more inflated diction, especially in its composition and the breakdown of his sentences, shows that he does not even aim to be pleasant to the ear. Furthermore, his choice of words, intended to gather grace and captivate the reader, is not sufficiently smooth; instead, it is adopted in a simple and careless manner. Moreover, his style nearly dulls his own followers, as his solutions stray far from the literal meaning and established history—or rather, from what was originally sought in the questions themselves. Still, for

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those who may delight in anagogical and contemplative interpretations (that is, spiritual and mystical senses), they will find nowhere more varied or carefully elaborated responses. For, while he collects various opinions on certain questions, he adds insights which, in their elegance and skill, are not less beautiful and ingenious than those in his own work. Throughout it all, however, the man's piety and sincere love for Christ shine forth. Since a good divine inspiration has prompted you to ask me to write and send the notes I have made on those chapters which appeared to me to be doubtful, I have placed those that seemed most necessary to me first.

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## QUESTION I

ARE AFFECTIONS OF THEMSELVES EVIL, OR DO  
THEY RESULT FROM THEIR USE? FOR  
EXAMPLE, PLEASURE AND SORROW, DESIRE AND FEAR,  
AND THOSE WHICH FOLLOW FROM THEM?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

These affections, like the others, were not originally created with humans. Otherwise, they would contribute to the definition of nature. However, I say, as I learned from the great Gregory of Nyssa, that man, having fallen from perfection, is subject to these affections, which arise in that part of nature which is more distant from reason; in which, instead of the divine and blessed image, there immediately appeared, from the time of the fall, a conspicuous and manifest likeness to the brute animals in man. For it was fitting that, the dignity of reason being overwhelmed and obscured, the human race should justly be punished by those marks of irrationality that they had voluntarily and willingly embraced. Yet, by the wise dispensation of God, man, educated, would emerge to the sense of rational magnificence.

Moreover, these affections also contribute to the good of those who are devoted to and cultivate virtue; then, indeed, when by wise counsel, they withdraw from earthly things and take them on in order to attain the

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heavenly. As an example, desire, the movement of the intelligent soul seeking the divine, produces; pleasure, the harmless joy of the will seeking divine charisms; fear, the careful concern to avoid the deserved punishment for future sins; sorrow and mourning, the penitence by which the present evil is to be corrected. And, to summarize, in the manner of expert physicians, who remove the noxious venom from the body of a venomous snake by neglect, so do they use these affections, to remove either the present evil or that which is to come; and to acquire and preserve virtue and knowledge. Therefore, as I said, these affections are good, according to their use, in those who subject all sense and thought to the obedience of Christ. Now, if anything concerning these is said in Scripture about God or the saints: indeed, in God, it signifies, for our sake and as is fitting for us according to nature, that from our affections, the provident processes of salvation and benefit are signified; but concerning the saints, it is so that we may express their affections and dispositions of the intelligent soul toward God by bodily expressions, just as we use natural affections.

## SCHOLIUM

1. How and when these affections become good and honorable.
2. The divine Scripture forms different modes of Providence in regard to our matter, by the names of the affections known to us.
3. Scripture signifies the affection and disposition of the saints toward God by these names.

## QUESTION II

SINCE ALL THE SPECIES THAT FILL THE WORLD WERE  
CREATED BY THE CREATOR IN THE SPAN OF  
SIX DAYS, WHAT DOES THE FATHER DO AFTERWARD?  
FOR THE LORD SAYS, "MY FATHER IS WORKING UNTIL NOW,  
AND I AM WORKING." DOES HE SPEAK OF  
THE CONSERVATION OF THE SPECIES ONCE CREATED?



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### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

God, who has once completed the rationales of created things and the essences of all things, as He knows Himself, is still working; not only in the sense that He preserves them in the natural order of things, but also in that He forms and produces the parts that lie within their power, bringing them into actual existence and nurturing the given existence. Moreover, Providence, according to the universal pattern, cultivates particular things, until, by the united will and desire of all, particular things are moved toward beatitude in accordance with the universal nature's rationality. Thus, the will's decision and the direction of the mind's intention aim to bring about a harmony, where nothing particular differs from the universal. But one and the same rationality is understood in all things, without division, and in this way, the grace of deification in reality and action is shown in the whole universe. For this reason, God and the Word became man, and He says: "My Father is working until now, and I am working." The Father indeed works with a good, pleasing will; the Son, however, works Himself, and the Holy Spirit completes in substance both the Father's will in all good things and the Son's operation. Thus, through all things and in all things, the one God is understood in the Trinity, who, according to His measure, acts in each and every one by grace, and in the whole universe, without diminishing the natural existence of the soul.

#### SCHOLIUM

1. In matter: that is, the substance of all things, which exists in potency, and from which singular things are made individually; whose origin, God visibly works.
2. He speaks of the assimilation of the singular to the universal, the union of all men according to one movement of the soul, united with the rational order of nature; which God accomplishes through Providence,

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so that there is, for all, a unity of nature and the will, united with God and with each other by the gift of the Spirit.

3. When He says "ἴσως" (perhaps), it means the same as "ὁμοίως" (similarly).

### QUESTION III

WHO, ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL, IS THE ONE IN THE CITY WHO CARRIES A WATER JAR, WHOM THE DISCIPLES MEET AND ARE INSTRUCTED TO FOLLOW? AND WHO IS THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, AND WHY IS HIS NAME WITHHELD BY THE EVANGELISTS? WHAT ALSO IS THE LARGE UPPER ROOM, WHERE THE TREMENDOUS MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE SUPPER IS CARRIED OUT?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Scripture withheld the name of the man to whom the Savior sent two disciples to prepare the Passover; not only that, but also the name of the city to which they were sent. From this, according to the first interpretation that comes to mind, I believe that the city represents this world, which is presented to the senses. The man, in turn, represents the whole nature of humanity, to whom the disciples of God and the Word are sent as its instructors, preparing for the prior feast of the divine and human banquet, according to both the old and new covenants. The first, by that part of philosophy which deals with action, cleanses all nature from corruption; the second, by the higher doctrine of contemplation, elevates the mind through the lights of knowledge to the spectacle of intellectual truths. The disciples, Peter and John, are symbolic of action and contemplation, respectively.

Therefore, it is fitting and appropriate that the one who carries the water jar is the first to meet them, signifying all those who, by the philosophy of action, like the water jar, bear the grace of the Spirit, which, through faith,

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purifies and nourishes the faculties of virtue. After him comes the one who shows the large upper room—the master of the house—also representing those who, by contemplation, have built the summit of knowledge and doctrine, receiving the Word of God as it befits divinity. The house is, finally, a symbol of piety: a place where the soul, striving for action, makes its way toward virtue. The mind of the master of the house rules over this, because nature has already possessed it, shining with the light of divine mystical knowledge; and through this reason, the soul, which strives for action, is blessed by the presence and feast of the Word. Thus, one man is mentioned, and yet two: one, because of the unity of nature; the other, because nature is divided into two classes: those who focus on action and those who focus on contemplation. The Scripture, mixing them by the spirit, calls them one.

If anyone wants to contemplate these individuals as specific persons, they will not err in truth. Each soul is a city, to which, as disciples of the Word and God, the principles of virtue and knowledge are constantly sent. He who carries the water jar is the strength of moral temperance, bearing the grace of baptismal faith, which is sustained by the power of continence. The house is built from various and diverse strong virtues, through which the status of virtue and its practices are formed. The upper room is the broad and spacious mind, cultivated in knowledge, adorned with the divine mysteries and arcane doctrines. The master of the house is the mind, expanded in the splendor of virtue's halls and the magnificence of sublime knowledge, to which the Word, with His disciples, comes, bringing an abundant supply of knowledge and truth. Truly, the Passover is the transition of the Word to the human mind; by this, to all those worthy of it, God's Word, coming in mystery, bestows fullness of His gifts.

## SCHOLIUM

1. In these, the hidden truth is revealed. From those things which are, we come to know their Creator, who truly exists in their rational nature. Time and nature are called those things that are comprehended under time and nature, and that which is subject to them, whatever is created,

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whether it can be understood only by the mind or also perceived by the senses. God's Word comes to those who are worthy. Through these things, we understand Him and see how He reveals Himself in all things, becoming conformable to each person's capacity and merit. He calls spiritual concepts of time and nature, understanding their rational forms by transcending matter and form, that is, from the flesh and the world, for the sake of Him who was made for us.

### QUESTION IV

IN WHAT MANNER DID THE LORD COMMAND HIS  
DISCIPLES NOT TO HAVE TWO TUNICS,  
WHEN HE HIMSELF, AS SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST  
ATTESTS, HAD FIVE? AND WHAT ARE  
THESE GARMENTS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Savior did not have five tunics, but rather one over a bare undergarment or tunic, and an outer cloak. The one worn over the bare body is called a tunic or undergarment, while the outer cloak is referred to as a toga or pallium, and other garments are simply called a vestment. Mystically, the great John the Evangelist, through the rudimentary sense of history and literal meaning, imparted the spiritual significance through the Holy Spirit: that through the actions narrated, our minds would be led to the truth of what is understood. The tunic of the Savior, woven from above and undivided, which was not torn by those who led Him to the cross, represents the indivisible and connected union of virtues. It signifies the suitable and proper covering of the Word applied to us, a grace woven from above through the Spirit. The outer cloak, on the other hand, represents the world, which falls under the senses, divided into the four elements, which are divided like four garments, spiritually crucifying the Lord within us. Thus,

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

the demons divide the visible world, which consists of the four elements, into which they entice through the senses, making those who are ignorant of divine reason. The tunic of virtues, although it is taken from us by the sluggishness of the spirit, does not persuade us to think that virtue is vice. Therefore, we should not seek solace in the five garments of the Savior due to greed, but understand the counsel of Scripture and the reason by which the Lord is crucified within us: through our laziness in cultivating good works, by neglecting the good gifts given to us by God, and by yielding to vice, we divide the creation of the Word, as demons divide the creation of the garments. We should guard the good gifts given to us by God and see creation, according to what is honorable, as one with His glory.

Finally, the tunic of the Word, which represents the study of good works (virtues), should be kept intact by us. However, if one wishes to interpret the tunic woven from above as representing the world of incorporeal substances, which can be understood only by the mind, and the outer cloak as the bodily nature, which is divided by Scripture into four parts like the elements, one will not err. The body is indeed dissolved by the death of the flesh when it receives the power of transgression against us, but the soul, whose origin and kinship are heavenly, is not destroyed.

## QUESTION V

WHAT IS THE "CURSED EARTH" IN THE WORKS OF ADAM,  
ACCORDING TO THE SPIRITUAL AND DEEPER SENSE?  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT ADAM MUST EAT THE EARTH IN  
SORROW? AND WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IT BEARING  
THORNS AND THISTLES, AND ADAM EATING THEM?  
FINALLY, WHY DOES HE EAT BREAD IN THE SWEAT OF HIS  
BROW? NO MAN HAS EVER BEEN SEEN TO EAT GRASS  
OR THE EARTH, AND THOSE WHO EAT BREAD, ACCORDING  
TO HISTORICAL MEANING, DO NOT DO SO IN  
THE SWEAT OF THEIR BROW

## BOOK ONE

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The cursed earth in the works of Adam is the flesh of Adam, which, through Adam's actions (namely, the earthly affections of the mind, which are marked by the infertility of virtue), is subject to the curse. It is always barren and incapable of producing good works, just as the works of God should. Through much toil and sorrow, Adam consumes a meager pleasure from it. This fleeting earthly pleasure produces, in place of it, cares and worries, which sprout like thorns; and, like thistles, they bring immense temptations and dangers, tormenting Adam with reasoning, anger, and desire in such a miserable way that he can hardly prepare for himself, like withering grass, the good health and constitution he needs. This is to say, he can scarcely achieve what is necessary. Finally, after a long repetition of evils and sufferings, he must eat in the sweat of his brow, enduring the hardship of the senses, the distress of the curious exploration of things that fall under the senses. Bread, in this sense, represents sustenance for this earthly life—whether through work or other means of livelihood.

Or, the earth represents the heart of Adam, made subject to the curse due to his transgression, so that he lost the celestial goods and now, through action and the efforts of philosophy, eats this earth. Through much rumination, it is cleansed from the curse of his actions, which bring shame and degradation. Again, like thorns, thoughts of the body grow within him, and like thistles, painful and difficult troubles arise. From Providence and judgment, considerations are made, and through reasoning, these things are clearly explained, like spiritual grass that is plucked by contemplation. So, like in the sweat of his brow, this is cultivated through knowledge and skill in understanding, and through the incorruptible divine knowledge, the true bread of life is obtained. This is the only true bread that sustains the incorruption of those who partake. Therefore, the earth that Adam labors to consume is the purity of the heart, which is perfected by the cultivation of action; the grass represents the knowledge of created things through natural

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

contemplation; and the bread, finally, is the true divine knowledge, the holiest doctrine.

### SCHOLIUM

1. The works of Adam are called "shameful allures": for only God works virtues, in those who are willing, taking their will as an instrument to manifest their virtues.

## QUESTION VI

ACCORDING TO THE HOLY AUTHOR JOHN, "WHOEVER IS BORN OF GOD DOES NOT SIN, BECAUSE HIS SEED REMAINS IN HIM, AND HE CANNOT SIN." (1 JOHN 3:9).

BUT, THE ONE WHO IS BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT, IS THIS ONE BORN OF GOD? WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WE, WHO ARE BORN OF GOD THROUGH BAPTISM, MAY STILL BE ABLE TO SIN?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

There are two modes of birth from God in us: one, indeed, provides the full potentiality of grace, given to those who are born, through the gift of adoption; the other brings the full actuality of grace, transforming the will, which is in harmony with the purpose of God. The former mode provides grace through faith alone, while the latter, in addition to faith, grants the divine likeness through knowledge in action, making it effective for those who receive it. In the first mode, the mind is not yet fully separated from earthly desires, and it is not yet fully imbued with the Holy Spirit through participation in the divine mysteries. Therefore, such individuals, although born again, are still prone to sin, as the mind may still be inclined towards sin. The Holy Spirit does not compel the will, but transforms it willingly into the divine nature.

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For those who have been transformed through knowledge of God, their will, now united to God, is not subject to sin. Just as the eye cannot be deceived once it has seen the sun, it cannot mistake the moon or the stars in its place, so too the will, once divinely transformed, cannot turn away from the divine truth. However, those who are born again in baptism through the Holy Spirit receive the grace of adoption, but their will still has the potential to sin, as it has not yet been fully purified from earthly inclinations. But if we prepare ourselves spiritually to receive the effect of water and the Spirit, the grace of baptism will purify us, and the Holy Spirit will guide us toward the perfection of virtue. It remains for us to fully offer ourselves to the Spirit through our will, so that we may be fully transformed and empowered to live according to God's will.

## SCHOLIUM

1. This response is also very fitting and relevant for those who inquire whether Adam was created mortal or immortal.
2. "Inactive faith," it is said, has the potential for the grace of adoption, which remains dormant unless activated by the commands and will of those who have it.
3. The response affirms two modes of birth: one according to the essence of the entire human nature, through which adoption is granted in potential; the other, according to the will and purpose of the mind, through which the Holy Spirit transforms the willing soul into divine grace. According to the first mode, those who are born are still capable of sin, while according to the second mode, once the mind and will are deified, they cannot sin. Hence, the Apostle speaks of the difficulty but not the impossibility of this transformation.



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### QUESTION VII

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PHRASE, "FOR THIS REASON THE  
GOSPEL WAS PREACHED ALSO TO THE DEAD,  
THAT THEY MIGHT BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO MEN IN THE  
FLESH, BUT LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD IN THE SPIRIT"?  
HOW ARE THE DEAD JUDGED IN THE FLESH?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

It is a common practice in Scripture to change tenses, to use the future as if it were the past, and vice versa. The present is often expressed in the place of the past or future, as is evident to those familiar with it. There are those who interpret the term "the dead" in Scripture to refer to those who died before the coming of Christ—such as those who lived during the time of the flood, or those in Sodom, Egypt, or other places who suffered divine judgment and destruction for their sins. These individuals are called "the dead" not so much because of ignorance of God, but because of their sins and injustices toward one another, for which they received punishment.

Thus, the Scripture says that the gospel was preached to them—the great proclamation of salvation—judged once according to the flesh, that is, having received punishment for their actions in the flesh, in the life of this world. But they now "live according to God in the spirit," meaning that their souls, having been in the realm of the dead, received the knowledge of true faith. This was through Christ, who descended to the dead to bring salvation to those who believed. Therefore, the phrase "the gospel was preached to the dead" refers to those who died in their sins, either before the coming of Christ or those who died for their faith, in whom the gospel was proclaimed, and they were judged according to human standards in their bodily lives. But now, through faith, they live according to God in the spirit.

In another interpretation, "the dead" may refer to those who carry the mortification of Christ in their bodies, who endure suffering and

## BOOK ONE

tribulation in this life for His sake. These individuals live according to God's will, and even though they die to this world, they live in the spirit. Thus, those who are dead because of God, judged in the flesh by the trials and persecutions they face, will live according to God in the spirit, as they endure the sufferings of this world with joy and perseverance.

### QUESTION VIII

WHEN SAINT JOHN SAYS, "GOD IS LIGHT," AND A LITTLE  
LATER, "IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT,  
AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT," HOW CAN THE SAME BEING BE  
CALLED BOTH LIGHT AND IN THE LIGHT  
(AS IF ANOTHER IS IN THE OTHER)?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The one who truly exists as light by His essence is God. He has truly become light to those who walk in Him through the practice of virtues. Just as those who participate in the light—such as all the saints—shine with religious piety and thus are in the light according to essence, so also the light according to essence is present in the light according to participation through humanity and mercy.

Therefore, if we are in God as in light, through virtue and knowledge, then God also is in us as light in the light. For the one who exists as light by nature, God, becomes the light in the light, which is an imitation—just as a primary form exists in an image. Or rather, light is God the Father, in the light, in the Son and the Holy Spirit—not as separate or different lights, but as one and the same light according to essence, and according to the mode of existence and subsistence, shining as the Trinity.

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### QUESTION IX

WHAT DOES SAINT JOHN MEAN WHEN HE SAYS, "BELOVED,  
NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IT HAS  
NOT YET APPEARED WHAT WE SHALL BE"? AND HOW DOES  
SAINT PAUL SAY, "BUT GOD HAS REVEALED IT TO US  
THROUGH THE SPIRIT; FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL  
THINGS, EVEN THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD"?  
WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY PHILOSOPHIZING ABOUT  
WHAT WE WILL BE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Saint John the Evangelist speaks of the future mode of the deification of those who, by faith, are children of God in this life, but he says that the nature of the future goods is still unknown because the substance of those goods, in its full manifestation, has not yet appeared. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Therefore, he points out that the future glory and state of deification have not yet been made fully visible to us. Saint Paul, on the other hand, says that God has revealed to him the plan for our future goods through the Spirit. However, he does not claim to understand the exact mode of deification through the divine plan. He clarifies that, while he has received the revelation of the divine will, he is still uncertain about the specific manner of the deification process. Thus, Saint Paul acknowledges that he perceives this divine revelation but does not yet fully comprehend the totality of it.

Both apostles agree, though their views might seem to diverge on the surface, as they are both inspired by the same Spirit. Saint John speaks of the unknown future glory and the faith by which we await it, while Saint Paul elaborates on the divine revelation and his partial understanding of it. The apostles' different perspectives are complementary rather than contradictory. Saint Paul further elaborates on this when he says that he

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currently knows "in part" and "through a mirror," but there will come a time when we will know fully, face to face, and when we will be made perfect. This resonates with the statement from Saint John: "It has not yet appeared what we shall be." This reflects the same truth that the full revelation of our future state in God has not yet been made manifest.

### QUESTION X

WHEN IT IS SAID THAT "HE WHO FEARS IS NOT PERFECT IN LOVE," HOW IS IT THAT NOTHING IS LACKING TO THOSE WHO FEAR? FOR IF NOTHING IS LACKING, THEN SURELY THEY ARE PERFECT. HOW, THEN, IS IT THAT THE ONE WHO FEARS IS NOT PERFECT?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The elegant and beautiful order of the divine Scriptures, according to the salutary rule of the Spirit, distinguishes the stages of those who move from the turmoil of external passions toward divine unity. Those who are just beginning their journey, so to speak, in the courts of the divine virtues, are called "those who fear"; those who have progressed a little further and are acquiring a more mature virtue are called "those who are advancing"; and those who, by spiritual knowledge, have reached the very peak of the truth and virtue are called "perfect."

Therefore, the one who fears the Lord and turns away from his former life, in which he was corrupted by vices, does not lack anything in the sense that he has fulfilled the duty of one who is just beginning his journey. Even though he has not yet achieved a stable habit of virtue, nor has he become a partaker of the wisdom that the Apostle speaks of among the perfect, he is still lacking nothing, as his heart is fully given to the divine commandments. Likewise, the one who is advancing, though he has not yet attained the perfect knowledge of the divine, also lacks nothing in terms of the goods appropriate to his level. In another sense, those who diligently

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practice the active part of philosophy, still driven by the fear of divine judgments, are understood to be the ones who fear, as the Psalmist says: "Nothing is lacking to those who fear the Lord." This is true even though they are not yet sharing in the full and pure mystical knowledge of the perfect. But those who, through contemplative theology, have purged their minds of all earthly thoughts and have become pure reflections of divine beauty—those are the ones who love God perfectly.

Thus, nothing is lacking to those who fear the Lord, as the Psalmist says, because their fear, which is a reverence for the divine, is not based on the fear of judgment, but on the understanding of God's infinite and eminent power. These individuals, though they are not yet fully united with God in love, do not lack anything in terms of their reverence and love for God. The Prophet and the Evangelist agree in this. The former says that nothing is lacking to those who fear the Lord, while the latter says that the one who fears God because of the stain of sin is not yet perfect in love. According to this interpretation, those who fear God because of His great and terrifying power are those who love and are loved in return, tempering their fear with love.

Indeed, fear may sometimes turn into contempt when it is based on punishment, whereas confidence and freedom, which naturally arise from love, are hindered by fear. This is the difference between a pure fear, which is based on reverence for God's majesty, and an imperfect fear, which arises from the expectation of punishment for sin. Therefore, there are two kinds of fear: the pure fear that is enduring and eternal, and the impure fear that is transient, tied to the fear of punishment. The Apostle teaches that those who fear in the impure sense are not perfect in love, while the Psalmist says that those who fear with pure fear lack nothing.

## SCHOLIUM

1. There are two types of fear: one pure and enduring, and the other impure and fleeting. The just are those who, due to the purity of their conscience, maintain a reverent fear of God, acknowledging His infinite

## BOOK ONE

power. The sinners, on the other hand, experience fear based on the expectation of punishment for their sins. The pure fear, as the Psalmist says, remains forever, while the impure fear is transient and can be erased by repentance. Therefore, the Apostle says that one who is driven by impure fear is not perfect in love, while the Prophet affirms that those who fear with pure fear lack nothing.

### QUESTION XI

WHO IS THE PRINCE OF THE ANGELS, THOSE WHO DID NOT  
KEEP HIM; AND WHAT IS THE DWELLING,  
WHICH THEY ABANDONED? WHAT ARE THE ETERNAL  
BONDS? AND WHAT IS THE DARKNESS UNDER WHICH THEY  
ARE RESERVED? WHAT WILL THEY SUFFER ON  
THE DAY OF THE GREAT JUDGMENT?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The careful reasoning of these matters is reserved only for those who are truly apostles in mind and sense: who have indeed immediately drawn from the Word both the true knowledge of things and have learned openly the good and just governance of Providence in things, so that no hindrance to the mind remains between them and the Word. But as for me, almost crawling on the ground, and to whom the passage of the Word is greatly hindered, the princely order (*ἀρχὴ*) of the angels, whose beginning is marked by their not being kept, might be explained in this way: according to the principle by which they were created, or by the natural power given to them through grace to be divinized; or again, the order established for them according to the dignity of grace. Their dwelling is either heaven or wisdom, according to the habit of goods, surpassing all power of the mind, for which they were created to dwell. For it is not unusual in Scripture to call wisdom a house; or the watchful inspection of the immovable Deity, the guardian of natural gifts and their parts, which they abandoned due to a tyrannical will.

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

The eternal bonds are the will and the spirit of those, in every way marked by a yoke, absent from the movement towards the good, and inertia; by which, they are not partakers of divine joy. Or again, the reason for our salvation, that through divine Providence, their fury is restrained against us, not allowing their malice to proceed against us. The darkness is the ignorance, complete and intact, of divine grace, with which, entirely filled by the will of their spirit, they have been deprived of the blessed and most splendid communication of untarnished light, losing all the mental faculties they once had, devoted to nothing but this emptiness and its pursuit.

As for what they will suffer on the dreadful day of judgment, it is known only by the just Judge, who, according to merit, assigns the just reward to each, and in proportion to the manner of sin, distributes an equal punishment, as is right; and He promises a judgment in accordance with His eternal decrees, which will never end, with justice for all ages.

## QUESTION XII

### WHAT IS THE TUNIC STAINED BY THE FLESH?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

A life stained by many sins from carnal vices and lusts exists as a stained tunic. For from a certain garment, from the way of life, it is accustomed that one can clearly see whether a person is just or unjust; while the just person indeed has an immaculate tunic, a life cultivated by virtues, the unjust, on the other hand, is endowed with one that is stained by wicked deeds. Or rather, the tunic stained by the flesh is the habit and affection of the soul, the memory of the evil works of the flesh, and the conscience that forms the mind with the reasoning of the soul: which, like a tunic adhering to it, always shows, and is filled with the poison of vices and lusts. Just as the spirit's fabric, interwoven with virtues and the reason of incorruption, forms the tunic of the soul, which, being worn, makes it beautiful and glorious; so too the works of the flesh, woven together by certain reasoning with vices

## BOOK ONE

and allurements, emerge as an unclean or stained tunic, which clearly shows the soul's departure from itself, taking on another form and image, unlike the divine one.

### QUESTION XIII

WHAT IS MEANT BY: "FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM  
FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, BEING  
UNDERSTOOD THROUGH THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE,  
ARE CLEARLY SEEN: EVEN HIS ETERNAL  
POWER AND DIVINITY"? WHAT ARE THE INVISIBLE THINGS  
OF GOD, AND WHAT ARE HIS ETERNAL POWER AND  
DIVINITY?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The principles of things, prepared in God before the ages, as He Himself knows them, though invisible (which holy men are accustomed to call the good wills), are understood and seen through the things that are made. For all the works of God, when viewed with proper diligence by our minds through their nature, secretly announce to us the principles by which they were made and at the same time reveal the divine counsel in every work. Hence, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of His hands."

The eternal power and divinity are the providence that sustains things and His force that deifies those governed by providence. Or perhaps the invisible things of God are nothing other than His eternal power and divinity, of which the splendid heralds are the excellent things that were created with magnificence. For just as from the things that exist, we believe that He who truly exists is God, so too, from the essential distinction of things according to their kind, which is inherent through essence, and truly is, and preserves things, we are taught His wisdom. Again, from the essential motion of things according to their kind, which is inherent through essence,



## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

and truly exists, and fulfills things, we learn of His life. From the creatures wisely considered, we derive the understanding of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For the Word, as consubstantial, is the eternal power of God; and the Holy Spirit Himself, consubstantial, is the eternal divinity. Accursed, therefore, are those who, from the consideration of things, have not learned the Creator of things and His attributes through nature, namely, His power and divinity.

Thus creation cries out through the things made in it and, as it were, proclaims to those who can hear with the mind its Creator, who is to be praised in Trinity: namely, God the Father, whose power and divinity are ineffable in words; that is, the only-begotten Word and the Holy Spirit. These are the invisible things of God, which are understood and seen from the creation of the world.

## SCHOLIUM

1. From things, he says, we know the Creator of things; and from the distinction of things, we are taught the truly existent wisdom of Him who is; and from the natural motion of things, we learn the truly existent life of Him who is: the life-giving power of things, the Holy Spirit.

## QUESTION XIV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: 'THEY VENERATED THE  
CREATION AND OFFERED IT WORSHIP'?

WHAT ARE THIS VENERATION (ΣΕΒΑΣ) AND THIS  
WORSHIP (ΛΑΤΡΕΙΑ)? (ROM. 1:25)

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Worship is the adoration of the divine in faith; veneration is the service that we render to Him through our works. Men, transferring this

## BOOK ONE

worship—thus their faith—to the creature instead of the Creator, adored it by placing their faith in demons and offering them worship through the service of their evil works. As for us, our worship is directed to God, and our faith in Him; let us devote all our zeal to offering Him a pure worship through a perfect life filled with virtue.

### QUESTION XV

WHAT IS MEANT BY: "FOR YOUR INCORRUPTIBLE SPIRIT  
IS IN ALL THINGS. THEREFORE, YOU CORRECT  
THOSE WHO ERR LITTLE BY LITTLE"? IF IT SPEAKS OF  
THE HOLY SPIRIT, HOW IS IT THAT WISDOM WILL  
NOT ENTER INTO A SENSELESS SOUL, NOR DWELL IN A BODY  
SUBJECTED TO SINS? I NOTED THIS BECAUSE IT IS  
STATED ABSOLUTELY, "IN ALL THINGS."

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Holy Spirit is absent from none of the things in the realm of nature; and this especially from those which, being endowed with substance—because they are of God and belong to the Spirit of God—possess reason. For it preserves each thing, providing for it through all things, encompassing them and stirring up their natural reason. Through this reason, the Spirit draws one endowed with sense, who has committed transgressions contrary to the law of nature through willful acts, back to the correct natural principles that are easy to embrace. Indeed, we find many, even among those who are highly barbarous and lead a pastoral life, who, having rejected laws, have pursued goodness and moral integrity, as formerly the savage qualities active in them were subdued. Thus, in all beings, simply, is the Holy Spirit.

But in a specific sense and in another way, He foretells future mysteries, imparting understanding to all who are under the law. By sanctioning the law and making known the transgression of the commandments, He reveals the foreordained knowledge of Christian

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

perfection. Hence, from these, we also find many who, abandoning the old shadowy worship, eagerly transition to the new and mystical. Moreover, among all those who have truly received the divine and genuinely deifying name of Christ through faith, the Spirit acts not only as one who preserves and sustains, stirring up natural reason by the principles of providence and pointing out transgressions of the commandments, but also as one who grants the grace of adoption through faith. Just as a master craftsman of wisdom, He dwells only in those who, purified in both soul and body through diligent observance and practice of the commandments, cultivate the knowledge that is simple and free of all material concerns. Becoming familiar with necessary things and pure knowledge of mysteries, He leads their minds to ascend to the grace of deification.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is present in all beings in a general sense, preserving, sustaining, providing for all, and stirring up their natural seeds. In a particular sense, He is present in all those under the law, serving as an indicator of the transgression of the commandments and as a light pointing toward the promised Christ. But among all Christians, beyond what has already been said, He exists as the author of adoption. As the founder of wisdom, He dwells not simply in any of those mentioned except in those who, possessing intelligence and discernment, have made themselves worthy of His divine indwelling through a life governed by divine principles. For whoever does not do the will of God, even if they are faithful, has a foolish heart, serving as a workshop of corrupt thoughts, and a body subject to sins, perpetually bound by the filth of lusts and vices.

## QUESTION XVI

WHO IS THE MOLTEN CALF, AND WHY IS IT REFERRED TO  
IN THE SINGULAR, "CALF," WHEN IT IS SAID IN THE  
PLURAL: "THESE ARE YOUR GODS, O ISRAEL"? WHAT ALSO  
DOES IT MEAN TO GRIND IT DOWN AND SCATTER IT UPON  
THE WATER? WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
EARRINGS AND OTHER ORNAMENTS?

## BOOK ONE

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Whoever departs from Egypt in the manner of Israel, leaving behind the sin of Egypt, yet carries with them, like images of vices, the thought of sin in their mind, if they for a time yield to negligence and are abandoned by the discernment of reason—just as Israel was abandoned by Moses—they, acting recklessly and irrationally, bring forth a calf, as it were, a parent of all vices. This includes the earrings, which represent the natural principles of divine understanding derived from the pious consideration of things; the necklaces and ornaments, which symbolize divine opinions about matters gained through natural contemplation; and the bracelets on their hands, representing natural virtuous acts arising from reasoned action. These are all melted down in the furnace (that is, in the burning fervor of lustful desire and anger) and shaped into sin by the prior evil thoughts and patterns in the mind. By committing sin in action, they establish a reckless and irrational habit, which the presence of the Divine Word grinds down and scatters under water.

This signifies that, by means of subtle contemplation, the visible heaviness of sinful affections and vices is reduced in the mind. The natural powers, which had been confused and interchanged through lust, are skillfully distinguished and restored to their proper principles of knowledge. This is the meaning of "scattering it under water." The spiritual understanding of the entire narrative has been briefly explained in these words. However, to clarify the passage more fully, let us consider each element in detail. The molten calf is, therefore, the mixing and confusion of natural powers; or rather, it is the lustful and irrational union that produces actions of vice contrary to nature. It is one calf because there is one disposition of vice, though dissipated into various forms. It is called a calf because of its robust strength, tolerance for labor, and its role in agriculture, as well as its faculty of chewing (symbolizing reflection) and thinking. It is molten because the disposition and actions of vice are formed according to

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the pattern of the evil thought present in the mind. That it is said in the plural, "These are your gods," indicates that evil by its nature is dissipative, unstable, multiform, and divided. For while it is the nature of good to unite and contain divided things, it is the nature of evil to divide and corrupt what is united. Earrings represent theological discourse and reasoning naturally existing in the mind through the pious consideration of things. Neck ornaments, which protect the neck, symbolize correct decrees derived from natural contemplation of matters. Bracelets signify the operation of virtuous action through the cultivation of virtue.

Alternatively, earrings represent innate reason, for the ear is a symbol of reason and speech. Neck ornaments symbolize the faculty of anger, as the neck represents pride and tyranny. Bracelets on the hands signify desire, denoting the actions of pleasure and lust. The mind, through negligence and fiery passion, combines and inflames all these elements in the fire of vice, producing an irrational and reckless habit of ignorance, the parent of all evils. However, this habit is ground down when the mind considers the visible heaviness of sinful affections, reduces each of its compounded elements to its origin through division, and thus scatters it under water, drawing it toward the knowledge of truth. This knowledge distinguishes and extracts it from the perverse mixture and composition it had previously formed.

For example, every lustful affection arises from the conjunction of something that falls under sensation and the natural faculty of sense (such as anger, desire, or reason alienated from its natural order). If the mind is able to separate each element from its compounded end and restore it to its natural reason while considering the object in itself without the affection or lust of the senses—and if it can view sense without the necessity of that object and desire, or any other natural faculty, without lustful affection—it crushes the disposition of the calf (that is, any arising lust) and scatters it under the water of knowledge.

Thus, the very thoughts of lust and vice are eradicated through a return of the mind to the natural truths from which they originally diverged. May God grant that we also, grinding down the molten calf within our souls,

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abolish it so that only the pure image of God, untainted by any external blemish, shines within us. As for the phrase, "And Moses made the sons of Israel drink it," this signifies the method of teaching by which vices are destroyed and transmitted from teachers to disciples.

### QUESTION XVII

WHEN GOD SENT MOSES INTO EGYPT, WHY IS IT THAT  
THE ANGEL OF GOD SOUGHT TO KILL HIM,  
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS SENT BY GOD? AND INDEED,  
WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM UNLESS HIS WIFE HAD  
IMMEDIATELY CIRCUMCISED THE CHILD AND, BY HER  
ACTION, HAD RESTRAINED THE ATTACK  
OF THE ANGEL. BUT IF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE CHILD  
WAS NECESSARY, WHY DID GOD NOT GENTLY COMMAND  
HIM TO PERFORM THE ACT BEFORE SENDING HIM?  
MOREOVER, WHY DID NOT A GOOD ANGEL  
PLACIDLY ADMONISH HIM OF HIS FAULT, HE WHO WAS  
SENT BY GOD TO SUCH A MINISTRY?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

He who, in the fear of God, investigates the meaning of the perplexing difficulties that occur in Scripture, and aims at nothing else but the glory of God alone, will find all things, according to the teaching of Wisdom, open before him. There will be no obstacle preventing him from turning his soul without harm toward divine matters, provided he removes the letter as a veil from the spirit. Let us now set aside the story as fulfilled corporeally in the times of Moses and consider with the eyes of the mind its force in spirit, which is ever becoming, and that which is being done is increasingly understood. The desert from which Moses is sent into Egypt to lead the sons of Israel out signifies human nature, or this world, or the condition devoid of vices and disturbances. In this state and through it, by

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the contemplation of things, a mind taught in the knowledge of divine matters receives hidden and mystical governance from God in the depths of the heart. This governance is so that it might lead out from Egypt (that is, from the flesh and sense) divine concepts and notions like Israelites who foolishly labor in clay (that is, the vices and lusts of the flesh).

Thus, with the divine office entrusted to it, the mind proceeds on the path of virtues, having joined to itself, as if a spouse, wisdom according to knowledge. From this union, it begets a noble habit and reason or thought of living honorably. The path allows no rest for those walking on it, but they strive with continuous and swift effort according to the purpose of the mind to reach the prize of the heavenly calling. For rest in virtue is the origin of vice; the mind, preoccupied with earthly matters on either side of the way, renders the thought and habit of pious conduct as uncircumcised and profane. Therefore, reason, as if an angel through conscience threatening death, immediately recognizes the cause of the death it threatens—rest deviating from the path of virtue. This rest, which reason and thought adopt as foreskin, wisdom (as a spouse) calms, by the reasoning (speech of faith) circumcising the earthly thought (the child, that is). As Sephora, she severs every thought of life arising from sense and withers all thought of life polluted by sensuality. For she says, "The blood of the circumcision of the child has ceased," that is, the licentious life has ended, and thought and motion, polluted by the reasoning of sense, are cleansed through the wisdom of the faith's reckoning. Once this cleansing is completed, the angel ceases—that is, reason, which strikes the sinning soul through conscience and accuses it of thinking anything beyond what is fitting and dutiful. For indeed, the way of virtues is truly filled with many holy angels, through whom, according to their type, each virtue is fashioned by reasoning and habits. These angels, invisible helpers, stir up in us such thoughts and reasoning toward what is honorable.

Thus, the speech of Sacred Scripture is good and magnificent, always presenting a spiritual understanding. It causes no reproach or blame either of God or of the holy angels in those who use the sound eyes of the mind before those things that are narrated to have been done. For Moses,

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according to the spiritual sense of Scripture, did not have a son with foreskin when sent by God. Otherwise, he would first have been commanded to circumcise him and then sent. Nor was the divine angel harsh, though he announced death to Moses, who had made himself liable to blame on the path of virtues through the stain of rest. Perhaps his weakness was the cause of failure in the course of virtues. For you who diligently examine the written account will plainly discover that the angel who announced death did not appear at the beginning, nor in the middle, nor at the end of the way, but at the inn. It was because of a failing that had carelessly entered the soul, resulting in blame. For this reason, had he not ceased from the course and turned aside from the way, he would not have been guilty of any crime, such as to incur angelic indignation for the foreskin of his son.

Let us pray to God, if indeed we are walking in the way of commandments, that whenever it happens that we transgress, reason as if an angel, warning of death through conscience, does not cease to send its message. By perceiving the matter, we may learn to circumcise as foreskin whatever impurity of disturbances and vices has crept in through carelessness into the course of life.

### QUESTION XVIII

IF, ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE, "THE DOERS OF THE  
LAW SHALL BE JUSTIFIED," HOW THEN DOES  
HE ALSO SAY, "WHOEVER OF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE  
LAW, YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM GRACE"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Not simply the doers of the law shall be justified, but those who fulfill the law in its spiritual sense, as it is spiritually understood, and who, according to the inner man, carry out the spiritual law in spirit. These, indeed, not falling from grace, shall be justified because of the ineffable penetration of the Word into the soul through purity. But those who,



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according to the external appearance of the law, serve it in a corporeal manner fall entirely from divine grace. For they are ignorant of the spiritual perfection of the law in grace, which cleanses the mind from all impurity, and of Christ, who is its end.

### QUESTION XIX

WHAT IS MEANT BY: "WHOEVER HAVE SINNED WITHOUT THE LAW SHALL ALSO PERISH WITHOUT THE LAW; AND WHOEVER HAVE SINNED IN THE LAW SHALL BE JUDGED BY THE LAW"? AND HOW DOES THE SAME APOSTLE ALSO SAY: "WHEN GOD SHALL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN BY MY GOSPEL THROUGH JESUS CHRIST"? IF THEY ARE JUDGED BY THE LAW, HOW IS IT THAT THEY ARE JUDGED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Word of God, Jesus Christ, as the Creator of all, is also the author of the law of nature. As He governs all things by providence and ordains them by law, He is openly the giver of the written law and of the law in spirit, that is, in grace. For Christ is the end of the law, indeed of the written law, which is spiritually understood. Therefore, since Christ is both Creator, Ruler by providence, Legislator, and Propitiation, the law of nature, the written law, and the law of grace are united in Him. It is true, as the Apostle says, that God will judge the secrets of men according to His Gospel—that is, in accordance with how it is proclaimed or preached—through Jesus Christ, who is essentially the Word. This Word, being present to all, rebukes some and fittingly praises others, distributing to each, according to their merits, whether in nature, in law, or in grace, as the only-begotten Word of God, ineffable and indivisible in essence. For the Word of God is the author of all nature, every law, every rite, and every order, and also their judge. Without the promulgation of the Word, there is no law. Thus,

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whether someone is judged in the law, they are judged as in Christ; or if without the law, they are likewise judged entirely in Him. For the Word is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that exists, of all that is understood, and of all that is spoken, as Creator.

### QUESTION XX

WHAT IS THE MEANING IN THE GOSPEL OF THE  
SEEMINGLY UNREASONABLE WITHERING OF THE FIG TREE?  
AND WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
HUNGER DRIVING SOMEONE TO SEEK FRUIT OUT OF  
SEASON? FURTHERMORE, WHAT IS THE  
PURPOSE OF CURSING AN OBJECT DEVOID OF SENSE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Word of God, Jesus Christ, who wisely arranges all things for the sake of human salvation, having first instructed nature through the law with its coarser rituals—since, due to the ignorance it had contracted and its aversion to the divine archetypes, it could not yet receive the truth unveiled from the covering of figures—later, manifestly becoming man Himself, assuming flesh endowed with a rational and intelligent soul, appeared to elevate humanity from material concerns to the spiritual and wisdom-filled worship that the Word and reason instill in nature.

With truth now shining upon the world, He willed that shadows, of which the fig tree was a figure, should no longer have power or vigor. Thus, He "returned from Bethany to Jerusalem," meaning that after His coming in the law through figures and shadows, He returned again to the human condition through the flesh. This is to be understood in the words: "Returning, He saw a fig tree on the way, having only leaves." The fig tree represents the corporeal existence of the law, rooted in shadows and figures, according to its unstable and transient tradition, as if positioned along a path. In the morning, the Word—magnificently and abundantly—saw the

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fig tree adorned outwardly with leaves, the coverings of the corporeal observances of the law, but finding no fruit in it, which is righteousness (since the Word was not nourished by it), He cursed it. Indeed, He commanded that the truth, now revealed, should no longer be veiled by the figures of the law. This indeed occurred, as demonstrated in reality: the fig tree, entirely withered, represented the beauty of the law, rooted only in shadows and ceremonies, extinguished along with the pride of the Jews who gloried in it. For it was neither reasonable nor fitting that, with the abundance of the fruits of righteousness revealed through the truth, the soul passing through this present life as a path should be drawn by the mere appearance of leaves—an empty lure when the abundant magnificence of the nourishing fruits of the Word is rejected. Therefore, He said, "It was not the season for figs." That is, the time when the law predominated over human nature was not the time for the fruits of righteousness, but rather a time representing future righteousness in a shadow, signifying divine and hidden grace yet to come. Because the ancient people, plagued by unbelief, did not reach this grace, they perished. "For Israel," says the Apostle, "pursuing the law of righteousness," which was set in shadows and figures, "did not attain to the law of righteousness," which is perfected in spirit according to Christ.

Alternatively, the priests, scribes, legal experts, and Pharisees, plagued by the vice of vain glory, used the display of outward piety to mask their inner emptiness, boasting as if they practiced righteousness. The Scripture declares that the barren fig tree with its luxuriant leaves is their boastfulness. Christ, who seeks and thirsts for the salvation of all and their deification, curses it as barren and withers it, so that men might value being righteous over merely appearing righteous. Casting off the deceptive appearance of moral virtue, they might pursue the life adorned with true virtues, as the divine Word desires, living piously and offering their inward devotion to God rather than merely an outward show of morality to men. But if among Christians some are like this—feigning piety in words and gestures but lacking the righteousness evidenced by works—they should anticipate the Word, humane and merciful, seeking their salvation. The Word will wither the seeds of vanity in their souls, so they no longer bear the

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fruit of corruption (that is, the desire to please men). You have here, within the limits of my ability, an explanation of the significance of the fig tree: that the Lord, who was hungering for righteousness, rightly cursed and withered it, whether this pertains to the old law's corporeal traditions or to the ostentation of the Pharisees and our own moral displays.

### QUESTION XXI

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE, "STRIPPING  
THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS," AND  
WHAT FOLLOWS FROM IT? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT  
HE, WHO WAS BORN WITHOUT SIN, COULD TRULY HAVE  
BEEN CLOTHED WITH THEM?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The divine Word, though in every way like us, yet without sin, unchangeably assumed our nature, becoming perfect man. In Himself, He possessed the first Adam, both in the manner of Adam's original creation and birth. For instance, the first man, having received existence from God and having been created and formed, was by his very creation and formation free from corruption and sin. Corruption and sin were not created together with him in that original formation. However, when Adam sinned by transgressing the commandment, he became subject to a nature bound to passion and sin. Sin, having been introduced through his transgression, was implanted in human nature along with its susceptibility to suffering, becoming as though innate to it. Consequently, by the law of nature, no one was free from sin, as human nature became subject to the law of birth inherited from Adam's sin. Since sin entered because of transgression, and suffering through natural birth arose due to sin, the human condition remained inextricably bound to sin. Human nature, entangled by an unbreakable bond of will and necessity, found itself without hope of liberation. The more human nature sought its integrity through birth and

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generation, the more it became bound to the law of sin, which flourished through its susceptibility to suffering.

Thus, in human nature itself, sin's original root gave rise to passions contrary to nature, which were hidden within natural emotions and inclinations. These passions, influenced by wicked powers, acted upon human nature, driving it from natural desires toward unnatural corruption. The only-begotten Son of God and Word, out of His immense goodness, became perfect man to deliver humanity from this oppressive condition. From the original constitution of Adam's creation, He took upon Himself a nature free from sin. Yet from the subsequent inheritance of human nature, subjected to sin and suffering, He assumed only the susceptibility to suffering, without sin. Since, in Adam's susceptibility to suffering, all evil powers found a hidden activity in human nature, when these powers saw in Christ the susceptibility of the flesh, they wrongly assumed that, like any other man, He was subject to the natural law of passions. They therefore attacked Him, believing they could induce Him to sin by exploiting the natural passions of His humanity. However, Christ allowed these powers to tempt Him so that, in being defeated by Him, they might be cast out of human nature entirely. Remaining untouched and inaccessible to their influence, He provided the victory for us, not for Himself. The glory of this victory was attributed to us, for whose sake He became man. By overcoming the temptations of lust and suffering, He stripped the principalities and powers, driving them far from human nature. On the cross, He entirely abolished their influence, triumphing over them in death. He exposed them publicly, showing that they could find nothing in His nature that aligned with their corruption. Through His divine power, He liberated all of human nature from the dominion of wickedness and sin, transforming it into freedom through His flesh, which He assumed from our common substance.

Thus, Christ first stripped these powers in the desert, when He overcame the temptations of lust and pleasure, healing human nature from these passions. He stripped them again at the time of His death, removing from human nature the passion of suffering. By doing so, He provided victory for us, attributing the achievement to humanity, as though it were its

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own accomplishment. At the moment of death, when these powers came to scrutinize Him, they found nothing in Him belonging to sin. Despite expecting to discover some weakness due to His mortal and passible flesh, they were utterly confounded. Through His holy flesh, which He assumed for our sake, Christ freed human nature from the evil inclinations that had once dominated it. Although this teaching might be expressed in a more elevated and spiritual contemplation, it is neither fitting nor permissible to commit the deeper mysteries of divine doctrine to writing. This much, however, should suffice, as it may lead the curious mind to pursue deeper understanding. If God permits, we may one day examine this topic further in person.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The term “original creation” refers to the first formation of man by God, while “subsequent birth” refers to the succession of human generations introduced after the curse that followed Adam’s transgression.
2. Christ assumed human nature in such a way that, although subject to the natural susceptibility to suffering, He was entirely free from sinful inclinations and passions.
3. The term “natural inclination” refers to the weakness of the human soul that inclines toward sin due to the inherited corruption from Adam’s transgression. Christ, however, possessed no such inclination, being entirely sinless even in His human nature

## QUESTION XXII

IF IN THE AGES TO COME GOD WILL SHOW  
HIS RICHES, HOW HAVE  
THE ENDS OF THE AGES COME TO US?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

He who, by the mere motion of His will, created the substance of all things, both those we grasp with our eyes and those which elude the sight, created the essence of the world before all ages, and likewise, the essence of things created, which no words can explain in reasoning, had a plan for these things: in this plan, that He Himself, unchangeably through a true union of persons, would mix with human nature, and without any defect or alteration in His quality, would join to Himself human nature. Thus, He Himself would also, in knowing, become man, and by uniting with man, He would consecrate him to God; wisely dividing the ages, discerning one in which man would truly become man, and another in which, by the same act, He would make man become God. Therefore, it was predestined that, at a certain time, He would become man, and the end of these ages has come to us by divine preordination and decree, through the event of the Incarnation. This, when the divine Apostle saw it, he declared that the ends of the ages had come to us, not in the sense we might simply understand, but that through the mystery of the assumption of the body which was to be accomplished, according to God's plan, the ends of the ages have come to us.

Since the ages were preordained according to His decree, God truly operates and fulfills it, so that, in becoming man, He has reached its end in us; thus, we must await other ages to come, in which, by a mystical and secret deification, humans will be endowed with the divine riches of His goodness. For He, who would take on the mystic operation, as a man, would give deification to those worthy of it, having received an end, in all respects, except for sin. He became like us, descending to lower parts of the earth, there delivering man from the tyranny of sin: truly, it will also happen that the mystical operation of deifying man will occur by all means (if we exclude only a simple and singular essence with Him), making man like Himself, and placing him above all created things, so that by His immense goodness, He may provoke man in the world to His divine greatness. The great Apostle, too, mystically teaches us that the excellent riches of God's goodness will be shown to us in the ages to come.

Let us then divide the ages and attribute them: one, to the mystery of the divine Incarnation; another, to the grace of human deification. We will

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observe that some have already reached their end, while others have not yet arrived. To sum it up, some times are directed to the descent of God to men, while others are directed to the ascent of men to God. Thus, when we understand this, we will not be confused by the obscurity of the divine Scriptures, nor mistakenly think that the Apostle contradicts himself.

Or rather, since the Lord is the beginning, middle, and end of all ages—both those that have passed and those that are present and yet to come—let us understand that the divine Apostle wisely distinguished between those times that concern action and those that concern suffering. For example, the times of the flesh, in which we now live (for Scripture acknowledges even temporal ages, as it says: "And He labored in the age, and He will live in the end"), are ages of action. However, the future spiritual ages, after this life, are times for the suffering of transformation. Therefore, in the ages to come, we encounter the end of the ages, reaching that end by the very capacity with which we act. In the ages that are yet to come, we will not act, but rather we will suffer, through which we will be deified. And this is the reason we never cease to be deified. For when the superior passion and affection of our future state takes place, it has no rational limit, and the deification will not cease, as it will be infinite. We are active when we possess the natural capacity of virtues in action, but we suffer when we are transformed, as we will be deified, through the grace of God.

Thus, we act in this life according to the faculties with which we have been endowed by nature, but in the future, we will endure suffering as we are deified. Our nature does not possess the faculty to comprehend what exceeds its limits. The power of deification does not come from anything created but is a gift of divine grace, which gives deification according to the capacity of the soul, surpassing the light of nature and setting the soul above all limitations. The riches of goodness, therefore, have come to us because we are about to receive the gift of deification through the grace of Christ, whose greatness we will partake in.



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### SCHOLIUM

1. The union of the Word with the flesh in the person revealed the hidden purpose of God, showing that through this union, no confusion of essence occurs, but rather, the person of the Word shines forth: the flesh remains flesh in essence, and the divinity is manifested in person.
2. The ages, says the Apostle, revealed the mystery of the Incarnation, and their ends have now come to us; others, still to come, reveal our deification, whose riches of glory have not yet been revealed.
3. The certain pledge, says the Apostle, and evidence of the future deification of the human race is that God became man, making man into God, as much as man became God. For He who became man without sin will certainly transform human nature into divinity.
4. The natural capacity to perform virtues is the act of doing, while the capacity to suffer, through grace, surpasses nature's capacity, as we have no natural faculty for what is beyond us.
5. It is said that the deification of man will have no end, because the superior passion of deification has no limit, and we will be made perfect through divine grace.
6. The Apostle teaches that the spiritual and the natural have different faculties: the former to perform actions, and the latter to undergo suffering, as we are made worthy of deification through suffering.
7. The Apostle shows that the divine nature in the person of Christ governs the ability to do and to suffer, and by surpassing natural faculties, it prepares us for the deification that will come after this life.
8. The figures of divine goods are virtuous qualities and the principles of knowledge, through which the deified become partakers of the divine nature, receiving the true essence of virtue and wisdom.
9. The riches of divine goodness refer to the pure and powerful affection of God's grace that will lead us to deification, an affection that never ends.

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### QUESTION XXIII

SINCE DAVID RULED ONLY THE CARNAL KINGDOM OF  
ISRAEL, BUT THE CARNAL ISRAEL REJECTED  
THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST; AND FOR THAT REASON IT ALSO  
PASSED OVER TO THE GENTILES:  
HOW THEN, ACCORDING TO THE VOICE OF THE  
ARCHANGEL, WILL THIS STAND: AND GOD  
WILL GIVE HIM THE THRONE OF DAVID HIS FATHER,  
AND HE WILL REIGN IN THE HOUSE  
OF JACOB FOREVER?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

This question seems to have a clear and sufficiently evident explanation. For not all who are of Israel are of Israel; nor, because they are the seed of Abraham, are all children: but those who are children of the promise are counted as the seed. And: If the number of the children of Israel be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved; it is evident that the faithful people, who through works of righteousness and true knowledge of faith see God, are Israel, whether they draw their lineage according to the flesh from Israel or derive their origin from the Gentiles. For whoever bears within himself the clear and undefiled mark of faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is by no means alien to the title and function of the true Israel.

Indeed, even the blessed David held the kingdom of the faithful Israelites. Therefore, as soon as Israel extinguished the light of faith from themselves, they also immediately fell away from the kingdom of David. Thus, the spiritual throne of David, which is understood intellectually, and the kingdom of those using reason, and the faithful house of Jacob—a holy and great nation, which God, through the oracle given to Moses (that is, through the one who was figuratively represented by him), promised to place

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

as ruler in place of the carnal and embittering Israel, saying: Let me alone, and I will utterly destroy this people, and I will make you into a great and formidable nation, greater than they—is not the unfaithful house of Jacob, exasperating and sinful, a wicked seed, and corrupt children; not the princes of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah, turning away with an evil turning; not those who forsook the Lord and provoked the Holy One of Israel; not those who did not know God nor understand; who were struck with the wound of infidelity that cannot be healed, and which admits no method or measure of rational medicine to heal the disbelief and diffidence of the soul. For, as it is written: Woe to the sinful nation, wicked seed, corrupt children! You have forsaken the Lord and provoked the Holy One of Israel. Why should I continue to strike you, adding iniquity? There is no ointment to apply, nor oil, nor binding.

For those who limp with double knees, and have turned away from the truth, and have been excluded from the divine inheritance—like Cain, and Ishmael, and Esau, and Reuben, and Er, and Onan, and Manasseh, and Eliab, and Amnon, the firstborn of the patriarchs and prophets, who were rejected and repudiated—are also unworthy. For it is said: Israel is my firstborn son; but not "only-begotten," because the adoption of the divine and pious people was awaited, which is created according to God and admitted into adoption, which is by grace, through the rejection of the firstborn and unfaithful people of Israel, who, out of envy, rose against the spiritual Abel, like Cain, and killed him; mocked, like Ishmael, the spiritual Isaac, with divine and gentler manners; was driven by madness against the spiritual Jacob, like Esau; and poured out the seed of faith and its righteousness into the land of error and vice, like Er and Amnon; and repudiated the Church of God, as they did Tamar; and, like Manasseh, adopted forgetfulness of virtues; and, after the spiritual David obtained the kingdom, bore the insult indignantly due to pride; and therefore, like Eliab, was despised; and like Amnon, became an inventor of new and unheard-of wickedness.

Not these alien children, who limped away from their paths; men breathing fury and murder, truly carnal and only carnal children, strangers to

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grace, whose god is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, whose memory of unbelief perished with a crash; but, as I was saying, the faithful and spiritual Israel, who see God with the light of faith, a people gathered from all nations according to the election of grace, into an acquisition; and a holy nation and a royal priesthood: God promised, through the oracle spoken by the angel to Mary, that He would give to the Savior of all, born of her, this faithful Israel and holy nation, which received its own confirmation, strength, and faith from the event itself: while the Lord fulfilled the promises made to the fathers, and blessed and adopted all nations in the spiritual Abraham, and made him the father of all nations in spirit through faith, and sat upon the spiritual throne of David, and reigned over the faithful house of Jacob, with a kingdom that will have no end.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Under Jeroboam, having renounced the faith of God, Israel fell away from the house of David.
2. Those firstborn from the beginning who were rejected and repudiated are listed, and the Israelite people are likened to them; and thus, by indulgence, it is said of them: Israel is my firstborn son; but, like a rejected firstborn, on account of the faith-based calling of the people adopted after him from earthly matters.
3. The brothers, attacked by the plots of the firstborn, are said to bear the figure of the Lord and the new people according to faith.

## QUESTION XXIV

WHAT IS MEANT BY WHAT IS WRITTEN ABOUT  
PETER IN THE ACTS: PASSING  
THE FIRST AND SECOND GUARD, WE CAME  
TO THE IRON GATE?

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

As the holy Peter, the faithful and diligent soul devoted to action, is held under Herod (that is, under the law of pleasure); for Herod, if you interpret the name, means "pleasure-seeker," which represents the sense of the flesh. The soul is confined under two guards and one iron gate, such that it is both attacked to commit evil in action and tempted to consent to it in the mind. These, like guards or prisons, are overcome through the reasoning of practical philosophy, as if by an angel, leading the soul to the iron gate that opens to the city. This gate symbolizes the firm and resistant connection of the senses with sensible things, which is neither easily overcome nor lightly dismissed. However, the discourse of natural contemplation in the spirit opens this gate, and the soul, now free from the fury of Herod, is boldly led beyond to related intelligible realities.

#### SCHOLIUM

1. The guards are called the habits and actions of vice. For, note, habit is consent. The most wicked one seeks to enslave the saints through these. The iron gate is described as the natural connection of the senses with sensible things. From these, as if by an angel, the reasoning and discourse of practical knowledge rescue the one who is truly faithful.

#### QUESTION XXV

## BOOK ONE

### QUESTION XXV

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN: “I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF EVERY MAN (ANHP), THE MAN IS THE HEAD OF THE WOMAN, AND GOD IS THE HEAD OF CHRIST. EVERY MAN WHO PRAYS OR PROPHESES WITH HIS HEAD UNCOVERED DISHONORS HIS HEAD AS IF IT WERE SHAVED.” AND ALSO THIS: “FOR THIS REASON, BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS, THE WOMAN MUST HAVE A SIGN OF AUTHORITY ON HER HEAD.”

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

One must understand that when the divine apostle says that Christ is the head of every man (*ἀνὴρ*), he intends to show that Christ is the head of a faithful, believing man who acts through the divine commandments and through contemplation and the holy dogmas. His expression clearly does not include unbelieving men. How could Christ be the head of men who do not believe?

Thus proceeding to the spiritual sense in this single meaning, we say that the acting nous is a man who has as head the word of faith—whose gaze is fixed upon Christ—and the nous structures his life through the graces of the commandments put into practice, not bringing shame to his head—his faith—by some material external veil, placing upon his faith something temporal and dissolving. We also say that the woman of such a nous is the very habit of action itself, covered with a “hair” of many and diverse actions, reflections, and dispositions; or rather, the nous itself, adorning and veiling its own head with a good “hair” of these thoughts and modes.

We say finally that Christ is the en-hypostasized faith whose head is clearly God, to whom the word of faith leads, showing to the one who ascends the God in whom He exists by nature.

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Or again, the nous, spiritually absorbed in natural contemplation, is a man who has for head, through faith, the Word who created the universe, demonstrated by the beautiful ordering of the visible world, whom he does not shame by placing something visible above Him and making it greatly superior to Him. The woman of such a nous is the senses, with which he lives and with which he embarks into the nature of visible things and reads within them the most divine logoi—without leaving them uncovered by sound reasoning so as to fall into the service of unreason and sin, his head becoming, instead of nous, sick with irrationality through the rejection of these divine logoi.

The head of Christ, that is, of the creative Word manifested in faith by the natural contemplation of beings in an analogical way, is the ineffable Nous who begets Him in His essence, near whom the Word places our nous, having brought it there through the pious contemplation of beings, offering it the choir of noetic reflections of the divine through knowledge of the visible.

And again, the nous that has reached the interior of mystical theology is a man who has Christ as head without any veil: the word of faith conceived beyond all knowledge in mystagogies beyond all demonstration—indeed the word of faith known beyond the nous. Above Him nothing among beings has place: neither sense, nor word, nor nous, nor intellection (νόησις), nor knowledge, nor known, nor conceived, nor spoken, nor felt. It is the nous trained in praiseworthy barrenness and privation—of itself and of beings—supreme, which deifies it in all its aspects.

The woman of such a nous is the thought (διάνοια) washed of every sensual fantasy, with the nous for head, covered by the outpourings—beyond every principle and nous—of the ineffable and unknowable dogmas. The head of Christ, that is, of the apophatic Word transcendent beyond all, is the Nous surpassing (ἐξωκισμένος) absolutely everything and infinite in every respect, whom Christ, spiritually conceived by nature as Word of the Nous, makes known to the elect. For “whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.” Truly, the intellection (νόησις) of the Word constitutes a clear knowledge of the Nous who begot Him, showing in Himself the Nous established by

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essence, toward whom He urges the nous pressed by the desire to be, by grace, identified with God, freed from the mass of beings, from their variety and multiplicity, and brought back to the deiform unity through the identity and simplicity of perpetual motion around and near God.

Therefore every acting nous, praying or prophesying—that is, urgently asking for the logoi of the virtues (this is the meaning of προσευχόμενος) or manifesting them through the modes of its works (this is the meaning of προφητεύων)—must have in view only the single word of faith, not allowing itself to think, reason, or act while hiding its head under something placed above it.

And every woman, that is, the habit of the acting nous, whether she prays or prophesies—whether moved interiorly without outward appearance, or giving form to virtue through outward conduct—without discernment of her reason, dishonors her head by pursuing the good but for a passionate end, deprived of the word that clothes with beauty as with a veil.

And every nous applied to natural contemplation, praying and prophesying with head covered—that is, seeking the logoi of beings in a gnostic manner or teaching them to others, but leaning towards something else in whatever way, without having piety in view—dishonors his head by placing above it something that oversteps right knowledge in piety.

And every woman, that is, the senses, moving naturally toward sensibles without having on her head the spiritual logoi I mentioned to cover her, approaches the contemplation of beings in their natural relation but in a passionate manner.

And every nous that has reached the mystical love of theology, whether praying or prophesying with the head covered—that is, immersed in abstruse considerations out of ignorance; or teaching or initiating others into theology, if he has some form of spiritual sense, whether initiated or initiating into this Word beyond all intellection—dishonors his head by placing the simple, beyond all intellection, beneath that which exists or is knowable. He must behold the true Word of God with closed eyes, stripped of all thought and knowledge, knowing clearly that above all it is the



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privative modes, by transcendence, that speak truly in “affirming” God in a manner that completely erases beings.

And every woman, the thought (*διάνοια*) of such a nous, praying or prophesying with head uncovered—that is, deprived of the intellectual power covering her with manifold mystical visions—dishonors her head by rejecting the divine and ineffable knowledge covering the nous as a head. Let every man, that is, every nous—practical, natural, or theological—whether praying or prophesying, taught or teaching, have Christ, the head, not hidden or veiled. The first—the practical nous—by placing nothing above faith and virtue; the second—the natural—by holding nothing superior to the primordial Word; the third—the theological—by not attributing to that which is beyond all intellection or knowledge any figure arising from conceptions of beings.

And let every woman, that is, the habit of action or the natural senses or the wise intelligence of the theological nous, veil her head: the practical habit through the discernment of the word regarding what must or must not be done; the senses through the epistemic power suited to the visible; the intelligence through the indemonstrable knowledge beyond the nous. For every habit, sense, or intelligence not covered in the manner indicated is, so to speak, a shaved head—that is, without the least word of virtue, piety, or mystical knowledge of divine love. Therefore it is right that such a woman always have on her head the authority of the word, meaning rational supervision—above all because of the angels who watch over our hidden or manifest motions and record every thought or action to praise or reproach us on the dread day of their unveiling; but also because of the reflections of our conscience, a kind of angels accusing or defending us for our actions today or tomorrow on the day of judgment; and finally because of the angels of the evil one, who watch habits, senses, and thoughts so that, seeing us stripped of rational and intelligent discernment, of piety and knowledge, they rush in to stir up everything opposed to them—confusion, impiety, ignorance—through which the evil angels have accustomed themselves to establish malice, error, and atheism. God is said to be the head of Christ as causal principle and Nous by nature.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. A man is one who cultivates philosophy as it pertains to action.
2. He said that "head" refers to Christ, as the substance and foundation of future goods. For faith, according to the divine Apostle, is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; this is He, in whom the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
3. True faith (ἐνυπόστατος) is effective and active, by which the Word of God is manifested in those who strive for action through commandments made incarnate: by whose power, as the Word, it moves towards Him in whom it is by nature (that is, to the Father), guiding the followers of action.
4. A man is one who, piously reflecting on natural contemplation, has the Word of God as an object of faith, with the intellect of the mind, having the head as the object to be speculated upon, so that he may be the author of created things.
5. If anyone desires to properly contemplate the creature (for man is endowed with the natural ability to see correctly and discern virtue, and what is better from what is worse), he will be led to the tree of life, which is God, the creator of every tree and wood: in whom are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. But if, abusing his natural ability, he desires to see the creature badly, he will stand far from life, and will feed on the tree which has the distinction between good and evil, with the senses and brute affection, enslaved by an attempt to understand without reason: considering pleasure as good, for the sake of the health of the body, and pain as bad, for the same reason, and because of bodily afflictions and labors; and in place of God, he makes the creature an error for himself, whereby bodily composition may produce pleasure.
6. For, as it is said, together with the Word, the creator of things, the mind is understood, to which the Word has a relation as its creator; He called

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the Father the head of Christ, as the Mind, which by nature is the parent of the Word.

7. From the substance and motion and distinction of things that fall into the view, we know the holy unity subsisting in a triune manner: as elsewhere it is stated.
8. A man is one who is taught mystical theology.
9. According to excellence, take the word *ἀνοήτως*, as if to say, without the sense or intellect of the mind. For what we believe, namely God, surpasses all intellectual power.
10. For it is said, the creator of creatures, according to excellence, by privation, has the Word itself, which is superior to all words and reason, immediately and unknowingly perceived, having the singular Word as its head: above which, or with which, no other word truly existing by nature is to be found; whose one mind, by nature, is the parent, in which the head is constituted through the Spirit of its nature, which bears up the following mind.
11. It is said that the woman (or wife) is the habit of the one who cultivates action, as the parent of gentler modes of virtue and behavior. But of him who contemplates natural speculation, the sense of the spirit translated into natural reason; that is, one who produces illicit thoughts and reasoning of the soul. But of him who cultivates divine knowledge, it is said to be the pure mind, singularly capable of receiving the unique light of the Trinity.
12. Christ is said to be the superessential and superessentially incarnate Word, which even the natural mind does not comprehend in its incarnation. But the head of this is said to be the Mind, which exists by nature without any author, and is understood by the reason of the Word. For those who have seen the Word by the light of faith, without time, along with the Word, the parent Mind, existing in essence, have mystically seen it. There are some who say that Christ, the human nature of Christ, is called the head of the universe of things, that is, of all nature; and that the divinity of His human nature is the head. For

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calling the whole body by its name, they have expressed the correct understanding and judgment.

13. The identity of the perfected mind with God through grace (so to speak) is a motion of simple indivisible agitation around that which nature is: about which there is no comprehension of spiritual things, which differ in quantity according to essence, and in quality according to the power and strength of faculties: but the joy, which cannot be explained by words, whose sense no mind can grasp.
14. Prayer is called the petition of one who strives for action, seeking virtues. Prophecy, however, is the true teaching of reasons in them. But of him who cultivates natural speculation, prayer is the request for knowledge and science of things: prophecy, however, is the transmission of this to others through true teaching. But of him who cultivates divine science, prayer is the secret silence, by which the mind, in union, exceeds all thought and knowledge, making it worthy: prophecy, however, is the more sacred teaching of others about these things. For prayer establishes the union of the one praying with God: prophecy, on the other hand, leads the prophet to impart good things granted by God to mankind.
15. When God is predicated of things, we understand Him along with those things; truly as the author and maker. But when we deny Him completely of things, even by the cause of reasoning, and as the author, He is understood with things by us; which truly has no relation to things in any manner, by which we understand that we may mutually infer and conceive the relation. Thus, the theologian, who is most excellent, makes an affirmation of the absence of true knowledge of God's eminence, fleeing every thought.

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### QUESTION XXVI

WHEN, ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION,  
THE DEVIL IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE REPRESENTED BY THE  
KING OF BABYLON, WHAT DOES IT MEAN  
THAT GOD THREATENS THROUGH THE PROPHET JEREMIAH  
WITH CHAINS, FETTERS, HUNGER, DEATH,  
THE SWORD, AND CAPTIVITY TO THE KINGS OF THE  
NATIONS AND THE KING OF JUDAH, UNLESS  
THEY SERVE HIM? BUT TO THOSE WHO VOLUNTARILY  
SERVE, IT WILL BE THAT THEY WILL  
LIVE IN PEACE IN THEIR LAND. AND WHAT IS THE MEANING  
OF GOD'S STATEMENT, "I HAVE GIVEN ALL THE  
LAND OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR KING OF BABYLON, MY  
SERVANT,"? WHAT, THEN, IS THE SERVITUDE  
OF THE DEVIL, AND WHICH BEAST IS REPRESENTED, AND  
WHAT ARE THE SIX TYPES OF THREATS,  
AND WHO ARE THE KINGS OF THE NATIONS AND THE  
KING OF JUDAH?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The devil, both an enemy of God and an avenger, exists. He is an enemy, indeed, when, through his hatred, he seems to have a destructive love toward us humans, becoming the author of voluntary lustful desires, so that we prefer temporary goods over eternal ones. His allure diverts all the desires of the soul from divine charity, willingly making us enemies of the Creator. He is an avenger when, with the hatred that has been stirred against us, he demands due punishment for those who have become liable to sin. For nothing pleases the devil more than the torment and punishment of humans. Having received this permission, he continuously devises other evils, one after another, which afflict and torment the unwilling, rushing upon them

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like a whirlwind. Not in order to fulfill a divine command, but with such a desire and madness that he feeds his hatred upon us; with the weight of suffering and torment, through weakness, the soul, overwhelmed by despair, severs the strength of divine hope. Instead of correction or discipline, he turns grievous misfortunes and suffering into an occasion for impiety.

For God, who is good, and wishes to uproot the seed of vice from us (that is, the pleasure that turns the soul away from divine charity), grants the devil the power to bring us labors, punishments, and torments. This is effective in two ways: first, it wipes away the rust that has contracted in the soul due to earlier lust, through the bitterness of suffering; and second, it creates in us perfect hatred and contempt for only the present sense of pleasure, which, apart from punishment, has no true benefit. It also strengthens the avenging and combined power of the devil over mankind, which is necessary for the cause of virtuous restoration in those who willingly depart from it, as a consequence of their own actions.

Thus, although the devil is called the servant of God when, by God's permission, he punishes sinners, he is not a willing servant but a most wicked deserter and thief, whose desire is opposed to those who, by their own lust, have willingly turned away from God. For just as the devil is the actor of punishment, punishing those who, by willingly indulging in his evil plans, have embraced them with a willing soul, so too is the devil the cause of torment through voluntary passions, while bringing pain through them to the unwilling.

Therefore, when those who inhabit Judea and Jerusalem—those who have acquired the habit of action or speculative knowledge of things—are tempted by human glory and seek to acquire it, they are said to be acting in vain. These people, who only speak of the virtues, clearly showing the qualities of wisdom and knowledge, but without the works of justice, and also ostentatiously displaying their pride under the name of virtue and knowledge, are delivered to appropriate labor and suffering. Through the endurance of these, they are taught the humility of the soul, that is, modesty, which they may have forgotten in their empty boasting. This is also what the divine Apostle understood when, having committed a crime, he handed over

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the Corinthian sinner to the devil for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus. For this reason, the king of Judea and Jerusalem is delivered to the king of the Assyrians (the soul devoted to contemplation and cultivated knowledge, handed over to the devil to pay the penalty). The Assyrian king, who justly inflicts suffering, teaches that through the endurance of suffering, one should philosophize about tolerance rather than vainly delight in pride.

Whoever, therefore, in the knowledge of the evils he has committed, willingly resolves to take on the severe labors of violent temptations, as it is fitting through the grace of prayer, does not lose the habit of virtue and knowledge, nor the grace of it, just as the ones from Judea and Jerusalem did not. These people, willing to bear the yoke of the Babylonian king, accept the inflicted torments in their rightful place. Remaining in these, they depend on violent labor, as a consequence of their previous crimes, consenting with their soul. However, through true worship and service to God (that is, through a modest and humble affection of the soul), they find redemption for what they have done.

But whoever, by God's permission, does not willingly accept through involuntary temptations the sufferings and torments, with a grateful mind, nor shakes off the vain show of being just, does not repent; that is, whoever opposes divine judgments, as those who once inhabited Judea did, and does not willingly bow the neck under the yoke of the Babylonian king, as they were commanded, will be delivered to the Babylonian king for captivity, and will receive chains, fetters, death, famine, and the sword, and will be utterly destroyed (clearly thinking they have the habit of virtue and knowledge). Through captivity, they are condemned by separation from the divine; through fetters, they are bound by false opinions about things; through chains, they are trapped by inactive leisure and cessation from the duties of honor; through famine, they are deprived of divine teaching; through death, they are blind and numb to the perfect duties of honor; through the sword, their lascivious and impure thoughts destroy the memory of divine things.

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For all these things, and many more, happen to those who, like their country, are destroyed by the habit of virtue and knowledge; that is, because of their pride and vain self-esteem, while they pay the penalty for their sins, they suffer in hardships and necessities, as the divine Apostle, \*\*, would not wish to please himself or be content in these. Although he, who was superior in justice, was not guilty of any of these things. For the great Apostle was not unaware that, having been humbled by external labors and hardships around the body, he remained firm in the treasures of divine things in his soul. For this reason, he willingly bore these things, for his own sake, and for those to whom the example of virtue and faith was given, so that, even if they suffered as those who were in a similar situation, as the Corinthian man was once subjected to, they might have solace and an example of patience, as he himself, innocent, was suffering.

Now, the kings of the nations in this place of Scripture are those who rule over the other wicked passions and are justly subjected to the penalty due for their sins. For this reason, they are delivered to the Babylonian king, as to an avenging virtue, and one who delights in the torments of nature. Thus, the king of Egypt is a mind that is luxurious and shameless; the Moabite, a mind broken by pleasures and profane; the Ammonite, a greedy and unjust mind; the Syrian, a mind superstitious and argumentative, contentiously caught up in words and reasoning. For it is written of the Syrian, "He resisted Solomon" (that is, peace and wisdom). Tyre is a mind that loves the world and flesh; and the remaining kings, whom the wise man will recognize by their names, either through the interpretation of their names, or the situation of their places, or the traditions they share, or through their dealings and attitudes toward Israel, will be understood. For they are not all similarly understood everywhere in the same meaning, but according to the use and strength of prophecy, are to be interpreted. For even Pharaoh is often used in Scripture as the type of the devil, especially when he destroys Israel. He is also the type of the law of nature, when he serves Joseph's dispensation. Through prophecy, he represents the one who, without sin, serves the divine Word through our natural affections. Similarly, the king of Tyre is understood as the figure of the devil, especially when Sisera, an



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enemy of Israel, is attacking them, but he also represents the law of nature when he becomes allied with David and helps Solomon in the building of the divine temple. Many other kings, likewise, are understood in various ways and meanings by Scripture, according to the prophecy's intent.

The beasts that God gives to the king of Babylon are demons, each of whom, according to their own ability, ministers to him in bringing this or that temptation. One demon is the instigator of one vice or malice, and another is worse and more prone to a particular type of malice. For demons cannot minister to the devil, the author of evil, except by God's permission, so that, as God knows, He may, through them, bring penalties corresponding to the merits of sins and iniquities. The history of Job clearly teaches this, where it is written that the devil could not approach Job without God's permission. Even King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is often taken as a type of the natural law. This is explained when it is written that those in Jerusalem, who could not embrace the spiritual law and were therefore led into the land of Babylon (representing the state of earthly confusion), should pray for the life of King Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar (the symbol of natural law, whose life they were subject to), that their days might be as the days of heaven. With these words, they are asking that those who stood firm in the seat of virtue and the truth of wisdom, should pray that the natural law, and the movement of its state, should not dissent from the spiritual law to which they had been abandoned.

This is in harmony with what the great Daniel mystically declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, when he interpreted the king's dream: "You will be driven out from among men and your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field; you will eat grass like oxen and be drenched with the dew of heaven, and seven times will pass over you until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will. And as he said: 'Let the root of the tree be left in the ground, your kingdom will remain yours until you know that the kingdom of heaven is the true one.'" The expulsion likely refers to the fall from paradise into this world due to transgression, and the loss of angelic company, that is, the separation from spiritual senses, and the return to the state of natural law, governed by sense and necessity. The

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dwelling with the beasts of the field is the company of vices and their ministers, the demons, representing both the companionship and existence in this fallen state. The grass that was eaten refers to natural consideration of things visible, which the angels (or men) offer, in contrast to the beasts that devour but do not nourish. But the phrase "you will dwell with the dew of heaven," or "in the stables," signifies that divine providence has the power to sustain in these things. For the dew of heaven, Scripture calls Providence, by whose gift in this world, along with the things that have been enumerated, man has received that which preserves him: that is, the natural law, not completely corrupted. Or perhaps, the divine gift through things visible to the eyes allows partial knowledge of intelligible matters, by which man, living in the world, is sustained by the hope of future things.

Finally, the phrase "seven times will pass over you" signifies the sevenfold duration of this world's time, to which the natural law is subjected, when its habits and actions have not been kept. After this period has passed, according to the expected resurrection, with the properties of brute animals shaken off, man will return to himself, receiving back the former glory of the kingdom: that is, the true power of the kingdom, recognized through the dispensation of Providence in this world. For what is added, "Let the root of the tree be left in the ground," denotes that the seed of nature and the powers of goodness have not been entirely abolished through transgression: through which, again taking root, it is restored to its original natural greatness and beauty by the resurrection.

Now, it is better that, following the law of commandments, we should teach ourselves through spontaneous labors to overcome the senses of the flesh: not only should it be better, but it should also be philosophical, and those who have appointed the innate reason as the leader and ruler of their affections should be fit for this. But if not, we should at least adopt that which ought to be accepted in secondary matters, so that, though unwillingly chastised, we may embrace the counsel of the one chastising us, with due gratitude. Just as we receive the punishment of the Babylonian king, which we have suffered for our sins. And in this way, it will be that the Babylonian king, from our land (that is, from the faith, knowledge, and the

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habit of virtue), will never transfer our hearts to foreign seats. Thus, in the manner we have delivered, the devil is both a servant of God and is resisted by the kings of the nations, the king of Judah, and the beasts of the field.

### SCHOLIUM

1. It explains how the devil is both an enemy and avenger of God.
2. The impurities of pleasure, like rust contracted, purify the impure laboring soul, and completely remove the affection for earthly things; it causes the loss of the very relationship it held, teaching of its damage. Therefore, by the just judgment of God, He gives the devil the power to torment humans.
3. "He who is afflicted by evils," it says, "because he has transgressed God's grace, is afflicted, provided that he recognizes the rational order of divine providence; then, he receives suffering with the joy of gratitude, and by whose grace he is chastised, he corrects his sin. But he who does not perceive the remedy that is applied to him, is justly cast away from grace and is delivered to the confusion of vices and disorders, and is allowed to sin actively, in whose heart the desire for sin was implanted."
4. Peace, according to its name, is [granted] wisdom, which Solomon received as a gift of divine prayer.
5. The type of the natural law is embodied in Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who take the habit of this same natural law.
6. From the prayer, it is clear that in this context, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are being depicted as the law and habit of nature emerging from it, and not the devil. For no one truly offers a prayer to the devil. The prophetic speech does not rebuke the prayer, so it should not be thought to be offered to the devil but rather to God.
7. Nature will return to itself, receiving it so that it may be immune from sin and destruction. For sinners will perish, that is, those who are the authors of sin; and all will be immune from sin; and therefore also from corruption. For these things arise from one another: all will acknowledge the true kingdom; some by illumination, others because

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they will be punished. However, not all will obtain good things, nor will those who do, receive them in equal ways.

### QUESTION XXVII

WHEN THE LORD, AFTER THE RESURRECTION, CLEARLY  
COMMANDED TO TEACH ALL NATIONS,  
HOW DID PETER, IN THE MATTER OF CORNELIUS, NEED TO  
BE TAUGHT BY REVELATION BECAUSE  
OF THE NATIONS? OR HOW DID THOSE WHO WERE IN  
JERUSALEM, THE APOSTLES, WHEN  
THEY HEARD THE THINGS CONCERNING CORNELIUS,  
DISPUTE WITH PETER?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Indeed, the most holy prince of the apostles, Peter, needed divine revelation in that matter concerning the nations: for he did not know there was a distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision, as it pertains to faith. Nor had it been clearly established to him that the Lord had commanded the nations to be taught without being imbued with the external observances of the law, until He would reveal the mystery of His secret counsel. Then, of course, persuading him by the example of the sheet, and with the grace of the Holy Spirit, it was granted to him, as to the nations, solely by the merit of faith, that there is no distinction in Christ between Jew and Greek: which the apostles, who were established in Jerusalem, were unaware of, and disputed with him, until they themselves learned the hidden riches of all divine goodness. For the doctrine of divine life, and the new introduction of worship beyond the legal cult, as well as the teaching that frees the mind voluntarily from the body, and the indication of the origin of a more divine principle, is the duty of preaching. Therefore, they needed the teaching of the one who commanded, to know what should be said, to whom this duty had been entrusted. Unless, indeed, to anyone

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who seems overly scrupulous, whatever is commanded by divine will necessarily has doctrine and revelation, by which the manner and reason for carrying out the work are defined. For it is impossible for someone to recognize the manner of a command without the revelation of the one who issued the command. Of this matter, the most laudable Peter, who had already received the command from the Lord to preach to the nations, did not proceed at all, waiting until the one who gave the command would also declare the manner of the command.

Indeed, perhaps something else, besides this, was being taught to the great Peter through the sheet let down from heaven, and the various animals in it. Rather, the whole human race: whether he, like Peter himself, apprehended the divine peak of faith, clearly learning to extinguish all his own sense, so that, while contemplating things subject to the eyes, he knows that God's creation itself is corrupted, and could not be immune to corruption and confusion. Therefore, through the sheet and the animals in it, the world, visible to the eyes, is signified, which can be understood through invisible reasoning; or, invisible, shining through the forms of sensible things, as if prefigured for spiritual consumption, who gives the oracle. Thus, He says: 'Rise, Peter, kill and eat.' Why is he commanded to rise? From where, except from the sense, both in habit and affection, and from a humbler preoccupation with things, or from the supposed justice of the law? So that the mind, freed from all sensory thought, can attain to the point of being able to look at the pure reasoning, recognize the intelligible forms, and understand that nothing of the things created by God is unclean. For the one who, from the world, perceives, through the mind, the preeminent creation shining in the eyes, or sees the forms of intelligible things through the appearance and distinction of visible things, will, like the sheet seen from heaven, not consider anything in those things that fall under sight to be unclean; since he sees no contradiction in the reasoning of things. Corruption and destruction are found in the sense, and mutual conflict among the creatures; but in the reasoning, nothing contrary at all exists.

The sheet is, indeed, the world as presented to the senses, hanging from the four elements, just as the sheet itself is made from four elements.

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But reptiles, beasts, and birds are various kinds of created reasonings, which, with regard to the senses, are unclean, but with regard to the mind, are clean and fit for spiritual life. And the third voice that was made teaches philosophy for the student of action, and that which clings to natural speculation, and that which concerns God, knowledge. For it is necessary that not only once and again, but even a third time, the creation of visible things be killed, and consumed by knowledge, by one who truly follows God. For he who rises from the passionate affection for visible things, kills the motion of visible things, and, having fulfilled that part of philosophy which cultivates action, eats virtue. But he who rises from the false opinion of things, kills the figures of visible things, and consumes the rational forms of invisible things; such a one fills natural speculation in the spirit. Finally, he who rises from the error of the gods, kills the very essence of things, and, through faith, swallows it whole.

Therefore, every mind pursuing contemplation, which has the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, having killed in itself the motion of visible creation, fulfills virtue: excluding the forms of sensible things by thought, it finds the truth placed in the reasoning of things, by which natural contemplation consists; and, having overcome the essence of things, it gains the illumination of divine and unapproachable unity, in which the mystery of true knowledge of God consists.

Or perhaps the highest of the apostles, the most blessed Peter, was being commanded to rise, to depart from the power of the common nature and ascend to divine felicity through grace, to kill evil desires and lusts in men, by the sword of the Word, with God's guidance; and to digest wholesome food and appropriate discourse with spiritual digestion, casting aside the former life of lasciviousness and brutality. For it is said that blood is the symbol of life: it customarily flows from every animal that is slaughtered. The distinction of the animals shown, perhaps, signifies the variety of temptations in men. For serpents symbolize those who have all the power of desire, who are crawling on the earth. The beast symbolizes the one who provokes all the force of anger to mutual destruction. The birds symbolize those who push all the motions of reason towards pride and injury, and from

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it arises the sense of lofty-mindedness; and who speak wickedness in the high places, and have set their mouths against heaven. In this manner, as a divine command, great Peter, by killing the fleshly desires, ignites others with a thirst for heavenly goods; makes others gentle and human, and teaches that one should be compassionate and kind to others; and, finally, makes others religious and of modest sense (that is, humble).

What, then, might Joppa signify, by the proper interpretation of its name (the place where the most holy Peter saw this vision), we shall consider. Joppa, by interpretation, is called "the watchtower," signifying a fitting guard and defense of action. For it is situated by the shore of the sea, and is indeed often shaken by waves, unless the city were established on a high point. Therefore, I believe it signifies one who, on the high summit of knowledge, builds virtue, like a city, and yet is not far from temptations, which seek to come to him uninvited, for he has near him, like the sea, the sense-affection, which he has not yet completely freed from, and for this reason, he needs the watchtower, lest unclean demons, while he does not sufficiently reflect, cause the impression of their vices through temptations, which exhaust the unwilling, upon the hearts of those struggling with sinful affections. But since Joppa belongs to the tribe of Issachar, and the name is said to signify labor and reward, it leads one to understand that Joppa has the character of one who watches over action, observing the invisible attacks of the spirits of wickedness. Therefore, rising from this, the great Apostle was perhaps commanded to transfer his mind to the knowledge of higher things.

Therefore, the philosopher who pursues that part of philosophy which concerns action, who cultivates the high peak of the watchtower, is said to be in Joppa. But one who dwells in Zion, which is in Jerusalem, that is, in the watchtower situated in the vision of peace (for this is what Jerusalem means, if one interprets the name), is removed from all sensory affection, as far as history goes, through the location of the place, for the sea is far removed from Zion, and he sees, as if in the watchtower, from the high summit of knowledge, only spiritual notions of things, in such a way that by subtle intellect he dismisses the apparent forms of things; and as much as it is permitted, he receives the clear representations of the divine, by which his

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mind is formed to what is more divine. Therefore, he who cultivates Joppa is one who studies action, observing carefully the snares and attacks of adversaries; while he who dwells in Zion is wise and spiritual, contemplating the beauty of the divine alone.

But if, once again, the sheet was lowered to heaven, we must understand that after Peter had been shown the reasoning of sensible things, along with those things that exist only in the mind, God is calling and drawing them back to Himself: teaching this to those whose reasoning remains with Him, that nothing is truly unclean. Therefore, after observing their power through the vision, the great apostle learned to say that no one is unclean, and that there is no acceptance of persons with God, which would bring about an unjust division of things. Therefore, without hesitation, he fulfilled the divine command, leading to spiritual life, by circumcising the heart with the word of grace, and by cleansing, like a foreskin, all the impurity of unbelief, malice, and ignorance; and, on the other hand, nothing is excluded from the flesh of those who are made by divine creation, not from a lascivious mind, but from divine creation. For nothing that is from nature is unclean: whatever has God as its author, has its being from Him.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Life, he says, is the translation and the angelic worship, the voluntary separation of the soul from the body; likewise, the beginning of the change in the spirit, proclaiming the mystery of the new covenant.
2. Another, he says, is the way of the command, another method by which it must be executed. When, therefore, the great Peter had received the command to preach to the nations, he was taught the method of the command through the sheet, which was lowered to him, namely, that the nations were to be called without circumcision and the other coarser observances of the law: for Scripture knows the spiritual circumcision, the cutting off of the carnal affections of the soul.
3. The entire nature of the divine command needs this: that we be taught the way of execution; for the great Paul called it "suitable."



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4. He who does not dwell on the figures of things that fall under the senses, but in the mind searches out the reasons of those things, like one who contemplates the forms of intellectual things, or even the reasons of sensible things, is taught that nothing is unclean among the things that are seen. For all nature is very good.
5. For, he says, he who is not changed by the quality of sensible things but cultivates the pure action of virtue; but he who does not form his mind according to their figures, has not attained the true opinion about things. But he who, by the intellect of his mind, surpasses even the substance of things, like the best theologian, overcomes them and binds them into a mysterious unity. Therefore, he who kills the visible creature of things, has risen to the rank of the perfect.
6. Joppa, he says, is the habit of virtue; it avoids the danger that arises from the things falling into the senses. But Zion, on the other hand, is the habit of knowledge, considering the reception of gifts, which are understood by the mind alone.

## QUESTION XXVIII

THAT WHICH IS SAID, "COME, LET US CONFUSE THEIR  
LANGUAGES"—TO WHOM WAS GOD SPEAKING?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Regarding the subjects who are governed by Providence, we find that God is represented in various ways in Scripture; hence, we encounter the lion, the bear, the leopard, the panther, the man, the ox, the sun, the star, the fire, the spirit or wind, and other superior things (although these do not truly exist in the same form), each having been called forth according to the subtle understanding of their respective meanings. Therefore, God, appearing to Abraham, who was perfect in knowledge, taught that the speech about Unity was connected to the immaterial doctrine of the Trinity;

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for Abraham, having risen beyond the material and its forms in his sublime mind, thus saw God in three aspects, yet the conversation remained as one.

However, Lot, who had not yet purified his soul from the composition of bodies and was still dependent on the material and form of bodies for his origin and substance, and believed in the Creator God of the visible creation, saw God in two aspects, not as three; showing that he had not yet transcended the material and form which the soul was being formed by. Thus, in any place in Scripture where God is represented in various forms, if you carefully and thoughtfully examine the reasoning, you will find the cause of this great diversity in the divine representations, stemming from the affections of those who are governed by Providence.

Therefore, since even those who built the tower had come from the region of the East, from the light of the true and singular knowledge of God, into the land of Shinar B (which you interpret as 'blasphemous teeth'), they had encountered many opinions about the Deity, and each opinion was as though they were laying bricks, building an impious tower of errors about many gods; rightly, God, who would have scattered the confession of the discordant error of the deceived men, scattered the affection into countless opinions and in that scattering, called Himself in the plural number: to show that, though He is One, He is manifested as if split into parts. Thus, He is seen even to speak in Adam: 'Behold, Adam has become like one of us.' Therefore, concerning the subject at hand, God's words in Scripture are expressed in the plural, or contracted into singularity.

As for the matter of whom God speaks with, it is customary in Scripture for Divine judgments to be revealed through corporal reasoning, so that, through suitable words and phrases, the divine may be understood. For otherwise, God is an unknown mind, and speech, not explainable by words, and life incomprehensible; and He neither speaks nor has one to speak for Him, for He Himself is the speech, and the counsel, existing essentially by Himself. And when we understand the words of Divine eloquence in this manner, whatever is written will not offend us due to its obscurity.

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But if anyone says that the name of God is not placed in the plural in Scripture, and argues for his view by presenting confirmation, namely: 'And God said: Let us make man in our image and likeness,' and claims that this is a false interpretation implying multiple gods, we would respond that whenever Scripture, with a pious sense, speaks of God in the plural number, it is referring to the holiest three persons; specifically, so that it might signify, in a more mystically obscure manner, the mode of existence of the consubstantial Trinity, which is without beginning. For unity, through essence, must be followed in all worship, and the most laudable Trinity of persons must be adored. For God is our unity in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity.

However, when speaking to the impious, He speaks of God in the plural number, and I believe this refutes their view of Deity, who thought that the distinction in properties was a natural one and not a matter of subsistence; for this plainly points out the error of those who think of many gods in relation to Deity.

But if we do not adopt this view, it is to the benefit of the Spirit, and those who love the Spirit, that we should not disagree in our minds but receive the Scriptures in harmony with one another. For the Scriptures teach the most holy Trinity in unity, sometimes introducing it as the Creator, as in the words: 'Let us make man' (for the work is of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), but at other times as the One who crowns those who have piously established their life according to His laws; similarly, as the governor for those who, from the beginning, received existence in the natural world; just as when He appeared in a triple form to Abraham, He speaks as if One and singular. But He also appears as the Avenger or Judge of those who have violated the natural law; and as the Punisher of those who have strayed from the law of nature, as it is written: 'Let us go down and confound their languages.' For indeed, the holy and consubstantial Trinity is not only the creator of the world, but also its conserving cause, and through it, God distributes to each according to his merit; for God is One, by nature the Creator, existing, ruling, and judging over the things He has made. For the

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work of creating, judging, and exercising the providence over creation belongs to the common office of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### SCHOLIUM

1. To each, He says, according to the opinion they have concerning God, God appears: to those who have overcome the earthly composition of the soul's desire, and whose powers are harmoniously and evenly interwoven according to a single and identical motion towards God, the unity and the Trinity appear; in order to show, of course, both the image of His substance and to mystically teach the mode of it: but to those whose every desire is stirred by earthly affection, and whose powers of the soul are in conflict with one another, He appears, not as He is, but as they are; showing that they are entangled in a binary manner, each holding with both hands; in this binary, the world is formed of both matter and form.
2. He who says that the distinction in God is natural, not personal, is not inspired by God, but deceived by the error of many gods; who thinks that the properties of essences, not persons, should receive the number of Deity.

### QUESTION XXIX

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT IT IS WRITTEN IN THE ACTS:

"THEY WHO THROUGH THE SPIRIT

SAID TO PAUL, 'DO NOT GO UP TO JERUSALEM'? WHY DID

HE NOT OBEY THE SPIRIT, BUT ASCENDED?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The holy prophet Isaiah in his prophecy says, that over the Savior, who was to arise from the root of Jesse, the spirit of seven would rest: not as if those seven spirits were known to God and that He would teach others to

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receive them in such a way, but because He calls the operations and breaths of one and the same Spirit by the name of spirits: for indeed, in every operation and breath, the Holy Spirit fully and proportionally works and breathes within. However, the divine Apostle calls the various operations of the one and same Holy Spirit by different gifts; which, indeed, are the effects of the same one Spirit. Therefore, since the manifestation of the Spirit is given according to the measure of each person's faith, and such participation of grace and gift is granted: each faithful person, according to their faith and the affection of their soul, receives, in a certain reasonable proportion, the operation of the Spirit that fits the task to be executed.

Just as, for example, one receives the word of wisdom, another the word of knowledge, another faith, and yet another some other grace of the Spirit, as the great Apostle has enumerated: so this person receives, through the Spirit, the gift of perfect and immediate charity with God, having nothing earthly in it, according to the measure of faith; another, however, receives through the same Spirit the gift of perfect love towards their neighbor; and another, something else according to the same Spirit: each person, as I said, has the gift truly exercised and proper to them. These gifts, as the prophet Isaiah said, if the Spirit calls them, I believe in my opinion that they are not far from the truth. For in every gift, whether greater or smaller, the Holy Spirit, operating and breathing within, is present with a certain rational proportion.

Therefore, truly great, and greater than human capacity in the service of mysteries, is the effect produced by Paul, when, having received the Spirit in the perfect grace of charity towards God, without any middle way, he did not obey the people, who, having received the perfect gift of charity, through the Spirit, told him not to go up to Jerusalem. He did not obey them because of the spirit, that is, the gift of love that had come to them through the breath of the Spirit (for, as I said before, the spirit and the gift are the same, as the prophet was taught by the oracle). He did not comply, but through his own example drew them to the love of all, surpassing all comparison in his spiritual affection for them. Nor did he ascend in disobedience, but by not obeying those who were prophesying to him with a

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moderate breath of the Spirit, he led them by his own example towards a higher love.

Furthermore, since the gift of prophecy is far inferior to the apostolic, it was not in accordance with reason for everything to be directed and arranged in its proper order, for what is greater should not give way to what is lesser, but the situation should be the other way around. For those who were prophesying through the spirit of prophecy were not prophesying through the apostolic spirit, which would have been necessary for the preaching that Paul was about to do. They were announcing the manner of his sufferings. But Paul, looking toward the divine purpose, disregarded all intermediaries, taking seriously not how to avoid bad events, but how another Christ would emerge, fulfilling all things by imitating Christ, for which reason Christ, in most benevolent piety, had chosen a life in the flesh according to His dispensation. Therefore, the preservation of the rightly established order is that which governs everything divinely, directing and arranging all things in their eternal stability, maintaining their inviolable firmness, which the great Apostle's not obeying appeared as obstinacy, and his doctrine, unmingled, showing that the distinct degrees of the Church, set apart by the Spirit, should not be confused.

## SCHOLIUM

1. He who breathes diversely, in each breath from Him, is entire, and in all simultaneously indivisible. For, in all things and in each, the Holy Spirit, breathing and operating, shines unaltered, according to one and the same power; whose virtue is such that it both fills all things (since He is God) and, exceeding all substance, cannot be contained by any.
2. The habit of fulfilling commands, He says, is a gift of the Spirit.
3. He who loves God with his whole heart, soul, and strength, is greater than he who loves his neighbor. Therefore, there is no reason why the one who is superior should be weighed down by a lesser law; but rather, the lesser should be subject to the greater. For this reason, the divine Apostle did not permit the apostolic dignity and the order of those

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under his command to be subjected to the authority of the degrees of the hierarchy, lest the noble arrangement of all things, and especially the established order of divine matters, should be corrupted.

4. He calls the kinds of temptations that they knew through the foreknowledge of the divine Spirit, which foretold to Paul the future contest according to the truth: of which they had no reason at all, hastening to be united with Christ through the apparent goodness of the world, after the goal of things in faith had been pursued.

## QUESTION XXX

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, "CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP THAT I  
DRINK, AND BE BAPTIZED WITH THE  
BAPTISM WITH WHICH I AM BAPTIZED"? WHAT DIFFERENCE  
DOES THE CUP HAVE FROM THE BAPTISM?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The baptism of the Lord is a figure of the labors which we willingly and deliberately take upon ourselves for the sake of virtue. Through these, we cleanse the stains and wrinkles of conscience and accept a voluntary death of the soul toward things presented to the eyes. The cup, however, is a figure of violent temptations arising from adverse circumstances for the sake of truth, which, though inflicted upon us by fate, we endure with a spirit opposing such adversity.

Thus, baptism and the cup are distinguished in this way: baptism renders the will dead to the delights of life for the sake of virtue; the cup, however, teaches that those who live by pious habits should place the truth above nature itself. The cup is placed before baptism because virtue exists for the sake of truth, not truth for the sake of virtue. Therefore, one who practices virtue for the sake of truth is not wounded by the arrows of vain glory, while one who pursues truth for the sake of virtue is accompanied by the boastfulness of vain glory.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. The baptism of the Lord," he says, "is the complete mortification of our will concerning the world perceived by the senses; the cup, however, is the renunciation of this very life of ours for the sake of truth.
2. He says that truth is divine knowledge, and virtue is the struggles undertaken by those who are held by the desire for it. Therefore, he who endures the labors of virtue for the sake of knowledge does not suffer from the vice of vain glory, understanding that truth, by nature, cannot be grasped through labors. For it is not arranged by nature that the first should be circumscribed by the second. However, one who pursues knowledge for the sake of its struggles labors entirely in vain glory, imagining that he has received the crown before the struggles. This person fails to understand that struggles must be undertaken for the sake of crowns, not crowns for the sake of struggles. Thus, by nature, it is established that no method or path can be devised by which what is absolute may be attained or even considered absolute.

### QUESTION XXXI

**If God dwells in temples not made by hands, how did He dwell in the temple of the Jews?**

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

God, who wisely considers the capacity and ability of those governed by providence, first directed to the truth those who were guided by the senses, accommodating Himself to their nature and understanding through figures. To the ancient people, He granted all the types, obscurely mingling Himself with them and preparing the way for their instruction.

Thus, God dwelt in the temple of the Jews figuratively, not in actual truth, through that habitation of the temple, enclosing the secret and more



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sacred mystery of the teachings of providence. For the only place suitable for the dwelling of God is the pure soul, for whose sake the figurative temple was permitted to be constructed. By means of coarser symbols, it sought to detach the minds of the Jews—made even coarser by the symbols of intangible things—from earthly matters.

From the earthly and unsuitable nature of the place, they were to understand that nothing physical was adequate for the habitation of God and, through this, comprehend the sense of what is inherently in them by nature. But the Jew, who failed to understand this and fed his pride on mere external displays of piety, was deprived of the figure and thereby made himself alien to the truth.

### SCHOLIUM

1. He who venerates only the form of knowledge, which is mere speech, and the semblance of virtue, which is mere conduct, is himself a Jew," it says, "inflated by the figures of truth.

## QUESTION XXXII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, "IF PERHAPS THEY MIGHT

GROPE FOR AND FIND GOD?"

BY WHAT MANNER DOES ONE FIND GOD

BY GROPING?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The one who, disregarding the visible and material nature of the law, sees every bodily act not through the sense but by the thought of the mind, and discerns the symbolic meaning of each visible thing—being instructed in the divine and perfect reason hidden in each—finds God in reason. This person, skillfully groping by the faculty of the intelligent mind, as though amid the confusion (that is, the earthly accumulation) of legal

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constitutions, discovers, hidden in the flesh of the law, that unity (i.e., reason) which entirely escapes the power of the senses.

In a similar manner, one who considers the nature of visible things not merely through sense perception but wisely investigates with the mind the reason inherent in each created thing also finds God. From the manifest magnificence of the structure of things, they come to know the Creator of these things. Since, therefore, the proper discernment of the one groping or feeling lies in this: the one who surveys the legal symbols with spiritual understanding and contemplates the nature of visible things with the light of knowledge distinguishes Scripture, creation, and themselves. Scripture is distinguished into letter and spirit; creation, into reason and the external visible subject; and oneself, into mind and sense. Thus, from Scripture they take the spirit; from creation, reason; and from themselves, the mind. Binding these inseparably together, they find God, recognizing Him as existing in mind, reason, and spirit, as is fitting and permissible for humanity. Freed from all errors and countless opinions—such as those arising from the letter, external appearance, and sense, which involve multiplicity and oppose unity—they discover the truth. But if anyone entangles and confuses the letter of the law, the external appearance of visible things, and their own sense perception, they are blind and suffer from ignorance of the Creator.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The one who, says [the author], views solely the spirit of Scripture apart from types and the reasons of creation apart from figures, perceiving these by the mind alone, unbound from the operation of sense, finds God. They find Him in the spirit of Scripture as the author of goodness; in the reasons of things as the author of power; and in themselves as the author of wisdom. For the reasons that exist from non-being declare the power of Him who created them; the spirit of Scripture, which restores those misled by error to deification, announces the goodness of Him who composed it; and our mind, grasping indivisibly the reasons of created things, openly proclaims the wisdom of the Maker.

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### QUESTION XXXIII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, “AMEN, I SAY TO YOU, THAT WHOEVER  
SAYS TO THIS MOUNTAIN: BE REMOVED  
AND CAST INTO THE SEA, AND DOES NOT DOUBT IN HIS  
HEART BUT BELIEVES THAT WHATEVER HE SAYS  
WILL HAPPEN, IT SHALL BE DONE FOR HIM”? WHAT IS “AND  
DOES NOT DOUBT” (ΔΙΑΚΡΙΘΗΙ)?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The great and divine Apostle, while defining what faith is, says, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” If someone else, too, defines it as the good laid up in the soul and as the true knowledge demonstrating those hidden goods, they would not depart from the truth. The Lord, when teaching about hidden goods that are hoped for and not visible, said, “The kingdom of God is within us.” Thus, the kingdom of God is faith in God, and these are distinguished only by subtle thought. For faith is the unformed kingdom of God, while the kingdom is faith shaped with a divine likeness.

Accordingly, faith is not external to us; when exercised through divine commandments, it becomes the kingdom of God, known only to those who partake of it. The kingdom of God is faith in practice. Moreover, the kingdom of God brings about immediate union with God for those who reign through its principles.

It has been clearly demonstrated that faith is a relational power (σχετικήν), that is, a connection or affection, by nature superior, which establishes the perfect union of the one who believes with God, in whom they believe. Since man, being composed of soul and body, is governed by two laws—the law of the flesh through sense, and the law of the spirit through the mind—each law has its force and efficacy. The law of the flesh

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binds to earthly things, operating through sense, while the law of the spirit operates through the mind, uniting immediately with God.

Thus, the one who does not doubt in his heart—that is, who does not divide or sever the immediate union with God through faith—becomes, by the power of this union, already godlike through faith. With a tranquil mind, free from vices and passions, such a one says to this mountain to move, and it moves. By the phrase “this mountain,” the sense and law of the flesh is indicated—a weighty and difficult thing to move, and in terms of natural strength, entirely immobile and steadfast.

For the operations of sense have deeply rooted themselves in human nature as irrational affections and passions, such that many consider man to be nothing more than flesh equipped with senses for the enjoyment of present life’s pleasures. Thus, all things are possible to the one who believes and who is not divided—meaning, not severed from the union of the mind with God, which is established through faith. This is because faith separates the soul from the body’s attachment to the world through sense, removing it from worldly and fleshly concerns and binding it excellently to God.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Faith, when bare, is called the unformed kingdom because it lacks the divine likeness of virtues. But the kingdom is faith that has been shaped with the divine form of goodness through works.
2. Faith, it is said, is undemonstrable knowledge. If it is undemonstrable knowledge, then it is a connection to a higher nature, by which—through an unknown principle, not by the power of demonstration—we are united to God in a union that surpasses all thought.
3. The mind that has attained union with God and is devoid of intermediary steps has its power of thinking and being thought of entirely suspended by nature. When it shifts its focus to any secondary things derived from God, the union—which surpasses all thought—is severed, and the mind is divided. As long as the mind remains united with God, elevated to a higher nature and through divine commerce

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becoming godlike, it transfers the immovable law of nature, as though moving a mountain.

4. From what has been stated earlier, it should be reiterated: All things are possible to the one who believes, meaning all things that separate the soul from the world and the flesh. These things, through the grace of God, are possible to the believer.

### QUESTION XXXIV

WHAT AGAIN DOES IT MEAN: "THEREFORE I SAY TO YOU,  
ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YOU ASK FOR  
IN PRAYER, BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE THEM, AND  
THEY SHALL BE DONE FOR YOU"? HOW  
CAN SOMEONE BELIEVE THEY WILL RECEIVE ALL  
THAT THEY ASK FOR, WHEN ONLY GOD KNOWS WHETHER  
WHAT IS ASKED FOR IS BENEFICIAL OR NOT?  
IF SOMEONE, OUT OF IGNORANCE, ASKS FOR WHAT IS NOT  
BENEFICIAL, HOW WILL IT BE GRANTED?  
BUT IF WHAT IS NOT BENEFICIAL, ASKED FOR OUT OF  
IGNORANCE, WILL NOT BE GRANTED, IN  
WHAT WAY CAN SOMEONE BELIEVE THEY WILL RECEIVE  
WHATEVER THEY ASK FOR AND THAT IT  
WILL HAPPEN TO THEM?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The chapters of this question have been briefly resolved above. For those who know how to believe, it is fitting for them to understand what it is, how it is, and from what it should be sought. Not all have knowledge; just as neither do all have faith. Moreover, when the Lord says: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," that is, above all, the knowledge of the truth and then the practice of virtuous living, He clearly shows that only the faithful are to seek divine knowledge, and that knowledge is adorned

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with virtue, which is its proper cultivation. Since therefore many things must be undertaken by the faithful in their pursuit of the knowledge of God and virtue—namely, liberation from passions and vices, patient endurance of temptations with a strong heart, understanding of virtues, methods of actions, the withdrawal of the heart from the flesh, the redirection of the senses from the desire for sensory things, the complete separation of the mind from created things; and generally innumerable other things related to this, so that we may refrain from vices and ignorance and be truly diligent in knowledge and virtue—rightly does the Lord say: "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive." All things that concern the knowledge and virtue of God alone, with knowledge and faith, are to be sought and asked for by the pious. For all these things are beneficial and granted by the Lord to those who ask. Therefore, whoever seeks everything for the sake of faith (that is, for direct union with God) will indeed receive it. But whoever seeks for some other reason, whether it be any of those mentioned or others, will not receive. For he does not believe, but, as an unbeliever, builds his own glory through divine power.

### QUESTION XXXV

SINCE THE WORD BECAME FLESH, AND NOT ONLY FLESH,  
BUT ALSO BLOOD AND BONES; AND WE ARE  
COMMANDED TO EAT THE FLESH AND DRINK THE BLOOD;  
YET BONES ARE NOT TO BE BROKEN; I ASK THAT YOU  
TEACH ME, WHAT DIVISION EXISTS IN THE THREEFOLD  
NATURE OF THE WORD MADE FLESH, THAT IS, IN THE  
HUMAN FORM OF THE WORD?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Word, which is the essence above all things and the creator of all, who knows how essence itself is formed by reason, and, wishing to come to the things of man, introduces the natural principles of all things, both

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those that are visible to the eyes and those that are perceived by the mind, along with their incomprehensible notions. From these, the principles of those things which are perceived by the mind are the blood of the Word; likewise, the principles of those things that fall within the senses are the visible flesh of the Word. Therefore, since the Word is the spiritual teacher of principles, both those in things visible to the eyes and those which exist only in the mind, it rightly and justly provides knowledge of things perceptible by the senses, in the form of flesh to be consumed; and likewise, it imparts knowledge of things intelligible to the mind, in the form of blood. These, once prepared by Wisdom in a mystical manner through a vessel and sacrifices, as the author of the Proverbs says, are offered. However, bones, that is, the principles of the divine nature, which surpass the mind and infinitely exceed all created nature, do not provide such knowledge, for nature is not capable of receiving them.

Again, the flesh of the Word is true virtue; the blood, knowledge free from all error; the bones, however, are the hidden theology (that is, the knowledge of God). Almost like the blood, which is turned into flesh according to its species, knowledge and science of action transform into virtue; and so with the bones, which combine the blood and flesh, creating, preserving, and conserving the divine principles and essences that are hidden in the nature of things and transcend all thought. They create all knowledge and virtue.

But if anyone were to say that the flesh and blood are the principles of judgment and providence (because we will someday eat and drink them), I do not think it would be unreasonable that the bones, which lie hidden in them, should contain the divine principles. Perhaps, however, the flesh of the Word is the return and restoration of nature to itself through virtue and knowledge; the blood, on the other hand, is the preservation of this by grace, so that it might always enjoy beatitude; the bones, however, contain the unknown force and power that leads to the eternal happiness of beatitude through deification. But if anyone should say more subtly that the flesh is the mortification of virtues through spontaneous cultivation, and the blood is the consummation of death due to adverse circumstances and tortures for

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the sake of truth, and the bones are the first principles of the divine nature that are inaccessible to the human mind, then he would have spoken rightly, and nothing would have been lacking in the proper understanding.

### SCHOLIUM

1. Essence signifies both the capacity and operation of each thing, through which all things are understood; by which God is known to us as creator, provider, and judge. Or, speaking thus of things, there are two parts: the material and form of those things perceived by the senses; and the substance and accidents of those things understood by the mind; or even the virtue and knowledge, by which God, who exceeds all knowledge, is known.
2. Hidden theology is the fullness of the excellence of science and knowledge, in which there is privation, as unknown as the things that have natural knowledge.
3. The use of blood here refers to deification, signifying the future life of those who will be worthy of it. For blood is a symbol of life.

### QUESTION XXXVI

WHAT DO THE BODIES AND BLOOD OF BRUTE ANIMALS  
SIGNIFY, WITH WHICH, WHILE THE  
ISRAELITES RENDERED WORSHIP TO GOD, THEY ATE THE  
BODIES BUT DID NOT DRINK THE BLOOD,  
INSTEAD POURING IT AROUND THE  
BASE OF THE ALTAR?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Those who once, through the legal rite, offered worship to God in shadow, bore the image of those who are introduced to piety in its rudiments; who could scarcely even understand the visible precepts of



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symbolic figures. Therefore, the law was given not primarily to them, but to us, so that through us it might be spiritually completed in the Christian rite. Let us piously consider the manner of the sacrifices of that age.

He who is introduced to piety and whose worship is like a rudimentary one is taught the works of justice, and he performs action alone with all obedience and faith; eating the flesh like those who are conspicuous in virtue. But the principles of the commandments, in which the knowledge of the perfected is found, allow God to be trusted through faith, which, due to the vastness of knowledge, cannot yet be fully extended. For the altar is the symbol of God, to which we are all spiritually immolated, and we allow knowledge of those things that exceed our capacity, so that we may live. The base of the altar is the figure of divine faith; for faith is the foundation, bearing the whole structure of divine works and perceptions. To this, anyone who cannot be soberly intoxicated by the cup of divine wisdom through knowledge, pours out those principles of science that are beyond comprehension. This is, the knowledge of faith permits the understanding of those principles that exceed our capacity.

Therefore, the ancient people, those who are introduced to piety and are rudimentary, bore the image of this by eating the flesh of sacrifices and pouring the blood around the altar, since due to their infantile sense, they could not grasp the mystical knowledge of those things being done. But Christ, coming as the high priest of future goods, offering himself as the hidden sacrifice, also gives the blood with the flesh to those who, due to perfection and the exercise of their mental faculties, have the ability to discern good and evil. For the one who is perfect, not only for those being introduced but also for those who have advanced, knows the principles that are carried out. But when he first drinks them in spirit, he eats all the flesh of virtue through works, advancing the knowledge of those things from sensory reason to the wisdom of the mind. There are many other such principles, especially for you, the most devout, who see them clearly. However, let them be left aside for now due to their multitude.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. What is conspicuous in virtues he called moral discipline.
2. Observe, he called principles "knowledge." If principles are knowledge, then whoever knows the principles, knows the reason, and the Father of the reason, that is, the Word. For the accurate knowledge of the Father is the Word: "He who has seen me," says the Savior, "has seen the Father."
3. He explained the blood in a spiritual sense as that which nourishes the body of virtue.

### QUESTION XXXVII

IT IS SAID IN THE ACTS ABOUT SAINT PAUL: "SO THAT EVEN  
HANDKERCHIEFS AND APRONS WERE CARRIED  
AWAY FROM HIS BODY, AND DISEASES DEPARTED FROM  
THEM." WAS THIS DONE FOR THE SAKE OF MINISTRY AND  
FOR THE UNBELIEVERS? OR WERE THESE THINGS  
PERFORMED DUE TO THE SANCTIFIED BODY, FROM WHICH  
THEY WERE BROUGHT FORTH BY HIS SKIN? AND IF, BY THIS  
MEANS, NO HARM CAME TO HIM FROM A VIPER,  
WHY THEN DID HIS BODY SUCCUMB TO A SWORD? THE  
SAME QUESTION APPLIES TO THE BODY OF ELISHA.  
WHAT THEN ARE THE APRONS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Not for the mere holiness of Paul, nor for the faith of those to whom the duty belonged, was the skin of his body through the handkerchiefs and girdles bringing about healing: but because divine grace, dividing itself equally between him and them, through supreme kindness was making the faith of the Apostle effective in them. Thus, whatever grace willed, his body remained unharmed from the venomous poison of the

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wasting beast; whether grace changed the poisonous quality of the venom, or whether it infused into the holy body the power to be consumed and destroyed; or whether, through some other mode of Providence, which the author himself knows how to make happen and transform, God achieved this. However, by the sword, again, grace willing, he succumbed: for nature was not immortal, though he worked miracles through grace. Indeed, if he had been immortal by nature, it would be rightly asked how he could have succumbed to the sword, which is beyond nature. But since, even though advanced in holiness, nature remained mortal, it is not necessary to ask why the divine Apostle passed beyond the limits of bodily life in this manner rather than another. For in whatever manner it pleased Him who before the ages defined and predestined the life of each one, whether just or unjust, He leads each to his appointed end.

Indeed, if the ratio of nature and grace were one and the same, it would be a matter worthy of admiration and astonishment, that grace would be unwilling according to nature, or that nature would be unwilling according to grace. But if, on the contrary, nature and grace have different ratios, it is clear and manifest that, while the saints, by the grace they possessed, performed miracles, they were subject to human suffering and weakness according to the nature they had. For the power of suffering was not taken away by nature; the ratios of nature and grace were never confused. In this way, we will understand that by God's grace everything is accomplished in the saints, whether they live or die, through which Providence uses them as its proper instruments for the salvation of others, but the saints themselves do not work in others through nature, but through grace. Thus, also, concerning the body of Elisha.

However, in spiritual understanding, the narration of events more deeply refreshes and affects the pious mind: we say the skin is that of the great Apostle, his piety; by which, to some, it was the fragrance of life leading to life, and to others, the fragrance of death leading to death; the handkerchiefs, the clear rationales of his wise contemplation; the girdles, the noble modes of action according to the virtue of philosophy (for they say that girdles are the hand-woven bands); which rationales and modes of

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virtue, like skin, breathed a sweet fragrance, exhaling the immense piety of the blessed Apostle, through which those who received it, burdened by weakness, went forth cured; others through contemplative rationales, as through handkerchiefs, driving away the sickness of ignorance; others, through the modes of action, shining in the virtue of their conduct, entirely overcoming the illness of malice and vices.

Thus, what happens in this manner, the black storm of temptations that assail unwillingly, I infer to be of great weight: the island, the firm habitation of divine hope, unshaken; the lit fire, the condition of knowledge; the twigs, the nature of visible things: which his hand touched (that is, the power of the mind, grasping them like palpation through contemplation), nurturing its virtues through his notions and feelings, by which the grief contracted in the mind through the storm of temptations, might be healed and lightened more humanely. The viper, secretly concealed in nature's harmful and deadly force; which, indeed, had bitten the hand (that is, the power of the mind grasping through contemplation), but had not harmed the discerning mind, which immediately, by the light of its knowledge, like a devouring flame, destroyed the harmful power adhering to the sensory contemplation through the active motion of the mind.

Similarly, what happened to Elisha, I understand thus: it is indeed that whoever, dead in sin, is laid in the tomb where the body of the prophet is, that is, in the memorial having the trace of prophetic life, in which the body of virtues was excellently preserved, by imitating the manner of life well, shall be given life: transferred from death, the cause of the corruption of vices, to life, shining with the light of virtue.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Faith, says he, in the healing of the poor and those asking for it, called forth the power of the Spirit existing in the saints, so that hidden within it, through faith, it might be made manifest to all. For then the true manner of healing becomes clear when the virtue of healing in the spirit

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of the excellent corresponds perfectly to the faith of those to whom it is given.

2. He, says he, whose mind is cleansed from the corruption of sin, corrupts the corruption of those who, by nature, are destined to corrupt. For the incorruption of the will, according to Providence, usually preserves the corruption of nature, by the virtue of the Spirit within it, not allowing opposing qualities to dominate.
3. When, says he, there is not one and the same ratio of nature and grace, it is not even worth questioning why some of the saints, at one time superior to injury and evil, at other times, succumbed to them: since it is clear that a miracle, the grace in them, has come to be; injury, nature.
4. The Apostle, by his example, was a fragrance to the faithful, from life to life, moving them from the cult of action to the fragrance of virtue; or, also, through the word of grace, like a preacher, transferring them from a life that is sensed to a life in the Spirit. But the fragrance of death to death, suggests the sense of remaining in condemnation, to those who hasten from the death of ignorance to the death of unbelief. Or again, the fragrance of life to life, to those who are advanced from action to contemplation; but the fragrance of death to death, to those who, ceasing from sin, with their members mortified on earth, pass into the praised mortification of lustful thoughts and feelings.
5. That: "We are the good fragrance of Christ to those who are being saved, and to those who perish; to some, the fragrance of life to life; to others, the fragrance of death to death" — this is particularly clearly set forth in this place: namely, the fragrance of life to life, to those to whom the gospel of Christ is not hidden; but the fragrance of death to death, to those to whom it is entirely hidden: "In whom the god of this world," he says, "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers." It is revealed and covered according to the fervor or coldness of those who hear.
6. Through imitation, says he, having the memory of the conversation of the saints, released from the death of vices, receives the life of virtues.

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### QUESTION XXXVIII

DID THE SADDUCEES, IN THE CASE OF THE SEVEN  
BROTHERS, WHO WERE THE HUSBANDS  
OF ONE WOMAN, RECOUNT THE NUMBER? OR DOES IT  
HAVE SOME DEEPER REASONING? BUT  
IF IT DOES HAVE, WHO ARE THE MEN, AND  
WHO IS THE WIFE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

There are those who deny that what is said by evil and reproachful men in Scripture should be drawn to an allegorical sense. However, since it is better to philosophize and incessantly pray to God, that He might grant wisdom and virtue so that we may spiritually understand all of Scripture, with your prayers aiding me, I settle this question as follows. The Sadducees, in a higher and spiritual sense, who teach the case, are demons or thoughts. The woman is human nature; the seven brothers are the laws given to her by the providence of God through the course of ages, by which she was to be instructed and bear the fruits of justice. She, having been united with these as husbands, did not bear offspring, that she might be barren of the fruit of justice.

Now, the first law is the one given to Adam in paradise. The second, which was issued to him when he was cast out of paradise, is somewhat in the form of a command. The third is the one given to Noah in the ark. The fourth is the one given to Abraham, the law of circumcision. The fifth, when Isaac was offered to him. The sixth is the law of Moses. The seventh, the breath of grace foretold, that is, the oracles of the prophets. For, indeed, the nature of the wife had not yet been united to the law of the Gospel, to her husband, who remains forever.

Therefore, these demons continually, by suggesting thoughts to our reasoning, oppose the faith in a certain true form from Scripture, stirring

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doubts. If indeed the future resurrection of the dead exists, and another kind of life is to be expected after this one we live, according to the law of the Scriptures given by God in ages past, will it be that human life will be established in this way? If we say from one of the aforementioned, they might add and say: "Therefore, human life will be vain and useless if it is not freed from the prior evils." For it will be that it will revolve again in the same superfluous things, which is plainly the assertion of fate and the removal of Providence from things.

However, the Lord and Savior's Word restrains these demons and thoughts, indicating the incorruptibility to come according to the Gospel, and signifying that from none of the previous laws will man henceforth live; now, having been granted divinity, and made apt through the Word and God by the Spirit, from whom and in whom he has received and will receive the beginning and the end.

But if anyone were to expose seven thousand years (that is, ages) of men, with whom the human race has interacted, he would not be without reason in giving this place a congruous spiritual sense. None of these will have a wife in the future life, because the temporal nature has come to an end; and this woman will be taken by an eighth man (namely, an immortal age that lacks an end).

## QUESTION XXXIX

WHAT IS THE THREE-DAY PERIOD DURING WHICH THE  
CROWDS SUSTAIN THE LORD IN THE DESERT?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The desert is human nature, or this world: in it, those who adhere constantly to the reason of virtue and knowledge, who are guided by faith and hope in future goods, endure labors and troubles. The three days, according to one mode of spiritual understanding, represent the three faculties of the soul: through which, being constant in the divine reason of

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virtue and knowledge (namely, the first seeking, the second desiring, the third striving for it), they receive incorruptible food and a mind that nourishes them (that is, knowledge of created things).

In another way, the three days signify three general laws: the written, the natural, and the spiritual, or the law of grace. For every law is appropriately related to its corresponding reason, as the Sun of Justice, the source of light, illuminates human nature. Just as it is impossible for the day to dawn without the sun, so it is also impossible for a law of justice to exist without the substantial and true wisdom, which illuminates the eyes of the mind with spiritual light. Understanding this, blessed David says, "Your law is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths," calling the written law a lamp, which, through a certain artifice of diverse bodily symbols and enigmatic figures, kindles a light to direct those who are advancing against adversarial forces through the action of the mind. The light, however, refers to the spiritual law of grace, which shows the eternal paths without any sensory symbols. In these paths, the mind, being more diligent in contemplation, makes its course towards the invisible good, and is directed towards God, the ultimate goal, with no created thing disturbing the movement of the intelligent mind.

The law of grace's light knows no evening, and its brightest rays are not limited by any human knowledge. Or perhaps the prophet called the feet the entire course of life, ordered by religious principles: or the good motions of the mind's thoughts, which, like a lamp, are directed by the light of the law. The paths refer to the natural law of virtue, and the spiritual law of knowledge, shining with the presence of the Word of God, leading towards itself and its creator, renewing the nature of virtue and knowledge.

Thus, those who, during this three-day period, that is, in the three-fold discipline of the laws, are constant in the Word of God, and who labor vigorously in each of the laws, desiring salvation, are not left hungry. Rather, they receive abundant and divine nourishment. For the written law, they are freed from unnatural affections (that is, vices); for the natural law, they find the unimpeded operation of natural forces, through which mutual affection and necessity unite all things, removing all diversity and division; and for the



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spiritual law, they achieve union with God, by which, surpassing all created things, they obtain the clarity of a nature higher than any, through which God alone is known.

### SCHOLIUM

1. Reason refers to anger and desire. For we seek by reason; by desire, we long for the good we seek; by anger, we contend for it.
2. Then, the soul called the three powers of the day, capable of receiving divine commandments: likewise, the three most universal laws, which have the power to illuminate those capable of light, namely the souls. Indeed, the Scripture calls the light the day, saying, "And God saw the light, that it was good"; and God called the light "day"; it was as if the air was illuminated by light, saying, "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." Likewise, not only did the soul experience the power of the day, but also from whom the laws of light come. For the deeper interaction between these laws makes a composed system of virtue, which does not diverge from divine reason, by which all powers are imbued.
3. The lamp and the light, according to one and the same thing, is the Word of God, which illuminates both the natural reasoning of the faithful and the life that acts through the senses, dispelling the darkness for those who, through commandments, hasten to the life of hope. And finally, it serves as the judgment of those who, driven by the lust of the flesh and its allure, cling to the dark night of this world.
4. Those who have not been tempted by unnatural allurements, but who have been lifted to their Creator, that is, to God, through the grace of good things, and achieved the victory over nature's bounds, cannot be deprived of this elevation. 5. For it is necessary to be separated from created things in order to be truly united with God.
5. The written law, as stated, is effective in liberating from all vices. The natural law's action is justice for all, through which everything responds

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equally to everything else. The perfection of the spiritual law, with God, is the greatest ability of man, resembling God

### QUESTION XL

WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY THAT SIX WATER  
JARS ARE COUNTED IN THE  
MARRIAGE AT CANA IN GALILEE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

He who created human nature, God, as soon as He willed that it should be, fitted to it the effective power of those things which are fitting. Therefore, six water jars are the natural power with which we fulfill divine commandments: of which men, with their vain diligence and care for earthly things, having exhausted knowledge, possessed a vacuous and waterless power of this kind. Therefore, they did not know how to cleanse the filth of vices. For indeed, he who is without knowledge does not know the measure of virtue, by which wickedness is to be washed away; until the Creator of nature, as I said, came, and filled the effective power of those things which are the duties of man with natural knowledge, and then at last turned it into wine: the reason, namely, of knowledge, which exceeds nature, reason, and the law of nature: those who drink it, exceeding the nature of all things, fly away to the secret place of divine intimacy; in which place they indeed receive the sweetness and exultation of knowledge, surpassing all, and the joy of exaltation: that wine indeed, the good wine (that is, by which divinization is given), the last of all they drink. The secret reason of Providence in its dealings with the human race, or the Word.

Now, in the number six, the effective power of nature is signified; not only in this way, that God created heaven and earth in six days, but also because among the numbers contained within ten, it is the most perfect, and it is formed from its parts. And the Scriptures say that the jars each contained two or three measures, which certainly signifies that the effective

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power of natural action, according to natural contemplation, takes in, as it were, two measures, the whole knowledge of the Creator: namely, both the natural bodies which consist of matter and form, and the intellectual substances, which coalesce from substance and accident: that is, the power of knowledge which comprehends both bodies and souls: according to the theological institution and teaching granted by nature, as it were, three measures, which concern the Holy Trinity, that is, the knowledge and illumination of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, you, who are spiritual, consider that which is said. In what way the more powerful effective power, the general force of nature, is divided into six, and those general modes of virtue: and also, what is universally the most general virtue, with the effective power of nature in all virtues, and how it is divided into six species, and these general: so that adapted to the power of nature, it may be taken in six-fold form, through its own modes. To these things, who are the ministers who drew the water; who is the bridegroom; who is the bride; who is the master of the feast; and who is the Mother, confidently and publicly proclaiming, "They have no wine"? These things must indeed be sought from divine teachings and understandings, both by the disciple and the teacher, since the mind indeed delights in a much more exalted sense. But lest our speech, which concerns these things, be utterly mute in the present, I will not say how great the power is; I do not profess to open all the power of sense that lies in the words (for my mind is weaker than to comprehend the spiritual concepts and senses in them), but how much my own mind is able to grasp.

Therefore, they say that charity is the most general of virtues: and they say that the most general effective power of nature is reason: which indeed, having firmly embraced its Author, is effective in the most general six modes, and is divided into those kinds, by which it is arranged according to the reason of charity; which embraces the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, the sick, and those in prison (both bodily and spiritual). For indeed, the reason of virtue is not defined solely for bodies, nor is the power of nature exerted only concerning the senses. Therefore, the most general virtue, the most general power of nature, took the form of six, dividing virtue

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into these six species or kinds; by which nature is united to one and the same thought of the mind, showing the indivisible dignity of the formation's reason in all (by providing and receiving the gifts of itself). This healthy and intact nature, through honest labor, the mind recovering, cuts off all the excesses and defects of nature (by which, being disturbed, the blind love of each mind rendered the purest nature savage and cruel: and one substance, dividing itself into many and opposite parts, thus causing mutual destruction). And it shows the form of moderation, according to which the natural laws of virtues were divinely written from the beginning. And perhaps, in passing, the Scriptures point out this mystery, producing six empty jars without water, indicating the inertia of the most general power of nature regarding the good and the honest. Thus, the most general power of nature, divided into six modes of action, forms the most general virtue into six species, comprehending all. To this, nature, composed, obtains its most general law, which stands as the unoffended judge of truth. This the Scriptures called the master of the feast, whose wise sentence was that the human race should first drink the good wine (which, after, the Word mixed by His coming): and be inebriated (namely, the more excellent and exalted reason of God): and then afterwards, teaching the lesser reasons of creation, as wine, that which pertains to the first reason. For indeed, it was most just and appropriate that first the reason of nature should be recognized, by which it was created, and then afterwards the reasons of the created things should be sought.

But those who drew the water are the ministers of the Old and New Testament: namely, the holy patriarchs and lawgivers, leaders and judges, kings and prophets, and evangelists and apostles, through whom the water of knowledge was drawn, and nature was again restored: which the Word turned into the grace of deification, the Creator of nature, and of deification, which is grace, through humanity and clemency. But if anyone should also say that ministers are those who draw the water of natural and pious scientific reason, by the command and order of the Word, drawing the water from the distinction and adornment of things, I do not think they have strayed from the truth. The bridegroom, however, is clearly the human

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mind, which, by the law of marriage, has led the bride of virtue. Honoring this union, Reason, being called, comes forward, binding the covenant of spiritual marriage; and with its wine, it nourishes their desire for spiritual fruitfulness, as vital heat. The mother of Reason, or the Word, is true and untainted faith. For just as the Word, as God, is the Creator of His parent according to the flesh through nature, and through His supreme humanity and clemency, He gave authority to her to become a mother, bearing Him as a man, so in us, Reason, having previously existed as the author of faith, later becomes the son of that faith which is in us, growing like flesh according to its action: by whose gift we accomplish all things, borrowing gifts from reason, by which the soul is sustained. For without faith (of which the Word and Reason exist through nature, and He is the same Son through grace), we have no confidence in offering prayers to Him. Would that we might always celebrate such marriages, and that Jesus might come to them with His Mother, to restore our knowledge, which has been defiled by sin, and turn it to deification, drawing the soul from the origin of things, converting natural knowledge into spiritual water, enduring with the quality of wine, and strengthening and reinforcing as if by nerves and ligaments.

## SCHOLIUM

1. It speaks of the power, potency, and virtue, that movement which is essentially implanted in nature to perform virtues, and which shines forth through the will of the mind, derived from that which it is endowed with, in its use.
2. The granted knowledge, having emptied nature, the Word of God made flesh once again filled it with knowledge; and enduring in inconvertibility, He did not change nature but deified it by His own Spirit, so that nothing was lacking, sealing it; just as water, imbued with the quality of wine, acquires strength and is tempered. For this reason, man truly became so, that by grace, He would make us gods.
3. The good wine calls the reason of nature, by which we exceed, in order to accomplish the work of deification. The drinking of this wine was

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forbidden to Adam due to his transgression; but because of His humanity and supreme clemency, as God, He emptied Himself, and afterwards, through the incarnation (by which He knew in reason), made it drinkable. For there is Providence, that by which things are contained; and the reason of Providence, that which directs the certain path of healing for those governed by Providence; and finally, the Provider, as one who contains and preserves all things by His reasons for existence.

4. The faculty of the mind exists, capable of both corporeal and incorporeal knowledge of nature; but the representations of the Holy Trinity are received solely by grace, by simply believing them to be so; yet nowhere does it presume to inquire what they are by essence.
5. The power of nature is divided into six general modes of actions: and charity in general is divided into six virtuous species. For he who, out of piety, seeks to relieve hunger, thirst, nakedness, the condition of the stranger, the sick, and those in prison—whether held by body or soul—he fulfills charity towards God and his neighbor, constant in these six virtues; so that he who has preserved in himself the yearning of the soul only for God.
6. The cause or author of the Word is God: and for this, man has received the power of reason.
7. In these, charity is divided, in which it consists.
8. He who, by virtue, has reached equality with all, shows that God is not a respecter of persons in him; just as He who created all according to one and the same reason, so He also sanctified one single motion of the soul and will; by which the reason of nature, which seems to be dissipated, is destined to be collected.
9. The term "moderation" refers to the state, indeed, free from unnatural affections, but still one who has not yet attained supernatural goods. For the will shows itself in equal modes towards nature, having nothing that seeks private advantage, nor that which would stand in opposition to the reason of nature; which, therefore, acknowledges all men as one, since it has the divinely written law of nature.

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10. We have natural judgment, a natural law, which teaches that it was worth the effort that our desire should first be moved to learn about the Author of the universe, before we are drawn to wisdom existing in the universe of things.
11. Faith, in a higher and spiritual sense, is the parent of reason: for it was first established, that which establishes itself, and then reason, embodied in virtues, is subsequently generated.

### QUESTION XLI

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIVE  
MEN THE SAMARITAN WOMAN  
HAD, AND THE SIXTH WHO IS NOT A MAN?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Samaritan woman, like the one who had seven brothers, as the Sadducees claim, represents not only the nature of humanity but also the soul of each individual. Thus, each of these women signifies both nature and soul, according to the affliction of the disease they suffer.

For instance, the woman introduced by the Sadducees represents nature or the soul, which, according to the divine laws of marriage given from the beginning of the world, is bound without the consolation of offspring and does not anticipate the future. Similarly, the woman who had a flow of blood represents nature or the soul, granted the power to perform works of justice and prepare for righteousness but becoming corrupted by vice. The Syrophoenician woman represents nature or the soul as the daughter of the mind, which is gravely torn apart by the necessity of worldly love, like an epileptic fit. Likewise, Jairus' daughter represents nature and the soul, bound by the law and deadened by the inertia of divine commandments and legal precepts. The woman who was bent down to the ground represents nature or the soul, with all the powers of the mind turned toward the earthly, twisted by the fraud of the devil.

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The Samaritan woman, in the same way, signifies nature or the soul of each person, following all the laws granted to nature, like the laws of marriage (with the exception of the gift of prophecy). Five of these laws had passed, but the sixth, though present, was not truly a man or a soul, since it did not bring forth everlasting justice.

Thus, nature had its first husband through the law given in paradise; the second, after the fall of paradise; the third, during the time of Noah's flood; the fourth, with circumcision in Abraham; the fifth, with the offering of Isaac. After receiving these laws, nature lost them, as their works of justice became barren. The sixth law, given through Moses, was as though it did not exist, for it did not provide the prescribed justice or it was destined to be replaced by another law (the Gospel), a law not given perpetually to mankind but with a specific dispensation, leading to something greater and more spiritual.

This is why the Lord said to the Samaritan woman: "And now you have had five, and the one you have now is not your husband." He acknowledged that nature would soon transition to the Gospel. Therefore, also around the sixth hour, when the soul shines most brightly with the rays of knowledge, the presence of the Word was revealed to her, dispelling the shadows. This took place by the well of Jacob, where she stood with the Word by the very source of Scripture's senses and conceptions. Thus, this is what has been said so far.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The well of Jacob is Scripture; the water, which in Scripture is knowledge; the depth, the complex meanings of Scripture, which one does not easily disentangle. The wellbore represents the discipline of divine Scriptures, which the Lord did not have, as He Himself was the Word, and did not impart knowledge gained through study and training to the faithful but gave the knowledge that comes through spiritual grace. He grants them eternal wisdom, which never ends, to those who are worthy. The wellbore, that is, the discipline, takes a small



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part of knowledge and discards the rest, which no reasoning can comprehend. However, the knowledge that is a gift of grace possesses an overflowing wisdom, as much as is granted to mankind, without needing the usual practice and use of study.

### QUESTION XLII

IN WHAT WAY ARE WE INDEED SAID TO COMMIT SIN AND  
TO KNOW SIN, WHILE THE LORD IS SAID TO  
HAVE BECOME SIN, BUT NOT TO KNOW IT? AND HOW IS IT  
THAT SIN IS NOT MADE WORSE, NOR IS IT  
KNOWN, THAN WHEN WE COMMIT AND KNOW IT?  
FOR, AS IT IS SAID, HE WHO DID NOT KNOW  
SIN, FOR US MADE SIN

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The will of the corrupted natural reason of Adam, having corrupted nature itself, with the grace of impassibility lost, gave rise to sin. The first sin, indeed, was entirely reprehensible: the fall of the will from good to wickedness and vice. The second, however, that of his first offspring, was a change of nature from incorruption to corruption, not blameworthy. For two sins existed in the first parent: one, the transgression of the divine commandment, was reprehensible; the other, free from blame, was the cause of sin which adhered to blame. The first was the sin of the will, having freely turned away from what is good and honorable; the second was the sin of nature, having been lost unwillingly, through the fall of the will, in immortality. Therefore, in order to heal this other corruption of nature and the change to a worse condition, our Lord and God, having assumed full nature, Himself also suffered in it the power of passion and death, so that the free incorruption of the will might be preserved. He became, indeed, by nature, due to the power of suffering, sin for us, not knowing it through the invertibility of the will, which is sin in the judgment of the soul, but caring

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for the power of nature's suffering (that is, the fall into corruption) through the corruption of the will: namely, the power of nature's suffering, bringing about the end (death indeed), being the beginning of the transformation of nature into incorruption. Thus, as by one man the willing change of the will from good to evil brought about the transformation of nature from incorruption to corruption in all men, so by one man Jesus Christ, who did not change His will from good, the restoration of nature from corruption to incorruption was achieved.

Thus, when the Lord did not know sin (that is, my change of will), He neither assumed it nor became sin; but that which became sin for me (that is, the corruption of nature brought about by the fall of the will), He assumed, becoming a man for us, subject to sorrow and mortality: through the sin made for me, my inclination to sin was taken away. And just as in Adam, the will, clinging to vice, took away the common beauty of incorrupt nature, so in Christ, the adherence of the will to good wiped away the common disgrace of corruption from all nature. And the same, by the resurrection, through the invertibility of the will, was changed into corruption: God rightly judging that nature should again receive the immortal man, whose will had not been changed. I speak of man, who took on flesh, the Word of God, because, in accordance with His hypostasis, He joined to Himself rational soul and flesh. For when the natural power of suffering, corruption, and death was brought about by the change of will in Adam, rightly did the invertible will of Christ restore the immunity of nature from these things by the resurrection.

Therefore, the condemnation of voluntary sin in Adam is that nature is subject to affections, sorrow, corruption, and death, a change which man did not have in his first creation from God, but which he himself made and knew, for he became the author of sin by transgression: whose open offspring is the condemnation of death. Moreover, the Lord, having taken upon Himself the voluntary condemnation of sin (that is, the power of suffering, sorrow, corruption, and death), for my sake became sin, who, by this reason, voluntarily underwent my condemnation, yet was Himself free from all blame of the will: to condemn both voluntary and natural sin and

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condemnation, at the same time banishing sin from nature, and suffering the power of corruption and death; and so, a common mystery was made concerning me, who had fallen through disobedience, and His dispensation of greater mercy for my sake, who, for my salvation, voluntarily took upon Himself death and condemnation, and through it granted the restoration of immortality as a divine gift.

In many ways, I think it has been shown in brief how the Lord became sin, yet did not know sin: likewise, how man, not made sin himself, but having made and known sin, etc., is understood: both in that which consists of the will, of which He was the author, and in that which is natural, which He took upon Himself, yet was completely free from the former. Therefore, it is by no means better to commit sin and know it than to become sin, according to the scope of Scripture, which we have shown, and conveniently distinguishing, for thus more is signified under this name. The first separates from God, while the will willingly repels the divine from itself: this, however, dissolves the power of malice, which is deeply rooted, when it does not allow the wickedness of the mind to proceed into action, because of the natural infirmity.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Read, Nile, and learn to be wise, even if late.
2. Sin of nature calls death, by which, unwillingly, we lose what we are: but the sin of the will is the unnatural choice, by which, desiring what would make us blessed, we reject it.
3. Indeed, the Lord, as man, assuming flesh, was corruptible according to nature, by which He is also said to have become sin; but with the will, He was incorruptible by nature, since He was immune from all sin.
4. The death of the Lord was the beginning and origin of the incorruption of all nature.
5. Christ, as man, was in no way subject to sin through nature.
6. That which is sin for us is the power of corruption in nature; but our sin is the invertibility of the will. Therefore, man was made mortal, suffering

## BOOK ONE

death according to natural, just judgment, to abolish the stain of sin in the will.

7. The first sin is said to be of the will, which the Lord did not have, even though He truly assumed the natural power of suffering, which would be the punishment of the deteriorated will of Adam. For this reason, He alone was free among the dead, immune from sin, for whose sake death came to be.
8. Namely, to commit and to know sin, according to the will.
9. To be made by nature subject to affections, sorrow, and death, Adam is punished for the sin of the will; which, not knowing, the Lord became sin, suffering that power of passion as a man according to the flesh, assuming nature.

### QUESTION XLIII

WHEN IN SCRIPTURE THE TREE OF LIFE IS CALLED  
WISDOM, AND THE WORK OF WISDOM  
IS TO DISCERN AND KNOW; HOW NOW DOES THE TREE OF  
THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL  
DIFFER FROM THE TREE OF LIFE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The teachers of the Church, although they could have said much about the proposed question, and were supported by grace, thought it more worthwhile to honor the place with silence, unable to command themselves to speak anything deeper, which the mind of the common people would not fully grasp, as the deep force of what had been written. Indeed, even if some had spoken, after first testing the strength of the listeners' intellect, they spoke in part what would be suitable for the benefit of the students, leaving the greater part untouched. Therefore, I also considered crossing the sea, unless I had feared that something of sorrow would be created in your religious mind. However, for your grace, so that it may suit everyone, and so

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that it may have meaning for both the small and the great, I will approach the subject in a brief exposition.

The tree of life, and in that it is not such, for the reason that one tree is indeed called the tree of life; the other, however, is not called the tree of life, but only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, have a certain broad and not easily explainable distinction by words. For the tree of life indeed has the power of bringing about life; but what is not the tree of life has power to bring about death. For that which lacks the power to grant life, by the very reason that it is not called the tree of life, clearly brings about death; for nothing else is divided against life, as its opposite.

Moreover, as wisdom, the tree of life differs greatly from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because it is neither wisdom nor called wisdom. For wisdom is properly the mind and reason; however, its opposite habit, which lies diametrically opposed to wisdom, is affection and sense, which are without reason. Therefore, since man is constituted from the intelligent soul and the bodily faculty of sensation, and is placed in the natural world: according to one sense, the tree of life exists in the mind of the soul, in which wisdom resides; however, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil exists in the bodily sense, in which the movements of affection clearly have their seat without reason: of which, through the experience of not touching or eating in gluttony, having received the divine command, the man, hearing the word, was not obedient.

Moreover, both trees, according to the sense of Scripture, have the power to discern certain things; namely, the mind and the senses. Consider the mind, which perceives by understanding and by sense, what is temporary and what is eternal. Indeed, the very power of discernment exists, advising one to pursue some things with zeal, and others to reject. The sense, however, discerns pleasure and pain; indeed, the very power of the soul and the body, endowed with sensation, with one attracting what is pleasant and pushing away what is painful. Thus, if man, in his totality, discerns by the power of sense what affects the body with pleasure or pain, having transgressed the divine command, he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which is without reason, being the affection of the senses, where one

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distinction is in things beneficial to the health of the body, in which, as good, pleasure is sought; but from evil, pain is shunned. But if, however, the discernment of the mind alone, which distinguishes the temporary from the eternal, holds fast, keeping the divine command, he eats of the tree of life, namely wisdom in the mind: endowed with only one discernment, which leads to the health of the soul, with which he seeks the good of eternal glory, and abstains from the corruption of evil things which are without time.

Therefore, there is much difference between the two trees and the natural distinction between them, their genuine and true power and meaning, with the name of good and evil applied indiscriminately in one sense or another; a matter which creates much room for error among those who do not prudently and thoroughly examine the words of the Spirit. But you, who through grace possess shrewd wisdom, should not be unaware of this: that what is simply called evil is not entirely evil; but in some respects it is evil, in others not evil. Similarly, that which is simply called good is not entirely good, but good in some respects, in others not good. And thus, beware of the damage that arises from the different meanings of the same word.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The good of the mind is that affection which is without lust, directed towards the spirit; but the evil is that connection which is with lust. The good of the sense is the excitement of the body through pleasure; the evil is the affection that comes to it through virtue.

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### QUESTION XLIV

TO WHOM DOES GOD SAY, "BEHOLD, ADAM HAS BECOME  
LIKE ONE OF US"? FOR IF IT REFERS TO  
THE SON, HOW IS ADAM COMPARED WITH GOD, SINCE HE IS  
NOT OF THE SAME ESSENCE? BUT IF IT REFERS  
TO THE ANGELS, THEN IN WHAT WAY DOES GOD COMPARE  
ADAM TO THE ANGEL, AS IF HE WERE EQUAL TO THEM  
IN ESSENCE, SAYING, "LIKE ONE OF US"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Indeed, I have already said in the chapter on the building of the tower, that Scripture, speaking through the disposition of those who are governed by Providence, portrays God in a manner suitable to their affections, indicating through modes that are inherent in our nature the divine plan in a veiled way. Here too, therefore, Scripture does not simply say that God said, "Behold, Adam has become like one of us," but after the transgression, it adds the cause of the statement, which was omitted in your inquiry, namely, a cause that opens up the full meaning. For after saying, "Behold, Adam has become like one of us," it added: "To know good and evil." Now, therefore, lest he stretch out his hand and take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. For since, along with the plan, the devil had taught him the error of many gods, saying, "In the day you eat from the tree, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil," God, therefore, in a form of speech that is not simple, but, so to speak, ironic and reproachful, uttered this plural expression to ridicule him who had believed the devil. "He has become like one of us," a phrase corresponding to the understanding of the deity that had been instilled in Adam's mind through the seductive temptation of the serpent.

Let no one think that this kind of speech is at odds with the composition of sacred Scripture, who listens to Scripture speaking from the

## BOOK ONE

person of God in these words to Israel: "If you walk crookedly before me, I will also walk crookedly before you." Indeed, understanding no distinction between irony or mockery and crookedness, and who also finds how Ahab's deceiving seduction, appearing true, was falsely proposed to him; and those who had sinned were justly punished. For unless, in regard to Adam's seduction, Scripture had brought forward God speaking thus, "Like one of us," how would it have introduced the words, "To know good and evil," as if Adam's composed knowledge were formed from opposites? For this cannot even be understood in God, much less rashly asserted about Him, who alone is simple in essence, power, and wisdom, and who has knowledge only of the good; indeed, He is truly essence, power, and wisdom. Nor can any of the substances that use reason, which are from God and according to God, have a knowledge formed by composition, which arises from opposites. For, when things are compared, one will oppose the other, and one knowledge will cause the ignorance of the other. Indeed, the knowledge of opposites cannot exist together in any way, for the knowledge of one, by the very nature of the thing, produces the ignorance of its opposite. Just as the eye cannot simultaneously see upwards and downwards, to the right and to the left (but rather, it must turn towards one, and be wholly directed away from the others), it cannot do so.

Therefore, Scripture shows that God, as it were, sympathizes with Adam's distress: either reproving him for obeying the serpent's counsel, and bringing him to the understanding of the foolishness by which, seduced, he invented many gods for himself. And so it is well: the question has been sufficiently answered. Otherwise, if you find something greater within yourself, I too, by the grace given to you for the understanding of things, may impart something of it to you. But this: "Now, therefore, lest he stretch out his hand and take from the tree of life and live forever," I think it suggests the division of Providence's plans, so that evil, supported by the company of good, might not endure forever. For the Creator of man desires that within the same man, the knowledge of opposites should exist in proportion to their relation.



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### SCHOLIUM

1. God speaks with Adam, as one who, having been taught by the devil about the deity, perceived.
2. He who loves a lie is given over to destruction, so that he may recognize the evil danger he has willingly embraced, and through experience learn that he has foolishly embraced death instead of life.
3. Only God has knowledge of the good, as He is both the good by nature and by knowledge; but He has ignorance of evil, for He has no power over it. For those things which He has the power to do, He also has knowledge of their essence. Evil, when growing through vice, is understood to happen contrary to nature in those who use reason, not in those who have the natural power to act.
4. The knowledge of opposites is understood to exist in those who are capable of it.
5. He who persuaded his conscience to consider the worst as naturally good, as one who, extending the power of his mind, dared to take from the tree of life, thinking it to be immortality, though it was the worst, is cast off from life. God gave humanity nature as a guide through conscience to accuse evil, and thus separated it from life, because man became evil by will, so that, while acting in evil, he might not persuade his conscience that what is worst is naturally good.

### QUESTION XLV

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "ELEVATION OF THE CHEST" AND  
THE "SEPARATION OF THE ARM" IN  
LEVITICUS 19, WHICH ARE DEDICATED TO THE HONOR  
OF GOD FOR THE PRIESTS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

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I believe that the "elevation of the chest" signifies a more excellent and sublime contemplation; while the "arm" represents action, that is, the disposition and operation of the intelligent mind, or knowledge and virtue. Indeed, knowledge immediately draws the mind to God, while virtue, through action, removes the mind from all worldly concerns. These the Scripture assigns to the priests, who, having obtained a heritage from God alone, possess nothing earthly.

Alternatively, those who are imbued with knowledge and virtue from the Spirit in all respects, lead the minds of others, through speech and the teaching of piety and faith, to be capable of higher things; and by their actions, they turn them away from earthly pursuits in keeping with human corruption, to the nature of incorruptible and higher goods. Therefore, the Scripture prescribes that the "elevation of the chest" (that is, the heart of those offering) and the "arm" (that is, action) be dedicated to the priests, as they offer sacrifices to God.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The "chest" signifies contemplation; the "arm" represents action. Contemplation is the habit of the faculty of understanding, while action is the operation that results. These two principles express the true nature of priesthood.
2. He who sanctifies the hearts of others to God through the teaching of piety is symbolized by the "chest" (that is, the heart); and the power of their actions, represented by the "arm," separates them by executing the commandments. Thus, a priest is made when he receives both the "chest" and the "arm" from those who offer themselves as a sacrifice to God.

## QUESTION XLVI

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A  
MIRROR AND A RIDDLE?

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

A mirror, in brief, is consciousness, which has the form of all good actions, resembling the cultivation of virtues. He who is pure in heart is fit to behold God; or, the habit of action, uniformly interrelated, encompassing the composition of virtues as though it were the divine face. A riddle, on the other hand, is knowledge, filled with divine words, representing a higher reality in the contemplation of nature, a mental thought reflecting a higher representation.

In general, a mirror is a habit, showing an exemplary form of virtues, meant to be manifested to those worthy of it. For a philosopher, who aims at the end of the study of philosophy, the mirror, when refined, shows a rudimentary vision. But a riddle is almost a model of the original rational knowledge of things understood by the mind.

Thus, all justice in this present life, compared to the future, has the nature of a mirror, showing the image of first things, but not the things themselves truly as they exist. And all knowledge of higher things, when compared with the future, is a riddle, showing only a faint appearance of truth, not the truth itself, which is to be revealed in the future. Because divine things are contained in virtue and knowledge, the mirror shows the image of virtuous examples; while the riddle shows an obscure representation of knowledge's examples. Therefore, the mirror and the riddle differ: the mirror designates the end of future actions cultivated; the riddle, however, obscurely represents the mystery of contemplation.

#### SCHOLIUM

1. A mirror shows the example of good actions fitting to virtue; a riddle, however, represents the designation of future mysteries in knowledge.

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### QUESTION XLVII

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS," AND THE FOLLOWING? WHAT WILDERNESS IS THIS, AND WHAT IS THE VOICE OF THE LORD, AND WHAT IS HIS PREPARATION? WHAT ARE HIS PATHS, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MAKE THEM STRAIGHT? WHAT ARE THE VALLEYS, AND WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY WHEN IT SAYS, "EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE FILLED"? WHAT ARE THE MOUNTAINS AND HILLS, AND WHAT IS THEIR HUMILIATION? WHAT ARE THE CROOKED WAYS, AND HOW WILL THEY BE MADE STRAIGHT? WHAT ARE THE ROUGH WAYS, AND HOW WILL THEY BE MADE LEVEL? AND FINALLY, WHAT IS MEANT BY "AND ALL FLESH SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

You of shouting from the beginning in the desert (in the nature of men, or in this world) of the Word of God, all is clearly holy, whether in the manner of Abel, with a sincere mind, the first movements of contemplation despise fatness in the virtues of the mind; or as Enos, with firm faith, having grasped future good things through hope, because of the hope, he obtained the power of invocation; or as Enoch, proven in the cultivation of every virtue, with his soul lifted above the necessary connection of things and knowledge, freely transferred his mind to the higher thought; or in the manner of Noah, contemplating the kinds of divine judgment with faith, like a fortress, surrounded by the discipline of divine fear and lowly worship, saving himself from the future wrath; or as Abraham, with the eye of faith seeing the beauty of future good things, obeyed with a ready mind to leave the land and the family and the father's household, leaving behind all that pertains to the senses of the flesh and the affections and lusts, as well as

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

nature, the temptations and struggles of the time, which the author of nature prohibits; just as great Abraham, preferring God to his dear son Isaac. Or as Isaac, on account of the supreme calmness of his mind, and the insatiable clearness of contemplation, remained unmoved by the truth, although he had hostile spirits inflamed with war, he had the habit of virtue and knowledge; or as Jacob, freed from the constraint of earthly things, and the confusion around them, was gentle; and, having laid skins of goats (indeed, according to the religious customs of the people, intending to harden his flesh), against the senses of the flesh, he obtained strength from God; and with fear of the rising disturbances, and the desire to experience a higher discipline, he migrated to Charran (that is, natural speculation), from where, after the labors of action and visible to all the eyes of the world, he returned to his homeland, having received spiritual knowledge, collected in various ways and senses and concepts. In his homeland, he brought with him as wives and servants those who were firm in the actions of both contemplation and operation; and from these, he had children, whoever those children might be. And altogether (lest I make the speech too lengthy while recounting the deeds of each individual), every saint, in whatever way he has arranged his life, that one who, calling out the Word to others, has received the Word, his voice becomes clearly visible, and the precursor, by the reason of his justice and faith, in which he shone.

Above all, however, the voice of the Word and the great precursor John, the announcer and herald of the true coming of God without figures and symbols, the witness to the ignorant and the revealer; who undoubtedly made clear the one who takes away the sin of the world, and offered his service and labor to the dispensation of the sacraments, through the rite of baptism. Moreover, because of the riches of grace, any even the smallest syllable can be received in many ways for the benefit of those who are held by the desire for virtue and knowledge; come now, let us also consider in another sense what has been proposed, for the best of our ability.

Therefore, the desert, as I was saying, is the nature of mankind and this world, as well as the soul of each individual, because of that which, through ancient transgression, has grown in it, the barrenness of good things.

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But the voice of the one crying out, of the Word or Reason, is the sense of conscience, regarding the offenses that each person has committed; so that it may cry out in the hidden place of the heart to prepare the way of the Lord. However, the clear and manifest preparation of the divine way is the change and amendment of manners and thoughts for the better, and the cleansing from previous defilements. And the way, beautiful and renowned, which is led by virtue, is life; in which, as a way, the Word completes the course of salvation in each individual, dwelling through faith, walking through various modes of virtue and knowledge, and decrees. But the paths of the Word are the various ways of virtues, and different disciplines of life, piously and religiously established, that is, studies striving towards divine reason; these are made straight by those who, for no cause of glory, nor for the occasion of greed, nor for the spirit of flattery and pleasing others, nor for the vanity of show, eagerly cultivate virtue or the study of divine Scriptures; but they do, say, and think all things for the sake of God, and they understand them in their hearts. For the Word does not remain in crooked paths; or, if it finds a prepared way in some, it is like this: if someone fasts, and abstains from that which usually serves as fuel for lust and vices; and does other things leading to this end, so that he may be liberated from them: he has thus prepared the so-called way. But he who, for the sake of vain glory, greed, or flattery, or to win the favor of men, or for any other purpose, does not seek to be approved by God and to be pleasing to Him, cultivates such a discipline; he has not made the Lord's paths straight: and indeed, although he labored to prepare the way, he did not have God walking in his paths. Therefore, the way of the Lord is virtue; the straight path, however, is the proper mode of virtue, without deceit.

Every valley shall be filled; that is, of those who have rightly prepared the way of the Lord and have made His paths straight. For it is not in every way, nor in all: nor in those who did not prepare the way of the Lord, nor make His paths straight. However, the valley is the flesh of each individual, deeply dug out by the flow of lusts and made rough, and severed from the spiritual continuity and coherence with the soul, according to the measure of the law that binds from God. But nothing forbids us from

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understanding the valley as the soul, deeply hollowed by many storms of vices, and hence, that beautiful plain in the spirit having lost its beauty, becomes rough. Therefore, every valley, or steep and rocky place (that is, the flesh and soul of those who have prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight), shall be filled, by the rejection of vices and disturbances, which, like a steep place, causes that inequality and roughness to be formed in them; and having received the cultivation of virtue, smoothed over by the natural surface, is made level by the spirit.

And every mountain and hill shall be brought low. Mountains and hills are most often, as it seems, found to stand in opposition to valleys and yawning places. A mountain is any height that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God; but a hill is whatever vice rises against virtue. Whether the mountains are the spirits of ignorance, authors of it; the hills, however, are the inciters of vice and corrupt life.

Then, plainly, when every valley (that is, the flesh or soul of those who, as I said, have prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight, by walking in them with the fulfillment of the commandments of God's Word) is filled with knowledge and virtue, all false knowledge of name and the wickedness of spirit will be brought low, with the very Word of God trampling it down and subduing it, and the most wicked power, which rises up against human nature, will be cast down and crushed, or, just as huge and high mounds of mountains and hills are dug out, and dragged to fill the valleys and precipices. For indeed, if someone were to take the full power of the Word and of reason, by which nature's corrupt demons have formed ignorance and wickedness in nature, no height of ignorance and wickedness could stand; just as no mountain or hill would be visible to the eyes, if any path or method were available to mortals by which those could be dug out, and the hollow places and rough areas filled.

Therefore, the depression is the lowering of the most wicked spiritual mountains and hills, and the restoration of the natural powers of both the flesh and the soul to themselves; by which the religious mind, rich in the resources of virtue and knowledge, walking through this world on an even and level path, hastens toward the world of incorruptible and untainted

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intellect and sacred virtues, free from old age; nor is it seduced by the voluntary affections of the flesh, nor by the winding path of pleasure; nor is it stirred by those things that occur against the will, by temptations heightened by pain; nor does the indulgence of the flesh disdain the way of the commandments as steep and difficult, because of the harshness of the labors of virtue.

But the crooked are directed, with the limbs of the body freed from vices and affections, that is, with the senses and the rest prohibited from sensual acts, to be moved according to the simple order of nature. However, harsh temptations, which seek the unwilling, will be on the flat paths, especially when the rejoicing and happy spirit takes pleasure in its weaknesses, sorrows, and needs: through violent labors and torments, casting off the dominion of spontaneous affections and lusts. For he who burns with the desire for true life, who knows that every labor (whether willingly undertaken or reluctantly endured) of pleasure, which is the parent of death, will be death itself, will joyfully bear all the harsh impressions of violent temptations, accepting them as a gift of cheerful patience; he will make the paths easy and level, thus transforming sorrows and narrowness into a clear course toward the crown of the heavenly calling, directing his divine course on a certain path.

Therefore, whoever dissolves the twisted and entangled pleasure, which is intertwined with all the senses in various ways, through the cultivation of continence, has made the crooked way straight; but he who, by patiently enduring, has trodden the difficult and harsh path of labor, has made the rough paths level. Hence, as the reward of virtue, and of those whose labors it has borne, as one who has fought well and legitimately, he will see the salvation of God, as it is said: 'And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' Every flesh, indeed, the faithful, according to that: 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh'; that is, upon those who have been saved. For the flesh of the wicked will not see it, if the true meaning of the Scripture is as follows: 'Let the wicked be taken away, that he may not see the glory of the Lord'; but specifically, every flesh that exists in faith. Moreover, in part, that is, in the flesh, Scripture signifies the whole person, as it is accustomed; just



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as it cries out: 'And every man shall see the salvation of God.' Every man, who, indeed, has heard the voice crying in the desert, and, according to the spiritual sense passed down to us, has prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight, and having overturned the spiritual and wicked mountains and hills, has filled that valley (that is, the soul), which, by its cavity and gap, through the transgression of the divine command, had provided the height and lofty brow to those wicked mountains and hills; namely, so that it may be filled, bringing down the wicked powers and humbling them; and directing the twisted movements of spontaneous affections (that is, the motions of pleasure and lust) through the study of continence; and bearing the harsh temptations which seek the unwilling, as well as the sorrowful trials (that is, the modes of pain) through patience, thus making the paths level: this one, rightly, shall see the salvation of God, for he has become pure in heart: which purity, through pious virtues and contemplations, and the senses, sees God at the end of the struggles, according to that: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'; namely, those whose labors, which they endured for the sake of virtue, have won them the reward of tranquility, by which nothing reveals God more than this, for those who have supported it.

By what reason, perhaps, it might also be permitted for those who seek higher spiritual senses to see, as in the desert, namely in the mind free from vices, the voice of divine wisdom and knowledge crying out silently through virtuous eloquence: for since all things to all people, according to each one's mode and reason, become the one and the same Word, spreading to each one; and as if the preceding voice prepares each one for the advent of the same, bestowing grace: which indeed in some becomes repentance, as the precursor of future righteousness; in others, virtue, as the prelude of expected knowledge; and in others finally, knowledge, as the sure mark of future contemplation. Truly, the contemplative mind will be exhausted by time, while it wisely performs the ascensions of the Word, and fittingly composes its remarkable and most generous reasons and considerations for each; by which all things become that they may save all, on account of the overflowing riches of His goodness.

## BOOK ONE

### SCHOLIUM

1. He who cultivates knowledge rich in virtues (that is, active knowledge) becomes Abel, in whom God, and His gifts, kindly looks upon.
2. He who has known and truly hoped for the future, according to the action he hoped for, makes no end; and the one who calls upon God, becomes a new Enos.
3. He who pleases God through action, leads the mind by contemplation to the region of intellect; lest by the image of a thinking mind, he should see death, which arises from the sense in affections; and may not be entirely subject to them, as they wish to capture him.
4. He who, fearing future wrath, cultivates a more severe way of life through labors, becomes Noah, with little distress and trouble of the flesh, avoiding the impending ruin and condemnation of the wicked.
5. The earth is called the flesh; kinship is the senses; the father's house is the world presented to the senses; by which the patriarch departed, casting off the affection of the mind for them.
6. It is written concerning Isaac, that he did not move from the land of promise; in contrast, his father Abraham and his son Jacob did: the former, leaving Mesopotamia, entered Egypt; the latter, driven into Mesopotamia, later lived in Egypt, where he met his end.
7. He takes wives for the habits of virtue and knowledge; but maidservants for their works: from which, like children, he produces relationships in nature and time.
8. Just as the flesh becomes a valley, formed by the assaults of the disturbances of vices, so the soul becomes a valley, a gaping precipice, while it is excavated by the flow of evil thoughts.
9. The rejection of unnatural affections, and the addition of virtues arising from the order of nature, fills the soul, dug like a valley, and the one who has lifted himself up on the summit of mountains does not depress the sense of wicked spirits.

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10. He called the unnatural movements of the senses 'wrong'; they are directed when the mind is taught to be moved by their author (that is, God), led by nature.
11. He called harsh the trials of temptations, which seek the unwilling; and they give way to the flat paths, when they are patiently endured with thanksgiving.
12. Pleasure is the parent of death; however, labor and pain are its opposite, whether it is willingly assumed or forced upon us.
13. He who loves virtue willingly extinguishes the furnace of pleasures; but the mind that is imbued with the knowledge of truth, through violent labors, does not rest in the desire for God, agitated by the motion of struggles.
14. The soul, excavated through transgression, has given to demons, as if to mountains, its height; that is, it has granted rule and power to itself.
15. Virtue, exercised through action and service, becomes the voice of knowledge crying out; as in the desert, where the mind is free from vices or disturbances. For true wisdom precedes virtue, according to the dispensation of the truth that will be manifested later; and this is why the former exists before the latter.

## QUESTION XLVIII

## BOOK ONE

### QUESTION XLVIII

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES SAYS ABOUT UZZIAH:  
THAT HE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF THE  
LORD, AND SOUGHT THE LORD IN THE DAYS OF  
ZECHARIAH, UNDERSTANDING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD,  
AND THE LORD MADE HIM PROSPER. AND UZZIAH BUILT  
TOWERS IN JERUSALEM, AND UPON THE CORNER GATE, AND  
UPON THE VALLEY CORNER, AND UPON THE ANGLES,  
AND HE GREW STRONG: AND HE BUILT TOWERS IN THE  
DESERT, AND DUG MANY CISTERNS, BECAUSE HE HAD  
MUCH CATTLE IN THE SHEPHELAH, AND IN THE PLAINS;  
AND VINE-GROWERS IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND IN CARMEL,  
BECAUSE HE WAS DILIGENT IN AGRICULTURE. WHAT  
TOWERS, AND WHAT GATE UPON THE CORNER? WHAT  
VALLEY IS ALSO MEANT, AND WHAT IS ITS CORNER? AND  
WHAT AGAIN ARE THE CORNERS? WHAT ALSO ARE THE  
TOWERS IN THE DESERT, AND WHAT CISTERNS WERE DUG?  
WHAT ARE THE CATTLE, AND WHAT IS THE SHEPHELAH,  
AND WHAT THE PLAINS? WHO, IN THE END, ARE THE VINE-  
GROWERS, AND WHAT ARE THE MOUNTAINS AND CARMEL?  
WHAT IS MEANT BY “BECAUSE HE WAS DILIGENT  
IN AGRICULTURE”?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Come, most praised Word of God: grant us even a moderate understanding of your words; and remove the thick covering of spiritual veils, showing us the beauty of spiritual senses, O Christ. Take hold of the right hand of ours (the faculty of our mind within us), and be our guide in the way of your commandments; lead us to the place of your marvelous tabernacle, to the house of God; with a voice of exultation and confession,

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

the sound of feasting: that we too, through the confession of deeds and the exultation of contemplation, may be deemed worthy to come to the place of your inexplicable feasts, where you, who spiritually feast there, may jointly rejoice with us in the banquet; in the knowledge of things which cannot be expressed in words, modulating with voices, pressing not with any silence.

And I pray, O Christ, grant us forgiveness; and be merciful, who, urged by the command of your worthy servants, presume to attempt things that exceed our ability: and let no bright shining illuminate our minds, to open the meaning of the intended text; that so greater glory may be added to you, who give sight to the blind, and make the dumb speak fluently.

I therefore believe that, just as Solomon was a figure of the time of Christ, so Uzziah was a figure of the time of the Savior. For if you translate the name Uzziah into our language, it signifies "the strength of God." Now, the true strength and virtue of God the Father is our Lord Jesus Christ; who became the cornerstone, that is, the Church. The corner connects two walls together, which are common to both. So, the Church of God unites two peoples (those from the Gentiles and those from the Jews), having Christ as the bond and the tie: He who built towers in Jerusalem (namely, the divine and impregnable first decrees of the divine nature, that is, the fortifications); and upon the gate of the corner, the doctrines concerning the incarnation. For the gate and door of the Church is He who says, "I am the doot." The towers have the fortifications of the divine decrees concerning the incarnation, by which it is necessary to enter the corner (that is, the Church), for those who wish to believe rightly. For he who is fortified by the towers of the divine decrees, as by the defenses of truth, does not fear erroneous doctrines or demons.

And upon the corner of the valley. The valley is the flesh. Its corner, however, is the union of the flesh with the soul; according to that connection which is in the spirit: upon which towers (that is, the fortifications of the commandments) are built; and what are the commandments given for discretion, so that the indissoluble union of the flesh with the soul, like a corner, may be preserved.

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And he built towers upon the corners. Perhaps Scripture called the corners the various unions of distinct things made through Christ. For He united man, mystically removing the distinction between male and female in spirit, and establishing a nature free from the stains of the passions in both. He also united the earth, removing the division between the paradise of the senses and the world we inhabit. Furthermore, He united heaven and earth, showing a single nature in those things which fall into the senses. He also united the sensible and intellectual worlds, showing a single nature of the things that came into being, mystically joined in a certain manner. Finally, He united, surpassing every force of nature in reason and manner, the created nature with the uncreated; and in every union, or corner, He connected and bound with towers, which are the divine fortifications of decrees.

And He built towers in the desert. The desert is the nature of things subject to the eyes, or this world, in which the Word usually builds towers: granting pious opinions about things to those seeking them, that is, straight decrees concerning natural speculation in the spirit.

And He dug many cisterns, because He had much cattle in the Shephelah and in the plains; and vine-growers in the mountains, and in Carmel, because He was addicted to agriculture. He dug cisterns in the desert, namely, in the world, and in the nature of men, those who are worthy of hearts that are barren, cleansing them from earthly weight and sense, and enlarging them to receive the divine showers of wisdom and knowledge, by which Christ's cattle (that is, those who, due to the immaturity of their minds, still need moral teaching) are strengthened.

And what in the Shephelah, cattle. The Shephelah, if translated, is called a narrow basin; it truly signifies those who are purified through violent temptations, cleansed of the filth of the soul and body, and made white by the assumed brightness. These, like water, need to be watered with the doctrine of tolerance and patience.

And in the plains. These are those who, in the breadth of secondary things that succeed them according to their will, live happily; or those who easily run the course in virtues, and are expanded in the way of the

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

commandments (that is, in the law) with tranquility of the mind: they, in turn, must be watered with the doctrine of modest judgment, and of generous provision, and with compassion toward those who are weaker, and for granted things, with gratitude.

And indeed the vine-growers in the mountains, they are those who diligently cultivate the divine and ecstatic discourse of knowledge at the height of contemplation. But the vine-growers in Carmel are those who, through contemplation of the lofty, perfect purification, and the full removal of all things, also cultivate discourse and doctrine. Carmel, if translated, is said to be the recognition of circumcision, in which the cultivator of the vine follows the mystical nature of circumcision: relying on recognition, he circumcises his mind from the earth and earthly things, not after the manner of the Jews, considering the disgrace and shame of glory. Scripture also says that these need the divine stream of wisdom, from the cisterns dug in the desert: so that, according to the measure of faith, each one may receive from them the appropriate discourse based on what he has believed, the gift of saving doctrine: by which our Lord Jesus Christ cares for the soul of each one; being, of course, the good and industrious farmer, both then and always enduring, working all that has been said for our salvation.

Thus it is dealt with in one way for us, in summary, concerning Christ in the spiritual sense explained by the proposed text: but in another way, concerning the spiritual sense of each individual mind, it has a great power to form their perfection, who are strengthened by the fear and love of the Lord. But before I approach the contemplation and spiritual sense of these, I am moved to wonder how, according to history, Uzziah, the king of Judah, could have had vine-growers in Carmel, since that mountain was not within his domain but was under the rule of the king of Israel, in which almost the entire royal city of Israel was built. But it seems that Scripture, to stir our sluggish minds to a diligent search for truth, casually mixed in the context of the history something that did not exist.

Therefore, Uzziah is the mind, having gained strength through the work of divine action and contemplation. For as I was saying, Uzziah, if translated, is said to be "the strength of God": And it is said, Uzziah sought

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the Lord in the days of Zechariah, understanding in the fear of the Lord. Zechariah, by interpretation, is said to be "the memory of God." Therefore, as long as the mind lives and is active, the memory of God is in it, and through contemplation, it seeks the Lord. And not in any way, but in the fear of the Lord, that is, by carrying out the commandments through action. For whoever seeks the Lord through contemplation without action does not find Him, because he has not sought the Lord in the fear of the Lord. And the Lord made him prosper.

For to everyone who cultivates action with knowledge, the Lord grants it to be prosperous; who both teaches the ways of the commandments and brings the true reasons of things into the open. And Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem. He who prospers well by seeking the Lord through contemplation with added fear (that is, carrying out the commandments in action) builds towers in Jerusalem: in a simple and tranquil state of mind, raising sublime discourses and reasons about the Deity. And upon the corner gate. The corner gate (that is, the gate of ecclesiastical faith) is the pious and religious institution of life, through which the way to the inheritance of the good is opened for us. Upon it, as strong and mighty towers, the mind of the wise builds the defenses of decrees concerning the incarnation, out of diverse notions and opinions, like certain stones of constancy, and the ways of virtues, which will provide support for the work of the commandments. And upon the corner of the valley.

The valley is the flesh. The corner of it is the union with the soul, which is through the law of the commandments. Upon this, as upon a tower, the judgment of the spirit of the law is built, which subjects the flesh to the mind. And upon the corners. He says that there are many corners upon which the mind, according to God, is said to build the strongest towers. A corner is not only the union of particulars with universals according to the same reason of being, but also, to speak by example, the union of individuals with the species to which they belong, and of species with genera, and of genera with substance, the extremes coming together and being united at the end. In these, the rationalities of universals precede the rationalities of particulars, making diverse unions of distinct things. Indeed, the union of



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the mind with the senses, of the heavens with the earth, of the sensible with the intelligible, and of nature with reason: upon all these, by its own skill, the mind, more learned in contemplation, firmly establishes true opinions about each of them, and wisely builds spiritual towers upon the corners; that is, decrees upon the unions to which they are entrusted. And he prevailed, and built towers in the desert; and he dug many cisterns. To him, who had the ability to remove himself from the passions of the senses and separate his mind from the affections of the senses, it was given to prevail, so that he might block the entrance of the devil through the senses into the mind, like a wall placed before him: and therefore, in the desert (that is, in natural speculation), as if in fortified towers, he built pious opinions about things: to which those who take refuge, in this desert (that is, the nature of things visible to the eyes), need not fear the robberies of demons, who deceive the mind through the senses and drag it by excessive error into the darkness of ignorance. And he dug many cisterns: That is, diverse dispositions of virtues, capable of receiving the divinely supplied teachings of wisdom.

For he had many flocks in the plain and in the fields, and vine-growers in the mountains, and in Carmel, because he was a man devoted to agriculture. He who by the weapons on his right and left, lawfully fights for truth, from the diverse dispositions directed toward virtue and knowledge, as from dug cisterns, which contain the flocks in the plain (that is, the movements of the mind concerning the body, exercised through the danger of violent temptations, which are stirred up to patience, watering them with words of tolerance), and which are in the field (that is, the movements of the mind, which by the right hand, through the broad way of virtue, increase), watering them with words of modesty and moderation, so that they neither fall to the left nor rise on the right. And the vine-growers in the mountains, and in Carmel.

The vine-growers in the mountains are those who, at the height of contemplation, rest in pious reasoning, cultivating ecstatic and hidden knowledge. But in Carmel, the vine-growers are those who, through contemplation of perfect purification, with all passions compressed and removed, like a certain preputial bond adhering to the soul, cultivate reason,

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and, with wisdom as a companion, circumscribe earthly affections from the mind. Carmel, indeed, is the recognition of circumcision.

It is said, however, that Uzziah was a man devoted to agriculture, because the whole mind, supported by the strength of God in contemplation, is truly devoted to agriculture, keeping the seeds of good from the weeds with care and diligence, while it remains, as long as it preserves the memory of God. For it is said: "And he was seeking the Lord in the days of Zechariah in the fear of the Lord." Furthermore, Zechariah, if translated into our language, sounds as "the memory of God." Therefore, let us continually pray to the Lord, that His saving memory may remain within us, so that what we do rightly, our mind, lifted up too high, and presuming things beyond the power of nature, as Uzziah did, may not lead us to destruction.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Tabernacle is called admirable, which God took from us as the holy flesh, so that He might take it without seed in Himself. But the house, indeed, is the mind that understands. For the flesh, endowed with the soul's intelligence, unites the Word with itself by a hidden reason, and man was made, like to like, purifying one by the other. The Word, indeed, is that which, in itself immutably, according to its hypostasis, raised the nature. Therefore, let us pass to this tabernacle (the flesh, namely), sanctifying the flesh by the cultivation of our virtues, that it may be made like unto the body of His glory through the grace of the Spirit. And within the house of God, by uninterrupted contemplation and simple and indivisible knowledge, it pervades the soul, which understands the Lord; that we too, like the Apostle, may have the sense of Christ through the communion of the Spirit, having been made by grace for His sake, whatever He, by nature, through the dispensation of the flesh, assumed for us.
2. The stone of the corner is called the bond of the corner and the join (that is, the Church).

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

3. The gate of the corner is called flesh; by it the door of the Church is opened; the towers, indeed, are the decrees regarding the incarnation.
4. The corner of the valley is called the natural union of the flesh with the soul; and the union of the soul with it through the spirit, as a ministering conjunction of virtue.
5. The corners he simply calls the various unions of things, in that different, more universal natures act together in one great conspiracy.
6. Every union of those creatures we have spoken of has wisdom, according to which it was created; and which Scripture calls the towers of the corners. For each thing has a defense and, as it were, a tower, both in the essential knowledge of it, and in the harmony by which all things are united in concord.
7. The cisterns he calls the hearts capable of holding the heavenly gifts of sacred knowledge, dug by the hard word of the commandments: like tumors removed, both of the love of lust and of the affection of nature toward sensory things; and full of the knowledge that rains down from heaven, by which vices are wiped away, and by which virtues are established in the spirit to bring life.
8. The flocks of Sephila are those who, through many afflictions, are taught the moral philosophy; those needing the words that teach patience.
9. The flocks of the field are those who run easily and quickly through the stadium of virtues and remain unscathed by evils. These need to be taught with the words of thanksgiving and doctrine.
10. The mountain he simply calls the sublime contemplation of nature in the spirit; which they cultivate who, casting aside the figures of things falling into the senses, which inflame the mind, pass through the middle virtues to reason.
11. Carmel is the sublime peak of the acknowledged removal of affection, and the cessation of the mind's necessary relationship with things. Its visible state is the vineyard, which gives a sober excess, the order of Providence: which they cultivate, who are moved solely by the simple unity, beyond principles and reasons. For he who is moved to this one

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[unity] is like a prepuce, cutting off the affection for things by which the origin of things is covered.

12. Another mode of the same spiritual intelligence.
13. A notable doubt that it cannot be reconciled in this place, which is narrated through the history of deeds.
14. The fear of the Lord is called the affection that cultivates philosophy, naming the beginning and end: "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."
15. The sublime discourse on the Deity is the tower of the soul, built upon the acts of the commandments.
16. Which gate of the corner?
17. The reason of particulars approaching the universals, of those things which are distinct, creates unions; hence, indeed, because the more universal reason encompasses the more particular ones, to which particular nature refers.
18. There is also a reason of this relation in the spirit, which provides the union among them.
19. Pay attention, how it is said that the word, which is said to have prevailed, should be taken.
20. He who is supported by pious opinion in all things, does not fear the demons who deceive men through visible things.
21. The vine produces wine; wine, drunkenness; drunkenness, excess. Therefore, the effective and active reason (which is the vine), cultivated by virtues, generates knowledge. Knowledge, however, produces a beautiful excess, by which the mind exceeds the senses and earthly affections.

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### QUESTION XLIX

WHAT DOES IT MEAN AGAIN IN THE SAME BOOK: "AND HEZEKIAH SAW THAT SENNACHERIB HAD COME; AND HIS FACE WAS SET FOR BATTLE AGAINST JERUSALEM. AND HE TOOK COUNSEL WITH HIS ELDERS AND MIGHTY MEN TO BLOCK THE WATERS OF THE SPRINGS THAT WERE OUTSIDE THE CITY: AND THEY HELPED HIM. AND HE GATHERED A LARGE CROWD AND BLOCKED THE WATERS OF THE SPRINGS; AND THE RIVER THAT WAS TEARING THROUGH THE CITY." WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN IN A MYSTICAL SENSE?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Hezekiah represents the one seeking knowledge, equipped with moral philosophy, divine wisdom, and all discernment against opposing powers. His name, based on its interpretation, signifies "divine authority" or "strength." For this reason, he governs Jerusalem, meaning the soul, which is "the vision of peace," that is, wise contemplation, free from passions and vices. When this soul sees the opposing power stirring within itself, it is worthwhile to take counsel with its elders and leaders to block the waters of the springs existing outside the city.

The leaders of the mind are of this kind: the reasoning of faith, hope, and charity, possessing a certain elder-like and senatorial authority, restraining with dominion all divine thoughts and considerations of the soul. These leaders wisely advise the mind, strengthen it against the opposing power, and reveal the means for its defeat. For indeed, it is altogether impossible for any force of evil to be destroyed or for anything truly virtuous to be fulfilled without faith, hope, and charity.

Faith, indeed, advises the mind, when attacked in battle, to flee to God, providing it with all the equipment of spiritual arms, thereby increasing

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trust and bringing solace. Hope, on the other hand, stands as the most faithful assurance of divine assistance, promising the destruction of opposing powers. Charity, finally, during the midst of battles, renders the soul immovable through the powerful force of divine love, fixing all its natural strength entirely upon the desire for God.

The names of the leaders or princes also harmonize with this interpretation if one examines them. At that time, the advisors and leaders of Hezekiah were Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the steward; Shebna, the scribe; and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder. If you interpret the name Eliakim, it means "the resurrection of God"; his father Hilkiah means "the portion of God." Therefore, Eliakim, the first and unique son of the divine portion (that is, true knowledge), represents the word of faith in the resurrection of God within us, bearing the proper knowledge, guided by moderation and discernment, and enduring with patience the attacks of both voluntary and involuntary temptations.

The scribe Shebna, if his name is interpreted, signifies "conversion." This clearly represents the fullness of reasoning in divine hope, without which no conversion toward God, even the smallest, can occur. It is the nature of hope to compose records, that is, to teach and to place before our eyes as if present the things that are to come, confidently persuading us that God is by no means absent, but rather protects those who are wearied by the battle with the opposing power. For His sake and by His favor, all battles of the saints are waged.

Joah, the son of Asaph, who was recorder, if you interpret the name, is called "the fraternity of God," and his father, Asaph, means "congregation." Thus, charity is the offspring of the faculties of the soul united and harmonized in equal measure around divine things—namely, reason, anger, and desire. By its function, charity records the beauty of divine glory on the tablets of memory for those who, by grace, have already achieved equality of honor with God (for "fraternity" openly signifies the gift of equal honor). Charity leaves no desire for divine beauty to be erased by forgetfulness; rather, like an immortal decoration, it is inscribed and impressed on the principal part of the soul.

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Since, therefore, matters are arranged in this way, and the interpretation of the names has allowed at least a slight conjecture of the truth, the entire mind, like Hezekiah, equipped with divine strength, possesses certain elders, leaders, or magistrates and governors. These include the faculty of reason, from which arises the horizon of faith, which is a wise and sound knowledge, always teaching the mind to recognize God's presence by a reason that cannot be expressed in words. With the support of hope, the mind becomes accustomed to considering future things as if they were present. The faculty of desire, in which divine charity resides, fastens itself freely to the love of the undefiled deity and adopts an insatiable longing for what is desired. Additionally, the faculty of anger clings firmly to divine peace, restraining the movement of desire by the standard of divine love.

With these faculties, the entire mind is equipped, by whose aid it both destroys vices and establishes and preserves virtue. These faculties are called elders because they are the primary faculties of the soul and complete its essence. They are also called leaders or magistrates because they command the movements that arise from them and have power over the effects subject to them, directed by the soul's will. These faculties likewise serve as counselors to the mind and assist it in blocking the waters of the springs that were outside the city—or, to speak more precisely, those that are outside the city. For whatever is narrated in history as having occurred in the past is regarded mystically as present through the consideration of spiritual meaning.

The person who possesses these faculties in a healthy state, uncorrupted by any error, gathers an immense crowd of people—that is, pious natural movements, perceptions, and reasonings from them. The waters that are outside the city (that is, outside the soul), whose overflow forms a river dividing the city, refer to the knowledge and perceptions of natural speculation. These are mediated by the senses, flowing from sensory things into the soul. From these perceptions, the speech of sensory knowledge, like a river, is formed, which pervades the soul and maintains thoughts and images of sensory things. It is precisely through this channel

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that the most wicked and destructive power customarily attacks the soul in battle.

Thus, Hezekiah says: "Let not the king of Assyria come and find much water and grow strong." It is as if the most perceptive mind speaks through its faculties, saying, "When vices and disturbances arise, let us temporarily cease from natural speculation and devote ourselves entirely to prayer and the bodily affliction of that philosophy which is practiced through action." Prayer is symbolized by the king ascending to the temple of God, and bodily affliction by putting on sackcloth. This is done lest the most cunning wickedness deceive the imprudent with the forms and figures of sensory things, drawing affections that cling to vices and lusts toward the external appearance of visible things. This would block the intermediary sense within us from the act of reason directed toward intelligible things and would strengthen the enemy to overthrow the city (namely, the soul) and violently drag it into Babylon (that is, the confusion of vices and disturbances).

Whoever, when vicious affections assault with hostile signs, resolutely shuts off the senses and completely removes thoughts and memories of sensory things, thereby suppressing the natural movements of the mind from investigating external matters, acts like Hezekiah by blocking the waters of the springs outside the city and cutting off the river dividing the city in the middle. This is done with the help of those faculties I have mentioned and with a multitude of people and an army gathered (that is, the pious thoughts or rational considerations of each faculty). By divine hand and victorious effort, he confounds the most wicked and tyrannical power that had threatened, in accordance with the divine command—like an avenging angel prepared by the Word to destroy vices—killing 185,000 (namely, the disposition that is the parent of vices and depravity, which grows through the three faculties of the soul by means of sensory things and the operation of the senses upon them).

It is therefore worthwhile not to devote oneself to natural speculation—which the mind wisely exhausts in invisible encounters—nor to undertake anything else when the most wicked demons attack, but solely



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to pray, subdue the body with labors, and diligently cast down earthly senses. At the same time, one should guard the walls of the city (that is, the virtues that serve as the soul's protection or the paths and methods conducive to preserving virtues, namely, self-control and patience) with the aid of good natural rational considerations. In this way, no thought should respond to the appearance of any spiritual enemy stationed outside. Otherwise, by enticing with the pretense of prosperity and weaving a snare of deception, the mind might be alienated from God, who gives the soul turbulent overthrow, and by means of things that seem honorable, cunningly lead the mind seeking the honorable toward worse things. This is Rabsaces, speaking in the Judean language, the commander of the army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria.

Rabsaces, if the name is interpreted, means "one indulgent in offering drinks with kisses," or "one having great kisses." The most wicked demon, who customarily attacks the mind with the allure of favorable circumstances, speaks in the Judean language—namely, pretending to wear the mask of virtue, which is not true virtue, and intoxicating the soul with turbulent destruction. He offers fraudulent and destructive friendship, whereas it is far better to be struck by the wounds of a friend. For it is said: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." Sennacherib, if his name is interpreted, means "temptation of dryness" or "sharp teeth," which refers to the devil. Indeed, by sharp reasoning aimed at vice (which the term "sharp teeth" implies), he dries up the streams of divine knowledge flowing to us. Thus, he aptly gains his name, acting as a "temptation of dryness" both in existence and effect, rendering those who succumb to his deceit void of all vital spiritual distribution.

Alternatively, Sennacherib (that is, the devil) may be called "temptation of dryness" as one who is needy and poor, lacking all inherent power by which he might attack us. Indeed, if sensory things, by which he usually wages war on the soul, are absent, he cannot harm us in any way. Seeking to subject us to tyranny, he requires the springs placed outside the city (namely, earthly thoughts and senses) through which the forms and appearances of sensory things typically invade the soul. By this very nature of

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the senses, tied to them by necessity, the soul often becomes an instrument of destruction for itself, undoing its divine beauty in favor of pleasures, surrendering its entire reasoning power to the enemy.

However, whoever, through the virtue of self-control, resolutely shuts off the senses and excludes the forms of sensory things from entering the mind with the aid of the soul's forces, easily scatters the devil's most wicked plans. The devil is compelled to retreat along the same path he came (and the path by which the devil comes are earthly things that seem to ensure bodily well-being), shamefully returning to his own land (that is, confusion). With the destruction of his wicked progeny through reason turned to peace, he is cast back. For whoever is granted the ability to defeat the devil with reason, using contemplation directed toward the right and the honorable, destroys Sennacherib by the actions of his own sons and drives him far away into the land of Armenia.

Armenia, if the name is interpreted, means "the position of rest." The position of rest is the possession of divine virtues, through which the mind, transferring the reasoning it once used for disgraceful vices and lusts of the senses, kills the devil, the parent of these, to the ruin of humankind.

Thus, Hezekiah acted excellently and most wisely in a spiritual sense of the Scriptures by blocking the waters of the springs outside Jerusalem because of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Therefore, the springs placed outside the city (that is, outside the mind) represent all things that fall into the senses. The waters of these springs are the impressions and concepts of those sensory things. The river dividing through the middle of the city represents the knowledge formed by natural speculation from the concepts of sensory things. It passes through the soul, acting as the boundary between both mind and sense, since the awareness of sensory things is neither entirely separate from the faculty of the intelligent mind nor solely reliant on the operation of the senses. Rather, like a mediator between mind and sense, it, by itself, facilitates the union of the two—shaped by sensory forms according to the senses, and by the mind transferring these forms and figures into the realm of reason.

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Therefore, it is fitting that the river dividing through the middle of the city is called the knowledge of sensory things, as it serves as the intermediary between extremes (that is, mind and sense). Whoever blocks this river during times of disturbance and vice—avoiding the injury caused by the influx of sensory forms into the mind—defeats the devil's invisible assaults with the guidance of knowledge, slaying 185,000 enemies. This signifies the habitual disposition that is the parent of vice and depravity: the power that adheres to the three faculties of the soul through the help of sensory things, contrary to reason, and that performs operations discordant with reason through the faculties of the senses.

The number six, whether composed of units, tens, or hundreds, represents this habitual disposition as the parent of virtue and vice. This is determined by the way it is multiplied, corresponding to the disposition perfected by a particular passion or habit. When combined with the number five—whether added, integrated, or related in composition—it signifies the sensory faculty, or the habit or operation of sensory things, which is either adjacent to, superimposed upon, or combined with the natural faculties of the soul.

For example, if the number five as a single unit is joined to the number six, it merely indicates the aptitude for potential operation in the senses. But if it is added to a composite six, it reveals a perfected sensory habit according to its virtue. If multiple tens are compounded into a six and multiple fives are compounded into that composition, it signifies the full operation of virtue or vice in its second potency and habit—that is, its completion. In whatever manner the number is taken, whether for blame or praise, according to the spiritual sense of the Scriptures or the context examined, the number 185 (composed of multiples of six and ten) represents the parent of vice and the habitual disposition of natural sensory faculties. In this Scriptural context, it is taken negatively, being slain by the divine Word as by an angel, showing that the mind relies more on prayer than on its own virtue and acknowledges the one God as the source of all virtue and victory over demons.

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Thus, whoever refrains from natural speculation when troubling temptations arise, collecting and concentrating the mind entirely on itself and God, diligently persevering in prayer, destroys in the senses the habitual disposition of vice unnaturally stirred up by the natural faculties of the soul. In doing so, the devil is compelled to return shamefully to confusion, having lost the habitual disposition on which he relied to invade the soul with arrogance and pride through arguments contrary to truth.

David, too, recognized this and acted wisely when he said, "When the sinner stood against me, I was silent and humbled, and I kept silent from good" (Ps. 39:2). Similarly, the divine Jeremiah, forbidding the people to go out of the city, warned them of the swords of the enemies surrounding them. If only the blessed Abel had observed this, avoiding the field (the sea of natural speculation), he would not have been killed by the deceitful law of the flesh, represented by Cain, before attaining perfect tranquility of mind. Cain, as the name implies, means "possession," and signifies the first fruit of transgression inherited by Adam, the author of the law of sin.

Likewise, Dinah, the daughter of great Jacob, would not have been defiled by Shechem, the son of Hamor, if she had not gone out with the daughters of the land (that is, with sensory thoughts). Shechem, if interpreted, means "back," and Hamor means "donkey," representing the body. The "back" (Shechem) signifies the posterior law, not the anterior—secondary, not primary. Before the transgression of the divine commandment, the human body (Hamor) did not have the law of sin, but this law, later generated through disobedience, was newly imposed upon the body. For this reason, true reason calls it "back," or posterior, indicating its later origin.

Thus, it is better not to engage in natural speculation before acquiring perfect habitual virtue, lest, while seeking spiritual truths from visible things, we unwittingly accumulate vices and desires. In imperfect individuals, the visible forms of things affect the senses more strongly than the hidden reasons within created forms, which affect the mind.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. Simple contemplation of things demands a soul free from vices, referred to as "Jerusalem" both for its perfect virtue and for its knowledge free from materiality. This state entails not only the absence of vices and passions but also the exclusion of thoughts concerning sensory things, which Scripture calls the "waters of springs existing outside."
2. Faith strengthens the soul assailed in battle, consoling it with the hope of assistance. Hope, by presenting before our eyes the assistance we believe will come, repels the attacks of adversaries. Lastly, charity completely crushes and eradicates the enemy's line (being entirely directed towards God), leaving it powerless against the pious soul.
3. "The first resurrection within us," it is said, "is faith," established in us rightly by the observance of commandments, after the stain of ignorance of God has been removed.
4. There is a harmony between things and their names. For no conversion to what is noble and dutiful ever happens without some anticipation—whether of pleasure or trouble—from that which one contemplates.
5. Charity unites those who are scattered, binding their will into one through concord. Its characteristic mark is the integrity of honor shared equally.
6. Without the faculty of reason, there is no knowledge of science. Likewise, faith cannot stand without knowledge, from which hope, the noble offspring, arises. By hope, a faithful man grows accustomed to the future as if it were present. Moreover, without the faculty of desire, there can be no longing or love, the end of which is charity. For loving something or someone is proper to a desiring soul. Finally, without the faculty of anger—strengthening the force of desire to preserve the union of what pleases—peace cannot be maintained, since true peace is the tranquil and complete possession of what pleases and satisfies.
7. Reason is the origin of both rational thoughts and considerations, as well as of the movements of anger and desire.

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8. Hezekiah, in a higher and spiritual sense, represents the mind, which cultivates action and morality; the city represents the soul; the spring represents the various kinds of sensory things; the waters are the images and perceptions of those things fixed in the thinking mind; the river represents the knowledge formed by natural speculation from the impressions of sensory things.
9. Natural speculation should not be attempted by a mind not yet purged of the stain of vice. The reason is the images of sensory things, which incline the mind toward passion, especially in one not yet freed from disturbances and vices.
10. A mind that lingers on the external bodies of sensory things for the sake of gratifying the senses becomes the parent of impure passions. This happens when it does not use the function of speculation to transfer to analogous intelligible things.
11. Where reason becomes irrational, anger reckless, and desire unreasoning, ignorance, violence, and luxury dominate the soul. From these vices, a habitual disposition arises in action, compounded by various sensory desires. The number 185 symbolizes this disposition. If you take three times sixty (representing the complete movement of each faculty derived from evils) and add five (indicating the pleasure that affects the senses in action), you complete the number that signifies the habitual disposition, the parent of vice. The devil, like a tyrant, uses this habit to attack the soul. Yet God, through an angel or the wise word of knowledge, destroys it, preserving the soul (truly Jerusalem) and the mind within it as invincible to vice.
12. The innate reasons of nature are referred to as the "people set under the protection of the city's wall."
13. The friend in this context is the Lord, and His wounds symbolize the disciplines applied to each individual to chastise the flesh—meaning the carnal sense—so that the spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord. The enemy, however, is the devil, and his kisses represent the various pleasures of the senses. By these allurements, he seduces souls, leading them away from the love of their Creator.

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14. The name Sennacherib is interpreted as "the trial of dryness." This is so for two reasons: first, because it dries the hearts of those who pay heed to it, separating them from the fountain of grace that nourishes holy thoughts; and second, because it is itself destitute and impoverished, having nothing of its own. Therefore, like a thief, it hides in the external forms of sensory objects, from which it rises against us, as if with a wedge, to launch its attack.
15. Whatever exceeds the natural use and necessity of things is called intemperance and luxury, which form the devil's path to the soul. He retreats in disgrace to his own land when temperance educates nature and places reins upon it. Alternatively, his path may also be through the natural passions: when their use exceeds what is necessary, they provide a way for the devil to reach the soul. However, through moderate use and just necessity, they compel him to return to his own land. The devil's land is the entrenched habit of vice and confusion, which he treads perpetually and to which he draws those led by a love of earthly things.
16. He who directs the faculties of the soul towards virtue grants them rest, having led them away from the unstable confusion of vices.
17. The mind, by its very nature, in mediating between itself and the senses, joins sense with reason. From this natural speculation arises true knowledge, which is called a river dividing the soul due to the understanding that arises from sensory perception.
18. To the will, nature provides the capacity for aptitude, while habit, which develops alongside this capacity, lies above it. Habit is always bound to operation and action, though it may not continuously manifest due to the occasional lack of material things.
19. The text refers to the joining of numbers, the combination of simple numbers within the scale of ten, both united and distinct. For example, six and five. Whether Scripture uses this in reference to good and noble things or to evil ones, it signifies the aptitude that is the potential parent of either virtue or vice. Addition of numbers refers to the multiplication of a number within itself, adding to the sum of single units. For

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instance, sixty-five or one hundred eighty-five signify not only aptitude in the senses but also habit, whether for virtue or vice. The composition of numbers refers to their interaction through multiplication and convergence, such as sixty and fifty, or five hundred and six hundred. These denote not only the potential operation through habit in the senses but also the action and operation resulting from habitual disposition, whether virtuous or vicious.

20. Cain symbolizes the law of the flesh, the first offspring of Adam, born after transgressing the divine command. Abel represents the wisdom or prudence of the spirit, the offspring brought forth by Adam through repentance. Cain slays Abel when man surrenders to natural spectacles before achieving a perfect habit of virtue. After the killing, God declares that vengeance will be exacted sevenfold. In the Gospels, the same spirit is called the evil spirit, who often takes with him seven spirits more wicked than himself. This may also signify blind self-love or carnal sin, particularly gluttony, accompanied by fornication, greed, sorrow, anger, sloth, vainglory, and pride. Whoever, by divine decree, slays gluttony simultaneously destroys its associated vices, in accordance with the statement: "Whoever kills Cain will suffer sevenfold vengeance."
21. The law of generation and corruption was added to human nature after the transgression of divine law, so that we generate and are generated. This came about not in accordance with the divine law of the spirit from the original command, but as a result of the fall.

## QUESTION L

WHAT IS AGAIN SIGNIFIED IN THE SAME BOOK WHEN IT SAYS: AND KING HEZEKIAH AND ISAIAH THE SON OF AMOS THE PROPHET PRAYED FOR THEM, AND THEY CRIED OUT TO HEAVEN. AND THE LORD SENT AN ANGEL AND DESTROYED EVERY MIGHTY MAN, WARRIOR, AND LEADER IN THE CAMP OF THE KING OF ASSYRIA; AND HE RETURNED WITH SHAME OF FACE TO HIS OWN LAND?



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### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The discourse of Sacred Scripture, although it is limited by certain terms as far as the literal sense is concerned—ending with the times of those things that are reported to have happened—nevertheless remains always unlimited in the contemplations and meanings of those things that are spiritually understood. Nor should anyone, being troubled by such statements, reject faith, since they must understand that God, who has spoken, is by nature unlimited. It is necessary for us to believe that the speech He uttered is more closely related to His nature, provided we are willing to listen to the counsel and intent of Scripture with a pure heart. For if it is God who has spoken, and if God is essentially unlimited, then clearly the speech He has uttered must also be unlimited.

And therefore, contemplating spiritually those things which occurred in the figure of King Hezekiah, and their outcome, which at that time, as the history testifies, came to an end, let us admire the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who wrote, how He has bestowed upon each individual an apt and fitting understanding and spiritual sense of those things which are written, so that anyone who wishes to be a disciple of the divine word may understand, and may determine not to value anything in the passing things of this world and of this life equally with virtue, but become in spirit like Hezekiah, or like Isaiah. For nothing prevents him from praying, crying out to heaven, being heard, and receiving from God through an angel, so that those who are spiritually assailed may be brought to destruction and an extreme end.

But since it is necessary that anyone who skillfully explains the divine Scripture of the Christian faith by the guidance of knowledge, should also diligently devote themselves to the interpretation of names, so that they may immediately and clearly reveal the meaning of what is written, for indeed, the aim is that the Scriptures be precisely understood, not interpreting them in a Jewish manner which depresses the body and earthly

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things, but in the elevation of the spirit, and defining the divine and immortal promises of spiritual goods amidst the corruption of passing things.

Therefore, let us contemplate spiritually the things that occurred in the figure of King Hezekiah, and the outcome of these events, which, as the history testifies, ended at that time. Let us marvel at the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who wrote, how He has endowed each person with an appropriate and fitting understanding of those things which are written, so that whoever wishes to be a disciple of the divine word may understand the spiritual meaning. Thus, he who has decided not to value anything in this fleeting world and its temporal matters in comparison to virtue, shall become, in spirit, another Hezekiah, and another Isaiah. No one will be hindered from praying and crying out to heaven, and being heard, and obtaining from God through an angel, that those who are spiritually attacked may be destroyed to the utmost and come to a final end.

For it is necessary that the one who, by the guidance of knowledge, rightly explains the divine Scripture with the reasoning of the mind, also applies himself diligently to the interpretation of names, so that he may immediately reveal the full sense of what is written. For he strives to perceive the Scriptures exactly, not in a Jewish way, which depresses the spiritual heights to the earthly body and the land, and defines the divine and immortal promises of spiritual goods by the corruption of passing things. For by this error, certain people who labor under the name Christian falsely appropriate the name for themselves, while in reality denying the true meaning of this name, and those who walk in a way contrary to Christ, as the speech will briefly declare, clearly proceed

For indeed, with other mysteries, which no power of speech or reasoning can achieve, God became man to this end, that He might spiritually fulfill the law by abolishing the letter, and establish and make manifest its life-giving power (of the law, namely) by removing that which kills. What kills the law, according to the divine author, the Apostle, is the letter; but what gives life, according to the same author, is the spirit. For he says: 'The law kills, but the spirit gives life.' It is clear that those who have

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chosen the opposing part to Christ have rejected His incarnation's mystery entirely; for not only have they crushed the power of their mind with the letter, and do not wish to be according to the image and likeness of God, but rather, in order to be of the earth and return to the earth, they have a more intense attachment to the letter, which clings to the earth, than to be lifted up into heaven (that is, the spirit), into the air (namely, the illumination of the mind), into the clouds (indeed, contemplation), to meet the Lord, and thus always be with Him through knowledge. It is right to be indignant at their ignorance, which affects them with intolerable harm; and it is sorrowful that so much is inflicted upon the Jews to establish their unbelief.

Now, leaving these aside as they wish, let us return to Scripture, beginning spiritually the examination of this chapter, drawing from the interpretation of names. Hezekiah, therefore, if one interprets the name, is said to mean 'the strength of God.' His father, Ahaz, means 'strength.' Isaiah, too, by the interpretation of his name, is 'the exaltation of God,' that is, 'the sublimity of God.' Amos, however, his father, means 'the people of labor.' The strength and power of God is such that it kills vices and protects pious thoughts and reasoning by the aid of the commandments. And in a moral sense, strength is understood, by which, with God's help (or rather, by God's power alone), we can defeat the most wicked powers of opposition to good. But the sublimity of God is the knowledge of the truth, which is born from the labor of creation's contemplation, and from the efforts we devote to the cultivation of virtues, which themselves are parents of labor. By this, we utterly abolish the power of falsehood, opposing truth; we cast down and pull down every height of the most wicked spirits, exalting themselves against the knowledge of God.

Prayer, therefore, is the request of those things which God is accustomed to bestow upon men for their salvation. And indeed, it is very just. For since a vow (Greek: *εὐχὴ*) is a promise of those goods which men offer to God through religious commitment, in a fitting manner, prayer (Greek: *προσευχὴ*, as it were, coming along with the vow) will be the request of those goods which are given by God to men for salvation (the effect of which we were previously finished with by the vow, bringing the reward).

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The cry, on the other hand, is the addition and amplification of the actions of those striving for virtuous conduct and the diligence of spiritual contemplation (at which time the wicked demons rise up). This is what God most especially hears, taking up the affection and soul of those who are devoted to virtue and knowledge, in place of a great voice.

The Scripture, in its phraseology, often refers to God Himself, as in a certain place where the great preacher of truth, John the Baptist, speaks: 'A man cannot receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven'; for that, read 'from God.' Indeed, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.' By this meaning, this passage in the Scripture should be understood in this chapter. But again, when the virtues are called heaven, it is not unusual in Scripture, as in the phrase, 'Heaven is my throne,' meaning that He rests in the holy and incorporeal natures.

And if anyone were to say that the human mind, purified from all earthly thoughts and magnificently adorned with divine intelligible reasoning, is heaven, I believe that this would not exceed the limits of truth. Indeed, if anyone were to assert that the sublimity of the human mind is heaven, he would not have deviated from decorum. For in truth, in the manner of heaven, true knowledge of God becomes a seat, where God is placed upon His throne, through the stable habit of firm and lofty desire, receiving what is honorable and of duty. It is called the footstool of virtue's pure action, through which divine steps are received, and the body is not allowed to be defiled by earthly stains.

Therefore, since King Hezekiah presents the figure of virtue according to the interpretation of his name, if you translate it into our language, it is called the strength and power of God, or the authority. God's power and strength against opposing powers is one virtue. Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, if you interpret the name, means strength, which we previously explained in terms of action, from which the divine strength and power of virtue are usually born. Isaiah, however, signifies the knowledge of the sublime. For if you interpret the name, it is said to be the knowledge of God, showing divine exaltation, that is, that which is born from the labor of

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various reflections on matters. Amos, as we explained earlier, signifies the labor of the people (or 'the people of labor').

Therefore, as has been said, such is the power of the signification of names, that whoever is truly a philosopher and religious, armed with virtue and knowledge, whether through action and contemplation, when he sees the most wicked power, like King Hezekiah of the Assyrians (a wedge of vices and disturbances) pressing in upon him, has one way by which to be freed from evils—he has recourse to God, whom he invokes silently (with greater contention of virtue and knowledge), making Him favorable. He receives, through the aid of an angel (that is, through the greater discourse of wisdom and knowledge), the angel who casts down all power and destroys the warrior, prince, and leader from the Assyrian king's camp, compelling him to return to his land with a confused face. For the most wicked and destructive kingdom of the devil is symbolized by the kingdom of the Assyrians, which seeks to uproot virtue and knowledge, and against men, having undertaken a campaign, strives through the power in them to pour out and conquer the soul; first indeed, by promoting a desire for things contrary to nature, and being the author of this, making sense take precedence over intelligibles; then, by stirring up anger, so that the sense of the object chosen by desire may join the battle under its protection; and teaching the force of reason, so that the modes of sensual pleasures may be invented: and so by these powers, the senses command (that is, the law of earthly faculties governs the soul).

Thus, the Scripture calls the most wicked demon 'the powerful one,' who presides over desire, and who ignites the pursuit of base pleasures. For nothing is more powerful or violent than natural desire. The demon who presides over anger is called 'the warrior,' and one who continually struggles for the sake of pleasures. The 'prince,' however, is one who, lurking over the forms and aspects of sensible things with an insidious reason, incites each individual sense to pursue each individual object. He is called the 'prince' or 'leader' because he is so arranged that any passion or disturbance can find in sensible things its origin and cause. For unless there is some object to which some sense can attract the powers of the soul, the disturbed affection and lust

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cannot stand. The demon is also called 'the leader,' because he abuses the part of the soul in which reason exists; this is the part through which he moves, so that it can devise all the reasoning and methods of vice, and cleverly invent them. Moreover, the devil's face is the taint of pleasure, by whose power the whole soul of the one sustaining it is accustomed to be ruled; and whoever has preferred the allurements of sensible things over the contemplation of spiritual matters, he fills with confusion. When, through prayer, one calls upon God, who sends the angel to drive out the most wicked power, this is the one who thoroughly abolishes the most nefarious force. Scripture says, 'He drew it out, but did not grind it down.' For grinding (Greek: *τρίψις*) refers to the destruction of a vicious and lustful act only in the moment, while 'drawing out' (Greek: *ἐκτρίψις*) refers to the full, complete abolition and excision of the evil motions in the soul.

Now, the region of the king of Assyria (of the evil one, I say, the author of all wickedness) is surrounded by the harsh habit of malice or vice and ignorance, deprived of the vital warmth of virtue and the light that illuminates the mind with all knowledge.

To this region, the devil returns, after trying in vain to assault it, after he could not transfer Jerusalem to its condition: a religious soul, namely, one raised in the highest tranquility, possessing within itself the perfect speech of action like Hezekiah, and the mind illuminated by the splendor of knowledge like Isaiah, pleasing God, and through the angel, abolishing the most wicked power.

Indeed, I have explained these things to the best of my ability. But if anyone can explain these things more sublimely, he will have shown grace both to himself and to us, who have brought forth the mind of Scripture more excellently and more splendidly into the light. For I have said earlier, the discourse of divine Scripture remains always without boundary; it, in fact, circumscribes all speakers but is not circumscribed by any speakers. Therefore, even if I have spoken something according to my ability, and in a somewhat rash manner, I do not believe that the full power of what is written (which exceeds the capacity of infinite distances) can be comprehended by speech.

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

### SCHOLIUM

1. Just as God, according to the essence of knowledge, is not subject to it, so neither can His word be comprehended by our knowledge.
2. Those who, in the manner of the Jews, have bound the mind solely to the letter, in this age await the promises of immortal goods, not knowing indeed what good things of the mind exist by nature.
3. Those who bear the image of heaven, who strive to follow the spirit of sacred Scripture in all things, in which the safety of the mind exists through virtue and knowledge. But those who bear the image of the earth, cultivate only the letter, in which, based on the reasoning of the senses, disturbance and the bodily servitude of vices persist.
4. Action generates virtue, as Achaz generates Hezekiah.
5. Contemplation generates knowledge, as Amos generates Isaiah.
6. He who cultivates knowledge with action, and action with knowledge, becomes the seat and foundation of God: indeed, seat because of knowledge; foundation, however, because of virtue.
7. The camp of the Assyrian king is the wedge of evil thoughts and reasoning; in it, the one who moves the appetites toward pleasure is powerful: the warrior, who excites the force of anger to be a defense for pleasures; the prince, who arouses the senses through the aspects of visible things; the leader, who gives the appearance of affections and vices and devises the methods and means by which they are performed.
8. Without some object falling into the senses, a disturbed affection does not stand. For unless there is a woman, there is no fornication; unless there is food, there will be no gluttony; if gold is absent, there will be no lust for greed. Therefore, all the movements of our natural faculties that are vicious, are presided over by something falling into the senses, whether through which the demon leads the soul to illicit sin.
9. Τρίψις (tripsis) is the operation; ἑκτριψις (extripsis) abolishes the very thought of vice in the mind. Just as the north wind does not affect the

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sun's course, so neither does an evil habit, cultivated by the devil, receive the illumination of knowledge.

### QUESTION LI

AND MANY OFFERED GIFTS TO THE LORD IN JERUSALEM,  
AND PRESENTS TO KING HEZEKIAH OF JUDAH.  
AND HE WAS EXCEEDINGLY EXALTED IN THE EYES OF ALL  
THE NATIONS. WHAT ARE THE GIFTS, OR WHAT  
ARE THE PRESENTS? AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT HE  
WAS EXCEEDINGLY EXALTED IN THE  
EYES OF ALL THE NATIONS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Creator of all nature, in His vision, did not allow it to be moved by the mere reasoning of the senses; but He filled it with kinds that complete it, with the spiritual reasonings of wisdom, as well as the modes of learned instruction and discipline. So that not only should the Creator of all things be magnificently celebrated in the silent voices of the created things, but also that man, having been educated in the knowledge of the natural aspects of things, would easily find the way of doctrine that leads him to it. For this was the property of supreme goodness: that not only should He make divine, incorporeal intellectual substances, the images of the secret and divine majesty, which, as far as allowed, would receive a beauty greater than all their capacity and reasoning; but also that He should mix, with His magnificence, certain obscure traces and even, as it were, the extreme sounds, by which the human mind, once carried along, could certainly pass to God without error, overcoming all things that are visible and the means by which it accomplished its way, leaving behind the traces of its reasoning. Thus, when the voice clearly proclaims its author, the creature hears.

Since, indeed, both the spiritual reasonings of wisdom and the modes of honorable instruction are naturally infused by the Creator in the



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nature of things falling into the realm of sight, it is fitting that the mind, crowned with virtue and knowledge, like the great King Hezekiah, should obtain the governance of Jerusalem (which represents a state of perfect peace, free from all disturbances, and entirely tranquil). For Jerusalem, if its name is interpreted, means "vision of peace." Such a mind holds all creation within its dominion through the forms that complete it. It offers spiritual reasonings of science to God, as if offering gifts, and displays the modes of virtue according to the natural law, to be cultivated. By both forms of worship, with their virtue observed, the mind—philosophical in nature, perfected in action and contemplation—receives honor.

Thus, Scripture says that gifts are offered to the Lord and the King through distinct reasons. Gifts are those given to those who do not need them, while offerings (*munera*) are those presented to those in need. It has thus become customary in human behavior to refer to what is offered to kings as gifts because, for those receiving, there is no apparent need.

Indeed, it could be said that these gifts are so called because they were offered by the Magi to the Lord in recognition of His supreme mercy and humanity, making the term appropriate without altering its meaning. Therefore, when we offer spiritual reasons from what has been made, we are indeed offering gifts. These gifts are provided by nature, which requires none of these things. Not like those who lack, we offer the reasoning of things to the Lord, but so that we may, in our small way, pay tribute to created things. The one who diligently pursues divine philosophy is the one who receives offerings; for nature requires methods to acquire virtue and knowledge.

Alternatively, the term "gifts" can be understood differently. A gift, in this case, is that which is given to those who have contributed nothing previously. The mind, studying wisdom through contemplation of things, offers to the Lord reasoning that it holds by faith alone, without reasoning or demonstration. For no one truly offers anything prior; by nature, and without any rhetorical skills, the Creator is known through His creation. How could anyone offer anything in such a manner that it could equate to faith? This is not a gift but rather a debt of faith toward God.

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On the other hand, "offerings" are those received by imitating the natural laws of things, behaviors, and tendencies. They begin with the labor of penitence, leading to the transformation of the old man, who must first strip away his old self before being capable of collecting the fruits of justice and virtue. These offerings lead one to virtuous modes that are never accessible unless, through much labor and sweat, the old self is thoroughly purged and cast aside, like a serpent shedding its winter skin.

Therefore, gifts are indeed received by God, which, from things, are the reasonings that preserve faith, and the mind studying wisdom rightly receives them, which previously has contributed nothing or given anything. For who, it is said, has first given to Him, that He might repay? But offerings are received, which imitate the natural laws of things with morals. To speak by example, the most wise mind receives the gift of the natural law of the heavens, keeping the most even and always the same mode in itself, preserving the mark of virtue and knowledge; which, like the stars, firmly carries reasoning about things, clear and most splendid. Indeed, imitating the natural law of the sun, which continually moves from place to place as the proper governance of the universe demands, it receives another gift; namely, prudence, by which, with wise counsel, it fits and arranges itself appropriately to the things that happen in the universe, doing nothing to hinder or diminish that power to illuminate itself by virtue and knowledge.

Moreover, it also receives from the eagle, so that it may direct its eyes straight to the eternal light of the gods, without the pupil and the sight of the intelligent mind being hurt by the most brilliant rays of the light. It also imitates the stag, just as it pursues the high mountains of divine speculations, and in the nature of things, like the hunter's poison, it kills through the discourse of discretion the affections and desires hiding within, and in some case, extinguishes the virus of vice and depravity from within the storehouse of memory by the various and manifold waters of science. Likewise, it imitates the sharp sight of the goat and the caution of the sparrow, leaping over the traps of the demons of virtue like a goat, and escaping them with swifter running; and like a sparrow, it evades the nets of attacking spirits, flying higher. Some say that the bones of a lion, when struck

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

against each other, give out fire. So also, the mind studying wisdom and imitating religious practice, when it strikes one pious reasoning against another like bones, kindles the fire of science. It becomes wise as a serpent and simple as a dove, always, like the head, preserving unbroken faith; and like the dove, it publicly removes the bitterness of anger, and knows not how to nourish hatred against those who trouble and hurt it. It also takes from the turtledove, as a gift, the imitation of chastity; superior in its thought and will, whatever the necessary nature is in the things of nature.

Thus, truly, according to the natural reasoning and mode of each, the mind most devoted to what is right and honorable, while following the knowledge of things in nature, as a student of wisdom, receives from the creature the spiritual reasonings of things to be offered as gifts to God: but as one cultivating action, by imitating the natural laws of things with morals, receives offerings, rendering in itself the magnificent wisdom of divine wisdom, shining forth in the laws of life with an unobservable reason in things. But if someone should say that the Scripture clearly established that gifts should be offered to God in order to show the immensity of divine goodness, which, in order to receive gifts from us, as offerings, like those that have contributed nothing prior to this, namely ascribing to us whatever has been contributed to it by us, then such a person speaking in this way would not have exceeded the limits of its decency: while, indeed, it shows the immense and infinite goodness of God towards us, who, in order to receive our things, which are His, from us, shows that He is bound by a debt as if they were foreign to Him. And He was exalted, says the Scripture, in the eyes of all the nations. Just as Hezekiah, through the cultivation of action and contemplation, reached the highest perfection of virtue and knowledge, so he is justly exalted above all the nations. This is because, through action, Hezekiah overcame the carnal affections and vices (which are contemptible), and through the contemplation of natural bodies, which are called natural, and in short, through all the forms of things that fall under the senses, He was wisely superior to all their reasonings. These things, the Scripture also calls "nations" in a moral sense, because they are considered outside the soul and mind by nature, and are alien to the true essence. But in the meantime,

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as long as they do not assault the mind, God did not command that they be fought against. For we are not called to fight against external things or external circumstances, but rather to wage a continuous internal war against unnatural, corrupt affections of the heart, until we destroy them and possess the land for ourselves, making the heart free from foreign affections and peaceful. This indeed, we have been commanded to do. Thus, the Scripture distinctly states, where it mentions the gifts of God offered to the King, that it is not simply said, "all offered gifts to God, and offerings to the King," but rather, "many," as if to say, "Not all nations, but many," so that it is clear that those called nations, from which nothing is given to God's gifts or the King's offerings. For those completing the created world naturally offer gifts to God (those beings which were created divinely and exist as a result of God's creation), but they offer offerings to the King: the specific and natural laws which are implanted in them, for whose sake these laws have been given, and by whose standard the human mind was formed to create ways by which virtue is cultivated and maintained. Indeed, those who do not grow as nations by the will of God—meaning vices and perturbations—do not offer gifts to God or offerings to humans, since they did not originate from God. For through our violation of the divine command, not through God, wicked affections have arisen, from which no one offers anything to God, since they have no true reasoning of wisdom or knowledge, but rather, by the loss of wisdom and science, they remain false sprouts.

Therefore, in this context, "He was exalted in the eyes of all the nations," signifies that the person who, through laborious efforts in action, has attained the state of Jerusalem—meaning the seat of an undisturbed mind, free from the trouble of sin, and speaking, hearing, and thinking only peace, where through the gift of natural contemplation of visible things, the divine reasonings, as gifts, are offered to the Lord—has received, in His eyes, the exaltation above all nations, namely, superior through both action over the affections of the flesh, and contemplation over the natural bodies and all forms under the senses, as well as through spiritual reasonings and methods overcome. Thus, it should also be explained: "Many carried gifts, but not all"; that is, foreign nations or creatures, but not those within us, namely, vices

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and perturbations. For all the creatures that complete the world praise God and celebrate Him with mute voices, and their praise becomes ours; as the great Gregory, who is known for theology, says, "I assume their praise so that I may praise Him. Thus, the sacred Scripture, as shown, does not restrict itself merely to the narrowness of one person's scope.

For whoever imitates Hezekiah in spirit can indeed become Hezekiah, cry out to God in prayer, and be heard, and receive an angel (the higher wisdom and knowledge of speech), when the most wicked demons come with a hostile force. And then, by receiving this, all the powerful and warrior-like princes and leaders are destroyed: that is, the lustful motions of desire and anger, and the affliction of the senses, as well as the reasoning of sin, which creates the modes and snares of sin, and in this way, it finds peace through liberation from perturbations and is able to focus on contemplation, offering gifts by which knowledge and virtues stand, for the praise of God and their own progress, by receiving the right reasonings and methods. Then, it is rightly exalted in the eyes of all nations, meaning it becomes superior through all the affections of virtue, and through all created knowledge gifts, and finally, through modesty (that is, humility), it preserves the grace of salvation, not being liable to those things that the Scripture later narrates.

## SCHOLIUM

1. What are the reasons and modes of creation?
2. For these three reasons, God has infused into nature visible spiritual reasons and honorable modes of discipline, so that the Creator of things might be praised, and that man, educated by natural laws and modes, might easily find the way of justice that leads to him; and finally, so that no one of the unbelievers may use ignorance as an excuse.
3. Between God and man, there are sensory and intelligible things; by which, the human mind, yielding to God, becomes divine. The mind that is devoted to action is not enslaved by the sensory, nor is it bound by intelligible things through contemplation.

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4. The creation of the impious becomes the accuser of men; for, through the reasons existing in it, it praises its Creator, and by the natural laws suited to each species, it educates man to virtue according to his nature. Furthermore, the reasons shine through the perpetual conservation of each species; the laws, however, shine in the natural operation of each species. While, through the faculties of our mind, we do not attend to these, we both ignore the Creator and allow unnatural affections and vices to spread throughout us.
5. When man considers the spiritual reasons of visible things, he is taught that their Creator exists; yet, he does not inquire as to who exactly that Creator is, for no one can comprehend it with the mind. The creature, presented to the eyes, shows us the wisdom of its Creator, but does not allow us to understand who that Creator is. Therefore, the reasons of visible things are called gifts by Scripture, because they indicate the universal dominion of God; the natural laws, however, are the offerings through which, by knowing each thing according to its kind, we learn not to corrupt the law that is foreign by nature.
6. Another explanation of the spiritual gifts.
7. Freely, we have received the faith that pertains to God, which is knowledge directly related to God, and dependent on Him, a science that is free from any demonstration. It is the substance of the hoped-for things, even though no such things are yet comprehended by us.
8. Indeed, virtue precedes faith; science, virtue. However, nothing at all exists before faith. For faith is the origin and beginning of the good in man, through which there is nothing that we can offer.
9. Nothing is esteemed as much as faith.
10. Indeed, the faithful and spiritual mind.
11. The reasons of things that support faith in God are taken by the mind devoted to wisdom, not as things which exist to establish faith. For the reasons of creatures do not constitute the beginning of faith. For if they did, that which is believed would be confined. What is comprehended by the light of science through demonstration is such that it may be grasped.

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12. The law of the heavens is that it should move in the same manner around the sphere: from this, the wise and spiritual man receives that he should be firmly moved in good, imitating the constant movement of the heavens while maintaining the same order of virtue.
13. The natural law of the sun is that it distinguishes the times by changing places: from this, the spiritual and wise man receives that he should be composed by diverse events, preserving the brightness of virtue through reason, which no unforeseen circumstance can obscure.
14. The natural law of the eagle is that it should catch the ray of the sun in its pupil with an unerring gaze; hence, the spiritual and wise man, by will, borrows this law so that his mind is continually illuminated by divine radiance.
15. What the natural law of the stag teaches to the spiritual and wise man, as he observes the nature of things.
16. What, also, the imitation of the goat and sparrow teaches, as it preserves virtue unharmed against adversaries, cutting the path of knowledge through action.
17. What the divine philosopher learns from the honorable reasoning of the lion, transferring this natural consideration of the lion into his own will and reason.
18. How, by imitating the serpent and the dove, the philosopher and wise man may escape.
19. What benefit may be gained by imitating the turtle.
20. He who applies the laws of things without reason to his own law, and who mimics the movement of things without reason by reason, changes the movement of his own law, guiding it by imitation of others, leading it away from vice.
21. Another consideration of the spiritual gifts, showing the divine example of goodness.
22. Natural bodies are called all things that are subject to birth and death.
23. A beautiful observation is made: we should not burden the creature, whose Creator is God, but rather we should remove the disordered and

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unnatural movements within ourselves and apply them to proper faculties.

24. The philosophy that cultivates action makes a man superior to disturbances and vices; contemplation, however, elevates the wise man even above visible things, advancing his mind toward spiritual matters.

### QUESTION LII

AND HEZEKIAH DID NOT ACT ACCORDING TO THE  
REPAYMENT WITH WHICH GOD HAD REPAID  
HIM, BUT HIS HEART WAS EXALTED; AND WRATH CAME  
UPON HIM, AND UPON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM. AND  
HEZEKIAH HUMBLERD HIMSELF FROM THE PRIDE  
OF HIS HEART, AND THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. AND  
THE WRATH OF GOD DID NOT COME UPON THEM  
IN THE DAYS OF HEZEKIAH. WHAT DOES "REPAYMENT"  
MEAN, AND WHAT FOLLOWS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Because Hezekiah had received many and various benefits in due time, and had been delivered by God from every necessity and adverse misfortune, being made secure; and because he did not, as was fitting, render all due thanks to God for his salvation, but instead, human corruption intervening, he attributed the success of events to himself: justly, Hezekiah did not repay according to the repayment with which God had repaid him. For he did not render sufficient gratitude in proportion to the greatness of the gifts, but his heart was exalted, being by no means free from the disease of pride, which commonly arises from virtue and knowledge.

And wrath came upon him, and upon Judah, and upon Jerusalem. The wrath of God, in one sense, is the grievous and troublesome experience of those who are chastised. Such experiences, often laden with hardships, are imposed unwillingly. Through this, God frequently leads a mind elevated by



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the name of virtue and knowledge to modesty and humility, accomplishing this so that it may acknowledge itself and become aware of its own weakness. By perceiving this, it might lay down the foolish swelling of its heart. For it is said that after the wrath had come: "And Hezekiah humbled himself from the pride of his heart, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And the wrath of God did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

Again, the wrath of God consists in the temporary withdrawal of divine grace and support, which fittingly occurs to any mind that is lofty and exalted, boasting of goods granted by God as if by its own merits. It is worthwhile for us to understand and see what the cause is, why wrath not only came upon Hezekiah (whose heart had been thus exalted), but also upon Judah and Jerusalem. Let it be something that most effectively convinces those who dedicate all their labor and effort to the literal meaning of Scripture, that it is necessary for religious people and worshipers of God to apply all diligence to unfolding the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, if indeed they value the doctrine of truth above all else.

For if we follow the letter alone, we will often, as it is fitting, unjustly ascribe a stain of injustice to divine judgment, whereby people without fault are unjustly punished with penalties equal to those of the guilty. And what is the true Scripture that says: "The father shall not die for the son, nor the son for the father; each one shall die for his own sin"? And that which David says to God: "For You will render to each one according to his works"?

It says, "And the heart of Hezekiah was exalted"; but it does not add, "And the heart of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah." How, then, can it be that, together with the guilty one, those not guilty of the crime were punished, according to those who do not consider this? It says, "And the heart of Hezekiah was exalted, and wrath came upon him, and upon Judah, and upon Jerusalem," though the Scripture does not record that they were exalted. Since no suitable solution to this doubt presents itself to those who cling to the letter and prioritize the words over the sense of the matter, let us turn to the spiritual sense of Scripture. Without difficulty, we will find the

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truth, shining like light to those who are guided by love of the truth, uncovering what remains hidden in the letter.

Thus, any mind devoted to knowledge and philosophy has both Judah and Jerusalem: Judah indeed, which, with spiritual understanding, is taken as the mode of confession, that is, the habit of repentance, which is preserved with principles sustaining it and is increased along with the progress of practical ascent of the mind. For Judah signifies confession if you interpret the name. Jerusalem, on the other hand, is understood allegorically as the peaceful state of a tranquil mind, complemented by divine contemplations.

To put it briefly: Judah represents philosophy engaged in action, while Jerusalem signifies the more abstract doctrine of contemplation. Therefore, when, by the grace of God, the philosophical mind, through philosophy—both that which cultivates action and that which studies contemplation—has fully achieved victory against the powers opposing virtue and knowledge, but then fails to render gratitude to God, the author of this victory, as is due, and instead, through pride of heart, considers itself the author of the entire achievement: then, as one who has not repaid God according to the repayment given to it, not only does it itself suffer the wrath of abandonment, but also Judah and Jerusalem—that is, the habits of action and contemplation.

Immediately, through divine concession, disgraceful emotions arise against action, polluting the previously clean conscience, and false principles invade contemplation, distorting what was previously correct in the judgment and perception of knowledge.

For indeed, the divine law, truly embedded in the order of Providence, is a most secure rule: commanding and leading those who, having been ungrateful amid better outcomes and successes, to learn gratitude through contrary circumstances. It instructs us by the danger of opposites to recognize the divine power by which good is granted, lest, if indulgent Providence allows unshaken arrogance to persist amid favorable outcomes, we fall into the opposite error of pride against God. Thus, we might consider our virtues and knowledge to be due to our nature rather

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than God's gift and, abusing the good, regard it as evil. Where unwavering knowledge of God should have remained deeply rooted within us, we (alas!) labor instead under the disease of ignorance of Him.

For one who believes they have attained the goal of virtue will no longer seek the source and author of all good, defining their desire's force within themselves alone. By doing so, they deprive themselves of salvation's goal, which is God. But whoever, conscious of their own natural poverty, strives earnestly for what is honest and right, will hasten without ceasing to Him who can satisfy their need.

Rightly, therefore, the wrath of God comes upon the exalted philosophical mind—that is, abandonment—or permission for demons to disturb it, as they would Judah concerning action and Jerusalem concerning contemplation. Thus, brought to an awareness of its natural weakness, it acknowledges the divine power and grace that accomplish all things as desired, is restrained in modesty, and casts off an alien and unnatural loftiness, lest further wrath come upon it, in which even its gifts might be taken away. This did not happen to Hezekiah, who, immediately upon the first abandonment, assumed a modest sense and acknowledged God as the author of good things. For it is written: "And wrath came upon him, and upon Judah, and upon Jerusalem," but added: "And the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah." That second wrath, by which good things would be taken away, did not come because the first abandonment had taught proper estimation of matters and gratitude of spirit.

For whoever is not taught by the first kind of wrath (that is, abandonment) to return to modesty of spirit will surely experience another wrath upon them, depriving them of gifts and leaving them exposed without the protective power of God. "I will take away its hedge," God says, speaking of ungrateful and wicked Israel, "and it will be plundered. I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. And I will abandon my vineyard; it will not be pruned or cultivated, and thorns will overgrow it. I will command the clouds not to rain upon it." As it is also explained allegorically to have happened to Saul, the first king of Israel. He, along with kingship, also

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received the grace of prophecy through anointing. But not preserving it, he suffered the first wrath, namely the influence and operation of an evil spirit. Failing to perceive this influence, he was reserved for a second wrath, ending his life with madness after shedding all piety before his final breath.

That this happened to him is evident from the influence of the demon that afflicted him and from the fact that he later turned to the demons themselves through a medium, committing the crime of offering a consecrated victim to demons as foretold. Thus, since we have accepted Hezekiah as a type of the philosophical mind, and Judah as representing action, and Jerusalem as representing contemplation, whenever we understand that something has in any way affected the mind, we will consider that it also simultaneously affects, in accordance with their respective principles, both the power of action and of contemplation. For it is impossible for the subject to be affected without those things contained within the subject also being affected.

Thus, the reasoning of the spiritual sense harmonizes well with the words of Scripture, casting no aspersion on divine judgments nor overturning any other command. For it is not only Hezekiah, according to the spiritual sense of Scripture (the mind, indeed, elevated on account of the success of things), who is exalted, but also Judah and Jerusalem (that is, action and contemplation) are not exalted together. For this cannot occur to them in themselves, as they are not truly understood to exist in their proper and personal nature. Nor is wrath directed solely at Hezekiah (that is, the mind); rather, it extends to Judah and Jerusalem as well. For if any impurity affects the mind, action and contemplation are likewise entirely corrupted, as they are associated with the cause provoking wrath.

Therefore, we too should pursue understanding of what is written. For although, according to history, these things happened to them as a type, they were written for our sake, as a spiritual admonition. Thus, what is written always happens spiritually to us, since the opposing power perpetually stands ready in battle array against us. By transferring all Scripture, as far as possible, to the mind, we illuminate it with divine meanings, while enlivening the practical application of these divine truths. In

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this way, we transform ourselves into a rational workshop of virtue, free from innate passions.

Anyone who is religious and diligent, like Hezekiah in fulfilling the office of the wise, girded with strength against demons—if indeed the impression of the most wicked spirits waging an invisible mental battle against him strikes him—receiving the aid of prayer sent divinely through an angel (that is, a greater discourse of wisdom), and having crushed and dispersed the entire phalanx of the devil, but fails to acknowledge God as the author of such victory and salvation, instead attributing to himself all the glory of the victory, does not repay God according to His repayment. This person does not offer sufficient thanks or render an affection equal to the benefit provided by the one who brought salvation. (For repayment, for one who has received salvation, is affection measured back by deeds to the one who brought salvation.) Instead, such a person exalts their heart, thinking highly of themselves on account of the gifts received, as if they had not received them.

Consequently, one who acts in this way justly and rightly incurs the wrath that comes upon them. By God's permission, the devil engages in spiritual combat with them, undermining their virtues regarding action and obscuring the clear principles of knowledge concerning contemplation. Through this, the person, taught of their own weakness—which alone brings true victory over vices—acknowledges God's power, repents, humbles their mind, casts off the pride of display, and reconciles with God, averting the wrath that comes upon the unrepentant. This wrath removes grace, which protects the soul, leaving the ungrateful and wicked mind desolate.

The "days of King Hezekiah" mentioned by Scripture perhaps signify the various illuminations received by any mind devoutly and religiously contemplating created things, allowing it to perceive the wisdom shining diversely in all things. As long as action and contemplation are harmonized, such a mind will not lack virtue and knowledge, since the "sun of righteousness," by its rising, creates such days for it.

## BOOK ONE

### SCHOLIUM

1. What is the wrath of God.
2. How, in another way, the wrath of God can be understood.
3. Those who, namely, follow only the letter (of the text).
4. The one who is exalted by merit of action is afflicted by base passions; but the one who is exalted for knowledge, God, by just judgment, allows to fall into error regarding the contemplation of truth.
5. He calls the rule and law divinely implanted in things "providence," which preserves things; this providence, indeed, by just judgment, educates to a sense of gratitude those who, having been ungrateful toward the giver, were taught by the scarcity of good things—providing the perception of recognition through contraries. For pride, vain boasting, and false opinion under the guise of virtue and knowledge, unless corrected, are usually the parents of the vice of arrogance, which brings forth a disposition contrary to God.
6. Whoever has recognized the poverty of the virtue they labor toward never ceases their course, lest they lose the principle and end of virtue (namely, God). The one who halts the movement of their desire in themselves imprudently considers themselves to have attained perfection. In so doing, they lose what is truly that toward which every earnest effort strives.
7. The stupor caused by the loss of virtues is a road inclined toward impiety. For the one who, by the allure of carnal pleasures, makes a habit of disobedience to God will also, when opportunity calls, deny God Himself, preferring the life of the flesh to God, having esteemed the lusts of the flesh above divine wills.
8. He calls the mind the subject, as it is capable of virtue and knowledge; and in the subject, action and contemplation, as they are related to the mind as accidents. Therefore, by every means, these are affected in the same way as those things which, having originated the movement of such a change, are affected.

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

9. That, namely, a son will not die in place of the father.
10. Innate bodily passions, if governed by reason, are without stain; but when they are moved without reason, they are considered a crime. Therefore, he says these passions, whose movement originates in nature, are to be rejected, especially because, while their movement is natural, their use, when not governed by reason, is often contrary to nature.
11. The wrath is salutary by which a mind, thinking itself exalted, is permitted by God to be attacked by demons in the tumult of disturbances so that, through the shameful things it suffers while glorying in virtues, it may recognize who is the giver of such things. Alternatively, it may be stripped of what it believed itself to possess, as though it had not received them.
12. What are the "days of King Hezekiah," in which wrath is not brought upon him.
13. He calls action and contemplation, in a higher and anagogical sense, Judah and Jerusalem.
14. The Sun of Righteousness is the Lord and God, the Savior of all, Jesus Christ.

## QUESTION LIII

CONCERNING HEZEKIAH, IT IS WRITTEN: "AND THEY  
BURIED HIM IN THE ASCENT OF THE TOMBS  
OF THE SONS OF DAVID. AND ALL JUDAH AND THE  
INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM GAVE HIM  
GLORY AND HONOR IN HIS DEATH" (2 CHRONICLES 32:33).  
WHAT IS MEANT BY "IN THE ASCENT OF THE  
TOMBS OF THE SONS OF DAVID"? AND WHAT IS THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT FOLLOWS?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

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David spiritual, our Lord Jesus Christ is the stone, whom the builders rejected, that is, the Jewish priests and leaders; and he became the head of the corner, that is, the Church. For the Church is the corner, as Scripture is accustomed to speak. Just as the union of two walls at the corner is made, binding them so that they remain inseparable from each other: so also the holy Church is the union of two peoples, those from the Gentiles and those from the Jews, connecting them by one doctrine of faith, and bringing them into one harmony, of which the chief corner-stone, as the head of the whole body, is Christ.

For the name David, if interpreted, sounds of rejection: who, being the Word of God and the Fig, for my sake putting on a servant form, became the reproach of men not believing the truth, and the despised of a people full of sin: that good shepherd, who laid down his soul for the sheep, and killed the lion and the bear: who, indeed, pulled out from nature the anger and the desire, tearing apart the divine image in us, by which we are endowed: that red one, with the passion of death, with the beauty of the eyes, with the brightness, namely, of the higher providence and the judgment of reason. For the eyes of the Word were judgment and providence, by which, even dying for us, he looks over this universe: who killed the spiritual and proud Goliath (namely the devil), who was five cubits tall, in whom the viciousness labors with lust, which in us is a fivefold sense.

For the stature of the devil rises in proportion to the vicious extension of the senses in us, which stretches toward the sensual in a depraved and lustful manner. The true king of Israel, seeing God; whatever Saul, that ancient people bound by the law, suffers through unbelief, consuming itself with envy, driven by rage. He does not endure the loss of temporal glory; for my king David, who, even then, suffers persecution, takes away the spear and the lentil-water; that is, the strength of moral virtue, and the grace of the wise in contemplation. This, in turn, grants merit to those who, through the faith of the kingdom's preaching, attain salvation.

To him who, in descending into the cave to lift the burden of the belly, takes away the double-layered rag: this is the high honor of moral philosophy; or the sublime sense of legal symbols and riddles; unworthy and



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not fitting, leading the people of the Jews, as though in the cave (in this age, or in the obscure letter of the law), lingering (that is, truly earthly men, lovers of the body and of corruptible things), defining the divine promises of the incorruptible; mystically, the double-layered rag of the legal constitutions (that is, the spiritual decoration, which, by abuse, corrupts the one who should be partaking). This is the spiritual David, the true shepherd and king, and the one who defeats the opposing virtues: shepherd, indeed, for those who still pursue philosophy in action, and, like grass, feed on natural speculation; king, however, of those who, through spiritual laws and reason, renew the image's grace to the princely form, and, with the mind, immediately assist the great King of the ages, and, as it were, in a mirror, behold the inaccessible beauty.

The sons of this David, all saints who have existed from the world's beginning, are born from him in the Spirit. Their tombs, the monuments of their lives based on divine teachings, are the foundations of the earth. The ascension of their tombs, the sublimity of their knowledge of God and their love, where all of Judah and those who dwell in Jerusalem bury them, placing them in the blessed mansion according to the merit of their reason (that is, the manner of action, and what truly contemplates the reason of knowledge), the mind surely having died honorably and well to all things; that is, by the reason through which the senses cast off their operation, and through which the intelligible ceased from the movement of the intelligent mind.

Therefore, Hezekiah (whom you might interpret as "the strength of God," as one whose mind is strong in action and most brilliant in knowledge) is buried (by all, that is, those whose mind ceases from intelligence and yields to those things which are higher than earthly matters) by all of Judah and those who dwell in Jerusalem (whose virtuous actions and true contemplation of knowledge are his worship); in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David (in the sublimity of the memory of the saints, who have existed from the world's beginning); giving him glory and honor: glory, indeed, so that through the knowledge of the intelligent mind, he might rise above the existing ratios in things; and honor, so that, purified

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from all affections and natural modes of existence, she might follow an innocent movement of the senses.

Indeed, it might not be lacking for someone to say in a more elaborate way, explaining the senses more clearly, that glory is the supreme honor of the image; honor, the exact imitation of the likeness. One might say that one is given through true contemplation of spiritual reason, the other by diligent and sincere action of the commandments: by which both, when the great Hezekiah was endowed, he was buried in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David. And if anyone might explain more clearly what was said, "And they buried him in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David," it could be said: "And they set the memory of Hezekiah on the high summit of the memory of the saints, who have been from the world's beginning."

But I ask, let us pay attention that it is not said: "In the tombs of David," or "In the ascent of the tombs of David": for the comparison of all things is surpassed; not only that of men, but even that of angels; indeed, the mode and reasoning of the Lord's flesh are incomprehensible, let alone the reasoning of His infinite deity, which no one can attain. Therefore, it is most desirable for anyone, even one who is very great and excels, that he might be buried either in the tombs of the sons of David, or, which is most excellent, in the ascent of the tombs of the sons of David. For Scripture does not report anyone being buried in the tombs of David, still less in the ascent of the tombs of David.

As I said: the life of our Lord, God, and Savior in the flesh exists incomprehensible in every mode and reasoning. For He says: "His power covered the heavens"; this is, His very human justice, through the Lord's flesh, covered the virtues of the heavens, surpassing excellence in all the brilliance of justice. For He was not a mere man, but God made man, so that He might renew human nature, which had grown old through Himself and in Himself, and make it a companion to the divine; casting aside every stain of corruption and change, so that, made like a beast, He had a mind superior to reason. To Him be glory forever. He is finished, by God's grace, in Volume IV.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. The devil is of five cubits stature, because of the senses. For without these, the movement of iniquity in the soul, unconsulted, does not progress toward the increase of sin.
2. The spear indeed signifies the strength of virtue as a symbol; however, the lentil of water is a sign of the knowledge of the mystery.
3. The cave calls this world and the letter of the law, Saul, the Jewish people, whose mind, turned away from the divine light of the spirit, lingers in the darkness and shadow of the letter of the law, using the law and the creation of God to produce unclean filth and corruption. For those who, by the letter alone and the sights of material things, cease to hope for the immortal promises, make a symbol of corruption, like the excrement of food, and from the end of their opinion about God, they show the beginning. However, the double layer calls the garment of legal riddles. Its layer, the sublimity of spiritual contemplation, is removed from those who interpret the divine Scripture only according to the senses.
4. The Lord is called their shepherd, those who are led by natural speculation to the heavenly realm. However, the king of them is those who are subject to the law of the spirit, and assist at the throne of God's grace, through a simple intuition of the mind in divine knowledge.
5. The modes of action are called the worship of virtue, those who dwell in Judah; however, the light of contemplation of knowledge, the reasonings of those who dwell in Jerusalem.
6. The praiseworthy death of the mind is called, by which it is severed from all things, as if it were dead, and the will is cut off: when this is completed, divine grace remains to be received; for things, by receiving the author of things, in a way that no one can understand by reason.
7. Glory is called, the indefinable knowledge, having no reason or limit: honor, however, the free pursuit of virtue in the will, and the fear and agitation in nature.

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8. Knowledge, into which no forgetfulness falls, has an infinite thought exceeding the movement of the mind concerning divine infinity, which is so indefinite that it represents the clarity of truth, greater than any infinity; however, voluntary imitation of the wise providence of goodness, the title of honor, has a brilliant assimilation of the mind with God (as far as it is allowed) in the affection of the soul.
9. Hear the serpent on the ground, Nile, and be silent.
10. With a higher sense and anagogical interpretation, David calls Christ: his tomb, his memory in righteousness, which no nature, using reason, can compare. For the Word of God, when He put on man, did not commit justice according to the natural laws of the flesh; but He provided justice through the flesh (where the natural operation did not fail), as was fitting for God's nature.

### QUESTION LIV

IN THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS, IT IS WRITTEN  
CONCERNING ZERUBBABEL: "AND WHEN THE YOUNG MAN  
WENT OUT, LIFTING HIS FACE TOWARD HEAVEN  
OPPOSITE JERUSALEM, HE BLESSED THE KING OF HEAVEN,  
SAYING: 'FROM YOU IS VICTORY, AND FROM YOU IS WISDOM,  
AND YOURS IS THE GLORY; AND I AM YOUR SERVANT.  
BLESSED ARE YOU, WHO HAVE GIVEN ME WISDOM; AND TO  
YOU I CONFESS, MASTER OF THE FATHERS.'" WHAT DOES IT  
MEAN, "LIFTING HIS FACE TOWARD HEAVEN OPPOSITE  
JERUSALEM," AND THE FOLLOWING WORDS?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Zerubbabel, according to the exactness of the Hebrew language, can be read both with a rough breathing and with a smooth one, as well as in compound or divided form, and with different interpretations. When read with a rough breathing, the name signifies "seed of confusion"; when read

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with a smooth breathing, it means “rising of confusion.” In compound form, it indicates “rising in confusion”; when divided, it signifies “rising of dispersion”; and when interpreted according to structure, it means “rest itself.”

Zerubbabel, therefore, is a philosophical intellect: First, through repentance, sowing righteousness amid the confusion of the captivity of passions. Second, “rising of confusion,” revealing the disgrace of the confused passions. Third, “rising in confusion,” providing enlightenment through knowledge in the confusion of the senses’ operations directed toward sensible things, not allowing them to approach the sensible without reason. Fourth, “rising of dispersion,” offering the scattered powers of the soul concerning sensible things the rising of works of righteousness, in which action according to reason exists, not devoid of intellectual contemplation, which leads the scattered powers back toward the intelligible. And fifth, “rest itself,” having brought about all peace and uniting the practical with the natural good and the theoretical with the natural truth.

For every action is by nature done for the good, and every contemplation seeks knowledge for truth alone. Once these have been accomplished, there will be nothing that agitates the soul’s practical aspect or its theoretical aspect through foreign notions, as all becomes transcendent of being and thought, clothing itself with God, the only true and good One, who is beyond all being and understanding. Such an intellect, having advanced through various virtues, when it departs after the victory from King Darius—that is, the natural law—having demonstrated to him the power of love and truth in the comparison of virtues against passions, and having legitimately received the vote, confirming his proposal and annulling those of the opposites, recognizes from where the grace of victory came to him. He lifts his face toward heaven opposite Jerusalem and blesses the King of heaven.

The “face,” therefore, of such an intellect is the inward disposition of the soul, wherein all the characters of virtues reside. This face he lifts to heaven, signifying the height of contemplation, opposite Jerusalem—that is, the state of impassibility. Or again, lifting his face to heaven opposite

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Jerusalem signifies seeking the dwelling place in heaven and the city of those whose names are recorded in heaven, concerning which David says, "Glorious things are spoken of you." For he could not otherwise bless God without raising his face to the height of contemplation and knowledge according to the state of impassibility—that is, the blameless peaceful state of the soul's disposition, the face composed of many and varied virtues like characters.

And what does he say as he lifts his face? "From You is the victory," declaring the end of the practical struggle against the passions through victory, as a prize of the divine contests against sin. "And from You is wisdom," declaring the end through contemplation, that is, through knowledge, which removes all ignorance from the soul. "And Yours is the glory," referring to the beauty revealed from these, calling it the glory of divine beauty in its fitting splendor—which is the union of victory and wisdom, of action and contemplation, of virtue and knowledge, of goodness and truth. These, united, radiate one single glory, that of God Himself. Therefore, he fittingly adds, saying, "And I am Your servant," knowing that God works everything in us as instruments: action and contemplation, virtue and knowledge, victory and wisdom, goodness and truth, with us contributing nothing except the willing disposition for good.

Having this disposition, the great Zerubbabel adds to what he has said, proclaiming to God, "Blessed are You, who have given me wisdom; and to You I confess, Master of the fathers." As a grateful servant, he attributes all to God, who gave all gifts, acknowledging that from Him he received wisdom, confessing to Him as the Master of the fathers, the source of all good things. He calls God blessed as the One who possesses infinite wisdom—or rather, who is Wisdom itself—from whom he received, and to whom he confesses the grace. He calls Him "Master of the fathers" to show that all the achievements of the saints were evidently gifts of God, with no one possessing anything at all except the good things granted by God as Master. These are measured according to the gratitude and goodwill of the one receiving them, and only those things are truly owned that are presented back to God, who is the Giver. He calls the "fathers" the holy ones of all ages.

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By receiving their faith and imitating their way of life, he achieved being spiritually reborn through them. Thus, as one born of self-determined parents, he became a self-determined son. This is incomparably more precious to God than the relationships of fleshly fathers and sons, which happen contrary to the will, just as the soul is far superior to the flesh by its essence.

This Zerubbabel is one of the young men presented to King Darius, symbolizing the natural law. He encapsulated the power of all divine goods among humanity in two statements, dismissed the reckless arguments of others, and drew the ruling principle of nature to himself. He declared freedom to those enslaved to the alteration of the soul's powers by passions. As for the leaders, representing the more material aspects of the body, there were two evil spirits, revealing through their numerical property the passionate and transient nature. The intellect, defending the soul, is simple in its essence and singular, representing the indivisible unity that is untouched by death because it is not subject to division or separation. The first young man, symbolizing the passionate life of the body, declared, "Wine is strongest," referring to the general allure of sensory pleasures. He described drunkenness as the state of mental distraction, distorting the use of natural reason. The wine of dragons symbolizes the fiery desires of carnal pleasures, and the wine of asps represents the arrogant and tyrannical disregard of obedience, as asps are said to block their ears out of pride.

The second young man said, "The king is strongest," referring to the empty glory of wealth, power, and other worldly appearances, which foster ignorance and division among humans. This self-glory leads to chaos, as everyone seeks to exalt themselves over others, ignorant of the enduring glory of God and its dominion. These two encapsulated all unnatural passions in their arguments, hoping to sway King Darius—the ruling natural law—toward their opinions. However, the third, representing the intellect leading virtue and knowledge and desiring to free the soul from the tyranny of passions, said, "Women are strongest, but truth triumphs over all." By "women," he meant the divine virtues that foster love for God and humanity, drawing the soul away from corruptible things toward union with God. By

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"truth," he meant the single, ultimate cause, origin, ruler, power, and glory of all things, through which and for which all things exist and are sustained.

Summarily, through "women," he revealed love as the culmination of virtues—the unbreakable pleasure and union with the naturally good for those who partake. Through "truth," he highlighted the ultimate end of all knowledge and all things, as the source and purpose of all existence. Truth, as the principle and cause of beings, overcomes all by nature and draws all movements of creation toward itself. Thus, the philosophic intellect, dialoguing with the natural law, rejects all deception from wicked spirits, persuading freedom for the faculties of the soul enslaved to passions and proclaiming release to those bound in the darkness of sensory attachment. By ascending to Judea—representing virtue—they are to build in Jerusalem, the state of impassibility, the temple of the Lord, which is the knowledge receptive to wisdom. Thus, wise and exceedingly wise is the great Zorobabel, having received wisdom from God, and through it, able to oppose, conquer, and overthrow every deceitful scheme presented for the corruption of the human race by the evil spirits striving against the body. Through each of his own propositions, he completely vanquished and obliterated the opposite challenges, liberating the soul from the evil bondage of passions.

For while they sought to honor the fervor of carnal pleasures through wine and established the dominance of worldly glory through the king, he (Zorobabel) introduced spiritual pleasure through women and demonstrated unshaken authority through truth. He persuaded others to despise present goods and to hold firmly to those to come. This concept of the propositions, as I would say, is beautiful and wise, and not unworthy of the Spirit for being written for our admonition. But if someone can examine the meaning of the writings more profoundly according to the ability granted to him to understand divine things, let there be no envy; for the grace of the Spirit in those who partake is not by nature diminished—this passion of envy does not arise. Even if one has more and another less grace, each possesses the energy of the Spirit revealed according to the measure of faith within him. Thus, each person is a steward of grace, and no one who is



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of sound mind would envy another who prospers in gifts, as the disposition for receiving divine goods lies in oneself.

Let us also come to another mystical contemplation, revealing the foundational truth of the writings. Zorobabel is truly and newly the Lord and God Jesus Christ, symbolically prefigured through the old. He, conceived, carried, and born within the confusion of our nature, became perfect man by nature, so that He might lead back our nature, having departed from confusion, to Himself. He did not become a captive with us nor was He transported to the confusion of passions. For He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth. Yet among us, the captives, He was born as if a captive and counted among the lawless, becoming, out of love for humanity, in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin. In the likeness of sinful flesh, because, being by nature God, impassible, He, by economy, deemed it worthy to become by nature passible as man; and concerning sin, because He was led to death for our sins, suffered on our behalf, was wounded for our transgressions, and was crushed for our iniquities, that by His wounds we might be healed.

For, as it is said, "The Spirit before our face, Christ the Lord, was captured in our corruptions," of whom we said, "In His shadow, we shall live among the nations." This is the just Dawn of our dispersal from sin, concerning which the Holy Spirit speaks through the prophet: "A just Dawn shall rise upon you." And, "Behold, a man; Dawn is His name; and under Him, it shall rise." And, "Sun of righteousness," and, "Healing in His wings." These wings of the Sun of righteousness are the two Testaments, by which the Word, flying among us, heals the wound of transgression and grants the perfect strength of virtue—through the Old Testament preparing for virtue and through the New working it. Again, these wings are Providence and Judgment, through which the Word, flying unknowingly, works among beings, healing the willing through words of wisdom and the reluctant toward virtue through ways of instruction, purging the defilement of the flesh in some and cleansing the stains of the soul in others. This is He who restores the captivity of the true Israel—not from one land to another, as the former Zorobabel brought the people from Babylon to Judea, but from earth

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to heaven, from wickedness to virtue, from ignorance to the knowledge of truth, from corruption to incorruption, from death to immortality. To sum up, He leads from the visible and transitory world to the stable and intelligible one, from a disintegrating life to an indissoluble and enduring one.

This is the true builder of the rational temple destroyed by transgressions and consumed by a foreign fire, which we burned as we walked by the light of our fire and the flame we kindled—not only preparing the soul's intellect slavishly to follow the carnal mind but also shamelessly igniting the fuel of passions through action. This is the one who persuaded King Darius through wisdom—meaning, the law of nature. For it is not right, according to this passage, to attribute Darius to the devil, as he willingly became a collaborator in the grace of the deliverance of the people. Persuaded, he realized that nothing is stronger nor more beneficial to nature for salvation than faith and a good conscience. For faith holds the word of truth; and through the divine love, which is allegorically understood as women, a good conscience bears the mark where there is no transgression of the divine commandments at all. This is the one who established within himself, through an ineffable and indivisible union, the tabernacle of David that had fallen—referring to the nature corrupted by death through sin.

This is Zerubbabel, who raised up the fallen house of God with glory, concerning whom the Spirit says, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former." For the Word partook of the nature a second time in a manner much more wondrous than the first. Just as He first imparted what is greater, He later partook willingly of what is lesser, so that He might save the image, immortalize the flesh, and utterly destroy the word of the serpent that had been instilled in nature. Thus, He presented nature again as pure from the beginning, surpassing the first formation by deification. And just as He had first established it as not existing, He also raised it up after it had been corrupted, strengthening it against failure through His immutability, and fulfilled all the counsel of God the Father concerning it, deifying it through the power of the incarnation. For, as it is written, the hands of Zerubbabel (the spiritual one) laid the foundation of

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this house (that is, man), and his hands shall complete it, referring to the first formation and the final ineffable recreation through union in Him. This is Zerubbabel, the redeemer of the captives, who holds in his hand the tin stone adorned with the seven eyes of the Lord, through which God looks upon the whole earth. According to the history, however, Zerubbabel does not appear to have held a tin stone in his hand with seven eyes—these, too, of the Lord, overseeing the whole earth. Therefore, since this is entirely impossible according to the letter, we turn to the understanding of what is written.

Zerubbabel, as I have said many times before, is our Lord and God, Jesus Christ. His stone is faith in Him, and "in His hand" means that faith in Christ is manifest in the practice of His commandments. For faith without works is dead, just as works are without faith. The hand is clearly a symbol of action. Thus, the Lord bearing the stone in His hand teaches us practically to have faith in Him, adorned with the seven eyes of the Lord, that is, the seven operations of the Holy Spirit. "And the seven spirits," He says, "shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of science, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of strength, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord."

The spirit of the fear of the Lord is the abstention from evil deeds. The spirit of strength is the eager impulse and movement towards the performance of the commandments. The spirit of counsel is the habit of discernment, by which we act according to reason on the divine commandments and distinguish better things from worse. The spirit of science is the unerring knowledge of the modes of virtuous action, by which, while acting, we do not in any way fall short of the correct judgment of reason. The spirit of knowledge is the comprehension of the reasons in the commandments, by which the modes of the virtues are established. The spirit of understanding is the disposition towards the modes and reasons of the virtues—or, more precisely, transformation, by which the natural powers are harmonized with the modes and reasons of the commandments. The spirit of wisdom is the ascent and union with the cause of the more spiritual reasons in the commandments, whereby we, being initiated into the simple truths in

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God as is fitting for humans, draw forth from the heart as if from a spring, the diverse truth concerning all things to others. Ascending from what is last in God but nearest to us to what is first and distant from us but near to God, we progress step by step and in order.

For from the inactivity of the evil ones through fear, we come to the action of the virtues through strength; from the action of the virtues, we come to the distinction of the will; from the distinction, we come to the habit of the virtues, that is, knowledge; from the habit of the virtues, we come to the knowledge of the words in them; and from this, to the transformative habit of the words of the virtues, which I call understanding; and from this, to the simple and accurate theory of the whole truth. From this, as we observe, we shall give pious words about the truth from the wise theory of the sensible and intelligible substances.

Thus, ascending through the eyes of faith, which are illuminations, we are brought together to the divine wisdom, which is one. Gathering together the division of the gifts among us, through the ascensions of the virtues, we leave nothing of what is said, with the cooperation of God, unfinished, so that we do not, by neglecting little by little, make our faith blind and without sight, not having the illuminations of the Spirit through the virtues, and we may justly be punished for endless ages, as we have, in our faith, darkened the divine eyes. For every person who, by inactivity in the commandments, opens such eyes, is certainly condemned; no longer having God looking at them. And it seems that for this reason, the Scripture calls the faith a tin stone, because it is both punitive to those who do not adorn it with the commandments and preservative to those who maintain it, made bright by the works of the Spirit. For, as Simeon the Great says concerning the Lord, it is for the fall and rise of many in Israel; the fall of the unbelieving and the rise of the believing. For some say that tin is composed of silver and lead. Therefore, lead carries the symbol of discipline, punishment, and the weight of condemnation; silver, on the other hand, is a symbol of brilliance, glory, and splendor. If this is so, then the faith symbolized by tin both educates, punishes, and condemns the untested who become such through inactivity in the commandments, as if it had lead, bearing the weakness of

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the flesh, strengthened in the Word through union; and it shines, glories, and enlightens again, and leads those who become tested in it through the working of the commandments, as if it had silver, representing the divinity of the Word, shining upon the worthy in full as much as possible.

Some took the tin stone, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as composed of two natures, divinity and humanity; but if anyone wants to consider the faith in Christ or Christ himself as more understandable, it is lead in the faith, and Christ himself, as disciplining the soul, punishing the flesh, suffering, and condemning demons; but silver, as illuminating the mind through the virtues, glorifying through knowledge, and making him light by deifying him, the image of the first light. In this sense, we must also expect the fall and rise that comes from it; for the fall is made of the flesh, that is, the fleshly mindset, and of the natural powers and the virtues and the unifying reasonings of knowledge; the rise is made of the Word, and of the new man according to him, and of the Spirit of the law. And perhaps for this reason, the faith is compared to the tin stone in the Scripture, because it is capable of illuminating again through repentance, both by action and theory, and once again receiving the bright clarity of life.

## SCHOLIUM

1. In how many ways the name of Zerubbabel, translated into our language, can be interpreted.
2. The end of virtue, he says, is good, and indeed the complement of divine operation; where the capacity of reason leads, there it is compared with nature, using the capacity of anger and desire; in which the beauty of likeness shines forth. But the end of contemplative philosophy is truth, which is the indivisible uniform knowledge of all things about God, to which the pure mind aspires, having renounced completely the judgment of the senses: in which knowledge, certainly, the genuine dignity of the divine image shines forth.
3. Women, in the type of virtues, have charity as their end; but truth, which leads to knowledge, is revisited, as it lacks quantity; when the

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character and form of these (namely charity and truth) are recognized, which the law of nature governs, like wine, they despise the earthly pleasure of lust and, like a king, they reject the insane love of glory of the arrogant.

4. The affection of virtue is the face of the contemplative mind, like the sky, always lifted up to the sublimity of true knowledge.
5. Another consideration of the same spiritual thing; according to which, it is signified that only those whose whole mind is committed to the Spirit's pen will be considered in heaven. For those who are willing, not those who are not led by their will, the Holy Spirit establishes their judgment in heaven.
6. No one can truly bless God unless he has purified his body by virtue and illuminated his soul by the radiance of knowledge.
7. He says that the victory in divine mental struggles, by which one cultivates action, is the end, which is the supreme good. Wisdom, however, the contemplation of mystical things of the soul, by which one cultivates knowledge, he determines to be the end, which is simple truth. Thus the mind, when the world exists by the thought of the senses and their images, is promoted; and reason subjects and subjugates to it the vital power of the soul. The meeting of these (victory and wisdom, or goodness and truth) shows, to those to whom it is granted, the shining clarity of one true likeness.
8. Concerning what we ourselves contribute to virtue.
9. Why God is called the Lord of the Fathers.
10. Those who are fathers in the Spirit become willing fathers through the teaching of their beloved children, whom they shape by word and life according to God. And those who are sons in the Spirit, by will through discipline, freely become sons of the fathers, who are shaped by them in word and life according to God. For the grace of the Spirit grants to those born according to Him the free birth of the soul. This is not the case with carnal fathers, who are not the fathers of unwilling children, as they do not will it. For nature requires not the thought or judgment of

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the mind and will in the formation of those who naturally both give birth and are born.

11. The number two in this place signifies matter and form: whose meeting creates the origin of the body; while dissolution, by its own force, brings destruction. Therefore, that which is constituted from matter and form has a goal against the natural principle, since corruption opposes generation. But there are two powers of generation and corruption, namely the power of desire and the power of anger: the one, by its force, seeks to preserve that which is generated and born in nature; the other, by corruption, seeks to expel that which it brings to destruction. The patrons of these powers are the most wicked demons. Some, indeed, through the desire of the soul (whose wine was the symbol of existence), lead the soul to seek a sensual life, while others, proposing the power of anger in earthly tyranny (whose kingdom is the image), promote life through lust. But unity designates the soul according to its essence, as an image of the most divine unity, subsisting in three persons: whose mind (that is, the soul) is as the patron of the One; through which we believe in God, faith, by truth; and by which we love Him, charity, through women, showing that it is stronger than the law of nature, and urging us to give the gift of victory.
12. The truth shines forth alone by the excellence of many, compelling the forces of knowledge, of those who understand and those who can be understood, by superessential existence; an infinite power, encircling the extremes of things according to the principle and the end, attracts all motion to itself equally; to some, by granting the grace to understand, clearly showing them; to others, by no explanation of words, manifesting to them the knowledge of goodness, which they longed for, by communion with it.
13. The people set in Babylon, in an allegorical sense and spiritual understanding, are those bound by the servitude of vices and disturbances. Darius represents the law of nature; Zerubbabel represents the wisest mind; Judea represents virtue; Jerusalem represents a state of tranquil mind or imperturbability; the temple represents knowledge

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capable of wisdom; the ascent from Babylon to Judea signifies the migration from the corporeal to the spiritual through repentance.

14. The cause of the distribution of divine goods is the measure of each faith. For just as we believe, we also have an increase in the zeal of action. Therefore, the one who acts, according to the degree of his action, shows the measure of his faith, by which he receives grace. But the one who does not act shows the measure of his unbelief by his inertness, thereby losing grace, because he did not believe. It is wrong for the envious person to waste away in spite of seeing clearly that it is not placed elsewhere for him, to want to believe and act, and to receive the grace that comes according to the measure of faith.
15. How Zerubbabel is a figure of the Lord.
16. It is beautifully shown that the figure agrees with the truth. Just as Zerubbabel was not himself a captive but born from captives, who were then being oppressed by the yoke of Babylonian servitude, and liberated them: so also the Lord, Himself free from sin, was considered as one of us among us, by willingly taking on our mortal nature. He truly sustained our natural weakness, and by His saving power, He brought us from destruction to life, restoring us from the earth to heaven: He indeed, by the power of His incarnation, took all nature to Himself by a union hidden from us and explained by no words; but by the call of grace, He restored only those who received the call with joy, and by their works, honored the grace of restoration.
17. The flesh of sin is that which is born from the seed of man: for it is, by nature, susceptible to sin and corruption; one being the origin of birth, the other the end attained. But the flesh in the likeness of sin was born without the seed of a man; though possessing the nature of corruption, which made it like us, it was free from sin in its power, and thus dissimilar to us.
18. Since, with regard to pure and supreme theology, the second doctrine concerns the incarnation: for the first concerns the essence of the supreme Word; the second, however, embraces the supreme operation of Providence; for this reason, from beneath the east, the Spirit is called.



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For indeed, the doctrine of the divine incarnation is comprehended in the origin of the ages, and those things which are in the world; and the life of things (or spirits and souls) through grace, which extends beyond the ages into infinite duration.

19. He who is held by the love of what is right and honorable, according to the reasons of wisdom's providence, strives voluntarily to acquire the grace of deification; but he who is not held by it is reluctantly called away from vice by the just modes of chastisement: and indeed, the one who is religious is endowed with divinity through Providence; but the one who loves the earth is not allowed to come to condemnation by judgment.
20. Our fire is reprehensible, the law of the flesh. The light of this fire, the reprehensible law, is in the habit of vices and disturbances, movements. The flame itself, also reprehensible, is the inflaming of vices and affections through operation. Or again, the fire, reprehensible, is a vice; the light reprehensible, is the bearing of the vice; the flame, the operation. Therefore, we must be careful that the mind does not heat up with that fire, nor be illuminated by that light, or be consumed by that flame. For the fire is to the senses, delighting in pleasure, and to the profoundest mind it is darkness.
21. True faith commends the truth in which nothing false exists: but good conscience carries the force of charity, since it is completely devoid of the transgression of the divine command.
22. The resurrection is the reformation of nature, surpassing the formation of nature in paradise with greater excellence: universally indeed, with unchanging immutability for all; but privately, the saints through grace, through a deification not explicable by words.
23. The spiritual hand, Zorobabel, is called by Scripture, both the power of creating, by which we are brought into the natural world to obtain happiness; and the power of restoring, by which we receive grace to be permanently blessed. Or, in us, it is the same power of virtue working through the grace of action, which is never dissipated by the work of contemplation of the fusion of knowledge.

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24. The stone is called faith because of its firmness, immutability, and stability of truth, for it cannot be moved from its proper place; nor will it yield to the deceit of falsehood. However, the hand is mentioned for the power of action, as it contains and encompasses all virtues. It is said to have seven eyes because of its power of discretion and because it comprehensively contains the knowledge of temporal matters with certain truth: finally, it is the subject of the sevenfold operation of the most holy Spirit.
25. An explanation, showing how the gift of the Spirit is manifested in its properties: fear, inasmuch as it is abstinence from evils; fortitude, the operation of good; counsel, discretion between opposites; knowledge (which the Greeks call *ἐπιστήμη*), a sincere knowledge of things that are our duties; knowledge (which they call *γνώσις*), comprehension of divine reasoning in the virtues of working; understanding, the affliction of the soul in those things that are universally known; wisdom, the union with God in the unknown: by which, for those who are worthy, desire turns into the delight of fruition, and makes one who perceives it a divine interpreter of blessedness through constant derivation to those who lack, removing all arrogance from divinity, and manifesting the mysteries.
26. In our reason, the first of the actions is good, namely, fear, which Scripture numbered last as the beginning of wisdom, from which, through its starting motion, we ascend to the end of wisdom, understanding; having achieved this, we become closest to God, having attained the one wisdom as the means of union with Him. For it cannot happen that wisdom is attained unless first through fear and the remaining gifts, we have shaken off the dust of ignorance and vice. Therefore, Scripture established this order and has disposed fear, closest to God, to teach us the law and the rule of uprightness and order.
27. Wisdom is one, which is understood indivisibly in the various virtues derived from it, and uniformly conformed in the operations of all virtues: again, the simple unity shines forth, through which the virtues

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which are from it return to it, as we are gathered upward through each virtue to it.

28. He has blind faith who does not work according to the reasons of faith and divine precepts. For if divine precepts are light, it is evident that one is deprived of divine light who does not fulfill the precepts; and one bears a bare, not true, profession of faith.
29. Scripture has called the operations of the Spirit (the divine inspirations) the eyes of the Lord. Those who do not open these eyes by fulfilling the commandments do not have God looking at them. For God, as is proper, is accustomed to inspecting the children of the earth with many eyes; for the radiance of divine vision is our illumination of virtue.
30. Tin, as having the nature and properties of silver and lead, represents faith as a symbol. Indeed, it does not serve those who have not kept it, but it clarifies for those who have kept it, being an illustrious and magnificent patronage for those who have kept it through the ages.
31. No sinner, because he sins, can take on the patronage of the weakness of the flesh. For when it is united with the Word of God, all nature is established and restored, and no excuse remains for us that we are more easily led into vice by our lust.
32. Just as tin, contracted with blackness, once again shines brightly, so the faithful, even if they become blackened through sin, recover their whiteness by doing penance. Therefore, faith was also perhaps likened to tin.

## QUESTION LV

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### QUESTION LV

AND ALL OF THEM WERE FROM ISRAEL, FROM TWELVE THOUSAND; THOSE, AND ABOVE, EXCLUDING CHILDREN AND WOMEN, FORTY THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SIXTY. THE CHILDREN OF THESE AND THE GIRLS, SEVEN THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED SEVEN. SINGERS AND CHANTERS, EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE. CAMELS FOUR HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE. AND HORSES SEVEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX. MULES EIGHT HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE; OXEN FIVE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE. MAKE LOVE FOR SUCH GREAT AND LOFTY ONES CONCERNING THE SIXTH CAPTIVITY'S RETURN, SPOKEN OF BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE PROPHET. WHAT IS THIS HUMILITY, AND THE INOPPORTUNE INTERPRETATION, AND UNWORTHINESS OF THE SPIRIT, TO REMEMBER CAMELS AND HORSES AND MULES AND DONKEYS, AND THESE WITH PRECISION OF NUMBER?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

As for the precise explanation of these things, it belongs only to those who, through much purity of mind, have received the full grace of the Spirit from God; in which, while they are immersed in the ocean of mystical visions, they only see the words of the written scriptures as bare of the symbolic formulae placed upon them. They do not make a total interpretation of the words, those who are marked by the symbols; unless perhaps they wish to interpret them wisely in a bodily way for those who, due to infantile minds, are unable to rise above sensory perception, so that, having been previously impressed by the symbols according to sense, they may later proceed towards the archetypes beyond sense.

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To apply this kind of reasoning to those who are of a more superficial nature, because of the naturally imposed power of divine knowledge within us, is not inappropriate. For, from reasoning, the more sincere ones, who have gained knowledge of the divine, reveal reverence for the truth of what is understood. Either they reach the truth of what is perceived, making the way for divine knowledge through reasoning, and offer a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving to the one who has given them the knowledge of the sought-after, or they find the meaning of the written scriptures elusive, and they revere the divine, learning to grasp the understanding that transcends their own ability.

Therefore, I, applying my reasoning to the matters at hand, call upon God to be the receiver of what will be said, finding the power of my own mind to be weak in every way in relation to the height of the Scriptural enigmas. For even if I succeed, it is entirely God's accomplishment, through the understanding that leads me to thanksgiving. And even if I do not succeed, still the good of God lies in my inability to comprehend, as is fitting, because of the ignorance that will come to me according to His providence, preventing me from attaining understanding, and thus making my inability a foundation for humility.

Thus, by reasoning, as it has been said, I now begin with the meaning of the written scriptures, having overcome the obscurity of the words. From this point, I begin with the scripture concerning Zerubbabel. And when the young man went out, raising his face to the sky, opposite Jerusalem, he blessed the King of Heaven. It is clear that after the events concerning the problems with Darius the king, he went out from his presence, clearly implying the presence of Darius the king. Therefore, Darius is, as I have already stated before, the ruler of the law of nature; and this is clearly in agreement with the interpretation of his name. For generation, or genealogy, or the one being genealogized, signifies the name of Darius, as those who know the accuracy of such a sound say. But the law of nature has established as its own the name of generation and genealogy, for by nature the genus exists, and genealogies are produced; and genealogy pertains to nature.

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Darius is rightly placed under the law of nature. For the law of nature encompasses both the generations and kinds that arise from nature, as well as those things considered in relation to nature: time, I say, and place. For of every created being, those things are considered that cannot be understood without a natural perspective. So Darius, as I have said, is the law of nature—while Zerubbabel, the contemplative mind, who went out as from Darius, the law of nature, surpasses the temporal and spatial arrangement of the phenomena, and, raising his face with virtuous disposition toward the heavens, that is, to the height of intelligible essences, opposite the Jerusalem understood in the heavens. I mean that Jerusalem, which has walls drawn in the hands of the Lord, in which is the dwelling place of all who rejoice. To this Jerusalem is the true return of the captives made, those who seek the dwelling place from heaven according to the divine Apostle. These are those who, with the great David, can say: 'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill; let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you.' This signifies the spiritual action of the divine and praiseworthy works. The tongue, sticking to the roof of the mouth, indicates the intellectual activity of the word in us, sticking from ignorance to the throat, that is, to the affliction fixed around the throat, remaining motionless about the desire for unspeakable good things. Therefore, it is unable to taste the kindness of the Lord.

If, however, due to time and nature, Zorobabel hastens towards Jerusalem, may it be the contemplative mind among us; may it be the Creator Word above us, having become in us as we are; and for this reason, becoming man, so that through the incarnation, He might bring us, by means of the flesh, from the apathy and the life of the flesh, leading us into Himself. And for this reason, He gathers those born of Him to Himself in a fitting way, leading them towards Jerusalem, which represents the highest form of virtue and knowledge, to which the symbolic representations through numbers and figures are shown. For every God-loving and righteous person, by thinking of the ascent towards the heavenly Jerusalem, fills in the numbers of the different forms presented. He brings together the words of each form and number into one completion of virtue and knowledge; and

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this is clearly indicated by the discourse of the Scripture before us, which has it thus: But all of them were from Israel, excluding twelve-year-old boys and women, four thousand three hundred sixty. Well done for the precision of the words of the Spirit, marking no one among those counted in Jerusalem and those who had gone out from Babylon. But I speak of the confusion of this present age, being entirely under the twelve-year period; the discourse mysteriously indicating that only the one born beyond sensation and time (for twelve clearly signifies a number, from five through the senses, and seven through time coming together), and breaking the relation of the soul to these, he comes out of their confusion, hastening towards the upper city, having no women or children, four thousand three hundred sixty.

Children are those who happen to be around the natural and unblemished thoughts, and not affected by passions in us; women, however, are either the memories or the natural desires and pleasures, which do not bring slander to those who have acquired them as a necessary consequence of natural desire. For pleasure acts according to nature, even without our willing it, and the food that happens to come, preventing poverty, provides comfort; and drinking alleviates the trouble of thirst; and sleep, renewing the strength worn out by wakefulness; and whatever other natural occurrences take place in us, are necessary for the constitution of nature, but useful for the acquisition of virtue to those who are earnest. These, even if they are not counted among men, still result in the same way for every mind fleeing the confusion of sin, so that it may not remain bound in servitude to the passions that are in us, which are corrupted and contrary to nature, having no other principle in us except the movement of the natural passions.

Nor is it counted, because it is not naturally fitting for us to transition to the immortal and eternal life, the passions that connect nature to the present life. There are four myriads, the four of the general virtues; with them, the mind, having passed through nature and time, is restored to the blessed state of apathy. For just as the myriad is known only by the element of the unit, it is entirely incapable of being marked by another letter, since it is the same according to the subject in the unit, even if it accepts a difference only in thought, as towards a beginning and an end. For the end of

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the unit is the myriad; and the beginning of the myriad is the unit; or, to say more precisely, the moving unit is the myriad; and the immovable myriad is the unit. So, too, every one of the general virtues, the divine and ineffable unit, I say, is God, has both a beginning and an end, as beginning from Him and ending in Him; and being the same as God, differing in the thought only from the word; from whom, and into whom, every genesis of virtue is clearly sustained.

"The four progressions of the ten divine commandments, advancing in length of theory and knowledge, are said to be the four myriads, according to the word. For example, the first progression is the one simply in those being introduced, after the avoidance of wickedness, the practice of the commandments; completing the first decade, which is the same as the unit. The second progression is the one, through each commandment, in the action of the others, making the same decade and the hundred, completed by the action of each commandment through one another; for the ten, having acted ten times, makes the hundred. The third progression is the one according to the law of nature, tenfold of this hundred; for the law of nature is also decimal, as it consists of ten, I say, from the three powers of the soul, and the five senses, and the vocal activity, and the natural fertility; for it has made use of the rational part towards the cause, and the inquiry concerning the good around the cause; the appetitive part, towards the desire of the sought-after; and the irascible part, towards guarding and affection; the senses, towards discrimination, divided fivefold, from which knowledge has naturally arisen. For the general discrimination is divided into the trained, and the untrained; the intelligible, and the unintelligible; the spoken, and the unspoken; the made, and the unmade; the perishable, and the imperishable. The vocal part is for pronunciation; and the fertility, for the increase of the sought, desired, and loved, and known, and manifested goods. Therefore, the hundred, according to the law of nature tenfolded, becomes a thousand. The fourth progression is the one, through theory and knowledge of the natural law, according to the given division, towards the original word of each commandment, an ascent; in which the myriad, having gathered, is considered, being known by the



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element of the first unit. For the one who simply performed the commandments, and again, according to each action, took the others along with it; and again, by the inclusion of these, having joined the discrimination of the natural law, and having elevated it again towards the known word of each commandment, gathered the four myriads; according to each progression, honored by the mystery of the unit, to which the word of the myriad is gathered."

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Again, the so-called four general apathetic states signify the four myriads. The first is apathy, which is the complete cessation of the actions of evil, seen in those being introduced. The second is the complete removal of the consent to evils in the mind, the casting off of thoughts, in those who, with reason, pursue virtue. The third is the complete stillness of the passions according to desire, seen in those who, through forms, mentally observe the words of the seen things. The fourth apathy is the complete purification of even the mere fantasy of the passions, in those who, through knowledge and theory, have made the clear and distinct mirror of God, by which the governing part is established. Then, the one who has purified himself from the energies of the passions, and has freed himself from the consent to them in the mind; and having taken stillness in regard to the movement concerning them according to desire; and having made his mind uncontaminated from the mere fantasy of them, possessing the four myriads, exits from matter and the material things, and approaches the divine and peaceful end of the intelligible; it is reached as completion.

Thus, let the four myriads be understood by us in this way; but the three thousands signify the perfect, correct, and pious reasoning concerning the holy and consubstantial Trinity, according to which the holy tri-hypostatic unity is praised as one God by us and believed in. But the three hundred signify here the discourse concerning providence, not only because the form of the letter, extending from above downward and encompassing the ends of the lateral sides, indicates the power that binds all things together ineffably, signifying providence. But also because it has been honored by the form of the cross, in which the great, primary, and hidden mystery of providence was accomplished. For the ineffable mode of providence is established in the great mystery of the incarnation of God, in whose form,

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together with the name of Him who was crucified upon it for our sake, perhaps the great patriarch Abraham, emboldened, with three hundred and eighteen—that is, with the form and name of Jesus—went forth and defeated the powers indicated as opposing through the kings. For often Scripture knows how to reveal its purpose through the forms of the letters to those who are purified for this purpose.

If someone wishes to examine the will of Holy Scripture even through the number (27), they will thus find the providence signified through it. For the work of providence is not only to preserve nature according to its intrinsic principle of being, keeping it unimpaired, but also to demonstrate it as possessing without deficiency the acquired principle of well-being through grace. Thus, when one joins two hundred to one hundred, one achieves three hundred, which signifies both nature and virtue. For the number two hundred indicates nature as existing from matter and form—since matter is associated with the four elements (hence tetradic), while form is pentadic, due to the fivefold sense shaping the material mixture into form. Multiplying five by forty, or four by fifty, yields two hundred. The number one hundred signifies perfect virtue, as it reflects the divine Decad of the commandments multiplied tenfold. When Abraham reached this (state), he became the father of the great Isaac—dead according to nature but, according to the spirit, the begetter of life and joy. Thus, by adding one hundred to two hundred, one fulfills the number three hundred, which signifies providence, holding nature together according to the principle of well-being.

The number sixty signifies the natural productive power of the commandments perfected through the principles of virtues. For if the number six signifies the productive power of nature, as it is perfect and composed of its own parts—hence it is written that God made the world in six days—and if the number ten indicates the perfection of virtue in the commandments, then the number sixty clearly signifies the natural capacity to receive the divine principles in the commandments. Thus, the forty thousand along with the three thousand three hundred sixty signify the perfect principle of virtue, the sacred mystery of theology, the true aim of

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providence, and the practical power of nature shaped by virtues. With these, the mind, separating itself through the Spirit from the flesh, the senses, and the world, entirely departs, abandoning their mixture and confusion—like the ancient ones leaving Babylon—and hastens toward the city above, holding the mind free from every attachment to anything. And the children of these, both male and female, were seven thousand three hundred and seven. The Law, in the passage concerning sons and daughters, proclaims, saying: "Hebrew sons and daughters shall serve six years, and in the seventh, they shall be set free." But the foreign sons and daughters shall serve forever—calling, I suppose, the fiftieth year of remission "forever." A Hebrew son and a Hebrew daughter are, as it were, reason and thought, serving the practical philosopher for six years toward the conception of moral decorum and the discovery of virtuous habits. For to every practical philosopher, reason and thought labor like sons and daughters, devising and accomplishing ways of virtue in action, and, as it were, having their entire power set against the adversarial spirits of wickedness that oppose practical philosophy. Thus, having completed practical philosophy—which the number six years signified (for it has been said that the number six signifies practical philosophy)—they are set free for spiritual things, clearly returning to the contemplation of the inherent principles in things, both reason and thought, whenever they reach the seventh year, which is the state of apatheia. In this state, through much toil by reason and its companion thought, the passions of the soul are subdued and withdraw.

A foreign son and daughter are anger and desire, which the contemplative mind continually subjects to the dominion of reason, for the service of virtues through courage and temperance. It does not entirely grant them release into freedom until the law of the spirit completely overcomes the law of nature—just as the death of the wretched flesh is swallowed up by infinite life. Then, the image of the eternal kingdom is clearly revealed, bearing entirely the form of its archetype through imitation. When the contemplative mind attains this state, it sets anger and desire free—transforming the former into the pure delight of divine love and the incorruptible charm, and the latter into spiritual fervor, constant ardor, and a

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sober zeal that burns passionately. In this state, as it appears, the great Apostle Paul, having become a radiant beam of unblemished light, heard from King Agrippa in the Acts: "You are mad, Paul." And again, he himself, writing about himself to the Corinthians, said: "If we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you," clearly calling this sober madness an ecstasy according to God, as it brings the mind governed by it outside of existing things in a state of sober contemplation.

I understand the number of these to signify the providence, according to reason, over the temporal order and the impassibility of habits. In this providence, the mind, placed above reason and thought—like a master over Hebrew sons and daughters in practice—defines the limits of their service in virtue, directing them toward contemplation. Likewise, it attends to anger and desire, as if they were foreign sons and daughters, treating them as slaves under its dominion and leading them, in the end, toward an equal freedom. Desire it transforms into a longing for the enjoyment of divine things; anger, into an unceasing zeal for the pursuit of this longing. Thus, it makes them true Hebrews by grace, converting the foreign slaves into faithful servants. Singers and chanters: eight hundred and fifty-five. Singers are those who proclaim the divine word through the ways of virtues in practice, without contemplation. Chanters are those who, through the ways of virtues, mystically guide others to the divine word with the delight of contemplative knowledge and sweeten their spiritual ears. The number of these signifies the knowledge of eternal things attainable by humans. Specifically, the eight hundred represents the matters of knowledge, and the fifty suggests the matters of virtues to come. The five signifies the understanding applied to these, as we explained earlier concerning the number five. Camels, four hundred and thirty-five. Camels, accompanying the sons of Israel with great freedom, are those freed from bitter captivity. They represent the natural differences in the ways of seeing, with camels having the following relation: in terms of sensation, they are like unclean feet, representing the appearances of visible things; in terms of the mind, they are like the head of the pure, representing the higher spiritual thoughts within them.

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And soon concerning these camels, the great prophet Isaiah, prophetically indicating the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, said: "And camels of Midian and Ephah shall cover you." That is, the spiritual contemplations of the natural passions. For the purification of Midian is interpreted as either blood-red clay, or sweating of humans and of a mother. Ephah, on the other hand, is the back of a beast, which is a contemplation lifted up concerning the passions of the flesh. The back of the soul, as the rear, is the flesh; which, just as a holy city, the spiritual knowledge of the peaceful and undisturbed mystical visions reaches its end, as the word says that it is covered by animals. This signifies the bestowed power, and the number itself signifies the logical motion concerning nature and time. And horses seven thousand seven hundred thirty-six.

A horse is one who, in the path of the virtuous life, possesses the entire readiness of the spirit. For they say that the bile of the horse is for the natural limbs of the feet. Therefore, among all the other animals, and those yoked according to nature with humans, it was judged more fitting and stronger for the path. In which, by likening the holy apostles, the great prophet Habakkuk through the Spirit says: "And you mounted your horses on the sea, stirring up many waters." The horses here are called the holy and blessed apostles, carrying the saving word of truth before nations and kings throughout the world, which he figuratively named the sea; and the nations are likened to waters, stirred and shaken by the great power in the Spirit's word, and by the saving earthquake, being transferred from unbelief to faith, from ignorance to knowledge, and from wickedness to virtue. This also signifies by the number of the horses, the virtue of practical philosophy, by the type.

For the number seven thousand seven hundred, as a time-related number, signifies the sharp movement in virtues; and thirty-six signifies the natural action that accompanies the virtues. The mules are eight hundred forty-five. A mule, according to the praiseworthy discourse, is a completely barren disposition according to wickedness; for the one who is destined to reign over Israel, as Scripture fittingly and properly indicates through the Spirit, was commanded not to sit upon a horse, but upon a mule. The

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discourse indicates that the contemplative mind, ruling over the existing thoughts and visions, and the appropriate motions of the self, must have a disposition that is barren of wickedness. That is, it must neither conceive nor bring forth wickedness at all; for it must be carried along, moved by contemplation, lest, by forming a spiritual consideration of the things that exist, it fall into the error of corrupting the pure disposition of the heart through any of the perceptible wicked spirits.

We also know that the mule is placed in reproach in Scripture, as it is written: "Do not be like a horse and a mule, which have no understanding." The discourse calls the horse the disposition that is ruled by the pleasures of the passions; and the mule, the disposition that neither conceives nor brings forth what is good. This the discourse has equally forbidden for those desiring salvation: the one, as the active conception of wickedness; the other, as the inactivity of virtue. And Absalom's mule is also taken in reproach, upon which, having mounted, he went out seeking the death of his father. In this, the Spirit shows that the one who, through a certain vanity, is wounded by a virtue or knowledge, vainly nourishes his hair, which has been artificially styled and mixed, just as a mule displays its immoral conduct to those who see it. Upon which, being suspended, he believes that the one who begot him, through the teaching of the word, has made him his father's hands, desiring all the glory of virtue and knowledge that pertains to the father, as if arrogantly to draw it tyrannically to himself.

But the one such as this, having gone out into the breadth of the natural theory in the spirit, towards the logical war for the truth, through the living sensation, is held by the hair of the oak tree of the material spectacles, having it binding the mind to death, the servant of the imagination. It hangs him between heaven and earth. For the vain-glorious one has no knowledge, just as the heavens drag him from the corrupting imagination; nor again does he have the earth, that is, the foundation of action in humility, dragging him from the rising of the breath of nature. The one who mourns and is dead because of philanthropy, as a lover of God, the one who begot him, is imitating God, not wishing for the death of the sinner, but that he might turn back and live.

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In order that we may also consider the place in another way, David clearly shows the practical mind. But Absalom, the imagination, being born from the practical through the union of the mind with sensation. Sensation is the daughter of King Gesour, whom David took and begot Absalom. Gesour is interpreted as the guidance of the wall. The wall clearly establishes the body. Guidance of the body is the law of the body, that is, sensation, from which Absalom is born, being interpreted as the peace of the father, which is clearly imagination. For those who suppose the passions to be at peace, we constitute the imagination, which, when it rises up, causes him to know – the great David, having been separated by knowledge from action, and having abandoned the tent, Jerusalem, and Judah, flees beyond the Jordan to the land of Gilead.

That is, to the migration of the witness, or to their revelation, deeming himself unworthy because of the rising imagination, of the holy tent; that is, of mystical theology; and of Jerusalem, that is, of the peaceful and divine contemplative knowledge; and of Judah, that is, of the confession of action in joy. For when the mind has migrated to mourning, it takes on its own powers, and the conscience, as a witness to the things previously done; and the memory of the faults committed according to the type. For this is their revelation. And, simply put, becoming in thought to the time before grace; for this is to become beyond the Jordan. Inasmuch as it is alienated from grace according to virtue and knowledge, and recognizing its own weakness, and having acquired humility, strong and unshakable, through the awareness of its own feelings, it passes through to itself, being in a good mourning, the tyrant imagination will kill, and it returns again to the house of glory.

And it rules over the land of Judah, and reigns over Jerusalem. And it serves in the holy tent of God, with pure and spotless service. But let us return to the number of the mules, those of the Judahites who were released from captivity, observing the spiritual meaning in it according to power. The mules, he says, are eight hundred forty-five. The present number signifies the unproductive disposition of the mind towards wickedness; that is, the disposition of wickedness that does not bear fruit, towards the sensible



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things and perfect apathy of the senses. For the eight hundred (signifies) the characteristic of the future age's apathy, praised as it is taken; the forty (signifies) the sensible things; and the five, the senses.

The pack animals are five thousand five hundred twenty-five. A pack animal is that which is yoked to the body for the burden of the things concerning virtue, according to the practice of labors and pains. That is, the disposition of the body according to virtue; and such donkeys, having them, the sons of the great Jacob, carried grain from Egypt to the land of the promise, signifying from the natural theory, as grain from Egypt to the minds of those who have been excluded from spiritual knowledge. By means of action, they impose it upon the bodies, and they carry it towards the coming life. The number of these donkeys, being entirely spherical, signifies the motion in accordance with virtue concerning the bodily exercise of action, and it remains unchanging, being in harmony with the word of knowledge. For only the spherical motion is called unchanging, as it has smoothness through all things, compared to the other motions of beings, according to the experts in these matters.

These things are to be said to us in this manner. According to our thinking and speaking, there is no deviation; we are imbued with power. But if anyone wants to speak again about the various levels of believers in the Church, and how they might be described, it is as follows: there are men who have reached the measure, according to the attainable age of the fullness of Christ, and according to love, choosing the virtue through their own judgment. There are children, who, fearing the threat of eternal punishments, bear the weight of practical philosophy. There are psalmists, who correctly explain the word about practical matters and strive for the passions of others. There are cantors, who manifest the beauty of knowledge of divine words through contemplation, and they turn away from the ignorance of others as from darkness. There are camels, who straighten the crookedness of judgment with the word toward virtue. There are horses, who run well the course of the life according to God. There are mules, who are mixed in character, and in common display the philosophical life harmfully. There are donkeys, that is, pack animals, who, through action, bear the labor, and

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receive the word through contemplation. For anyone who gathers these together, the fullness of the holy Church will be assembled, adorned with the beauty of many virtues.

The discourse on the spiritual theory of the perplexed has, as I say, reached its end here. But if anyone is found with wealth, adorned by the grace of knowledge, and according to the great Samuel, seeing the future in the mind, he will clearly reveal to us the intellect that lies hidden in the written words, the high light of truth shining forth in all things, enlightening those able to learn, convincing them that nothing is written without reason or in vain by the Holy Spirit, even if we are unable to grasp it. But all things are written mystically and opportunely, for the sake of human salvation, whose beginning and end is wisdom; fear first begins, creating (the Creator), and later, desire perfects, establishing. Rather, fear itself, from the beginning, is accomplished through us in an economic manner, so that it may end the lover of evil; and desire, later, is found naturally through itself in the end, so that it may fill the laughter of the mind, those whose existence has been transformed by the union of all things.

Such are the men I would have written, having believed in the Spirit; such are the children and little ones; such are the psalmists and cantors; such are the camels and the mules and the donkeys, whom the Holy Spirit knows to write; not those whom sensory perception has naturally described, but those whom the pure mind accepts, engraved by the pen of grace. With God, the fifth volume has been completed.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The fullness of the grace of the Spirit is a wisdom of this kind, which, in power, habit, and action, embraces the full force of all knowledge, as far as is granted in Christ to perfected men: by which the mind, exceeding sensible forms, touches all the bare varieties of gestures and written reasoning; collecting the divine characters in them, by which it completes a single divine and august form around itself: according to

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which the radiance of truth, the knowledge of all things, shines forth uniformly and undivided, as much as possible.

2. Those who are truly spiritual and endowed with knowledge, while they teach the principles of the mysteries set forth in the Scriptures, as examples of those things which are written in the deeds, use figures to instruct the minds of their disciples; in such a way that the letters of history fit the spirit of spiritual sense: by which, namely, both figure, for the sake of meaning, and reason, for the sake of the mind, are preserved in man, who is constituted of both soul and body: regarding which, the mind and the senses (for they both regard the same man) certainly exist.
3. Praise, *αἶνος*, is the speech by which divine beauty and goodness are signified: but laudation, *αἰνεσις*, is the affection and habit of the one praising, that is, the narration of words and speeches by which divine beauty is signified; according to which, the habit of knowledge is to be formed, this which ends in praise, transforming into that which deserves praise. But the sacrifice of this laudation is not only the perfect mortification of unnatural affections and desires, and the temporary cessation of natural ones, but also the full leading of the one praising to God.
4. Which the fear of God does not restrain through action, knowledge provides with arrogance, while it inflates the mind, so that it seems to boast of its own as if it were its own, turning the symbol of speech into its own praise. But action, growing with divine love, makes the practitioner humble, in a manner higher than that which is denied by the reason of action, and the spirit, compressing its own in itself, elevates beyond the faculties of reason.
5. That which has overcome the unnatural affections by faith in God and love, also exceeds the law of nature and is transferred to the intelligible realm; and the nature-affined kind, with those things which have been added, leads out from servitude, equally into freedom.
6. Under nature is all that, which in any way has been compared to a subject, or about a subject, or in a subject, from which definitions of things that can be defined are collected. For those things which

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complete the various natures of things, have usually been taken for the definition of them, so that the thing signified might be declared more accurately; since these things exist in the subject and together with the subject, and from them, and in them, the subject has existence; nor are they such that they are understood as coming from without. But those things which surround nature are, some of them prior, and some are simultaneously understood; one of which pertains to the origin of things, altogether where and when, while the other pertains, along with the first origin and existence of things, to the universal situation and motion of things, which are time and place; in which, the reason of the external situation and motion exists in the beginning (not in the very essence of the substance) of nature. For nature is not from these; but from them, coming from without, it exists first and has a position. Therefore, when we have considered only the reasons of being for kinds, species, and individual things, we take these differences together with their essential reasons; but when we subtract the series of generations, where and when, that is, time and place, we necessarily assume them with things, for we consider the origin and position; from which, nothing absolutely exists from the things that have arisen. For no thing is free from that limitation, which is formed from the beginning and the position.

7. Jerusalem, and from heaven a dwelling place, is the most peaceful abode of virtue, and its knowledge is of such a kind that it does not permit any hostile or attacking sense of error.
8. The tongue is the symbol of the power and operation of the soul's knowledge; the throat and the gullet, however, are the sign of the natural blind love and lust of the body. Therefore, he who unites these by the effort of reproach cannot remember the habit of peaceful virtue and knowledge, which the confusion of bodily affections and lusts will more violently delight in.
9. Darius is taken as the type of the law of nature. The law of nature embraces both nature and time, to whose power the use of all things belongs, both those that are natural and those that exist around it.

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Therefore, he who proceeds as if from Darius (the law of nature), is made superior by time and nature, and no such sense should claim him, which exists under nature and time: lest, while carrying about the images of corruptible things, he should become the temple of idols; instead of God, he is filled with many unclean affections, to which worship and reverence are given.

10. What mystery the number twelve holds.
11. The children (that is, servants) who have gone out with their masters, but have not been enrolled in the census or numbers, are explained with spiritual sense, regarding their affections and the reasons of those who are not of our faculty, who obey the command, although they arise in us, but are not in us and do not belong to our faculty to control them. But women, who from those affections that are not of our faculty, have no crime or fault from natural desires: whom he leads with him, who goes to establish the way piously, lest they otherwise become subject to the servitude of unnatural affections.
12. He assigns the reason why Scripture did not include children and women in the census of men, nor did it count them together.
13. Just as a myriad has its end in the unity of motion; the unity of a myriad is the beginning, when it lacks motion. For the beginning of all things is its stillness; and the end of every beginning exists in the fulfillment of its motion. In the same way, faith, being the beginning of the nature of virtues, has the good that is fulfilled through them as its end; and the natural good, as the beginning of faith in virtues, is collected within the mind itself. For faith is an inner good placed in the mind; and the good is faith, effective and active in deeds. Moreover, God is naturally faithful and good; the first being good as the first good; the latter being good as the highest object of desire. These are indeed the same with each other in every way; they are not at all distinct from one another, except by simple thought, due to the motion of those things that proceed from him and end in him. Therefore, the myriads, referring to the highest object of desire, circumscribe the perfect movement of desire among those things that move toward him; the unity, carrying the image of the

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first good, imports the perfect stability of those things that are moved by him. What is therefore called the four myriads (that is, forty thousand), in any general virtue, exercises its perfect good in some fixed manner.

14. He who, after fleeing from vices, has entirely imposed rest and vacation from sin upon himself; and again, having shown the perfect action of the command and the comprehension of others (that is, all things are understood in each according to its action), has made the number of one hundred. For the perfect observation of any command in action is the completion of the action of the rest. And again, he who has obtained the perfect knowledge of their natural distinction has made the hundred thousand. Finally, he who, through contemplation, has touched and perceived the bare reasons of these, has made the thousand thousand. He himself, in fact, has been gathered from the division of action into the singular unity of contemplation. To speak plainly, he who has perfectly fled from vices, kept the commandments inviolate, and perfectly executed them, has fully solved their natural distinction, and has borne their perfect spiritual contemplation; this one has had the four myriads (that is, forty thousand) of each progress perfectly combined. For the perfect, both in its beginning and in its end, collects the inseparable connection of its reasons.
15. How our natural law is to be acted upon.
16. What is the mode of operation of each natural faculty, for the sake of which we have received the natural faculties themselves?
17. Of divine things, namely.
18. In how many ways the discretion of general virtue is divided.
19. What is begun, it calls sin; for it has its origin, an unnatural motion from us. But that which is not begun, is good. For good, in every age and time, is prior by nature. It calls intelligible the good, which is worth understanding as one effort; it calls unintelligible the bad, which is worth not being understood as one effort. It calls good that which must be spoken; it does not call bad that which must not be spoken. What is made, it calls good; for since nature is uncreated, and neither made nor

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originates, by grace it sustains being made by us, in our deification of what we do, speak, think, or understand; this is the only thing worth being made and most singular. The bad must not be done, as it is the only thing worth not being made. It calls corruptible the bad; for corruption is the nature of evil, having no existence anywhere; it calls incorruptible the good, as that which always is, and never ceases to be; and whose power is such that everything in which it exists is preserved and guarded. Thus, by the faculty of reason, we seek; by the faculty of desire, we long for; by the faculty of anger, we preserve inviolate; by the power of the senses, we discern it through knowledge from opposites: by the vocal faculty, we make it manifest to the ignorant by speaking; by the generative power, we multiply it; indeed (to speak truly), by its reason, we are multiplied.

20. Another mode of spiritual sense.
21. The first impassibility (*ἀπάθεια*) it calls, the motion of the body, an act of sin, inviolate in work and act.
22. The second impassibility (*ἀπάθεια*) it calls, the perfect removal of thoughts with desire from the mind; by which the movement of perturbations, according to the reason of the first impassibility, is extinguished; when sinful and desire-bound thoughts are lacking, by which one is kindled to action.
23. The third impassibility (*ἀπάθεια*) it calls, the perfect cessation and absence of the movement of desires and passions of vices; for the sake of which, that which is placed second and superior (which indeed consists in the purity of thoughts) has to be formed.
24. The fourth impassibility (*ἀπάθεια*) it calls, the perfect abandonment of thoughts concerning those things perceived by the senses; by which the third has its origin, being devoid of such thoughts, by which the forms of vices and passions are shaped.
25. The thousandth number is unity, needing no perfection itself. For all the superior unities have their own reason, the fullest of all. Therefore, by its own composition, it again makes a unity, not a decade. For the unity of the thousandth number receives composition, as those assert

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who have accurately explored the power of numbers. Therefore, three thousand rightly signify the triple reason of theology (namely the faith of the Trinity), by which, being equipped with perfect virtue, anyone who has left spiritual Babylon goes forth.

26. The letter T is the figure of the cross, for by its very direction and form, it keeps the shape of the cross. I, as an initial, signifies the dreadful name of Jesus. Finally, as it is also an initial, it hints at the firmest nature of virtue, by which the patriarch Abraham mystically, having crossed over an innumerable host, led them against adversary powers, so that he might be surrounded by three hundred and eighteen natives: namely, the universe being circumscribed by the reason of theology and faith, designated by the symbol of three hundred; by the secret mystery of the incarnation of the Divine Word, similarly designated by ten; and finally, by the perfect and firm nature of virtue's disposition, designated by the number eight. These things are said in Scripture of the vernacular, namely of the heart, a seed of divine grace.
27. How the number of three hundred signifies perfect providence.
28. The number one hundred is a doubling of the ten parts of the divine commandments. For it is the perfect combination of all, wherein each individual is made to act with one another. The combination by which the divine commandments act with one another is absolute and complete virtue. However, perfect virtue is a certain and unfailing knowledge of truth. Therefore, the mind, instructed by such knowledge, becomes like great Abraham of a hundred years, considering its own dead body: this is, it sees the life of the senses failing, bringing forth joy in the spirit. For if someone interprets this, it sounds the name of Isaac. Therefore, it concerns providence, that it not only preserves nature according to its own reason, but also that the mind, perfectly imbued with virtues, by adopted wisdom, returns to the divine: by which, with nature understood, it provides the number three hundred.
29. The number six has the meaning of perfect existence of things. But the number ten signifies the safety of true existence. Whoever multiplies the



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six by ten parts, or the ten by six, signifies a happy existence of things in action, making the number sixty.

30. Of flesh, sense, and the world.
31. What are the ones with a higher and spiritual sense, the Hebrew servant and the Hebrew maid?
32. Where impassibility (which the seventh year signifies) comes, the mind and reason return to the contemplation of things near, having received the freedom granted by the work of the corporal virtues.
33. They call desire, which is completed in action and exists, pleasure; for the present good, according to its definition, is pleasure. But desire not in action and completed, they call longing; for the future good, according to its definition, is longing. Anger also is the motion of madness established in the mind; and fury is anger completed in action. Therefore, he who subjects these faculties to reason finds that desire, yielding to pleasure, is found by the pure grace of the soul's union with God; and that anger, the purest fervor of pleasure toward God, and sober fury, is the willing desire toward God, making the mind perfectly exceed the things of this world. As long as the world lives within us, with the spontaneous affection and lust toward earthly things, we must take care not to release these faculties; lest, mixed with sensible things like relatives, they may attack the soul and, like the Babylonians of old, take it captive, enslaving it. For the name of eternity and of the age, by whose space the law has bound foreign servants to servitude, Scripture understands as the inclination of the mind to this world, or to the present life, through what is done, written, and understood, designating these things.
34. The number seven thousand, accepted in this context in the part of praise, signifies the temporary and present life, adorned with virtue and reason. For the thousandth number, according to the assigned sense of numbers in myriads, signifies the mutual beauty of a pious and religious life, as they present the natural and written law. It is clear that the number seven thousand shows that the whole life of this one is subject to time, fortified by these things. However, the number three hundred

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shows those who are governed by Providence, how they enjoy blessedness through nature and grace. The number seven, in the end, signifies the immutability of morals. Therefore, he who has, according to Providence and its reasons, compared the natural powers endowed in him, and has preserved his life free from perturbations and vices, he, surrounded by seven thousand three hundred servants and maids, exceeds the confusion of perturbations.

35. They call the end, both that which is the impassibility of the life of action in this world, and that which is the future, expecting the deification through grace.
36. They call singers, who, having been established in life and action, cry out the divine will.
37. They call modulators, who not only carry out divine wills themselves, but also become the masters of the mysteries that exist within them.
38. The number eight has both rest and motion. Rest, indeed, is considered according to itself (for every number is equally still, which lacks a center); but motion, as it is joined with that which precedes or follows it. For it makes the number odd. Every odd number is by its very nature mobile, as its extremes are equally distant from the middle. Therefore, what the number eight does in numbers arranged under ten, it also does in numbers arranged under one hundred, and similarly in those arranged under one thousand. Therefore, according to itself, it has rest, circumscribing the motion of the previous number. For seven and seventy and seven hundred show the property of time in their own reason. Since, therefore, sense apprehends rather those things which are subject to time and birth, it remains that the perfect mind receives an unimpeded knowledge of eternal and spiritual things, or knowledge. For knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) is defined as the unimpeded and certain knowledge of the subject. However, the fiftieth number, which bears an odd unity, after the seventh week multiplied by itself into seven parts, signifies the end of virtues being perfected in the worthy. For he who has obtained the natural good and found rest in it no longer moves toward performing virtues. For unity is the beginning and the end of all

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motion. But the number five, in this case, shows knowledge. For it comprehends the principles of intellectual things, reasoning and sensible things, and the principles of life and being, which, as a whole, divine Wisdom has the ability to circumscribe, defining the unimpeded and certain knowledge of truth.

39. He calls the camels Madian, as indeed Madian sounds of the rejection of the womb, true contemplations of things subject to birth and death. But as the bloody clay, which pertains to this transient and unstable life, he understood the reason of Providence. As for the sweat of humans and of the mother, he understood the reasons of divine judgment in the present life, which are gathered from both the reason of the mind and the thoughts of the perceivable senses; from which reasons and thoughts a true opinion about things is formed, existing as the fruit of intelligence in the senses. Therefore, he desires the human and maternal sweat, which produces the reasoning of the mind, and the thoughts like those of a mother nurturing us. The camels, however, Gefar, that is, the possession of the back. Furthermore, the back of the soul is the flesh, which exists for the sake of the soul. Therefore, while we rightly possess the flesh, we will have the soul serving to bring forth virtues, and only for which reason it was made, we will consider its reasoning; and then, like camels of Madian, gathering the reason of visible things, we will cover our Jerusalem (namely, the soul), covering it with divine speculations of things, making it unseen and impregnable against vices and passions.
40. The number four hundred signifies the nature of the corporeal world, since it is completed by the four elements. However, the thirty-fifth signifies the temporal with reason, the movement of those who cultivate virtue. For if you reduce seven seven times into itself, you will make thirty-five. Therefore, the number seven signifies the temporal motion; but the number five signifies that which is with reason, knowledge. Thus, when you combine four hundred and thirty-five, you have shown the rational knowledge of the divine men living in them, both natural and temporal.

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41. They agree with the numbers that are attributed to numbers. The horse, with swift running, is that element which is lifted by constant motion and carries the element on its feet. Time, swift in motion, whose momentum no delay can scatter, is the action of those who are numbered, existing as sharp and lively: for this, round motion makes it evident. For the number, composed with a bent line, makes itself six parts greater. Therefore, the swift, rapid, sharp, and lively habit of virtue, mystically represented by horses and numbers, in which their summation is initiated, the spirit of doctrine has signified.
42. What is a mule?
43. What is the vice of the horse and mule in Scripture?
44. He who, from his own knowledge, gives an opinion to the spectators, occupying their minds through mere words, which he has stolen, deceiving the ears of the foolish, like Absalom, and defiling the beautiful and religious teachings, like wives, committing wicked speculations and senses to profane ears, according to the counsel of Ahithophel, whom he calls a brother whitening, that is, a brother who kisses with deceit; he is shown to be aroused by the breath of glory, who falls under the hand of David's servants, in the breadth of the variety of natural speculations, with his own rashness in conjunction with the strength of the one with whom he contends. For he is known neither to walk on earth, lacking any firmness based on virtue; nor to have reached heaven, since he has not truly attained the habit of sublime knowledge. He dies, pierced by a triple dart in his heart: namely, the memory of the wicked deed committed as a teacher, the empty boast of vain glory, and the expectation of inevitable judgment for future crimes. For, deceived by the desire for vain glory, he is struck down and perishes. To him, the wicked counselor Ahithophel, by rightful merit, leads him to death; he who would teach children to rise up against their parents, and seeing the evil counsel scattered, could not bear to live. For he could no longer bear to live, he who had removed the cloak of false friendship with David and could not demonstrate the victory of spiritual doctrine.
45. Another consideration of the same spiritual sense.

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46. Galaad, in that sense in which from its etymology, the migration of sorrow is called, signifies the labor and affliction of repentance; however, the migration of testimony denotes the refutation of the guilt of sins by conscience; and the revelation of them specifically denotes confession. Whoever begins to consider the way of life in this manner, and places himself in this state, casting aside empty boasting and his own opinion, having pursued it through some great work and virtue, will easily perish; and again, he returns to Judea and Jerusalem: to the confession of divine mercy upon him, and to the perfect peace in the spirit of the contemplation of things, and to the divine tabernacle (namely, mystical theology), where the hidden beauty of all things is veiled in mystery.
47. The number eight, together with the numbers contained within the decade; and eight hundred, those within the thousand; and eight thousand, those within the myriad (namely, ten thousand), signifies immobility when considered in themselves, for it pertains to the remission and intensity of quantity. Therefore, when placed in the context of Scripture, it signifies perfect immobility in vices and passions; that is, their abolition. It is truly a sign of the state of the future age, where there will be no rise of vices, no anguish of the soul. The number forty, however, presents an image of things which are perceived by the senses; the number five, however, signifies the senses, through which the world, falling into sensory perception, is subject to natural knowledge. Therefore, the present number designates the perfect abandonment of affective attachment to sensible things, as it pertains to the habit of divine men towards sensible things, according to the relation or necessity of the senses.
48. What is the beast, considered in a spiritual sense.
49. The number five, they say, is round, and when combined in any way with any other odd number, it returns to itself by means of restoration. For whatever odd number you add five times its value by composition, the number that is gathered will end in five. For example, three times five equals fifteen; five times five equals twenty-five; five times seven

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equals thirty-five; five times nine equals forty-five. Thus, if you proceed infinitely, when combined with any number, five times five, fifty times fifty, five hundred times five hundred, and five thousand times five thousand, you will find it returns to itself, according to the number that is gathered, as it is a property of circular motion and that which moves in a circle. Therefore, experts in such matters justly called the number five round and circular, for it never completely exceeds itself, in the manner that it forms a composition with odd numbers. It also signifies general knowledge, which, by its constant motion around the universe of things, never exceeds the act of knowing, and through the power of the word, comprehends all things.

50. Another summary of all the previous statements, a very accurate and elegant spiritual understanding.
51. Wisdom, by correcting and freeing from disturbances and vices, creates fear; and by acquiring virtue, it excites the mind to foresee the future, producing love and desire.
52. Wisdom is fear, which, namely, in those who do not desire it, exists as deprivation, by which they flee from it; and it is love, which, in those who cherish it, becomes the habit of enjoying and the joy of pleasant delight.

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### QUESTION LVI

IT IS AGAIN WRITTEN IN THE SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS:

"AND THE ENEMIES OF THE TRIBES OF JUDAH AND BENJAMIN, HEARING, CAME TO KNOW WHAT THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPETS WAS; AND THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THOSE WHO WERE FROM THE CAPTIVITY WERE BUILDING A TEMPLE TO THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL. AND APPROACHING ZERUBBABEL, AND JESUS, AND THE LEADERS OF THE FAMILIES, THEY SAID TO THEM: 'LET US BUILD WITH YOU, FOR WE ALSO WORSHIP YOUR LORD, AND WE SACRIFICE TO HIM SINCE THE DAYS OF ASBACAPHATH, KING OF THE ASSYRIANS, WHO BROUGHT US HERE.' AND ZERUBBABEL, AND JESUS, AND THE LEADERS OF THE FAMILIES OF ISRAEL SAID TO THEM: 'IT IS NOT FOR YOU AND US TOGETHER TO BUILD A TEMPLE TO THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL.'" BUT WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN, AND ESPECIALLY THE JEALOUSY BY WHICH THEY REFUSED TO ALLOW THOSE WHO ADHERED TO THE SAME RELIGION OF GOD TO BUILD TOGETHER WITH THEM?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Judas, if you interpret the name, signifies confession. However, this word has a twofold meaning and reason: one that pertains to giving thanks for gifts received, and one that relates to the acknowledgment and punishment of misdeeds committed. For confession refers both to the act of recounting divine benefits with thanksgiving by those who have been affected by them, and to the declaration and narration of wrongful acts by those guilty of them. Both lead to a humbling of the senses: for in like manner, both he who gives thanks for gifts received and he who admits his guilt and investigates it humble themselves—one, considering himself

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unworthy of the good things received; the other, asking for forgiveness of sins.

Benjamin, if you properly consider the force of the Hebrew word, signifies either the mourning or lamentation of the mother, or the measure of the mother, or the son of the right hand, or the edification of the people. Therefore, whoever confesses in any of the ways mentioned belongs to the tribe of Judah. Likewise, whoever mourns for the sake of virtue, or who, like a mother, possesses justice properly and successfully defining and guiding both life and reason; or whoever, by the abundance of virtue or the rich streams of teaching in the word, is a way to salvation and edification, belongs to the tribe of Benjamin. For Scripture knows such as these—those who receive freedom from the captivity of sins and passions and who rise above the affection for sensible things. Those who have attained a state of unperturbedness are able to build a house for the Lord. By house, I mean the mind, which, constructed from diverse virtues and principles as they pertain to action and contemplation, becomes a dwelling place for God in the Spirit. Their enemies, however, are the four nations that King Asbacaphath of Assyria transplanted into the land of Israel. For he was the first to lead the Babylonians into the land of Israel to settle, along with the men of Chuth, Hæmath, and Evæos. This name, if you interpret it, signifies confused nature. Thus, the Babylonians represent pride.

The Chuthæans, on the other hand, signify vain glory—those, namely, who divert the mind from virtue to unproductive boasting and empty opinion. For their name, if interpreted, implies excess and change. The men of Hæmath represent the pursuit of pleasing people. For Hæmath can be rendered as the vision of visible things, which leads to the defect of granting greater honors to those who, with feigned sanctity, pursue virtue for the favor of men. The Evæans signify the deception of simulation. For their name, if interpreted, means serpentine, akin to the first serpent, who by seduction and the guise of friendship, as with Adam, expels those who are obedient from the seats of virtue. Asbacaphath, who sent these into the land of Israel, is interpreted as captivating from behind—that is, one who secretly and by ambush takes captive—or again, as captivating with chains. Clearly,



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this refers to the devil, who clandestinely schemes everything and through ambush seeks to destroy human nature, binding each one with the chains of their sins. This one transferred into the land of Israel (that is, the habit of virtue and knowledge) pride, vain glory, flattery, and simulation—uniting these vices to the cultivators of virtue and knowledge, by which he plunders the labors of those who strive in good works, cunningly and deceitfully diverting the aim and end of their actions away from the Creator. Perhaps, knowing that these wicked demons attach themselves as companions to those who cultivate virtue, the Divine Apostle hinted at this to the Corinthians by writing that he did not come to them with a speech of flattery, as a deceiver might, nor under a pretense of defrauding them, as a flatterer might, nor seeking glory from anyone, as one desiring vain glory. For he did not conceal pride, as he displayed clear indications of modesty—namely, countless persecutions and bodily sufferings, great poverty, and lack of eloquence or refinement in speech. For, though unskilled in speech, as he says, he was not lacking in knowledge.

Hearing the sound of the trumpets, they came to understand what this sound was, and they recognized that those who had returned from captivity were building the temple to the Lord God of Israel. The trumpets, whose sound the impure demons hear, are the discourses held concerning virtue and knowledge. The sound of those discourses is the works of virtue and the steadfastness and diligence in the conduct of those who, through the practice of repentance, have turned from vice to virtue and have emerged from ignorance to the knowledge of God. And approaching Zorobabel, and Jesus, and the leaders of the families, they said to them: "Let us build with you, for we too, like you, hear your Lord and sacrifice to Him." Zorobabel represents the mind devoted to action; Jesus, the mind devoted to contemplation; and the leaders of the families, the powers of the soul, from which virtuous manners and the principles of knowledge arise. To these, impure demons of pride, vain glory, flattery, and simulation—or hypocrisy—join themselves, saying, "Let us build the temple of the Lord together with you." For no demon among these most wicked ones restrains the zeal of the one striving for virtue; rather, cutting off defects in virtue through cunning,

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they encourage greater efforts, assisting with equal zeal, so that they may draw the entire focus of the one practicing piety to themselves, causing him to lose the balance of moderation and, unwittingly, to aim for another dwelling than what he had intended. Therefore, these crafty ones say, "We hear your Lord just as you do." For they neither hate chastity nor dread fasting; they do not oppose the giving of alms, hospitality, the chanting of psalms, the practice of reading, higher disciplines, lying on a humble mat or bare ground, vigils, or any of the other practices by which religious life is distinguished—as long as the intention inclines toward them and is directed by the purpose of their actions. For while the cultivator of virtue may more easily detect and avoid the harm caused by other demons, he may not so readily escape these demons, who seem to assist in the progress of virtue and as if desiring, through cooperative effort, to build the temple of the Lord together. A mind capable of discerning this, even if exceptionally elevated, requires the aid of that powerful and penetrating word, which reaches as far as the division of soul and spirit—able to discern what works or intentions are animal (that is, natural forms of virtue and motions) and which are spiritual, being supernatural, marked by God, and granted through grace beyond nature.

The limbs and the marrow as well, of those who are proficient in the consistent and entirely fitting understanding of the virtuous manners shining forth and of the spiritual principles; who discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart, that is, the hidden affections concealed deep in the chest concerning the things spoken of, and the invisible causes stored in the mind regarding them. For there is no creature that is not manifest, namely in us, who seem to be hidden, but all things are naked and revealed—not only the things that have been done and thought, but also those which are to be done and thought by us. For concerning future actions and thoughts, Scripture perhaps says that there is no creature hidden or not manifest: not concerning a creature that has been made and exists, which is manifest both to us and to others, let alone to God, who foreknows all infinite ages—past, present, and future—and whose knowledge of all origins naturally precedes,

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not derived from things, but having in Himself the antecedent knowledge of things.

For He alone is by nature the knowledge of things, as their cause, and likewise is in Himself the knowledge itself, whose knowledge of the causes surpasses every reason by nature and yet exists beyond even this, in every infinite respect of utterly surpassing infinity; who, indeed, as the inaccessible founder of all so-called knowledge and of any knowledge that can be conceived, exceeds every reasoning and mode of knowledge. Whoever does not have this word dwelling inwardly in the soul and deep within the chest, freed from the hidden deceits and traps of the demons of simulation, could scarcely stand alone without any association and, after the manner of the great Zorobabel, Jesus, and the leaders of the families, build the temple of the Lord. These, with a clear and loud voice, would say to the seducing spirits of pride, vain glory, flattery, and simulation: "It is not for us and you to build a house for the Lord our God; we alone shall build to the Lord, the God of Israel." For they know that through association with these, ruin and collapse would be prepared for the whole building, and the beauty, light, and grace of divine gifts would be plundered. For no one who has any of these demons as a helper in cultivating virtue can build it for the Lord, since such a one does not have God, on whom he looks as the goal of his works and deeds. Thus, it was not out of envy that the men returning from captivity did not admit the Babylonians, Chuthæans, Hæmathæans, and Evæans to collaborate with them in building the temple of the Lord, but because they were aware of the extremely cunning deceits of the demons under the guise of love, striving to use the bait of good as a trap to destroy them by the death of sin.

Would that we also, whenever the spirits of wickedness, veiled under the guise of spiritual friendship and approaching us in an unseen manner, say to us, "Let us build the temple of the Lord together with you," might reply, "It is not for you and us to build the house of the Lord our God, for we alone will build for the Lord, the God of Israel." Alone indeed, because being freed from those spirits who attack according to the deficiency of virtue—by whom we have also been assailed—we do not wish to be pierced through by the excesses into which we might be uplifted through

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you, nor to be dashed down with so much heavier a fall as there was an easier hope of repair from that fall, provoked by the very frailty that calls for pardon. From this, however, there is either no hope of restoration or a difficult one, due to the pride of those who are despised and who act as if they could do something more upright than uprightness itself. Yet again, not alone, because we have the holy angels as helpers in good deeds; indeed, we also have God Himself, revealing Himself to us through works of justice, building us as a holy temple for Himself, free from all vice.

## SCHOLIUM

1. Confession is spoken of in two ways.
2. Every confession disposes the soul to humility: one, indeed, by teaching it to be justified by the grace of the gift; the other, by instructing it, through the sorrow of its mind, to recognize itself as guilty of crimes.
3. He who mourns for past sins and is endowed with faith in God, which always brings him forth into righteousness, and who offers his life and way of living as a complete model of virtue, makes himself a part of the spiritual tribe of Benjamin. This signifies an act of will, not necessity, demonstrating its origin in the divine principles of birth. For he is a son of the right hand who, by the will and inclination of his mind, voluntarily undertakes divine generation.
4. The Babylonians are called pride, which is likened to a confused sense and prudence of the mind. For the disease of pride arises from a double ignorance. This double ignorance, through mutual interconnection and union, produces a confused singular prudence. For the proud man alone is ignorant of both divine aid and human frailty. Therefore, pride is the deprivation of divine and human knowledge. By the true denial of the extremes, a false singular affirmation comes into existence.
5. The Chuthæans are called vain glory. Vain glory is the deviation from the goal according to God and the transition to another goal that is not divine. One afflicted by vain glory labors under this fault, cultivating

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virtue not for the glory of God but for his own glory and trading the labor of his virtues for false praises from men.

6. Hæmath is called the vice of flattery. For he who is afflicted by this vice cares only for manners and gestures visible to the eyes of men, as well as for the words of flatterers. By such gestures, he attracts their gaze, and by such words, their ears, delighting those who are drawn only by what they see and hear, and who are guided solely by this admiration. Such people ultimately define virtue only by sense perception. Therefore, we call flattery (the desire to please men) a kind of semblance of virtue that is cultivated to gain the favor of men through the display of external appearance and speech.
7. The Evæans are called simulation. Simulation (hypocrisy) is a feigned appearance of friendship, or hatred concealed under the guise of friendship, or hostility exercised under the pretense of benevolence. It may also refer to envy disguised as affection, or a wicked disposition and affection that captivates others by the apparent display of virtue in the body. It can also mean a life adorned with the mask of virtue, but not venerable by its essence, or the pretense of justice based on mere opinion, or a form of moral philosophy that conceals the hidden absence of virtue in the soul. Finally, it refers to deception that has the appearance of truth, which is cultivated by those who strive to imitate the serpent in their depravity of manners.
8. God is the cause or author of things and of the goods present in them. Therefore, he who devotes himself to virtue and knowledge but does not extend a sense of grateful humility in proportion to his growth in grace does not escape the stain of pride. He who cultivates virtue for the sake of his own glory, pierced by the nail of vain glory, has placed himself above God. He who, aiming only to be seen by men, performs or pursues virtue labors under the vice of flattery, valuing human praise more than God's. But he who uses virtue's honor for deception and fraud, disguising a depraved disposition with a conspicuous mask of piety through gestures and manners, acquires virtue by the deceit of simulation. Therefore, the spiritual Asbacaphath has diverted the

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purpose of the soul, which should aim at other things than the cause and author of these virtues.

9. The words of God, if you merely proclaim them with the mouth, are not heard; for instead of a voice, the action of the speaker is required. But if you speak the commandments by performing them in deeds, then both demons, wasting away at such a voice, and men, advancing in works of righteousness, eagerly build within themselves the divine temple of the heart.
10. Zorobabel in this passage is taken as a type of the soul devoted to action, as being more warlike; but Jesus is taken as a type of the soul inclined to contemplation, like a priest ordained for this duty, to always offer supplications and vows to God.
11. The division of soul and spirit refers to the distinction of virtues by their nature: some having inherent rational principles from nature, while others derive from the Spirit, from whom we receive the grace of divine gifts. For the word, clearly judging these, makes the distinction.
12. The marrow is the divine word, nourishing within us the divine principles as if they were bones, by which the body of virtues is secretly sustained. The joint is the mode of action, according to which the union of the rational principles of the soul with the divine principles customarily occurs to fulfill a single virtue.
13. Thoughts and intentions, which the word is said to discern, refer to affections in accordance with rational principles of the soul and divine thoughts, and also to the causes of those affections. For thought moves memory, whose property is affection; but intention regards the end, which is the distinguishing mark of a cause.
14. God is the knowledge according to essence. Evidently, the mind precedes all knowledge, under which even knowledge itself is subordinated. Therefore, God is also superior to this, infinitely surpassing every mind under which knowledge could in any way fall.
15. The demons who attack through the deficiency of virtue are those who teach fornication and drunkenness, greed and envy, and such things. But those who attack through excess—teaching vain opinions of

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oneself, boasting, and empty glory, as well as pride and things of that kind—secretly introduce left-handed faults through those things that are seemingly right-handed.

16. The end and principle of virtue is the union of human weakness, through its recognition, with divine power. Therefore, he who defines himself by the weakness of nature does not reach the end and goal of virtue. For this reason, he errs, as one who has not yet acquired the virtue by which weakness might be strengthened. But he who presumptuously substitutes his own weakness in place of divine power, as though it were strength and might, exceeds the bounds of virtue; and for this reason, being exalted by what he considers to be superior, he does not acknowledge his sin. For he considers sin to be in the place of virtue. Thus, greater pardon is due to the one who restrains himself in natural weakness (even if he suffers the loss of virtue through negligence), than to the one who, presumptuously substituting his own weakness as though it were strength, offers it in place of divine power for the performance of duties, thereby becoming through pride the author of his own loss.

## QUESTION LVII

MUCH POWER DOES THE PRAYER OF THE  
RIGHTEOUS WHEN IT IS  
ACTIVE; WHAT IS MEANT BY "ACTIVE"?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

I know in two ways the "active" nature of the prayer of the righteous: in one way, whenever the one praying brings the prayer to God with the works commanded, and it is not just in a mere word or hollow sound of the voice, but inactive and without substance; rather, it is active and alive, being enlivened by the ways of the commandments. For the foundation of prayer and petition is evidently fulfilled through virtues, by which the

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righteous person has a strong and all-powerful petition, active through the commandments. In another way, whenever the one praying the prayer of the righteous performs the works of prayer, both correcting the previous life and making the petition of the righteous strong through one's own good conduct, becoming capable of it through a virtuous way of life.

For there is no benefit in the petition of the righteous, when the one needing it is more inclined to faults than to virtues. For even the great Samuel once mourned over Saul's sin, but he was unable to make God propitious, not having taken the appropriate corrective action for the sinner. Therefore, God, putting an end to His servant's lamentation, says to him, "How long will you mourn for Saul? I have rejected him from reigning over Israel." And again, Jeremiah, the most compassionate, when praying for the people of the Jews, who were mad with the delusion of demons, was not heard, having no power in his prayer, for the repentance of the atheistic Jews who had gone astray. Hence, God, preventing him from praying in vain, says, "Do not pray for this people, nor seek that they should be shown mercy; do not pray, nor come to Me concerning them any longer, for I will not listen." For it is truly an act of ineptitude, to say nothing of madness, to seek salvation through the prayers of the righteous for those who, according to their disposition, are pleased with destruction; and to ask for forgiveness for those boasting in their sinful actions. It is necessary not to allow the prayer of the righteous to become vain and stagnant, but rather to make it active, strong through one's own virtues, and capable of granting forgiveness to those who have sinned. Whether, then, the prayer of the righteous is made effective through the one doing it, or through the one asking for it, the prayer of the righteous is very powerful. For when it is made effective by the righteous, it gives him boldness to ask the one able to grant the requests of the righteous; but when it is asked by the one requesting the righteous, it removes him from his previous wickedness, changing his disposition toward virtue.



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### QUESTION LVIII

"WHEREIN YOU GREATLY REJOICE NOW, IF IT IS  
NECESSARY TO BE MADE SORROWFUL FOR  
A LITTLE WHILE IN VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS," HOW CAN ONE  
WHO IS SORROWFUL IN TEMPTATIONS  
REJOICE IN THAT WHEREIN HE IS SORROWFUL,  
OR FOR WHOSE SAKE HE IS GRIEVED?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The discourse of truth recognizes a twofold sorrow: one indeed hidden in the soul, the other manifestly set in the senses. The former indeed occupies the deep recesses of the soul, striking it with the scourge of conscience; the latter surrounds all feeling, compressing natural delight with grievous distress and torment. Thus, the former arises from the awareness of sensual pleasures, while the latter is the end of natural affliction of the mind's feelings; or rather, the former indeed consists in the constancy of the mind's voluntary senses, while the latter is the limit of sufferings and pains endured beyond the mind.

Sorrow, as I consider it, is such a disposition as lacks pleasures. But the deprivation of pleasures is the infliction of labors and pains. Now, labor and pain are clearly natural states of defect or withdrawal. A natural habit's defect, however, is a blemish and disorder of the faculty subjected to that habit. The disorder and blemish of a faculty subjected to a natural habit are a concrete vice arising from the misuse of natural operation. But the concrete vice of the misuse of natural operation is an inclination of the faculty toward that which is neither naturally intended nor truly enduring. Just as, as I was saying, the discourse recognizes a twofold sorrow, so too does it acknowledge a twofold mode of temptations: one indeed consisting in those that arise from the will, the other from those that happen unwillingly. The former is indeed the parent of pleasures which belong to the soul; the latter, however,

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brings about pains and torments which do not belong to the soul. For the temptation that arises from the will obviously produces pleasures existing in the mind, while that which happens unwillingly clearly induces labors beyond the will. Indeed, one is the cause of the sorrow of the soul; the other, of the pain of the senses.

Wherefore, I think that our Lord and God, when teaching His disciples the mode of prayer, instructed them to deprecate that kind of temptation which lies in the will, saying: "And lead us not into temptation;" so that He might teach them to strive in prayer lest, being forsaken by God, they might be allowed to experience the peril of such temptations as have lust and reside in the will. But James the Great, called the brother of the Lord, to teach that the champions of truth ought not to fear that kind of temptation which is applied unwillingly, says: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various temptations;" namely, those which are involuntary and outside the intention of the mind, and which induce labors. And they clearly show this, for while the Lord adds there, "But deliver us from evil," here James the Great states: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." He is perfect who fights against voluntary temptations through self-restraint and remains steadfast in involuntary ones through patience. He is complete who displays both action with knowledge and contemplation not lacking in action.

For dividing equally the sorrow (or pain) of the soul and senses, as well as pleasure, he who cultivates the delight of the soul while admitting the pain of the senses is tested, perfect, and complete. Tested, indeed, due to the trial of opposites in the senses; perfect, because through self-restraint and patience he continuously and constantly fights against the pleasures and pains of the senses; complete, because maintaining unscathed and unharmed the dispositions of the affections of the senses contending against each other, he preserves in the same firmness of reason both action and contemplation, mutually coherent and by no means separated by any division. Thus arranged, the active life and the contemplative life shine forth in the manner

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of knowledge, and contemplation, fortified by the strength of action, stands no less firm through reason.

Therefore, since the discourse shows a twofold sorrow (or pain) and pleasure, and that one indeed resides in the soul, while the other in the senses, let us also examine their causes somewhat more subtly. Thus, of that sorrow which affects the soul, there are two modes: namely, one arising from one's own faults, and the other from the faults of others. The cause of such sorrow, moreover, is plainly the pleasure and desire of the senses either of the one affected by the sorrow or of those for whose sake one is affected. For it is a true and certain doctrine that no sin at all exists among human matters unless it arises from an unreflective affection of the soul joined with the senses' pleasure and desire, which is the cause of its origin. For the cause of pleasure in the soul is clearly the pain of the senses, as of one who rejoices and takes delight in their own or others' virtues.

For as true doctrine holds, scarcely any virtue at all exists among human matters which does not have its origin in the deliberate separation of the soul from the senses. Now, the cause of the soul's virtue, as it is affected by the senses, is this: when the necessary connection is broken, it cannot but happen that the senses are occupied with labors, namely, because the sweet, inventive faculty of the soul is not joined with the mind's desire. Instead, it firmly suppresses the crowd of natural pleasures through the power of self-control and remains steadfast and unyielding in violent and unnatural labors through patience. And it is such that, from the surpassing excellence and brightness of divine virtue, it does not deviate in any way toward the deceptive lure of pleasure; nor does it decline from the height of virtue due to the indulgence of the flesh being more inclined to relieve the pain and burdens of the senses.

The cause of the senses' pain, however, arises from the fact that all the strength of the soul is occupied with things that are according to nature. Furthermore, the pleasure of the senses, which is beyond nature, is clearly caused by the operation of the soul, whose origin and power can be none other than its rejection of those things that are according to nature. For the mind and the senses, due to the great dissimilarity and diversity of the things

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subject to them, have a naturally opposite operation. For the mind indeed has intelligible and incorporeal substances as its subjects, to which its very essence is adapted, so as to perceive them. But the senses, on the other hand, have sensible and corporeal natures, which they recognize by their nature.

Since, therefore, it cannot happen that the mind advances to its kindred intelligibles without also considering the sensibles that lie in between (and this cannot at all be achieved without the senses being joined to it and akin to sensible things by nature), it is quite reasonable that if, by clinging in affection to the outward bodies of visible things when encountering them, it regards the operation composed of the senses as natural, then having fallen from those intelligibles that are by nature, it seizes the bodies with both hands, as it were. By doing so, being driven and acted upon by irrational impulse, it becomes the parent of the soul's sorrow, beaten by the frequent scourges of conscience, and openly the author of the senses' pleasure, fattening itself in devising ways to sustain and care for the flesh. But if, as soon as it perceives and encounters them, it sees the purified spiritual reasons of things in their visible forms, it becomes the parent of the soul's pleasure, which is bound by nothing of those things perceived by the senses, while it causes pain or sorrow in the senses, deprived of the allure and enjoyment of natural sensibles. For when reason precedes and governs the senses in the consideration of visible things, the flesh entirely lacks its natural pleasure, because there is no free and unbound sense available to serve its pleasures.

Since, therefore, as I was saying, the soul's sorrow or pain (for these are essentially the same) is constituted by the pleasure of the senses, and conversely the pain or labor of the senses is customarily created by the pleasure of the soul, it is fitting that one who is captivated by the hope of the life laid up in God and our Savior Jesus Christ, through the resurrection from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven, should be held by this desire. Such a one indeed exults and rejoices in the soul with inexpressible joy, continually rejoicing and almost leaping for joy in the hope of future goods; but in the flesh and senses, they experience sorrow and pain, which arise from the labors that come to them

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through various temptations, producing corresponding torments. For every virtue is accompanied by both pleasure and labor: namely, the labor of the flesh, which is deprived of gentle and lenient sensation; and the pleasure of the soul, which delights in pure spiritual reasons apart from all sense-based objects.

Therefore, it is worthwhile that in this present life (for this is the sense conveyed to me by the word "now"), the mind should sorrow and grieve in the flesh due to the many labors of temptations that are inflicted upon it for the sake of virtue, while it continually rejoices and delights in the soul, supported by the hope of eternal goods, however much the labor nearly overwhelms the senses. For as the divine Apostle says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us." Thus, therefore (as I indeed think), nothing prevents a person from rejoicing in the very matter over which they sorrow and grieve. For while, by cultivating virtue, they grieve in the flesh because of the accompanying labors, they simultaneously rejoice in the soul, as though beholding the beauty of future things as if already present. For this reason, like the great David, they die daily through the voluntary renunciation of the flesh, while they are continually renewed in the spirit by the generation of the soul. Such a one possesses both a salvific pleasure and a beneficial sorrow.

We do not speak here of a sorrow alien to reason or arising from the common people, which consumes the soul with anguish due to the absence of pleasures and earthly things. This kind of sorrow is typical of those who unnaturally pursue what reason of duty does not permit or flee from those things from which they should not. Instead, the sorrow we mean is deliberate and approved by men adorned with divine wisdom—a sorrow that uncovers present evil. For they say that sorrow or pain is the perception of present evil: either residing in the soul when the judgment of reason is overwhelmed by the pleasure of the senses, or residing in the senses when, without hindrance, the course of the soul is completed in the pursuit of virtue. In this case, it imposes as much labor on the senses as it brings pleasure and joy to the soul, which, through the kindred illumination of virtue and knowledge, is united with God.

## BOOK ONE

### SCHOLIUM

1. He speaks of the sorrow of the soul.
2. Here, he calls the pain of the senses sorrow (in the sense of tristitia).
3. He says the sorrow of the soul is the end of the pleasure of the senses: for indeed, from this the sorrow of the soul arises; just as the sorrow of the flesh and pain are the end of the soul's pleasure. For the joy of the soul turns into the sorrow and pain of the flesh.
4. Sorrow or pain has various definitions, each tied to the cause from which it arises, which determines its nature.
5. He speaks of a twofold sorrow: one residing in the senses, stemming from the deprivation of bodily pleasures; the other residing in the mind, caused by the absence of the goods of the soul. He also mentions two kinds of temptations: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary temptations are said to be the parents of bodily pleasure and the sorrow of the soul (for a single act of sin troubles the soul with sorrow). Meanwhile, temptations that occur involuntarily and against one's will are also the parents of the soul's pleasure and the pain of bodily senses.
6. Voluntary temptation produces sorrow in the soul and openly generates pleasure in the senses. Involuntary temptation, however, which assails unwilling victims, results in pleasure for the soul and pain for the flesh.
7. The Lord indeed teaches us to pray against voluntary temptations, as they bring the pleasure of the flesh and the sorrow of the soul. But the great James commands us to rejoice in involuntary temptations, as they remove the pleasure of the flesh and the sorrow of the soul.
8. He describes what it means to be perfect.
9. He describes what it means to be whole (integral).
10. One who has experienced both the pleasure and pain of the flesh may be said to be tested, as such a person has endured the prosperous and adverse outcomes of carnal matters. A perfect person, however, is one who has vanquished both the pleasure and pain of the flesh by the power of the Word. A whole (integral) person is one who has kept the

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unchangeable habits of action and contemplation through the vigor of divine love.

11. Bodily pleasure precedes all sorrow of the soul.
12. Without the soul's lustful affection toward the senses, no sin at all can exist in human affairs.
13. He brings spiritual joy to the soul who subdues the flesh with willingly assumed labors.
14. He affirms that the origin of virtue arises from the soul's voluntary detachment from the flesh.
15. He describes the intelligent faculty of the soul as an inventor or discoverer, which, having broken the necessity of the senses, leaves the flesh vacant of the soul's concern for the sake of moderating lust. It neither endures relieving the pain of the flesh nor allows the mind's power and affection to be distracted from divine matters.
16. The withdrawal of the mind's natural affection becomes the origin of the sense of pain. For when the soul labors over those goods that are from nature, the capacity for devising pleasures of the senses does not arise.
17. Sensible objects are subject to the senses; intelligible objects to the mind. Hence, a vast difference exists between these two.
18. As soon as the mind considers the senses as its own natural power, it becomes entangled in the forms of sensible things and devises carnal pleasures. Bound by a lustful affection toward the senses, it cannot transcend the nature of things placed before the eyes.
19. The one who transfers the laws of things to his own law through imitation is a devotee and cultivator of virtue, as he endows the motion of irrational things with reason. But one who transfers his own law to the laws of others by imitation is vicious and lustful, as he reduces the power of reason to the level of the irrational.
20. By the dominion of reason within us—which, to fulfill the functions of virtue, has subjected the flesh to it—the flesh must necessarily be tormented.

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21. The soul belongs to the flesh, but not the flesh to the soul. For what is inferior belongs to what is superior, but not the reverse. Therefore, since the law of sin, which is the pleasure and lust of the senses, has been imposed on the flesh due to the transgression of sin, the flesh is subjected to death, which was invented for the abolishment of sin. The one who has explored death, which continually enters on account of sin to abolish it, always rejoices in the soul. By this joy, they see the law of sin receding from their flesh through various labors, and thus they become fit for the life of blessedness in the spirit. Otherwise, this cannot be attained unless, as long as we live this life, the law of sin has first been abolished in the flesh, as if in a vessel, by the soul's attachment to it.
22. He calls the joy of the soul that arises from virtue "salvific pleasure" and the pain of the flesh endured for the sake of virtue "beneficial sorrow."
23. The one who desires affections and things unsuitable for the soul is incited toward them.
24. The one who does not embrace the outcomes that rid them of unsuitable affections and the turmoil of things flees and shuns those outcomes they should not avoid.



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### QUESTION LIX

“OF WHAT SALVATION THE PROPHETS INQUIRED AND SEARCHED DILIGENTLY, WHO PROPHESED OF THE GRACE THAT WAS TO COME TO YOU: SEARCHING WHAT OR WHAT MANNER OF TIME THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THEM SIGNIFIED, TESTIFYING BEFOREHAND THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AND THE GLORIES THAT SHOULD FOLLOW.” SINCE THE BLESSED PROPHETS, HAVING LEARNED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKING TO THEM, LEFT US WRITINGS TO BE SOUGHT OUT AND EXAMINED, HOW IS IT THAT THEY THEMSELVES, WHO, AS IT WERE, HEARD THE HOLY SPIRIT WHISPERING IN THEIR EARS AND WROTE DOWN WHAT WAS REVEALED TO THEM, WERE ALSO SAID TO INQUIRE AND SEARCH DILIGENTLY?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The abilities to inquire into and search out divine matters, being substantially implanted by the Creator, were received by human nature at the very moment of its creation. However, it is by the advent of the Holy Spirit’s power, through the grace of His gift, that divine truths are revealed. Because, from the beginning, the most wicked being (Satan) had subjected these capacities to the visible nature of things through sin, and no one was understanding or seeking God, all who were partakers of this nature possessed faculties of mind and reason that were limited by the external appearances of sensible things. They could not rise above the senses with their intellect. Rightly, therefore, the grace of the Holy Spirit restored this faculty to those who had not willingly and inwardly given themselves over to error, tearing it away from earthly attachments to which it had been bound. Having regained this capacity through grace, they first sought and searched

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diligently, and then they continued to inquire and search—by that same grace of the Spirit.

For it is utterly false to say that grace alone, without the natural faculties that are capable of knowing, operated the knowledge of mysteries in the saints. Otherwise, we would depict the prophets as those who, by the gifts of the Holy Spirit granted to them, lacked the power to understand what they were given. How could it then be true, as Scripture says, "The wise person understands what proceeds from his own mouth"? Neither did they, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, attain true knowledge of things merely by the natural capacity for inquiry; otherwise, the coming of the Holy Spirit would be rendered superfluous, serving no purpose in manifesting the truth to them. Who could maintain such a claim when Scripture itself states, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights"? And again: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith in the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing," and so forth. It adds: "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes them to each one as He wills." Now, His will is that each person receive what is useful for the certain fulfillment of their untainted desire to seek divine things. Indeed, the one who seeks purely and without vice or lust will undoubtedly receive what they seek. But the one who seeks with lust, like one who seeks wrongly, will by no means attain what they seek. For it is said, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly."

Therefore, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not produce wisdom in the saints without the mind that receives it; nor knowledge without the capacity of reason that is capable of it; nor faith without the mind and reason providing a certain conviction of future things and all things thus far unknown; nor gifts of healing without natural humanity; nor, moreover, any other remaining gift without a disposition and capacity suited to it. Likewise, no one will acquire even one of these enumerated gifts through natural capacity alone, unless they are supplied by divine power. This is openly declared by all the saints, who, after receiving divine revelations, sought out

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and examined the reasons for the things that had been made manifest and revealed to them.

For instance, Abraham, after receiving the promise of inheriting the land shown to him, with God saying: "I am God, who brought you out of the land of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess," did not consider it sufficient to receive what he had left the land of the Chaldeans to seek, but rather he inquired further, wishing to know also the manner of his possession, thus speaking to God: "Lord, according to what shall I know that I will possess it?" Moses likewise, after receiving the power of signs and wonders, sought to be taught the methods and reasons by which the faith of the given signs would be confirmed. As the great David says: "He set among them the reasons of His signs and His wonders in the land of Ham." Again, David himself, crying out to God about himself, says: "Reveal my eyes, and I shall consider the wonders of Your law." And: "Your law is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths." Daniel too, that great man of desires, fasting for three weeks for the sake of divine visions, sought out their reasons, and he heard an angel speaking to another angel: "Make him understand the vision."

The great prophet Zechariah likewise, throughout his prophecy, introduces an angel speaking within him, showing him visions and teaching him their reasons, saying: "And the angel who spoke within me showed me." And: "I said to the angel who spoke within me, 'Lord, what are these things?'" Thus it is clear how all the saints, while receiving revelations from the Spirit, also sought to have the reasons for what was revealed explained. This also shows that the grace of the Spirit does not destroy the power of nature; rather, it restores what was weakened by the misuse of unnatural ways and habits and, through the use of natural faculties, makes it effective again, leading it to understand divine things. For the Holy Spirit in us seeks and searches for knowledge of things—not for Himself, for He is God and above all knowledge, but for us, who are in need of knowledge. In the same way, the Word became flesh—not for Himself, but for us, fulfilling the mystery of the Incarnation. Just as the Word, not without flesh, animated with understanding in the manner of the intelligent, performed divine works with what pertains to the nature of the flesh, so too the Holy Spirit does not work

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the knowledge of mysteries in the saints without the natural faculty that seeks and investigates it.

Therefore, whether the saints were seeking or inquiring, or searching or investigating, they had the grace of the Spirit moving the power of their minds and reason to seek and search for the salvation of souls. They perceived nothing spiritual without the Spirit, for it is not possible for the human mind, which is directed to divine and intelligible things, to perceive them unless illuminated by divine light. Just as the eye cannot perceive objects that fall within its sense without the rays of the sun, so the human mind can in no way grasp spiritual contemplation without spiritual light. For one sense, by nature, is illuminated to perceive physical things, and another illuminates the soul to perceive things that surpass the power of the senses. The salvation of souls, however, is properly the goal of faith. The goal of faith is the manifestation of what we have received by faith.

True manifestation of what we have received by faith is hidden according to the measure of each one's faith, leading to progress in what is held by faith. The progress in what is held by faith is the return of the faithful at the end to their origin. The return of the faithful at the end to their origin is the fulfillment of desire. The fulfillment of desire is the rest of those who desire perpetually, in constant movement toward the desirable. The perpetual rest in movement toward the desirable, for those bound by desire, is the continuous and eternal enjoyment of the desirable. This eternal and continuous enjoyment of the desirable is the perception of things surpassing the nature of the divine. The perception of the nature of divine things surpassing all is the similarity of the perceivers to that which is perceived. The similarity of the perceivers to what is perceived, as far as permitted, is a form of identity through likeness.

The identity through likeness, as far as permitted, of those perceivers to what is perceived is their deification. Deification (to speak plainly) is the comprehension and fulfillment of all times, ages, and everything within time and age. The comprehension and fulfillment of all times, ages, and all within them is the indivisible union of the true beginning with the true end in those who attain salvation. The indivisible union of the

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true beginning and the true end in those granted salvation exceeds the natural bounds of those proportioned to beginning and end. This surpassing of the natural bounds by those proportioned to beginning and end is the immediate and infinite operation and power of God, surpassing all strength, in those who attain this greater transcendence.

Finally, the immediate, infinite, and immeasurably strong operation and power of God, surpassing all strength, is an ineffable mystery, beyond even mystery itself, producing joy and delight in those upon whom it is bestowed and who are moved by it. This is entirely impossible to be comprehended by any intellect, reason, thought, speech, or words within the realm of nature. For the nature of things does not encompass reasoning about that which surpasses its own measure, just as it does not conform to the laws of things that are unnatural. What is beyond nature's measure is divine delight, surpassing all thought, which God, who is by nature God, unites by grace to those worthy of it. What I call unnatural is the indescribable pain, the absence of this grace, which God in justice permits for those unworthy of it.

For God, united with all according to the quality and disposition of each as He knows, provides each one with a sense of Him, according to how each is prepared to receive Him, who at the end of ages will be united with all. The salvation of souls, as I understand it, is called by the great Apostle Peter, as the goal of faith, the perception of those things which are beyond nature. Of this salvation (plainly through the Holy Spirit) the prophets sought and inquired, seeking to know what or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ in them signified when it foretold the sufferings in Christ and the subsequent glories. Thus, those who seek the salvation of souls in the Spirit and examine the spiritual reasons and methods of this salvation are guided by the Holy Spirit so that they may achieve understanding. The Spirit does not allow the power granted to them for seeking divine things to remain unmoving, idle, or unproductive.

First, it teaches one to seek the extinction of the will to sin or the will of sin; likewise, to raise the will of virtue or the virtue of the will. Then, it teaches one to examine the methods of extinguishing the will to sin and the

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reasons for raising the will of virtue. Through these methods and reasons, the extinction of the will to sin or the sin of the will, and the raising of the will of virtue or the virtue of the will, are accomplished. This is clearly provided in this age (which Scripture calls “time”), bearing the sufferings related to nature in Christ (that is, for Christ), which the Holy Spirit foretold to them, so that being conformed to the likeness of Christ’s death by the extinction of sin, they might be conformed to the likeness of His resurrection by the practice of virtue.

Indeed, it is truly necessary for one who is to attain salvation not only to extinguish sin in the will but also the will itself that leads to sin; and not only to revive the will for virtue but also to vivify virtue for the will, so that the will, entirely extinguished and dead, wholly separated from all sin, feels no sensation of it; and, wholly alive, feels virtue entirely living in undivided union. Perhaps those holy ones who sought and investigated these matters through the Holy Spirit fulfilled philosophy active in practice. Having attained it, being now pure and free from all defilement, they, by the inspiration of the same Spirit, directed the eye of their mind to the ultimate end of things, seeking, after the resurrection of the will, the incorruption of nature, and investigating the modes and reasons of divine immortality. For they no longer sought the resurrection of the will, which they had already attained through the cultivation of action by the Spirit, nor did they examine its methods.

Rather, they sought the incorruption of nature, whose modes and reasons they explored, concerning the deification to come, toward which, desiring that glory in Christ, they hastened: that as in this age they suffered afflictions together with Him (which, as I said, Scripture calls time), so also in the future age they might be glorified together with Him. This would occur in a manner higher than nature, through grace, as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, according to the dispensation by which He assumes and claims all nature to Himself by the power of His assumed humanity.

For Christ, being by nature both God and man, is approached by us as God, above nature, through grace, in a mystical union by the right of inheritance. Yet, for our sake, as man in a form similar to ours, He claims us

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to Himself and simultaneously approaches His inheritance with us, with a condescension and abasement to our condition that surpasses all power of mind and thought. The holy ones, mystically foreseeing Him in the Spirit, understood it necessary that, as the reward of virtue, the glory to be revealed in Christ must be preceded by the sufferings and afflictions borne for virtue in the present.

For Scripture says, "inquiring into what or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating, when He predicted the sufferings in Christ and the subsequent glories." Therefore, they both sought and investigated not only the incorruption of nature and the reasons for its deification but also the time when, through sufferings and afflictions for His sake, their future trial would occur, revealing openly the disposition of those who truly desired Him and exposing the intention of those who desired Him in pretense. And they also investigated another time or age, in which that present reality would shine forth in action, transferring all, according to their capacity, into the divine likeness—a likeness which Scripture perhaps called glory or radiance, destined to accompany the labors undertaken for virtue.

This is what someone might say in answering the raised question: namely, why Scripture did not simply use the words to seek and to search here, but instead added the prepositions to inquire and to investigate, thereby opening up a sense more profound and complex. Yet I also heard another explanation from a certain wise person. He said that a more hidden and spiritual meaning concerning the beginning and the end lies in the distinction between inquiring and investigating.

For seeking pertains naturally to the beginning, while investigating pertains to the end. For one does not naturally investigate the beginning, just as one does not naturally seek the end. Instead, one seeks the beginning and investigates the end. From the time, he said, that man, upon being brought forth into the realm of nature, cast away his beginning in the guilt of disobedience—which had been established in the past—he could not seek what had been done in the past. And because the beginning naturally circumscribes the motion of those things that originate from it, it is rightly also called the end, in which the motion of those things in motion comes to

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rest in their author. Therefore, when man investigates his end, he encounters his beginning, which naturally exists in the end; and since he had omitted to seek it, the nature of the end, as something to be investigated, took on its role. For he could not escape its circumscription, which surrounds him on every side and encompasses his motion. Thus (as I said) it was not permitted to seek the beginning that had been established in the past, but to investigate the end, which was observed beforehand, so that through the end he might come to knowledge of the beginning he had abandoned, having failed to know the end through the beginning.

And perhaps teaching this, the wise Solomon says: What is that which has been? The same that shall be. And, What is that which has been done? The same that shall be done; as if he wisely showed the beginning from the end. For no longer, after the transgression, is the end shown from the beginning, but the beginning from the end. Nor does anyone inquire into the reasons of the beginning, but investigates those that lead to the end for those who are in motion.

But if anyone, because the word to seek is often used in Scripture, as in Seek peace and pursue it, and Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, considers this argument not sufficiently strong, from these very passages themselves, if he prudently directs his attention, he will find confirmation of the statements made. For Scripture, by saying Seek peace and pursue it, has admonished that the beginning must be pursued in the end. Likewise, the kingdom, which is the beginning (or rather the principality), it commanded to be sought through righteousness as the end of the kingdom. For the kingdom of God is, before all things, righteousness; or rather (to speak more truly and properly), it is itself righteousness; to which, as to an end, every motion of a diligent person strives. For righteousness is the equitable distribution of what is due to each according to their merits; and the kingdom is lawful governance.

Therefore, righteousness and the kingdom are the same; through which, as to an end, it is easy for those who are willing to strive toward the beginning (that is, the kingdom). For righteousness is an effective and operative kingdom, and the kingdom is confirmed by the works of



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righteousness. For to govern things lawfully is to distribute to each according to what is merited. And to distribute to each according to what is merited is lawful governance. Therefore, no obscurity of Scripture's meaning, nor varied expression, hinders those who wisely understand divine matters.

Moreover, if anyone wishes to explain in another way what is meant by to seek and to search as well as to inquire and to investigate, he will find that seeking and inquiring pertain to the mind, while searching and investigating pertain to reason. For the mind naturally seeks, and by its very nature, reason searches. For seeking (to express it in a brief definition) is the simple motion of the mind, with desire, toward some thing that can be known; whereas searching is the simple discernment of reason, with some thought or intention, concerning some thing that can be known. Inquiring, however, is the motion of the mind, wise in knowledge, with a certain eagerness, toward some thing that can be known; and investigating is the discernment of reason in action, with prudent and wise thought or intention, concerning some thing that can be known.

Transferring these definitions to divine matters, we say that seeking is the first and simple incitement of the mind with desire toward its proper cause or author; that searching is the first and simple discernment of reason, with some thought or intention, concerning its proper cause or author. Likewise, we say that inquiring is the wise agitation of the mind, with fervent desire, toward its proper cause or author; and that investigating is the discernment of reason, in the exercise of its virtues, with prudent and wise thought or intention, concerning its proper cause or author.

Therefore, the holy prophets, inquiring and investigating concerning the salvation of souls, were moved with an incitement of the mind, kindled and fervent with diligence and knowledge, toward God; and likewise, they excelled in the prudent and wise discernment of reason in the actions of divine matters. Their imitators, with diligence and knowledge, inquire into the salvation of souls; and with prudence and wisdom, investigating, they cultivate discernment in divine works.

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### SCHOLIUM

1. Neither does the divine grace elicit illuminations of knowledge without someone existing, through the faculty of nature, capable of receiving illumination; nor does that which is capable of it provide illumination of knowledge apart from the assistance of divine grace.
2. He who seeks without disturbance, immune from stain and pure, receives grace so that he may accomplish virtues through action. Likewise, he who seeks without disturbance and without stain finds, through natural contemplation, the truth existing in things. Finally, he who knocks at the door of knowledge without disturbance and chastely, with no hindrance, prevails into the hidden grace of mystical theology.
3. The mind is the instrument of wisdom; reason is the instrument of knowledge. The certainty of both is in faith, which consists of both; and the gift of healings is natural humanity. For every divine gift finds in us a suitable and kindred organ, as if a power or disposition capable of it. For example, he who has purified his mind from all sensible thought receives wisdom; he who has elevated his reason above innate passions (namely, anger and desire) receives knowledge; he who, moreover, is steadfast in mind and reason with unshaken certainty toward God receives faith, which is capable of all things. Finally, he who has fulfilled natural humanity, after perfectly removing its blind self-love and corporeal desires, receives the gifts of healings.
4. Namely, light perceptible to the senses.
5. Indeed, spiritual light.
6. Namely, those who are moved toward God.
7. The mode of being presents God as the natural principle, and the mode of well-being and happiness presents God as the end; toward whom the will of the soul hastens, whoever burns with the desire to reform their longing in God. The unity of these is the basis of beatitude, which comes through grace, presenting God, who is by nature superior to every principle and end, and granting to those who have a natural

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beginning and end that they may, through grace, lack beginning and end.

8. The transformation that occurs through grace, for the sake of attaining divinity, is an excess from those things circumscribed by a natural beginning and end.
9. A mystical expression by the demonstration of future judgment.
10. First, one seeks to mortify sin in the will and the will in sin, and then investigates by what method and manner these are to be mutually mortified. Again, after these and other things are perfectly mortified in sequence, one seeks life in the virtue of the will and the will of virtue; and then seeks by what method and manner the mutual life of these is to be constituted. Therefore (and let me say it as if defining), seeking is the desire for something desirable; searching, however, is the method by which the desire for that desirable thing is to be fulfilled.
11. He who has mortified the will to sin has been made conformed to the likeness of the death of Christ; and he who has resurrected the will to justice has been made conformed to the likeness of His resurrection.
12. Sin and the will, having been mutually mortified, hold a double indifference and as it were a kind of stupor between them; and justice and the will, which mutually have life, are endowed with a double sense.
13. Another consideration of the same matters.
14. The mind, moved by mere desire toward the unknown author of things, only seeks; reason, however, strives by various arguments to search out the true principles in things.

## QUESTION LX

"LIKE SPOTLESS AND UNBLEMISHED LAMBS OF CHRIST;  
INDEED FOREKNOWN BEFORE THE  
FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, BUT MADE MANIFEST  
IN THE LAST TIMES FOR YOUR SAKE." OF WHOM  
DOES HE SAY 'FOREKNOWN'?

## BOOK ONE

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The mystery of Christ, the text of Scripture calls Christ, and the great Apostle openly shows this when he says: "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest" (Colossians 1:26); that is, of course, the same as Christ, calling the mystery Christ. However, this is clearly a secret, not explainable by the power of words, nor intelligible by any sense of the mind. It is the union of divinity and humanity according to the hypostasis; it compels humanity to be one with the divinity, making one person composed of both; yet, in such a way that, although they are distinguished by nature, the essential difference is not in the slightest degree diminished. And thus, I say, their person becomes one, while the natural distinction remains uninjured, by which, even after the union, the natural quantity of both, even united, is preserved without any diminution. For where the union is, there is no trace of any mutation or alteration; the union was accompanied by the sincere and true essence of both of the united, and the essential nature of each was preserved. Therefore, the nature of each, even after the union, remains entirely uninjured and complete, so that neither of the two loses anything of its own nature because it was united.

For it was necessary for the Creator of all things, both who became through nature by economy what He was not, and who was by nature what He was, and who became by nature according to economy, to preserve Himself unchanged. For God is not by nature subject to change, in whom no movement is ever conceived; of which, among the moved, there is the turning. This is the great and hidden mystery. This is the blessed one, by whom the One who established all things is the end. This is the divine purpose preordained from the beginning of all things, which we say is defined as the preordained end, for the sake of which all things exist, but itself for no one's sake. To this end, God brought forth the essences of beings. This is primarily the end of providence and the things foreordained;

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according to it, the end of those made by God is the recapitulation in Him. This is what describes all the ages, and the infinitely preceding and countless, eternally preexisting great will of God showing the mystery, of which the angel himself, the Word of God made flesh, became man. And He, if it is right to say, made manifest the innermost depth of the Father's goodness, and showed the end in Him, through which the creation received the beginning of being. For through Christ, that is, the mystery according to Christ, all the ages, and all that is in them, in Christ, have received both the beginning of being and the end. For the union of the ages was preordained, of limit and indefiniteness, and of measure and immeasurableness, and of end and infinity, and of creator and creation, and of rest and movement; which in Christ, when He was revealed in the last times, became. Giving fulfillment to the foreknowledge of God through itself, so that the things moving according to nature might stand immovable in substance, having utterly departed from movement, and might take the experiential knowledge of the one in whom they were deemed worthy to stand, unchanged and equally enduring, providing the enjoyment of the One made known to them.

For the Word knows the divine knowledge in two ways: one, relative, as existing in a single word and in concepts; and the other, according to the effect of the known through experience, which has no sensory perception, by which we are governed according to the present life. But the truly true knowledge is in the experience alone, according to the effect, without word and concepts, fully giving the perception of the known through grace; by which, according to the future end, we receive the vision of God, ever working beyond nature. And the relative knowledge, as existing in word and concepts, they say is a moving kind of knowledge, related to the effect in the activity of knowing. But the knowledge according to the effect, giving the perception of the known through experience, is said to be a subtractive kind of knowledge from the knowledge that exists in words and concepts.

For the wise men say that it is impossible for the Word concerning God to coexist with the experience of God; the perception of God is the understanding of Him through experience. By "Word concerning God," I

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mean the analogy of the knowledge concerning Him derived from the beings; by "perception," I mean the experience of the supernatural goods through participation; and by "understanding," I mean the simple and unified knowledge of Him derived from the beings. Perhaps this is also made clear in other matters; if the experience of this thing suppresses the word concerning it, and the perception of this thing works the understanding concerning it. By "experience," I mean the knowledge according to the effect, which follows the word in everything; by "perception," I mean the participation in the known, manifested with every understanding. And the great Apostle, perhaps mystically teaching this, says, "Whether prophecies will be abolished, whether tongues will cease, or whether knowledge will vanish," evidently speaking about the knowledge that is sustained in word and concepts.

This mystery was foreknown before all the ages to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: to the Father according to will, to the Son according to operation, and to the Holy Spirit according to cooperation. For there is one knowledge of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, because there is also one essence and power. For the Father did not remain ignorant of the Son's incarnation, nor the Holy Spirit, since the whole mystery of our salvation through the incarnation, which the Son operates, was wholly in the Father according to essence. He was not incarnate, but He willed the Son's incarnation; and the whole Holy Spirit was in the Son according to essence, not incarnate, but cooperating with the Son in the ineffable incarnation for us.

Therefore, whether someone calls Him Christ, or the mystery of Christ, the only knowledge and essence of this is with the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And let no one be perplexed, how Christ, being one of the Holy Trinity, is foreknown by It. For he knows that Christ was not foreknown as God, but as man— that is, His incarnation for man. For the always-being, from the always-existing, is never foreknown by cause and reason. For foreknowledge is of those who have a beginning of being through cause. Therefore, Christ was foreknown, not as He was by

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nature for Himself, but as He was revealed in economy, becoming later for us.

For it was necessary that the creator according to the nature of the essence of beings, and the creator according to grace of the things that have become divine, should be made manifest; so that He, the giver of being, might also be seen as the one who is always gracious. For since none of the beings knows itself at all, nor anything else according to essence, it is fitting that neither of the things that will come into being has any foreknowledge according to nature, except for God, who knows Himself and what is by essence, and all things made by Him, and who, before they come into being, foreknew their existence, and who will, according to grace, take delight in those who are, revealing to them their own and one another's nature. He gives them knowledge of what they are by essence, and He manifests the words of their generation that proceed from Him in one form.

For when someone says that Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world, it is as though He was known with those to whom He was later revealed in the last times. For those who existed before the foundation of the world, together with the foreknown Christ, were not truly one in essence with the truth, bringing in the logical essence that is eternal with God. We are misled, for it is not at all possible to say that they became with Christ as He is, and again, that His whole being was ever separated; for if it is in Him that the end of the ages is brought to completion, and the standing still of the moving things, in which nothing at all of the beings will ever be turned. But the Christ of Scripture is spoken of as spotless and pure, for according to soul and body, He is entirely free from the corruption of sin. For His soul had no blemish of wickedness, nor did His body have any stain of sin.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The end or definition is the limit of those things which, having attained a limit by nature. Measure is the universal circumscription of quantity, and the end of the ages and temporal natures. The limit or extremity is

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the circumscription of those things which, because they have been brought forth, are limited by beginning and end. A creature is the substance of those things that, by production, come into existence from nothing. The union of these, he says, according to the hypostasis was preordained and decreed by Providence, in order that, from the time they had their origin, the existence of things according to essence might be preserved, and also that, through union with God, all things might be transferred to immutability, and subsist, thus truly and indeed, by divine grace, would obtain existence.

2. He says there are two kinds of knowledge: one is set in reason and divine thoughts, concepts of things in the mind, presented without sense but according to their form; the other is in act, solely without reason and the thoughts of the mind, having the pleasure derived from the true forms of things.
3. Since through knowledge, that which knowledge is of, the reason (or speech) is usually marked, it excites the desire for those things which it moves, towards that which is to be enjoyed, which is shown.
4. Every trial or experience of a thing precedes the reason of knowledge; because only through the trial of a thing, sweet pleasure and enjoyment come to life, which is compared to it.

## QUESTION LXI

"THAT IT IS THE TIME TO BEGIN THE JUDGMENT FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD; AND IF IT FIRST BEGINS FROM US, WHAT WILL BE THE END OF THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL OF GOD? AND IF THE RIGHTEOUS IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR? WHAT IS MEANT BY, 'IT IS THE TIME TO BEGIN THE JUDGMENT FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD,' AND BY, 'IF THE RIGHTEOUS IS SCARCELY SAVED'?"



## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

God, who created human nature, did not implant the sense of pleasure or pain in it from creation; but He constructed a certain power of the mind for pleasure, by which, through secret reasons, it would be free to enjoy it. This power (the natural desire of the mind for God) as soon as the first man was born, being devoted to the senses, in the first movement immediately had pleasure diffusing unnaturally into the sensible things. To this, by providence, God, who looks after our salvation, applied a certain avenging force, pain, so that through wisdom, the law of death, limiting the unnatural desire of the mad mind stirred up towards sensible things, He struck deep roots in the nature of the body.

From this, because of the pleasure added to nature, which is foreign to reason, pain in turn arose from reason; through many hardships and labors in which, and from which, death is easily produced, removing unnatural pleasure; yet not completely destroying it; for through the grace of divine pleasure, it has the power to shine in the mind. For every labor, by the virtue of its origin, having as its cause the pleasure of its origin, is clearly due, in which the nature of things to be borne exists, as many as are participants in nature. For pleasure, beyond nature, is certainly accompanied by labor, and in all these, the law of pleasure, without a cause (from no prior author), preceded its origin, I call this pleasure without cause, which is from transgression, which indeed does not follow any previous labor.

Therefore, since after the transgression all men had pleasure, from their own origin, the preceding nature, no one was naturally immune from the stain of pleasure from the beginning, but as if due to the nature of the universe, labors were paid, by which pleasure is prepared and even death is sustained: and there was no method of asserting freedom for those whom unjust pleasure tyrannized, and who were bound by rightful labors of nature, and for whom death was the most just companion. But it was necessary to abolish the most unjust pleasure, and its cause, which induced the most just

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labors, by which man, miserably toiling, was torn apart (for which, from the corruption of pleasure and desire, the first origin was, and in the decay of death, the end of life ceased), and for the restoration of the laboring nature, the labor and the death of the unjust were simultaneously devised and without cause (not induced by any fault), without cause and without guilt, so that its origin would not precede pleasure; and it would be unjust that it would not succeed a life of desire at all: so that, indeed, being intercepted in the middle, unjust pleasure and the death of labor would abolish the unjust, which arose from pleasure and desire, the origin and the cause of death caused by the destruction of nature, the most just end; and again the human race would be free from pleasure and pain, receiving nature; by which it shone from the beginning, with clarity and happiness, which no marks of those things, subject to birth and death, would defile.

Therefore, since God was perfect by nature, the Word of God became a perfect man, from an intelligent soul and a body naturally mortal, similar to us in reason, with the one exception of sin, existing as such; He Himself did not, by transgression, have in Himself unlearned pleasure or desire, having the preceding temporal birth from a woman, although He took upon Himself the labor induced by His supreme humanity, accepting the end of nature's existence, willingly within Himself; so that, unjustly suffering and dying, He would overthrow the origin of procreation, which was being oppressed by iniquitous pleasure and desire; for which, as a debt, the death of the Lord would not be dissolved, but rather would be opposed against it; and would abolish the just end of nature by the death of the body, which indeed unjust pleasure and desire had corrupted, and which He would rightly avenge, so that the author of its origin would not remain.

For it was fitting, it was truly fitting, that the Lord, who by nature was wise, just, and powerful, in that way in which He was wise, should not be ignorant of the mode of healing; in that way in which He was just, not by force openly, should bring salvation to the man, who by his own will had made himself subject to sin; in that way in which He was omnipotent, His remedies of healing would never fail.

## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

Thus the Lord clearly exhibited the aspect of wisdom in the mode of healing He entered into, without any change in Himself, and without the slightest stain upon Himself, becoming man. And of justice He revealed fairness, showing the great magnitude of His inclination to our benefit; submitting to the power of suffering in nature, which was bound to death, by willing submission; and He made that same suffering the instrument to abolish sin, and the death induced by it: pleasure, namely, and the pain or labor which arose from its cause; in which the power of sin and death resided; which power is the force of sin in pleasure, and the power of death, which consists in pain. For plainly, in the power of nature's suffering and mortality, the power of both pleasure and pain exists. For while we strive to avoid the painful sensation of sorrow, we take refuge in pleasure and desire, in order to alleviate nature from the weight of sorrow's agony: and while we try to blunt the sting of pain with the allure of pleasure, we confirm more strongly the bond against us, which is the power of pleasure, disconnected from pain, and we are unable to achieve it through labors.

Furthermore, He clearly displayed the power of His excellence, showing it through the opposites He Himself endured, creating the unchangeable origin of nature. For by suffering and stain, He brought immunity from them; by shortening the labor, He brought remission; and finally, by death, He granted eternal life to nature, restoring it; through which He Himself, in poverty and flesh, labored, renewing nature's state; and by His incarnation, He granted the grace of deification, surpassing all the power of nature, giving it as a gift to nature.

Therefore, God truly became man, and gave a different origin to the nature of the second birth, ending in the future life through the shortening of labor and the pleasure of that life. For just as the first parent, Adam, through his transgression of the divine command, gave rise to a different origin of birth, consisting of pleasure and desire, and ending in death with intermediate labor and sorrow, contrary to what he had originally received, he was led by later counsel, and at the suggestion of the serpent, he found pleasure not following the previous labor, but rather, it would give way to labor and sorrow; from his own flesh, he fathered offspring in his manner,

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all subject to the same fate, being led by labor and sorrow to the precipice of death. Thus, the Lord made Himself man, and from the Holy Spirit He made a different origin for the second birth, a just origin in Adam's manner, by taking upon Himself the death that was most unjust, that is, because He did not receive the origin of His birth in the unjust pleasure and desire from the transgression of the first parent; He took away and abolished both extremes (that is, the beginning and end of human generation, which were not of divine counsel from the start), and He freed all those spiritually reborn from their due punishment and guilt; for they no longer had the desire from Adam's birth, but instead, the pain that works in them, brought by Adam's authoring, not as a debt or punishment from sin, but as a necessary measure of counsel, against sin, and for its abolition, death. Wherever, therefore, there was no pleasure from the parent, whose nature is avenger of the offense, there exists plainly the beginning of eternal life. For just as Adam's life was bound with desire, becoming the parent of death and decay, so too, the Lord, who for Adam's sake underwent death, became the parent of eternal life, since He was free from that desire which comes from Adam.

Since, therefore, I believe the speech has well distinguished the reason by which the desire from Adam's birth oppressed nature, and how that desire provided nourishment for death, and also the reason by which the Lord, with greater humanity, began His birth in the flesh, He took away both (namely the desire and pleasure from Adam, and the death which was induced by it), together with Adam's sin, abolishing the penalty imposed upon him; for it could not be that one who did not touch that origin by which death grew into its end, would be destined for the destruction of death. Therefore, as I said, this was distinguished in the Scriptures, as long as the signs of Adam's origin and end (that is, his birth and death) dominantly ruled over nature by force, it was not time for judgment to begin, for the complete condemnation of sin. But when the Word of God appeared in the flesh, and a perfect man existed, with sin alone removed, He became the nature of Adam in the flesh, willing to bear punishment, and condemned sin in the flesh, dying innocently for the wicked, for He was just; and He turned the use of death upside down, performing this, that this condemnation of sin

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would not belong to nature; it was time for judgment to begin, through the opposing condemnation of death with sin.

For example: sin, from the beginning, as if bait presented to Adam, was the cause of his seduction; by which, forming pleasure and insinuating itself into the innermost parts of nature, and as if clinging to a nail, it condemned all of nature to death, pushing the nature of those who are born into nothingness and the destruction of death through man. For this also was the work of the sower of sin and the wickedest parent of malice, the devil, who had also previously, through pride, cast himself out of the divine brightness, and, in his envy toward us and God, had driven Adam out of Paradise; with this mind and plan, that he might abolish the works of God, and destroy what exists in the nature of things. For the most impure head envies not only us, for that clarity which is set in God as the reward of virtue contending with each other, but even God, for that power of praise in every way, through which He confers salvation.

Therefore, he dominated all nature through his power, which through transgression had been invaded by death; having as a sign of his power and rule, that which, from the breach of nature, he first began, pleasure and desire: for this reason, nature itself was condemned to death. But the Lord, having become man, and not assuming the wicked pleasure preceding His carnal birth, for which through death a just condemnation against nature had been decreed, but, willingly assuming death in His mortal nature, which is natural, He received it; and in dying, He overturned the use of death, which now in Him is not the condemnation of nature, but of sin. For it could not be that in Him death would be the condemnation of nature, for He did not have its origin from pleasure and desire; but, rather, the destruction of the sin of the first parent, by which the fear of death had held all nature in bondage.

For indeed in Adam, death was the condemnation of nature, which had its origin in his own pleasure; justly, death in Christ was the condemnation of sin, in whom the world again received the origin of nature, freed from pleasure and desire, so that just as in Adam, sin through death had condemned nature to destruction because of pleasure, and the time had

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come for nature to be condemned by death for the cause of sin; so in Christ, nature for the sake of justice condemns sin through death, and the time comes for sin to be condemned by death, on account of the justice of nature, which in Christ had completely banished the origin of pleasure and desire: by which merit, for all, death's condemnation was necessarily like a companion of debt. Thus indeed, in Adam, because of sin, death is the condemnation of nature: but in Christ, for the sake of justice, it is the condemnation of sin. For he who suffers the condemnation of nature for the cause of sin, justly endures death; but he who suffers with no fault of sin, but rather indulgently according to the dispensation of nature, willingly assumes the death induced by sin, that it may perish.

Just as, therefore, because of Adam, who, through disobedience, had established the law of the pleasure of generation, and because of whom nature was condemned, and death was introduced, all the descendants of Adam, by the law of birth which has desire, necessarily, whether they wanted it or not, also had that death, by which nature had been condemned, joined with the power of their birth; and it was time for nature to be condemned for sin, as long as the law of constant desire governed nature's birth: so, because of Christ, who by His birth, by constant desire, utterly destroyed the law of nature, and, because of the death He took on for the cause of nature, He voluntarily assumed the use of death, in order to condemn sin; all those who are born again through the Spirit by the will of Christ through the baptism of regeneration, having been freed from the constant desire of the birth of Adam by grace, and having received, through baptism, the grace of immunity from sin, and the complete and untainted power of mystical adoption in the Spirit, they have, by merit, truly received the use of death, so that they may condemn sin in the flesh; in general, as regards nature, by the gift of grace for the great mystery of the assumed human nature, through which the incarnation of the Word shone forth, it is the time: but properly, in the act, it is the gift of grace, the time when each one, through baptism, has received the grace of adoption; according to which, by the precepts of the mind, having obtained a spiritual and laborious generation, through

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many troubles and labors that are induced, they assume the use of death for the condemnation of sin.

For, no longer, because of sin, does he who is baptized and keeps the commands of baptism, as if by the debt of sin, pay the penalty of death; but he admits the use of death for the condemnation of sin, by which he is mystically transferred to divine and immortal life. For the holy ones, because of truth and justice, have strenuously completed the course of the present life through many troubles and labors; freeing nature in themselves from the condemnation of death, which is from sin; turning the instrument of death, which was to bring about the destruction of nature, into death itself and its destruction, imitating in this the Savior Jesus. For indeed sin, in those who commit it according to Adam's way, has made death the instrument of nature's destruction; much rather, in those who work justice through faith in Christ, nature finds death as the instrument of the destruction of sin.

From which, therefore, the mystery of the assumed human nature arose, and He who put on flesh, God, in those who are born according to Him through the Spirit, has completely taken away the origin of nature, which was formed by the law of pleasure, bound to desire. The time, as I have said, has come for the judgment to begin at the house of God; that is, for sin to be condemned, the beginning of whose condemnation, through suffering and torture, was brought forth by the faithful and those who have acknowledged the truth, and who, by baptism, have expelled the origin of desire and lust.

For these, indeed, He has called the house of God, as the most divine Apostle testifies, saying: 'But Christ is in His own house; and we are that house.' But Peter, the prince of the apostles, confirms this with the following words, saying: 'If judgment begins with us (that is, the judgment begins), what will be the end of those who do not believe the gospel of God?' As if to say: When we ourselves, who by the gift of God's grace through the Spirit have deserved to become the house of God, must necessarily show such great patience in suffering for the condemnation of sin, and that, even though righteous, we must willingly endure death like criminals and the wicked with a joyful heart; for what will be the end, or judgment, of those

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who not only have kept the origin of Adam, which is bound to nature's dominion, with desire and lust, both in mind and body, will and nature, to the end, but also have not received the exhortation of God the Father through the incarnate Son; nor have received Him, acting as Mediator and the Son, for reconciliation with the Father, who for us, by the Father's will and His own will, delivered Himself to death, so that He might glorify us with the splendor of His divinity as much as He Himself, for our sake, endured His passions and evil deeds. For this, I believe, is the gospel of God, and God's message and exhortation to mankind through the incarnate Son; and to those who believe in Him, He graciously bestows the reward of reconciliation with the Father, granting the inherent deification.

Therefore, with the following words, the great apostle, lamenting the unbelievers, says: 'And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Certainly, calling the righteous, as is fitting, the one who is faithful, and who has kept the grace granted in baptism, and who, having been afflicted with many troubles and labors, has kept the adoption, which is through the Spirit, inviolate. But salvation, which is from God and His gift to the worthy, is the fullest grace of deification, which, in the end, even he who has pursued all things with the utmost divine diligence will scarcely obtain.

But the ungodly and the sinner, who are strangers to the evangelical grace: the ungodly indeed, because he does not believe in Christ; the sinner, however, because of the great corruption of passions in him and the stain of the origin of ancient sin. Or perhaps the Scripture calls him ungodly, who lacks the full knowledge of Christ; but the sinner, who, while he is a believer, as I myself am, transgresses the evangelical commandments, through which the sacred garment of incorruption remains clean, which is bound by holy baptism. The condition (that is, the ungodly and the sinners) is not unknown to those who have at least given some attention to the mystical knowledge. For what is said, where it clearly indicates the place, is not lacking in local circumscriptions: against which, when the place of the righteous is distinguished, there will be no place where the righteous can exist, who by grace has been made the place of the superior, that is, God



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Himself, promised by the divine oracle. For God is not where He is, but above every absolute where, in which all those who are to be saved will have a firm seat, according to what is written: 'Be to me a God for protection; and to a fortified place, that you may save me'; of whom whoever, in any way, does not partake of the felicity according to the necessity of his faculties, will be like a member of the body, which is without the vital operation and virtue of the soul.

Or again, because God will be the place of all the saved, uncircumscribed, continuous, and infinite, having become all things to all people according to the certain reasoning of justice; and indeed, who, according to the measure of the sufferings, by which in this age we are afflicted for justice, will magnificently be given to each one, just as the soul, for the faculty of each member, makes itself effective and connects the members so that they may exist and share in the duties of life; the ungodly and the sinner, where will they appear, whom this grace will fail? For who, having been unable to grasp the presence of God in the thing itself and exercised in it, so that it would be well and blessed for him, will be able to appear, who, having suffered the loss of divine life, surpassing all ages, places, and times, has fallen away?

Therefore, either in the former sense, we affirm: the ungodly and the sinner, wherever they will appear, will by no means be exempt from life; to whom, namely, the one who flees all circumscription and exists in every place, superior, life will be lacking. Or in the latter and following sense, we deny: Where will he appear, who does not have God as the sustaining life, so that it may be well and blessed for him, who will be the place for all the worthy? How will he be, who will not have God as his place, through the firm seat of being well and blessed in God, and through the perpetuity of life? And to put it briefly, if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will happen to him, or what will become of him, who had no measure of piety and virtue, as long as his life survived?

## SCHOLIUM

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1. Pleasure and pain were not created together with the nature of the flesh; but transgression, one indeed invented to the ruin of the will, the other, by a just punishment, brought death to nature: by which, indeed, pleasure and lust would bring about the spontaneous death of the soul, the guilt of sin; while pain, through destruction, would abolish the very form of the flesh.
2. God, by His providence, arranging human affairs, granted pain to the nature of the flesh to chastise the lust of the will, and death, which He is the cause of.
3. Those labors that the soul finds of its own accord, and those that it endures against its will, take away pleasure, which actually controls and stops its motion; yet they do not destroy or abolish the power of the law, like nature's power inherent to generation.
4. The unjust pleasure, which arises from the transgression of nature, is called the law of sin.
5. The Lord's labor and death are said to be a medium to abolish the extremes, namely, He who had a beginning free of pleasure, and He who, for our sake, bore the death of divine flesh, cleansed from the sinful life; according to which, He willingly bore both birth and death for our sake, taking away death from us, which had its origin in pleasure and sinful life, and transferred us to another life, free from the temporal origin and end, a life which was made not by nature, but by grace.
6. It could in no way happen that nature, which was subject both to voluntary pleasure and lust, and to violent pain, would be restored to its original life, unless the Creator became man, taking on pain by His will; indeed, this was devised to correct the voluntary lust of nature, which did not have its origin from pleasure and lust; by this, He would free nature from the guilt of birth, taking on a birth which did not have its origin from pleasure and lust.
7. The Lord's end, indeed, through death.
8. The power of nature in suffering.
9. How we may increase the penalty of nature's pain, while we try to ease it with the medicine of pleasure.

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10. God's wisdom is shown in this, that truly, man was made of nature. Justice, in that He took on the power of suffering by nature in a way similar to ours. Power, in that through suffering, affliction, and death, He prepared eternal life for nature and an unchangeable immunity.
11. What was from the law of sin, pleasure, leading to the destruction of carnal birth, He removed, and by His grace, those who are born in the Spirit are raised in the Lord, which previously led to the condemnation of nature and now grants to them death for the condemnation of sin.
12. Human nature, from the beginning of its transgression of generation, took on pleasure from the seed for conception; and its end, death, which is formed by pain and affliction through the lapse of destruction. But the Lord, who was free from the carnal principle of birth, was not even subject to its end (that is, natural death).
13. The Devil, while he waits for the nature of the created beings to finally fall into nothingness, made every effort to make man guilty of transgressing the divine command.
14. The Devil, who envies God and us, persuades man with deceit to envy God, so that he would transgress the command; he was the instigator. But he envies God, lest His truly praiseworthy virtue, by which He grants man divinity, be revealed; openly, however, he does not want man to become a partner in divine clarity in the likeness, due to the merit of virtue.
15. The general condemnation of the law through the transgression of the dominant nature is the true incarnation of God; but the specific condemnation of that law, which each Christian regenerates by his will in the Christian rite.
16. He called the innate deification that which, according to its appearance, is truly a manifestation of divinity, which has no origin, but in the worthy ones, is a greater contemplation of its revelation.
17. This, where and how it should be understood.
18. He who is not going to receive the pure divine life, in which there is absolutely no reason for limitation, will not be free from pain, since he will have a life that is perpetually generated, whose substance is limiting

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(that is, containing), not innate and released from all local positions and temporal motion, and empty of all comprehension (and thus limitation). For divine life, which exceeds every thought of the mind, although it offers itself to be enjoyed, to those who are partakers of it through grace, is not, however, to be comprehended. It will always remain incomprehensible, even in the participation of those who enjoy it, because through nature, like innate, it exists as infinite.

19. God, according to His one and the same will of infinite goodness, will contain all, both angels and men, both good and bad: but not all will be participants of God in the same way, who Himself is untainted and absolute, to all imparting His essence, but each according to their capacity and proper reason. For those who, by keeping the will of nature in a balanced way, have made themselves capable of its reason, according to the entire reason of blessed eternity, will, through their willingness to obey the divine will, receive divine goodness, with divine life shining upon them, according to what is granted to angels or men. But those who have made their will unequal to nature in all things and have made the reasons of nature itself dissipate, according to the entire reason of blessed eternity, will lose whatever goodness is theirs due to their stubbornness and dissension from the divine will of obedience, along with the miserable and deadly eternity, which is their destiny, through the division from the divine. These will be separated from God, who, by their own free will, did not preserve the path of goodness for the safety of blessedness, through which divine life was made to shine. Therefore, the reason of nature will be the standard in judgment of each will, examining its movement, whether it pursued it for evil and misery, or for good and happiness. And it will be according to whether anyone will share in divine life or be deprived of its communion. For by the reason of existence and its perpetuity, God will contain all in His presence; but with blessed perpetuity, He will contain only the holy angels and men in a particular way. Those who are not such will be deprived of the fruit of miserable perpetuity, in a tempered condition.

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### QUESTION LXII

WHAT IS IT THAT THE HOLY PROPHET ZECHARIAH SAYS?

"AND I LIFTED MY EYES AND SAW: AND BEHOLD,  
A FLYING SCROLL, TWENTY CUBITS IN LENGTH AND TEN  
CUBITS IN WIDTH. AND HE SAID TO ME: THIS IS THE CURSE  
THAT GOES FORTH OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH."

AND A LITTLE LATER: "AND I WILL BRING IT FORTH, SAYS  
THE ALMIGHTY LORD, AND IT SHALL ENTER THE HOUSE OF  
THE THIEF AND THE HOUSE OF HIM WHO SWEARS FALSELY  
IN MY NAME; AND IT SHALL REMAIN IN THE MIDST OF HIS  
HOUSE, AND IT SHALL CONSUME IT, BOTH ITS TIMBER AND

ITS STONES." WHAT, THEN, IS THE SCROLL, AND ITS  
MEASURE, BOTH OF LENGTH AND OF WIDTH? WHY IS IT  
FLYING? WHO, INDEED, ARE THE THIEF AND THE PERJURER?

WHAT, MOREOVER, IS THEIR HOUSE? WHAT ARE THE  
TIMBER AND THE STONES?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

He who had said, "I have multiplied visions and been likened by the hands of the prophets," was foretelling the wondrous coming of Himself in the flesh, for the sake of human salvation, through various symbols, imparting beforehand indications through different prophets, as much as each could grasp. Therefore, granting the great Zechariah also the initiation into His mysteries, and as if bringing before his eyes the power of His future coming in the flesh for understanding, He wisely presented to him the scythe to contemplate. Indeed, teaching that He who had mystically represented Himself in manifold visions of the prophets would willingly and truly enter into our nature's formation, so that in the very event of the matter, He might show forth the truth present, which had been prefigured by prior symbols.

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The scythe, therefore, is our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God and the Word; He indeed exists by nature as simple in Himself and always remains the same. Yet, for my sake, by the assumption of flesh, He became, according to the manner of intelligent beings, composite in person (in a way known to Him alone through His reason). Thus, neither by the complete union with the flesh in person does He admit any confusion of nature into one, nor by the complete natural distinction from the flesh does He separate into two sons. Regarding the union in person, I call it complete or ultimate, meaning utterly indivisible; while regarding the natural distinction, I likewise call it complete and in every way unconfused and preserved.

For the mystery of the divine incarnation, though composed of natures that are diverse, does not at all introduce any distinction in person; nor does the union in person result in any confusion of these natures into one. The former ensures that the mystery of the Trinity does not admit any addition, while the latter ensures that nothing alien or dissimilar by nature arises in relation to the divinity. For the conjunction of the two natures was accomplished into one person, not into one nature, so that both the unity of person, arising from the conjunction of the natures through union, shines forth, and the natural distinction of the things that came together to be indivisibly united remains credible, with their natural properties intact and beyond all alteration and confusion.

For if the natures had come together in such a way as to produce one nature, the mystery of our salvation would be entirely unknown to us, since there would be no way or reason for us to recognize the condescension of God toward us and for our benefit. This would be the case if the flesh, through the union, were changed into the nature of divinity, or if the divinity were converted into the substance of flesh, or finally, if both were mixed together in some way to produce another nature different from them both, confused and unable to retain the unaltered essence of either nature from which it arose. For whether the flesh was transformed into the nature of divinity, or the nature of divinity was transformed into flesh, or, finally, the union of the natures resulted in the creation of some other nature,

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compelling the natures into one nature, I can recognize no mystery of the divine incarnation—one in which, after the union, I cannot find a distinction between the flesh and the divinity within the mystery.

But if, in Christ, the natural distinction of flesh and divinity exists after the union (for never were the divinity and the flesh the same in essence), the union of the things that came together did not occur so that one nature would arise but so that one person would be established. And in this sense, we find no distinction whatsoever in Christ. For the Word is the same as His flesh according to the person. In whatever sense Christ admits any distinction, He cannot in any way be wholly one. And in whatever sense He admits no distinction whatsoever, He is entirely and always rightly affirmed to be one.

Since all distinction, insofar as it is distinction, necessarily belongs to the subject quantity of the things distinguished (for without quantity, distinction could never exist, and quantity cannot be expressed without number), it is appropriate, solely for the purpose of signifying the distinction of natures from which Christ consists after the union, to use number—to indicate that the natures remain unchanged after the union. This is not to divide the union of the things that have come together into one person by the addition of number. And we declare this understanding, namely, that when speaking of the person, we do not apply number in any way. For where no distinction at all is understood, no quantity is implied. And where no quantity is implied, neither is number, which expresses quantity, admitted. Thus, He is composite in terms of person, according to which He is understood as one and the same, entirely singular. In this way, we preserve the singular and unique person while confessing the distinction of the natures that have converged into one person. This is the One whom the wondrous Zechariah beheld in the form of the flying scythe. For the Word of God possesses the power to cut away all the force of vice and ignorance.

Its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits. This signifies that Christ, God and the Word, is measured by ten cubits—related to actions and divine commandments—through the operations of providence, as they extend in multiplicity. For the Word of God is multiplied in the ten

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commandments, which, by prescribing what must be done as duty and forbidding what must be avoided, encompass all movements of the free mind of those guided by providence. But as He also became flesh and fully assumed humanity, He is extended to twenty cubits, on account of the composition of the elements displayed in the senses of the body. There are, indeed, five senses and four elements, from which, when united, human nature arises. If you combine five over four, you will evidently produce the number twenty. Scripture called its length the measure of dispensation, on account of its loftiness and because the mystery of the divine incarnation surpasses all nature.

The fact that it is flying signifies that it has nothing earthly, and also its swiftness and rapidity of motion—and, in a word, the abbreviation of the Word—encompassing all human salvation in the one mind of those being saved, which depends solely on faith and a good conscience. For nothing is swifter than inward faith, and nothing more straightforward than confessing with the mouth the grace that faith holds. One demonstrates the living love of the believer toward the Creator; the other, a pious affection of the soul toward one's neighbor. But love, or charity, and true affection (that is, faith and a good conscience) are clearly the work and effect of the inward movement of the soul, which, in its origin, requires no external material at all. "For the Lord," it says, "will complete the shortened word upon the earth."

This is the curse which God the Father sent forth upon the face of the whole earth—a true curse of the true curse. For since, through transgression, the disobedience of Adam brought about a curse that prevented the commandment from growing to produce the fruits of righteousness, by which creation would be blessed, the natural blessing of God the Father entered into Adam's curse. Becoming a curse of the sin of the curse, it abolished the disobedience that had grown, to prevent the production of the fruits of unrighteousness, so that creation might cease to grow in sin. For, as the divine Apostle testifies, "He became a curse and sin for me," who dissolved my curse and takes away the sin of the world.

For I had a twofold curse as my companion: one was the result of my will, that is, sin, by whose merit the seed of virtue in the soul fell to the



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ground; the other was that by which, justly on account of my will, nature was subjected to death. This, of course, compelled unwilling nature by necessity to where the movements of my will, sown by the deliberation of the soul, had directed. To this curse, therefore, to which nature was subjected, the Creator of nature, God, willingly submitted Himself (namely, to death). By bearing the curse of sin flourishing in me through the will, He destroyed it through His own death on the cross. Thus, the curse and death of my God did not allow transgression to proceed to produce the fruits of unrighteousness, but instead brought about the blessing of divine righteousness and immortal life.

This scythe (namely, our Lord and God Jesus Christ) consumes the thief and the perjurer and overthrows his house. The thief and the perjurer is truly the wicked devil. He is a thief because, as a vile robber, he cunningly seduced and carried man out of paradise—God's work, creation, and possession—and dragged him into this place of misery. He also defiled the image of the divine majesty with the many stains of sins, seeking to usurp another's wealth as his own, greedily desiring the goods of others—not with the intention or purpose of preserving them, but to steal, kill, and destroy.

He is a perjurer as a liar and deceiver. Promising Adam the glory of divinity, he cast him into the reproach and injury of irrational beasts and, to speak more truthfully, inflicted upon him a reproach even greater than that of any beast. For, as much as the absence of reason in beasts brings injury, so much greater is the reproach of something unnatural compared to what is natural. He cast him outside the laws of immortality and defiled him with the garment of corruption. The house of this thief and perjurer is the present world of corruption and continuous confusion, which he subjected to himself after plundering man. In it, he has been permitted to act as a thief, for reasons known to the God who allowed it, as long as the motion of time continues in its cycle.

In this world, as in a house, the Word of God, through the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, took up residence, and, binding the devil, vanquished him. He entirely destroyed and consumed the wood and stones of this world, utterly eradicating statues, altars, and fixed idols. These were the means by which the devil—a supposed multiform and formless god, the

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utterly base father of error—was worshiped by those deceived in their error, being considered a deity. The devil used the madness of those whom he had deluded in error (he himself being far more mad) as evidence and material for his own glory. For what could be more irrational than an opinion that contradicts reality itself, which does not consist of any true nature?

In this house of the thief and perjurer (namely, the devil), that is, in this world, the most benevolent Redeemer of our souls and bodies took up residence in the flesh. He overturned it entirely in regard to its previous manner of error, and completely restored it in relation to the understanding of truth—that is, faith. To put it briefly, driving the robber from his stolen estates, He regained possession as the rightful Lord through the power of His own. He magnificently built His holy Church throughout the whole world.

Alternatively, the devil may be called a thief because, by craft and deceit, he still attempts to transfer human desires to himself. He is also a perjurer and a liar because he is a deceiver who, by raising false hopes, leads people of lighter character and understanding to abandon the good things they already have in hand. Through things that have the appearance of sweetness, he secretly imposes burdens on those who follow him. The house of this thief and liar is the disposition of any soul inclined to sin, in which the hardness and senseless apathy towards what is virtuous and dutiful act as stones, while the impure pyre of vices, ignited by what is pleasurable, acts as wood.

Could Scripture have fittingly called this disposition desire? For it is written that wood first corrupted its unnatural movement and that this faculty of the soul, much like the combustible nature of wood, is receptive to all vice and disturbance. Stones, perhaps hard and unyielding, symbolize the movements of anger, which are resistant to the reasoning of virtue. The Word of God abolishes and destroys all these things, along with the house (that is, the disposition) in which they reside. First, through faith, He drives out the one who once made his seat there through error—namely, the devil. Binding him with unbreakable chains, He plunders his house and expels the

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disposition that fuels vices and the hardness against what is virtuous and dutiful from the soul.

Or perhaps the stones indeed refer to the soul's inclination towards what is honorable and dutiful, as sloth, which with stupor takes away all sense of virtue; while the wood refers to a ready and incited soul towards what is evil. All of these things the Word does, expelling and removing from the hearts of the faithful, never ceasing to bring peace and reconcile into one body of virtues those who are far off and those who are near, dissolving the middle wall of separation (that is, sin), and abolishing the bond of iniquity and vice, and subjecting the sense of the flesh to the law of the spirit. For those who are far off, as I believe, He called them through the motions of a sensing soul, far from nature and strangers to the law of God; but those who are near, He called through the operations and virtues of an understanding soul, which are not far from the necessity of speech. These indeed He connects after the dissolution of the carnal law, joining them together by the spirit according to the method of virtue. For the middle wall, I think, He called the natural law of the body; but the masonry, which exists in the law of the flesh with vices and affections (that is, sin), He called the relation. For only with vices and disgraceful affections is there a relation to the natural law of nature (that portion of nature which is subject to affections, grief, and death), which is masonry, as if there were an intervening wall, dividing the body from the soul, reason, and speech of virtue. It does not allow the soul, through its action and cultivation, to pass over to the flesh. But the Word coming, and the law of nature being defeated (that portion of nature which is subject to affections), overthrew the unnatural relation of those affections.

This is my Lord and my God, Christ Jesus, whom the prophet saw in the form of a sickle, twenty cubits long (so as to encompass the operation of all senses in sensible things) and ten cubits wide; for indeed, my God and Savior is the limit and end of every rational motion. For they say that counting parts belongs solely to reason by nature. But the whole composition and end of the number ten exists. Therefore, the reason and the Word of God not only encompass the powers of sensing but also the operations of understanding, so that He is not only the Creator of bodies,

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but also of spirits. The sickle, however, was called by name in the vision, not only as one who reaps the wickedness of nature, which its Creator is not, gathering what He has not scattered, but also as one who cuts and within the divine storehouses compels those who will attain salvation; moreover, He is also in the works of virtues, joined to the powers of the soul dedicated to action.

But if it seems to anyone that the sacred Scripture text designates two persons and the same number of houses, which the Word destroys, or reason, when it says: "And He will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely in My name," we know that it signifies the operations of the devil's error in place of two persons: that is, two kinds of operations, and two general ones, which encompass the rest, calling them houses dedicated to the affections of human nature. Consider, for instance, when by the trick of seduction, that evil one, having robbed the inherent knowledge of God from nature, claims for himself and asserts it—he is a thief, striving to transfer the worship of the divine to himself; while, drawing the speculative powers of the understanding mind away from spiritual, created things, he attaches all the force of the mind to the external vision of sensible things. But when, beginning with natural movements, he draws the mind's energy toward unnatural deception, and with his desire for things that seem good and honorable, he entices with the allure of pleasure and attaches the mind to worse things, he falsely swears in the name of the Lord, leading the listening mind elsewhere than he had promised. Indeed, he is a thief, in the sense that he steals knowledge from nature; his house is the affection of the mind, which is at rest in error and ignorance. But the perjurer is one who compels the mental power to labor in vain in unnatural actions; his house is the mind's affection prone to the wickedness of sin.

Therefore, the devil, as I was saying, is a thief who perverts the knowledge of nature; the perjurer is one who darkens the operation of virtue by removing it from the rational conduct of action. Moreover, the house of the thief is the affection of the mind tangled in uncertain and deceptive reasoning; the house of the perjurer is the affection of the mind stained with the disgraceful impurity of passions. These, the saving Word of God,

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descending with human kindness, makes into a dwelling of God through the Spirit, replacing error and ignorance with the knowledge of truth; and instead of malice and depravity, it forms virtue and justice, in order to show His presence visibly to those who are worthy.

Thus, in place of persons, the various tricks and deceptions of the one and the same most wicked devil; in place of houses, the ways akin to the devil's modes. The affections of the souls who are influenced by them, and driven by them, Scripture calls houses. Again, the thief is one who, in order to deceive his listeners, cultivates divine speech and doctrine, whose force he does not know through his works. He turns mere oral expression into a pursuit of glory, seeking from the listeners a single praise of justice for what he says. And, to put it simply, he who has a life abhorrent to speech and an affection of the mind opposed to knowledge is a thief, who does not rightly shine with others' goods. To him, the Word rightly says: "But to the sinner, God says: Why do you recount My justices, and take My covenant upon your lips?"

And again, the thief is one who, with a conspicuous nature and character, does not reveal the fraudulent wickedness of the mind under a visible appearance; with a feigned appearance of piety and modesty, hiding the inner affection of the soul. Just as that one, through the utterance of learned speech, leads the mind of his listeners astray, so also he, by pretending to have the honesty of manners, deceives the perception of those observing him; upon whom it will similarly be said: "Be ashamed, you who are clothed in other people's clothes." And also: "And the Lord will strip them of their garments in that day." For I myself seem to hear these words of God speaking to me daily in the depths of my heart, as one who is liable to the punishment for both open crimes.

However, the perjurer is one who, falsely swearing in the name of the Lord, having professed to live according to the rule of virtue by a vow, pursues studies unrelated to this profession; and like me, he renders the covenant of a holier life null and void by his inactivity in fulfilling the commandments. And to sum it up, he is a liar and a perjurer, who, when he has chosen the path of a pious and religious life, does not die to this world

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perfectly, but rather remains a liar and perjurer; he who has sworn an oath to God, that is, who has vowed and promised an unblemished divine course, yet fails to complete it; and for this reason, he is devoid of all praise. For it is written, "Everyone who swears in it will be praised," that is, he who has publicly professed the life instituted by divine principles, fulfilling what he vowed with the truth of his works, in line with the justice of the deeds he vowed to perform.

But if he indeed has praise, he who fulfills his promises and vows, then, one who has sworn an oath to God, and is faithful to the truth, will be praised. Clearly, he will be marked with disgrace and dishonor, who has broken his own pact, just as one who has sworn to God and lied.

Their hearts, like certain houses (that is, each affection of the soul), the sickle (namely, the Word of God the Father, who is both knowledge and virtue by essence) completely perfects, abolishing the former state of each soul and leading both to the participation in its good that it lacks; and indeed, making the thief of knowledge, and the worker of virtue, indistinguishable; while the thief of modest demeanor, and milder manners, becomes the hidden cultivator of the affection of the soul; the perjurer, however, becomes the faithful keeper of promises, confirming his vows and commitments with works, sanctifying his promises by fulfilling the commandments.

## SCHOLIUM

1. See the mystery; see those who adopt the nature of the trap; see the destruction of the Italians and Nilus.
2. We do not assert distinct persons in Christ, because, even in God and the incarnate Word, the Trinity remains the Trinity, and no addition of persons was made to the holy Trinity by the incarnation. Indeed, we say that there are distinct natures, so that we do not assert that the Word assumed the flesh by a nature that is consubstantial.
3. He who does not maintain the distinction of natures does not have the grounds to assert what he professes: that the Word became flesh

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without any change, and does not know that in the one person of God and Christ, after the union, both what was assumed and what was assumed remain intact according to their nature.

4. For this reason, the Lord is called the sickle, and what is understood by its width in cubits.
5. For the same reason, it is said that the sickle has a length of twenty cubits.
6. What is the reason that the prophet saw a flying sickle?
7. Faith in God, through the power of hope, establishes perfect charity. A good conscience brings love for one's neighbor by observing the commandments. For a good conscience, accusing the transgression of the commandment, has nothing to accuse. These things are prepared only for their hearts, as they are believed, who seek true salvation.
8. In what way is the Lord a curse, and what curse is the curse of the curse?
9. What human desire stirred the earth into motion, and into it, even unwillingly, death drove?
10. Who is the thief and the perjurer?
11. Theft is the worst thing in nature, by which it was seduced, enslavement. Sacrifice, by which the devil slays what he has stolen by theft, is of the will, in regard to the divine life, a killing; and from its principles, perfect oblivion of memory. Destruction, which is formed by the privation of the knowledge of God, results in ignorance for those who are slain. Therefore, he steals, seizing the mind and reason, in order to deprive it of the life of virtue and knowledge.
12. What is the house of the thief and the perjurer?
13. The reason why the devil is permitted to plunder like a thief might be suggested: so that through the very danger of the deed, his wickedness and malice would be made known to all with greater hatred; and also, that the affections among all men might be exposed in the examination of probation, so that each one might bring forth as his own defense, the patron of his own conscience. For God does not need to learn from the danger of the deed, who by essence has knowledge of all things, even before they come into being.

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14. What are the trees, and what are the stones?
15. The overthrow of the house (that is, the world) for the parts of error, made by the incarnation.
16. The same things explained with another spiritual sense.
17. Another consideration of the same things with a spiritual sense.
18. He placed this consideration of moral sense, fitting for those who are vicious and lustful. For he who struggles so that he may be completely immovable in what is honest and of duty, is altogether easily movable with regard to evil. For it is impossible for him to be immovable in both.
19. The sense of motion, when connected with the operation of the mind, provides virtue combined with knowledge.
20. What is the reason that it was called the sickle?
21. To weave the speech with the practical powers of the mind, like a sickle in the hand of the reaper, to cut off vices or disturbances, and to gather virtues.
22. The devil is a thief, as the author of ignorance; and a perjurer, as the maker of evil and wickedness: whose house, as it were, consists of him who is held in ignorance, the seduced mind; but the wicked and criminal, the mind inclined to the lust of sin.
23. A beautiful contemplation, very appropriate and fitting for us, who, through the vain glory in which we labor, adulterate the honor of virtue and knowledge.
24. The thief is one who pretends to virtue with a deceptive nature, and with a hidden composition of morals; displaying the wickedness of the mind with a conspicuous appearance, gesture, and manner.
25. He who simulates knowledge with mere cultivated speech and learned utterance, steals the minds of his listeners for his own glory: similarly, one who simulates virtue with external appearance and modesty, steals the sight of those who gaze upon him for his own glory; and both, by stealing, lead into error: the one deceiving the minds and hearts of listeners, the other deceiving the bodily sense of those who look.
26. What does the perjurer want for himself?



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### QUESTION LXIII

AGAIN IT IS WRITTEN IN THE SAME PROPHET: AND HE SAID  
TO ME: WHAT DO YOU SEE? AND I SAID: I SEE, AND  
BEHOLD A WHOLE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND, AND A LAMP  
ABOVE IT; AND SEVEN LAMPS UPON IT, AND SEVEN PIPES TO  
THE LAMPS WHICH WERE UPON IT; AND TWO OLIVE TREES  
UPON IT: ONE AT THE RIGHT OF THE LAMP, AND ONE AT  
THE LEFT. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE LAMPSTAND,  
AND WHY IS IT GOLDEN? WHAT IS THE LAMP THAT IS ABOVE  
IT? WHAT ARE THE SEVEN LAMPS, AND WHAT ARE THE  
SEVEN PIPES TO THE SEVEN LAMPS? WHAT ARE THE TWO  
OLIVES? WHY ARE THEY PLACED AT THE RIGHT  
AND THE LEFT OF THE LAMP?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The magnificence of the holy Church, conspicuous with much light and remarkable brilliance, was once depicted by the prophet in a vision, outlining it to be considered through preceding figures and symbols. I think he depicted this vision in such variety to teach the power of the new mystery. Therefore, the lampstand is solid gold, to be celebrated with all praise, representing the Church of God; pure, untainted, undefiled, and sincere, bearing no loss of integrity, and capable of true light. For it is said that pure gold is such that, if it is dug from the earth, it does not darken or spoil with rust, nor does anything diminish or spoil it when it is heated in the furnace. Moreover, even with its own natural force and effectiveness, it strengthens the fixed edge, renewing and restoring it with increased power. Indeed, the most glorious Church of God is compared to such things, as it exhibits the purest form of gold: sincere, in the sense that it has nothing mixed with the mystery of the faith and theology, and nothing extraneous to it; pure and shining, as it is made bright and clearly visible by the radiance of virtues;

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undefiled, as it is not tainted by any filth of vices; unblemished, as it remains untouched by all wicked spirits; and not stained by any earthly misfortunes, nor turned to rust or darkness. It is secure in its integrity, and, as it were, undiminished, because, even in the furnace of persecutions, to which it is often subjected, and in the frequent storms of heresies, tested and proven, it does not relinquish anything of its doctrine, life, faith, or discipline, regardless of the severity of temptation or the contention of heresies. Just as anyone who meditates piously will strengthen his own mind and spirit. For those who are held by impiety, the light of true knowledge will show them; but those who are willing, it preserves and nourishes, guarding them, keeping their minds clear from the affliction of disease. It also recalls those who have stumbled or fallen, renewing the sick and weary mind with words of exhortation. Thus, we have explained the vision of the prophet's lampstand in one sense, through what has been said.

The lamp that is placed upon it is the paternal and true light, which enlightens every man coming into the world—our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by assuming our flesh, became the lamp and was called the light; that is, the natural wisdom of the Father and the word, which is preached in the Church of God with pious faith and whose life, established by the observance of the commandments, is exalted and shines among the nations, and gives light to all who are in the house (that is, in this world). As God and the Word Himself speaks in a certain place: “No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” Clearly calling Himself the lamp, as He, being God by nature, became man by dispensation; like the light by essence, uncircumscribed like the lamp, intervening in the soul, as fire, clear, contained in the flesh and adhering to it. And I think that the great David also understood this when he called the Lord the lamp, as he says: “Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.” For such is my Savior and God, who dispels the darkness of ignorance and vice. For this reason, Scripture also called the lamp (λύχνον\*) by this name. For λύχνος (that is, the lamp) is named from λύνειν τὸ νύχθος, which learned grammarians call the darkness. He, indeed, alone, like the lamp, dispels the gloom of ignorance, driving away the darkness of wickedness and

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vice, and becomes the means of salvation for all, leading them through virtue and knowledge to the Father, so that they may follow the path of justice by divine commandments and bring this into their minds. The lampstand, however, he called the holy Church, in which through the preaching of God, the shining word enlightens all who live in this world, as in a certain house, and illuminates them with the radiance of truth, filling all minds with divine knowledge.

The "modius," in the way symbols are shaped, is called by the Jews the synagogue, that is, the bodily worship of the law, in which, due to the crudeness of the symbols and the literal content they hold, the true light of understanding cannot fully penetrate the inner sense. Under such a bushel, the word cannot be held in any way, as it should be placed at the highest point and adorned by the greatness of the Church's beauty. For as long as the word is confined like the bushel of the letter of the law, it deprives all of eternal light; for it reduces the sense to a seducer, only capable of error, and endowed with such power that it perceives only the decay and destruction of mere bodily matters, seeking to strip them away, but does not provide spiritual contemplation. But when placed on the lampstand, that is, in the Church, that is, in the rational spiritual worship, it illuminates all: namely, teaching those who live in the world to live according to reason and the established principles, and to give their bodies the care that is necessary to completely sever the connection of the soul from earthly things. They should direct all their efforts and work so that no thought of earthly things enters the mind, with the sense already extinguished by reason, which, at first, had removed reason and had allowed the growing pleasure of the serpent, like an external temptation. Against this, the sentence of death was justly decreed, so that, in the end, it would cease to provide the devil access to the soul. For the sense itself is one, but through five parts it is divided into multiple forms; which, in the manner in which it perceives its own proper forms, leads the soul into error, making it perish as it becomes enamored with a sensible object, which, instead of God, is fitting for it. Therefore, the one who follows wisdom and reason in his counsel, before death becomes necessary or arises

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from the sentiment of the soul, voluntarily submits himself to the death of the flesh, by which he completely separates his mind and will from the sense.

Therefore, those who pursue only the letter of Scripture have the sense of the dominant nature, through which the only inclination of the soul with the body is evident. For the letter, unless it is understood spiritually, has only the sense by which its utterance is circumscribed, and does not permit the meaning of what is written to pass to the soul. But if the letter only has a relation to the sense, anyone who, in the manner of the Jews, takes the letter as if it were only what is written about past events, lives according to the flesh, dying daily in the soul due to the death of sin (which persists in that sense). He will not mortify the works of the flesh by the Spirit, so that he may live a blessed life in the spirit. As the divine Apostle says, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you will live."

Therefore, let us not place the lamp (that is, reason, which kindles the light of knowledge) under a bushel, nor, like those who circumscribe the inexplicable power of wisdom with the letter, be entrapped by it. But let it be placed on the candlestick (that is, the holy Church), which, at the high peak of true contemplation, holds the lamp of all divine dogmas for all to see.

Perhaps this holy Church was figuratively pre-announced by the law, when it was commanded that the candlestick be made of solid and polished gold: one, so that there would be nothing empty or without the force of speech; the other, so that, with the excessive weight of its bulk thoroughly smoothed away, it would show that nothing earthly remained in it. This is what the great Zechariah saw in a wonderful vision of the candlestick, besides the lamp. "And there were seven lamps upon it," he said. I think the seven lamps here should be explained differently, and the earlier interpretation of the lamp in the Gospel has already been discussed. For not all persons and things, which are called by the same name, receive the same spiritual sense of understanding. But what is said must be understood according to the subject and the place in sacred Scripture, and it is necessary, if we strive to do so, that we reach a certain conjecture of what was intended by what is written.

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I believe that the lamps here refer to the sacred Scripture, or the workings and breathings of the Holy Spirit; that is, the gifts of the Spirit, which the Word, as the head of the whole body, is to give to the Church. "And the Spirit of God shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord," and He will fill him with the spirit of the fear of God. The head of the Church, according to the understanding of His humanity, is Christ. Therefore, who, by nature, has the Spirit, has the workings and breathings of the Spirit, as God, and He has given them to the Church. For the Word became flesh for me, and He works out all salvation through what belongs to me, and in return, He gives me what is His own, for whom He became flesh. And, like for me, He, through His own grace, gives me His virtues, by which I now, even above all understanding, receive the Spirit as eternal, as He has been for all eternity. For the Holy Spirit, as He is naturally of God and the Father, is also naturally of the Son, as He proceeds ineffably from the Father, through the Son. And to the candlestick (that is, the Church), He gives His workings and breathings as lamps. For every work of the Spirit has the power of a lamp that dispels the darkness, to eliminate and completely remove the many and varied origins of sin in the Church. For wisdom indeed removes madness; understanding and prudence destroy the dullness and imprudence of the soul; counsel, the absence of judgment and discretion; strength, weakness; knowledge, ignorance; piety, impiety, and all that is associated with the strength of vice; and fear drives away hardness and contempt. Indeed, the light of the Spirit is not only the law, but also His workings and breathings.

Again, the lamps are those who, through the Church, throughout all ages, like a raised torch, bring the light of salvation, completing the harmonious and elegant composition of its orders. To speak by example: the wise teacher of divine and sublime dogmas and mysteries is a lamp, revealing what has heretofore been obscure to the common people. He is another lamp who, with keen insight and the ability of the mind, diligently listens to the wisdom that the perfect ones speak to each other. Another lamp exists, like a diligent and clever listener, who keeps the light of truth in the things that are

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said. Yet another lamp shines as an admirable counselor, who, with the accompaniment of counsel, discerns occasions and moments, finding appropriate ways in words and doctrine, without allowing them to clash or be confused with each other. Another lamp is he who, like the blessed Job and the valiant martyrs, endures the onslaught of violent temptations with unwavering mental constancy, guarding the eternal light of salvation with the nature of manly patience, giving praise and strength to the Lord. Another lamp exists in the one who knows the cunning of the most wicked frauds and is not ignorant of the battles of invisible forces. This one, illuminated by the light of knowledge, is another lamp, who speaks with the great Apostle's voice and sense, saying, "For we are not ignorant of his devices." Moreover, another lamp exists in the one who, by piously cultivating a life in accordance with the commandment through virtues, establishes piety with virtuous conduct. Another lamp shines in the one who, trembling in expectation of judgment, keeps the entrance to his mind closed to vices, thus preserving it from troubled movements by the enclosure of continence. This one, with diligent work, washes away the filth of the vices he has contracted, and, by the fear of God, purifies his life, rendering it shining and splendid.

Thus, purification is granted by the Holy Spirit through fear, piety, and knowledge to those worthy of the purity of virtues. Regarding the things according to which exist the rational relationships, the Holy Spirit grants illumination by fortitude, counsel, understanding, and prudence to those who are worthy of light. However, perfection, through the clearest, simplest, and fullest wisdom, He grants to those who are worthy of deification, advancing them to the Author of all things, immediately and in every way possible, according to what is allowed to men, so that they may shine from the divine properties. In this way, they may know God from God, and themselves from themselves, with no intermediary between them, since there is no intermediary with wisdom between God and man. These are the ones who, by grace and the gift of God, will escape, being granted a state where no changeable thing will be subject to them, having surpassed all obstacles through which there was danger that the error of knowledge might ever creep in. And when they reach the infinite, which stands above all, a summit

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incomprehensible by speech or thought, no one will ever be able to express it through words or even attain it by mental speculation. Through the grace and gift of God, they will have passed beyond it.

And the seven infusoria of the seven lamps, which were above it. Concerning the lamps, as I believe, a rationale has been given with a double sense and consideration: but the exposition here is to be started from the infusoria. They say that what they call *ἐπαρυστρίδα* (Latins call it "infusorium") is a vessel resembling a cup, into which those whose duty it is to sustain the light by pouring oil into the lamps and tending the flame, are accustomed to pour. Thus, in a more spiritual and sublime sense, the infusoria of the seven lamps of the candlestick, which was shown in the vision, are the dispositions and habits, capable of various kinds and modes of reasoning and conduct, able to sustain and nourish the seven lamps (that is, the operations of the Spirit) of those who have received the division of gifts in the Church.

For just as a lamp cannot remain lit without oil, so too without the proper disposition, the corresponding reasoning and manners, and the virtuous perceptions and attentiveness that nurture and sustain the gifts, the eternal flame of the gifts cannot be preserved. For any spiritual gift, a corresponding habit is required, which, like oil, continually feeds the understanding of the soul, providing its substance and nourishment. According to the recipient's disposition, the gift remains vigorous and steadfast. Therefore, the infusoria of the seven lamps of the candlestick are the fitting habits of the gifts of the divine holy Church. From them, like certain vessels, according to what is written in the Gospel of the wise virgins, the oil of exultation is poured into the lamps of the gifts, those who are wise and vigilant, guardians of the good things entrusted to them. And the two olives above it: one on the right side of the lamp, and one on the left side.

The speaker beautifully and fittingly arranged and structured the entire vision. For, after mentioning the candlestick, lamp, lamps, and infusoria, he also added the two olives. Indeed, it was necessary that together with the light, the cause of virtue, the parent nature that sustains the light, should also be understood, lest the light of the candlestick fail or be

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extinguished due to lack of sustenance. The two olives of the golden candlestick (that is, of the holy Catholic Church) are the two Testaments; from which, like olives, by pious inquiry and diligent study, the power of the oil of intellect and understanding flows, which feeds and sustains the divine light of gifts. Through it, each one's disposition, filled according to their ability, preserves the inexhaustible light in proportion to the grace that corresponds to it. It is like oil that nourishes the senses, which the Scripture urges us to contemplate, keeping them whole. For just as it is impossible to find pure oil without olives, or for oil to be contained without a vessel (for without oil, the lamp's light would be extinguished), so too the divine power of the senses, which provides the light of knowledge, cannot exist without the sacred Scriptures. And unless there is a vessel-like habit that receives the senses, divine understanding cannot be established anywhere. However, unless it is sustained by divine senses, which are found in the gifts, the light of knowledge in those who seem to possess it cannot be kept burning.

Therefore, the discourse rightly, while drawing the vision to a spiritual and higher sense, has explained the candlestick as resembling the Church; the lamp, as God incarnate, who clothed our nature without any change of person; the seven lamps, as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is, His operations and inspirations, as the great Isaiah clearly shows; the infusoria of the lamps, as the habits of receiving the divine senses of the Scriptures, of those who have received divine gifts; the two olives, as the two Testaments, from which the effective power of the divine senses is wisely spread, through which the nurturing light of divine mysteries is kept inexhaustible. And one, he says, is on the right of the lamp, and one on the left.

I believe the right side is called that of the prophet, as the more spiritual part of Scripture; the left side, on the other hand, is that which is closer to the body and is heavier. But if the left signifies that part of Scripture which is closer to the body and heavier, the right side signifies that which is more spiritual. The left olive, as I think, signifies the Old Testament, as it has more weight in the reasoning of the active philosophy; while the right, the New Testament, as it teaches a new mystery, and the parent of the contemplative habit in each of the faithful. The former, indeed, offers the



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modes of virtue; the latter, the rationales of knowledge for those who philosophize divinely. The former draws the sense from the darkness of things falling into view, lifts the mind purged of all earthly thoughts to that which is akin to it; the latter, like a hammer of fortitude, shakes the nails which bind the soul to the body, purging it from earthly lust. Indeed, the Old Testament, imbued with reason, leads the body through the middle virtues to the soul, guarding against the mind being lowered to the body; the New, on the other hand, fired with the fire of charity, elevates it toward God. One indeed, through the movement of the will, makes the body one with the mind; the other, through the habit of charity, makes the mind one with God; with such great similarity to God and His expression, that from it, like an example and a leading form from a model, God is known, who can in no way be known by anyone through His nature.

And thus far, these things stand in such a manner. But if anyone wishes to explain them in such a way that the meaning of what has been said pertains to each individual, there will certainly be no lack of beautiful and pious senses to contemplate. For it is possible to consider the candlestick as the mind of each individual; solid gold, endowed with the power of understanding and reason; immune from corruption and destruction, immortal, and most royally adorned with the power of free will. It has placed upon itself the lamp of faith; the Word, which became flesh, whom one must firmly believe and truly worship. To this Word, a lamp of knowledge is lit, as God Himself and the Word teach and exhort.

For He says: "No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it gives light to all who are in the house." Here, perhaps, the lamp is called the word of knowledge, the guide in the spirit of action (that is, the law of the spirit), while the bushel is the earthly sense of the flesh, the law of the body with its lustful desires, under which we must beware not to place the law of grace. But on the candlestick (that is, the mind), a truly solid golden candlestick, so that, shining with the brightness of just works and the wisdom of the senses, it gives light to all who are in the house (that is, in the Church or in this world), making them shine with the good they see, and making them imitators of it. They, too, through acts of

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virtue, not merely the spoken word, glorify the Father who is in heaven; God, that is, who, shining in the sublimities of the mystical knowledge of things, generates the visible magnificence of the holiness of just works and the cultivation of virtue. As He says: "Let your good works shine, so that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Thus, in the manner now presented, one will understand that the candlestick and lamp shown in the division are those of the prophet; and the seven lamps will be explained in such a way as to signify the division of the gifts of the Spirit, as previously stated. These gifts, thus divided, mystically shine and rest in him who, like Christ, is perfect in power and knowledge. Indeed, it is customary in Scripture to call Christ "the one who lives according to the way of Christ," shining with the same morals and principles, as far as is allowed to man: as one who himself has wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, and fear; through which God, as through spiritual lights, is said to illuminate the whole earth of each heart. For these seven are the eyes of the Lord, as it is said, which look upon the whole earth.

And the seven infusoria of the lamps that are upon it. The infusoria are the habits of action and contemplation of those who are worthy to receive divine gifts; from these, as from certain vessels, they infuse the power of mystical senses, and they preserve the unextinguished light of the gifts of the Spirit. As for the two olives, as I said earlier, they should be understood as the two Testaments: the Old, to the left of the lamp, which generates the modes of virtues in action, like oil for the part of the soul in which the power of knowledge or contemplation resides; and the New, to the right, which, like oil, continually generates spiritual notions and reasoning in the perceptive or active part of the soul. Thus, the mystery of our salvation is beautifully fulfilled by both: the life being the example of the Word, and the Word and doctrine shining in life. Therefore, action is contemplation made effective by action, and contemplation, an educated and shining action. (To say briefly) virtue is the manifestation of knowledge, and knowledge is the power that maintains virtue intact. In both (virtue and knowledge), one wisdom is shown to be formed, so that we may know that, concerning grace,

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the two Testaments fit together to complete one mystery more perfectly than the soul and body unite to form a single human being. However, if someone, enriched with spiritual senses, explains and says that the two olives are the two laws, the natural and the spiritual, they will not exceed the limits of truth. For the natural law, to the left of the lamp (that is, of the Word of God incarnate), will be understood as offering the modes of virtues in things subject to the senses, through a related sense. The law of the mind, or the spiritual law, will be understood as to the right, through a related power of intellect, guiding spiritual reasoning in matters of knowledge, reading. By these, we keep the unextinguished light of truth, filling the infusoria of the spiritual gifts, which are directed to the action and knowledge of the speculative.

Indeed, this present passage of Scripture, more spiritual and subtle, through the two olives, which are on the right and on the left of the lamp, signifies providence and judgment, in the midst of which, like a golden candlestick (that is, the holy Catholic Church or even the soul of each saint), stands, holding out the light of truth like a burning torch. The Word, who, as God, contains the entire universe, declares the true and most universal reasons for the providence and judgment of the conservation and salvation of things; by which, before all ages, the mystery of our salvation was predestined and fulfilled in the last times.

Of whose providence, indeed, we understand the olive on the right of the lamp as signifying the union of the Word with the flesh, a rational union in a single person, which can only be grasped through faith, without being explained by words. But judgment, which is established on the left, we understand in the mystery of the vivifying passions, which God incarnate suffered for our sake, through a hidden reasoning. For the one, indeed, was made a good, primarily through the will, so that he might be the Savior of all by nature; the other, however, was spontaneously suffered in consequence, to be the Redeemer. For he was not made man to suffer and to die in the primary sense, but to grant salvation to humanity through his passions and death; by which, having transgressed the divine command, man made

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himself liable to them (although he was originally free from these from the beginning and origin).

Thus, the right signifies the providence of the incarnation of the Word, which grants a grace, exceeding all the power of nature, predestined before the ages, for the deification of those who obtain salvation, a grace that no reasoning of nature can achieve. The left, however, occupies the mystery of God's vivifying passion, who deigned to suffer in the flesh and die, a judgment, the power of which is such that it utterly destroys all unnatural properties and motions in nature brought on by disobedience. And those properties and motions which originally belonged to nature are entirely restored to their original state, with nothing desired in them. Through the power of this complete restoration, no adulterated reasoning of the world can be found: from which (that is, from providence and judgment, or the incarnation and passion, or death) because of the firmness, purity, incorruption of man's action, the cultivation of virtue, and immutability, and because of the clarity and brilliance of mystical contemplation and knowledge, as if from the middle of two bronze mountains, like the chariot of the four holy Gospels, it has traversed and encircled the entire world, healing the wound which had been caused by Adam's transgression, and providing rest to the Spirit of God through faith and the companion of that Spirit in honorable manners, by the discipline of a righteous life.

This was provided in the land of the north, that is, among the nations, where the darkness of ignorance reigned, and the shadows of sin oppressed the nature of man. Or again, competing with the same number as the holy Gospels, the force of the four general virtues, which, like the land, has pervaded every faithful heart, healing the wound caused by corrupt affections, and renewing the Spirit of God by carrying out His commandments, showing through the works of justice the spirit of the law, which shines in the land of the north (that is, in the flesh).

Or again, the two olives are understood as contemplation and action; of which, contemplation, indeed, in which the incarnation was revealed as providence, gives reason to shine, while action, by which the passion and death are brought about by judgment, shows the method; as if,

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namely, one, which pertains to the mind, is on the right; the other, which pertains to the body, on the left of speech, arranged, and the other, calling the mind to God's relationship; the other, indeed, sanctifying the sense by the Spirit, and removing from it the forms of affections and lusts. Or again, faith and a good conscience are taken as the two olives, in the middle of which the Word stands; indeed, the Word is rightly honored by the faithful; but good conscience, in which manner we seek to please others, is piously served. Or two peoples, one from the Gentiles and the other Jewish, the Scripture introduced as two olives; whom it also called "sons of fatness," explaining them as olives, because of their spiritual birth, and because of the grace of adoption, by which we are endowed with divinity. The middle of these stands, the one who assumed the flesh, God, so that over the lampstand (which is the one and only Catholic Church), He Himself, reconciling Himself and others to others, and showing Himself as the reconciler of the light of virtue and knowledge. Perhaps indeed, even the soul and the body were mystically indicated by the two olives in a deeper way in the Scripture: the one, indeed, because the olive tree, in the manner of true knowledge, produces leaves by reason; the other, because it exists in the form of virtuous deeds. But if the text of Scripture figuratively indicates the two olives as the two worlds, this interpretation is also right. The middle of these, as God, stands the Word; which is perceived by the mind, but in what is known by the sense, it mystically illuminates the figure; and in that which is presented to the senses, it teaches that which is to be understood by reason.

But if the vision of the olives presented signifies the life of the present age and of the future, this too would align rightly with the mode of spiritual sense. The middle of these stands the Word, leading from the practice of virtue and bringing back to it through knowledge. Perhaps the admired Habakkuk understood this: "In the middle of the two," he says, "you shall be known," calling them lives, as great Zacharias, like the bronze mountains and olives, depicts two worlds or ages, or lives fitting with them: or the soul and the body, or action and contemplation, or the upright and virtuous character and operation, or the Law and the Prophets, or the entire Old and New Testament; or two peoples, the Gentiles and the Jews; or the

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two laws, the natural and the spiritual; or faith and good conscience; in whose middle stands, praised and celebrated through all, the Word, drawing everything to a single harmony of uprightness and virtue, as the God of all; and for this reason, He has done all things, so that in all, the one and the same right reason might be woven together and united, making an indissoluble bond. And the lampstand that was shown in the vision, perhaps the Word called the Church and the soul; namely, in the sense that they possess an artificial nature and a comparable light of grace. Indeed, the goodness of God alone is proper by nature; from which, by a certain commerce, are imbued with light and goodness, whatever things exist by nature that are capable of light and goodness. And this, indeed, so far, as the reason of moderation is maintained, and the mode of speech is kept; but you yourself, considering more profoundly those things which are superior, I ask, Holy Father, that you illuminate my soul, blinded by your eternal light and shining rays of your mind.

## SCHOLIUM

1. What lampstand is this?
2. In what way is the Church pure gold?
3. How is it pure and clear?
4. How is it untainted?
5. How is it untarnished?
6. How is it secure in integrity, or, to speak more precisely, undiminished?
7. What is the lamp of the lampstand?
8. Not every man who comes into this world is illuminated by the Word and the Word itself. Many remain devoid of light, nor do they receive the shining knowledge; but surely every man who comes into the true world of virtue by the judgment of his own mind, is fully illuminated by the Word and the Word. For whoever truly comes into this world of virtue, born of the kind of free will provided, is fully illuminated by the Word and the Word, who will obtain the habit of virtue, the proper and flawless knowledge of truth.

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9. How is the lamp the incarnate Word of God?
10. What is the measure under which the lamp should not be hidden?
11. The woman is understood as the sense; and the serpent as the desire and lust. Both, indeed, deviate diametrically from reason or speech.
12. The sense, wherever the mind is bound, is filled with the impiety of many gods; while, indeed, serving with any of the sense organs in disturbed morals, it worships its own innate and familiar sense as though it were a divine being.
13. What lamps does Scripture speak of?
14. See the greatness of grace, see the vast sea of theology.
15. What do the gifts of the Spirit bring?
16. What lamps are there in another spiritual sense?
17. In action, philosophy is formed by fear, piety, and knowledge; in the spirit of contemplation, however, by fortitude, counsel, and intellect; but mystical theology is granted solely by divine wisdom.
18. The middle calls the things that fall into sense and are understood by the mind, substance; through which it is given to the human mind, that it be led towards God as its creator.
19. What are the lamps with a spiritual and higher sense infused into them?
20. What are the two olives?
21. A recapitulatory and concise summary of those things that have been explained with spiritual meaning.
22. What is right and what is left?
23. The Old Testament, as it is a symbol of action and virtue, provides that the body and mind's movements agree with reason; however, the New Testament, as it is the parent of contemplation and science, delights the mind that follows its mysteries with divine gifts.
24. Another proper mode of spiritual sense, in which the lampstand and what pertains to it are explained in the figure of each individual soul.
25. What is the lamp?
26. Their God is called and made the Father by grace, who, having received native birth through the sole judgment of the mind in the spirit, holds, as the face of the mind, the figure of the Parent of God expressed in the

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institutions of life's reasons, and bestows it, so that those who gaze at it, may praise God by a change in their morals; who, in fact, exhibit to others their own life as an excellent example of virtue to be imitated. For it is not compared to God that He is praised with mere speech, but that His works of justice, which in a far greater manner than speech and words, proclaim His divine magnificence.

27. What ought the seven lamps be understood to mean in a spiritual sense?
28. What are the infusories?
29. What are the two olives?
30. The Old Testament supplies the modes of virtues to the one who cultivates knowledge and is spiritual; but the New Testament, to the one who is engaged in action, grants the true reasons of knowledge.
31. The power of acting is called the passive part of the soul.
32. He who shows the knowledge embodied in action and the action animated by knowledge finds the perfect mode of the true influence and deification. But he who has either of these disconnected from the other, either turns knowledge into a vain spectacle, or makes action a lifeless image. For knowledge, to which action is not an accompaniment, differs from an empty vision and thought only in that action fails to truly exist; and action, without reason, is in the same way a lifeless image, as it does not possess the animating knowledge.
33. Just as the soul and body make man through their composition, so action and contemplation, with equal concurrence, complete wisdom as one spiritual and enlightened whole, and the Old and New Testaments work as one mystery.
34. The natural law is left-handed, because of the senses; and it offers to reason the modes of virtues, and makes knowledge active; the spiritual law, however, is right-handed, because of the mind; it mixes spiritual reasons existing in things with the sense, and makes action imbued with reason.
35. Providence is revealed in that the Word is united to the flesh by the reason of the person; but judgment is shown in that He deigned to



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suffer and die for us in the flesh: through both (that is, through union and passion), the salvation of all is forged.

36. The incarnation was made to provide salvation for nature; but the passions and death were made to redeem those whom the debt of death, because of sin, had bound.
37. The mystery of God made man drives out unnatural properties from human nature; and restores what is from nature.
38. Providence and judgment, incarnation and passion or death, were displayed by two bronze mountains (from which the Gospels go out in fourfold number).
39. The peoples of the north land were displayed, who once wandered in the region of darkness through the error of ignorance; but now, indeed, through the knowledge of the truth, they exist in the region of light, through the grace, indeed, of the four holy Gospels, as incorruptible elements, reformed according to the inner man and mind to eternal life through faith.
40. Another contemplation of the four chariots.
41. Another contemplation of the olives.
42. He who is dedicated to contemplation and is spiritual has the reason of the incarnation shining through providence; but he who engages in action shows the effective mode of the judgment of the Word's passions.
43. The olives explained in a different spiritual sense.
44. The same, explained in another spiritual sense.
45. The same, explained in another spiritual sense.
46. The two olives explained in another spiritual sense.
47. He who considers the visible world with his eyes, considers the intelligible as if it were visible to the eyes. For sense informs the intelligible, while these are thought upon by the mind and the rational aspects are shaped by the mind; and the sense indeed conveys the multiform constitution of the intelligible world, but the mind reflects the complex composition of the sensible world. And in the intelligible world, indeed, he considers the sensible, who, through reason, leads the

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sense to the mind; in the sensible world, however, he considers the intelligible, who skillfully reflects the mind in sense through figures.

48. Another spiritual consideration of these same things.

### QUESTION LXIV

WITH WHAT UNDERSTANDING SHOULD IT BE GRASPED,  
WHAT IS SAID IN THE PROPHET JONAH ABOUT  
NINEVEH: "IN WHICH DWELL MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED  
AND TWENTY THOUSAND MEN WHO DO NOT KNOW  
THEIR RIGHT HAND FROM THEIR LEFT HAND"? FOR, FROM  
THE LITERAL SENSE, I FIND NOTHING THAT SATISFIES ME.  
FOR HE DID NOT SAY "CHILDREN," SUCH THAT I MIGHT  
THINK IT REFERS TO INFANTS, BUT "MEN." YET WHAT MAN,  
IF HE IS OF SOUND MIND, DOES NOT KNOW HIS RIGHT  
HAND OR HIS LEFT? TRULY, I BEG YOU, EXPLAIN: WHO ARE  
THESE MEN, AND WHAT IS MEANT BY THE RIGHT HAND  
AND THE LEFT HAND, ACCORDING TO A HIGHER AND  
SPIRITUAL SENSE OF UNDERSTANDING?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Concerning the things written in the sacred Scriptures—whether you consider persons, places, times, or other matters, both those endowed with a soul and those without it, both things that are perceptible to the senses and those understood only by the mind—if they are always understood and considered in the same way, they possess neither a sufficiently coherent narrative of the matter itself nor a proper understanding of the spiritual meaning. Therefore, it is worthwhile for anyone cultivating an understanding of divine Scripture to interpret and receive each particular matter differently, in accordance with the diversity of the events or statements described, and to assign, as is fitting, a spiritual meaning appropriate to the place or time. For the names of individuals in Scripture,

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according to the force of the Hebrew language, signify many things, as we also clearly observe in this case.

For the name Jonah, depending on how it is variously pronounced, can be interpreted as: the rest of God, the gift of God, the health of God, the grace of God, the labor of God, the dove, the flight from beauty, and the weariness or exhaustion of them. He also went to Joppa, to the sea, was in the whale, in Nineveh, and under the gourd. Joppa, if you interpret the name, can be called the watchtower of joy, the marvelous appearance, and powerful joy. Jonah the prophet thus bears the type of Adam, of the common human race, of Christ, and of the prophetic office. Lastly, he also represents the type of the ungrateful and wicked, who grow weary in every good work, are afflicted with disgust, and are always envious of divine gifts—namely, the Jewish people.

To illustrate by example: Jonah bears the type of Adam and of the common human race when he flees from Joppa to the sea, and for that reason, according to the meaning of his name, he is called "flight from beauty." Joppa, however, signifies Paradise, a figure depicted in it, which truly serves as the watchtower of joy and is so named, and likewise as powerful joy and marvelous appearance or beauty, due to the wealth of incorruption in it—whatever that Paradise may have been, planted by the hand of God. For, as it is written, "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, and He placed in it the man whom He had formed," and there were certain trees placed in it, whether they were visible to the eyes or understandable only by the mind; and especially the tree of life, which was in the middle of the garden. Of all these, Adam was commanded to eat, yet he perhaps did not even touch or taste them. For it is said, "Of every tree that is in the garden, you may eat."

Again, Joppa signifies virtue and knowledge, and wisdom, which is joined to them in fellowship. Virtue, indeed, when, according to the meaning of the name, it is called "marvelous appearance" or "beauty." Knowledge, when it is explained as "the watchtower of joy." Wisdom, however, when it is interpreted as "powerful joy," by which a perfected human being attains that joy, truly powerful, not explicable by any words—such joy as preserves and securely guards a life of divine and rationally

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ordered piety in humanity. For, as Scripture testifies: "Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who rely on her as on the Lord find safety." We see that the human race, like Adam in Paradise, constantly flees Joppa (that is, the habit of virtue and knowledge, along with the grace of wisdom that accompanies and supports them) through disobedience. The mind of humanity diligently inclines toward evil and is willingly drawn into the sea—that is, the flood of sin—just as the first parent, Adam, after losing Paradise, was cast down into this world, cultivating the unstable, salty instability of earthly things, both carrying and being carried by error and confusion. For the profit of this condition is only for those who embrace and pursue it, to the extent that they are plunged into the abyss and swallowed by the whale, encircled by water even to the soul, encompassed by the depths of the abyss, driving their heads into the clefts of the mountains and descending into the earth whose bars are eternal bonds, representing the deepest chasm of the abyss. This earth is truly dark and shadowy, a land horrendous with eternal gloom, where no light is seen, nor the life of mortals—such as the great Job, enduring mighty struggles for the cause of truth, spoke of in one passage.

The prophet, therefore, depicts Adam as a type (namely, the common human race and nature), representing these things allegorically in each detail: that is, nature, as if fallen from Joppa (the divine goods) and swept into this world's misery, as though dragged into the sea and overwhelmed by the unstable and turbulent sea of earthly desires. It is swallowed by the spiritual whale, the insatiable beast—the devil—and enveloped by water, up to the soul, a symbol of the trials of life surrounding it. It is hemmed in by the abyss below (the mind entirely obstructed by the snares of ignorance and crushed under the heavy weight of wickedness) and its head thrust into the clefts of the mountains.

This refers to the initial principle of faith (which regards unity), like the head of the whole body of virtues, obscured as if in certain dark clefts of mountains and cut into many opinions and thoughts by the schemes of the most wicked powers. The clefts of the mountains refer to the thoughts and sentiments of error that Scripture names as the spirits of wickedness,

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dwelling in the deep whirlpool of the abyss of ultimate ignorance. It descended to the earth, whose bars are eternal bonds; that is, it was cast down into a state utterly devoid of divine understanding and deprived of the vital motion of virtues. This state is entirely lacking in any sense of goodness and has no desire in the soul for God. It is like an abyss, where the darkness of ignorance and the hopeless depth of vice and wickedness rise up, where the mountains of error take root—spiritual wickednesses, whose clefts humanity first entered, and afterward, by the force of wicked habits, made its foundation, becoming as a vessel and seat of their error and wickedness. This condition holds, as eternal bars, the attachments to earthly desires clinging to the soul, through which, being bound in the darkness of ignorance, it is unable to see the light of true understanding.

This state, as I said earlier, was perhaps what the great Job obscurely described as the "land of darkness and shadow," the land of eternal darkness. It is called dark because it lacks all true knowledge and contemplation, and shadowy because all virtue and action are absent from it. In this land, he says, "there is no light" (that is, of knowledge and truth), "nor the life of mortals to see"; referring to that structure and discipline of life that instructs those who use reason.

Perhaps the prophet alludes to this when he portrays himself as representing the feelings of human nature, arranging himself in a miserable state and posture, attributing to himself those things that pertain to common nature. Fittingly, the significance and meaning of the name align with one who represents Adam as a type, which you might interpret as "the flight of beauty." Moreover, when the prophet represents God, who for our sake lived among us in the likeness of our flesh—animated by a soul, yet without sin—he typologically prefigures and instructs in the mystery of His incarnation and sufferings.

The prophet signifies His descent from heaven into this world in the same way that he went from Joppa to the sea. The mystery of His death, burial, and resurrection is expressed when Jonah is swallowed by the whale and, after three days and nights, emerges unharmed. Thus, in accordance with the meaning of the name, Jonah is aptly called "rest," "God's healing,"

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"the grace of God," or even "the labor of God," on account of the death and suffering willingly undertaken. For indeed, Christ Jesus, true God, is the rest for those who labor in pain, the healing for those who are broken, and the grace of forgiveness of sins. The prophet mystically prefigured this in the account written about Jonah. For our Lord and God, having become man, descended into the sea of our life as though from Joppa, coming from heaven, which you might interpret as the "watchtower of joy" based on the meaning of the name. Dwelling in the sea of this world, as it is written: "For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame," He descended into the heart of the earth, where the evil one held us captive through the destruction of death. By His voluntary descent and through His resurrection, He liberated human nature, lifting and restoring it to heaven. He is truly our rest, healing, and grace.

Rest, in that He loosens the law of necessary servitude to the flesh in the temporal life; healing, in that He cures the corruption of death and destruction through the gift of resurrection; and grace, in that He grants adoption in the Spirit through faith and, according to merit, the grace of deification. For it was fitting—truly fitting—that He who is the Light and the Power of God the Father should come to the land where darkness and eternal bars existed. By dissolving the darkness of ignorance, He granted the gift of spiritual light. By breaking the bars of wickedness, He revealed the power of God, which truly exists. The evil one, who had held human nature bound by these chains, was overcome, and humanity was freed into liberty. Christ bestowed the inextinguishable light of true knowledge and the inviolable strength of virtues.

When the prophetic grace, as though from a certain Joppa—namely, from the worship of the Law, previously held as glorious and renowned—migrates for the sake of the Gospel to the Gentiles, leaving the Jewish people destitute of its joy due to their unbelief and faithlessness, and through many tribulations, dangers, adversities, labors, persecutions, and deaths, converts the Church of the Gentiles to God, like Nineveh, the prophet mystically portrays this in himself. He leaves Joppa, that is, departing from legal worship, signifying the prophetic grace that also

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entered the sea of violent circumstances and the trials of struggles, labors, and dangers, and though swallowed by the whale (symbolizing death), was by no means utterly destroyed. For nothing hindered the course of evagelic grace proclaimed to the Gentiles—neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor peril, nor sword. Rather, through these very adversities, overcoming all the opposition of adversaries, grace gained strength and power. It triumphed over injuries and errors, converting erring human nature to the living and true God, just as Jonah converted Nineveh. And although the wicked one perhaps believed that through the force of persecutions and injuries he could obscure grace, like the whale engulfing the prophet, he was unable to retain it, nor could he undermine the effectiveness of its power. Instead, he contributed to its greater brilliance, causing grace to shine more radiantly in the face of opposition, while his own power crumbled in his futile attempts.

The adversary not only observed grace as invincible but also saw the natural weakness of the saints, who preached it to the nations, transformed into strength—such that, in destroying his power and abolishing his arrogance that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, grace grew stronger spiritually even as it seemed outwardly to suffer harm. In the very perils faced, the grace of prophecy to the Gentiles in Christ, becoming a minister of the newness of the Spirit rather than the oldness of the letter, found expression. When the great herald of truth, Paul, learned this, he declared: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," calling the grace of the word and doctrine a treasure, and the earthen vessel this mortal body, subject to suffering. He also referred to the seeming simplicity and lack of eloquence in speech, which overcame all the wisdom of the world, and comprehended the wisdom of God incomprehensible to the world, filling the whole earth with the true knowledge of that light: "That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." "In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always

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delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus may also be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you." For while those who were heralds of the word of grace willingly endured death in afflictions and labors to cleanse the stains of sin, they brought life in the spirit of truth's knowledge to the Gentiles. Jonah, who prefigured this grace, also mystically experienced this in himself, enduring such labors to convert the Ninevites from error to God.

And, accordingly, by the meaning inherent in his name, you rightly interpret him as "the gift of God" and "the labor of God." For truly, the grace of prophecy destined for the Gentiles is both a divine gift and a divine labor—God's gift, because it bestows the light of true knowledge and provides the incorruptibility of life to those who receive it; and God's labor, because it inspires its ministers to glory in their labors for virtue, teaching them to boast more in afflictions and torments than in the anxious cares, pleasures, and luxuries of a carnal life. It becomes a sign of excellent spiritual virtue, demonstrating the capacity of human nature, through grace, to endure suffering while revealing the weakness of the flesh.

For the word of grace, through many trials, reached humanity—or the Church of the Gentiles—just as Jonah, through many hardships, came to the great city of Nineveh. It overthrew the law dominating human nature from its throne, bringing the former evil habits, born of sensuality, to an end. It persuaded them to cast off their robes (that is, the pride of worldly glory acquired from a display of virtues) and to don sackcloth—mourning, indeed, and the rigorous and laborious discipline of a life ordered according to the principles of piety—and to sit in ashes. Ashes signify the poverty of spirit, where one sits who is instructed to lead a pious life, bearing the scourge of conscience for their transgressions.

The proclaimed word of grace did not only move the king to place his trust in God but also taught the people (humankind in general) to confess the one God, Creator, and Judge of all with certainty. It instructed them in faith to renounce completely their previous sinful pursuits and to don sackcloth—from the least of them to the greatest—undertaking with diligence and zeal the harsher discipline that destroys vices and passions.



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Moreover, I understand that the "least" and "greatest" mentioned here, in a deeper and more elevated sense, refer to those whom the word identified as subject to lesser and greater corruptions.

"And the men of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and clothed themselves in sackcloth, from the least to the greatest of them. And the word came to the king of Nineveh; he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And it was proclaimed and declared in Nineveh by the king and his nobles, saying: Let neither men nor beasts, oxen nor sheep, taste anything, let them not feed nor drink water." The king (of nature, I mean) signifies the law of nature, while his nobles represent the faculties of reason, anger, and desire. The "men of the city" (that is, of nature) are, in one sense, those whose intellect and reasoning err, who suffer from false knowledge of God and divine matters. The "beasts" are those who sin out of desire and bear the burden of lust through bodily passions and vices.

The "oxen" symbolize those who channel all their wrathful efforts into acquiring earthly goods—for it is said that the blood of an ox, when drunk, brings immediate death. Blood is plainly a symbol of wrath. Finally, "sheep and cattle" (those not free from fault) represent those who, with senseless minds and solely for the sake of fulfilling lust, pursue the fleeting visions of visible things, like grazing sheep. All these elements in this passage of Scripture are understood as subjects of blame and corruption until the Word, taking them up, transforms them into something better. For this reason, Scripture adds: "Let them not taste, nor feed, nor drink water." This refers to eliminating the original causes—namely, the passions and vices that fuel these faults. By removing them, Scripture introduces the transformation to a better way of life for those once bound by wicked pursuits. "And men and beasts were covered with sackcloth, and they cried out mightily to the Lord God. And each one turned from his evil way and from the iniquity that was in their hands." The "men," as I was saying, signify those who, misled by faulty reasoning, were trapped by animalistic passions and ailments.

The "beasts" signify those who, through the misuse of anger and desire, were enslaved to bodily vices. They all, as it were, are "covered with

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sackcloth"—through the mortification of their bodily members, which are upon the earth (that is, through the subjugation of every earthly law and sense). They cry out mightily with great and heartfelt voices, confessing their confidence against the wickedness and indulgence of their former sins. It is as if they are departing from a path, a habitual course of action—the iniquity they carried out with their hands and deeds—and turning away from it.

Thus, understanding Nineveh as a symbol of shared human nature or the Church of the Gentiles, it always displays Jonah preaching within it—namely, the word of prophetic grace—daily converting those who have strayed in error back to God. However, if we apply the spiritual understanding of Nineveh to individuals, we can say that the soul of each one of us is that great city, defiled by wickedness, to which the Word of God is sent, preaching repentance unto life. Its king represents the mind; its nobles, the innate faculties; its men, thoughts stained with lust; its beasts, the desires surrounding the body; its oxen, the motions of anger greedy for earthly things; and its sheep, the movements of the senses without understanding, by which we perceive what moves our senses.

The king (that is, the soul) must rise from his throne, abandoning the habit of former ignorance, as if discarding a robe—the false valuation of things—and be clothed with sackcloth, signifying repentance, for the errors he has harbored. He must sit in ashes, assuming the habit of spiritual poverty. Furthermore, it is commanded to men, beasts, oxen, and sheep to fast from the food of wickedness and the drink of ignorance, meaning to abstain from evil deeds and false sensory perceptions. They are also to clothe themselves in sackcloth—assuming a condition in which unnatural passions are extinguished, and virtues and knowledge arising from the principles of nature are acquired. They must cry out vehemently to God, earnestly confessing the sins and offenses of their former life, and strive to appease Him through modesty of the senses, for He alone can forgive these same offenses. Moreover, they should seek from Him the unchangeable power to perform virtue and fulfill His will, for He generously grants it to those who sincerely ask. Finally, they must restrain the mind from its evil path and

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former error, casting off the habit of vice from the faculties of the soul dedicated to action.

In this great city, namely the common nature of humanity and the Church of the Gentiles—or even in the soul of each individual, which prepares salvation through the word and reasoning of virtue and knowledge (that is, faith and good conscience)—there are more than twelve myriads of people (120,000) who do not know their right hand from their left. I believe the Scripture here, in a deeper and more hidden sense, refers to the principles of time and nature, that is, to the knowledge that encompasses the visible, tangible nature and the things inseparable from it. The number twelve is derived from the combination of five and seven. Since nature is governed by the five senses and time progresses according to the sevenfold cycle, the number twelve is clearly symbolic of nature and time. Furthermore, the Scripture specifically states "more than twelve myriads of people," indicating that this defined number is exceeded indefinitely by many more, those who, by their addition, produce a sum greater than the twelvefold measure.

The Church of God, most resplendent and worthy of the highest praise—which transcends the principles of virtue and knowledge, surpassing the boundaries of time and nature, and advancing toward the magnificence of eternal and spiritual things—possesses, as it is said, more than twelve myriads of people (that is, 120,000) who do not know their right hand from their left. Indeed, the one who, relying on true virtue, has consigned carnal desires and vices—symbolized by the "left hand"—to oblivion, and who, by steadfast knowledge, avoids the pride and vanity of empty boasting—symbolized by the "right hand"—is a person who does not recognize his own right hand (that is, who is not overcome by the love of fleeting and perishable glory) nor his left hand (that is, who is not enticed by carnal desires born of lust).

The Scripture, therefore, seems to have called the "right hand" that which arises from merits and virtues, yet gives birth to vain glory; and the "left hand" as that which grows from vile passions, indulgence, and a dissolute life. Every soul that shines through spiritual contemplations is said to possess men who know neither their right hand nor their left hand. For

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anyone who has withdrawn the power of thought from considerations of nature and time, as if it were men exceeding the number twelve, possesses natural thoughts—those that no longer labor over things subject to nature and time, but instead are devoted to contemplating divine mysteries and understanding them. The knowledge of virtues derived from reason—that is, the true and real recognition of the author of virtues—has been designed so that such a person may completely forget both the excess and defect that lie beyond the bounds of virtue, represented as the “right hand” and the “left hand.” For there is absolutely nothing that arises from reason which is contrary to reason. Clearly, anyone advanced to the understanding of virtue will not recognize as valid anything contrary to reason. Indeed, opposites cannot both be observed simultaneously in the same respect, nor can one shine while the other obscures. For in faith, there is no place for doubt or unbelief, just as light by its nature is not the cause of darkness, nor is the devil capable of shining together with Christ.

Thus, there cannot exist anything contrary to reason alongside reason. And if what is contrary to reason cannot exist with reason at all, then one advanced in the understanding of virtue, as I said, does not acknowledge anything contrary to reason. Such a person knows virtue only as it truly is, not as it is imagined; hence, he neither knows the right hand through excess nor the left hand through defect. For in both cases, that which is “beyond reason” is evident—something that is contrary to reason and alien to it. Since reason exists as the limit and measure of things, it is equivalent to the absence of reason to be moved either beyond limit and measure or beneath them. For in such movements, one departs from what is true. The former leads one to pursue an aimless course without defined limits, so that due to the excess of the mind, they do not have God as their predetermined end. These are those who, by presumption, imagine a right hand even more right. The latter, however, prompts one to direct their course to a single sensation alone, who, due to the weakness of the mind, consider the predetermined end to be confined within the narrow limits of the senses and define it as such. These things are unknown to those who adhere solely and are bound to the reason of virtue, defining all motion of the mind and spirit accordingly.

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For this reason, such a person is so disposed that they cannot conceive of anything beyond or contrary to reason

But if anyone also wishes to direct their mind magnificently toward a loftier understanding, they will certainly interpret the "right hand" as the principles of incorporeal things and the "left hand" as the principles of corporeal things. These principles, indeed, the mind striving freely and unhindered toward the author of all things will utterly disregard, perceiving no reasoning in God, who, in all respects as the cause, transcends all reason. In Him, the soul, gathering and contracting itself from all things, knows no reasoning concerning those from which it has departed. It knows only the one reasoning, that which no one can fully explain, beholding and contemplating the reason to which it has ascended by grace.

Indeed, God mercifully forgives these things and others like them; and for the sake of such as these, He spares the entire world—those men, surely, who truly neither recognize their blameworthy right hand nor their left hand. For nearly everything in Scripture that has been ascribed to either praise or blame—though it may provoke envy, hostility to all human sentiment, and the resistance of human salvation—is such that the Jewish people, wicked and ungrateful, hostile to humanity and enemies of God's kindness, dare to challenge divine benevolence. Such a people, despising the salvation of the Gentiles in Christ, would rather tear themselves apart in grief, rejecting life in despair and regarding the salvation of the nations as a cause for mourning. They mourned greatly over the gourd, esteeming it far more than salvation due to ignorance, grieving when they saw it withered by the gnawing of a worm.

For, as I said earlier, great Jonah prefigured in himself even the madness of the Jews, not as though he had shared in their feelings or sins—perish the thought!—but because he symbolically reprovved their impiety in his own actions. Therefore, just as he lost Joppa as a figure of their fall from their former glory, so too did the Holy Spirit mystically give him a name which, by its diverse interpretations, easily indicated the disposition of all those whom he prefigured. Thus, when he represents the madness of the Jews in himself—grieving over the salvation of the Gentiles and confounded by

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their new and unheard-of calling, disheartened and at odds with God's will, preferring death over life because of the withering of the gourd—the labor of his name is reflected in its very interpretation. Mocking this, Scripture says: "God saw their works" (speaking of the Ninevites), "that they had turned away from their evil ways; and it repented Him not to do harm to them, and He did it not. And Jonah was grieved, and said, 'Now, O Lord, take my soul from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And again: "And the Lord commanded a worm in the early morning of the next day, and it struck the gourd, and it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that it beat down on the head of Jonah; and he became faint and wished for death, saying, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'"

Nineveh, then, represents the Church of the Gentiles, which, having received the word of grace and renounced its former error of idolatry, obtained salvation and the glory of heaven. The tabernacle that Jonah constructed for himself after leaving the city symbolizes earthly Jerusalem and the man-made temple within it. The gourd, which exists only in the literal sense, prefigured the temporary and shadowy nature of the physical law, possessing nothing stable, enduring, or capable of delighting the soul. The worm signifies our Lord Jesus Christ, as He Himself declares of Himself in the words of David the prophet: "I am a worm and not a man." This signifies that by taking on flesh without any seed, He both became and is called a worm. Just as a worm is born and brought forth without union or mingling of sexes, so too was the birth of the Lord according to the flesh without any such union. Moreover, this worm served as the bait of divinity, such that the spiritual serpent, insatiable by nature, while fixating on the fragile nature of the flesh, was pierced by the hook of divinity. And thus, having already devoured human nature, the serpent, through the Word's flesh assumed from us, was made to regurgitate all that he had consumed. Just as the serpent had previously deceived and ensnared man, lured by the expectation of divinity as if by bait, so too was the serpent himself deceived and ensnared by the bait of assumed humanity. Through his expectation of divinity, he was deceived, and through his expectation of human weakness, he was again deceived. In this way, he was compelled to vomit what he had

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swallowed, and the superiority of divine power shone forth. The nature that had been conquered became victorious, and the victory of God was revealed as more glorious through the weakness of the flesh than the serpent's victory over man through the false promise of divinity. This worm struck and withered the gourd, abolishing the worship of the law as a shadow and extinguishing the pride and arrogance of the Jews.

And it came to pass the next day, as soon as the sun arose. "The next day" signifies, namely, after the figure of the legal mysteries and the ritual of its corporal worship had passed, the grace of the new mystery began the following day, elevating the understanding of divine virtue (that is, the kind that, by embracing it diligently, would grant divinity). For, when this worm and the sun struck the gourd (for the worm and the sun of righteousness are the same), one, being born without seed according to the flesh, whose conception far surpasses the power of any contemplating mind; the other, who for my sake passed through the mystery of death and burial, entering the depths of the earth, and, as it were, being the eternal light of nature through His own reason), by the resurrection, arose from the dead: God commanded the spirit of burning heat to ignite; and the sun struck Jonah's head. For after the rising of the sun of righteousness, that is, after the Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven, the burning heat of temptation assailed the unrepentant Jews, and by righteous judgment struck them on their heads; namely, turning their sorrow upon their own heads, as it is written: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Indeed, after the resurrection of the Savior and His ascension into heaven, the spirit of burning heat and fervor (the vengeance brought on by the Gentile assault) fiercely came upon them; and, like the head of the entire nation (the glory and power), my sun of righteousness struck them down. They, with their eyes of the soul closed, did not recognize the light of truth that had shone upon them.

Or again, the spirit of burning heat, stirred up in the Jews, is divine abandonment, which restrains the dew of grace and the rain of prophecy, and dries up the natural spring of pious thoughts and the reasoning of the mind; justly brought upon the Jews, who, having filled their hands with

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innocent blood and betrayed the truth with lies, rejected the Word of God, who had come immutably in a form like ours to bring salvation to the human race; and who had been given over to the license of error, in which no affection related to piety or the fear of God is found, but rather a dry and parched will, imbued with every perverse affection. This will is marked by pride and vanity, which are the signature of the mind's swelling and arrogance: an execrable affection, arising from two coalescing vices, pride and empty glory. For pride denies the author of virtue and nature; while empty glory renders nature adulterous and corrupts virtue. Indeed, for one who is proud, nothing of divine piety is carried out, and for one who labors in vain glory, nothing proceeds from the rational nature.

The mixture and fusion of these affections is the swelling and arrogance of the soul; contempt for God, who is blasphemously maligned in His providence, and for nature, an alien affection of the mind, through which everything that pertains to nature is carried out against it, against reason, and damages the beauty of nature through abuse. And, to sum up, in the disbelief that the Jewish people labor under concerning Christ, the mind, permitted to be seized and bound by the Typhonic spirit, equally hates God and mankind. They view God as less significant in worldly delights; for this reason, they reject the worship of the spirit; and regard those not descended from the line of Jacob as entirely alien to the Creator. Because of this, they regard as acceptable and superior the actions of divine virtue, failing to recognize, as seems likely due to foolishness, that the need for God is more closely related to the soul than to the body, and that the mind, bearing the same character of faith as the others, shares the same affection for the good of the mind. By this means, the law of the flesh is utterly extinguished, and only God's reasoning and speech shine gloriously through the spirit, uniting all minds so that they may recognize God as one, and through love and concord, bind each to one another in harmony, where no one is separated from another by any spirit, even if vast distances divide them in space.

Therefore, the spirit of ardor is the swelling of the soul and pride; an affection of this kind and a vice that swells with the hatred of both God and men. For, like the heat of a sultry wind, it dries up the minds of the



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unbelievers, causing those who would reflect on God and His divinity, and the right reason concerning nature, to become desiccated. It is said that this wind, mixed with the southern and eastern winds, is generated, and that the wind thus created dries up all the moisture in the earth. This is called Euroclydon [or Euroaquilon] and Typhonic; the former because it disturbs all the elements, both land and sea; the latter because it brings on foul darkness. Indeed, this swelling of the soul and pride (which is indeed τῦφος) easily results in this condition. It brings great turbulence to the soul and fills the mind with the darkness of ignorance. God roused this heat and fervor after Christ was treated with scorn; that is, He permitted the Jews, who were affected by His reasoning, to be harried, so that their minds would be openly revealed in relation to both God and men.

Therefore, oppressed by the fog of ignorance, they impulsively pushed themselves into an opposition to God, leaving themselves with nothing but to endure it with difficulty and to be tormented in their minds. This is because the Gentiles, by the merit of faith, have attained salvation and glory, while the Jews lament, saying: "Now, Lord, take our souls from us, for it is better for us to die than to live"; and this is indeed because of the dried-up gourd. That is, the cult of the shadow of the law was destroyed, which had risen and flourished in the night, but ceased to exist: a cult defined only by signs, riddles, and figures, entirely lacking in spiritual clarity, through which the mind could be illuminated and made to shine.

For we, spiritually through faith, and with justice, which is its companion, embrace spiritual Nineveh; that is, the Church from the Gentiles, the truly great city of God, as it is written, having obtained salvation after the repentance of three days, appointed for its conversion. Let us strive to become citizens of this great city of God through the worship of repentance, and by improving our lives with better fruit. The Scripture significantly calls it the great city of God, when it says: "Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city to God." Where, then, is the Jew to be found, or in which part of the Scriptures, if truth is dear to him, will he find a similar statement about earthly Jerusalem? Indeed, when I have frequently studied the whole sacred Scripture, I have never found it saying: "And Jerusalem was

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a great city to God." Who, then, with the faculty of speech and the abundance of thoughts, could venture to assert how great this city is that is great to God and is heard by Him? For me, certainly, this matter seems entirely forbidden. But moreover, if anyone, through the taste of such great magnificence, has experienced the divine, and reflects in all things upon God, who speaks and expresses His thoughts, he knows that this is so. But how, then, can we say Nineveh, the great city to God, the chief city of the Assyrians, where there was confusion of error, and where the royal palace was established in the insanity of idol worship?

A city that was far removed from the holy (as they call it) land, and from the bodily promises given to Israel? Unless we say that, viewed through the faith of the Gentile Church, the greatness of the faith, exceeding every measure of reason and speech, which was to come, as if it were present, God confirmed it, and reclaimed as His own what had been foreign until then; and that what was once the most vile through the stain of impiety, by the grace of the Word, He made divine and most noble, such that its future greatness and preeminence could not be measured by reason or speech. Thus, speaking plainly through the prophet: "And Nineveh was an exceedingly great city to God." To this city, the prophetic word of grace was sent, predicting its blessed destruction, saying: "Yet three days, and Nineveh will be overthrown." In this place, as we are brought to the prayer and where the indulgence of days is mentioned, I have decided to omit other matters that could be more subtly and spiritually explained. But this should be carefully noted and said: that if this is said, it will certainly not be found to surpass the limits of truth.

Therefore, when I hear the prophet proclaiming with a definite period and limit, "Yet three days, and Nineveh will be overthrown," I expect an unchangeable sentence against Nineveh. Indeed, to speak more accurately and appropriately, I expect, in place of Nineveh, the future inspection or judgment for its benefit. For after three days, during which the prophet, figuratively dwelling in the belly of the great fish, signified the three-day burial and resurrection of the Lord in himself, the Scripture also waits for three more days in which the light of truth should be revealed, and the true

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outcome of the predicted mysteries should occur. These events will not merely signify the future truth of Christ's burial and resurrection through a figure, but will openly manifest the truth of those events themselves, in action, as that three-day stay of Jonah in the belly of the fish had prefigured. For every figure exists as the figure of the awaited truth, and Jonah, dwelling three days in the belly of the fish, is plainly a figure of the future truth, which should have been revealed through a new means.

The three days and three nights, the Lord was in the heart of the earth, according to His own words: "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." By saying, "Yet three days," He silently indicated and implied that three other days had already passed; otherwise, the word "yet" would not have been placed there. And if He had said, "There will be three more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown," He would have meant the same. Therefore, it was not the figure that overthrew Nineveh according to God's divine sentence, but the truth, of which He said, "Yet three days," in the sense of a more profound meaning of burial and greater resurrection: "And Nineveh will be overthrown."

However, it may not be lacking that someone will ask and say: "By what reason does the truthful God exist, who, with a sentence of destruction, does not utterly destroy?" We respond that He is truthful who both destroys and preserves intact; doing one by repudiating error, and the other by assuming true knowledge, or rather, by the sword of faith, which again is vivified, eliminating error, and by the death of error, accomplishing salvation. For Nineveh, if you interpret the name, signifies a filthy defilement or stain, and a very fine beauty. Therefore, as the force and meaning of the name demand, the stain and defilement of error, which had grown out of the transgression of nature, was overturned by the Lord after the three-day burial and resurrection.

But the most delicate beauty of nature, restored by the obedience of faith, was established—namely, the most excellent beauty of incorruption, showing no earthly roughness or harshness at all. It is fitting that this is so, even for the common nature, the holy Church, and each individual soul,

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which, through good faith and a good conscience, having put off the image of the old Adam and the earthly, takes on the image of the heavenly.

Therefore, it is clearly demonstrated that the prophet has a completely different understanding of the mystical sense, based on the diverse power and meaning of the name, as this diversity in his oracles and passages rightly aligns. For it signifies, in the manner in which the name denotes the escape from beauty, Adam and common nature; and as for the rest, the rest and healing of God, and the labor of God, it refers to our Lord and God, according to the meaning of the exposition handed down to us: but, in order to designate grace, through the riches of the Spirit in it, it is called a dove, and the gift of God, and God's labor, on account of the many struggles of those who have been the ministers of the true calling. It subtly indicates the insane rage of the Jews against the truth, their labor or fatigue and weariness is depicted, which is the envy of others' goods, creating pain and sadness for those who struggle with it; this vice indeed grew among the Jews by nature, who had allowed themselves to be inclined in mind to hate both God and men; and for this reason, with all impudence, they seek one destruction and stain of nature through bloodshed and murders. However, the speech hastens in its course, which pertains to the journey of three days, leaving behind the spiritual understanding. For it says: "Now Nineveh was a great city to God," as if in the journey of three days; if you wish, let us complete briefly what has been omitted.

Therefore, I think the journey of three days' duration should be considered, signifying the different courses of life, which is established according to the principles of piety; that is, the appropriate mode of discipline for each according to the general law. However, I call these general laws the natural, the written, and the grace-filled ones. For each of these has its own particular kind of discipline and corresponding course; indeed, those who are trained according to their principles hold a different affection and sense of mind. For one law instills in each person a different willingness and inclination of the soul. For example, the natural law, when it does not have reasoned guidance or prescribe any doctrine, leads to the spontaneous, as if it embraces all people as kin and related by nature. Indeed, nature itself serves

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as a teacher, offering help to whoever needs it; and so, all people wish for others to do for them what they themselves would like to receive from others, and they find joy in it from the heart. And the Lord taught this, saying: "Whatever you want people to do for you, do the same for them." For where nature is governed by reason, this is arranged, that the affections of the soul are in harmony. For those whose affections are one, the principles of their conduct and the course of their life, by their own nature, are clearly one. And where the principles of conduct and the course of life are the same, there is, without a doubt, one bond of affection between them, with one will and intention, uniting all to one nature's reason, in which there is no division, and where the division of nature does not thrive due to the stain of perverse love.

The written law, by the fear of punishments, restrains the erratic movements of those who labor under greater foolishness, and teaches the mind to focus solely on the fair distribution of justice, so that they may become accustomed to it; thus, justice, once strengthened by time, transitions into nature, so that gradually and gently fear, strengthened by the intention of a virtuous mind, creates a robust affection. The world is then clothed in the forgetfulness of the past, in a habit that, by its nature, brings forth love. This is where the fullness of the law resides, with all being bound together in the bond of charity. For the fullness of the law is that mutual connection of all things, rejoicing in the commerce of nature through charity; it crowns the reason of nature, adorned by desire and love, and honors the law of nature with its addition and growth. Indeed, the law of nature is the rational principle of nature, which gives a sense to habits and has acquired it as its servant.

But the written law, or rather the fullness of the written law, is the rational principle of nature's mutual connection, assumed with a spiritual reason. Hence, it is said: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"; not "See, you have your neighbor as yourself." The first signifies the union of people of the same kind, merely aiming that they should be; the second, however, signifies providence, that they live well and happily. But the law of grace teaches those who are instructed to imitate God directly, who, as it were,

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loved us beyond ourselves (if it is appropriate to say so), even though we were enemies through sin, in such a way that He consented to assume our essence and nature, which is above all essence and nature, with an unchangeable, super-essential reason, and to become man, and to listen to man as one of men; nor did He refuse to make our condemnation His own; and He dignified us with grace, to increase our divinity as much as He, the one who was human for the sake of our salvation, was by nature. Thus, not only do we know how to embrace one another naturally and spiritually love each other as ourselves, but also to care for one another divinely, above ourselves, and to show this mutual love by the will of virtue, so that for the sake of others, we may be willing to face death. For, as it is said, "There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

The law of nature, to sum up, is the rational principle of nature, which, having acquired a sense, is subject and servile, and from which, when the affection is removed due to the lack of reason and its opposition, those who are united by nature are distinguished in their parts. The written law, however, is the natural principle, which, after the affection opposed to reason is removed, assumes a spiritual desire and love, by which the mutual cohesion of those united by the necessity of their kind is formed and preserved. Finally, the law of grace is a principle that exceeds nature, transforming it immutably so that it may be imbued with divinity, like an image or likeness, in an incomprehensible manner, which, exceeding all essence and nature, represents the original model of humanity in nature, and grants the eternal blessedness of being.

But if the nature of the threefold law is thus, it is not unjust that the great city of God (namely the Church, or the soul of each individual) is the journey of the three days; so that what is capable of justice may embrace it, as it is constituted by the principles of nature, law, and spirit. For all that is adorned in the Church is contained in this threefold law; it is comprehended by the breadth of virtue, the length of knowledge, and the depth of the mystical theology of wisdom. However, let us be cautious not to, like the people of the Jews, depart from the city in our emotional affection, clinging to the tabernacle, or the body, in love; and let us not cultivate the fleeting

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pleasures of the body like the gourd, lest, struck by the conscience of truth, the affection based on the error of pleasure withers away, and like the spirit of ardor that consists in involuntary temptations, the vengeance of our misdeeds rises, causing us to despair of life and be enraged against divine judgment.

For whoever is overcome by the error of earthly things and delights in the pleasures of the flesh, we take in the word of God like a worm, which strikes the conscience, and, like the root of the gourd to which we are addicted by pleasure, consumes our lust; and in this way, as the spirit of eloquence rises, illuminated by its light, it dries up the act of sin; likewise, with the spirit of ardor, the memory of eternal punishments, like a head, strikes at the beginning of desires and passions, through the suggestion of the senses. Thus, we come to know the principles of providence and judgment, both of which, though temporal, the absence of which causes the mortal race to suffer and grieve, are set before us as eternal. Indeed, the Scriptures have led man to grief through the tabernacle and the sorrow of the gourd (because of the flesh and carnal lust), but God is seen to be concerned with Nineveh; it is clearly evident that God considers it much better and nobler for all things, which are valuable to men and loved by them, whatever they may be, rather than those which may not even exist and are only believed to exist by the erring judgment of opinion, with no reason for their existence at all, but only an illusion deceiving the mind; such things that offer no true existence to the empty figure or appearance, nor to the vice and affection.

## SCHOLIUM

1. In how many ways the name Jonah is interpreted.
2. Joppe, in how many ways it can be interpreted.
3. How many ways Jonah, when considered spiritually, is similar and congruent.
4. With whom Joppe, when considered spiritually, is congruent.
5. In another sense, the spiritual consideration of Joppe that fits each.
6. The turbulent storms.

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7. The head calls the first principle of unity, which indeed is the source of all virtue. The clefts of the mountains, however, are the thoughts and plans of the spirits of iniquity, by whose blast and assault, through transgression, our mind has been overwhelmed.
8. The earth calls the lowest level, a state that is not affected by any divine sense and lacks all movement of life relating to virtue.
9. The abyss calls the ignorance that is imminent in a vicious habit; by which the streams of vice and depravity, like the earth, ascend.
10. The earth is called a firm habit of vice. Eternal bars, the lustful affections of the earth, forming the worst habit.
11. The radiance calls true knowledge; however, the life of mortals, which, if guided by reason, should be the institution of life, which is lacking in one who is endowed with a bad habit.
12. Here the sea takes on the figure of this world, into which the Lord came through the flesh.
13. Rest is called the Lord, as in Him the labors of virtue are resolved. God's medicine is spoken of as one who heals the wounds of death. The grace of God is spoken of as one who is redemption. Finally, the labor of God is spoken of as one who has taken upon Himself our weaknesses and affections.
14. How is grace the Lord our God? See, don't be moved by what is written: "Full of grace and truth."
15. How, then, does Jonah signify prophetic grace?
16. The patience of the saints consumes the most wicked power that comes upon them.
17. The saints, enduring bodily torments and dying for the piety of the flesh, provided life in the spirit, which is through faith, to the nations.
18. The argument for divine excellence in power is that which is from the infirmity of the saints, by which the Lord made it so that the proud devil would fall by victory.
19. He calls the king the law of nature: his throne, the tainted habit of sense, the garment of empty glory; the sackcloth, the sorrow of repentance; the ashes, the modesty of sense; that is, humility.



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20. He calls men those who live by reason; beasts, those who live by desire; oxen, those who live by anger; sheep, those who stumble through contemplation of the things which fall within sight.
21. He also signifies Nineveh as the soul of each individual.
22. Those without which nothing exists in the created world are time and place.
23. The Church, which shines with the principles of virtue and knowledge, and whose individual souls (since they transcend time and nature) number above twelve myriads (that is, one hundred twenty thousand). For the principle of virtue, as it is contrary to sin, does not know the sin of the flesh; and the principle of knowledge does not recognize the vice of the soul, like the right hand unaware of it.
24. The author of virtues is God. In reality and action, His knowledge belongs to the one who truly knows God, in the spirit's transformation of habit.
25. The law of nature, through the middle virtues, diligently assists action, lifting the mind toward it; but the mind, through contemplation, and the desire for knowledge, leads to wisdom. But that affection which is outside reason and contrary to it, leads the neglectful mind away from the sense; its end is that the mind, fixed like a nail, clings to pleasure.
26. He calls distrust or unbelief the denial of the commandments; faith, however, is the assent of the mind to them; darkness, the ignorance of good and the honorable; light, the recognition or knowledge of it. Christ, moreover, called the essence and substance of these; and the devil, finally, the most evil habit, the source of all evils.
27. Virtue calls the most tranquil and firm habit toward what is honorable, in which there is nothing that goes against the image and character of God, nothing that is contrary to it.
28. Indeed, reason, as it has been compared to the origin and substance of things, defined the beginning of each thing; nothing in nature exceeds or is inferior to itself. Therefore, the definition and limit of things is the recognition of the creator's will; the mode and measure, in reality, is the imitation of the creator, determining how much is granted to things.

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29. What is driven by desire beyond its limit and exceeds its measure, makes the movement futile, for they do not follow God, in whom the motion of all desires finds its end, the true and truly existing, namely the enjoyment of God.
30. That which is beyond rule and measure; and indeed is beyond the rule and measure.
31. Indeed, reason.
32. It dismisses the relations of incorporeal bodies, as the mind, through excess, seeks the course toward God: for it is not fitting that anything which is second to God should be seen alongside God.
33. In what way can Jonah be understood to be a figure of the Jewish people?
34. With what interpretation of the name Jonah does he formerly rebuke the Jewish people in figure?
35. The Lord overcame the power of the tyrant, presented with the infirmity of the flesh, more than the devil overcame Adam, promising him divine dignity.
36. The Lord is the worm, because He was not born of any seed of the flesh. The sun, both because of the setting of the grave, where the Word descended to the earth as man, and because nature exists as Light and God through essence.
37. The spirit of ardor signifies not only temptations but also the abandonment of God, by which the Jews were deprived of the supply of divine charisms.
38. Pride's characteristic is to deny God as the author of virtue and nature: vain glory, on the other hand, distributes nature to the lower forms: from which arise the swelling arrogance and pride, a composed habit of vice; denying God willingly, and ignorant of the equal dignity of nature.
39. The connection and affinity of the soul through the spirit dissolves the affection of the will bound to the flesh; and it binds to God, affixed to His desire.

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40. He calls the night the legal symbols, under which the law operates; in these, the illumination of the soul cannot be found unless one understands them spiritually.
41. Because of the vastness and immeasurability of the mystery of divine dispensation, the Church of the Gentiles, the great city of God, has heard.
42. Truth, according to essence, precedes the figures; but according to declaration, the figures precede the truth in time: thus, Jonah in himself prefigured the truth, remaining in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights: "Yet three days," he says, signifying the burial and resurrection of the Lord, after which the error and ignorance of the nations were to be overturned.
43. Indeed, faith.
44. A brief exposition of the interpretation of the name Jonah, in relation to the characteristics of persons and behaviors, as concerning all that is said and written about him through allegory.
45. Indeed, the law.
46. The effect of the natural law is to make one act in accordance with all emotions and desires of the soul.
47. The rules that demonstrate the properties, which distinguish the natural law.
48. The written law, by inhibiting the fear of injustice, causes one to accustom oneself to justice. Habit, when it matures over time, gives birth to an affection that loves justice; with which, a firm and tenacious habit of the honorable is developed, leading to the forgetting of the former wickedness.
49. Definitions, through which the effects of each of the laws mentioned are demonstrated, along with the force of action.
50. To love your neighbor as yourself concerns only what pertains to life and being, which is the scope of the natural law; but to love your neighbor as yourself, in that it pertains to him that he may live and live well through the cultivation of virtue, this is commanded by the written

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law. Finally, to love your neighbor above yourself is the very essence of the law of grace.

51. Brief definitions that demonstrate the characteristics of the three days, which present what is honorable and of duty.
52. The three-day way, which is provided by the triple law, is the perfection of justice for the one who keeps it.
53. A subtler spiritual sense, relating to the tabernacle, the gourd, the worm, the heat or the burning, and the sun.
54. One who is kept away from the occasions of bodily lusts learns the reasons of Providence, which indeed prevent the fuel of vices. But one who endures the scourges and tortures of the body is taught the reasons of judgment, which cleanse him from the filth of the higher parts, purging him from involuntary labors.

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### QUESTION LXV

IN THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS IT IS WRITTEN: "IN THE DAYS OF DAVID A FAMINE STRUCK THE LAND FOR THREE YEARS. DAVID SOUGHT THE LORD, AND THE LORD SAID: 'IT IS BECAUSE OF SAUL AND HIS BLOOD-STAINED HOUSE, FOR HE KILLED THE GIBEONITES.' DAVID CALLED THE GIBEONITES AND SAID: 'WHAT SHALL I DO FOR YOU, AND HOW SHALL I MAKE ATONEMENT?' THEY ANSWERED: '...GIVE US SEVEN OF SAUL'S SONS, AND WE WILL HANG THEM BEFORE THE LORD IN GIBEAH OF SAUL.' THE KING TOOK ... SEVEN DESCENDANTS OF SAUL AND HANDED THEM OVER TO THE GIBEONITES, AND THEY HANGED THEM ON THE MOUNTAIN BEFORE THE LORD. ... AFTER THIS, GOD LISTENED TO THE PLEA OF THE LAND." WHY, AFTER SAUL'S DEATH, WAS JUSTICE STILL REQUIRED FROM DAVID—SO THAT THE FAMINE CONTINUED UNTIL HE DELIVERED SEVEN MEN OF SAUL'S LINEAGE TO THE GIBEONITES? WHAT MEANING SHOULD WE GIVE TO THESE WORDS, AND HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THEM SPIRITUALLY?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

It is undoubtedly ordained that the knowledge of the words of the Spirit is revealed only to those who are worthy of the Spirit; namely, to those who, through the diligent cultivation of virtues and by cleansing their souls of the soot of vices, present themselves as a clean and transparent mirror. Such individuals, at the very first glance, perceive as if a face is imprinted on them, and they receive the knowledge of divine things poured into them. But those whose lives, like mine, are stained with the blemishes of vices, barely reach a faint understanding of divine matters through some plausible

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conjectures. It is so far from them to comprehend these things precisely in their minds or to express them in words. I am fully aware, venerable father, that you know divine matters better because you yourself experience them, and that you possess greater knowledge of them through experience and taste than I could ever describe. For I, judging by my own awareness and what I experience, am incapable of proclaiming anything about divine matters. Nevertheless, one must not reject what is within one's ability, especially since you have entrusted this matter to me and imposed upon me the task of speaking about matters that surpass my capacity.

Therefore, Saul represents, in this passage of Scripture, the Law that dominates according to the commandment of carnal virtue, the letter of the carnal Jews. This is the bodily manner or reasoning that governs those who are guided solely by the letter of the Law. In one sense, Saul may be interpreted as "hell" if we consider the meaning of his name. For the Jewish people, by rejecting the life lived in the Spirit of God and by adhering to their indulgent lifestyle, chose hell; namely, they chose ignorance in place of knowledge and subjected themselves to its rule. For whoever falls from divine love becomes subject to the dominion of the carnal law, which arises from pleasure, and cannot or will not keep anything of what is commanded by God.

In another interpretation, considering the meaning of Saul's name, it can be understood as 'borrowed' or 'lent.' For the Law was not given as a firm and established possession but as a provisional institution awaiting the fulfillment of the promise. Therefore, when Saul's kingship was granted and a covenant made with him, God did not promise that it would endure forever. Whatever is received on loan or under an agreement is not a secure and permanent possession but rather an opportunity for the recipient to labor and produce something of their own substance or wealth. Saul's concubine, Rizpah, signifies, by the meaning of her name, 'the flowing of the mouth.' The flowing of the mouth refers to the discipline of the Law, which consists only in the speech uttered by the mouth. Those who pursue only a bodily observance of the Law bring her illegitimately into their house through improper and sinful unions. From such unions, no devout or religious

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offspring can be produced. For those who cultivate only the external discipline of the Law, as expressed through spoken words, have no lawful union with reason (that is, the true discipline of the Law). Consequently, the offspring of such a union are degenerate and illegitimate. The offspring of Rizpah's unlawful bed are Ermoni and Mephibosheth, which translate to 'accursed' and 'shame of their mouth,' respectively. Ermoni, in one sense, means 'anathema,' while Mephibosheth signifies 'shame of their mouth.' Their 'anathema' is the corruption of the mouth exercised through habitual sin and vice, while their 'shame of the mouth' is the mind's inclination toward sin against reason: the mind's inclination to conceive evil thoughts, which becomes both the shame and designation of the mind.

Alternatively, their 'anathema' may refer to the domain of the manifold nature that now exists, that is, this world, which has been made a region of death and destruction due to the guilt of sin. Into this world, the first man fell from Paradise through the transgression of the divine commandment. By the sinful desires of the will (namely, worldly and secular lust), this world is produced from the bare, outward utterance of the Law's discipline. This happens to those who do not pass from the external beauty of the Law, as written in the letter, to the inner divine splendor in the Spirit. The 'shame of their mouth' refers to the mind's meditation on worldly and bodily matters. For when the world is engendered by lustful desires of the will from the external and visible formulation of the carnal Law, this worldly affection, rightly so, gives rise to the mind's meditation on worldly and bodily matters as its natural consequence.

Their 'anathema' is the earthly, unbeautiful, and formless stirring of the passions, while the 'shame of their mouth' refers to the mind's agitation, which gives shape to the passions, presenting them with an appearance and forming their beauty according to the reasoning of sensory pleasure. For without the faculty of the contemplative mind, the passions are not spurred toward any form. Thus, whoever confines the divine power of promise to the mere letter of the Law adopts the doctrine of the Law not as a legitimate spouse but as a concubine. Consequently, such a doctrine, not in itself but because of the one who receives it in a carnal sense or unites with it, begets

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both 'anathema' and 'shame.' For the one who believes that God ordained sacrifices, feasts, Sabbaths, and new moons in the Law solely for the sake of bodily pleasure, rest, or leisure will certainly and completely be subject to passions and vices, as well as to the shame caused by the impure defilement of disgraceful thoughts within them. They will also be enslaved to this corruptible world, meditating on the pleasures of the body and indulging in the material and form of passions and vices. Such a person can value nothing other than what is perishable.

Perhaps this is the reason why Merob brings forth ill offspring, as she bore five sons to Esdriel. Now, if we interpret the name Merob, it means 'the overflowing satisfaction of the throat,' which is gluttony. This gluttony, arising from the freedom granted under Judaic command, produces steady habits of sensory abuse, represented by Esdriel (the contemplative part of the soul). The name Esdriel signifies 'divine power,' or 'strong helper,' or 'potent vision,' referring to the mind created in the image of God. Yet, this mind falsely weds itself to gluttony as if it were the offspring of the carnal commandment of the Law (that is, the letter of the Law). Such a mind, believing that the carnal delights prescribed by the letter of the Law are ordained by divine command, admits no other companions in life. It falsely considers these delights divine and the offspring of the ruling Law itself, and from them, it forms habitual patterns of sensory abuse. For when the contemplative power of the soul, guided by religious devotion, accepts pleasure as divine based on the reasoning of the letter of the Law, it misuses sensory practices contrary to nature and prevents any operation from shining forth according to the principles of nature.

Therefore, whoever practices the doctrine of the Law in a bodily sense, as though he had acquired divine knowledge not through a legitimate spouse but through a concubine, produces from it anathema (that is, the curse) as the result of vices and passions, as well as the shame of their deformity in reasoning. From Merob (Saul's daughter, representing gluttony), such a person brings forth the misuse of the senses as descendants, and these offspring, existing in the natural order (that is, natural reasoning and thoughts), are often put to death as if they were the Gibeonites. The



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Gibeonites, if we interpret their name, mean 'mountain-dwellers' or 'lofty ones.' They openly signify the higher rational thoughts or natural considerations within us, which Saul destroyed, just as anyone who, like Saul, is enslaved to the mere letter of the Law does not hesitate to repudiate or corrupt natural reasoning. For whoever devotes his mind to the bodily observance of the Law in no way accepts or respects natural reasoning and thought. This is because things themselves, as symbols and signs, cannot be identical to nature. If these are not identical to nature, it follows that one who is entirely fixated on the legal symbols as initial forms and examples cannot clearly see things as they are in their natural substance. By such an irrational and unreasoning effort, the mind rejects natural reasoning, not understanding that those saved by Jesus must be redeemed. For their sake, Jesus fought that formidable battle against the five kings who rose against them, during which even heaven itself helped the Gibeonites by raining down a hailstorm of stones against their enemies. He appointed them to be the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the divine tabernacle, which prefigures the holy Church, whose figure the tabernacle once was, under the Incarnate Word. It is Jesus—this Word of God—who destroys the lustful patterns and thoughts arising from sensory desires, which rise up against those rational considerations. The Word of God, Jesus, always accepts and preserves the rational contemplations of natural reasoning, entrusting them with the task of bringing wood and water into His divine tabernacle of mysteries. These rational considerations provide the material and occasion for the illumination of divine knowledge, the washing away of the filth of vices, and the nourishment of spiritual life. For without natural contemplation, it is by no means possible, in any way, to sustain or preserve the power of the mysteries.

But if the Gibeonites also signify that part of the nations which, by the reasoning with which they approached the dispenser of divine promises, Jesus, attained salvation, and were taught to carry wood and water (that is, to bear on their shoulders the mystical and salvific word regarding the cross and the water of divine regeneration, truly mystical and salvific virtues), and likewise to provide for the divine ark through pious faith—as with wood

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through the cultivation of deeds, the mortification of the earthly members; and as with water through contemplation, to supply the irrigating streams of spiritual knowledge—then it would not be absurd or thought to deviate from piety. Whether, therefore, the Gibeonites represent the reasoning of natural contemplation or that part of the nations which, through faith, received salvation, they are hostile to anyone who, Judaizing, seeks to regulate life solely by the letter of the Law, and they are opposed to him to whom salvation has been granted. For whoever makes their belly their god and glories in what is their shame, as though it were a noble adornment, and is pleased with themselves for it, knows only how to sustain disgraceful passions (that is, shameful and base desires) as if they were divine. Thus, such a person reveres only the temporal (that is, the matter and form of things, and the fragmented operations arising from the misuse of the senses' five faculties). These are, in truth, like the children of the concubine Rhespha; and the latter, like the grandchildren of Merob, the scorned daughter. For a union mixed with and entangled in matter and form has, by its very nature, the inclination both to give birth to vice and to destroy and consume natural reasoning. It is not arranged for natural reasoning to shine alongside vice, just as it is not arranged for vice to arise alongside nature.

Whoever, therefore, like Saul, clings solely to the letter of Scripture, both rejects natural reasoning and does not admit the mystical proclamation of the calling of the nations, which was foretold of old; instead, they adhere solely (as they believe) to the pleasures of the flesh, deriving this from the rationale of the Law. Thus, under the dominion of this reasoning, those who live only by the dictates of sense do not recognize the famine of divine spiritual knowledge. For indeed, famine is the absence of those goods which are known through experience itself, and a general want and lack of spiritual nourishment, which give stability and strength to the soul. How could anyone conceive of famine or any deprivation when they lack goods they do not even remotely know exist? Hence, famine does not occur while Saul is alive; for it has not been arranged that, while the letter of the Law lives and the earthly spirit of the Jews dominates, the scarcity of spiritual knowledge could be discerned. However, when the light of evangelical grace

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dawned, and the most luminous David took up rule in the mind over spiritual things (that is, the spiritual Law), after Saul was put to death—that is, after the death of the letter (David, if you interpret the name, means 'rejection' and 'vision of strength'; the former is referred to in the Jewish sense, with the letter suppressing the spirit, while the latter is called Christian, with the spirit overcoming the letter)—then the famine of spiritual knowledge is discerned: generally, in the faithful people themselves; and individually, in the soul of each person, when, instead of mystical spiritual contemplation, they remain outwardly observant and place the letter, which is presented as a preliminary light, before the greater illumination. So to speak, they regard the soul of Scripture as inferior to its ignoble body. For indeed, the faithful people, those who have recognized the truth, hunger; and likewise, the soul of each individual, dismissed from the contemplation of spiritual grace and enslaved to the figurative letter, is not nourished by magnificent mental conceptions but instead filled with sensual thoughts by the corporeal forms of the symbols in Scripture. Therefore, a famine of divine knowledge is especially enkindled, lasting three years, one year continuing after another. For whoever does not admit the spiritual contemplation of Scripture both rejects, like the Jews, the natural Law, and is unaware of the Law of grace by which deification is conferred upon those who are governed by it.

Therefore, the famine of three years signifies the shortage of knowledge in each of the three laws (natural, written, and of grace), as conjoined with each person's reason, for those who have not tended to the task of spiritual contemplation and its care. For indeed, no one can care for the knowledge of the Scriptures who rejects the contemplation of the natural reasons of things and dedicates the mind only to earthly symbols, without understanding any of the spiritual sublimity within them. For as long as the historical narration of the Scriptures alone prevails, the power and rule over transient and earthly things have not yet departed from the mind; but still, the children and grandchildren of the deceased Saul, all seven in number, continue to live. Namely, the corporal and temporary worship of the Law, from which, as I have given the reason for it, a libidinous affection is wont to

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be aroused in sensual men, with error as its fuel, and an open commandment in the symbols of the precept. I believe this is the reason why there was no famine in the days of Saul: that is, the shortage of spiritual knowledge did not become known during the time of legal, carnal reasoning, but it became evident during the time of grace. Through this, unless we receive all of Scripture with spiritual sense after the reign of the letter has passed, we become utterly famished, for we cannot be nourished by the mystical spiritual worship corresponding to the Christian life. But when, in the manner of David, we take on the sense of the Lord, we openly learn; hence, we have lost the grace of knowledge because we did not accept the natural reasons by which we would advance to the mystical contemplation in the spirit, but we still embrace the thoughts of the corporal letter of the Law.

And David sought, it is said, the face of the Lord. And the Lord said: 'For the injustice of the house of Saul, because he killed the Gibeonites.' David is the clear-sighted mind in Christ, which always seeks the face of the Lord. The face of the Lord is the true contemplation of divine virtues and knowledge, which, when sought, teaches the cause of its poverty and shortage; and it is commanded to give up two sons of Saul, taken from Rhespha, his concubine, and to deliver them to death, and also five sons of Merobes, his daughter. Saul is, as I said, the desirable hell, or the desired ignorance. For ignorance, clearly desired, is the letter of the Law, that is, the carnal and legal worship of the Law, for it is the body of the Law; or the mind which embraces and cherishes only the matter of the letter in a corporal sense. Rhespha, however, by the meaning of her name, signifies the course of the mouth; indeed, it is the doctrine of the Law as it is presented in plain speech. For he who is alien to the spiritual contemplation of the Law has the course of the mouth, but not that of the mind. Moreover, the sons of Rhespha, Ermonthi and Memphibosthe, represent the following: Ermonthi is their anathema, which is the corruption brought about by the innate flaw of the body, the effect of vices; or a place (that is, the world) where a transgressor is punished for his sins; or the libidinous affection of the soul toward the world. Or perhaps, it signifies the earthly, deformed, and shapeless movement of vices.

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Memphibosthe, however, is the shame of their bodies, which is the unnatural movement of the soul concerning lust and vice; that is, the thought that introduces libidinous affections and vices, or perhaps the meditation of those who love the world and the body. Or again, what introduces these affections and compares the sensual beauty to the mind's agitation. These Iberians, from the doctrine that rests only on the utterance of speech, are easily produced by the written law, and by the mind that clings only to the letter of the Law. Merobes, however, as her name indicates (Saul's daughter), is the abundance of throat satisfaction; which signifies the vice of gluttony. So it is arranged, that the law according to the letter, with its reasoning, defines with symbols, while the mind, due to carnal and libidinous life, concludes the law through figures, creating only bodily pleasure, and making the mind devoted to earthly concerns. There are five Merobes, Saul's daughters; namely, five libidinous ones, persistent in abuse, five modes of the senses: whom Esdriel has accustomed to produce (for Esdriel is the part of the mind that contemplates), for the mind given over to the body according to the letter of the Law through pleasure.

These two sons of Saul (namely, the matter and form) and the five grandsons of Saul, namely, those who are involved in the abuse of the five modes of the senses related to matter and form (evidently the libidinous and unnatural connection of the senses with the sensible, with temporal and fleeting things), after the death of Saul (where indeed the carnal worship of the Law through the letter and ignorance had passed away), are handed over to be killed by the Gibeonites, as the admirable David had been instructed by the oracle (that is, by the higher considerations and thoughts of natural speculation, the spiritual law, or the mind, aiming to abolish and break the most universal connection in symbols with the sense and the body of temporal things). This is to be done to those who are on the summit of Saul's hill (that is, the contemplation of the spiritual law). For unless someone, by first disdaining what is in the symbols, the dissimilarity of the divine and spiritual, and completely leaving behind sense in the lower realms, desires solely to attain to the adornment of the spiritual, so that he may be freed from the variety of bodily forms, it is by no means possible. For this reason,

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while he continues to honor the letter, which he sustains from the famine of knowledge, he is not comforted as he rightly ought to be, who has bound himself, like the serpent seduces, to eat the earth of Scripture (that is, the body); not to feed according to Christ's understanding and sense (that is, the spirit and soul of Scripture, the heavenly and angelic bread); but rather to partake of the spiritual contemplation and knowledge of the Scriptures in Christ, which God gives in abundant supply to those who love Him, according to the saying: 'He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of angels.'

Therefore, it is worthwhile that the exposition of the Scriptures, addicted to the body of sense, should be treated as the parent of vices, disturbances, and passions, leading to temporal, fleeting, and libidinous desires (that is, the vices of the senses in relation to sensible operations), like the children and grandchildren of Saul, as if on a mountain (by which we may abolish the height of divine speech through natural speculation; for this is what we desire for our souls, that we may be satisfied by grace). For if injustice is upon Saul and his house, according to the divine oracle, because he killed the Gibeonites, it is clear that it is an injustice to violate the truth: both the Law, which is understood only through the letter, and the people of the Jews, and anyone who imitates the mind of the Jews (for Scripture knows this as the house of Saul), such that the one who defines the power of the Law by the letter alone, without assuming the natural speculation, to mystically reveal the knowledge that is hidden within the letter, which exists between the figures and the truth, and removes those who are formed by them, and leads them back to this; but as if altogether denying and rejecting it, he blocks it from the divine institution.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to accept and interpret the corporeal and temporal exposition of the Law, as something subject to time and fleeting, through natural speculation, as if on a mountain (in the sublimity of science), to abolish it for those who have divine considerations in mind. For David called the Gibeonites and said to them: 'What shall I do for you, and how shall I make atonement, so that you may bless the inheritance of the Lord?' And they said to the king: 'The man who consumed us and

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persecuted us and thought to exterminate us, we will destroy him, so that he will not stand in any territory of Israel. Give us seven men from his sons, and we will hang them before the Lord on the hill of Saul.' And the king took two sons of Rhespha, the daughter of Aiah, Saul's concubine, Ermonthi and Memphibosthe, and five sons of Merobes, Saul's daughter, whom she bore to Esdrieli, and delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites. And they hanged them before the Lord on the mountain. And these seven fell together; and they were killed in the days of the harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Now, where, according to the historical account, do we find that the Gibeonites destroyed Saul, so that he would not stand in any territory of Israel, when Maribaal, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was protected by David's mercy, and many others of his kin, as it is found in the book of Chronicles? But how is it that, having taken the seven men who descended from him, they said, 'We will destroy him so that he will not stand in any territory of Israel,' when that man had died many years before? But, as it seems, the context of the history has been mixed in such a way that it is strange, and we should not seek the true sense of what was written. Therefore, what is corporeal in Scripture (namely, Saul) is completely abolished from all territory of Israel, by the cult of action through natural speculation, as if by the work of the Gibeonites, which, arising from the written law, kills the libidinous and body-loving affection toward the unstable and fleeting matter; killing, as it were, the sons and grandsons of Saul (the humble sense of the law) by the work of natural speculation; as if on a mountain (the height of science) making it manifest in the sight of the Lord (clearly confessing) the prior understanding of the law addicted to the body.

For those who are studious understand what is said, that they are to be hanged before the Lord; as if it were said, 'to bring into the light' (that is, through knowledge) the wandering opinion of the law, occupied by the letter. For whoever destroys the corporeal understanding of the law, openly kills and abolishes the letter of the law, so that it will not stand in any territory of Israel; that is, in any realm of spiritual contemplation. For

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indeed, Israel, from the very meaning of the name, is said to be the 'Seeing of God,' it is clear that the corporeal law cannot stand in any way in spiritual contemplation for those who place the spirit of the letter above it; for as it is written: 'God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth; not in the letter. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.' Therefore, it is necessary that the letter, which is so disposed as to kill, itself be killed by the life-giving spirit. For the two—what is corporeal in the law and what is divine (that is, the letter and the spirit)—cannot exist together and thrive at once, for they cannot agree, as the one is prone to give life, and the other is inclined to take it away.

Therefore, if we take this passage from historical faith, we will not find that Scripture is based on truth. For where did the Gibeonites exterminate Saul from all the territory of Israel, when many of Saul's relatives later existed in the people? But if we understand it in the spiritual sense, we will clearly find that by the help of natural speculation, on the heights of science, the written law (namely, the corporeal rite of worship in symbols) completely ceases. For where will carnal circumcision still stand, when the law is understood spiritually? Where will the Sabbaths, the beginnings of months, the solemn assemblies of all the people for festivals be? Where will the sacrifices, the rest and peace of the land, and the rest of the law's corporal ritual traditions be? For we know, when we pay attention to things under the guidance of nature, that perfection is not found in it being removed from what God has naturally endowed. For nature does not make perfection by mutilating it through art, losing by subtle invention what is inherently in it by the reason of creation; nor should we bring in a stronger art to establish the strength of justice, nor make a supplement for the defect of justice that has grown from creation by inventing a defect in nature. But from the typical position of that member, which is circumcised, we are taught to circumcise the libidinous affection of the mind by spiritual and scientific gift; the removal of which makes the mind composed, so that it rather follows nature, correcting the law of libidinous adventitious origin. For spiritual circumcision is the complete and absolute removal of the libidinous affection of the mind; the Sabbath, however, is the perfect cessation of disturbances, a



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universal rest of the mind from motion towards created things, and a perfect migration to God; to whom, having granted virtue and knowledge according to the measure of ability, it is necessary to beware that the mind does not meditate on any matter that provides fuel to vices, like wood, so that it does not gather the reasons of nature at all, lest, in the manner of the Greeks, we suppose that God takes pleasure in affections and desires, or we claim that He is confined within the limits of nature, whom only perfect silence calls out, and who represents full ignorance according to excellence. The new moon, indeed, we say, is the diverse illuminations of virtue and knowledge, in which, by suddenly contemplating all ages, we fulfill the acceptable year of the Lord, to which He grants the adornment of the crown of goodness. But the crown of goodness is pure faith, which, like precious stones and gems, interwoven with sublime doctrines and spiritual words and senses, binds the loving and religious mind of God as a head. Or rather, the crown of goodness itself is the Word of God, which, through various modes of providence and judgment (namely, the abstinence of affections and evils, which are from the mind, and their patience, which afflict unwillingly), like a head, surrounds the mind, and, by the grace of Deity, makes it more beautiful.

As for festivals and solemnities, the first symbol of its philosophy is that which is concerned with action; which indeed, like from Egypt, leads those under its dominion from sin to virtue. The second, however, bears the type of natural speculation in the spirit; which certainly offers to God the judgment concerning things, as the firstfruits of the harvest, adhering to piety. The third, finally, is the mystery of theology; which, namely, is the science of all spiritual reasons in created things, and the fullness of the Word according to the dispensation of the incarnate grace, a gift that provides immunity from sin; and lastly, as it is the producer of the trumpets, atonement, and the stage of the propitiation, it embraces perfect and immortal immutability in good, completing the sum of these.

Thus, up until now, one sense comes to my mind, arising from the honor given to the days, which suggests itself. For it is not because God desired that days be honored by men that He commanded the Sabbath as well as the new moons and solemn festivals to be kept. For thus He would

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have taught that creatures serve more than the Creator (as far as the commandment of the law is concerned); since, namely, those days, venerable by nature, and therefore considered worthy of reverence, would have been held as such by them; but He, for His part, indicated that honor should be given to Himself through the reckoning of the days, as symbolized.

For He Himself is the Sabbath, as the removal of suffering from the soul in the flesh, and the rest of labors in righteousness. However, the Passover is as the liberator of those who are held by the bitter servitude of sin. Pentecost, on the other hand, represents the beginning and end of all things, and the Word and reason, in which all nature consists. For after the seven weeks of the cycle, Pentecost itself is the fiftieth day; and clearly, this follows the nature of things, which is naturally fivefold in the sense of the five senses. After the time of nature has been surpassed and ages have passed, in God who is one by nature, there will be no end; in which indeed, no distance or change shall exist. There are some who say that the Monad is the λόγος (the Word, namely the speech and reason) as Providence, which is multiplied by the progression of the commandments, as a decadal. But where nature has been united with reason (the Word and the Speech) through grace, they will not be without those things, through which the motions of those things which are moved by nature, detain and alter the senses (what they call alteration). For it is necessary that the finite rest (in which, by necessity, through transformation, another quality is compared to another motion of what is moved) receive an end, the present unending rest, in which the motion of things moved must cease.

For where nature has a limit, there the motion of such things, which transfers from one quality to another, is inherent. But where nature does not have a limit, in that place, there will be no such motion. Therefore, the world is a place of limitation and finite rest; time, however, is defined motion; and from this, it happens that the motions of life within it are of such a nature that they change through those qualities, which variously affect the senses. Where, however, nature, having surpassed both place and time (those things without which, as they call it, namely finite rest and motion), has not adhered to any medium of Providence, it stumbles upon reason:

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nature in its simplicity and stability, devoid of any circumscription (and hence devoid of all motion). Therefore, as long as nature moves within the temporary order of the world, it has motion that changes the sense through varying qualities, on account of the world's finite rest and time's corruptive course, which degrades it. But in God, having been established and having found in Him, through the natural Monad, in which it was created, it will have the quiet of eternal motion, and the same motion concerning the one, the only, and the same, in an everlasting, unchanging stability. This, divine speech often calls the eternal and firm attachment to the first Author of all things created by Him, as well as the seat and establishment of that which is.

Therefore, the mystery of Pentecost is the immediate union of those who are governed by Providence with Providence itself; that is, the coupling of nature with reason, inspired by divine Providence, according to which no image or representation of the origin of time or generation exists. Moreover, the trumpet is our reason and speech; which, surpassing divine and all the power of eloquence, resounds for us as knowledge. The propitiation, however, is, as He who became like us within Himself, to dissolve our sins and, through the gift of grace in the Spirit, to imbue the nature of sin's guilt with divinity. The tabernacle, on the other hand, is our honor in the worship of immutability, in the habit of God as an imitator, firmness, and the bond of such a nature, which, through the way we are transfigured to immortality, holds and preserves. As for the sacrifices of brute animals and the sprinkling of their blood, it is not to be believed that God delights in them, as though, in exchange for the offering of the forgiveness of sins, it were a reward for obedience; when we pay attention to the nature of Scripture, we are not led to believe that we should unwittingly worship God as if He were enslaved to emotions and desires. It is as though those who burn with the heat of lust would, seeing a man dying in his own passion, condemn him to luxury and incontinent behavior. Indeed, we know spiritual sacrifices, not only by mortifying the disturbed affections, slaying them with the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, and by evacuating all carnal life as though by the blood of the soul's conviction, but also by offering to God all cultivated philosophical virtues and all natural faculties

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consecrated to Him, and, in order that they may belong to His part, offering them up as a holocaust in the fire of the Spirit. Thus, as we contemplate each symbol in Scripture based on the natural reasons, as in the mountain (at the high peak of mystical speculation), we metaphorically slay seven of Saul's sons (that is, the temporary and fleeting tradition of the law), and we exterminate Saul (the earthly sense of the law, placed solely in the text and letter of Scripture), and do not allow it to stand in any boundary of Israel; that is, of spiritual contemplation. For here indeed, life survives, consumes, pursues, and destroys (defining the law solely through the flesh), natural reasons and thoughts; just as one who worships divine, disgraceful affections: namely, those who, by taking on natural reasons, using the liberty taken from the spiritual law, slay and annihilate them all together at the beginning of the harvest of the barley.

The beginning of the barley harvest is the collection of virtues with a certain moderation through the philosophy that seeks action: by which it is compared so that all that is earthly in the Scriptures is given over to destruction, and all earthly motion is abolished. For as soon as someone enters the philosophy of virtues through reason, the sense of the Scriptures is transferred into the spirit, in the newness of the spirit's action, serving God through the exalted senses and objects, and not in the oldness of the letter, through the more humble acceptance of the law by the body, following the Jewish manner of affections and lusts, and being unsparing in the care of sin. It is necessary that, through the help of natural reasons, we destroy the affection for lust and the corporeal understanding of the law, as the text of Scripture narrates: "And the king took two sons of Rhespha, the daughter of Aiaphel, Saul's concubine, Ermonthiet and Memphibosthe, and five sons of Merobes, the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Esdriele; and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites." The hands of the Gibeonites are the action of natural reasons, by which the sons of Rhespha, Ermonthi and Memphibosthe (who indeed, from the mere utterance of speech, from the corporeal doctrine of the law, give birth to sinful actions, inciting lascivious and luxurious thoughts) are destroyed. Moreover, the five sons of Merobes (who indeed, from pleasure through unnatural use of operation, give birth to

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the intemperate five, the five modes of the senses) are together, as if in the mountain (at the high peak of spiritual speculation), to be slain, at the beginning of the barley harvest (that is, at the very start of action derived from the reason of virtue, or, from the speculation of nature's reasons in piety). The whole mind, according to God, is exalted and sublime; it slays together both the force of affections and lusts, and the vile motion of thoughts. Moreover, it also slays the lascivious modes and dispositions born from the abuse of the senses.

And they fell, he says, these seven, to the very same place, and were delivered to death, at the beginning of the barley harvest. And Rhespha, the daughter of Aia, took a sack and spread it for herself over the rock until the waters of God from heaven distilled upon them. Rhespha, as I was saying, if you interpret the name, is 'the course of the mouth'; which is the doctrine of the bodily law, based solely on the reasoning of spoken speech; which indeed, after the death of the affections from the very birth, and the formation on the mountain (the high peak of natural speculation), the manifestation to the hearts of all those whom she had previously embraced; just as a sack, penitence is spread; over the rock (that is, the doctrine of the Lord's idea, working through spiritual laws and knowledge in Christ by penitence), which, day and night, as though it had children in memory before the eyes, carries the prior institution in the flesh of the law, until the waters of God distill from heaven (until indeed, the divine knowledge of the Scriptures has been sent, from the high peak of spiritual speculation), whose power is, of course, to extinguish affections and vices, and to restore virtues. For when the discipline of the law is compared, it approaches Christ (the true and firm rock), through penitence, to receive the divine rain of spiritual knowledge of the Scriptures, according to the command of King David (that is, according to the aspect of the strong mind). For he says: 'And he did all that the king commanded; and afterwards, God heard the earth.' Therefore, the discipline of the divine Scriptures, according to the command of King David (that is, the spiritual law or the aspect of the strong mind), by the riches of penitence (whose sack is the symbol), when it works to the virtues, transferring itself to the rock (that is, Christ), calls forth the divine rain of

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knowledge; and it knows how to obtain that God hear the land of the heart, and grant the divine rains of grace, and supply the fruitful fruits of justice, and, like hunger, dissolve the superior ignorance of the divine, and fill the region with spiritual goods; namely, making the soul abundant with wheat, wine, and oil: that indeed, so that it may be confirmed by the language of practical knowledge; this, however, so that the divine desire, and the fervor of the soul uniting with God, may shine; that one, however, so that, with gentle, plain, and clear ways, bringing light and free from all earthly motion, the soul may shine with tranquility of mind, both in manner and reason, and with the countenance of virtues.

Let us also, following the example of the great David, destroy Saul from every border of Israel; that is, the earthly and bodily rite of the law; that is, the Jewish mode of worship, and the sense that is first encountered and more crude in the entire structure of Scripture, from all modes of theoretical instruction; and let us pass on to the spiritual, deifying power of those things which are understood; and let us reconcile the Gabaonites to ourselves (that is, natural reason), whom the true distributor and arbiter of divine promises, Jesus, wished to be safe; for whose injury to Saul, God withheld the death, and through the same Gabaonites (that is, natural speculations), let us slay, like seven men of the sons of Saul (that is, the sensual, earthly, and temporary understanding of the law), which Rhespha (the course of the mouth) has to bear (the discipline of the bodily law), and Merobe, whose interpretation is the abundant satisfaction of the throat; that is, the pleasure of the belly. The first, Memphibosthe, and the second, Ermonthi (of whom one, the shame of the mouth; the other, their anathema, if you interpret the name; namely, the habit and operation of vices), then, five sons of Esdriel take up (that is, the part of the soul contemplating, five forms of the senses constantly fixed in sensual abuses), whom, by the natural power of speculation, we kill, placating God's wrath, and transferring to the spirit from the letter; and we call forth the divine rain of knowledge, and of whose mother we receive the abundant fruits of justice. For the letter of the law, just as Saul, or what is born from the letter, from the earthly intelligence of the mind, just as the sons and grandsons of Saul, intervened by natural speculation, to the heights of

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spiritual doctrine, we kill whatever the sense of the bodily and temporary law is, or, to speak more truly, the earthly, leading, and we do not allow it to live; provided that we, just as God, hate Saul, and spurn him, so that he does not reign over Israel; that is, we reject the visible mode of Scripture (namely, Judaism), so that it may not dominate the faculty of the intelligent soul within us, which the servitude of the flesh adds to. For it is necessary to hate Saul (that is, the bodily rite of the law) and expel him from the kingdom, just as he kept Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and the fat flocks and herds, as well as the vine and olive tree (that is, the incitements of wrath and desire, and arguments that exist as fuel for lust); and let him bring the living Agag (the calf, that is, the earthly sense of the flesh) to the land of promise (that is, the place of divine knowledge and faith, namely, the soul). For Agag, if you interpret the name, signifies a calf; which, perhaps, the foolish and senseless Israel, having melted in the desert, consecrated to God, placing the lust of the belly before divine worship. This calf is abolished by Moses and Samuel; the one, by breaking and sowing under the water; the other, by slaying with the spiritual sword: that is, the living and effective grace of the Holy Spirit (which is what Moses signifies), and the obedience to the commandments of God (which Samuel signifies). For Moses, if you interpret the name, is the one who leaps through the water; Samuel, on the other hand, is the obedience to God; which is true faith, and divine life.

Therefore, to abolish the dominion of sin, or the prudence and sense of the flesh, grace is obtained through holy baptism; also, through obedience, by which the divine commandments are truly fulfilled, so that the sword of the spirit (that is, the word of divine knowledge in the Spirit) may slay; crying mystically against the lust of sin and the prone passion, just as the great Samuel cried to Agag:

‘Just as your sword has made women childless, so today your mother shall be childless among women.’ For many, like the sword of gluttony, the vice of indulgence in pleasure has made the virtues childless. For temperance and chastity, through intemperance and the luxury of life, extinguish their seeds; but justice, through insatiable and unknowing desire for possession, corrupts its equitableness; humanity, through private and

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indulgent self-love, which arises from the rationales of nature, divides and severs connections and relationships. And, to sum up, the vice of gluttony destroys all the seeds of virtue. However, as I said, it is only the grace of baptism and the instituted order of life through obedience to God's commandments that removes this vice. Therefore, the law placed in the letter, which nourishes and preserves this vice, God regrets having anointed a king over Israel, and He gives the scepter to David (that is, to the evangelical and spiritual law), namely to the son of Jesse. But Jesse, if you interpret the name, signifies the work of God. Therefore, the holy Gospel is the seed of God's work; that is, it is His work through the flesh of His own production, which rules in endless ages; under whose auspices and gift we have an indissoluble joy and gladness, like a day that does not know the setting and is immortal. For it says: 'This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.' That is, calling the gospel grace a day, in which He wishes, as the Apostle advises: 'Let us walk honorably in the day (of knowledge and truth).' For Christ is the eternal light, the day in which it is worth it for all His faithful ones to live their lives in the proper establishment of virtue and worship.

For He alone, made by God (that is, through the reasoning of the flesh), without any seed, was born and formed, and He renewed the natural laws of birth and tradition; indeed, prepared before the face of all peoples, as a light for the revelation of the Gentiles and for the glory of the people of Israel. Truly, the light of the Gentiles is our Lord, who, through the darkness of ignorance, truly wipes and opens the eyes of their minds with the light of recognition; and again, by His divine discipline, He has provided an example for the faithful peoples to follow in the emulation of virtue: He, indeed, being an example of the face of virtue, shining with radiant light, in whom we, contemplating, just as our author of salvation and leader, through the conduct of action, to the extent granted to us, demonstrate His virtues by imitating Him. But the glory of the people of Israel is the Lord and the Word, just as He, through the light of divine knowledge, illuminates the mind through mystical contemplation. Or perhaps the Scriptures call the peoples 'natural reasons': and their face, which is unoffended and free from



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all error, whose preparation (that is, the light of recognition) is the Word, as the Creator of nature itself.

But the nations, abhorring the affections of nature, which He uncovers and reveals, by granting the light of knowledge, He utterly defeats them by nature. Therefore, the Word becomes the glory and brightness of Israel, because it purifies the soul from unnatural affections and adorns it with the reasonings of nature. Furthermore, it also binds it with the diadem of the immovable arrogance of divinity. Truly, the glory of Israel is, first, to be freed from unnatural affections, secondly, to fulfill natural reasonings, and lastly, to acquire those goods which surpass nature. Whoever receives this spiritual David, even though the envy of Saul may burn against him, is not captured and defeated; on the contrary, his supreme mercy and humanity, like the tranquility of the mind, even though he may be hated, the Spirit's harp recreates the enemy and relieves the distress, freeing him more from the evil spirit, as from the sinful stain of disease, making him of a sound mind.

For whoever, through envy, hates and falsely accuses the one who, renowned in the contest of virtues, is even stronger in the abundance of spiritual knowledge, is Saul, whom the evil spirit oppresses, because he cannot bear the excellence of that one who excels in the glory of virtue and the felicity of knowledge. And this reason is that greater insanity is carried away by him because he cannot bring death to one who is undeserving. Oftentimes, he even rejects the beloved Jonathan more harshly, that is, the natural reason of conscience; which indeed condemns unjust hatred and reports the deeds and virtues of the one who is hated, just as even the insane and ancient Saul, to whom Samuel said, as a divine transgressor of commandments: 'Foolish, you have acted, who have transgressed my commandment, which God commanded you.' Saul, as I said earlier, either the written law is, or the Jewish people, who live according to the written law. From both, thus, when the spirit of the Lord departs (that is, the spiritual speculation and knowledge), the evil spirit invades (namely, the earthly sense), seizing with frequent and other interchanging disturbances of things being born and perishing, in a dizzying spiral, suffocating with the instability of reason.

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For when the earthly law, understood only by the letter of the text, brings to a seizure, and he who is sick with a holy disease, tossed by six hundred opposing things, does not agree with himself; then the mind, following the Jewish ways, drawn into the unstable whirl of earthly circles, gnashes in error, unsteadily, necessarily joined to the instability of the circle of error, and carries affection with it. But when David, truly the musician of nature, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the spirit of mystical contemplation, has enchanted the law and the Jew alike, He then makes it spiritual from earthly, and leads it from doubt and unbelief to faith. Thus, Saul is represented by the law and the Jewish people, both when they are agitated by a fanatical spirit, and when they are sober-minded. For the law is agitated with fury, as I said, when it is received with earthly sense; and the Jew is more seized and fanatical, who induces the idea of worshiping God with earthly sense. On the other hand, the law is sober, when it is spiritually understood; and likewise, the Jew is sober, who is led from bodily worship to the spiritual worship of God.

Moreover, it must be observed that Saul is slain by those whom Jesus desires to save and keep safe. For those whom the spirit of the Scriptures defends, the letter is compared, so that it may slay. Therefore, God regrets having anointed a king over Israel, one who is received carnally by the Jews; and He grants the power of the kingdom to the Spirit, who is closer to the letter and superior to it. And He says, 'I will give the kingdom to your neighbor, who is better than you.' Just as David was the neighbor of Saul, so the Spirit is skillfully joined to the letter of the law; for it is destined to shine after the death of the letter, as is clear from its nature.

Therefore, let us also beseech the spiritual David, that He, through the harp of spiritual contemplation and knowledge, may sing to the ears of our fanatical mind, stirred by earthly affection, and drive away the evil spirit, which crashes against the sense of earthly things in a variety of cases; so that we may spiritually understand the law, encounter the hidden mystical meaning within it, and obtain sufficient provision for the eternal life's journey. We must not have a symbolic law in the letter that we have received mutually, while lacking the knowledge of grace in the spirit. We must not

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only, like captives of the eyes, engage in the divine inquiry, deprived as we are of the true and clearest vision to understand divine words.

For Saul is called both, if translated into our language: for, in addition to what has been said, if the name is interpreted, it signifies usury and inquiry; and indeed, the written law is also such. The first, indeed, is not the highest necessary possession of nature, nor is its constant persistence a companion; the second, however, is that which moves us towards true knowledge and the primal wisdom: that is, we should not consider inquiry as the thing we seek, nor as the primal and exemplary comprehension of divine reasoning, but rather that through corporeal symbols of the law, we strive towards the comprehension of divine goods. Thus, by our care for inquiry (which may, perhaps, frequently lead to error), we are freed and come to know the truth about those things we were supposed to inquire into, and we may obtain our blessedness, which shines in unchanging commerce within us, illuminating our essence and distinguishing our true nature, itself bearing the form of its own excellence: in Christ Jesus, our God and Savior, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

## SCHOLIUM

1. The mind, most purified by the cultivation of virtues, is rightly prepared to acquire divine knowledge, which it can then claim as its own through the radiance of virtue. For the mind, by its own merits, is without form or character; it has an acquired form, either the knowledge that shines through the light of virtue in the spirit, or the ignorance that results from the stain of passions.
2. He who has attained the form of virtue, by which the divine knowledge shines in the spirit through the light of virtue, is said to suffer the divine, not through nature by substance, but by grace, having entered into it through a shared gift. However, one who has not received knowledge by grace, even if he speaks of something spiritual (specifically relating to knowledge), does not know the power of what he speaks through

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experience. For mere discipline does not bestow knowledge, which exists in habit and effect.

3. It was rightly said to "receive Saul," regarding this passage of the Scripture; because it is interpreted in various ways in other passages, depending on how the spiritual sense is appropriately derived from the history.
4. Just as, he says, one who is joined to a concubine does not have a lawful marriage, so also one who practices legal discipline by corporeal reason does not enter into a legitimate union with it in the society of life; producing false doctrines from it, which perish together with the life of the flesh.
5. He who receives and expounds the doctrine of the Scriptures by bodily reason is taught sin by deed, and thus meditates on it in his mind, namely, the pleasures of impure intercourse, murder, and in short, learns to abhor all of God's creation from the letter of the law.
6. Spiritual consideration in another sense. Here, the world is also called "anathema," as it is the place of a curse. It has the tendency to produce through desire, one who does not pass into the spirit of the law with the mind.
7. He says, "In which we are drawn by affection, and we also think about it with the mind."
8. In another spiritual sense, "anathema" refers to the motions of desires, vacant of idols: shame of the mouth, the movements of the mind forming desire from the reasoning of the senses, and subtly supplying materials for such thoughts and reasons.
9. Through synaeresis, as they call it, he has explained three spiritual senses and considerations of the text.
10. He who has conceived in his mind and holds as true the divine constitution of the body, delights in the law of the flesh, as if receiving the gift of God with joy in an unwilling union, and assumes the power and operation of the senses, polluting them with abuse.
11. A brief summary of those things which have been considered above, showing that he who expounds the law by corporeal reason holds its

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discipline as akin to that of a concubine; generating the habit and act of desires, and, as if divine, introducing gluttony into the home, from which various modes arise through the abuse of the senses, and natural reasons and seeds in things are destroyed.

12. He who remains in the symbols of the law cannot see the nature of things through reason, nor can he grasp the substantial reasons of things, which are given by the Creator, because of the distinction of signs from the nature of things.
13. Natural reasons bring together wood, which becomes a ready material for the divine knowledge; they also bring water, cleansing affections, so that it may provide an increase to the vital operation in the spirit.
14. Another spiritual consideration of the same, by which the calling of the Gentiles by the Gibeonites is explained.
15. The material and form, in spiritual sense, are represented by Ermonthi and Memphibosthe; however, the abuse of the five senses is represented by Merobes, the five sons, whom, by joining them together (that is, joining sense with material and form to bind the necessity of the law with the flesh), one who is confined to the letter of the law, indeed produces carnal affection and desire; but he corrupts the natural reasons.
16. Vice (or passion) and nature, according to the same reason of being, do not coexist.
17. He who is not persuaded in his mind that the Scripture is spiritual, and by this he labors, does not feel the lack of knowledge.
18. When David is taken in the sense of the Jews to signify the law, it is referred to in rejection of the name's etymology, due to the carnal tradition of divine law; however, when it signifies the Christian rite, it is rightly seen as a strong vision, because of the spiritual consideration of knowledge in the mind.
19. He called the soul the spirit of the Scriptures; but the body, he called the letter.
20. He calls the three years three laws: the written law, the natural law, and the law of grace, which are connected one with the other. Therefore, one

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who accepts the written law through corporeal reason does not nourish the soul with virtues. Likewise, he who does not attend to the reasons of things in the mind does not ambitiously accept the various wisdom of God in his mind. Finally, he who does not know the great mystery of new grace, does not exult in the hope that he should be imbued with divinity. Therefore, spiritual speculation, as a companion to the deficiency of the written law, is a lack of understanding of the various wisdom of God, according to the reasoning of the natural law; it is followed by the ignorance of deification, according to the gift of the new mystery of grace.

21. He who does not understand the law spiritually, though he may have the dead law (because it does not serve corporally), still cultivates the humble senses of the law (the sons and grandsons of Saul); from which it happens that he is tormented by hunger for knowledge.
22. Just as the face distinguishes and marks each one as a proper sign, so also spiritual science distinctly signs and represents what is divine; he who seeks it is said to seek the face of the Lord.
23. David, if the name is interpreted, is said to be of strong vision and keen insight.
24. He who, from the reasoning of the written law, is immersed in bloody sacrifices, loves and seeks ignorance, explaining the precept as if it were only for the pleasure of the flesh.
25. He who serves corporally from the reasoning of the law, as material, produces sin by deed; but, as a form, the mind is shaped by the consent to it, with the allurements of the senses. However, he who takes the law spiritually, takes as material the operation; but, as a form, the consent to sin, together with the licentious allurements of the senses, by abuse in various modes, kills, as if through the sons and grandsons of the letter of the law, through natural reasons in the high peak of speculation.
26. Without natural speculation, no one can discern the legal symbols from the divine.

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27. To "suspend to the sun," he understood this as meaning: to manifest the dead letter of the law through knowledge in the spirit in the sublimity of speculation.
28. He understood the boundary of Israel, the reasoning, the whole method of spiritual speculation, in which the tradition of the corporeal law cannot at all subsist.
29. It is the nature of the Spirit to give life; but the letter, to take it away. Therefore, the letter and the spirit cannot work in the same way; just as what gives life and what destroys cannot coexist.
30. The foreskin: What is natural. But whatever is natural is the work of divine creation. And the work of divine creation is also very good and beautiful, according to the saying: "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good," or beautiful. But the law, when it commands the foreskin to be cut off as though it were unclean through circumcision, introduces God as correcting His own work by art, which is, even by thought, very impious. Therefore, he who applies the law's signs to nature knows this: God does not correct nature by art, but commands that we cut off a part of it, subject to the affections, which obeys reason; the part whose member is a figure. This is prepared as science, so that it may be cast off by the strong action of the mind. For the priest who performs the circumcision signifies knowledge, as if with iron, by the strength of the word's action, against passion and desire, girded up. The corporeal tradition of the law is abolished when the spirit of the letter prevails.
31. The definition of the mystical circumcision of speculation.
32. The definition of the mystical Sabbath law; which mystically shows what the Sabbath is, and what its spiritual reason is; namely, to be a rest from affections and the agitation of the mind concerning the nature of things.
33. Namely, God.
34. What the new moon signifies.
35. The definition of the crown of kindness.
36. A more subtle and spiritual definition of the same.

## BOOK ONE

37. Here the work of Providence is said to require abstinence, as it is arranged to cleanse the vices of the soul. Patience, however, is a work of judgment, which, as it were, stands against involuntary temptations.
38. The first feast and solemnity is called Passover.
39. The second feast and solemnity is called Pentecost.
40. The third is called the celebration of the Day of Atonement, which was held in the seventh month.
41. Observe how the law drowns those who understand it corporally, as its author exists so that creation may serve the creature more than the Creator; and that those things which were created for the creatures, are considered worthy of veneration and worship, but they, ignorant of Him, for whom they exist, serve them.
42. How God is the Sabbath.
43. How God is also the mystical Passover.
44. The mystery of Pentecost, in which the spiritual power of the things signified is more profoundly cooked, while Pentecost is called God. For just as the monad, which remains stable, after a week, wound into seven turns, makes Pentecost; and again, by its own accumulations and additions, multiplied in ten parts, giving back Pentecost, it exists as its principle and end; one, as preceding all, the other as being superior. Thus, God, to whom a monadic figure and likeness was said to correspond in proportion, is the principle and end of things, and the Word, by which all things consist and were created. Indeed, the principle, which exists before all substance and movement; and the end, which is superior to all substance and motion. The Word and the reason, by which it provides for all as the author, and which contains and preserves them in a subject form and appearance; by whose work, each thing in its reason has eternity. So, when times and ages have reached their end, which are said to correspond with a certain ratio to the week, then God Himself, who is singular, will be without those things, without which (i.e., in no places or intervening times) He Himself, through the true union of things, preserving and protecting those who are given salvation, will exist in them. For created nature,



## QUESTION OF THALASSIUS

which He arranged by the number five, is not only for the senses (to which it is arranged as if to fall) but also for universal knowledge, which in undisturbed and certain knowledge, intellect, reason, sense, and life, comprehending what alone exists, is placed. Therefore, it will come to pass that at some point, He will cease from rest in place and movement in time, as being superior to those things that were created for Him (i.e., places and times) through the true union and conjunction with God, by whom it was created, existing in those things that will be given salvation. For what God, according to the divine plan of the commandments, has imposed on Himself a quality proper to Himself (that which is from grace through deification, a mark of proprietorship and insignia), then He is to be freed from the rest in place, and from movement in time, attaining constant motion and peace, with endless divine fruition and an insatiable desire for them to enjoy.

45. In the seventh month, there are three solemnities: of the trumpets, of atonement, and of the tabernacles. The trumpet, indeed, is the type of the law and the prophets, and of the knowledge proclaimed by them. But atonement is the symbol of reconciliation between God and men through the incarnation. For He, by His own will, underwent the condemnation of the one who was guilty of sin, dissolving the hatred that had previously been fixed upon Him. The tabernacle, however, is the designation of the future resurrection, and the transformation of all things into an immutable state.
46. He who delights in naked bloody sacrifices, does so as if he were lustful, as one who practices it also desires lust. For he who sincerely and from the heart practices, rejoices in those things to which he, to whom he pays reverence and worship, is joined.
47. The Scriptures call sacrifices the immolation of affections and the offering of natural faculties, of which the ram is the figure of reason; the calf represents wrath; the goat is the sign of desire.
48. The earthly understanding of Scripture rules the soul with its authority, rejecting natural reason; abolishing the abuse of natural faculties.

## BOOK ONE

49. As soon as someone ceases to take Scripture according to the reasoning of the senses, which is arranged according to the body, it also returns to the spirit in the mind, as a nature intermediary, spiritually acting that which the Jew, through the performance, becomes subject to the wrath of God.
50. What the hand of the Gibeonites is, which David hands over to the descendants of Saul.
51. He calls it the suspension to the sun, the manifestation that affects from the lofty rationalities of nature, while they are led through high speculation.
52. The doctrine of the corporeal law, which has deadened the corporeal sense of the law through penitence, and by adhering to Christian doctrine, receives heavenly illuminations of knowledge like rain.
53. Namely, wheat.
54. Of wine, indeed.
55. Of oil, truly.
56. Wheat is called the support of the soul, as it is spiritual knowledge. Wine, however, rejoices the heart, as it forms the union of love with God. Oil, on the other hand, fills the face with joy, as it is the emblem of spiritual grace, enlightening the mind with a most tranquil state.
57. Amalek is gluttony. Its king is earthly sense. Its herds and flocks, which nourish the affections and vices of the body. The vine, the precipitous motion of the soul. The olive tree, inflaming pleasure, the smoothness and allure of desire. These, as if transferred to the holy land (i.e., the religious habit of worship), sit with it, which is the body of the law: whose grace, like a reward, is received, and the turning away from God is seen.
58. The fool is called, like the impious, the Jewish people; the foolish, as a criminal, that is, impious and sinful.
59. The vice of gluttony is compared, as it kills the divine seeds of virtue: but it is faith's grace that, through the obedience of the divine commandments in the word of knowledge, kills it.
60. How it is wheat.

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61. How the preparation of the Lord is before the face of all peoples.
62. How the Lord is the glory of Israel.
63. In another spiritual sense, who the peoples are, and what their preparation is before their face.
64. What nations, once again, the Word coming reveals or manifests.
65. How the Word is again called the Glory of Israel.
66. As soon as someone who exists in the corporeal sense of the law's letter dies, they receive the Word, which reigns in the spirit.
67. David received the type of the Lord, the Gospel, knowledge, contemplation, and action (what they call) of the new people; and in line with the various modes of spiritual senses, he adapted what each should have from the use of the material subject, according to the location's reasoning.
68. He who has received the figures, not the forms of the principal mysteries themselves, and has received knowledge in the spirit of inquiries, not illustrations; having received a mute (i.e., the knowledge through silent reasoning), is examined through the symbols of the law according to the reason of the senses. The spirit's hunger makes the soul wither, like the leader of the way, cheerfully attending to the inquiries of true knowledge.
69. An interlocution is what is called thus, in which often there is error and deception.
70. Beatitude, namely, which marks those who have merited to become its partakers, as a sign, and makes them known by itself.

**BOOK TWO**  
**QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS**

**QUESTION I**  
**WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES OF THE MIND, AND WHAT**  
**ARE THE VIRTUES OF THE BODY?**

§ I.  
*THE RESPONSE*

The virtues of the mind are these: charity or love, humility, meekness, long-suffering, patience, forgetfulness of injuries, being immune from anger, fury, envy, not judging, not striving for empty glory, almsgiving, chastity, sobriety of the mind, not having greedy habits, the affection of a compassionate mind, a sense that is alien to all arrogance and pride, remorse. The virtues of the body, however, are: fasting, the hardness of the body, lying naked on the ground, vigils, self-control, renunciation of things, and not wandering or being distracted.

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### QUESTION II

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, WHAT IS SAID IN THE  
APOSTLE: "I WILL SING WITH  
THE SPIRIT, I WILL SING WITH THE MIND"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

One sings with the spirit when the words contained in the Psalms are uttered with the tongue alone. However, one sings with the mind when, understanding the meaning of the same Psalms, one delights in them with spiritual intelligence.

### QUESTION III

WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN: "I WAS  
CONCEIVED IN INIQUITIES,  
AND IN SINS MY MOTHER CONCEIVED ME"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The first will of God was that we should not be born from the union of marriage through corruption. However, the transgression of the commandment introduced marriage because Adam acted unjustly (namely, because he violated the law given by God). Therefore, all who are born of Adam are conceived in sin, becoming subject to the condemnation of the first parent. That which is written, "and in sins my mother conceived me," signifies this: Eve, our first mother of all, conceived sin through lust, to which she was drawn and inflamed as if provoked. Thus, we too, being made subject to the condemnation of our mother, acknowledge that we are conceived in sins through lust.

## BOOK TWO

### QUESTION IV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, AS SAID BY THE APOSTLE: "TO BE ANATHEMA FROM CHRIST FOR MY KINSMEN"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

He means, "I wish," he says, "to be handed over by Christ to the devil for torment, and to bear the punishments due to Israel, which they deserved because of their unbelief in God, provided only that they might obtain salvation." In a similar way, the Lord also handed Himself over and became a curse for us.

### QUESTION V

IN HOW MANY WAYS CAN A MAN SIN?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

I think it happens in four ways: namely, through deceit, through error and being misled, through ignorance, and through the inclination of the soul's affection. Indeed, those who sin in the first three ways easily recognize their fault and repent of what they have done. However, the one who sins with the inclination of the soul's affection, without feeling the danger of their condition or the delay of time for repentance, remains without any remedy and is left to punishment.

### QUESTION VI

WHAT DOES THE LORD MEAN IN THE GOSPEL WHEN HE SAYS, "TWO SPARROWS ARE SOLD FOR A FARTHING"?

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Some say that the term "farthing" (assarium) is understood to be equivalent to ten coins. This is symbolized by the letter iota, which represents the numeral ten. Moreover, this letter is the initial of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, both the old and the new people, as well as our inner and outer man, are redeemed through the name of the Lord.

### QUESTION VII

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE  
TAKEN BY ELISHA FROM  
ELIJAH: "WHERE IS THE GOD OF APPHU?"

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

This phrase allows for three interpretations: it can mean, "Where is the God of my Father?" or "Where is the God of my Great One?" or finally, "Where is the God of the one who is hidden?"

### QUESTION VIII

IN HOW MANY WAYS IS ALLEGORY EXPLAINED,  
AND WHAT IS TROPOLOGY?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Allegory is when something is understood in inanimate objects—for example, in mountains, hills, trees, and the like. Tropology, on the other hand, is applied to our body parts, such as the head, eyes, and so on. The

## BOOK TWO

term "tropology" comes from *τρέπεσθαι* (to turn or to change), meaning a moral transformation or change.

### QUESTION IX

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN THE PSALM: "YOU SAT SPEAKING  
AGAINST YOUR BROTHER AND  
SET A STUMBLING BLOCK AGAINST THE SON OF  
YOUR MOTHER"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Whoever criticizes the actions and character of the one to whom they are united by the bond of faith, and who persistently undermines them with their words, is rightly said to speak against their brother. Moreover, whoever, out of envy, slanders someone endowed with wisdom and causes scandal to all through their actions is the one who sets a stumbling block for the son of their mother.

### QUESTION X

SINCE IT IS WRITTEN IN THE ONE-HUNDREDTH  
CHAPTER BY SAINT DIADOCHUS:  
"IN THE FUTURE AGE, SOME WILL BE JUDGED AND PURIFIED  
BY FIRE," I ASK THAT YOU, FATHER, EXPLAIN  
THIS PASSAGE TO ME

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Those who have attained perfect love for God and have lifted the wings of their soul, as the Apostle says, elevated by the strength of their virtues, will be caught up in the clouds and will not come to judgment. However, those who have not fully achieved perfection but whose virtues are



## QUESTION & DOUBTS

mingled with sins will be brought to the judgment tribunal. There, through the examination of their good and evil deeds, they will be tested as if by fire. If the scale of their good works outweighs the bad, they will be purified through appropriate correction and expiation.

### QUESTION XI

#### ON THE VARIOUS KINDS OF JUSTICE

##### § I.

##### *THE RESPONSE*

Those skilled in divine matters say there are three kinds of justice: human, angelic, and divine. Human justice is the fair distribution of honors and goods in matters that affect the senses, as well as moral integrity. Angelic justice is the abundant sharing of divine knowledge. Finally, divine justice is defined as enduring evils for the sake of pardoning sins.

### QUESTION XII

#### WHAT WAS THE REASON THE LORD REBUKED PETER AND CALLED HIM "SATAN"?

##### § I.

##### *THE RESPONSE*

Not, as some think, as an insult or reproach did the Lord call Peter "Satan," but because what belonged to the Lord's deprivation became, in turn, our gain. For instance, His death became our life; His dishonor became our glory. Peter, unaware of this truth, when the Lord foretold that He would suffer, thought, in his human understanding, that it was impossible for Life to die or for such glory to be joined with disgrace. To correct this misguided opinion—that in matters beyond nature, the natural order and sequence are not to be sought—the Lord decreed that opposites would achieve their purpose: through death, life; through dishonor, glory. Thus,

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rebuking Peter's opposition to this idea, the Lord said, "Get behind me," as if to say: "Follow my counsel and do not go ahead of me, trying to seek the order and sequence of things." The term "Satan" is said to mean "adversary" in its literal sense. The Lord did not use it as an insult but as though saying, "You oppose my purpose and plan."

### QUESTION XIII

SINCE GREGORY OF NYSSA SEEMS TO SUGGEST IN ALL HIS WRITINGS THE ΑΠΟΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ (THAT IS, THE RESTORATION TO COMPLETENESS) TO THOSE WHO CANNOT FULLY GRASP THE HEIGHT OF HIS LOFTY UNDERSTANDING, I BEG YOU TO EXPLAIN WHAT YOU KNOW ON THIS MATTER

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The Church recognizes three types of ἀποκατάστασις (restoration to completeness): The first is the restoration of each individual, according to the principle of virtue, which they attain when they have fulfilled the measure of virtue within themselves. The second is the universal restoration of nature in the resurrection, when it is renewed to incorruption and immortality. The third, which Gregory of Nyssa has particularly misused in his discourses, is the restoration of the powers of the soul, which had succumbed to sin, to their original state in which they were created. For it is necessary that, just as all nature in the resurrection will receive incorruption of the flesh (at the time we hope for), so too the corrupt powers of the soul, together with the impressions of wickedness and malice ingrained in it, will gradually lose these over the long duration of ages. After all the ages are completed, and without having found any rest, the soul will come to God, who has no end, and thus recover its powers—not by participating in or sharing in goodness, but by knowledge of it—and return to its original

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

condition. In this way, it is clearly demonstrated that the true Creator is not the author of sin.

### QUESTION XIV

WHY IS IT, GIVEN THAT THERE ARE MANY GRAVER  
INJURIES, THAT THE LORD IN THE GOSPELS  
DECLARES THE ONE WHO CALLS HIS BROTHER A FOOL TO  
BE GUILTY OF HELLFIRE, WHILE THE ONE  
WHO SAYS "RACA" IS LIABLE TO THE COUNCIL?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The term "fool" (*fatuus*) is understood to mean senseless or mad, while "Raca," in the Hebrew language, means "despicable" or "worth spitting upon." Therefore, since the term "fool" is used to refer to an impious or unbelieving person, as in "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God"" (Psalm 14:1), and as Moses says, "This people is foolish and unwise" (Deuteronomy 32:6), whoever calls his brother—who is united with him in the bond of faith—impious or an idolater, or a heretic or infidel, calls him a "fool" and is justly made liable to hellfire. But whoever says "Raca," meaning "despicable" or "unclean," accuses his brother's character and life and is justly subjected to a lesser penalty.

### QUESTION XV

HOW IS IT TO BE UNDERSTOOD, AS STATED  
IN THE CREED: "INCARNATE BY  
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE VIRGIN MARY"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

## BOOK TWO

Some of the holy ones say that the soul was sown by the Holy Spirit, as if from a male seed, while the flesh was formed from the virgin's blood.

### QUESTION XVI

WHO ARE THOSE REFERRED TO BY THE  
APOSTLE WHEN HE SAYS TO THE  
EPHESIANS, "WHO FIRST HOPED IN CHRIST"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Whoever among the saints practiced any virtue before the Lord's coming, even though they did not fully know the mystery of the Incarnation, were, in part, moved by nature to hope and expect that He who had created nature would also restore it when it had been corrupted. Herod, if you interpret the name, is said to mean 'made of skin.' Therefore, it is worthwhile to denounce fleshly thoughts.

### QUESTION XVII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, ACCORDING TO  
THE APOSTLE: "FLESH AND BLOOD  
CANNOT POSSESS THE KINGDOM OF GOD"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Flesh signifies desire, and blood, anger. Rightly, therefore, one who is not cleansed of these cannot possess the kingdom of God.

### QUESTION XVIII

WHAT IS "DIAPSALMA"?

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

I believe it to be a transition from one concept to another, or even a change of mode in teaching to another mode.

## QUESTION XIX

### WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE STORY OF LAMECH?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Certain men learned in divine matters say that in Lamech's time, when the order of things was disturbed, and there was no fixed magistrate or one in authority, the state of affairs was such that the stronger would oppress the weaker. Thus, Lamech encountered a man with his wife, killed him, and took his wife. He also encountered his brother with his sister, killed him, and took his sister. Scripture indeed calls one of these a "man" and the other a "young man." As to the historical sense, this is the account. As for the spiritual meaning, Lamech represents the act of wickedness. For he kills in us the "man" (namely, the natural law) and the "young man" (that is, the spiritual law) and from these takes understanding, so that, mingling it with the sower of malice, he brings forth the offspring of sin. Regarding this Lamech, vengeance is taken seventy times sevenfold, meaning he pays the penalty in terms of both action and deed. Thus also the Lord, when Peter asked, "If my brother sins against me, how often should I forgive him? Up to seven times?" replied, "Not just seven times, but seventy times seven." This means that for one who is repentant and grieves having offended, you will forgive not only the lesser offenses committed by consent but also actions and deeds.

## BOOK TWO

### QUESTION XX ON THE VARIOUS WILLS OF GOD

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

We must acknowledge three types of God's will: that of benevolence or good pleasure, of dispensation, and of permission. The will of benevolence or good pleasure is shown in what happened with Abraham, when God said to him, "Go out from your land." The will of dispensation is seen in what happened with Joseph, as events were arranged with a certain rationale to prepare for future outcomes. Lastly, the will of permission is exemplified in the events of Job.

### QUESTION XXI WHAT DOES THE PSALMIST MEAN WHEN SPEAKING OF ENEMIES, SAYING: "THOSE WHO ATTACK ME ON ALL SIDES"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

"On all sides" means in front, behind, to the right, and to the left. Demons attack us in front when they ensnare us with the outward appearance of physical things, like bait. They attack from behind when, through preoccupied thoughts of wicked opinions, they stir up memory. From the left, they attack through carnal and lascivious desires or lusts, disturbing the mind. From the right, they assault with vain glory and pride, attacking the soul and pressing upon it.

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION XXII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "TAKE UP THE PSALM  
AND GIVE THE TAMBOURINE;  
THE PLEASANT PSALTERY WITH THE HARP"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

"Take up the divine doctrine, and give diligent action in accordance with the principle of virtue through the mortification of the body." Regarding what follows, "the pleasant psaltery with the harp," the psaltery represents the spirit, the harp the soul, and the tambourine the body.

### QUESTION XXIII

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF: "A BRUISED REED HE WILL NOT  
BREAK, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT  
EXTINGUISH"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

One who follows the Lord's example, with greater mercy and indulgence, does not entirely crush the one broken by sin into despair, nor does he extinguish the one whose soul and power of reason, flickering like a flame through the vain wind of empty glory, smolders. Instead, he allows them to flourish until they reach the perfection of knowledge. I think this also means that, just as weeds are allowed to grow together with the good crop, so too, along with virtues, the effort to please men and vain glory grows for a time. Therefore, the cultivator of souls forbids these to be uprooted until virtues have sent forth deep roots, lest, in trying to uproot such things, the zeal for virtue is also uprooted.

## BOOK TWO

### QUESTION XXIV

WHAT DOES THE EVANGELICAL STATEMENT MEAN:

"IF ANYONE STRIKES YOU ON THE  
RIGHT CHEEK, OFFER HIM THE OTHER ALSO"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

When demons, by casting thoughts, have attempted the right cheek in terms of reason, so that through secondary and fortunate actions, they exalt glory, turn the other cheek: namely, presenting the deeds of left-handed actions under scrutiny.

### QUESTION XXV

HOW SHOULD WE PIOUSLY UNDERSTAND THIS

EVANGELICAL PASSAGE: "THE FATHER  
WILL NOT JUDGE ANYONE, BUT HAS GIVEN ALL JUDGMENT  
TO THE SON"? ALSO, AS HE SAYS IN ANOTHER  
PLACE, "I DO NOT JUDGE ANYONE; BUT THE WORD WHICH  
I HAVE SPOKEN WILL JUDGE HIM"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

As God is neither the Father nor the Son who judges anyone. For a man does not become a judge of brute animals, but of men. However, the Father has given judgment to the Son, not in the sense that the Son is God, but in the sense that he became man. He will judge all, by which he initiated in himself the standard of life in opposition to us. Moreover, his word will judge, that is, the doctrine he exhibited in his works, as it is written, "What Jesus began to do and teach."



## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION XXVI

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF BLASPHEMY? ALSO, WHAT  
DOES IT MEAN: "EVERY SIN WILL BE  
FORGIVEN TO MEN, BUT THOSE WHO BLASPHEME AGAINST  
THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL NOT BE FORGIVEN,  
NEITHER IN THIS WORLD NOR IN  
THE WORLD TO COME"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

As to the question regarding the blasphemy of the Spirit, it is resolved in this way: When the Lord performed various miraculous works, the Jews attributed the operations of the Spirit to the demons. What is added, that it will not be forgiven "neither in this world nor in the world to come," is to be further inquired. Some say that the acts of the divine Spirit are explained by four modes in which sins are forgiven; two for the present and two for the future. Because memory is weaker than to recollect the sins of an entire lifetime, for which a man is repentant while his life endures, the most merciful Lord, in his kindness, has established modes of penitence, even when we do not act with full repentance. As to the future, it involves two modes, as mentioned.

When a person, during this life, indulges in sins but then also performs good deeds, whether prompted by mercy towards his neighbor or by another sense of humanity, and thus at the future time of judgment, when they have depressed their lance, forgiveness will be granted them. This is one mode of remission. The other is when a sinner, hearing from the Lord "Do not judge, and you will not be judged," reverently abstains from judging anyone, but in the examination of life, as one who has kept the commandment, will be judged. For the true Lord will not forget his commandment. Moreover, both of the remaining two modes hold forgiveness in themselves. The sinner, by God's certain providence and

## BOOK TWO

counsel, is disposed to suffering, necessity, and adversity. For God, by inflicting such things, unknown to him, purifies him. And indeed, if, while tempted, he gives thanks because he has been made grateful, he will receive his reward; but if he is ungrateful, he is purified from the sins for which he is punished, though he is punished for his ungratefulness. Finally, what a person does to men, when they sin, has many causes for obtaining forgiveness, as the Scriptures show.

When someone sins against a man, and wrongs another, the very nature of that offense turns away the guilt. However, blasphemy against the Spirit (namely, unbelief), because it has no other cause of forgiveness except for becoming faithful, rightly, one who has closed his life in unbelief will not be released from the guilt of unbelief and impiety, neither in this world nor in the next.

### QUESTION XXVII

WHAT DOES THIS RIDDLE FROM THE PROVERBS

MEAN, OR THE OBSCURE SAYING:

"IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, GIVE HIM FOOD; IF HE IS  
THIRSTY, GIVE HIM DRINK: FOR BY DOING  
THIS, YOU WILL HEAP COALS OF FIRE  
ON HIS HEAD"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The enemy that opposes the mind is the body, always hostile because of the vices and affections that arise. Therefore, if it happens that he hungers, that is, desires salvation or thirsts for divine knowledge, it is worth feeding him with the labor of self-control and giving him drink with the meditation of divine teachings. For thus, coals of fire (that is, divine and spiritual thoughts) will be heaped upon his head (the mind).

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION XXVIII

WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY WHEN IT IS SAID IN  
PSALM 101, "I AM BECOME  
LIKE A PELICAN OF THE WILDERNESS"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The pelican is a bird, and its young are greatly troubled by the serpent's hatred. What does it do? It builds its nest in a high place, preventing the serpent from reaching it. What does the malicious and crafty serpent do? It watches to see where the wind blows from, and then breathes venom to cause the young to die. Thus, the pelican comes and sees the young dead. Looking at the cloud, it flies high and strikes with its wings, causing the young to rise. Therefore, the pelican signifies the Lord: its small offspring are Adam and Eve (that is, the human race). Its nest is the paradise; the serpent is the devil, the deserter. The serpent, by the disobedience of the first parents, blew in the venom of sin, and they died. Our Lord and God, because of his love for us, is exalted on the precious cross. When his side was struck, through the cloud (that is, the Holy Spirit), he gave us eternal life.

### QUESTION XXIX

WHAT DOES THE STATEMENT "THERE THE SPARROWS  
SHALL MAKE THEIR NESTS" MEAN?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The sparrows signify either souls or various virtues.

## BOOK TWO

### QUESTION XXX

WHAT DO THE WORDS "THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF  
HEROD IS ONE OF THEM" MEAN?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

They say that the Herod is a bird; it lives with such great continence that, during the time of the year's cycle, it mourns for forty days, and when this period is over, it again spends forty days in sorrow. It fixes its nest in the trees, where, with no shade covering, it enjoys the pure air. This nature signifies chastity. It precedes all virtues, and, from those things which fall into the senses, it is separated by the shadow of temporal things, and does not allow any cloud to cover it. The number forty, which contains the perfection of all four elements, signifies this.

### QUESTION XXXI

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT IS SAID: "VISITING THE  
INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE  
CHILDREN, UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION,  
OF THOSE WHO HATE ME"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

I consider the first generation to be the propagation of evil, that is, the suggestion of the mind. The second is the desire or craving. The third is the formation of the evil nature (namely, consent). The fourth is the act or operation (that is, the action and effect). Therefore, it is visited unto the third and fourth generations, corresponding to consent and action. For the suggestions of the mind and desire are harmless, because evil has not yet reached its completion.

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION XXXII

HOW SHOULD THE CONCEPT OF GOD'S  
REPENTANCE, AS STATED IN  
SCRIPTURE, BE UNDERSTOOD PIOUSLY?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Those who think piously and reverently about divine matters say that it is impossible for God, who is the Creator of the nature of all things, not to foresee the things that have been created by nature. However, if the matter stands thus, it is necessary that, since God provides for the human race by nature, there are many modes of salvation with Him. For since man is a mutable and inconsistent creature, easily changeable according to the time and character of his conditions, it is fitting that divine Providence, though the same, should change according to our affections, finding a way through nature, as vices grow within nature. Just as many diseases lie under the practice of medicine, and the skilled physician, encountering many various forms of sickness in bodies, must also pass from worse to better methods, so too in God, the change from one mode of Providence to another, according to Scripture, requires divine repentance.

### QUESTION XXXIII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT SAYS: "FOR THREE  
TRANSGRESSIONS OF TYRE,  
AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The four transgressions or evils mentioned by the prophet, I believe, suggest the following: namely, the suggestion and aggression of evil,

## BOOK TWO

the craving or desire, the evil nature, and the operation or act. Concerning the first two (the aggression and desire), God endures them, as the evil is not yet fully grown or completed. However, regarding the third and fourth transgressions (the nature and the operation, or consent and action), the Scripture rightfully threatens judgment.

### QUESTION XXXIV

WHY IS IT NOT CORRECT TO SAY THE FATHER OR CHRIST  
IS THE SPIRIT, AS IS SAID ABOUT  
THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN  
THE FATHER AND THE SON?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Just as the Mind is the author of the Word, so too the Spirit is, though through the intermediary of the Word. However, just as we cannot say that the Word is the voice, we cannot say that the Son is the Spirit.

### QUESTION XXXV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN THE LORD SAYS: "IF YOUR  
RIGHT EYE CAUSES YOU TO SIN,  
PLUCK IT OUT AND CAST IT FROM YOU"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

This can indeed be understood as referring to friends, who are like eyes, and those who are part of the household, who are as necessary to us as hands; also, to companions who serve us as feet. In this sense, it can be understood more readily that through the parable, it is meant that if they are a stumbling block or harm the soul, they should be cut off. However, it can also be explained in another way, according to the mode of spiritual

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

understanding. If you are endowed with the knowledge of contemplation, which is like the eye, and through it, you become puffed up with pride, you should cut it off. Or, if even through a delightful or honorable action, pride or self-exaltation arises, you should cut it off. Likewise, if you are a minister, represented by the foot, and pride inflates you, you should step away from it. It is better to lack those things that seem like virtues than to perish in the vice of pride and arrogance.

### QUESTION XXXVI

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT IS WRITTEN:

"THE SUN WAS EXALTED, AND  
THE MOON STOOD IN ITS ORDER"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

When the sun of righteousness, represented by good works and true knowledge, is exalted within us, then the moon stands in its order: our nature, which is subject to change and constantly absorbs qualities from one thing to another through movement, receives a stable and firm state.

### QUESTION XXXVII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT IS WRITTEN IN THE

CATHOLIC EPISTLE OF PETER: "THAT  
THEY MAY BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO MEN IN  
THE FLESH; BUT LIVE ACCORDING TO  
GOD IN THE SPIRIT"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

This was said of those who existed during the time of the flood. These people were completely ignorant of God and led their lives in evil

## BOOK TWO

pursuits. God, however, let them go and allowed them to suffer the consequences of their actions: the daily struggles, wars, hardships, and various adversities that befell them. But the sins that concerned their ignorance were not forgiven until, through faith in Him, He descended to the depths with the utmost kindness and mercy, so that all who would believe in Him might be freed from the guilt of impiety. They were judged according to the flesh, for the wrongs they had done to men, but lived according to God in spirit.

### QUESTION XXXVIII

WHAT DOES DAVID MEAN BY PLAYING  
THE HARP AND SOOTHING AND  
CALMING THE EVIL SPIRIT FROM SAUL?

RESPONSE: Whoever, in the manner of the blessed David, tends the sheep (that is, the power and reasoning of the soul) and slays the lion and bear (which represent wrath and desire), uses the speech of doctrine, mixed with lofty contemplation, to delight the hearer and calm the vices and desires within him.

### QUESTION XXXIX

SINCE SCRIPTURE CLEARLY STATES THAT ABRAHAM GAVE A  
TITHE TO MELCHIZEDEK, YET HE ALSO  
SAID THAT HE GAVE EVERYTHING AND DID NOT TAKE EVEN  
A THREAD FROM THE SANDAL, HOW  
DID HE GIVE THE TITHE? FOR HE HAD NOT PROFITED  
MATERIALLY FROM THE WAR EFFORT

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Since Scripture says that Melchizedek was a priest of God, it is fitting that Abraham, as a layman, should have given the tithe to the priest.



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As for not having anything from which to give, it is clear that the kings who had fought against Sodom had not only the spoils of Sodom, but also from other regions they had previously conquered. All of these spoils, after the enemies had been defeated, were brought by Abraham. He returned what was Sodom's to the Sodomites, but kept the rest, from which he gave a tithe to Melchizedek.

### QUESTION XL

WHY WERE LEGAL PRIESTS NOT PROHIBITED FROM  
HAVING WIVES, WHILE CHRISTIAN  
PRIESTS ARE PROHIBITED, ACCORDING  
TO CUSTOM?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

This is because the evangelical priesthood is believed to have existed according to the order of Melchizedek, not according to the order of Aaron. Moreover, it is not written that Melchizedek had a wife. Therefore, those who serve in the priesthood according to his order, such as bishops, are not allowed to marry.

### QUESTION LI

WHAT IS THE REASON THAT THE CHURCH CUSTOMARILY  
PRESENTS THE BREAD AND CUPS OF  
THE PRECIOUS BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD  
IN AN UNEQUAL NUMBER?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

All that is performed in the Church has a special significance. Since these symbols, especially, are the mysteries and images of divine substance,

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they lack any composition: however, every created thing is composed. Only the Holy Trinity, as has been said, is simple and free from all composition. Therefore, the Church proposes the bread and cups in an unequal number, in which the Deity is represented in figure.

### QUESTION XLII

WHY DO SOME RAISE THE QUESTION: HOW IS IT THAT  
THE HEAVENLY VIRTUES ARE SAID TO  
HAVE BEEN UNAWARE OF THE LORD'S INCARNATION, WHEN  
WE FIND THAT THE PROPHECIES  
CONCERNING HIM WERE MADE THROUGH ANGELS,  
GABRIEL ANNOUNCED HIS CONCEPTION TO  
THE VIRGIN, AND FINALLY, ANGELS TAUGHT THE  
SHEPHERDS?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

It must not be doubted that the angels knew of the future incarnation of the Lord, who came for the salvation of men. What was unknown to them, however, was the incomprehensible mode of the Lord's conception: how He, being fully in the Father and filling all things, could be fully present in the womb of the Virgin.

### QUESTION XLIII

WHAT DO GARIZIN AND BAL SIGNIFY?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Garizin, when interpreted, means circumcision; Bal, however, means sprinkling or mass. Therefore, in the sprinkling of the destroyed portion of the nations, the Lord Jesus Christ establishes an altar.

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION XLIV

WHAT DO CHAVONES, CANA, GALILEE,  
DOCE, AND HERMON MEAN?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Chavones signifies windows. Cana, when interpreted, means possession. Galilee means revolution. Doce Syrus signifies a proud mind or reasoning. Hermon, when interpreted, means turning away from wild beasts. They say that the Jordan River originates from there. Through these, the grace of holy baptism is signified.

### QUESTION XLV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT IS SAID IN  
THE PSALMS: "BE STILL  
AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The phrase "be still" is understood in six parts. If we perform these, we can know God. The first stillness is from the act of sin; the second, from the manner of living that fuels it; the third, from the association and companionship with those who live recklessly; the fourth, from any way of life that does not contribute to a religious and pious life; the fifth, from substance that turns to vice and distracts the mind; and the sixth, from entirely renouncing one's own will. These are truly a renunciation and subjugation of oneself for the sake of piety.

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### QUESTION XLVI

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF JEPHTHE  
AND HIS DAUGHTER?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Jephthe is understood as a figure of the Lord, and his daughter as representing His pure flesh. Just as Jephthe, born of a harlot and stirred by his own people, went forth to fight and defeated his enemies, vowing to offer to God as a sacrifice whatever first came out of his house. So, the Lord, having taken on human nature (which was sinful), came into the world free of sin, became the Father of His own flesh, and, being stirred by those who rejected the Jews, took up the battle for us. He victoriously offered His flesh to God the Father. The name Jephthe, when interpreted, means "the opening of God."

### QUESTION XLVII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT IS WRITTEN IN THE  
GOSPEL: "AMONG THOSE BORN OF  
WOMEN THERE IS NO ONE GREATER THAN JOHN; YET THE  
LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS  
GREATER THAN HE"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Anyone who humbles themselves before John (for this is what is meant by "the least") is greater than John. Alternatively, since John is thought to have grasped the contemplative power that can be attained in this age, he is considered greater, for the knowledge of the end state, which is to come, is given to him, surpassing any knowledge that exists in this present age. Or,

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someone who is the greatest theologian among men and most advanced in the knowledge of divine things is, in the end, lesser than an angel. Finally, according to the evangelical institution, someone who holds the lowest place is greater than John, as it pertains to legal justice.

### QUESTION XLVIII

WHAT DOES THE FOLLOWING FROM PROVERBS

MEAN: "THE ONE WHO STRIKES  
HANDS WITH ANOTHER WILL NOT  
BE INNOCENT"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

One who mixes a good action with an evil one will not be innocent.

### QUESTION XLIX

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT SAYS: "THE JUST MAN FALLS  
SEVEN TIMES, BUT RISES AGAIN"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Here, "the just man" refers to the truly just one, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose actions are worthy. Since He took upon Himself all human nature with the most profound compassion, He fell and rose again, showing the full nature of humanity. Human nature fell seven times: the first, by the transgression of the first parent (Adam); the second, by Cain's attempt at murder, who was the first to show evil; the third, by Noah's generation, where the Spirit of God did not remain in men because they had become flesh; the fourth, by the construction of the Tower of Babel; the fifth, in the age of Abraham, who alone was pleasing to God; the sixth, during the time

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of Moses, when mankind's impiety was so great that it seemed necessary for God Himself to intervene; the seventh, during the time of the prophets, when the previous generations' sin had accumulated into a greater impiety. Therefore, as it is said, human nature had fallen seven times, but the Lord, moved by ineffable compassion, raised it up by uniting Himself with it through the hypostatic union.

### QUESTION L

WHAT DOES THE FOLLOWING IN THE GOSPEL MEAN: "WASH YOUR FACE, AND ANOINT YOUR HEAD WITH OIL"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Our face represents our life, which, like our outward appearance, reflects our inner self and guides our actions. Therefore, Scripture commands us to wash our face, meaning we must cleanse our life from all the filth of vices. The head, on the other hand, is our mind, which Scripture commands us to anoint, meaning to illuminate and invigorate it with divine knowledge.

### QUESTION LI

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT IT IS BETTER FOR A  
MILLSTONE TO BE HUNG AROUND  
SOMEONE'S NECK AND FOR THEM TO BE THROWN INTO  
THE SEA THAN FOR THEM TO  
CAUSE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES  
TO STUMBLE?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

I believe that "little ones" refers to those who are simple in mind and, due to their mental weakness, cannot discern the judgments of

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

Providence. If someone causes these simple souls to stumble, it would be better for them to be bound like a donkey, made to spin the millstone (the motion of the world), and cast into the sea, representing the confusion of the world. This is also supported by the Apostle Peter when he says: "It would have been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back."

### QUESTION LII

WHOSE FIGURE IS REPRESENTED BY CAIN,  
AND WHOSE BY ABEL?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

Cain represents the wisdom of the flesh, and Abel represents mourning, that is, repentance.

### QUESTION LIII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT SAYS: "DO NOT PRONOUNCE  
A MAN BLESSED BEFORE HIS DEATH"?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

In the common sense, due to the uncertain outcome of things and the slippery nature of human will, no one should be called blessed until, having overcome all challenges and virtues, they have closed the book on life without any doubts. Regarding a higher understanding, for someone who, through repentance and the cultivation of virtue, has subdued and overcome the earthly passions and prudence within themselves, they are not yet blessed until, through continuous labor, they have mortified their senses and reached their fulfillment. For such a person is blessed, as one who has died with Christ, ceasing from evil, and will rise again with Him due to the exaltation

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of virtue. This is what the psalmist also indicates when he says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, who walk in the law of the Lord, who journey through life with good deeds."

### QUESTION LIV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "IF THEY PERSECUTE YOU IN THIS CITY, FLEE TO ANOTHER"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The reason and purpose of cities being established is that those which are valued and highly esteemed may be safely kept under secure protection. In an allegorical sense, a city is formed by the diverse ways and virtues of religious exercise and worship, such as temperance from wine, abstinence from food, long hours of wakefulness, and similar practices, which serve as strongholds and fortresses.

Therefore, if we are driven away by the violence of demons or any scheme, especially when the arrogance of vain glory creeps into religious worship, it is better to withdraw from this, which may seem like a more refined discipline and institution, lest we fall into pride, and to flee to another virtue, free from such corruption, until the speech of Impassibility arrives. Or alternatively, cities are referred to as human souls. For the disciples were sent by the Savior, and those who judged themselves unworthy were expelled, passing on to the souls of others who were capable of receiving the teachings and adapting to them. Such cities, therefore, in Israel would not be consumed, but would come to them, and would share in them until the Son of Man comes in His glory.



## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION LV

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "MERCY WEIGHS IN THE  
SCALES, AS THE HOLY ISAIAH SAYS"? IS IT  
NOT TRUE THAT IT IS NOT GOOD FOR THE BALANCE OF  
JUDGMENT TO LACK MERCY,  
ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS SO FOR THOSE HIRED  
INTO THE VINEYARD?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

If God's mercy is itself measured, then certainly it is also circumscribed by merit. It should therefore be understood as follows: just as we are endowed with the faculties of seeing, hearing, and smelling, yet do not receive all that is in the air, light, or sound, otherwise there would be nothing left for others to perceive, but each one perceives according to the ability with which they are endowed. So also God's mercy, according to the affection of each subject and its quality, grants both remission and grace. To speak with an example: one who has fully performed penance has received full remission, and similarly, so also with the one who loves.

### QUESTION LVI

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN IT SAYS IN EZRA: "THE  
LAND IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The term "land" is used here in the sense of something that brings terror, causing them to be struck down, not by promising good, but by threatening with tremendous fear. This is characteristic of the servile and Jewish nature.

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### QUESTION LVII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "ARMS IN THE TERRORS OF THE NIGHT, REST FROM LABORS, WHO ASSAIL BY DAY"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The night is referred to as hidden plots and attacks, while the day represents examined and open temptations. Therefore, the one who has obtained divine knowledge and habit, knowing the schemes and thoughts of the enemy, fears neither the hidden suggestions nor attacks of the enemy. For fear is nothing other than the expectation of evil. Furthermore, rest and refreshment are considered those who, through labor, endure the trials of temptation, and in the confrontation with them, they find the clarity of divine aid, expecting the blessed crown of incorruption.

### QUESTION LVIII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PSALM 75 WHEN IT SAYS: "THE THOUGHT OF MAN WILL CONFESS TO YOU, AND THE REMAINING THOUGHTS WILL CELEBRATE A FEAST DAY FOR YOU"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

A feast day is latent, while confession refers to those who are subjected to judgment and examination. Indeed, one thought is of sorrow, the other of joy. Therefore, this means as it is written: like a balance in judgment, with imperfect and incomplete thoughts of good being examined, whereas the more enduring and perfect thought exists as the higher part, since one is troubled by examination, while the other exists as a day of festivity and joy.

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

### QUESTION LIX

WHAT IS THE TRUE MEANING OF  
THE NAME "YAORPUAPRIA"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

There is no one, either grammarians or orators, who remembers this. However, Aristotle, in that work he wrote about animals, mentions a certain animal called the "margus," which is born from putrefaction, in the gap between the earth and water. From the place where it is born, it does not cease to eat the earth until it has pierced it and escaped to the surface. Once ejected, it dies in three days; after three days, when watered by a cloud and sprinkled, it regains its life and does not continue to exist with the same voracity.

This is what I think led the ancient philosophers to call those given to gluttony "Gastromargos." It is indeed fitting to consider, with spiritual contemplation, what has been said here. Whatever vice is afflicted with, it is likely to arise from putrefaction; once born, the mind that is prone to devouring does not stop, even though through scientific habits, it has been brought to an open state. Thus, it dies in the three faculties of the mind. And in this manner, the grace of the divine Spirit, like through a cloud, by the teaching of its abundance, provides drops of knowledge and grants life, not according to the reasoning of the former life full of lust, but sustained by virtues, and aligned with God.

### QUESTION LX

WHAT DOES THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN  
THE VINEYARD IN THE GOSPEL  
MEAN, AND WHAT IS ITS INEQUALITY?

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### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

God's judgment is not based on the reason of time or the body, for the soul is without time and incorporeal; in the sense that it does not take growth or an end from time's reasoning, but acts its affections and movements without time. It is better to illustrate this with an example. It often happens that a person has been a monk for seventy years, while another has followed the same path for only a few days. However, since both are placed in the same manner of life and institution, where the cultivator of this life has turned his whole mind from earthly attraction and lust to God, the one who has seventy years dies when he has acquired this tranquility without anxiety. The one, however, who has only one day, by abstracting all the thoughts of the mind from earthly lust and placing them in God, is thus perfected: it happens that in judgment, at the distribution of rewards, this one indeed rightly receives his merit (as one who has rightly advanced to the goal of his institution), and that one, according to indulgence, and only by name, because he has sustained the labor of the more sanctified discipline.

### QUESTION LXI

WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THE SPIRIT CAME TEN DAYS  
AFTER THE LORD ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Some learned men in divine science say that, according to Dionysius the Areopagite, the angelic powers are distributed into nine orders, and as the Lord ascended according to human nature (for He filled all things with the divine), He spent one day for each order from the lowest to the highest. For even the angels of the Lord needed His advent. As the Apostle feels: "In Him all things are restored, not only those which are on

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

the earth, but also those which are in heaven," and thus He appeared to God the Father, and in this way the Spirit came. However, it can also be considered in another spiritual sense, which we are discussing. For the Word of God, hidden in His ten commandments, inclines to our mode and through the cultivation of our actions, and again, raising us up through knowledge, leads us until we reach the higher command: "The Lord your God, the Lord is One," let us ascend. And when our mind, freed from all things or rather dismissed from all, has at last attained God Himself, then it receives tongues of fire, made by divine grace.

### QUESTION LXII

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: "RARELY PUT YOUR  
FOOT NEAR YOUR FRIEND, LEST,  
BEING SATISFIED, HE MIGHT HATE YOU"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The "friend" here refers to our body, due to the natural union and the necessity of love with it. Therefore, the Scripture warns not to give excessive care to the body, but to direct your attention to the track of the soul alone. Yet, this should be done rarely, lest in seeking the body's comfort and rest, by carefully considering it, you might exhibit that which is hostile or hateful towards you.

### QUESTION LXIII

WHAT DOES THE LEGAL HEIFER FOR MURDER  
COMMITTED IN IGNORANCE  
SIGNIFY IN THE VALLEY OF THE UNDERNOURISHED?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

## BOOK TWO

The symbolism of this represents the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, showing that we should fear, not only for obvious sins, for which we are bound to receive punishment, but also for those committed in ignorance. Always handing over our flesh to be undernourished in the valley of continence, and its exercise in piety. Therefore, they left the living heifer, so that we might learn not to kill the flesh, but to subdue and conquer the arising pleasures and lusts.

### QUESTION LXIV

WHAT DOES THE PARALYTIC BEING LOWERED  
THROUGH THE ROOF BY FOUR  
PEOPLE SIGNIFY, AND HOW CAN THE HOUSE NOT BE  
ACTUALLY UNCOVERED BY THE ROOF?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

As far as the actual event is concerned, the house was indeed uncovered. For those who have traveled the places of Palestine, it is said that the roofs of the houses are very light, made of pumice stone, so that anyone wishing to remove them and uncover the house can easily do so in a short time. However, in a spiritual and higher sense, the paralytic represents every soul suffering from sins and unable, by the strength of natural contemplation (for this has the function of reasoning), to see the discourse: yet, through the help of faith, the crudeness of the covering law is removed, and being loosened by the four (which might signify the four evangelists or the four cardinal virtues), the soul is raised from vain exaltation to the Word, who emptied Himself, through faith and action, and receives movement.

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### QUESTION LXV

WHY DID THE PROPHET ELISHA PRAY FOR THE  
MOCKING BOYS, AND THEN BEARS  
CAME OUT AND MAULED FORTY-TWO BOYS?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Some say that the boys were not Israelites but foreigners, and that they were not physical boys but rather a sense of the mind or prudence. Because they heard that the prophet was performing many miracles but did not believe and mocked him, there were some present who abhorred their perverse mind. To prevent them from receiving corruption or returning to blasphemy against God, they were punished by God's vengeance. In a spiritual sense, the mind of Elisha is like a bald head: that is, it is pure from earthly senses and thoughts, in its ascent to knowledge, often mocked by those who deal with the senses, matter, and form. So, just as the number forty signifies things that fall under the senses, adding matter and form makes forty-two. Thus, these reasoning powers mock the mind to induce it into laziness, so that it does not pursue virtue. These mocking powers are killed by prayer, which is the work of the bears—symbolizing the power of desire and passion. Through an alternate turn, the virtue's aid counteracts these mocking thoughts and reasonings.

### QUESTION LXVI

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THE IGNORANCE  
OF THE SON REGARDING  
THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

## BOOK TWO

There are two types of ignorance: one that is subject to reproach and another that is free of any blemish and harmless. The one deserving of reproach pertains to our faculties regarding virtue and piety, while the pure and harmless ignorance is not in our faculties, as it is of things distant and future. Therefore, if the prophets were given the grace of recognizing things that are far off, which are not in our faculties, how much more should the Son of God, who knew all things through the human nature He assumed (which was united to the Word) know everything? For just as heated iron does not lose the qualities of fire, even though it is not fire by nature, but remains iron, so too the human nature united with the Word knew everything, exhibiting the divine in accordance with its majesty; but when the human nature was not united to the Word, it is said to have been ignorant.

### QUESTION LXVII

WHAT DOES THE MONK'S HABIT SIGNIFY, AND PRIMARILY,  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE HAIR IS SHAVED?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Just as the head stands out above the rest of the body, so in the soul, the mind holds the place of the head. It must therefore be shaved of all worldly thoughts. The habit, which covers the entire body except the hands, symbolizes that we should be clothed in philosophy, whose operations and actions are taken away; always, both in faculty and action, we should be restrained. Against the opposition of the very wicked power, as Blessed Job testifies, the power is found beneath the navel; and as Blessed David testifies, the mind is filled with the illusions of demons. These illusions represent the various operations of fornication. However, the "scapular" of the monk, which is worn both front and back with a cross, signifies that we should, according to the Apostle, not only be crucified to the world but also have the world crucified within us; so that when we flee from the world, nothing will



## QUESTION & DOUBTS

hinder us from running, and we will not be held by the deceptive appearance of worldly affection and lust, nor, on the other hand, be pursued by temptations, and in these, we should not allow our zeal for piety to be diminished. Rather, like those lacking the senses and as if dead, we should stand firm against both voluntary afflictions and involuntary evils. The cowl symbolizes the grace of God protecting the mind and covering it. For one whose thoughts are shaved of worldliness takes up the helmet of salvation. The sandals have this meaning: since they are made from the skins of dead animals and are placed under the body's small part, this signifies that just as the washed body follows the footsteps of the sandals, so too the soul, using the body, makes itself as though dead to unnatural affections (which are bound by vice). Finally, the cloak, having four corners, signifies the four elements of the world, indicating that we should also take up that kind of contemplation that is provided by natural use, so that we do not see things subject to the senses through the lust of affections, but rather, through the reason within them, we are led to their Creator. The uncovered left hand signifies that good actions should shine within us, according to the Lord's command, so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. The color of the habit indicates that we should be obscure to the world, since we have our life and citizenship in heaven. If someone associates the four corners of the cloak with the four general virtues, they are not mistaken.

### QUESTION LXVIII

[QUESTION MISSING IN P.G. 90]

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The priest, from the exalted position of the chair, calls out peace to the Church, imitating the Lord of the chair, who, at the time He was taken up, left and gave peace to His own. The response of the people, "And with your spirit," signifies: "You have granted us peace, Lord, and mutual concord.

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But give us peace, an undivided union with You, so that, through the Spirit, we may be reconciled, which You have given to us when we were first created, and may we never be torn from Your charity."

### QUESTION LXIX

IF THE DEAD RISE AGAIN, WHY, THEN, ARE OUR BODIES  
NOT RAISED UP AT ALL? AND WHY,  
WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED, DO WE BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE  
TRANSFIGURED INTO INCORRUPTION?

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

[RESPONSE MISSING IN P.G. 90]

### QUESTION LXX

[QUESTION MISSING IN P.G. 90]

§ I.

*THE RESPONSE*

If you seek the mystical explanation of Scripture, this should be understood: Praise the Lord with the sound of the trumpet; in memory of the resurrection, which the trumpet sounds, as it is written: Praise Him with the psaltery and harp; with our tongue and mouth, touching them with the spirit, in the manner of some kind of plectrum. Praise Him with the timbrel and choir; with body and soul, from which, as in a dance, prayers and vows rise up to God. Praise Him with strings and organ; with the heart, and all the inner parts and nerves of the soul, which is called the organ. Praise Him with well-sounding cymbals; with the lips, through which the songs of psalmody are brought forth.

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### QUESTION LXXI

WHEN, ACCORDING TO CERTAIN VERSIONS OF THE  
APOSTLE, IT IS SAID: 'FOR WE SHALL  
ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL NOT ALL BE CHANGED,' AND IN  
OTHER VERSIONS: 'NOT ALL WILL  
BE CHANGED, BUT WE SHALL ALL RISE AGAIN,' PLEASE  
TEACH WHICH VERSION IS  
TO BE PREFERRED; AND WHAT THE MEANING  
OF THESE STATEMENTS IS.

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

I think that whichever version one accepts (since both old versions contain both readings), if one receives it piously, it will not stray from the Apostle's intent. According to the former version: "For we shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed," it should be understood in this way: all will indeed undergo the sleep of death, but not all will attain glory and assurance. This the Apostle clearly states elsewhere when he says: "If, indeed, we are clothed, and not found naked." According to the latter version: "Not all will sleep, but we shall all be changed," it should be interpreted that not all will undergo the sleep of death, which is brought about in times requiring the tomb and the corruption of dissolution, but those who are found at that time will taste a brief death, for they will not need the long sleep of death due to the soon-coming resurrection; all, however, will be changed, that is, will be granted incorruption.

### QUESTION LXXII

## BOOK TWO

### QUESTION LXXII

WHAT IS MEANT WHEN LUKE, IN THE ACTS, SAYS OF  
PAUL THAT 'HE WAS HASTENING,  
IF POSSIBLE FOR HIM, TO BE IN JERUSALEM ON THE DAY OF  
PENTECOST,' WHICH SEEMS STRANGE BECAUSE  
IT WAS FORBIDDEN BY THE  
SACRED CANONS?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

He is not speaking of the Pentecost in which the Spirit descended, but since fifty days are called the days of Pentecost, Paul was hastening to be in Jerusalem as soon as possible after the Passover. And it is clear from this that he bent his knees during the fasts.

### QUESTION LXXIII

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE STATEMENT: 'IF ANYONE BUILDS  
UPON THIS FOUNDATION WITH GOLD,  
SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, OR STRAW, EACH  
MAN'S WORK WILL BE REVEALED BY FIRE;  
AND IF ANYONE'S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER  
LOSS, BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED,  
YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE?'

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

The foundation is the faith of Christ. However, one builds upon it in the following ways: with gold, the higher theological contemplation; with silver, the life of virtue made evident by its light; with precious stones, pious reasons; with wood, the more easily inclined towards things subject to sense,

## QUESTION & DOUBTS

allure, and lust; with hay, those with brutish affections; and with straw, those who perform corrupt works. Now, as for those who have good actions, the day of judgment will reveal them; for in the fire, that is, in the spirit, their deeds will be made manifest. However, as for the sinners, their works will be burned up, namely, with the cognition of judgment, burning their consciences, deterring sins, and saving the person. Yet, for the inertia of virtues from the earlier time, this will be multiplied. In the future age, the works of sin will be brought to nothing, while the natural powers will remain unharmed through fire and judgment.

### QUESTION LXXIV

WHAT IS MEANT BY DAVID'S PSALM, SAYING: "GIVE  
COMMAND TO YOUR SERVANT,  
AND LET THE SON OF YOUR MAIDSERVANT BE SAVED"?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Because by nature we are servants of God, and His wisdom is the maidservant's son. Therefore, we first ask that command be given to us, that is, that we may prevail over vices; and then salvation comes to us.

### QUESTION LXXV

WHEN IN THE BOOKS OF KINGS IT IS WRITTEN THAT GOD  
MOVED DAVID TO NUMBER THE PEOPLE,  
AND IN THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES IT IS SAID THAT THE  
DEVIL PROMPTED THIS, HOW CAN IT BE  
SHOWN THAT THE DIVINE SCRIPTURE IS CONSISTENT  
WITH ITSELF?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

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Because the Apostle calls the god of this world the devil, it should be understood that what is said in the books of Kings is in this sense. Or alternatively, because nothing happens without God's providence; but everything occurs either by His will, His nod, or His indulgence, or even by His permission. What is written in the books of Kings, "God moved David," should be understood as "God permitted," and in the books of Chronicles, "the devil did this," meaning the devil was the instrument of God's permission. The seventy thousand who perished, those found with Absalom, represent those who suffer due to vain pride and arrogance. In a spiritual sense, this means anyone who, like David, does not act with a willing heart but who, through inadvertence and without fully contemplating, gives rise to pride. Moved by remorse, he turns to God in prayer and causes thoughts about earthly matters to perish. The number seventy signifies temporal movement, due to the seven-day cycle of the week. It is better to ask that the demons, our enemies, pursue us than to be punished by hunger from hearing the word of God.

### QUESTION LXXXVI

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE APOSTLE'S WORDS: "I WISH  
THAT THEY WERE CUT OFF"?

§ I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

This phrase is used to mean that they should mourn and lament, being moved to penance for their sins, disturbing the faithful and testing their constancy.

### QUESTION LXXXVII

WHY ARE THE MOABITES AND AMMONITES FORBIDDEN  
TO ENTER THE TEMPLE OF THE  
LORD, EVEN TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH  
GENERATION, AND FOREVER?

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### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

Because Moabites, if the name is interpreted, means "father's intestine"; Ammonites, on the other hand, means "mother's father." These two refer to anyone who has received an example of wickedness from another, thus exposing the "father's intestine" of the wickedness. Anyone who, through himself, has produced sin is the "father of the mother" (that is, the origin of his own sin). Such people are forbidden to enter the house of the Lord, even to the third, fourth, and tenth generation, and forever. This means that those who neither by habit, action, nor by the name and faith of the Lord Jesus, nor by the ten commandments of the law, nor by the future regeneration of the age, will not enter into a relationship with God or be reconciled to Him, will not enter into the house of God; that is, into the heavenly Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the joyous.

### QUESTION LXXVIII

WHY IS IT THAT A LEPER, WHEN HE IS PARTIALLY LEPROUS,  
IS CONSIDERED UNCLEAR BY THE LAW,  
BUT IF HE IS ENTIRELY COVERED WITH LEPROSY,  
HE IS DECLARED CLEAN?

### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

A person partially leprous has a part of his body that is stained with leprosy. The vital blood has retreated from that area, and it becomes a hollow place. As such, the priest, touching that part, becomes defiled. But someone entirely covered with leprosy has the color of a leper, but the vital blood is dispersed throughout his whole body. This signifies that a person who has come to the extreme of evil and then repents can regain the strength of virtue and has only a conscience stained by the prior thoughts of the mind. For it is

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impossible not to remember what he has done or to think of those things as if he had not done them. This is the reason why the law declares such a person clean.

### QUESTION LXXIX

WHAT DO THE FIVE KINDS OF OFFERINGS MEAN IN THE  
RITUAL LAW: THE RAM, THE BULL,  
THE GOAT, THE TURTLE DOVE, AND THE PIGEON?

#### § I.

#### *THE RESPONSE*

In one sense, the ram is taken to symbolize the leader, signifying the power of reason; the bull, wrath; the goat, desire; the turtle dove, chastity; and the pigeon, holiness. However, if one also seeks what the natural characteristics of each animal signify, and applies the spiritual sense to each of them, those who have studied such things say that the sheep provides three things to the lord: fleece, milk, and lamb. Its pupil, the eye, revolves with the sun, and it makes daily offerings. The rational sheep represents a person who, diligently offering himself to God, as the Master of His domain, should offer himself as a sacrifice, as wool, and dedicate himself as a lion taught in virtues. But just as milk represents the natural nurturing element (for it is what nourishes the mind), so the lamb symbolizes a disciple, fully grown in doctrine, striving to offer himself in full likeness and perfection to God. And the pupil of the eye, which revolves with the sun, indicates that a person should, with the Sun of righteousness (Christ), have their mind guided by Providence, giving thanks in both hardships and good times, and be willing to comply with the divine will and guidance. The bull, they say, has a triangular heart, kidneys that project in five directions, a stomach that is tripartite, and eyes that are clear by day and dull by night. It breathes in three cycles by day and night, turning toward the rising sun. Its right nostril breathes a sweet fragrance, and it is prohibited to spill its blood, except for the dog. The work is, therefore, like that of the bull, for Christ has



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taken on the yoke, tearing apart the stone-like hearts, uprooting the thorns of vices, and expanding the soil of the heart to receive divine instruction. The heart being triangular symbolizes the doctrine of the Trinity, as the heart distributes vitality to the body, so should the soul, strengthened by faith, spread its vigor to the limbs of God. The kidneys, with their seven projections, signify that the desires should not be turned toward vices and lusts, but that through the works of the senses, we should contemplate God's nature, desiring and loving Him. The tripartite stomach first receives food, and then the pure is transmitted through the digestive process into the various parts of the body. Likewise, we, through moral, natural, and divine contemplation, should guide all the faculties of our mind, distributing what is necessary to each part of the soul. The bull breathes in three cycles, both by day and night, toward the East, symbolizing the triple Providence of God, who preserves, converts, and chastises. We should give thanks for this in both the night of temptation and the day of prosperity. Thus, we are to be like the bull, with eyes burning with the fire of wisdom by day and shining with righteousness, and, by night, with the clarity to comprehend temptations and the rationale for their virtue. The right nostril, breathing a sweet fragrance, symbolizes the soul, which, through its virtues and the grace of the Holy Spirit, becomes fragrant, spreading a sweet aroma to others. The goat has a certain nature: it easily climbs mountains, walks along cliffs, and delights in musical melodies. Its right horn provides sustenance anywhere and signals the movement of the earth. It makes daily offerings of two hundred pills of excrement. Thus, the soul should boldly leap across the mountains of temptation and, through prophetic contemplation, seek the heights of wisdom, finding delight in it. Not only should the soul delight, but it should also instruct others through teaching, like a musical pipe, stirring the listeners' hearts. The right horn represents the person who, by prayer, directs the power of contemplation toward God and spreads a sweet fragrance among the listeners, shaking off the habits of carnality. This person daily rejects error and focuses on what is of the senses. However, the sense when entangled with the things that fall under it... (The text ends here, and there is no further continuation.)

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#### **EXPOSITION ON THE PSALMS 59**

This work by Maximus on the Psalms is the only one that exists for us. Most manuscripts contain this, with no other expositions on this subject or scheme. Here, he also pays little attention to the letter and focuses on the mystical and allegorical senses; which is somewhat common among the Greeks. Only Chrysostom has devoted more effort to explaining several psalms, among which this one is not included. However, it is clear that many other Fathers have worked extensively on it, as evidenced by the most comprehensive Chain edited by Corderius. This psalm sings of the deeds of David, which are told in detail in 2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 16, and are more accurately referred to as an allegory of Christ, where the calling of the nations is typologically represented, and the victory of Christ over them is symbolized, as Máximos correctly explains in his exposition of this title. To the end; for those who will be changed; the inscription of the title is by David; for instruction, when he kindled Mesopotamia, and Syria of Zobah: and Joab returned, and struck the Valley of Salt, twelve thousand.

#### **COMMENTARIUS IN PSALMUM LIX**

The inscription of this psalm is: "To the end, for those who will be changed; then, on account of the future end of times, through the advent of

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Christ, from unbelief to faith, from vice to virtue, and from ignorance to knowledge, the change of the mind's purpose and will, the transformation of people; then, to show at the last end of the ages, through our Savior God, the final renewal of all humankind, from death and corruption, to life immortal and incorruption, expected through the resurrection, a change and renewal. However, in the inscription of the title to David, that is to Christ, due to the act long ago of His divine incarnation, the title stands as a representation of the same, so that through Him as leader and Savior, they might henceforth in those who by His prescribed way live piously, overthrow iniquity and corruption; also, for the future, still with His aid, the complete abolition of death and corruption.

In doctrine, when He set fire to Mesopotamia and Syria, Soba: in doctrine to us, who are to be changed and are being changed (by the praiseworthy and divine transformation) by the spiritual David (that is, Christ God), the psalm is inscribed. For when He, the one true King of Israel, the King of those who see God, will exist, He will be as the destroyer of all malice and ignorance, the victor of all time and nature, through whom vice and depravity are brought forth and grow within us. He kindled Mesopotamia, through His flesh He lived among us, certainly in the stagnant filth and unnatural affections of the flesh. And He kindled Syria, that is, the time-bound, that is, the soul deceived by the error of this world. For Soba, if the name is interpreted, means Seven, which signifies the nature of time. Time indeed revolves in seven. For the devil, when about to commit invisible battles against virtue and knowledge, moves both nature and time with him, just as Adraazar turned both Syrians against David. For Adraazar, if translated into our language, is called "the one dissolving strength," or "overturning power"; certainly the devil, who, by seducing, dissolves the spiritual strength of human nature through the transgression of the divine command from the beginning, and binds man as a servant to nature and time. Without those things which are subject to nature and time, he cannot at all wage battle against humans. And Joab returned and struck the Salt Valley, twelve thousand. For whoever leads the army of the spiritual King David (that is, our Lord Jesus Christ) against the adversarial powers strikes

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twelve thousand in the Salt Valley. But the Salt Valley is the flesh, being the place of the most disgraceful affections through disobedience. In this valley, whoever is pious and religious, with the arms of reason and contemplation, strikes nature and time; certainly the mind, which is corrupted by irrational opinion, is occupied, surpassing the laws of nature and time with the excellence of virtue and knowledge. For the number twelve signifies nature and time; since nature, by the five senses, is five; and time, indeed, is seven, as is clear to anyone. If, however, five and seven are combined, you will complete the number twelve. But indeed, the number of the slain signifies the change of the powers of the mind, entangled and bound by the seduction of erroneous impressions that fall upon the senses, from which all sin originates; which is excellently destroyed by Aradie, who, contending for the truth in the spiritual David, undertakes invisible battles and spiritually determines a battle against the most wicked powers. For all the faculties of the soul, when moved unnaturally, are almost completely entangled by those things that fall upon the senses. For when reason, anger, and desire—three general faculties of the soul—succumb to things that fall to the senses (which indeed consist of four), they make the number twelve. For if you add three to four, and add three more to make five, you complete the number, which is destroyed by one who comes to the Lord in faith and courageously fights against every invisible enemy. Thus, the inscription and title of this psalm is: "To those who will be changed; that is, to us: in doctrine, namely, the good things which have come to us through the spiritual David." In the title inscription, it is the praise and celebration of the good things that He, for us, has gloriously performed. For the inscription of the title signifies the praise and celebration of the things performed gloriously, as those who know such names deeply understand.

Verse 3. "O God, You have rejected us and destroyed us; You were angry, and You have mercy on us."

God has rejected us, when, having not kept His commands from the beginning, we seemed unworthy to enjoy His presence. He has destroyed us, when, because of our malice, He cast us out from the high glory of Paradise. He was angry, when, as the avenger of our sin and malice, He

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bound us to the penalty of death. He had mercy on us, when, through His only-begotten Son, the incarnate Word of God, who took upon Himself our debt, He redeemed us from death, and called us back to His glory.

Verse 4. "You have shaken the earth and troubled it; heal its brokenness, for it has been shaken."

You have shaken our earth and troubled it (the heart, namely), giving us the sword of the Spirit, which distinguishes that which is worse and full of vice from that which is superior and virtuous, stirring the law of the Spirit against the law of the flesh, and making worthy praise in us by fighting against vices and disturbances; shaking up the corresponding affections and desires, as well as the conscience, which, through occupied opinion, is filled with absurd and impure thoughts. But He heals through spiritual regeneration, by the grace of the Author, the brokenness of our hearts, which we first suffered through disobedience and the transgression of the command in Paradise.

Verse. 5-7. "You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of compunction. You have given those who fear You a sign, so that they may flee from the face of the bow; that they may be delivered, Your beloved ones."

God shows to those who fear Him the hard things of the commandments, through that part of philosophy which concerns action, teaching the ways of mortifying the body; or on the other hand, through various means of Providence and judgment, by the highest benevolence, teaching us what is conducive to our well-being, who refuse to bear the yoke of the divine lawgiver willingly and of our own accord. He makes us drink the wine of compunction: that is, He grants us the purification brought by the practice of action, with the knowledge bestowed through spiritual contemplation. For all knowledge, which instills in us a sense of the greatness of God's benefits, pricks the heart. He gives a sign to those who fear Him, that they may flee from the face of the bow, teaching them to bear the mortification of Jesus in their own bodies, by which sin is completely overcome and left behind. For the true sign is the power that, through the cross, extinguishes the sensation of the flesh. "That they may flee from the

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face of the bow": this means from the external appearance of things. For the face of the bow (that is, the outward appearance of demonic affections and vices) is the external appearance of the bodies, which excites the senses and, as it were, wounds the soul with the sharpness of a needle, drawing it shamefully toward vices. Therefore, Scripture advises those who fear the Lord to flee from the face of the bow, but not from the bow itself. For the bow of sin, without a face, would not inflict any harm on them. "That the beloved of God may flee." The beloved of God are those who, through divine contemplation, contain knowledge, the principles of which they liberate, who through action form the modes of virtue, freeing themselves from all error and dulling all those mental distractions that arise from occupied opinion, and from the stored-up images and forms of sin in the memory.

Verse 8. "Save with Your right hand, and hear me. God has spoken in His holy place, 'I will rejoice, and I will divide Shechem, and I will measure out the valley of Tabernacles.'"

God saves with His right hand, by giving His only-begotten Son (for the Son is the right hand of the Father) as redemption for the salvation of the world. He listens, indeed, by giving to the righteous, beyond the remission of sins, also spiritual gifts. For God listens to His suppliant, first granting the forgiveness of sins through repentance; but He listens fully, as it were, when, beyond the forgiveness of sins, He grants also the breath and gifts through spiritual grace. He speaks in His holy place, that is, in His incarnate Word, His divine plan and purpose, which had been hidden from the ages and generations, made clear through the dispensation of Christ in the flesh, His human conversation with us, in a way openly proclaiming, and sounding more clearly in the world, for the instruction of eternal life, providing the demonstration of good works. He also speaks in any saint, who, by keeping His commandments, exhibits a life through works that demonstrate words, and shows more vocal expressions through all manner of voice.

The righteous exults when, perfected by the grace of the Only-begotten, he becomes fit to divide Shechem; namely, to impart, according to each one's capacity and reasoning, through learned experience, the masculine

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modes of virtue, cultivating action and giving instruction to others. Shechem, if the name is interpreted, means "a width of shoulders"; such a disposition that it both restrains all perturbations and vices, and stands as the parent and cause of all virtues. For it is said that the shoulder is a symbol of virtue. And He measures out the valley of Tabernacles; that is, He bestows upon each thing the reasons and rational considerations through natural contemplation. The valley of Tabernacles is this world, in which, according to each one's will and mental purpose, nothing constant or fixed is found, and the present, temporary life is carried on like that of tabernacles. Or again, the valley of these Tabernacles refers to the modes of virtue, which the wise and learned teacher divides among his disciples, providing each with the fitting discipline according to their nature and purpose, guarding them with gifts and virtues, and teaching them appropriately for salvation, showing them the way to walk. Or the valley of Tabernacles refers to the churches of the faithful nations of the world, which have been established through our Savior Christ, which, I believe, is the most manifest and illustrious meaning. Or again, He measures the valley of Tabernacles, who embraces the world of bodies as a valley of Tabernacles, through knowledge and wisdom. For the body is called the Tabernacle in many places of Scripture.

Verse 9. "My is Gilead, and mine is Manasseh: and Ephraim is the strength of my head."

Gilead, according to one interpretation of the name, means "revelation"; Manasseh, however, if the name is interpreted, signifies "oblivion." Indeed, revelation and oblivion properly occur to the just, who, by contemplation, are taught the hidden things, and by the labor of virtue, forget, through the sweetness of spiritual contemplation, the labor of virtues. Finally, Ephraim, if the name is interpreted, signifies "expansion," which is certain and firm, the hope for future good things based on the reasoning of faith; this very hope is the reception or defense of the head of the just, that is, of faith. For the head of the just is faith, and all good works. The firmness, strength, and power of this faith is the firm and stable hope of future good things; by which, indeed, contemplating the future as though it were already

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present, we are expanded in tribulations, stable and strong, persevering in temptations.

Verse 10. "Judah is my king: Moab is the pot of my hope."

Judah, if the name is interpreted, signifies "confession." For the confession in prayers is the omen of all good things in the saints. But Judah can also be understood as a figure of the Lord, who is the true spiritual king of Israel and of those who see God. For He, having become man for us, confesses to the Father, saying, "I confess to You, Holy Father."

Moab, however, if the name is interpreted, means "the inward part of the father." It is understood to refer to our body, which, like a vessel, is compared to that part of philosophy that is concerned with action (for the vessel clearly signifies the pot). This vessel serves for the purification of sins. Indeed, the pot is the purification of hope; which, through rightly established ways of life, prepares and makes us fit for the good things reserved for us in hope through purification. Alternatively, Moab can be understood to refer to the Incarnation of the Lord. For the Son of Man, for our sake, became the true pot of our hope; that is, He who cleanses and purifies the stains and filth contracted by us through sin.

Verse 11. "Will You bring me into the city of refuge?"

The city of refuge, in Greek *Teorós*, can be understood as a place surrounded by a rampart, wisdom gathered from many divine and mystical contemplations, surrounded and fortified, as one interpreter (Sym., Theod.) rendered, with the fortifications and protections of virtues. Alternatively, the city of refuge is the state in which a truly pious and religious man is made invincible and inaccessible to his enemies, being protected by the guardianship of holy power. Or again, the soul is the city of refuge, which is fortified by reason and life, and abounds with all the graces of virtues. Or the city of refuge is a true and certain state of knowledge, fortified by all moral, natural, and theological sciences as by a rampart. To this, whoever is a servant of piety is led, by no guide other than God Himself, who, by the immense greatness of His goodness, draws all to Himself. Or, who will bring me as far as Idumea? Idumea, as previously explained in the passage, is the collection and accumulation of all things that fall into the realm of the



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senses, around which natural contemplation revolves; through the beauty and greatness of created things, in proportion to them, the Creator Himself is perceived, who gathers the knowledge of them. Alternatively, philosophy, through the flesh and the function of action, cultivates virtue; by which our body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, is beautifully co-built with the ornaments of commandments: to which the Lord leads, granting knowledge of those things that fall within the scope of our senses, teaching us the mortification of the members of this earthly and mortal flesh. Or, to speak briefly, the city of refuge is surrounded by the fortifications of wisdom, which is the contemplation of spiritual things. Idumea, however, refers to the knowledge of those things perceived through the senses, to which only the wisdom of God, in the form of His only begotten Son, leads and directs us.

Verse 13. "Are You not, O God, who rejected us?"

That is, You, O God, who from the beginning, because of sin, rejected us, but because of the bowels of Your mercy, You will bring us into the city of refuge, which is fortified, and You will guide us to Idumea, as explained in the previous verses. And You will not go out with our armies. For God will not go out with him who trusts in himself, hoping in his own bow, and ascribes salvation to his sword; but He will go out with those who, in the Lord Himself, scatter their enemies with His horn, and who, in His name, despise those who rise against them, justly going out to battle against invisible enemies.

Verse 15. "Give us help from the tribulation, for vain is the salvation of man."

The Prophet prays to God and the Savior of mankind in the name of the whole human race, asking that help be given to us from the tribulation that, because of sin, has been poured into nature and presses it even to the gates of hell. Tribulation is, indeed, the harsh power of death and its dominion; whereas help is the firm hope of resurrection through grace, in which, looking to it, the righteous endure the sorrow of death without being overcome by sadness or pain. Or again, tribulation is the suffering that arises from the cause of virtue, and help is the unwavering stability that comes with

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divine grace; compared to it, all human salvation is vanity and mere nothingness and cessation. Indeed, vanity should be understood as this.

Verse 14. "In God we will do mightily, and He will bring to nothing those who oppress us."

They do mightily in God who do not ascribe the deeds of virtues to themselves, nor claim their own wisdom for comprehending divine mysteries, in which the most singular God Himself, the whole and immense being, performs all virtue and bestows knowledge. He brings to nothing and destroys all demons, the most wicked of them, who oppose both virtue and knowledge, and attempt to destroy those who fear Him through vices and ignorance. For He is the Savior of the whole universe, as He is the Creator of all. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

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### EXPOSITION ON THE LORDS PRAYER

On the explanation of the Lord's Prayer. The explanation of the Lord's Prayer has long been the labor of the principal Greek and Latin Fathers, who, with a happy effort, nearly added a conclusion after several centuries, through this work of theirs, in which they explained the sevenfold number of mysteries or sacraments, as they are called, which prepare our salvation, with such depth, as to present a fuller and more universal interpretation of the Dominican doctrine. The author of the *Catena* in Matthew VI, published by Corderio, has derived many of these from Máximos into his own channels.

### EXPOSITIO ORATIONIS DOMINICAE

I received my lord, preserved by God, who graciously came to me through his most auspicious letters. He, who is always present and can never truly be absent in spirit, disdains not, in the abundance of his virtue—almost divine in reason—to interact with his servants, as God grants the opportunity by the nature He has provided. Therefore, marveling at the greatness of his soul as he humbles and inclines himself to me in this way, I tempered the fear with which I regard him with desire. I thus established a single love, composed of both fear and desire, consistent with the sentiments

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of reverence and goodwill. This ensures that fear, unaccompanied by desire, does not degenerate into hatred, nor desire into contempt; for sober and chaste fear, united with love, does not fail. Instead, love as the law of affection, deeply implanted in the soul, reconciles and claims for itself everything kindred by nature. It subdues hatred with goodwill and drives contempt far away with reverence.

Blessed David, who understood this type of fear to be superior to all others, as it is most akin to divine love and endowed with the power of establishing and adorning it, says: "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever" (Psalm 19:9). He knew of another kind of fear that arises from dread of punishment for the evil one has committed, but this fear vanishes entirely with the arrival of love. As the great John the Evangelist shows in his writings: "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). This pure fear, however, stands as a unique mark of true love, preserving the incorruptible law and measure of love. This love, employed both toward God and among the saints, ensures it is faithfully maintained forever.

Therefore, as I was saying, I tempered fear with desire and established this rule of love toward my Lord: reverence deters me from writing, lest I risk falling into contempt, while goodwill compels me to write, lest by completely refusing to do so, I seem to hate my role as a writer. I write, as I have been commanded, not everything that comes to my mind—for, as Scripture says, "The thoughts of men are timid" (Wisdom 9:14)—but only those things aligned with God's will and provided through His grace for some beneficial purpose. For, as David says: "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His heart through all generations" (Psalm 33:11). This counsel, which David perhaps refers to as God's design and intention, was assumed by the only-begotten Son in His ineffable act of emptying Himself to bestow divinity upon humanity. This act, enclosing the end of all ages, embodies God's thoughts—namely, the reasons of providence and judgment by which He wisely governs and arranges both the present life we live and the future one, distributing and assigning to each its appropriate course of action.

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If the deification of the human race is the work of divine counsel, and divine thoughts aim to direct our lives toward the ultimate end of those things sought through prayer, then surely it is most useful to know and fulfill the force of the Lord's Prayer and thus commit it to writing. Since my Lord, through divine inspiration, also made special mention of this prayer in writing to me, His servant, I take it as the necessary theme of what I must discuss. I implore the Lord, the very author of this prayer, to open my mind to understand the mysteries contained within it and to grant me speech as needed, so I may clearly explain what I have understood.

This prayer encompasses, in brief and mystical instruction—or, for those who are discerning, plainly enunciated—all the purpose and end found in what has been said. For the petitions in the text of this prayer include everything the Word of God, emptied in the flesh, established as their author. It teaches us to strive for those goods that God the Father alone, through the natural mediation of the Son and in the Holy Spirit, truly bestows. As the divine Apostle declares, "The Lord Jesus is the mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5). In the flesh, He made the unknown Father known to humanity and reconciled humanity to the Father in Himself through the Spirit. For humanity, He became man without any change, the author and creator of innumerable mysteries so vast and profound that their quantity or magnitude can never be comprehended. Chief among these are seven universal gifts, generously granted to humanity in His extraordinary kindness. The prayer's aim, as I mentioned, mystically encompasses their power: theology, adoption into grace, sharing in honor equal to the angels, the communion of eternal life, the restoration of nature into purity without stain or passion, the destruction of the law of sin, and the abolition of the tyranny of the evil one who had enslaved us through deception. Let us, therefore, diligently seek the truth of these matters.

For it teaches theology, in that the Word of God assumed flesh, showing in Himself the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the entire Father and the entire Holy Spirit were perfectly and essentially in the whole Son, even when incarnate, though they themselves were not incarnate. This was because the Father, willingly and with approval, and the Spirit, cooperating,

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granted that the Son Himself would assume flesh. For the Word, possessing intellect, remained alive and intact in such a way that it was comprehended only by the Father and the Holy Spirit in essence. Furthermore, in the supreme mercy of His kindness, He entered into a union with flesh in person.

He grants adoption in that He bestows and gives, through the Spirit, a birth from above that is superior by nature to earthly things. Its preservation and keeping rest upon God's favor, while the free will of those thus born guards it by cultivating the grace granted with sincere affection and by diligently adorning the honor given through grace by fulfilling His commandments. He advances humanity to communion with divinity to the extent that the Word of God, having truly become man, emptied Himself by an act of will, withdrawing from His true and magnificent glory for the sake of the dispensation.

He elevated and exalted humans to equal dignity with angels, not only by reconciling through the blood of His cross all things, whether on earth or in heaven, and destroying the hostile powers occupying the spaces between heaven and earth, thereby revealing heaven as one assembly of terrestrial and celestial powers distributing divine gifts. Humanity, sharing the same will as the higher powers, now joins their choir to proclaim and sing the glory of God with exultation. Additionally, after completing the work of our salvation in the flesh, He ascended to heaven with His assumed body, thereby uniting heaven and earth within Himself and joining spiritual and intelligible realities with those perceptible to the senses. Furthermore, He presented the single created nature—bound and coherent to itself through its parts' reverence for virtue and knowledge of its first author—showing through mystical acts how word and reason, though distant, are united, while irrationality (brutish passion) divides those united. Through this process, we learn to act with reason: not only joining angels in the function of virtue but also wisely uniting with God by renouncing material things.

He grants participation in divine life by offering Himself as food, consumable in a manner He alone knows, understood by those who have

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received such insight of mind from Him. By tasting this food, they truly recognize and understand that the Lord is good and sweet, for He infuses His eaters with divinity, mixing them with divine qualities. Thus, He is revealed and proclaimed as the bread of life and strength.

He restored nature to itself, not only by becoming man and preserving His will free from any passions or rebellious affections against nature, but even in the face of those who crucified Him, He did not allow His natural disposition to be moved from its seat in any way. Instead, for their salvation, He preferred death over life. His voluntary suffering and death thus demonstrate the most humane affections of the one who suffered and died. Moreover, He destroyed enmity by nailing the handwriting of sin to the cross—the sin which had caused nature to wage an implacable war against itself. Calling both those far off and those near (that is, those under the law and those outside the law), He broke down the middle wall of separation, clarifying the law of commandments in decrees. He made the two into one new man, establishing peace and reconciling us to the Father and one another through Himself. Henceforth, we no longer have a will of the soul resisting the law of nature but, like nature itself, become immovable in both will and understanding.

He purifies nature from the law of sin, namely because in His assumption of flesh, which He undertook for our sake, He did not allow lust to precede it. For His conception was without seed, in a new and unusual manner, and His birth and delivery were incorrupt beyond nature. Indeed, the one who was born, being God, bound the bonds of virginity of His mother, the woman in labor, by His birth in a manner surpassing nature. By the power of His liberation, He freed all nature from the dominating law for those who are willing to imitate Him in mortifying their earthly members, as He willingly accepted death. For the mystery of salvation belongs to those who voluntarily resolve it in their minds, not to those who are compelled by force.

Finally, He overturned the tyranny of the most wicked one who, by seduction, had gained control over us. He displayed the flesh, which had been defeated in Adam, as a weapon against him and conquered it

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—"defeated in Adam, it is deployed as a weapon against him"—so that what had previously been captured into death would, in turn, capture its captor, putting the captor's life to death by natural death. What was poison to him, consuming all whom he had devoured through the dominion of death, became life for the human race, raising the whole nature as if it were a lump to the resurrection of life. For this purpose above all, the Word, who was God, became man (an entirely new and unheard-of event!) and willingly accepted the death of the flesh. All these matters, as I said, you may find indicated in the text of the Lord's Prayer.

For He speaks of the Father, the Father's name, and His kingdom. He again shows the grace of this Father's Son, praying. He requests that those in heaven and on earth be of one will. He commands us to ask for daily bread. He ordains that men should be reconciled to one another, such that they forgive others and are themselves forgiven. In this way, He unites nature to itself without any division of will or sentiment of the soul. Moreover, He teaches that one must pray not to enter into temptation, as into the law of sin. Finally, He urges that one should be delivered from evil. For it was fitting that the author and giver of good things should also be a teacher, imparting instructions on life's prayer and sayings to His faithful followers, as disciples. Through His discipline of life in the flesh, He revealed the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge that truly exist within Him, stirring up the desire and love of those who pray and ask for them to enjoy.

For this reason, I think the Scripture called this teaching "prayer" (Greek: *προσευχή*), as it encompasses the petition for gifts which God grants to men through grace. Thus, inspired by divine will, our Fathers discussed prayer (Greek: *προσευχή*), saying that it is the petition for those things which God, by His innate goodness and as is fitting, generously grants to men. In the same way, a vow (Greek: *ἐσχή*) is the promise or declaration offered by true worshippers to God. They brought forward many testimonies from Scripture to support this definition. Regarding vows, they cited: "Make vows and repay them to the Lord our God," and "I will pay all my vows to You, Lord, my salvation." Concerning prayer, they cited: "And Hannah prayed to the Lord, saying: O Lord Adonai, God of hosts, if You will indeed hear Your



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handmaid and give me the fruit of the womb," and, "King Hezekiah of Judah and Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, prayed to the Lord." Lastly, they referenced the words spoken by the Lord to His disciples: "When you pray, say: Our Father, who art in heaven." This shows that a vow is the observation of commandments, confirmed by the will and sentiment of the one who makes the vow. Prayer, however, is a petition that the one who has observed may be led into the good that has been observed. Or rather, a vow is the contest of virtue, which God most graciously accepts as an offering, while prayer is the reward of virtue, which God most willingly bestows.

Since, therefore, it has been proven by the above that prayer is the petition for good things of which the Incarnate Word is the author, let us confidently expound upon the Lord's Prayer, appointing the Word Himself as our teacher. Let us explain the meaning of each clause, as far as contemplation allows us to grasp it, in the way the Word Himself graciously provides and so that the force of the speaker's meaning is understood.

### OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN; HALLOWED BE THY NAME; THY KINGDOM COME

The Lord teaches those praying with these words to fittingly begin with theology. He reveals, in some way, the existence of the cause of all things, who is Himself the cause and author of all things by essence. For the words of the prayer speak of the Father, the name of the Father, and the kingdom of the Father, so that from the very beginning we may learn to worship, invoke, and venerate the Trinity, which is united. The name of God and the Father, subsisting essentially, is the Only-Begotten Son; and the kingdom of God and the Father, subsisting essentially, is the Holy Spirit. What Matthew here calls the kingdom, another evangelist in a different place called the Holy Spirit, saying: "May Your Holy Spirit come and cleanse us." For the Father does not have an adopted or artificial name, nor do we understand the kingdom as if it were a dignity that came to Him. For He did not begin to exist, so as to then begin being Father or King. Rather, as He has always existed, He has always also been Father and King. He did not begin to

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exist, nor to be Father or King. But if He has always existed, then He has always been Father and King, and therefore the Son and the Holy Spirit have always essentially and truly coexisted with the Father. They are of Him and in Him by nature, beyond cause and reason, and were not made after Him or due to some cause that impelled their creation. For relation has the power to signify what it relates to, without implying that one is posterior to the other.

### OUR FATHER

Beginning this prayer, we are taught to venerate and honor the consubstantial and superessential Trinity as the cause and author of our being. Moreover, we are taught to proclaim the grace of adoption granted to us, so that we may merit to call Him, the creator by nature, "Father" through grace. Revering the title of Him who granted us this grace, we are urged to conform our lives to the character of our Father by sanctifying His name on earth, referring to Him, and showing ourselves as His children through our deeds. By magnifying the author of our adoption, who is the natural Son of the Father, we glorify Him in whatever we think or do.

### HALLOWED BE THY NAME

We hallow the name of the Father, who is in heaven, through the gift of His grace. We do this by mortifying earthly desires and cleansing ourselves of destructive passions and vices. For holiness consists in suppressing and extinguishing every movement of sensory desire. Having achieved this, we calm the unseemly barking of anger, for when desire, which provokes and suggests fighting for its cause, is already mortified and extinguished by the holiness of reason, it no longer exists within us. Anger, which naturally arises as an avenger of desire, ceases to rage by its nature when it sees that desire is mortified.

### THY KINGDOM COME

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Thus, once anger and desire are cast away and driven out, the dominion of the kingdom of God and the Father rightly follows in the prayer. This comes to those who, having cast aside these passions, are worthy to say: "Thy kingdom come," meaning the Holy Spirit. For He dwells in those who, through gentle habits, are built as temples of God by the Spirit. "Upon whom shall I rest," He says, "but upon the one who is meek and humble, and who trembles at My words?" It is thus clear that the kingdom of God and the Father belongs to the meek and humble. "Blessed are the meek," He says, "for they shall inherit the earth."

This earth, which by nature occupies the middle position of this universe, God did not promise to those who love Him as their inheritance. For He is truthful who said: "When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven," and, "Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Elsewhere, to another servant who faithfully fulfilled his duties, He says: "Enter into the joy of your Lord." Following this, the divine Apostle also says: "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead who are in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." Since these promises have been made in such a way to those who love the Lord, who, if guided by reason and aspiring to be a worshiper of the Word, would ever claim—while fixing their mind on a single statement of Scripture—that heaven, the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, the mystically hidden joy of the Lord, and the everlasting and completely indivisible fellowship with the Lord of those deemed worthy of it, could be the same as the earth? Instead, I think that here "earth" refers to the firm and utterly unchangeable state of meekness, a habit and virtue of immutability grounded in reason and honesty. This state always abides with the Lord, possesses unending joy, receives the kingdom prepared long ago, and attains the state and order offered in heaven. This state, in a manner of speaking, is like an "earth" situated at the center of the universe, as reason (the principle of virtue) deserves. The meek and gentle,

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standing between good reputation and disgrace, endure calmly and unshaken, neither puffed up by praise nor grieved by dishonor.

For where reason, free by nature, has removed desire, it no longer feels the troubles of attacks that arise around such desires. It steers the entire strength of the soul toward divine freedom, free from worldly cares and occupations. The Lord, wanting to impart this to His disciples, said: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls." He calls "rest" the power of the divine kingdom, which grants freedom from all servitude to those deemed worthy. If, therefore, to the humble and meek is given the immortal, inviolable power of the eternal kingdom, which never falls into ruin, who is so hardened by the lure of worldly pleasures or so languishing in disdain for divine goods as not to be driven by a desire to acquire humility and meekness? By this, the character and image of the divine kingdom, as far as humanly possible, is achieved in oneself. Through the grace of Christ, the great King, a person bears in their spirit a likeness truly resembling His essential nature, one that is free from any deviation. The divine Apostle says of this likeness: "There is neither male nor female" (that is, neither anger nor desire). Anger, tyrannically ruling over reason, drives the mind beyond the bounds of natural law. Desire, on the other hand, driven by a singularly desirable but impassive cause, prioritizes the flesh over the spirit and considers the delights of visible things to be more pleasurable than the clarity and brilliance of spiritual realities. Desire seduces and distracts the mind from divine perception through its allure. However, the highest reason, purified even from natural bodily love and emotional attachment due to an abundance of virtue, overcomes nature. The spirit, victorious over nature, sets aside moral philosophy for a time to focus on simple and undivided contemplation, striving to meet the superessential Word. While moral philosophy is naturally useful for navigating temporal matters, once these are passed and overcome, it would be unjust for someone freed from sensory and earthly concerns to be burdened again by moral exercises.

The great Elijah clearly demonstrates this through his symbolic act. When he was taken up, he left his mantle (signifying the mortification of the

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flesh and the fixed grandeur of moral integrity) to Elisha, as assistance for the spirit against every opposing power. With this, Elisha struck the unstable and flowing element, symbolized by the Jordan River, so that the turbulent and slippery affection for earthly things would not hinder the disciple's crossing to the Holy Land. Elijah himself, free and unbound, ascended to God, unhindered by any attachment. In single-minded simplicity and unfettered will, he pressed onward to the One who is by nature simple, through the general virtues wisely bound together, like fiery horses yoked to his chariot. He understood the necessity of removing discordant passions from a disciple of Christ, whose diversity reveals their alien nature. For desire stirs the circulation of blood around the heart, and the force of anger causes the blood to boil and seethe. But the one who has reached the point of living and moving and being in Christ has cast out from themselves the alien generation of these discordant passions. No longer bearing within themselves, like male and female, the contradictory dispositions of these passions, they are no longer enslaved by their unstable changes. Instead, the radiance of the divine image, naturally commingled with reason, transforms the soul's purpose into the likeness of God. Thus, the great kingdom of all, which coexists essentially with God and the Father (namely, the luminous dwelling place of the Holy Spirit), is formed. This encompasses the entire capacity of the soul to know and comprehend, as far as is permitted, the divine nature. With this understanding, the lesser things fade and perish, while the greater are established. The soul, preserving within itself the inviolable essence of the goods granted by the grace of divine calling, ensures that Christ is mystically born anew within it. Through this birth, the soul becomes a virgin mother, where no marks or signs of corruptible nature or generation exist—neither passions nor desires resembling male and female. In this state, there is no corruption or weakness subject to the nature of decay and generation.

Nor let anyone be disturbed, as if by something new and unheard of, that the destruction of corruption is spoken of as being preferred to the origin of generation. For anyone who looks with a serene mind's eye and right reason at the nature of things that arise and perish will plainly find that

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origin begins from destruction or corruption and likewise ends in it. And the affections or passions, which, as I was saying, mark and define it, are not recognized by Christ (that is, the way of life and the order of Christian living according to Christ). For the one who said, "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female" (referring, of course, to the marks of that nature, affections, and passions that are subject to the destruction of corruption and the origin of generation), speaks the truth. Rather, there is only the divine-like reason, imbued with the quality of divine knowledge, and the singular motion and activity of a soul's will that chooses virtue alone.

Nor let anyone be moved, as if by something new and unheard of, that the destruction of corruption is placed before the origin of generation. For anyone who, with a serene eye of the mind and right reason, considers the nature of things that arise and perish, will clearly find that origin begins from destruction or corruption, and ends in it; which those affections or passions mark and designate, as I was saying, Christ does not acknowledge (that is, the way of life and the order of Christian living according to Christ), for He is truthful who says: "In Christ Jesus, there is neither male nor female" (signifying, of course, the marks of that nature, affections, and passions that are subject to the destruction of corruption and the origin of generation); but only divine reason, imbued with the quality of divine knowledge, and the singular motion and action of the will of the soul, which chooses virtue alone, drives and moves. Nor let anyone be disturbed, as if by something new and unheard of, that the destruction of corruption is spoken of as being preferred to the origin of generation. For anyone who looks with a serene mind's eye and right reason at the nature of things that arise and perish will plainly find that origin begins from destruction or corruption and likewise ends in it. And the affections or passions, which, as I was saying, mark and define it, are not recognized by Christ (that is, the way of life and the order of Christian living according to Christ). For the one who said, "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female" (referring, of course, to the marks of that nature, affections, and passions that are subject to the destruction of corruption and the origin of generation), speaks the truth. Rather, there is only the divine-like reason, imbued with the quality of divine knowledge,

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and the singular motion and activity of a soul's will that chooses virtue alone. Greek and Jew, to whom a different opinion concerning God is signified, or (to speak more truly) one that is opposed. For indeed, the Greek foolishly teaches the principle of many, and although it is one, divides it with contrary operations and forces; and the veneration of many gods, both conflicting with the multitude of those who apply it, and differing in the ridiculous manner of worship.

But the Jew, however, teaches one principle, but narrow and imperfect, scarcely consistent, as though destitute of reason and life; fallen into evil and the prior evil, the removed divinity through contrary collapse; one person alone, one principle that is without reason or Word and Spirit, or certainly with reason and spirit as imbued with a quality, defining; not understanding who God is who is outside of them; or how God, who is no less than created minds, is communicated by these as accidents. Of these, as I was saying, neither is in Christ, but only the true speech of piety, and the firm law of mystical theology, eliminating the division of the prior divinity; rejecting the contraction of the latter; lest, namely, the nature of the many gods set apart from themselves, the error of the Greeks, nor the singularity of the passive person, as in the superstition of the Jews, so that it may be without reason or Word and Spirit. And teaching us, who by grace are called through faith to the knowledge of the truth, that we may know the one nature and power of the deity; namely, the one God, who is understood in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: namely, the sole cause of all things or the principle of the author essentially existing from the mind of the eternal Word, and the eternal source of the Holy Spirit; in unity the Trinity, and in the Trinity unity: not one in another: not for the Trinity to exist in the unity as an accident in the substance, or vice versa, the unity in the Trinity; for it is of no quality.

Nor as different from one another: not for the unity to differ from the Trinity by the diversity of nature, but one and simple nature existing. Neither as better than the other: not for the Trinity to be distinguished from the unity by lesser power and more inferior rank, nor unity from the Trinity. Neither as a common or universal thing, which is understood by subtle

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thought distinct from the singular subjects, but a unity distinct from the Trinity is that which is truly self-existing substance and power by itself, truly potent in its own reality. Nor as one through another: for neither does the Trinity come forth from the unity by production, which is uncreated, and explaining itself from itself: but what is truly unity and Trinity is spoken and understood; one, indeed, according to essence, the other, however, according to existence: the entire unity the same, which is not divided into persons; and the entire Trinity the same, not confused, as the unity exists; lest, namely, from division, a crowd of gods be introduced, or from confusion, the deity perish. For the Christian doctrine makes clear, avoiding both absurdities. And I call the Christian faith (according to Christ, namely) the new preaching of the truth; in which there is neither male nor female; namely, the signs and passions or affections of nature subject to destruction and generation; nor Greek nor Jew: that is, opposed opinions about the Deity; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision: worships agreeing in both sects, of which one, because of the symbols of the law, defiles the visible creation, accusing the one by whom it was created as the author of evils; but the other, through desire and inclination toward vices, makes it a deity, committing against the Creator what was created by Him; and both lead to the same evil (namely, the dishonor of God).

Not barbarian and Scythian: namely, the nature, which is one, being divided with itself, and the will and mind at odds; in which the law of nature against mutual slaughter has grown among men. Not slave and free: of the same nature, the division of which is imposed unwillingly; dishonoring and demeaning the one who has the same honor of nature, namely, having the law that tyrannically oppresses the dignity of the image in which we were created, the mind and will of the rulers. But all in all Christ: who through those things that are eminent according to the law of nature and reason, creates the image and form of the eternal spiritual kingdom; whose characters and marks, as has been proved, are humility of heart and meekness, which, coming together, show the one created according to Christ, a perfect man. For whoever is humble in spirit and modest in sense, is also gentle and meek; and conversely, whoever is gentle and meek, is also



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humble in spirit and modest in sense. Indeed, humble in mind and modest in sense, because he knows himself as having what he has by grace and favor; gentle and meek, because he knows how to use the strength granted by nature, and adds this through obedience to reason to produce virtue, and withdraws the operation of these affections from the sense. And hence it is that the mind, moved constantly to God, is not disturbed even if all things that commonly afflict the body should assail it at once, and even if the danger of them arises, nothing within him is moved, nor any trace of sadness is imprinted on his mind, so that hence a full disposition of joy and gladness is not changed in him. For he does not consider the pain that tortures the sense as the deprivation of pleasure. But the pleasure he knows is only that of the soul, with reasoning, which, when deprived, is the eternal punishment, encompassing all ages naturally. Therefore, he strives earnestly for divine communion, having valued only one loss, even if he should possess all dominion over earthly things, namely, the frustrated hope of deification, which is expected through grace.

Therefore, let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, extinguishing the desire that roams through the passions of beauty, and let us sanctify the divine name, and restrain the anger which is violently inclined to pleasures; that we may receive the kingdom of God and the Father, which comes through meekness. And then let us add the following part of the prayer to what has come before.

### LET YOUR WILL BE DONE, AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH

He who, by the sole force of reason, is separated from desire and anger, and mystically renders worship to God, in the same way that the angelic orders fulfill the divine will in heaven, also fulfills it on earth. He is in every way like the angels, an adorer and companion of theirs, as the great Apostle says in a certain place: 'Our citizenship is in heaven,' where there is no desire to dissolve the strength of the mind through the force of pleasures; no furious anger, raging against relatives or those bound by the same kind of

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society, arrogantly trampling over them. Rather, there is the singular reason, which leads those who use reason according to the first reason, that which alone pleases God and is requested by His servants. This is indicated when He speaks to the great David with these words: 'For what is there for me in heaven, and what do I desire on earth?' But in heaven, the holy angels offer nothing to God except rational worship; and this very worship, which He demands from us, He taught us to say in our prayers: 'Let your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.' Therefore, let our reason also be stirred to inquire of God, and let the force of desire be carried toward Him; and finally, let the power of anger be aroused by the fervor of His preservation: or, to speak more truly and properly, let our thoughts be fixed on God, so that, as if by some thunder, our tempers are strengthened, and our desires inflamed by the supreme force of love. For in this way, by imitating the angels in heaven, we are found to be worshipers of God in all things; who certainly exhibit the same way of life on earth as the angels do in heaven; thus made so, that we, like them, are never moved in our minds by anything that is second to God. For we receive from the nature of our vows, arranging our lives in this way, as if with bread, the 'supersubstantial' and vital bread, for the nourishment of our souls, and that the vigorous and well-disposed gifts granted to us may be preserved. This is the Word itself, which says: 'I am the bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world' (which, according to our capacity and that which nourishes us, is done by the virtue and wisdom that He has granted us, varying in every way through whatever means that consult for salvation). He who knows this through reason, He will be incarnated by us. And so, while we are still in this present age, in accordance with the strength of the meaning and the words of the prayer, which thus has:

### GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

For I believe that what is said, 'today,' designates the present age; and if someone were to explain the meaning of this part of the prayer more clearly, they might say, 'Give us the bread, which from the beginning You

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prepared to grant immortality to nature, give it to us today, as long as we live in this mortal life.' For it is indeed the bread of life and wisdom, the nourishment that conquers the death of sin; the first man's transgression of the divine commandment prevented him from becoming partaker of this. Therefore, had he been nourished by this divine food, he would never have been ensnared by the death of sin.

Moreover, he who desires to take this bread, the substantial nourishment, does not receive it in the same way as the bread itself is; but according to the capacity of the one who receives it. For to all those who ask, it is offered as the most generous bread of humanity, not equally to all; but to those who have performed greater deeds, it is offered more liberally; and to those who have performed lesser deeds, more sparingly; yet to all, as much as their dignity of soul is capable of receiving.

The Savior inspired me to accept and explain the meaning of this text as such, for He clearly commands His disciples not to be concerned about the food that is perceived by the senses, saying: 'Do not be anxious in your minds about what you will eat, or what you will drink, or what you will wear. For all the nations of the world seek these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.' How, then, do you teach that we should ask for what we seek in prayer, if we were not commanded to seek it first? It is clear, therefore, that the words of the prayer do not request what is to be sought through a command that does not require it to be sought. For it is only through prayer that we ask for what is precious in action, which is ordered by care and instructed through command.

So, what we seek through command is indeed what we ought to ask for in prayer. And if, indeed, the Savior commanded that we should seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He also led us to ask for this through prayer; those who are held by the desire for divine gifts are led to do so; and in this way, by the grace of those things which must be asked for in prayer, He sanctifies the petitioner's mind, uniting it with the will of the one who gives. And this union brings about a shared effect.

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But if we are also commanded to ask for the daily bread through prayer, let us not transgress the limits of prayer, offering ourselves many periods of years with a greedy mind, forgetting that we are mortal and endowed with a life of this kind that passes like a shadow. Instead, let us ask for the bread sufficient for the day through prayer, and let us show ourselves according to the teaching of Christian philosophy, making the meditation on death part of our lives, occupying our minds and thoughts with nature. Before death comes, let us separate our minds from worldly cares, so that we do not cling to things that perish, changing the natural use of desire for earthly things. Let us flee, as far as we are able, from the love of earthly things, and as it were, wipe it from the eyes of our minds, and let us be content with only those things that sustain our present life, not those things that lead to luxury. Thus, as we have been taught, let us pray to God, that we may preserve our souls free and completely unaffected by the distractions of bodily things, so that our minds may remain in service to the divine, and our lives may be sustained not for the sake of eating but in order to live.

For the nature of eating is governed by reason; the other (which refers to mere consumption), is not recognized by reason. Let us be diligent guardians of prayer, showing it by our actions, and holding firmly to the one and only life that is lived in the spirit. Thus, let us compare it to this life, so that, for its sake, we may live, never rejecting the bread that sustains us, and always preserving our health, as far as possible, that we may not live merely to eat, but live in God. The body, indeed, properly trained by the principles of virtue, draws the soul to higher things; and the soul, imbued with honorable constancy, stands as a herald of God. We conclude this with the thought that we should seek the bread of nature for this day, as He who gave the prayer taught us not to extend our petitions beyond the present day. Thus, with this in mind, we can proceed to the remaining parts of the prayer, saying: 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'

Who, according to the earlier explanation of this text, in this world, whose symbol is today, seeks, by the petition of prayer, the incorruptible bread of wisdom, from which our first transgression of time excluded us. And in seeking it, he who knows this unique pleasure, which

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consists in the attainment of the divine, knows that God is the arbiter of nature, and He is the guardian of the free will. He is the one who has understood the unique pain of failing in this. The tempter, indeed, is the devil; the author, however, is anyone who through ignorance and weakness, desists from seeking the divine. Keeping this in mind, let him be diligent and preserve what his affection cherishes, and let his will not be moved by any of the visible things that come before his eyes. And let him, as one who is prepared, not be led astray from the path of righteousness, no matter what burdens the body endures.

He, indeed, remains in perfect tranquility, never disturbed by the passions, and he forgives those who sin against him. He does not let his soul be affected by sadness over those who have offended him, and he never allows himself to be convinced that his nature is torn by disagreement with others. Thus, when his will is united with reason, as nature intends, reconciliation with God is ensured. For it cannot happen that God's relationship with us, as He bends to our condition, could ever be explained by words. This may be the reason why God first desires to reconcile others with one another, and to resolve the conflicts that exist between us, not so that He learns to reconcile with sinners, nor to forgive the many and great sins, but so that He may purify us from disturbances and vices, showing that those to whom He gives mercy do not recoil from the necessity of grace. It is clear, then, that when the will and the mind are united with reason, nothing will separate them from God's will, as it is consistent with reason and nature's law. For the divine and natural law exists, and when the will's movement is exercised in accordance with its own reasons, it will necessarily be in harmony with the divine law. Thus, when nothing in nature's reasoning is discordant with the divine, it is right that the will, which is moved as nature intends, will act in harmony with God. This is how virtue, imbued with grace, generates strength for us and helps us grow in righteousness.

Thus, in prayer, the one who seeks the spiritual and wisdom-filled bread is affected; after him, also, the one who, by the force of nature and its necessity, seeks only the daily bread (which is sufficient for the day), will be similarly affected; namely, by forgiving debts to those who owe him, so that

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he does not forget that he is mortal by nature; and he who, expecting every day that which nature has provided, precedes nature with his will and mind, going ahead of it, dying voluntarily to the world, as is expressed in the divine oracle: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.' He will thus associate in a friendly manner with all, so that no trace of this world's corruption follows him when he migrates to that life which is exempt from old age. And from the Judge and Savior of all, for the abuse of this life, he will receive his reward. For both of these, based on their reason and what is necessary, the affection of the soul must be pure toward those who have committed any wrongs, both for the sake of all grace and especially due to the strength of the remaining sentences in the context of the prayer, which is as follows:

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION;  
BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

For Scripture indicates that unless a person perfectly forgives those from whom he has received offense, and cleanses his soul from bitterness, presenting reconciliation with his neighbor in the light of God, he will fall from the grace of the good things he desires and seeks through prayer, and will become subject to temptation and evil, so that he might be taught to cleanse his sins, cutting off and removing the causes of sin from himself. Temptation here is referred to as the law of sin, from which the first parent was created free. Evil is the devil, through whom this stain has spread in human nature, and by whose seduction man transferred his desire from what was permitted to him to what was forbidden, and turned to the transgression of the commandment. In his rashness, he made a loss of the incorruption he had received through grace.

Or again, temptation is called the voluntary consent of the soul to the passions of the flesh and vices; evil, however, is the manner in which vicious desires and affections are fulfilled in action. Neither of these will be freed by the judgment of the just judge, who will not forgive debts to those who owe him; although he may pray for forgiveness by merely speaking with

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his voice in prayer. Moreover, the person who, by nature, is inclined to sin, allowing the law of sin to corrupt him, and who is harsh in spirit and more rigid in justice, will be enslaved by evil, having preferred the corruptions of the devil, the author of nature. Nor will he prevent his body from being given over to the vices and passions of the flesh, nor redeem from the way in which they are carried out. For indeed, disturbances and vices that are not even present, and are nothing, being contrary to nature, the one who has adhered to them has forgotten their true nature, and the motion and impulse that reason should have known, and which should have been recognized in the law of nature: what that nature is, and what the power and tyranny of the vices and disturbances are, which do not arise from nature, but from the will and the choice that has settled in him. He must indeed choose the law of nature, which preserves the natural actions; but he must keep the power and tyranny at a distance from his mind, and contain his nature with reason, which remains pure and untainted, without hatred or division. And again, he must unite his will to nature's will, which brings nothing but what is right according to reason. Therefore, all hatred and whatever causes division among those whom nature's bond unites must be removed, so that the prayer may be heard, and he may obtain double grace from God: both forgiveness for the sins of the past and protection against future evil, and be liberated from it. And let him not be permitted to enter into temptation, nor be enslaved by evil; for this is the single and sole title by which he must forgive his neighbor's debts with a ready heart.

Therefore, we too, in order to briefly explain the power of the words in the prayer, if we desire to be delivered from evil, let us conform to God and forgive our debtors: For if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. Thus, not only will we obtain forgiveness for our sins, but we will also overcome the law of sin, which God will not abandon us to, so that we do not fall into temptation. We will trample upon its most wicked parent (the serpent, from whom we ask deliverance); with Christ, who overcame the world, leading and commanding us, and instructing us with the arms of His commandments; and by rightly casting off disturbances and vices, binding nature to Himself

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with the bonds of love, He will stir our desire toward Him, who is the Bread of life, wisdom, knowledge, and righteousness. And as we fulfill the will of the Father, He will make us equal to the angels, both worshipers and adorers, and by the rules of life and discipline, as they have been received by Him, we will excellently imitate and follow their heavenly way of life. And from there, He will guide us to the highest ascent of the divine (the Father of lights), and through the sharing of the grace of the Spirit, we will be made partakers of divine nature. Thus, by this divine gift, we are the sons of God, carrying the whole Son of the Father, beyond all circumscription, in purity, bearing Him through all. From this, through Him, and in Him, we exist, move, live, have, and will have our being.

This prayer's purpose is to point us toward the mystery of deification, so that we may understand what we have been made through the flesh of the Only-Begotten, and from where, and to where, His most merciful right hand has lifted us, and that we may love Him more ardently, who has so wisely prepared our salvation. With our actions, we must show that we truly proclaim God, the Father, who is the giver of grace, not Him who tyrannically attempts to oppress and enslave nature (that is, evil), manifestly showing that we have made life our parent through our foolishness, changing life into death. For so it is arranged that both provide to their followers what is available: thus, He, indeed, will provide eternal life to those who love Him; He, however, will bring death to those who approach Him, through the suggestions of temptations that are pressed upon us. For there are two kinds of temptation (as we learn from Scripture): one, which has lust; the other, which has pain and suffering; one is from free will, the other is imposed against our will. Indeed, the first is the parent of sin, for which we have been commanded to pray, according to the Lord's teaching, that we should not enter into it, as He says: 'And lead us not into temptation.' And: 'Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.' The second, however, is the avenger of sin, when we sustain labor against our will, correcting the soul that loves sin. If anyone endures this kind of temptation (especially one who has not been bound by the key of vices and wickedness), he will hear the blessed James clearly shouting: 'Count it all joy,



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my brothers, when you fall into various trials; for the testing of your faith produces patience; and let patience have its perfect work.'

Both kinds of temptation (those that come from willful desire and those that are imposed externally) are maliciously pursued and eagerly cared for by the wicked one. First, indeed, he sows the seeds, alluring and exciting the soul with bodily pleasures, to divert it from divine love; the second, by deceit, pain, and suffering, he forces nature, weakened by labor, to sin against and accuse its Creator. But we, who are not ignorant of the wicked one's schemes, must pray against the temptation that comes with voluntary consent, so that our desires are not drawn away from divine love. What is violent, however, when it comes with the permission and will of God, we should bear with a strong and courageous soul, so that we may clearly show that we have preferred nature's Author to ourselves. Would that all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be delivered from the delights of this life, which are suggested by evil, and from the future sorrows and sufferings, by the hope of the communion of good things that are granted to us, with which we may rejoice in Christ our Lord, who alone with the Father and the Holy Spirit is praised by all created beings. Amen.

### SCHOLIUM

1. The will of God is the same as His counsel.
2. For reason, being free from praise or blame, is presented as free from emotions, which is achieved by directing the mind to live according to pure reason. Specifically, it urges the mind to withdraw its desires from those things which bring corruption and stain. By distancing from earthly matters, the one who is gentle in manner neither feels the effects of praise nor blame, as though he is unaffected by either.
3. He calls these unequal affections, specifically the movements of anger and desire, which form the soul through their nature. A disciple of Christ must be free from these, so that he is not carried away by blood flow to the heart which stirs up lust, nor incited by the heat of blood in the heart to the frenzy of anger.

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4. In the languages of the Greeks and the Jews, neither of these emotions is found in Christ. Christ's speech and teaching are not divided by rank among many, but are the words of Him who is one and constrained to a single person.
5. It is not by generation, procreation, or birth, nor by what has emerged.
6. How can one forgive debts to debtors?
7. Divine justice is rightly adapted to our emotions. It exists in us in a manner corresponding to how we exist toward one another, and it establishes God in such a way that He relates to us as we relate to our fellow human beings, who share our mortal condition.
8. The law of nature is turned into the law of nature itself, assuming the will that gives assent to the natural operation of forces and faculties.

## BOOK FIVE

### THE ASCETIC BOOK

I found it most fitting to place the great ascetic book (that is, the one exercising piety, as Nobilius aptly expressed, who himself rendered it in Latin, and published it in Rome in 1578 alongside several letters of Chrysostom and two letters of Basil) here, in no better place than as a supplement to the Lord's Prayer, in such a pious, clear, and charitable sense as it has been explained by him. That charity and love, which are the mistress and goal of all our salvation, the aim and perfection of all, and the admirable culmination of sanctity, Máximos praised in a wonderful manner. He explained it so clearly and without any oblique allegory or lengthy style that I found no reason to add any of my own annotations. However, Nobilius' version itself and nearly one or two scriptural passages suggested that I should not leave it entirely unaddressed. Certainly, I must say with boldness that, among the ascetic writings of the Fathers, of which so many exist in Greek, some of which have not yet been widely circulated, and which shape the ascetic life, there is nothing in that genre that could seem greater or more useful, both for those striving in the exercise of all virtues, and for those who either engage in monastic religious life or live the common, august Christian life with dedication. This text is taken from the dual manuscript of Cardinal Mazarin: one is ancient, and the other is more modern, a silk manuscript,

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corrected from the better version of Raphael Duffrenii, now held in the Royal Library.

### BROTHER, ELDER

1. The brother asked the elder with these words: "Please, my Father, tell me, what is the purpose or meaning of the fact that the Lord became man?" To which the elder replied: "I am surprised, brother, that you ask me this question, since you hear the Creed of Faith every day. Nevertheless, accept this: that the Lord became man for our salvation, which is the end. To which the brother responded, 'Explain the manner, Father.' The elder answered: 'Indeed, man, who was originally created by God and placed in paradise, by his transgression against the commandment he had received, became subject to destruction and death. And thus, through the providence of God, he was governed and helped throughout the ages, but in a more wretched and wicked state, always falling deeper into sin, with the various temptations of the flesh leading him to despair and to the pit of hell. For this reason, the Only Begotten Son of God, the Word that existed from eternity with God the Father, the source of life and immortality, appeared to us, who sat in darkness and the shadow of death; He, incarnate by the Holy Spirit and from the Holy Virgin, showed us the way of life by God's example. By opposing the holy commandments, promising the kingdom of heaven to those who lived by them, and threatening eternal punishment for those violating the faith; and finally, having completed His saving passion, and risen from the dead, He graciously gave us the hope of eternal life. By His obedience, He took away the guilt of our ancestors' transgression, and by His death, He destroyed the power of death, so that, just as all die in Adam, so all are made alive in Him. And having ascended to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit as a pledge of life to grant illumination and sanctification to our souls, and to provide help to those who strive to keep the commandments for their salvation. This, indeed, is the purpose, and this is what it means that the Lord became man, as I briefly say.'"

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2. And the brother said: "What commandments, then, must I fulfill, Father, in order to be saved by them? I wish to hear shortly." And the old man answered: "The Lord Himself, after the resurrection, said to the apostles: 'Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.' Therefore, whatever He has commanded, all baptized people must observe in the name of the life-giving and sovereign Trinity. For this reason, the Lord, having perfect faith, connected the observance of all the commandments; knowing that it is impossible for one who is severed from the unity to save the person. And thus David, having correct faith, said to God: 'I have been directed to all Your commandments; I have hated every unrighteous way.' For against every unrighteous way, all the commandments have been given to us by the Lord, and if even one is omitted, it certainly introduces the opposing path of wickedness."

3. And the brother said: "Who, Father, can fulfill all the commandments, which are so many?" To whom the old man replied: "He who imitates the Lord and follows His footsteps." Then the brother said: "Who can truly imitate the Lord? For the Lord was God, although He had become man; but I, a sinful man, am enslaved by countless vices and passions. How, then, can I imitate the Lord?" The old man answered: "None of those who are addicted in mind to the earthly things of this world can imitate the Lord; but those who can freely say: 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You'—they receive virtue, both to imitate Him and to fulfill all His commandments." And the brother asked: "What virtue?" The old man replied: "Hear Him saying: 'Behold, I have given you the power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will harm you.'"

4. Having received this virtue and power, Paul said: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." And again: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." And again: "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." And again: "The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

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5. Foretelling of this power and aid, David said: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. He will say to the Lord: 'You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" And a little later: "You will tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." But those who are addicted to the flesh, and who are held by the love of earthly things, listen to what they hear from this: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." And a little later: "And he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." And: "He who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." Therefore, he who desires to become His disciple, to be found worthy of Him, and to receive power from Him against the evil spirits, must depart from all carnal affection, strip himself of all love of earthly things, and thus begin the struggle against invisible enemies for His commandments, just as the Lord Himself presented an example to us—first, when He was tempted in the desert by their leader, then, when He gave Himself to the world, by those who were inspired by His adversary.

6. Then the brother said: "But the Lord's commandments are many," he said, "and who can have all of them in mind, to strive for all of them in battle? Especially I, who am of fragile memory, and cannot remember many things? I would like to hear a brief word, so that, holding it in my mind, with His help, I might provide for my own salvation." The old man replied: "Indeed, there are many, my brother, but in one word, the sum of all is contained; namely, what is said: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' And he who strives to keep this one word fulfills all the commandments at once. However, as has been said before, he who has not separated his mind from earthly affections cannot truly love God or his neighbor. For it is impossible to love both God and earthly things at the same time, as the Lord clearly pointed out when He said: 'No one can serve two masters.' And: 'No one can serve God and mammon.' For, as much as

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our mind is attached to earthly things with affection, it becomes enslaved by them, and by transgressing the commandment of God, it despises Him."

7. And the Brother said: "What things are you speaking of, Father?" And the Elder answered: "Of foods, of money, of possessions, of glory, of relatives, and the like." And the Brother said: "Tell me, Father, did not God create these, and give them to men for use? And how does He command us not to cling to them?" And the Elder replied: "It is clear that God created them and gave them to men for use. And everything that God has created is good, that we, using them well, might please God. But we, being weak, and material in our understanding, have preferred the material over the command of love. And by clinging to them, we struggle with men. It is necessary that, of all visible things, and even of the body itself, we prefer the love of all men, which is the sign of love for God, as the Lord Himself shows in the Gospels, saying, 'He who loves me will keep my commandments.' And what is the commandment that, by keeping it, we love Him? Listen to Him saying: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another.' Do you see that mutual love for one another constitutes love for God, which is the fulfillment of all of God's commandments? Therefore, He commands us not to cling to them, but also to renounce all that we have, to have a deep desire to be His disciples."

8. Then the brother said: "Since you have said, Father, that we should be equal toward all things, whatever comes under the eyes, and even toward the body, for we make the love of any human being more important than other things, how can I love him who hates me and shuns me? And if he acts out of envy, seeking to harm me with insults and plotting traps, how can I love him? It seems, Father, that this must be included among those things that cannot happen by nature, because the pain of passion and the injury caused by it forces nature to act, making us have an adverse mind toward the one who is the cause of such harm." And the old man answered: "In snakes and wild animals, which are driven by nature, it is not entirely possible for them to refrain from vengeance, as they are easily angered. But in those who were made in the image of God and are led by reason, who are worthy of divine knowledge and have received the law from God, it is

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certainly possible that they do not have a hostile mind toward those who have caused them harm and that they love those who hate them. Therefore, the Lord also said: 'Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you,' and those who follow this command are not being told to do something impossible, but to do what can indeed be done. The Lord Himself made this clear to us by offering us a clear example of His love. All His disciples, too, demonstrated this by contending for the cause of love even to death, and praying for those who killed them with fervor of spirit. For when we are too intent on earthly matters and the love of pleasures, and give more importance to this commandment, we are unable to love those who hate us. Indeed, for their sake, we are often more hostile than even wild beasts and serpents, with hatred in our hearts. Therefore, even though we cannot fully follow God's example, we cannot comprehend His goal or the end to which He is directing us in order to receive virtue and strength."

9. And the brother said: "Behold, Father, I have left everything: kinship, wealth, the pleasures, the glory of the world, and I possess nothing in life except my body. Yet, I am unable to love a brother who hates and shuns me, although I restrain myself and take care not to repay evil with evil. Tell me, then, what must I do to be able to love from the heart, even the one who causes me harm and affliction, who sets traps against me?" The old man replied: "It is impossible to love the one who afflicts you and is the cause of your distress, however much it may seem that he has given up the things of the world, unless he truly knows the Lord's goal. However, if, by God's grace, he can come to know it and strives to walk in His way, he will be able to love from the heart, even the one who hates him and afflicts him, as the apostles loved those who knew Him."

10. Then the brother said: "I ask you, Father, to tell me what the Lord's goal was." To which the old man replied: "If you wish to know the Lord's goal, listen carefully. Our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was God by nature, out of supreme mercy and love for mankind, deigned to become man, born of a woman, and was made under the law, as the divine Apostle tells us. He became man in order to overturn the old curse and fault of Adam by keeping the commandment. Since He knew that the entire law and the



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prophets depend on two commandments, namely: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself,' He sought to keep these from the beginning to the end by human reason. The one who had led man astray from the beginning, and who had gained authority over death (that is, the devil), when he saw the time of the baptism of Jesus, celebrated by the testimony of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended upon Him from heaven, and knowing that He came into the wilderness to be tempted by him, turned all his forces against Him, hoping that He might also induce Him to prefer the earthly things of the world over the divine love of God. Knowing that these three things—food, wealth, and the glory of life—are the chief things upon which all human life turns, and which the devil often uses to plunge man into the abyss of destruction, he tempted Him with these three things in the wilderness. But the Lord, having been victorious, commanded the devil to depart."

11. Therefore, this sign of God's love, the commandment which the tempter could not persuade Him to break, because he could not obtain anything by the force of His promises, he tried all the more to violate the commandment of loving one's neighbor. When He came into the crowd of people, He encountered the most wicked of the Jews, who, using their works and all kinds of arts, incited Him to break that commandment. Thus, while teaching the ways of life, showing by action the discipline of heavenly life, as the herald of the resurrection of the dead, promising eternal life and the kingdom of heaven to the faithful, and seriously threatening eternal punishment to the unbelieving, performing miraculous and unheard-of divine signs to confirm the faith, He stirred up the most wicked people, the Pharisees and the scribes, to build various traps against Him. Clearly, He was unable to bear the burden of their temptations and, as it seemed, He turned their hatred against them, and in this way the wicked achieved their intended end: the violation of the love of one's neighbor.

12. But the Lord, who as God knew their thoughts and intentions, did not pursue the Pharisees with hatred. How could He, being good by nature? But with the love with which He pursued them, He avenged their actions. Indeed, those who received His rebuke, as if they had the freedom

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not to receive it, but, through negligence, endured His rebuke, He chastised, reproved, and rebuked them, never ceasing to do so with love. He lightly endured insults, bore the wrongs inflicted on Him, and showed no end to His acts of love toward them. To the one who reproached Him, in a more human sense, He became an avenger, who, in place of hatred, offered love, striking down the parent of vice and evil with goodness. Therefore, He endured great evils from them, or rather, for their sake, even to the point of death, fighting for the commandment of love, and by His victory over the devil, He brought the crown of resurrection for us. In this way, the new Adam restored the old. And this is what the divine Apostle says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and what follows.

13. Therefore, the Lord set this goal for Himself, that He would be obedient to the Father even to the point of death, keeping the commandment of love, while He would avenge the devil by enduring the evil worked by those whom He would inspire (namely the scribes and Pharisees). Thus, He conquered the devil and, by promising victory, He won it, liberating the world by His power. In this way, Christ was lifted up on the cross through weakness; with that weakness, He destroyed death and conquered him who had the power of death. In this way, Paul, being weak in himself, gloried in his weaknesses, that the power of Christ might dwell in him.

14. Having explored the way of this victory, Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," and he commands them to take on the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, so that they may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, against whom this spiritual battle is fought. And showing them the way of these matters, he says: "I run thus, not uncertainly; I fight thus, not as one who beats the air; but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And again: "Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place." Again:

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"In labors and hardships, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness, besides those things that are without."

15. And indeed, He struggled against the demons, the inciters of pleasures in the flesh, fleeing them by presenting the weakness of His own body. But against those who, having taken up the battle, harbor hatred and stir it up, and for this reason, incite the sluggish in spirit against the pious, He showed this way of victory in the very things themselves, saying: "We are cursed, but we bless; we suffer persecution, but we endure; we are blasphemed, but we entreat; we have become the filth of the world, the scum of all things until this day." For indeed, the demons, by their mockery, by seeking insults, by urging persecution, were trying to stir up hatred in the apostolic heart; the aim, of course, being that they would turn the apostle into the offender of the commandment of love. But the apostle, knowing the aim of their plans, returned their mockery with words of blessing; he endured the persecution; he entreated those who sought to insult him. He wished for the demons who were the instigators of such actions to separate from him and form a bond with the most kind God. The instigators of these demons clashed in this kind of struggle, always overcoming evil with good, in the example of the Savior. And in this way, He, along with the other apostles, separated the whole world from the demons and reconciled it to God; by His own downfall and defeat, they became victorious, who had prophesied certain victory. Therefore, you too, brother, if you hold this goal, will be able to love your enemies; but if you do not, you will not be able to do so by any means.

16. And the brother said: "Indeed, it is as you have said, Father, and no other way. And for this reason, when the Lord was being sought by the Jews with curses, beaten with fists, and suffering other things at their hands, He endured it with a feeling of pity for them, as though they were acting out of ignorance and were deceived by error. Hence, even on the cross, He said: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" But triumphing over the most cunning mind and fraud of the devil and his princes on the cross, He, as you said, contended to the point of death for the commandment of love, and gave us the gift of victory over death, granting to the world the gift

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of resurrection and the destruction of death's power. He granted to the whole world the gift of life and resurrection. But pray for me, Father, that I may fully understand the goal of the Lord and that of His apostles; that I may also be able to be vigilant and sober in mind when temptations approach, and that I may not be ignorant of the plans of the devil and his demons."

17. The old man responded: "If you continually reflect in your mind on the things that have been said, you will not be ignorant of them. But if you understand how you yourself are being tempted, you will also understand that your brother is tempted in the same way; and you should forgive him who is tempted. But you must resist the tempter, who seeks to incite hatred in the one who is being tempted, and not act in accordance with his deceptive plan. For this is what James, the brother of God, says in the Catholic epistle: 'Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' Therefore, as has been said, if you keep the memory of these things in your mind and meditate on them vigilantly, you will be able to understand the goal of the Lord and His apostles; and indeed, you will be able to love men and have mercy on their offenses, while at the same time continually fighting against the demons with the gesture of charity. But if we are soft, negligent, and sluggish, and sink our minds into carnal pleasures, we will no longer be fighting the demons but ourselves and our brothers; and we will be serving the demons more, in whose favor we act against people."

18. The brother said: "Thus it seems to be, Father; for always, through my negligence, the demons take opportunities against me. But I beg you, tell me, Father, by what means I may acquire a sober and vigilant mind?" To which the old man replied: "By entirely renouncing all care for earthly things, and by constant meditation on divine Scripture, the fear of God grants a vigilant and sober mind. With these supports, you begin to see the demons, who harass with thoughts, and you begin to take revenge on them. Of them, David said: 'My eyes have looked upon my enemies.'" Also, to this fight, Peter, the leader of the apostles, arousing the disciples, said: "Be sober, be watchful; for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, firm in the faith." Indeed, the Lord

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also said: "Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation." But Ecclesiastes says: "If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place." But the place of the mind is virtue and knowledge, and the fear of God. The apostle, indeed, marvelously contending soberly and zealously, said: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and having in readiness to revenge all disobedience." Therefore, if you too, imitating the saints, devote yourself more diligently to God, you will be vigilant and sober.

19. The brother said: "What then, Father, should someone do in order to continually devote himself to God?" To which the old man replied: "It is not possible for the mind to be perfectly devoted to God unless it has prepared these three virtues: namely, love, abstinence (or fasting), and prayer. For love softens anger. Abstinence or fasting tames and weakens desire; prayer withdraws the mind from all distractions and presents it naked before God. These three virtues embrace all other virtues, and unless the mind is supported by them, it cannot devote itself to God."

20. The brother said: "I beg you, Father, teach me how love softens and mitigates anger." To which the old man replied: "Because, indeed, it is the part of love to show mercy, to offer kindness to the neighbor, and to be gentle and long-suffering with the injuries inflicted upon it. As has often been said, love, when it possesses the person who is endowed with it, softens and mitigates his anger." Then the brother said: "Indeed, these are not small gifts; blessed is he who is able to acquire them. I, for my part, am far from it. However, I beg you, Father, tell me what μακροθυμεῖν means (we might say to act with long-suffering and mild patience)."

21. The old man responded: "Indeed, to be of a strong mind in adversity, to endure evils, to wait for the end of temptation, and not to speak angrily or speak in foolishness, or to suspect anything or think something unworthy of a religious person, as the Scripture says: 'A man will endure with mild patience until the time comes, and afterwards joy will burst forth for

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him. He will restrain his words until the time, and the mouths of many will tell of his wisdom."

22. Therefore, these are the signs of long-suffering (mild patience); and not only this, but also to consider the cause of temptation as being one's own, which is the proper virtue of this quality. Perhaps, indeed, it is also true that a great part of the things that happen to us occur so that we may be chastised and instructed, and either our past sins are forgiven, or the negligence with which we were sluggish is corrected, or finally, so that the way to future sins may be blocked. Therefore, he who reflects in his mind on any reason why temptation has overtaken him, does not become indignant when he suffers, especially when he himself is conscious of his own sin; nor does he blame the one through whom temptation has occurred (for whether this or that person was involved, the cup of divine judgment had to be drunk), but he fixes his eyes and mind on God, gives thanks to Him whose mercy has allowed it, and blames himself, willingly accepting discipline, as David did with Shimei, and as Job did with his wife. The foolish one, however, often seeks God's mercy, but does not receive it, because it does not come in the way he wanted, but in the manner the physician of souls deemed fit. Therefore, he neglects it, and his agitation increases; at times, he becomes enraged with men, and at other times, he blasphemes God, revealing the corruption of his soul, receiving nothing but the rod.

23. The brother said: "Well said, Father; but I beg you, also add how abstinence weakens and tames desire." The old man responded: "Because abstinence makes one refrain from all things that are not necessary for use, but provide pleasure; it does not allow one to take anything except what is necessary for sustaining life, nor does it permit the pursuit of sweet things, but only those that are useful, and to prepare food and drink according to the just necessities, not to accumulate superfluous humors in the body, and to strive only to preserve the life of the body, guarding it free from the desire for carnal union. Thus abstinence weakens and tames desire; but pleasure, the satiety of food and drink, fosters heat in the belly, and incites the appetite for vile lust, leading the whole body down the path of illicit union. Then come wanton eyes, reckless hands, a tongue speaking words that seduce

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the ears; the ears are hungry for empty things; the mind despises God; the soul, in its act of thinking, commits adultery with itself, and by the very action of sin, provokes the body to disgraceful wickedness."

24. The brother said: "Indeed, Father, it is as you say, but I beg you to also teach about prayer, and how it draws the mind away from all thoughts." The old man replied: "Thoughts and reasonings are the thoughts and reasonings of things; but some things fall under the senses, while others are understood by the mind. Therefore, when the mind lingers, it moves these thoughts and reasonings around; but for the sake of prayer, it joins the mind with God, and in that same act, by joining with God, it separates from all other thoughts and reasonings. Then, indeed, the mind, naked and revolving with God, becoming accustomed to Him, becomes divine (radiant with divine gifts). Now, this mind, having become such, seeks that which is honorable and fitting from Him, and never fails to receive what it has asked for in prayer. Hence, it is why the Apostle commanded to pray without ceasing, so that, continually joining the mind to God, we may gradually break free from the desire for earthly things."

25. The brother said: "How then is it possible for the mind to pray without ceasing? For by meditating on the Psalms, reading, and mingling and ministering the words, we distract the mind with many thoughts and senses." The old man replied: "There is nothing in divine Scripture that commands something impossible to achieve. For the Apostle himself sang, read, and ministered, and yet prayed without ceasing. For one prays without ceasing when, with great reverence and love, the mind clings to God and always hopes in Him; and in everything, whatever one does, whatever happens, they trust in Him. In this way, the Apostle's affection was expressed when he said: 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress?' and the following. And shortly after: 'I am certain that neither death, nor life, nor angels...' And again: 'In everything we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; we are persecuted, but not forsaken; we are cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.'"

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26. Thus, in this manner, the Apostle prayed without ceasing, as in all his works, as it was said, he depended on God's hope for whatever would happen. For this reason, all the saints always rejoiced in afflictions and troubles, so that they might grow in the habit of divine charity. Hence, the Apostle said: "Therefore I will most gladly glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." A little later, he said: "When I am weak, then I am strong." But alas for us wretched ones, because, having left behind the life of the holy Fathers, we fail in all spiritual work.

27. And the brother said: "What is the cause, Father, that I do not have compunction?" The old man replied: "Because we do not have the fear of God before our eyes. We have become the very sink of all evils, and for this reason, we have contemptuously disregarded the fearful vengeance of God as something mere thought and the invention of reason. Otherwise, who would not be struck with compunction, who hears Moses, speaking in the person of God, saying to the sinners: 'A fire is kindled in my wrath: it shall burn even to the lowest hell. It will devour the earth and its crops; it will burn the foundations of the mountains. I will bring evils upon them, and I will complete my arrows in them.' And again: 'I will make my sword as bright as lightning, and my hand will take judgment; I will render vengeance to my enemies, and to those who hate me, I will repay.' Let him hear Isaiah crying out: 'Who will announce to you that the fire is burning? Who will announce to you the eternal place? Walk in the light of your fire, and in the flame that you have kindled.' And again: 'They will go out and see the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me. For their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished, and they will be a horror to all flesh.' Let him hear Jeremiah, who says: 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause the darkness to come, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains.' And again: 'Hear, O foolish and senseless people: they have eyes, and they do not see; they have ears, and they do not hear. Will you not fear Me, says the Lord, or will you not tremble at My presence, who have set the sand as the boundary of the sea, an eternal decree that it cannot pass?' And again: 'Your own fault will correct you, and your wickedness will reprove you. Know and see that it is bitter for you, that you have forsaken



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Me, says the Lord. I planted a true vine, how then have you turned into the bitterness of a foreign vine?' And again: 'I did not sit with the council of the mockers; but I feared the presence of Your hand. I sat alone, because I was full of bitterness.' And hearing Ezekiel, who can fail to tremble with horror? 'I will pour out My wrath upon you, and I will fulfill My fury in you: I will judge you according to your ways, and I will bring upon you all your abominations: My eye will not spare, nor will I have mercy; and then you will know that I am the Lord.' And who, hearing the words of Daniel, would not be struck with compunction, when he describes the dreadful day of judgment in this way? 'I, Daniel, beheld until thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.' And again: 'I beheld in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' My spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head troubled me."

28. Who, hearing David, would not fear, when he says: "Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God, and mercy belongs to You, O Lord; for You will render to each one according to his works." Again, the Preacher: "The end of the matter, all has been heard: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; for God will bring every work into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

29. Who, hearing similar words from the Apostle, would not tremble: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." Who, then, would not lament our unbelief

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and the hardness of our hearts, that, hearing all these things, we are not moved to repentance, nor do we love God with our hearts for our great negligence and sluggishness? Jeremiah, seeing this from afar, said: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord negligently." If the care for our souls' salvation truly touched us, we would tremble at the Lord's word, and we would diligently strive to fulfill His commandments, by which salvation is prepared. For indeed, when we hear the Lord saying: "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat," we have preferred the wide and spacious gate that leads to destruction. Therefore, we will hear when He comes from heaven to judge the living and the dead: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

30. And it will be in the future, that when we hear on that day, we will not act as though we were without care, but because we have neglected good works and not loved our neighbor. But if we have even committed evil deeds, how will we be able to bear that day, when we have been so negligent? Indeed, it was said to the ancients by Moses: "You shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery," and the following commandments; but the Lord, knowing that this alone is not sufficient for a Christian to be perfect, said: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, the Lord prescribes holiness of mind, by which the body is also sanctified, and true love for all of mankind, and it is through this love that one may attain it. He Himself, as well as His disciples, gave an example and a standard, even unto death, as has often been stated.

31. What excuse will we have on that day, who, supported by such an example, have become sluggish and lazy? Jeremiah, lamenting, said: "Who will give me water for my head, and a fountain of tears for my eyes, that I may weep day and night for the people?" And I hear Moses speaking about us: "And Jacob ate and was satisfied; and he kicked, the beloved one. He became fat, thick, and gorged, and forsook the God who made him, and turned away from the God of his salvation." Likewise, Micah lamented and said: "Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as

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the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. The good man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men." Similarly, the Psalmist spoke of us: "Save me, O Lord, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." And so it follows.

32. The prophet, lamenting with words similar to those of the Apostle, said: "There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; they speak deceit with their tongues. The poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Therefore, he foresaw what would happen and wrote to Timothy: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." And so it follows. Woe to us that we have fallen into the depths of evil! For who among us is free from the evils we have spoken of? Have we not fulfilled what was foretold in that celestial prophecy? Are we not all given over to gluttony? Do we not all pursue sensual pleasures? Are we not all in love with the things of the earth, almost to madness? Are we not all angry? Are we not all slow to forgive injuries? Do we not foster enmities forever? Do we not all betray virtue? Do we not all curse? Do we not all slander? Do we not all act rashly and recklessly? Do we not all labor under hatred for our brothers? Do we not all grow proud? Do we not all live in pride? Do we not all seek empty glory? Do we not all pretend to be what we are not? Do we not all harbor deceit? Do we not all envy others? Do we not all act with insolence? Do we not all indulge laziness? Do we not all have fickle minds? Do we not all slacken in our duties? Do we not all neglect the commands of the Savior? Do we not all, in every way, fill ourselves with malice? Have we not turned God's temple into a den of idols? Have we not turned the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit into a dwelling place for the worst spirits? Do we not invoke God the Father in vain? Have we not become the

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sons of perdition? Have we not become worse than the Jews, who bear the great name of Christ? And who among us will bear the truth, when even the wicked of old would reproach us, saying: "We have one Father, even God," but the Savior said: "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do."

33. How then can we, who have transgressed His commandments, not hear the same from Him? For the Apostle called those who are led by the Spirit of God, the children of God: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." How, then, can we, who are dead in sin, hear that we are the children of God? For the sense of the flesh is death. But those who are led by the Spirit are manifest in the fruits of the Spirit. Let us, therefore, see the fruits of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Do we have these in us? I wish we did not have the opposites! How, then, can we be the children of God, and not rather the opposite? For that which is born of someone is like the parent. And the Lord also signifies this with His words: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit; but we have become flesh, and we burn with the desires of the flesh against the spirit." Therefore, it is justly said: "My Spirit shall not remain in these men, for they are flesh." Since, therefore, we are Christians, how can we hear, when in us there is nothing that is Christ's?

34. But perhaps someone will say: "I have faith, and that faith is sufficient for my salvation." But James answers the one who speaks thus, saying: "Even the demons believe, and tremble." And again: "Faith without works is dead in itself, just as works without faith are dead." By what reasoning, then, do we believe in Him, or offer Him faith concerning the future, when we do not even have faith in the things of this life? Therefore, we are entangled with earthly affections, and we live according to the flesh, militating against the spirit. But those who truly believed in Christ, and who followed Him entirely by fulfilling His commandments, thus said: "I live, but not I; Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Therefore, when they suffered for the salvation of all, as imitators of His

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perfection and true followers of His commandments, they said: "When we are reviled, we bless; when we suffer persecution, we endure; when we are cursed, we pray for those who harm us," and in both their words and deeds, they clearly demonstrated that Christ was working in them. But we, who resist all His commandments, and oppose them, are filled with every impurity and malice. For this reason, we have made God's temple a house of merchandise, and His house of prayer a den of thieves; for the holy people have become a sinful people; for the people of God, a people full of iniquities; for the holy seed, a corrupt seed; for the children of God, children of perdition, because we have forsaken the Lord's commandments, and become slaves to unclean vices and sensuality, serving the most wicked spirits, and provoking the Holy One of Israel to anger.

35. For this reason, the great Isaiah, lamenting us, exclaims, who also desires to bring aid to our ruin, saying: "Why are you still being struck, adding iniquity? Every head is in pain, and every heart is in sorrow; from the feet to the head there is no soundness in it: neither wound, nor bruise, nor swelling. There is no ointment to apply, nor oil, nor bandages." Then indeed what follows: "The daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, as a besieged city." This desolation of our soul also the Apostle signified, saying: "And since they did not think it worthwhile to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do things which are not fitting; filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Therefore God gave them up to vile affections, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. These things, however, what comes next? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and the following.

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36. Likewise, the Lord, signifying this desolation of the soul, said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Again, Isaiah, seeing us monks, who only perform bodily duties, but despise the spiritual ones, and on that account are inflated, says: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Indeed, the reason is, because "he who hates his brother is a murderer." Therefore, whatever pertains to discipline, and religious exercise not supported by charity, is foreign to God.

37. For this reason, also accusing our hypocrisy from afar, he said: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Moreover, the things which our Lord spoke lamenting the Pharisees, I hear spoken of us, who now fill the list of hypocrites: we, who, having been honored with so much grace, are worse than they. Do we not bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, and we ourselves will not move them with one of our fingers? Do we not do all our works to be seen of men? Do we not love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi? And those who do not give these things we pursue and harass to the point of death? Do we not take away the key of knowledge, and hinder men from entering into the kingdom of heaven, neither going in ourselves? Do we not

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compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, we make him twofold more the child of hell than ourselves? Do we not blind guides, who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel? Do we not cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter; but inside they are full of extortion and excess? Yea, incontinence and shameful lust! Do we not tithe mint and anise and cumin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith? Do we not resemble whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness? Do we not build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and are like unto those who killed them? Who then will not weep, who have become such and labor in such a state? Who will not follow our captivity with tears? Therefore, the renowned sons of God were considered as earthen vessels. For this reason, the gold has become dim, the finest silver changed. For this reason, the Nazarites of Zion are more glorious than snow, they are whiter than milk, but now they are blacker than the coal, they are now like Ethiopians. The iniquity of our soul has grown greater than the iniquity of Sodom. Therefore, the sons of the day and the light, have become the sons of the night and darkness. For this reason, the sons of the kingdom have become the children of hell. Therefore, the sons of the Most High, though we die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Therefore, we have been delivered into the hands of the wicked enemies (that is, the cruel and fierce demons) and to the unjust and most wicked king over all the earth (indeed, their prince), because we have sinned and done wickedly, violating the commandments of our Lord God, and trampling the Son of God underfoot, and holding in contempt the blood of the covenant. But do not deliver us unto the end for your name's sake, O Lord, do not scatter your covenant; neither turn away your mercy from us, for your compassions' sake." Our Father, who art in heaven, and for the sake of the bowels of the only-begotten Son, and for the mercy of the Holy Spirit, do not remember our former iniquities, but let your mercies speedily prevent us, for we have become exceedingly poor. Help us, O God our Savior, and be merciful to our sins for your name's sake, O Lord, remembering our deliverance, which by your supreme kindness and clemency, the only-begotten Son has received in

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heaven for us, to give us a sure hope of salvation. And that we may not, forsaking the hope of salvation, become worse, for the sake of his blood which he shed for the life of the world; for the sake of his holy apostles and martyrs, who for his name's sake shed their own blood; for the sake of the holy prophets, fathers, and patriarchs, who, that they might please your holy name, put forth all their effort. Do not despise our prayer, O Lord, neither forsake us unto the end. For in our righteousness, we do not trust, but in your mercy, in which you show care for the human race. We humbly beg and beseech your kindness, that what the only-begotten Son did for our salvation in the dispensation of the mystery, may not turn into judgment, and that you cast us not from your face. Do not abhor us, for we are unworthy, but have mercy on us according to your great mercy, and according to the multitude of your compassions, forgive our sins, that we, acquitted and loosed from judgment, may come into the presence of your holy glory, and may merit to be protected by the power of your only-begotten Son; and that we, your unworthy servants, who are oppressed by the burden of sin, may not become reprobates. We beg, Almighty Lord, hear our prayer, for outside of you we know no other. We invoke your name: for you are the one who works all in all, and we seek your help. Look down, therefore, from heaven, O Lord, and behold from the habitation of your holy glory. Where is your zeal and your strength? Where is the multitude of your mercies and your compassions, that you have borne with us to cause our ruin? For you are our Father, for Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; but you, O Lord, our Father, deliver us, for over us is the holy name of your Son and the Holy Spirit. Why have you caused us to err from your way, O Lord? Do not correct us in the rod of your judgments. Why have you hardened our hearts, that we should not fear you? Have you left us to the license of error? Turn, O Lord, your servants, for the sake of your holy Church, for the sake of all the saints who have been from the beginning, that we may possess a small inheritance in your holy mountain." Our adversaries have trodden down your sanctuary; we have become like in the beginning, when you did not rule over us, and your name was not called upon us.



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38. If you open the heavens, a tremor from you will seize the mountains, and they will melt like wax in the face of fire: and the fire will ignite your adversaries; and your name will be fearful to your enemies. When you make glorious deeds, terror from you will strike the mountains. We have never heard of it, nor have our eyes seen a God other than you. And your works, which you will perform for those who wait for mercy, will be revealed to those who do justice, and they will be mindful of your ways. Behold, you are angry, and we have sinned. Indeed, we have sinned, and you are angry: Therefore, we have gone astray, and we have all become unclean; like a menstuous cloth is all our righteousness, and like leaves we have fallen because of our iniquities; thus, the wind will carry us away, and there is no one who calls upon your name, or who remembers to lay hold of it. And you have turned your face from us, and have delivered us into the hands of our iniquities. Now, O Lord, you are our Father: we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hands. Be not very angry, O Lord, neither remember our iniquity forever: behold, see, we beseech you, we are all your people. Your holy city, Jerusalem, is desolate; Zion is become a wilderness. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste. In these things, O Lord, you have held your peace; you have been silent and humbled us very much.

39. These things, indeed, happened in the old figure to the people; but now, in us, they are truly fulfilled, and we have become a reproach to our neighbors, a mockery and derision to those who are around us. But behold from heaven, and see, and save us for your name's sake; and make known to us the deceit of our enemies, and deliver us from their snares. Do not take your help from us, for we are not worthy to overcome the adversity, but you are powerful, so that we may be saved from all our enemies and preserved safe. Save us, O Lord, from the troubles and dangers of this world, for your supreme goodness, that we, standing pure in conscience over the seas of this world, without guilt and stain, may, standing before your dread tribunal, be worthy to receive the rewards of eternal life.

40. After hearing all these things, the brother, deeply moved, his eyes filled with tears, said to the elder: "Indeed, Father, as I see it, there is no

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hope left for my salvation. For my iniquities have overwhelmed me." Yet I beg you to tell me what I should do. The elder replied: "The burden of attaining salvation is indeed beyond human strength, but with God all things are possible, as the Lord himself has said. Therefore, let us go before his face in confession; let us adore, prostrate, and weep before the Lord who made us, for He is our God. Let us hear with Isaiah, who said: 'When you return and groan, you will be saved.' And again: 'Is the hand of the Lord not able to save? Or has He become deaf that He cannot hear?' But our sins separate us from God, and because of our sins He has turned His face from us, that He may not show mercy. Therefore, He says: 'Wash yourselves, be clean; take away the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land.' For the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things. And again, the prophet Joel declares: 'Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning; rend your heart and not your garments; for I am gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.' To Ezekiel, He says: 'Son of man, speak to the house of Israel: Thus you have spoken, saying, 'Our transgressions and our iniquities are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn from your evil ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel?' Moreover, the Book of Kings shows God's excellent mercy when Ahab, having seized the vineyard of Naboth, with the works of Jezebel having slain him, heard the words of Elijah saying: 'Thus says the Lord God: You have killed, and taken possession; and in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.' And when Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, fasted, and lay in sackcloth. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying: 'Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days.' But David says: 'I have acknowledged my

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iniquity, and my sin I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my heart.' For this shall every saint pray to you in a time when you may be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near him.' But the Lord says in the Gospel: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Moreover, when Peter asked Him, 'How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?' He replied, 'I do not say to you, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' What can compare to this goodness? What can equate with this humanity, or match it?

41. Therefore, since we have explored the fear of the Lord, His kindness, mercy, and compassion, both from the Old and New Testaments, let us turn to Him with all our hearts. Why should we perish, brothers? Let us cleanse our hands, sinners, and purify our hearts, we who are double-hearted. Let us lament, mourn, and weep for our sins. Let us put an end to our wicked desires, and let us have faith in the mercies of the Lord; let us fear His threats; let us obey His commandments; let us love one another with all our hearts. Let us speak, brothers, to those who hate us, and to those who curse us, that the name of the Lord may be glorified, and that in their joy they may see Him. Let us forgive one another, and let us bear with those who try to lead others into temptation, just as we are all attacked by a common enemy. Let us strive against our thoughts and other vices, calling upon God for help, and let us flee from the most wicked and unclean spirits. Let us subject the flesh to the spirit, and, subduing it and chastising it with the strictest discipline, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit. Let us stir one another up to the love and good works that promote mutual encouragement. Let us not envy one another, nor let our hearts be embittered by the envy of others. Rather, let us be moved with a merciful heart towards each other, and let modesty of mind heal each other's wounds. Let us not speak ill of one another, nor tear each other apart with insults, for we are members of one another. Let us shake off negligence and sloth, and let us stand firm against the wickedness of the spirit. We have Jesus Christ the righteous as our Advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation for our sins; by praying to Him with a pure heart and whole soul, we will obtain

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forgiveness of our sins from Him. For the Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth. Therefore, He says: "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay your vows to the Most High; and call upon Me in the day of your trouble; I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me." Moreover, Isaiah says: "Loose every bond of iniquity; undo the heavy burdens; let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. Share your bread with the hungry, and bring the poor who are cast out into your house; when you see the naked, clothe him, and do not hide yourself from your own flesh." Then your light shall break forth like the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, "Here I am." Your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkness will be as the noon day. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make your bones strong; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. You will see with what reason we are called to loose the ties of iniquity from our hearts, and dissolve every bond of violent anger and resentment. And, loving our neighbor with our whole soul, we strive to give ourselves to Him, that we may be enlightened by the light of knowledge, freed from vile passions and vices, and filled with all virtue, and bathed in the glory of God, released from all ignorance. And indeed, the prayers made in Christian piety will be heard, and we will have God with us always, and our desires, rooted in piety, will be fulfilled.

42. Therefore, let us love one another, and be loved by God. Let us be patient and gentle with one another, and God will forgive our sins. Let us not repay evil for evil, nor return according to our sins. For the forgiveness of our offenses will be found in the forgiveness of our brothers; and the mercy of God is hidden in the charity of our neighbor. Therefore, the Lord said: "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." And, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your sins." And again, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And, "With what measure you measure, it will be measured back to you." Behold, the Lord of salvation has

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granted us mercy, and He has given us eternal power, so that we may become the children of God; and indeed, our salvation is now placed in our own will.

43. Therefore, let us dedicate ourselves wholly to the Lord with all our hearts, so that we may receive Him entirely. We should be made divine for His sake, for this is the reason why He, who by nature was God and Lord, became man. Let us listen to His word, and He will easily avenge our enemies. "If My people would have listened to Me," He says, "Israel, if they had walked in My ways, I would have humbled their enemies and sent My hand upon their oppressors." Let us place all our hope in Him alone, and cast all our cares upon Him, for He will deliver us from all tribulation, and He will nourish our whole life. Let us love every man from the heart, but let us place our hope in no man. As long as the Lord preserves us, all our friends will love and observe us, and no enemy will prevail against us. But when the Lord has forsaken us, even friends forsake us, and all enemies grow stronger against us. But whoever trusts in himself will fall to a great disaster, while whoever trusts in the Lord will be exalted. Therefore, David also said: "I will not trust in my bow, and my sword will not save me. You have saved us from those who afflict us, and You have put to shame those who hate us."

44. Let us not sustain such thoughts, which diminish our sins and make us believe they are forgiven. For the Lord admonishes us to be cautious about them, saying: "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." As long as our mind is disturbed by sin, we have not yet obtained its forgiveness; for we have not yet produced the fruits worthy of repentance. The fruit of repentance is an undisturbed mind and assured tranquility; this, however, is the abolition of sin. We have not yet attained that perfect tranquility, for sometimes we still feel troubled, and at other times we do not. Therefore, we have not yet fully obtained the forgiveness of our sins. Indeed, we were freed from the original sin by the sacrament of holy baptism, but from the sins we commit through our own carelessness after baptism, we are freed by repentance.

45. Let us truly repent, so that, liberated from vices and disturbances, we may obtain forgiveness of our sins. Let us despise temporary things, lest, fighting over them with men, we violate the commandment of

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love and fall away from the love of God. Let us walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the desires of the flesh. Let us be vigilant, sober-minded, and let us shake off laziness. Let us embrace the holy warriors of the Lord, let us imitate their struggles; let us forget what is behind, and press forward to what lies ahead. Let us imitate their constant race, fervor of spirit and eagerness, self-control, patience, chastity, sanctity, endurance, mercy, gentleness, tranquility, zeal for good works, sincerity in love, humility, simplicity, fortitude, kindness, and gentleness. Let us not give ourselves up to pleasures, nor let our thoughts and affections weaken us; let us not pollute our conscience. Let us pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. For this reason, brothers, let us flee from the world and its ruler. Let us leave behind the flesh and all that is carnal. Let us strive toward the heavens, where our true citizenship awaits. Let us imitate the divine Apostle, embrace the author of life, enjoy the source of life, lead the choirs of angels, praise our Lord Jesus Christ with the archangels, to whom be glory and power, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

### FROM PHOTIUS

#### THE SAME ASCETIC DISCOURSE, AND ANOTHER TREATISE IN FIVE CHAPTERS

I have read the Ascetic Discourse of the same Saint Máximos, structured in the form of a dialogue and division. The discourse is indeed useful for all, especially for those whose life is shaped by asceticism. For it is a teacher and cultivator of the morals by which one might become a citizen of the heavenly city. Especially of Love, which, according to knowledge and action, provides many opportunities to approach it.

There is also another treatise, expanded into five chapters, or addressed to a certain Elpidios, a man consecrated to a life of holiness. The author himself titles the work *On Love*, possibly because he begins with it in the writing, and also often discusses it in many other places throughout the text. Indeed, through numerous problems and theorems, the theology is

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strengthened, and the holy and pure life is produced; those who diligently engage with it can gain considerable benefit.

The style of his discourse is polished, clear, and shining, as compared to the others; and there is nothing that could provide a legitimate reason for criticism. Except for the fact that, at times, it prefers Attic words over other forms of speech.

## **BOOK SIX**

### **CHAPTERS ON CHARITY**

#### **FIRST 100 CHAPTERS**

¶ 1. Charity is the soul's noble orientation, placing nothing above the knowledge of God. Yet the heart cannot acquire this holy disposition as long as it clings to earthly attachments.

¶ 2. Charity arises from inner stillness. Stillness is born of hope in God; hope finds strength through patience and longsuffering; these are guarded by self-control; self-control grows from the fear of God; and the fear of God is founded upon faith.

¶ 3. Whoever truly believes in the Lord does not tremble before punishment; whoever fears punishment restrains himself from sin; the one who refrains from sin endures suffering with patience; the patient soul places its hope in God; and hope separates the soul from earthly desires, drawing it into divine love.

¶ 4. Whoever loves God esteems the knowledge of Him above all created things, and with unceasing longing devotes the whole heart to His contemplation.

¶ 5. Since all things exist through God and for God, and since He surpasses all creation beyond measure, the one who turns from Him toward



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lesser things shows, by this preference, that he regards creation as more valuable than the Creator.

¶ 6. The heart bound in love for God looks upon all visible things—even its own body—as foreign and of little significance.

¶ 7. Since the soul is higher than the body, and God infinitely surpasses the world, whoever prefers the body to the soul or the world to God acts no differently than an idol-worshiper.

¶ 8. Whoever diverts his mind from the remembrance of God and binds it instead to earthly concerns chooses created things over the Creator and the body over the soul.

¶ 9. The life of the soul is knowledge, and knowledge gives birth to divine love. Thus it is rightly said that nothing is greater than love.

¶ 10. When the soul, lifted by love, ascends toward God, it forgets itself and all things. Surrounded by the radiance of the divine, it becomes unaware of creation—just as an eye fixed upon the rising sun no longer sees the stars.

¶ 11. Though all virtues raise the soul toward divine love, pure prayer does so most swiftly; in prayer the soul takes wing and rises beyond the earth toward God.

¶ 12. When the soul, carried by love, beholds the immensity of divine knowledge, it perceives its own smallness—like Isaiah who cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” beholding the Lord of Hosts.

¶ 13. Whoever loves God must also love his neighbor. Yet he may grieve over the soul’s imperfections in others, rejoicing with inexpressible joy when he sees them turn toward virtue.

¶ 14. A soul enslaved to lust is impure, filled with passionate and hostile thoughts.

¶ 15. Whoever harbors even a trace of resentment against another is estranged from the love of God, for divine love cannot dwell with hatred.

¶ 16. The Lord says, “He who loves Me keeps My commandments,” and “My commandment is this: that you love one another.” Thus, the one who does not love his neighbor cannot love the Lord.

¶ 17. Blessed is the one who loves all people without distinction.

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¶ 18. Blessed is the heart unattached to anything corruptible or temporary.

¶ 19. Blessed is the mind that, having transcended all things, delights continually in the beauty of God.

¶ 20. Whoever indulges the flesh and becomes hostile toward his neighbor over fleeting matters serves creation rather than the Creator.

¶ 21. Whoever keeps the body free from indulgence and affliction offers it as a servant of virtue.

¶ 22. Whoever rejects worldly desires rises above worldly sorrows and transcends earthly things.

¶ 23. Whoever loves God also loves his neighbor with fullness. Such a one does not hoard wealth, but distributes it as a steward of God to all who have need.

¶ 24. The one who gives alms in imitation of God does not discriminate between the worthy and unworthy in supplying bodily needs, though he rightly esteems the virtuous above the wicked.

¶ 25. As God, being passionless and good, loves all creation, yet glorifies the virtuous and corrects the wicked toward repentance, so too a virtuous soul loves all and honors the diligent while pitying the misguided.

¶ 26. Charity is revealed not only through material gifts but even more through teaching divine truths and offering works of service.

¶ 27. Whoever renounces the world sincerely and dedicates himself in charity to his neighbor is quickly freed from passions and becomes a sharer in divine love and knowledge.

¶ 28. Whoever attains divine love never wearies in following God; like Jeremiah, he endures every insult and suffering without malice.

¶ 29. When wronged, guard yourself lest anger or sorrow lead you away from love into hatred.

¶ 30. Injury humbles the proud; through dishonor the soul is purified of empty glory.

¶ 31. As fire cannot warm a lifeless body, so faith cannot illumine a soul lacking charity.

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¶ 32. As the sun draws the healthy eye, so the knowledge of God draws the purified mind through love.

¶ 33. A pure mind is freed from ignorance and illumined by divine light.

¶ 34. A pure soul, released from passions, is gladdened continually by divine love.

¶ 35. Disturbance—such as agitation from praise or blame—is an unnatural motion of the soul.

¶ 36. Peace of soul is the stillness in which the heart is not easily moved to sin.

¶ 37. Whoever has tasted the fruit of charity does not abandon it even under countless afflictions—witness Stephen and above all the Savior, who prayed for His executioners.

¶ 38. Charity is recognized by gentleness, patience, and kindness; whoever is consumed by anger has fallen away from it, and from God, who is Love.

¶ 39. Do not say, “Faith in Christ alone is enough,” for even demons believe. Without charity manifested through deeds, faith is barren.

¶ 40. The work of charity is the steady inclination of the soul toward doing good, joined with patience and the right use of things.

¶ 41. Whoever loves God neither causes sorrow nor is disturbed by earthly matters. His only sorrow is a healing one, as Paul sorrowed for the Corinthians for their spiritual benefit.

¶ 42. Whoever loves God adopts an angelic way of life—fasting, watchfulness, prayer, and the remembrance of good concerning all.

¶ 43. If people labor to obtain what they desire, how much more must we labor to attain God, who is the Good beyond all goods.

¶ 44. Do not stain the body with shameful acts or pollute the soul with evil thoughts, that the peace of God may rest upon you with charity.

¶ 45. Afflict the body with fasting and vigil; devote yourself to psalmody and prayer; then chastity will blossom, bringing holiness and love.

¶ 46. The one illumined by divine knowledge through charity is never swept away by vainglory. But the one who has not attained such

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knowledge is easily deceived by it. Let all actions be done for God, and vainglory will wither.

¶ 47. The one who lacks divine knowledge exalts himself because of outward virtues; but the one who possesses such knowledge cries with Abraham, "I am dust and ashes."

¶ 48. Whoever fears the Lord remains humble and, remembering past sins and divine deliverances, holds fast to charity through gratitude.

¶ 49. Do not allow thoughts of desire or anger to stain the soul, lest prayer lose its purity.

¶ 50. The mind loses confidence in God when it becomes accustomed to impure thoughts.

¶ 51. The foolish person, enslaved to passions, withdraws from brethren when angered yet returns quickly when stirred by desire. The wise, however, dispel anger and restrain desire.

¶ 52. When temptations arise, do not flee your place, but patiently endure the inner storm. Through endurance you gain hope. If you flee, you reveal instability.

¶ 53. If you wish to preserve love for God, do not sleep with anger in your heart against a brother; reconcile quickly, and offer pure prayer as your gift to Christ.

¶ 54. If all gifts are worthless without love, how urgently must we labor to acquire it.

¶ 55. Since charity does no harm to a neighbor, whoever envies or slanders a brother is alien to love and condemned.

¶ 56. Since love fulfills the law, whoever hates a brother or rejoices in his misfortune violates the law and risks eternal punishment.

¶ 57. Whoever judges a brother judges the law of Christ, which is love, and thus falls from it.

¶ 58. Do not listen to slander nor speak it, lest you fall from charity and forfeit eternal life.

¶ 59. Do not accept accusations against your spiritual father, nor honor those who dishonor him, lest God judge you severely.

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¶ 60. Silence the slanderer so as not to incur double guilt—both by tolerating slander and by failing to restrain the one who speaks it.

¶ 61. The Lord commands: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who slander you—so that the soul may be freed from anger and may receive perfect charity.

¶ 62. “Do not resist the evil one,” the Lord says. Yielding to insult and injustice frees the heart from anger and instructs both oneself and the aggressor in the ways of love.

¶ 63. Whenever we cling to things, we harbor lustful thoughts about them. Whoever conquers such thoughts scorns the things themselves, for thoughts of remembered things can wage fiercer war than the things present.

¶ 64. Attractions arise either from the body or from the soul; both are healed by charity and self-control.

¶ 65. Attractions belong to both the irascible and desiring parts of the soul, stirred by the senses when charity and self-control are absent.

¶ 66. Movements of the irascible part are harder to subdue than those of desire; therefore the Lord gave the supreme remedy of love.

¶ 67. Sloth, which assaults the whole soul with one blow, is more grievous than all other passions. Hence the Lord said, “By your patience, possess your souls.”

¶ 68. Do not strike a brother, lest you cause him to withdraw in grief and trouble your conscience in prayer.

¶ 69. Do not accept suspicions against a brother, for such thoughts estrange the soul from peace and charity.

¶ 70. Perfect love is not yet attained by the one who changes disposition toward others according to their behavior; charity sees only human nature, loving all equally.

¶ 71. Perfect love distinguishes between persons without losing equality of love: honoring the virtuous, bearing the wicked with patience, and suffering for their salvation—just as Christ died for all.

¶ 72. Perfect love belongs only to the one who has despised honor and dishonor, wealth and poverty, pleasure and pain, even life and death.

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¶ 73. Hear those perfected in love: nothing—neither death nor life nor any creature—can separate them from the love of Christ.

¶ 74. Hear also their love for neighbor: Paul, wishing himself cut off from Christ for the sake of Israel. Moses and the saints spoke likewise.

¶ 75. Whoever delights in glory and pleasure cannot escape greed, or the anger born from it, and thus cannot reach perfect love.

¶ 76. Humility cleanses the soul, bodily discipline cleanses the flesh. David prayed, “Look upon my humility and my labor, and forgive all my sins.”

¶ 77. Through commandments the Lord frees us from passions; through divine teachings He grants illumination.

¶ 78. Teachings concern God, visible things, invisible things, and the workings of providence and judgment.

¶ 79. Almsgiving heals anger; fasting restrains desire; prayer purifies the mind. God ordained commandments according to the powers of the soul.

¶ 80. “Learn from Me,” Christ says, “for I am meek and humble.” Meekness pacifies anger, humility frees the mind from pride.

¶ 81. Fear of God is twofold: one arises from dread of punishment, leading to self-restraint and hope; the other is united to love, instilling reverence and guarding the soul from presumption.

¶ 82. Perfect love casts out the first fear but preserves the second, which abides forever.

¶ 83. “Put to death what is earthly”: the Apostle lists the layers of sinful motion—from act to consent to passion to suggestion to the material that nourishes it. All must be slain.

¶ 84. Thoughts arise from memory; if entertained, they stir passion; if not expelled, they lead to consent; consent leads to sin. Thus Paul teaches us to uproot both cause and effect.

¶ 85. As a bird tied by the foot is dragged to earth when it tries to fly, so the mind enslaved to passions is pulled down when it seeks heavenly knowledge.

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¶ 86. When freed from passions, the mind moves unhindered toward contemplation of the Trinity.

¶ 87. A pure mind contemplates spiritual things; a mind tainted by sloth is drawn down to base thoughts in human matters.

¶ 88. If worldly thoughts do not trouble you during prayer, know that you have not yet reached true stillness, for temptation has not yet tested you.

¶ 89. When the mind begins to perceive its own healing, it sees dreams clearly and without agitation.

¶ 90. Just as visible beauty draws the eye, so invisible realities draw the purified mind.

¶ 91. It is great not to be drawn by pleasure; it is greater not to be troubled even by its thoughts, for such thoughts wage fiercer war than deeds.

¶ 92. Whoever has virtue and knowledge acts and speaks rightly, for virtue arises from the right use of things.

¶ 93. A sign of deep tranquility is the arising of simple, passionless thoughts both waking and sleeping.

¶ 94. Through the commandments the soul casts off passions; through contemplation of creation it casts off their images; through knowledge of invisible things it transcends visible things; and through holy knowledge it enters the mystery of the Trinity.

¶ 95. As the sun illumines the world, so the Sun of Righteousness rising in a pure mind reveals Himself and the reasons of all things.

¶ 96. We know God not in His essence but through His works and providence, which mirror His goodness, wisdom, and power.

¶ 97. A pure mind dwells either on simple human notions, or on natural contemplation of visible and invisible things, or on the radiance of the Trinity.

¶ 98. When contemplating visible things, the mind seeks their principles, their meaning, or their Creator.

¶ 99. When contemplating invisible things, it seeks their nature, their origin, and the providence that governs them—especially spirits.

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¶ 100. When the mind reaches toward God, it burns with longing to know His essence yet cannot comprehend Him. It finds rest only by contemplating what surrounds Him—His eternity, infinity, goodness, wisdom, and power. To know that He is incomprehensible is itself true knowledge, as Gregory and Dionysius teach.

### SECOND 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. The one who loves God with his whole heart prays with an undistracted mind. For just as true love draws the soul entirely to God, so prayer that is free from wandering thoughts reveals a heart wholly given to Him. Whoever's mind clings to earthly things cannot pray without distraction, and thus does not yet love God as he claims.

¶ 2. The mind that lingers on what is perceived by the senses soon develops an attachment to it—whether desire, grief, anger, or rivalry. Unless the person learns to disdain such things, the mind cannot be freed from these passions.

¶ 3. Passions that seize the mind bind it to earthly things, turning it away from God with violent longing. But divine love, once it takes hold of the soul, loosens these bonds and enables one not only to despise all sensory things but even to live above the measure of time itself.

¶ 4. The commandments simplify the soul's thoughts; reading and contemplation free the mind from earthly illusions; prayer becomes undistracted when nothing within the soul wanders toward lesser things.

¶ 5. Active virtue alone does not fully liberate the soul from passions, so that the mind may be settled and undistracted in prayer. It must be joined to spiritual contemplation. For action frees the soul from intemperance and hatred, but contemplation frees it from forgetfulness and ignorance. When both are present, prayer becomes pure and unhindered.

¶ 6. Pure prayer has two highest states: one belonging to those devoted to active virtue, the other to those given to contemplation. The first arises from fear of God and good hope; the second from divine love and perfect purity. In the first, the mind stands collected, free from worldly



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thoughts, praying as before God who is truly present. In the second, the soul, seized by the impulse of prayer, is drawn into infinite light and perceives nothing but God alone.

¶ 7. Whatever we love, we embrace; and whatever obstructs that love, we despise. Thus, the one who loves God guards prayer from all distractions and passions, lest anything hinder his ascent toward Him.

¶ 8. Whoever uproots the primal passion of sensual self-love by God's help easily conquers lesser passions—anger, sorrow, resentment, and others. But whoever is defeated by that first passion is necessarily wounded by all the rest. Sensuality is the irrational attachment to bodily pleasure.

¶ 9. People love one another for five reasons: (1) for God's sake, as the virtuous love all; (2) by natural affection, as parents love children; (3) for vainglory, loving those who flatter; (4) for greed, loving those who enrich them; (5) for lust, loving those who gratify desire. The first is holy, the second natural, the rest corrupt.

¶ 10. If you love some passionately, others moderately, some indifferently, and some not at all—or even hate others—then know you are far from perfect charity, which loves all equally.

¶ 11. “Turn away from evil and do good.” Resist your passions so that they weaken, and labor to acquire virtues so that they remain firm. Vigilance is needed both to uproot vice and to preserve virtue.

¶ 12. By divine permission, tempters may stir desire, agitate anger, darken reason, afflict the body, or take away possessions.

¶ 13. Demons tempt us either directly or through human beings. They tempt us directly when we are alone, as they did the Lord in the wilderness; they tempt us through others when they stir them against us, as with the Pharisees. In both forms we must imitate the Lord and conquer them.

¶ 14. When the soul grows in love for God, demons attack it with blasphemous thoughts, so vile that no human mind could invent them. They seek to drive the soul to despair by making it think it is the source of such thoughts. But their schemes fail, for they provoke the soul into deeper vigilance and stronger love.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 15. When the mind considers visible things, it perceives them naturally. Neither the mind nor its mode of knowing nor the senses nor created things are evil. Evil lies in the irrational desire that arises within, which must be restrained by vigilance and right use of thoughts.

¶ 16. Passion is a movement of the soul contrary to nature—either irrational love or unjust hatred toward something. It may arise from pleasure (food, sex, wealth, glory, etc.) or from aversion.

¶ 17. Vice is a false judgment of the mind that misuses things. For example: the natural purpose of marriage is the begetting of children; whoever regards union solely for pleasure has already fallen into error.

¶ 18. When demons surround your mind with thoughts of fornication, cry out to God with tears, saying, “Those who pursue me have encircled me; deliver me from them, O God of my salvation.”

¶ 19. The demon of fornication is fierce, attacking especially those who struggle for purity. Improper eating and idle conversations strengthen him. But fasting, labor, vigilance, solitude, and prayer subdue him.

¶ 20. Demons seek to defile the soul through evil thoughts; but when they meet a mind devoted to contemplation, they flee in shame.

¶ 21. The deacon signifies one who anoints the soul for spiritual struggle; the priest represents illumination by true knowledge; the bishop symbolizes the completion of sanctification through the knowledge of the Trinity.

¶ 22. As passions diminish, demons grow weak; when passions are extinguished, demons perish, having no place to dwell.

¶ 23. Some abstain from vice from fear of men, others from vainglory, others for the sake of self-control; some from fear of divine judgment.

¶ 24. All the Lord’s words belong to four categories: commandments, doctrines, warnings, and promises. The hardships of spiritual life—fasting, vigil, humility, labor, suffering—are borne for the sake of these divine words.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 25. The reward of self-control is a peaceful mind; the fruit of faith is knowledge. Peace gives birth to discernment; knowledge gives rise to divine love.

¶ 26. Right action leads to prudence; contemplation leads to knowledge; the grace of theology comes after both, granting understanding of divine mysteries.

¶ 27. Do not seek to know God's essence—it is beyond all beings. Instead contemplate His eternity, infinity, goodness, wisdom, and power by which all things exist.

¶ 28. Great is the one who unites knowledge with action: action subdues passions, knowledge lifts the mind to God.

¶ 29. When the Lord says, "I and the Father are one," He speaks of unity of essence. When He says, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me," He speaks of inseparable union. To divide the Persons or confuse them is equally erroneous.

¶ 30. The one perfected in love does not regard distinctions among people—slave or free, male or female, believer or unbeliever—but sees one human nature and loves all equally.

¶ 31. Demons exploit our passions, first through thoughts, then through actions. After sin they abandon the soul in desolation. The "abomination of desolation" in the holy place refers mystically to this desecration of the soul.

¶ 32. Three things draw us toward virtue: natural seeds, sacred virtues, and good will. Natural seeds incline us to treat others as we wish to be treated; virtues strengthen our efforts; good will helps us choose the good.

¶ 33. Three things move us toward evil: allurements of passion, demons, and evil will. Allurements pull us contrary to reason; demons attack when we are negligent; evil will knowingly chooses wickedness.

¶ 34. The rewards of virtue are peace of mind and knowledge; the result of vice is punishment. Whoever seeks virtue for human praise will receive nothing.

¶ 35. Many naturally good works—fasting, prayer, almsgiving—lose their goodness when done for vainglory.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 36. God judges not the act itself but the intention with which it is done.

¶ 37. When Scripture says God repays each according to his works, it refers not to outward deeds alone but to deeds done with right intention.

¶ 38. Pride tempts a monk either to attribute virtue to his own efforts instead of to God, or to despise others as incapable of virtue. Both lead to denial of God's grace.

¶ 39. Whoever knows human weakness relies on God, never despises others, and recognizes that God alone delivers from passions.

¶ 40. When passions lie dormant or demons withdraw for a time, pride readily arises.

¶ 41. Almost every sin arises from pleasure, and is healed by voluntary or involuntary suffering.

¶ 42. When temptation comes, do not blame the instrument but contemplate the reason why God permitted it.

¶ 43. Do not spare your body when striving against passions; bodily labor humbles pride.

¶ 44. Temptations come as pleasures, as sorrows, or as bodily pains. God heals according to the soul's need.

¶ 45. Some temptations cleanse past sins; others correct present sins; others prevent future sins; others test the righteous.

¶ 46. The wise endure afflictions with gratitude, attributing them to their own sins; the foolish blame God or men.

¶ 47. Some things restrain passions; others extinguish them. Fasting restrains desire; solitude and prayer extinguish it. Forgetting injuries restrains anger; charity extinguishes it.

¶ 48. The soul that turns wholly to God pours its desire into divine love, and transforms its anger into spiritual zeal.

¶ 49. Whoever neither envies nor grows angry nor remembers injury already has love for those who harm him; but to return good for evil is the work of perfect love.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 50. One who does not love does not necessarily hate; he may stand in a middle state. Affection arises from praiseworthy, neutral, or blameworthy causes, as previously taught.

¶ 51. If your mind willingly dwells on earthly things, you love them more than God; for where the treasure is, there the heart dwells.

¶ 52. A soul united to God through prayer and love becomes gentle and luminous; estranged from Him, it becomes either brutish through pleasure or beastlike through anger.

¶ 53. Scripture calls material attachments “the world.” To those enslaved to them it says: do not love the world nor the things in it.

¶ 54. A monk is one who has withdrawn his mind from earthly things and who lives in prayer, psalmody, chastity, and love.

¶ 55. The shepherd of beasts represents active virtue; the shepherd of sheep represents contemplation. The Egyptians—symbolizing demonic powers—hate contemplative shepherds.

¶ 56. A depraved mind follows bodily impulses; a virtuous one restrains harmful desires and directs them toward what is good.

¶ 57. Some virtues belong to the body (fasting, labor), others to the soul (love, patience). Bodily weakness excuses bodily virtues, but nothing excuses neglect of spiritual virtues.

¶ 58. Whoever loves God despises earthly pleasure and endures labor for Christ, as the saints did.

¶ 59. Self-love—the blind attachment to the body—is the root of gluttony, avarice, and vainglory, from which all vices arise.

¶ 60. This self-love deceives monks into softening the body under the pretense of moderation, leading gradually to pleasure.

¶ 61. The highest state of prayer occurs when the mind transcends body and matter and stands before God untouched by any image.

¶ 62. As the body withdraws from worldly affairs in death, so the mind withdraws from earthly thoughts in pure prayer.

¶ 63. Let no monk think he may be saved while devoted to pleasure or vainglory.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 64. Bodily sins arise from misuse of things; mental sins arise from misuse of thoughts. Both require discipline proportionate to their nature.

¶ 65. Pleasure and vainglory are always followed by sorrow, either now or in the age to come.

¶ 66. No one guilty of sin escapes judgment unless he voluntarily accepts labor or bears suffering with humility.

¶ 67. God permits demonic attacks for five reasons: to teach discernment, to strengthen virtue, to produce humility, to instill hatred of sin, and to preserve the soul from forgetfulness of its weakness.

¶ 68. The envious dream of feasts; the lustful dream of women; the vain dream of honors; the greedy of wealth. These images weigh down the mind whether waking or asleep.

¶ 69. When desire burns, dreams take sensual form; when anger burns, they become terrifying. Evil conversations also corrupt dreams; angels purify them.

¶ 70. Habitual indulgence deepens lust; repeated anger makes the soul cowardly. Fasting cures lust; gentleness cures anger.

¶ 71. Demons fight externally through events and internally through thoughts, attacking each person according to his state.

¶ 72. It is easier to sin in thought than in deed; likewise, inner warfare is more severe than outward.

¶ 73. External things exist outside the mind; their thoughts exist within. The right or wrong use of external things follows the judgment of the mind.

¶ 74. Thoughts arise from three sources: the senses, temperament, and memory. Each can stir passion unless governed by self-control.

¶ 75. God has given some things to the soul, some to the body, and some around the body; how we use them determines virtue or vice.

¶ 76. Events affecting soul, body, or external things are not good or evil in themselves; only their use becomes good or evil.

¶ 77. Knowledge is good, but its misuse becomes harmful. Health and wealth also benefit or harm according to how they are used.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 78. Misuse of thoughts leads to misuse of things; unless the soul first sins inwardly, it will not sin outwardly.

¶ 79. Vice mirrors the earthly image—foolishness, sloth, intemperance, injustice. Virtue reflects the heavenly image—prudence, courage, temperance, justice.

¶ 80. If you seek the path of life, seek Christ, the Way. Few find Him because few seek with perseverance.

¶ 81. Five things restrain sin: human fear, fear of judgment, hope of reward, love of God, and the sting of conscience.

¶ 82. Some say evil would not exist without a force drawing the soul toward it. But evil arises from neglect of the soul's natural powers. Drive away negligence and you expel vice.

¶ 83. It is natural for reason within us to be subject to God and to rule the irrational part. If this harmony holds, evil will not arise.

¶ 84. Thoughts are simple or composite. Composite thoughts unite memory with passion; separating passion from thought restores simplicity.

¶ 85. Some say demons stir lust in dreams by touching the body or by presenting images. Yet they cannot arouse passion where love and self-control dwell.

¶ 86. Some commandments must be kept both outwardly and inwardly; others only inwardly, such as certain figures of the old law.

¶ 87. There are three general moral states among monks: not sinning in deed; not entertaining passionate thoughts; beholding persons and circumstances without disturbance.

¶ 88. The truly poor person has renounced all possessions and entrusted even bodily needs to God.

¶ 89. Some possess things without affection and rejoice when deprived of them; others cling to possessions and grieve when they lose them. Loss exposes the soul's true state.

¶ 90. Those seeking pure prayer are attacked with distracting thoughts; those seeking knowledge are tempted with passions; those engaged in active virtue are pushed toward outward sin. Every state has its warfare.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 91. God tests the soul through pleasant things, sorrowful things, and bodily afflictions. The Lord teaches detachment in all.

¶ 92. The body's temperament is altered by angels, demons, air, and diet. These changes present the soul with corresponding thoughts.

¶ 93. True death is separation from God; sin is the sting of this death. Christ, who is Life, destroyed this death through His own.

¶ 94. We write either to remember, to benefit others, or both; or from necessity, or to harm, or from vainglory.

¶ 95. Virtue is the soul's pasture; knowledge is its water of refreshment.

¶ 96. Human life is the valley of the shadow of death; yet the one who walks with God fears no evil.

¶ 97. Pure perception sees rightly; disciplined speech examines what is seen. But the undisciplined mind despises instruction.

¶ 98. One is with God who knows the Trinity and has purified the soul's passions.

¶ 99. The rod signifies judgment; the staff signifies providence. The one who knows these may say, "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

¶ 100. When the mind is stripped of passions and illumined by contemplation, then it dwells with God and prays as it ought.

## THIRD 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. When the soul employs right reason in its thoughts, actions, and judgments, it brings forth temperance, chastity, charity, and true knowledge. But when it casts off reason, it generates intemperance, hatred, and ignorance.

¶ 2. "You have prepared a table before me." The table signifies virtue accomplished through action, which Christ sets before us even in the presence of those who oppose and trouble us. The oil that fattens the mind is the luminous contemplation of created things. The cup of God is the knowledge of Him—His wisdom and His divine understanding. His mercy refers to His own Word, God Himself, who, taking on our nature, pursued



## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

humanity unceasingly, gathering to Himself all who were to be saved, as He did with Paul. The house is the Kingdom into which all the saints enter, and the “length of days” is life everlasting.

¶ 3. Vices arise from the misuse of the soul’s powers—whether from the rational faculty, or the desiring and irascible parts. Misuse of reason becomes ignorance and folly; misuse of anger and desire becomes hatred and lack of self-restraint. But the right use of these powers brings forth prudence and knowledge, love and temperance. Thus nothing created by God is evil in itself.

¶ 4. Food is not evil, but gluttony is; procreation is not evil, but fornication is; wealth is not evil, but avarice is; honor is not evil, but vainglory is. Therefore, nothing created by God is evil—only its misuse, born from the soul’s negligence in cultivating its natural order.

¶ 5. Blessed Dionysius teaches that the evil in demons is irrational anger, reckless lust, and impulsive thinking. But these are privations—failures of reason, clarity, and attentive judgment. Privation follows a fall from a prior good. Since demons once possessed reason, spiritual clarity, and careful discernment, they were not evil by nature; rather, by misusing their natural powers they became what they now are.

¶ 6. Some passions give rise to lust, others to hatred, and some stir both simultaneously.

¶ 7. Gluttony and excessive delight in food kindle lust; avarice and vainglory produce hostility toward one’s neighbor. Yet behind them all stands self-love—*φιλαυτία*—the primal root of both lust and hatred.

¶ 8. *Φιλαυτία*, self-love, is a blind and irrational attachment to one’s own body. Opposed to it stand charity and self-control. Wherever this self-love reigns, all the passions inevitably flourish alongside it.

¶ 9. The Apostle says that no one hates his own flesh; rather, he disciplines it, giving it only what is necessary for life—food and clothing—treating it as a servant of the divine, not as a master demanding indulgence.

¶ 10. Whoever loves another strives to serve and please them. Thus, whoever loves God seeks with diligence to do His will; but whoever loves the flesh seeks eagerly to gratify its desires.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 11. What pleases God is charity, chastity, temperance, contemplation, and prayer. What pleases the flesh is gluttony, lack of restraint, and lust, together with whatever increases these. “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”; but, “those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

¶ 12. The soul that turns wholly toward God keeps the body in the place of a servant, granting it nothing beyond necessity. But the soul enslaved to fleshly passions is constantly occupied with the body’s cravings and anxieties.

¶ 13. If you desire to subdue your thoughts and govern your passions easily, you must attack each vice with the remedy fit for it. Against fornication—fasting, vigil, labor, and solitude. Against anger and sadness—contempt of glory and disgrace, and indifference toward earthly matters. Against resentment—earnest prayer for the one who has wronged you, which frees the heart from its bitterness.

¶ 14. Do not compare yourself with those weaker than you; instead strive to fulfill the commandment of love. Comparing yourself with the weak leads to vanity; pursuing love leads to humility.

¶ 15. If you truly keep the commandment to love your neighbor, why does bitterness arise within you toward him? Is it not because you esteem temporal things too highly, and therefore become hostile toward those who seem to threaten them?

¶ 16. People seek gold not primarily for necessity, but because it feeds their lusts and pleasures.

¶ 17. People love money for three reasons: pleasure, vainglory, and distrust. The last—distrust—is the most destructive.

¶ 18. The pleasure-lover seeks money to indulge his appetites; the vainglorious person seeks it to appear glorious; the distrustful hoards it out of fear of hunger, age, illness, exile—placing more hope in possessions than in God, who cares even for the smallest creatures.

¶ 19. Four kinds of people seek money: the three just described, and the steward who gathers it only to distribute it justly. Only the steward uses it rightly.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 20. Evil thoughts strike the soul in three ways: they provoke desire, agitate anger, or obscure reason. These darken spiritual vision and scatter prayer. Thus the monk—especially one living in solitude—must examine his thoughts carefully, discern their causes, and uproot them. Lustful thoughts arise from repeated recollection—gluttony, immoderation, and foolish conversations nourish them. Anger arises from remembering injuries—its cause is love of pleasure, vainglory, and attachment to worldly goods. The cure for both is to despise these things for the sake of God.

¶ 21. God knows Himself through His own essence, and knows created things through His wisdom. The holy powers also know God and His creation, but not in the same manner: they know God through participation, and creation through discerning the principles within it.

¶ 22. God knows Himself immediately by His essence and knows creation in the very wisdom through which He made all things. The holy powers know God by participation in Him—though He surpasses all participation—and they know creation by contemplating the meanings placed within it.

¶ 23. Created things exist outside the mind, but are contemplated within it. God alone grants existence, sustains it, and enables all things to exist well and joyfully.

¶ 24. Rational beings who participate in God's goodness and wisdom know Him insofar as He permits Himself to be known—good, blessed, and granting eternal being through grace. They know creation by discerning the wisdom hidden in its design.

¶ 25. Through His perfect goodness, God bestowed four divine attributes to preserve all beings: existence, perpetual existence, goodness, and wisdom. Existence and eternal existence belong to their essence; goodness and wisdom pertain to their will and capacity for choice, so that creatures might become, by grace, what God is by nature. All rational beings bear His image, but only the good and wise bear His likeness.

¶ 26. All rational beings fall into two orders: angelic and human. The angelic divide into holy powers and fallen demons; humanity divides into the pious and the impious.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 27. God—who is existence, goodness, and wisdom itself, surpassing all—has no opposite. Created beings, however, have opposites: non-existence opposes their existence; vice and ignorance oppose their capacity for goodness and wisdom. Whether beings exist depends on God; whether they share in goodness depends on their choice.

¶ 28. Some Greeks claim that the substance of created things is eternal and shares only qualities from God. But we confess that only the divine essence is free from opposition, for it is eternal and infinite. Created substance is opposed by non-being and exists only by God's will.

¶ 29. Evil is the privation of good; ignorance is the privation of knowledge; non-being is the privation of being. These privations do not concern God, who has no opposite, but created beings, who exist only by participation in Him.

¶ 30. Some creatures are rational and capable of virtue or vice; others are composed of matter and form, or are immaterial but joined to bodies.

¶ 31. A body is naturally motionless; it is moved either by a rational soul, an irrational soul, or by mere vegetative life.

¶ 32. The soul has three powers: nourishment, desire, and reason. Plants possess the first; animals the first two; humans possess all three. The natural powers pass away, but reason is immortal.

¶ 33. Holy powers illuminate one another—and us—either by sharing virtue or imparting knowledge. Virtue makes them resemble divine goodness and raises others toward God; knowledge grants deeper insight into God, creation, providence, and judgment.

¶ 34. Impurity of mind consists in false knowledge, ignorance of universal truths, thoughts entangled in vice, and consent to sin.

¶ 35. Impurity of soul is failure to act according to nature. From this arise shameful thoughts. The soul acts naturally when anger and desire remain free from passion in all circumstances.

¶ 36. Impurity of body is sin committed through outward action.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 37. The one not enticed by worldly things loves quiet; the one unattached to anything loves all people; the one who contemplates divine things is not scandalized by anything—either in others or in thoughts.

¶ 38. It is a great thing to be free from desire for material things; far greater not even to be troubled by the thoughts of them.

¶ 39. Charity and self-control preserve the soul in peace regarding both material things and the thoughts connected to them.

¶ 40. A devout soul does not battle created things, nor even the thoughts about them, but the passions hidden behind them.

¶ 41. The whole power of spiritual warfare lies in separating thoughts from passions and desires; without this separation the mind cannot behold things purely.

¶ 42. A thing, a concept, and a passion are distinct: a person, wealth, or gold is the “thing”; the memory of them is the “concept”; irrational desire or hatred is the “passion.” We wage war not against things but against passions.

¶ 43. A sinful thought is a fusion of concept and passion. When passion is removed by charity and self-control, the thought becomes simple and harmless.

¶ 44. Virtue frees the mind from passions; contemplation frees it from concepts; pure prayer unites it directly to God.

¶ 45. Virtues prepare the soul for knowledge of creation; knowledge prepares the soul for God, who transcends knowledge and knowing.

¶ 46. God created nothing out of need—for He lacks nothing—but so that His creatures might share in His goodness. He rejoices in their joy and is satisfied beyond measure by their unending delight.

¶ 47. Many appear poor in spirit, but only regarding worldly things; many seem to mourn, but only for temporal losses; many are meek, but only toward their passions. Many hunger and thirst, but for injustice; many appear merciful, but only toward bodily concerns; many seem pure in heart, but only for empty glory. Only those who do and suffer such things for Christ are truly blessed.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 48. As always, the end of all our works must be God. If we seek human praise, we lose the fruit of our labors.

¶ 49. During prayer, cast out all thoughts of human affairs and created things, lest the mind be pulled down from contemplating the One who surpasses all things.

¶ 50. If we truly love God, this love itself drives away corrupt passions, leading us to despise the world and devote ourselves entirely to God—through chastity, charity, prayer, psalmody, and constant remembrance of Him.

¶ 51. When the soul has long labored in serving God and has healed its passions, random thoughts no longer have power; through careful examination of their causes the soul gains true discernment.

¶ 52. If your mind considers things in a holy and just way, your body remains pure. But if your mind grows accustomed to sinful thoughts, the body soon imitates the mind's corruption.

¶ 53. Just as the body sins through outward acts, so the mind sins inwardly by unclean thoughts, mixing itself with the images it forms—toward women, enemies, or any passion.

¶ 54. Consider the wonder: God the Father judges no one, entrusting all judgment to the Son—yet the Son commands us not to judge. Nonetheless, people neglecting their own sins usurp His judgment and judge their brothers. Heaven itself trembles at such boldness.

¶ 55. Whoever scrutinizes the sins of others or judges them by suspicion has not begun repentance. He ignores his own sins—pressing upon him like lead—and pursues shadows in others.

¶ 56. As often said, self-love is the root of all passionate thoughts—gluttony, avarice, vainglory— and from these arise fornication, greed, pride, anger, sadness, resentment, envy, gossip, and sloth. These bind the soul to the earth though by nature it is lighter than fire.

¶ 57. Self-love is the beginning of all vice; pride is its end. Whoever destroys self-love destroys with it all the passions it spawns.

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 58. As parents take delight in their children, so the mind delights in its own words. The foolish exalt their own thoughts as wise; the wise examine their words carefully and submit them to others more experienced.

¶ 59. When you conquer shameful passions like gluttony, lust, or anger, vainglory immediately attacks; and when vainglory is overcome, pride follows.

¶ 60. While passions dominate, vainglory remains distant; once they are subdued, it rises and assaults the soul openly.

¶ 61. Vainglory produces pride, sometimes through flattery of the mind, sometimes through arrogant behavior.

¶ 62. Vainglory is defeated by hidden virtue; pride is defeated by attributing every good to God alone.

¶ 63. Whoever has tasted the knowledge of God despises all carnal pleasures, recognizing them as shadows before the truth.

¶ 64. Desire is drawn toward earthly things—food, sex, glory, wealth—unless something greater captures it. The knowledge of God surpasses all earthly delights and alone persuades the soul to despise them completely.

¶ 65. People renounce pleasures out of fear, hope, knowledge, or love of God.

¶ 66. Knowledge of divine things without affection remains barren; many have attained knowledge but, lacking vigilance and love, later fell again into passions.

¶ 67. As bare knowledge of earthly matters does not make one despise spiritual things, neither does bare knowledge of divine things make one despise earthly matters without the fire of love.

¶ 68. Some have expelled passions and simplified their soul's movements, yet have not turned toward divine love. They abstain from evil out of fear, not yet out of longing for God.

¶ 69. Since we walk by faith and know in mirrors and enigmas, we must persevere in contemplation, forming a stable habit of divine vision.

## BOOK SIX

¶ 70. If we cut off passions only partially and begin contemplation but fail to persevere in it, we quickly sink back into earthly desires, gaining only barren knowledge and pride.

¶ 71. A disordered love binds the soul to earthly things; a blessed love binds it to divine things. The mind expands according to what it dwells in—earthly or heavenly.

¶ 72. God made the visible and invisible worlds, the soul and the body. If the visible world is already so beautiful, how much more the invisible? And how much more the Creator of both? Yet the soul, ignorant of its own dignity, clings to the flesh because it has not yet tasted spiritual sweetness. But through restraint and meditation it gradually rises to divine things and pours all its love into God.

¶ 73. One may speak of a brother's sin without malice, either to correct him or help another. But whoever speaks with reproach or slander will be abandoned by God and soon fall into the same sin.

¶ 74. People commit the same sin for many reasons: some from habit, others from sudden weakness. The habitual sinner sins first in thought and keeps affection for the sin even after performing it.

¶ 75. Whoever practices virtue for vainglory seeks knowledge for the same reason. Such a one does not grieve that others are not helped but that he himself is despised.

¶ 76. Avarice is revealed when someone rejoices in receiving but grieves when giving. Such a person is unfit to manage material things.

¶ 77. People endure evils for various reasons: love of God, hope of reward, fear of punishment, fear of men, natural temperament, or for pleasure, gain, or vainglory—or because necessity forces them.

¶ 78. It is one thing to be without passionate thoughts because the objects are absent, and another to be free of passions themselves. Passions reveal themselves when the objects appear.

¶ 79. A true friend shares another's trials as his own, bearing them with an unshaken heart.

¶ 80. Do not neglect your conscience; it gives divine counsel, frees the soul from hidden impurities, and grants boldness before God.



## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 81. If you desire discernment and humility, remember constantly how much you do not know. Awareness of your ignorance restrains arrogance and opens the mind to greater knowledge.

¶ 82. Whoever seeks salvation accepts the healing remedies God sends—sufferings, trials, and afflictions. Whoever rejects them does not understand their purpose.

¶ 83. Vainglory and avarice give birth to one another. The vainglorious seek wealth; the avaricious seek glory. The monk without wealth boasts of his poverty; the monk with wealth hides it in shame.

¶ 84. The monk's vainglory is self-exaltation under the guise of virtue. Pride is exalting oneself over others and attributing one's achievements to oneself rather than to God. The worldly show this through boasting over beauty, wealth, power, or intelligence.

¶ 85. The worldly virtues—wealth, strength, reputation—are ruinous for monks; monastic virtues—poverty, weakness, disgrace—are ruinous for the worldly.

¶ 86. Food is given for nourishment and for healing. To use it for pleasure alone is misuse and thus sin.

¶ 87. True humility is continuous prayer with tears and labor. It prevents trust in one's own virtue, guards the soul from pride, and heals its deepest passions.

¶ 88. It is one thing to resist simple thoughts so they do not kindle desire; it is another to resist passionate thoughts so they do not draw the soul into consent. Neither must be allowed to linger.

¶ 89. A sorrowful expression is the mirror of a soul harboring resentment. The end of remembering injuries is death, for it is entirely unrighteous.

¶ 90. If you resent someone, pray earnestly for them; prayer dissolves the passion by separating sorrow from memory. If someone hates you because of your fault, show humility and kindness, and you will free him from his burden.

¶ 91. The sorrow of the envious is hard to heal, for your good appears to them as their harm. If your good benefits many, you must not hide

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it to appease one man's envy; rather help him as far as possible without abandoning virtue.

¶ 92. The mind stands between an angel urging virtue and a demon urging vice. Free will chooses which voice to follow.

¶ 93. Virtue, natural inclination, and good will draw us toward the good; passions, vice, demons, and evil will draw us toward sin.

¶ 94. The pure mind is taught sometimes directly by God, sometimes by the virtues, and sometimes through contemplation of the nature of things.

¶ 95. Even the advanced cannot always remain unmoved; sometimes demonic assaults cloud prayer. Yet vigilance restores clarity.

¶ 96. Not every grief stirs anger; some things cause only sadness—losses, death, accidents. But when both sorrow and anger arise, the heart is still unpurified.

¶ 97. The soul shapes itself according to what it contemplates. When it beholds spiritual things, it assumes their quality; when it contemplates God, it becomes formless, luminous, and unified, for it approaches Him who is beyond all form.

¶ 98. The soul is in danger when its passionate part inclines more toward vice than toward God.

¶ 99. A mind is perfect when, through true faith, it knows the One who surpasses all knowledge and contemplates all His works as far as is granted—perceiving providence and judgment in all things.

¶ 100. Time unfolds in three sacred parts—past, present, and future. Faith extends its luminous reach to all three; hope belongs only to one, dwelling ever in the future; charity belongs both to this present age and to the endless ages yet to come, remaining forever united to Him who is infinite and eternal. Thus speaks the apostle of Christ in his first letter to the Corinthians: "The greatest of these is charity."

## FOURTH 100 CHAPTERS

## CHAPTERS ON CHARITY

¶ 1. First, the mind is seized with wonder when it beholds the divine infinity reflected in all things—a boundless and incomprehensible sea, sought by many names yet surpassing every name. Then it stands in awe before the mystery by which God, from nothing, summoned the nature of all beings into existence. Just as His greatness has no end, so the creativity of His wisdom is without measure.

¶ 2. How could one fail to marvel at that immeasurable sea of goodness that exceeds all understanding? Or how could one not be lifted beyond oneself when pondering how rational and intelligent beings came to be, and how the very elements of the world emerged when no matter previously existed? What power was it that, being moved, brought all into existence? The Greeks do not accept this mystery—they do not know the Almighty Goodness, His effective power, or the wisdom that transcends every created understanding.

¶ 3. God Himself—the eternal Creator—brings all things into being whenever He wills, through His consubstantial Word and Spirit, for such is His infinite goodness. Do not say, “How could He create now if He was always good?” For the wisdom of His being is unfathomable and does not fall under human scrutiny.

¶ 4. The knowledge of all things pre-existed eternally within Him; when it pleased Him, He bestowed essence upon them and brought them into being. It is absurd to doubt whether the omnipotent God can create whenever He wills.

¶ 5. Why God created, we can know to some extent. But how He created, or for what new reason, do not inquire; such things cannot enter the human mind. Some divine matters are comprehensible, while others remain forever beyond our grasp. Unrestrained contemplation can mislead a person, as a saint has warned.

¶ 6. Some assert that created things existed eternally with God. This is impossible. How could what is finite coexist coeternally with the Infinite? How could a creature truly exist alongside its Creator from eternity? This is the teaching of the Greeks, who imagine God created not substances but only qualities. But we confess that God, being omnipotent,

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created not qualities alone but the very substances themselves. Therefore, created things did not coexist eternally with God.

¶ 7. God can be known in part, and in part remains unknown. He is known through His manifestations—His energies, His providence, His works—but as to what He is in Himself, He remains ever-hidden beyond mind.

¶ 8. Do not seek qualities or attributes within the simple, infinite essence of the Holy Trinity, lest you divide what is utterly indivisible and make God resemble created things—a thought both irrational and impious.

¶ 9. The divine essence alone is simple, uniform, passionless, tranquil, boundless, omnipotent, and freely choosing all that exists. Every creature, however, is composed of substance and accident and depends entirely upon providence, for it is never free from change.

¶ 10. Every rational and sentient being receives its powers of perception directly from God at the moment of creation: the power to understand what belongs to its nature, and the power to sense what pertains to its life.

¶ 11. God alone partakes of nothing and shares nothing; He is complete in Himself. A creature both partakes and shares: it partakes in order to exist and to exist well; it shares only what pertains to its ability to act well. Yet material and immaterial beings participate in God differently.

¶ 12. Incorporeal and spiritual beings impart goodness through their speaking, acting, and even self-contemplation, while material beings do so only by their appearance and the contemplation of their form.

¶ 13. Rational beings exist or cease to exist according to the will of the One who created all things good. But whether they act with goodness or malice according to their nature depends on their free will, upheld by the Creator.

¶ 14. Evil is not found in the essence of things as God created them, but in the erring and unconsidered will that departs from their created purpose.

¶ 15. The mind is stirred by reason when the desiring part strives for continence, when the irascible part turns from hatred toward love, and

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when reason, through continual prayer and contemplation of God, becomes accustomed to divine things.

¶ 16. Whoever has not yet acquired perfect charity or attained the lofty wisdom of divine providence, if he becomes impatient or troubled amid trials, demonstrates that he has strayed from charity and from spiritual love for his brethren.

¶ 17. Divine providence aims to restore unity among those divided by malice and vice—through right faith and through spiritual love. This is why the Savior suffered and died: to gather into one the children of God who had been scattered. Thus, whoever refuses to endure suffering patiently or rejects trials fails to walk within the purpose of providence.

¶ 18. Charity is long-suffering, kind, and gentle—especially toward the humble and afflicted. How then can it seem harsh toward those who wrong it, withdrawing its warmth? This appears contrary to divine providence.

¶ 19. Take care lest the evil seemingly directed at you by a brother be found not in him but within yourself. Hasten to reconciliation, lest you violate the commandment of charity.

¶ 20. Do not disdain the commandment of charity, for by it you become a child of God. To transgress it is to be guilty of destroying the very law of love.

¶ 21. These things separate friends: envy or prolonged envy, doing harm or suffering harm, dishonor or being dishonored, and the suspicions that arise from a troubled mind. Guard yourself against these lest you break the bond of friendship.

¶ 22. When temptation arises and the pain of it pushes you toward hatred, beware lest hatred overcome you. Conquer it by charity. Pray sincerely for the one who wronged you and defend him before others; then the temptation will weaken, and its hidden cause will become clear as you bear it patiently until the cloud passes.

¶ 23. Long-suffering is the endurance that waits until the trial has finished its course, bearing all things in hope and with glory.

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¶ 24. The long-suffering and wise person views everything that happens as having an end. Through this expectation he endures pains and hardships. The end, however, is eternal life—"to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

¶ 25. Do not take lightly the loss of spiritual love, for without it no hope of salvation remains for anyone.

¶ 26. Take care lest hatred cause you to condemn today the brother whose virtue you praised yesterday. Instead, with patience born of charity, recall yesterday's good deeds and cast off the poison of today's resentment.

¶ 27. Do not call a brother wicked today simply because you have exchanged love for hatred. Do not defend your hatred by accusing him; rather, persist in speaking well of him. Even if your heart is troubled, return to the sound love you once possessed.

¶ 28. Beware lest the lingering pain in your heart corrupt your praise of a brother before others, mixing praise with criticism and leading them into false judgment. Speak of him sincerely and with pure love, and the sickness of hatred will quickly depart.

¶ 29. Do not claim you do not hate your brother while avoiding even the remembrance of him. Moses says, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall rebuke him and not bear sin because of him."

¶ 30. If a brother, stirred by temptation, continually speaks evil against you, take care not to respond in the same spirit. When maligned, bless; when persecuted, remain gentle. This is the way of Christ; whoever departs from it cannot share His joy.

¶ 31. Do not trust those who whisper accusations into your ear, stirring anger and hatred. Even if they speak truth, flee from them as from venomous serpents, so that their malice does not enter your soul.

¶ 32. Do not argue with your brother using confused or evasive words, nor respond in similar fashion if he speaks so. With the boldness of charity, approach him and correct him, so that both of you may be freed from turmoil.

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¶ 33. Examine your conscience carefully lest your brother depart unreconciled because of your negligence. Do not deceive your conscience, for it knows your hidden sins and will accuse you in prayer and at death.

¶ 34. Do not recall during peaceful times the harsh words your brother spoke in distress—whether to your face or behind your back. Otherwise you may revive old injuries and slip again into hatred.

¶ 35. The soul cannot have peace with God—who gave the commandment—while harboring hatred against another. “If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you.” If your brother refuses reconciliation, at least guard your own heart from hatred, pray for him, and never accuse him before others.

¶ 36. The ineffable peace of the holy angels rests on two bonds: their love for God and their love for one another. The same holds true for all saints. Thus the Savior said, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

¶ 37. Do not exalt yourself, and you will not hate your brother. Do not love yourself or your flesh in a disordered manner, and you will become a lover of God and devout.

¶ 38. If you choose to dwell among spiritual people, renounce your own will from the very beginning; without this, peace will not be possible—neither with God nor with those around you.

¶ 39. Whoever has attained perfect love and ordered all things according to it speaks truly of the Lord Jesus in the Holy Spirit; and anything contrary to this he rejects.

¶ 40. Love for God lifts the soul toward divine communion; love for one’s neighbor disposes one to honor him in thought.

¶ 41. Only the one still attached to vainglory or earthly things becomes distressed, resentful, or spiteful over temporal matters. Such things are entirely foreign to a devout and God-adoring soul.

¶ 42. When you neither commit nor conceive anything shameful, when you harbor no anger against the one who harmed or defamed you, and when your mind remains free from earthly forms during prayer, then know you have reached the threshold of tranquility and perfect love.

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¶ 43. It is no small struggle to be freed from vainglory. Deliverance comes through hidden virtues practiced in secret and through frequent prayer. A sign of this freedom is remaining unmoved when slandered.

¶ 44. If you wish to be just, assign to each part of your being what befits it: to the rational soul—spiritual readings, insight, and prayer; to the irascible part—love, which opposes hatred; to the desiring part—temperance and self-control; and to the body—only what is essential for life.

¶ 45. The mind functions according to nature when, having subdued passions, it contemplates the principles of created things and directs them toward God.

¶ 46. Just as health and sickness pertain to the body, and light and darkness to the eyes, so virtue and vice pertain to the soul, and knowledge and ignorance to the mind.

¶ 47. The Christian philosopher practices a threefold wisdom: in commandments, which cleanse the soul from passions; in doctrines, which impart knowledge of reality; and in faith, which lifts the mind to contemplation of the Holy Trinity.

¶ 48. Those who struggle spiritually differ: some only repel impure thoughts; others uproot the very passions. Impure thoughts are repelled through psalmody, constant prayer, contemplation, or by changing one's environment. Passions are destroyed by despising the objects toward which the soul is unnaturally inclined.

¶ 49. A man despises sensual beauty after retreating into solitude and disciplining his body by self-restraint; he despises wealth when he chooses sufficiency; he despises glory when he performs virtue secretly before God alone. Whoever despises such things will never hate anyone.

¶ 50. Whoever renounces only external things—wife, wealth, possessions—has made the outer man a monk. But unless he uproots sinful thoughts and desires, he has not yet made the inner man a monk. This inner transformation is far harder and requires great effort.

¶ 51. Who then has become a true inner monk? The one who has been freed entirely from lustful and sinful thoughts and who has attained that pure prayer untouched by anything earthly.



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¶ 52. Many passions lie hidden within us and are revealed only when circumstances arise to stir them.

¶ 53. When circumstances are absent, one may feel no attraction or disturbance; this is only a partial and unstable dispassion. When the circumstances return, the passions reappear.

¶ 54. Do not imagine you have attained perfect dispassion when the objects are absent. Only when they appear and you remain unmoved—even in memory—have you reached its threshold. Yet do not relax, for virtue requires constant vigilance; negligence rekindles old passions.

¶ 55. Whoever loves Christ imitates Him as far as possible: doing good continually, enduring ingratitude without anger, and bearing even betrayal and violence without resentment. These three—kindness, patient endurance, and freedom from malice—are the fruits of love for one's neighbor. Without them, whoever claims to love Christ deceives himself.

¶ 56. The entire aim of the Savior's commandments is to free the soul from disorder and hatred and to unite it to love for God and neighbor. From such love arises the radiance of holy knowledge.

¶ 57. If God grants you knowledge, guard love and self-control, for they purify the passions and prepare the way for deeper knowledge.

¶ 58. The path to knowledge is through dispassion and humility; without these, no one can behold the Lord.

¶ 59. Knowledge alone puffs up, but love builds up. Combine love with knowledge so that neither pride destroys your understanding nor your soul fails in edification.

¶ 60. Love builds up because it neither envies nor grows embittered by envy; it does not flaunt its gifts; it does not consider itself already perfected; it confesses its ignorance and humbly prepares for greater knowledge.

¶ 61. Knowledge is often accompanied by pride and envy, especially at its beginning. Pride inwardly exalts; envy fights both within and without. Love destroys all three—pride, inner envy, and outer envy—by humility, peace, and long-suffering. Therefore, knowledge must be bound with abundant love.

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¶ 62. Whoever has received knowledge but holds resentment or hatred is like one who wounds his own eyes with thorns. Therefore, knowledge must be inseparably united with love.

¶ 63. Do not devote all your strength to the flesh. Give it only measured care, and turn the full power of your soul to the inward life. “Bodily exercise profits little, but godliness profits in all things.”

¶ 64. The one who dwells inwardly becomes sober, patient, kind, humble, contemplative, and diligent in prayer—walking by the Spirit.

¶ 65. One ignorant of the spiritual path does not guard his mind but gives his effort to the flesh—falling into gluttony, indulgence, grief, anger, and resentment, or else into harsh excesses that darken the mind.

¶ 66. Scripture does not forbid using what God has given, but forbids immoderation and irrational excess. It does not condemn eating but gluttony; not procreation but fornication; not wealth but avarice; not thought but lustful attachment.

¶ 67. Acts of piety are of two kinds: those commanded—such as love of God, love of neighbor, love of enemies, chastity, and justice—and those freely offered—such as virginity, poverty, and monastic life. These voluntary gifts help heal us when we fall short in commandments due to weakness.

¶ 68. Whoever embraces virginity must have “loins girded” with self-control and a “lamp burning” with prayer, contemplation, and spiritual love.

¶ 69. Some brothers believe themselves devoid of the Spirit’s gifts, but it is their negligence in fulfilling the commandments that deprives them. For whoever truly believes in Christ carries within himself all treasures of grace as a single hidden wealth.

¶ 70. Since Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, and all treasures of wisdom and knowledge dwell in Him, it follows that these treasures are hidden within us and become manifest according to the purity we acquire through keeping the commandments.

¶ 71. This treasure lies buried in the field of your heart. You have not yet found it because of your laziness. For if you had found it, you would

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sell all and buy that field; instead, you cultivate what surrounds it—thorns and thistles.

¶ 72. Thus the Savior says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” They shall see Him and the treasures in Him when purified by love and self-control—and even more clearly as their purity increases.

¶ 73. Therefore He also commands: “Sell what you have and give alms, and behold, all things will be clean for you.” That is, your mind will no longer cling to bodily matters but will cleanse the heart from hatred and lust, which defile the inner man and obscure Christ dwelling within through baptismal grace.

¶ 74. Scripture calls virtues “paths,” but above all virtues is love. Thus the Apostle says, “I will show you a still more excellent way,” urging us to despise temporal things and seek the eternal.

¶ 75. Love of God resists covetousness, strengthening the soul to abstain from pleasures; love of neighbor resists anger, persuading us to despise worldly glory and riches. These two loves are the two denarii entrusted by the Savior to the innkeeper—our free will. Guard them lest thieves steal them and leave you not half-dead but wholly dead.

¶ 76. Purify your heart from anger, resentment, and shameful thoughts; then you will behold Christ dwelling within you.

¶ 77. Who enlightened you with faith in the consubstantial Trinity? Who revealed the Incarnation of one Person of the Trinity? Who taught you about spirits, souls, their origin, the end of this visible world, the resurrection, eternal life, the Kingdom, and the dread judgment? Was it not the grace of Christ within you and the pledge of the Holy Spirit? Nothing surpasses this grace and wisdom. If passions still blind us, the fault is ours—not God’s.

¶ 78. The God who promised eternal blessings and placed His Spirit in your heart also commands diligence and careful living, so that the inner man may begin even now to taste the joy of those blessings.

¶ 79. Once you have reached sublime contemplations, take even greater care to preserve love and self-control. Keep the passionate part of

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your soul unshaken and allow the radiance of divine knowledge to shine without interruption.

¶ 80. Restrain the irascible part with love; subdue the desiring part with self-control; elevate reason through prayer; and never allow the light of your mind to be darkened.

¶ 81. These things destroy love: dishonor, loss, slander (whether of faith or morals), assaults, wounds—whether these befall you or those beloved by you. Whoever lets such events dissolve love has not understood Christ's commandments.

¶ 82. Strive to love all people as much as you can; and if you cannot yet love all, at least be sure that you hate none. You will not even achieve this unless you despise worldly things.

¶ 83. If someone slanders you, do not hate the person; hate the slander and its author—the devil. If you hate the person, you sin as he did. Keep the commandment: love him, pray for him, and help him escape evil.

¶ 84. Christ forbids all hatred, resentment, and bitterness toward anyone, for any temporal reason whatsoever. The Gospels proclaim this clearly.

¶ 85. Many speak, but few act. Let no one distort God's word because of personal negligence. Rather confess your weakness and preserve the truth, lest you incur double sin—breaking the commandments and falsifying Scripture.

¶ 86. Love and self-control free the soul from passions; reading and contemplation free the mind from ignorance; and prayer places the entire person before God.

¶ 87. When demons see us despising the world so thoroughly that we do not hate anyone for its sake, they then stir calumnies against us, hoping that grief will make us hate the one who slanders us.

¶ 88. Calumny is the heaviest burden for the soul—whether concerning faith or conduct. Only one who, like Susanna, looks solely to God escapes harm; for God alone can remove false accusation and comfort the soul with hope.

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¶ 89. To the extent that you pray for the one who slanders you—especially when you are innocent—God removes the injury from your soul and restores your peace.

¶ 90. Only God is good by nature; a person is good only by imitation of God through the intention of his soul. God strives always to unite the good with the wicked so they may become good. Thus He blesses His cursers, strengthens His persecutors, prays for His blasphemers, and intercedes for those who put Him to death—never swerving from the aim of love.

¶ 91. The commandments teach us to use intermediate things rightly. Their right use purifies the soul; purity grants discernment; discernment produces untroubled serenity; and serenity blossoms into perfect charity.

¶ 92. Whoever has only a false calm—one produced by the absence of disturbances—but not true imperturbability, has not yet acquired perfect charity. When severe temptation arises, or the loss of a friend, he is shaken; his passions cloud his mind and obscure truth. Such a one has not yet reached charity, which casts out fear.

¶ 93. A faithful friend never changes. He takes his friend's misfortunes as his own and bears all burdens even unto death.

¶ 94. Many are friends during prosperity; few remain in times of distress.

¶ 95. Love all people sincerely, but trust only in God, and exercise all virtue for His sake. When He upholds us, friends surround us and enemies cannot harm us; when He withdraws, friends depart and enemies prevail.

¶ 96. Abandonment occurs in four ways: first, by divine economy, as in Christ, whose seeming abandonment brought salvation to mankind; second, for testing, as with Job and Joseph; third, for instruction, as with the Apostle, that humility might guard grace; and fourth, for chastisement, as with the Jews, that they might be moved to repentance. All these are works of divine mercy.

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¶ 97. Those who keep the commandments are true mystics of God's judgments. Though they are tested, they are never abandoned. But those who despise the commandments cannot perceive God's judgments; in prosperity they flourish, but in adversity they collapse—even siding with the adversary.

¶ 98. Christ's true friends love all people sincerely, yet are not loved by all. The world's friends love selectively and are loved only selectively. Christ's friends hold perfect charity to the end; the world's friends abandon one another at the first offense.

¶ 99. A faithful friend is a firm protector. In prosperity he offers wise counsel; in adversity he becomes the truest defender and companion.

¶ 100. Many speak about charity, but you will find it only in the disciples of Christ. They alone possess true charity, which teaches charity. As the Apostle says, "If I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Whoever has charity has God, for God is love. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

## SCHOLIUM

1. We, who are often unable either to teach through deeds or to be taught ourselves, nonetheless presume to teach by mere words, and like those set as teachers, we overflow with speech. But note this well: not everything that a person wishes to grasp can be easily understood, even if it appears so. Who would not be astonished at those who, with an inflated and arrogant mind, boast that they will instruct both lustful women and unformed children in divine things?
2. When the Apostle says, "If anyone loves God, he is known by Him," he means that it is through loving the Lord that we are truly known by God. And as we are known, we are also taught, as the great Gregory the Theologian says, both in the height of virtue and in the praise of true theology. This, I believe, is the sense of the chapter: charity is purity and

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freedom from disturbance; charity is the mother of knowledge and illumination.

3. Do not be surprised at this saying, especially regarding those who, for the sake of Mammon, even lose their lives. It is foolish to treat lightly their talk about the “public treasury” and the “ruler of this world.”
4. God wills that all be saved and has died for all, that all might attain salvation. Therefore, whoever loves God holds fast to what God wills. And if he keeps God’s will, how could he not desire the salvation of all, loving them as he loves himself, since this is precisely the will of God?
5. The knowledge of God is called faith. Charity is the keeping of the commandments; and this keeping is also called will, righteousness, commandment, and light—for “the commandment is light.” This chapter thus presents knowledge joined to action and rightly directing it.
6. God is the giver of knowledge. Yet in the act of knowing, knowledge belongs to the one who knows God and becomes a transformation of the spirit.
7. Compare this with the seventy-sixth chapter of the same Century and you will find nearly the same teaching, though expressed with different terms.
8. If the commandment of charity has been given as a remedy for anger, then temperance has likewise been granted as a remedy for desire. See also chapter seventy-nine.
9. But we, who are servants of these three tyrants—gluttony, avarice, and vainglory—how much hatred do we harbor against others, being enslaved by insatiable greed? See chapter sixty-four.
10. In chapter seventy-seven it was said that we are freed from passions and vices by the commandments. This chapter shows the path: charity, fasting, temperance, and prayer.
11. Yet whoever has received spiritual and intellectual wisdom, if he neglects charity and self-control, is again humbled and weighed down, losing what he thought he possessed.

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12. But we, who are submerged in passions and vices, how shall we rise to contemplation? Or if somehow we do contemplate, how shall we not fall away again from the knowledge of the Holy Trinity?
13. Do you see how contemplation itself ascends in stages?
14. As in the realm of faith there is no ground for unbelief, so in the contemplation of things that exist by nature there is nothing contrary to reason. The work of the commandments is reason and speech made active. Read chapter eighty-four and you will find rest and sufficient nourishment for your mind.
15. The natural contemplation of the commandments and genuine love of neighbor free those who practice them from perverse and carnal love and from tyranny. Knowledge of created things frees spiritual and instructed persons from forgetfulness and ignorance. These teachings show that the soul has three faculties and movements. In accord with reason and nature, it practices every virtue; contrary to reason and nature, it brings forth every vice. Remember that the three primal roots of all evil in us are ignorance, carnal love for the body, and tyranny. The evil one has established these within us through the misuse of our own spiritual power.
16. Commandments concerning things, thoughts, and senses are fettered and corrupted by lustful desires and passions, as was shown in chapter four of this very Century.
17. Whatever contradicts the will of God—which is good, well-pleasing, and perfect—contradicts also the proper end and purpose of love for one's neighbor for God's sake. What opposes God's will reveals that a person is not rightly disposed toward his neighbor. The Lord Himself teaches this in the Gospel when He says, "As much as you have done—or not done—to one of the least of these," enumerating acts of charity and of hatred. Consider this: whoever acts against the proper end of love and suppresses natural compassion has no valid defense and does not even appear to himself as opposing the true end. Yet anyone who knowingly acts against God's good purpose, even if he offers many excuses, will not escape judgment.



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18. Charity restrains disordered desire, and love for one's neighbor softens and quiets an angry heart.
19. Those who mistake the substance of sacred images for the very divine forms themselves misuse the concept of form. For when a sign or figure refers to a person, they imagine that the material in which the form is depicted is itself the personal reality. Thus, misusing names and concepts, they come to treat the bare and lifeless material of holy icons as if it were an idolatrous object to be destroyed by fire.
20. Notice the distinction between sorrow and pain, and how each clings to something different: one attaches itself to pleasure, the other to empty glory.
21. The three preceding chapters remove every excuse for refusing to renounce money, if we desire to walk in the way of God.
22. He calls it "artificial wisdom," not in the sense of learning that comes from human discipline, but that wisdom which God has placed within all things as their inner logos.
23. My mind is defiled by a fourfold stain; and beyond this, it has laden itself with something worse—it has arrogated to itself a wisdom greater than that of others.
24. My soul has never labored according to the mode in which it was naturally formed to act. Nothing of what it has done remains hidden from it; and no sinful act that it has committed ever had a rightful or permitted end.
25. Therefore, when we do not act for Christ's sake but for some other end, our deeds fall outside the true final goal. We act from ourselves and not from God's will.
26. If someone thirsts to seize and rob what belongs to others—something that is clearly against the will of God—how will he propose as his end the will of the God whose own final purpose is to have mercy and to give?
27. The one who serves carnal self-love is heavy of heart; he loves vanity and falsehood and complains constantly. These are the senses and prudence of the flesh—his delights, his habits, his supposed "good condition."

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28. The pleasures that have been described—of sensual love, of glory, and of money—are precisely those that entangle the heart. But if someone clings obstinately to this way, how can he be found worthy of God's knowledge? It is impossible.
29. We relate to God in three ways: as slaves, as hirelings, or as sons—either merely as those who perform the acts of the commandments, or also as those who have received the gift of knowledge.
30. Bare thought is that which is unaccompanied by passion, free of attachment—a simple consideration. But when thought is flavored by affection and lust, it draws the mind away from God. Likewise, bare and simple knowledge does not itself separate us from people, but allows right affection toward them. Through long habituation, this becomes a transformation of the mind into spiritual understanding.
31. Those who are like lilies—pure by knowledge and love—abstain from vice out of love for God; servants and hirelings abstain from some vices either through fear of punishment or hope of reward.
32. This chapter also deters those for whom it is written, by showing the loss that awaits at the end if they persist in negligence.
33. I think that, while writing these things, he especially turned his mind toward us and our condition.
34. Those who imagine that they already know do not understand what profit would follow from this method of life. For if they truly knew, they would have gained this benefit: continual progress and growth in knowledge.
35. When the mind lingers in bare and simple thoughts, affection and attachment are often stirred; and when thought is once joined to affection and lust, it easily proceeds to consent.
36. You know, Lord, how I shall be judged today, and for what reasons. Do not forsake me when that hour comes.
37. One who trusts in his own reasoning and imagines that he has already grasped what, even when grasped, remains by nature incomprehensible—such a person cannot impart true spiritual understanding to others.

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38. Sorrow—the hardness of the soul—and hatred are vices of the part of the soul that is without reason, that is, of its passionate and ungoverned aspect.
39. See how we deceive ourselves: we speak contrary to the Gospel and yet think that we live in Christian piety. What is worse, we even imagine that we possess spiritual love.
40. The one who has the vice of greed does not always immediately commit injustice; he may not yet have had the opportunity to grasp or deceive. But once the occasion appears, he is quickly exposed and captured by the passion he carries within.
41. Notice in what circumstances forbearance is necessary and in what circumstances patience must be shown. Both arise in situations of temptation that come upon us unwillingly from outside, yet they differ. Some temptations are in words, others in blows or wounds. Those who are spiritually awake distinguish them accordingly and respond in a fitting manner.
42. Through self-control and charity, good knowledge is granted in the realm of action.
43. But what of those who remain seated in vices and pride and yet delude themselves, thinking—because of their swelling arrogance—that they possess divine knowledge? They are in great spiritual darkness and vanity.
44. Whoever thinks he has already grasped the truth, yet in reality knows nothing as he ought, does not possess charity. And without charity, how will he advance in knowledge?
45. We, burdened with vices and ignorance like thorns and briars, nevertheless confidently imagine that we possess virtue and spiritual knowledge.
46. Here he defines charity more precisely: he presents the “two coins”—love of God and love of neighbor.
47. In the process of purification, the soul’s three faculties are revealed, and through them the knowledge of Christ is gradually imparted.

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48. It is inevitable that those who cultivate and cling to worldly things will lose holy charity. For the sake of these things, they harbor relentless hatred toward their brothers.
49. In both respects—the slander of his life and of his faith—the holy monk Cedonius suffered calumny. Yet, looking to God alone, he was strengthened by divine hope.
50. Whoever serves allurements and lust is of a foul and darkened mind. With judgment clouded, he cannot discern virtue from vice.

## BOOK SEVEN

### CHAPTERS ON THEOLOGY & ECONOMY

You will find a hundred chapters on the theology of God and the Word of God in the dispensation of the flesh. I would have placed these two hundred chapters before the five hundred other chapters published earlier by Pico, and connected the four hundred chapters on charity to Elpidius directly, due to the worthiness of the subject. For although both works—*Peri thelogias* (On Theology) and *Peri en sarkos oikonomias* (On the Dispensation in the Flesh)—are titled similarly and thus the subject seems common, still, those chapters on virtue and vice, which Maximus Margunius referred to under one title, were distinct and separated by two hundred chapters.

Also, it seemed better to refrain from excessive allegory, and not to use verbatim what was found in the *Questions to Thalassius*, extracted from them, but to keep them slightly more refined, with a different composition. Indeed, these two sets of one hundred chapters were borrowed by Photius, and this indicates that they are related to the judgment or critique of Photius himself, as the arguments of the chapters correspond with the same proportion; for in addition to the number of chapters, everything else matches as well.

Photius proves the genuineness of this work by its very diversity of argument and treatment from the four hundred chapters on charity to

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Elpidius, which are discordant with them, indicating their connection and similarity to the Questions to Thalassius, which is one of his more prominent and undoubted works. The interpreter of Photius missed the point, altering his meaning, drawing the connection of these chapters to Thalassius' work based on material similarity, whereas Photius had referred to their affinity with the chapters on Elpidius. Photius had already spoken of these matters, and there was no need to repeat, but only to show the discrepancy between these chapters, thus proving the genuine nature of these works.

One thing appears to have escaped Photius' attention, as he did not observe that many of these chapters had been received from the ascetic Marcus. However, in his critique of the work on Thalassius, he had noted that Maximus included some quotations from others while adding some of his own observations.

These chapters exist in several royal manuscripts; among them, the excellent manuscript of Raphael Dufrêne, which ensures that the purity and integrity of the text remain intact. These chapters, as well as those above, and those I have received from Rome and the Vatican, are not inscribed with any title or heading, although Maximus often titles even smaller works; no reason can be given for this, nor perhaps by another. These chapters may have been arranged by the holy and learned man for his own use rather than for others, as if they were well-prepared sayings, easily recalled, and expedited by their brevity.

## PHOTIUS' CRITIQUE

In the same volume, there is also a book consisting of a hundred chapters, and another equally concluded with the same number of chapters, in which the science of divine things shines forth, and likewise the doctrine for the adornment of manners is presented. Indeed, there is no distinction between the character of these chapters and the four hundred chapters (on charity, namely); if it were not for the allegorical interpretation often provided, these chapters would appear in a manner closely related to the

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writing which addresses doubts and solutions from Scripture, and was diligently executed by Thalassius the presbyter and abbot.

Moreover, the affinity between these chapters and the others is such that the necessity and the similarity in argument do not allow for any suspicion that this connection was fabricated.

### FIRST 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. God is one, without origin or source, incomprehensible, holding within Himself the whole power of being; He transcends every measure and mode of existence in time, is inaccessible to all, and is not truly known by any created thing through likeness or image.

¶ 2. According to His own divine logos, as far as it has been granted us to know, God is neither beginning, nor middle, nor end; nor is He any of those things which, by nature, belong to what proceeds from Him. For He is boundless, unmoved, and infinite, surpassing every substance, every power, and every operation by an immeasurable excess.

¶ 3. Every created substance, insofar as it contains the principle of its own dissolution, has its movement grounded in a power that has a beginning. Every natural operation that belongs to such a substance, although later in time, is prior in working and stands as a “middle,” that is, as the logos of nature mediating between beginning and end. Finally, every operation, bounded by its own rational nature, constitutes the end proper to that movement—a term that is first in the order of thought, conceived by the subtle vision of the mind.

¶ 4. God is not “substance” in the sense in which we call something a substance that is principle and origin; nor is He “power” as we name that which mediates as capacity; nor is He “operation” as we call that which is the end or completed act arising from power. Rather, He is such an existence (if it is lawful to speak so) as to be both the Cause and the Transcendent of every substance—establishing its stability and imparting its power and energy—and likewise the immortal and living foundation of every operation.

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In sum, He is the effective Cause of every substance and essence, every power, operation, principle, middle, and end.

¶ 5. Beginning, intermediary, and end are marks of realities that unfold in time; and the same may be said, in a higher sense, of those realities situated in the age or eternal realm. For time, whose motion is measured by number, is itself limited; the age, whose existence is grasped under the notion of “when,” likewise presupposes a beginning and realities that have come into being. If neither time nor age is without a beginning, then, all the more, nothing that is held within them is beginningless.

¶ 6. There is one God and only one, who by nature is always, truly, and properly God, enclosing within Himself, and in every way surpassing, the whole power of existence. If this is so, nothing else that is said to “exist” possesses in itself true and proper existence. It follows, then, that nothing distinct in essence from God—neither the age, nor the eternal realm, nor anything contained within them—has existed with Him from eternity as a coeval companion. For it is impossible that what is truly and properly existent should coexist with that which does not possess true and proper existence.

¶ 7. No beginning, no intermediary, and no end exists without relation and comparison, for these arise only in relation to other things. But God, who by an infinite excess transcends every relation and comparison, is not Himself beginning, intermediary, or end, nor does He belong to any category that can be understood comparatively in relation to something else.

¶ 8. All things are called “beings” because they are intelligible—that is, because there are principles by which reason can speak and demonstrate concerning them. God, however, is called God not because He is comprehended by the mind, but because, through the things that are understood, we simply believe that He exists; for none of the things we understand can be compared with Him in any way.

¶ 9. Sciences and rational notions, being naturally interconnected so that demonstrations may be formed from them, have their proper principles whereby their natures are defined and circumscribed. God, however, is believed to exist through the principles that appear within



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created things, and yet, even without demonstrative proof, He implants in the devout mind a conviction stronger than any argument that He truly and properly is. For true faith is a kind of knowing whose principles lie in what is beyond demonstration, since it concerns realities whose essence surpasses all power of mind and reason.

¶ 10. God is the beginning, the intermediary, and the end of all things—not as a subject acted upon, but as the acting Cause. In this sense alone He bears the same names as other things. He is beginning as Creator of all; intermediary as the One who governs all by Providence; end as the ultimate limit and circumscription of all, for, as it is written, “From Him and through Him and in Him are all things.”

¶ 11. Among rational natures, none is nobler in essence than the rational soul itself. In His goodness, God creates all things according to His image, bringing them into being with self-determining motion. Yet each soul, by the intention of its will and its free choice, either ascends to honor and glory or voluntarily embraces disgrace and shame.

¶ 12. God, as Scripture says, is the “Sun of righteousness,” sending the rays of His goodness upon all without distinction. The soul resembles wax, if it is devout and God-loving; or clay, if it clings to earthly things. Just as clay hardens in the sun’s heat while wax is softened by the very same rays, so too the soul attached to the world and its love grows hard like clay under God’s warnings and corrections, resisting by its own will and, like Pharaoh, driving itself toward ruin. But the soul that loves God is softened like wax, receiving the impressions and forms of divine realities and becoming a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

¶ 13. The one who, like lightning, fills the mind with divine thoughts and perceptions, training it to glorify the Creator unceasingly with spiritual hymns of reason and speech, and who purifies the intellect with pure and undefiled reflections, has added the likeness of God to the natural gift of His image—that likeness which lies in the free and deliberate movement of the mind toward the good.

¶ 14. A person guards the soul in purity for God when they constrain the mind to dwell only on God and the divine virtues; when they

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make speech and reason faithful interpreters and teachers of those virtues; and when they train the senses to fashion pious perceptions of this visible world and of everything in it. Such a person becomes a trustworthy herald of the radiant wisdom of the Logos manifest in creation.

¶ 15. God, who has delivered us from the harsh tyranny of cruel demons, has given us instead the gentle yoke of piety—that is, a lowly and humbled disposition of soul. Through this meek yoke, all the power of the devil is subdued, every good is given to those who freely choose it, and the grace bestowed is kept safe and unassailable.

¶ 16. The believer is first pierced by holy fear; struck by fear, he becomes contrite and humbled. Thus he acquires meekness and gentleness and, in this peaceful disposition, restrains the unnatural motions of anger and desire. The meek and gentle one keeps the commandments; the keeper of the commandments is purified; the purified is illumined; and the illumined is finally deemed worthy to enter the secret bridal chamber of mysteries with the Word, the Bridegroom.

¶ 17. As a farmer, while examining a field suitable for transplanting wild trees, unexpectedly finds a treasure, so the devout and modest soul, like the blessed Jacob, free from earthly coarseness and guile, receives spiritual riches. When the Father asks, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” he answers, “Because the Lord God set it before me.” For when God grants us the most subtle principles and contemplations of His wisdom without labor and beyond expectation, then we recognize that we have discovered a spiritual treasure. The tested ascetic is such a farmer, transplanting sensible perceptions like wild shoots into spiritual soil, and thus discovering the hidden treasure through their transformation.

¶ 18. When, suddenly and without expectation, through humility a monk engaged in piety receives the knowledge of divine principles and perceptions, this breaks the spirit of the one who, for the sake of ostentation, toiled for the same knowledge yet failed to attain it. His failure stirs envy against his brother and drives him to seek his brother’s fall, while inwardly tormenting himself over the loss of praise that once fed his pride.

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¶ 19. Those who labor for knowledge but do not receive it either fail through unbelief or are swollen with pride against those who possess it, contending contentiously with them like the people of old against Moses. Of such it is rightly written that some presumptuously forced their way up the mountain, and that the Amorite who dwelt on the mountain came out against them and defeated them. For those who put on the outward guise of virtue for display must necessarily lose their hope by corrupting true piety and suffer the wounds of conscience as well.

¶ 20. The one who seeks knowledge out of vain display and fails to obtain it should neither envy his brother nor grieve in spirit. Rather, he should “prepare what is near,” as the commandment indicates—that is, he should cultivate virtue with strenuous bodily labor, thereby disposing and preparing his soul to receive knowledge.

¶ 21. Those who direct their mind rightly toward realities in a spirit of piety and who form no schemes of ostentation encounter, without toil, the most radiant contemplations of created things and attain their full understanding. To such the law promises: “You shall enter and possess great and beautiful cities, houses full of all good things which you did not build, wells you did not dig, vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.” For the one who no longer lives for himself but for God is filled with all divine gifts that previously were hidden by the tumult and agitation of passions and affections.

¶ 22. Just as sense is twofold—habitual sense, which remains even during sleep yet perceives nothing outside itself and is useless without actual operation, and active sense, by which we apprehend what falls under sensation—so also knowledge is twofold. One form is merely habitual: reading principles without putting them into practice, which profits nothing unless it brings the commandments into action. The other is active and practical, which, through experience, grants true understanding of things.

¶ 23. The hypocrite, so long as he imagines himself unobserved, acts with quiet and outward restraint; but when he is exposed, he bursts forth in venomous speech, hoping by accusing others to conceal the shame of his own deeds. Scripture compares such a man to the brood of vipers for his

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cunning and demands from him fruits worthy of repentance—that is, the transformation of the hidden disposition of the soul into visible and manifest righteousness in life.

¶ 24. Some define a “beast,” according to the letter of the law, as any animal of air, sea, or land judged unclean, even if it appears gentle by nature. Scripture employs such animal names to signify certain people marked by particular vices.

¶ 25. The one who pretends friendship in order to injure his neighbor is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, concealing the treachery of his cunning heart. When he detects anything in the simple way of life or speech of others—done with Christian sincerity and without duplicity—he immediately seizes it, distorts it, and covers it with countless accusations. He is like a spy upon the freedom of the brothers, which is in Christ Jesus.

¶ 26. Whoever keeps silence with malicious cunning is secretly weaving deceit against his neighbor. When his plot is uncovered and fails, he withdraws in deeper sorrow and confusion, adding torment to his wound. But the one who is silent for the sake of some good strengthens friendship and departs with joy, as one who has received a light to scatter the darkness.

¶ 27. Whoever rudely interrupts a discourse in the assembly of brothers clearly reveals himself to be in the grip of vainglory. Captured by this passion, he introduces countless digressions and twists of speech, breaking and diverting the flow of the discussion.

¶ 28. The truly wise person, whether speaking or listening, desires only to teach or to learn what is spiritually profitable. But the one who only wears the mask of wisdom, whether asking or answering, offers nothing but curiosities and idle questions.

¶ 29. Whatever good things a person has received as a gift from God, he ought to share freely with others—“Freely you have received, freely give.” He who hides the gift in the earth accuses the Lord of being harsh and demanding, doing so because he wishes to spare his flesh and avoid the labor that the cultivation of virtue requires. But the one who sells the truth to the enemies of God for the sake of human glory, unable to endure reproach, injures his own soul. Those who are too timid to wage war against passions,

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vices, and invisible foes should keep silence and entrust themselves to God in prayer, as is written: “The Lord will fight for you, and you shall be still.” Those who, having already conquered their persecutors, seek the paths of virtue must keep the ears of their souls open with simplicity to learn; to them it is said: “Hear, O Israel.” And the one whose soul, purified and inflamed with desire for divine knowledge, is marked by piety, may draw near to speak in bold reverence; to him it is said: “Why do you cry out to Me?”

¶ 30. Thus, for the one who is silent through holy fear, the fitting task is to flee to God alone; for the one who is commanded to hear, it is fitting to hasten in obedience to the divine precepts; and for the one who is both wise and spiritual, it is fitting to cry out continually in supplication—to avert evils and to give thanks for blessings received.

¶ 31. The soul never stretches itself toward the knowledge of God unless God Himself, by loving condescension, raises it up. No created mind could ever step forth into the light of divine illumination unless God drew it toward Himself as far as it can be drawn and bathed it in His uncreated radiance.

¶ 32. The one who imitates the disciples of the Lord is not restrained by Pharisaic fear from passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath and plucking the ears. After the labors of action, he enters the peace of an undisturbed mind and gathers the inner reasons of creation, being nourished devoutly by divine knowledge.

¶ 33. The one who is faithful to the discipline of the Gospel removes from himself, through ascetic practice, the mountain of vice and corruption, shaking off the unstable, passing attachment to sensible things. As a disciple, he receives fragments of the spiritual and rational loaves from the Word and distributes them to feed the multitudes, manifesting the power of his word multiplied through works. Raised even to the rank of apostle, he heals every disease and weakness, casts out demons—that is, the power of vices and passions—and cures the spiritually sick by restoring the irreligious to hope and restraining the sluggish through the word of judgment. For the one commanded to tread upon serpents and scorpions destroys both the origin and the end of sin.

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¶ 34. An apostle is, in full measure, also a disciple and faithful. A disciple is certainly faithful but not yet fully an apostle. The merely faithful is neither disciple nor apostle. Yet through well-ordered conduct in life and the cultivation of contemplation, the faithful may advance to the rank of disciple, and the disciple may ascend to the dignity of apostle.

¶ 35. Whatever arises in time from temporal conditions, when it comes to fullness and maturity, ceases from growth and rests from motion. But whatever is brought forth by the knowledge of God from the principles of virtue, once perfected, begins another and greater movement; for the end of some things becomes the beginning of others. The one who, by practicing the virtues, has stripped from himself the attachment to corruptible things and brought their sway to an end, inaugurates nobler forms of being. For God is never glorified and exalted by good works without surpassing those who are offended that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

¶ 36. In the law and the prophets there is mention of the Sabbath and Sabbaths and the Sabbath of Sabbaths; likewise of circumcision and the circumcision of circumcision; and of harvest and harvest of harvest, as it is written, "When you reap the harvest of your land." The first Sabbath signifies the spiritual philosophy that consists in ascetic practice, natural contemplation, and divine knowledge. The second points to the origin and creation of things and the letting go of their principles. The third refers to the spiritual sense of the mind, the progress of reason, and the blessed possession of the things contemplated. In each of these three, one and the same mystery unfolds, so that the spiritual and knowing person, advancing in understanding, recognizes the principles by which Moses, dying outside the holy land, kept the Sabbath, and Joshua, son of Nun, circumcised the people after crossing the Jordan. Those who inherit the good land offer to God a double portion of the harvest as an excess.

¶ 37. The Sabbath is the soul's disturbance brought to rest and its tranquility according to reason—that is, of the soul which, through ascetic labor and discipline, has cast off the marks and chains of sin and now abides in peace.

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¶ 38. The Sabbaths are the freedom of the rational soul—that is, of the soul which, through spiritual contemplation of nature, has cast aside the innate tendencies of the senses, bringing them under the rule of reason.

¶ 39. The Sabbath of Sabbaths is the complete cessation and rest of the rational soul—that is, of the soul whose mind, adhering to divine things, is wholly contracted in love toward God alone and remains firmly fixed in the gifts of mystical theology, unshaken in its devotion to Him.

¶ 40. Circumcision is the cutting away of the soul's carnal affection, by which it is bound to the origins and conditions of created nature.

¶ 41. The circumcision of circumcision is the total severing of the soul's natural movements toward created things and their origins.

¶ 42. The harvest is the gathering into the rational soul of the inner reasons of things—those that pertain to virtue, nature, and spiritual knowledge—and the recognition of them there.

¶ 43. The harvest of the harvest is that contemplation which, rising beyond all spiritual mysteries, stands in unknowing before God, considering Him in the mind. This offering is rightly made to God by the one who honors the Creator through all His creatures, visible and invisible.

¶ 44. There is, further, a yet more spiritual harvest in God's essence itself; and a more mystical and holier circumcision; and a deeper Sabbath, wherein God, ceasing from His works, rests, as it is written: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," and again, "Circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit." Thus God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His works which God began to create and to make."

¶ 45. The harvest of God is that consummation at the end of the ages when a firm and unshakable dwelling will be granted to the worthy.

¶ 46. The circumcision of the heart in the Spirit is the complete cutting away, through the presence of the Spirit, of the natural movements of sense and intellect toward what is sensible or intelligible, so that both body and soul may be wholly transformed into what is divine.

¶ 47. The sabbatism is the complete recapitulation of created things in the divine, wherein, in a manner beyond all speech, the divine operation ceases from its natural operation in them; for God rests from

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moving each thing according to its nature when, according to each one's capacity, He brings its natural motion to an end in Himself.

¶ 48. It is profitable for those who seek knowledge to inquire which works of God are those He “began to do,” and which are those He did not begin. For if He rested from all the works He had begun, it is evident that He did not rest from those He never began. The works that began in time are the participating realities: the diverse substances, natures, and essences that had no being before they came to be, and that are called “nothing” before their existence. There was, then, a time when the participating things did not exist. The works that did not begin in time are those that have the power of being participated in and are proper to God Himself: for example, goodness and all that is contained under it, as well as life, immortality, simplicity, immutability, infinity—in short, everything that belongs essentially to the knowledge of God. These are indeed works of God, yet they did not arise in time; virtue, goodness, holiness, and immortality never were lacking. Those things that began temporally are composed of temporal participation and are thus said to be, as they are and as they are called. For God is the Creator of all life, immortality, sanctity, and virtue, and He transcends the very essence of all that is conceived or spoken.

¶ 49. God is infinitely exalted above both the things that participate and the things that can be participated in. For whatever is, and whatever grounds its being, is the work of God—even if it began in time and bears in itself some trace of the divine creative energy, by which God's presence in all things is clearly manifested.

¶ 50. All immortal beings, and immortality itself; all living beings, and life itself; all holy things, and holiness itself; all who are endowed with virtue, and virtue itself; all good things, and goodness itself; all beings, and the very essence of being—all these are manifestly works of God. Among them, some have begun in time—for there was once a time when they were not—while others exist beyond time and without beginning. Virtue, goodness, holiness, and immortality have never been absent. The things that began temporally are those that exist by temporal participation and are called beings in that limited sense. But God is the Maker of all life,



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immortality, holiness, and virtue, and He surpasses the essence of everything that can be grasped or spoken.

¶ 51. The sixth day, according to Scripture, manifests the completion of realities under nature; the seventh day, as temporal, marks and limits the movement of properties; and the eighth signifies that mode which is beyond nature and beyond time, revealing and indicating its manner.

¶ 52. Whoever keeps the sixth day only according to the letter of the law, fleeing the dominion of passions and disturbances, passes safely through the sea into the desert—that is, he seeks merely rest from these things, or a cessation of them, and thereby observes the Sabbath. But whoever, after crossing the Jordan, has set beyond himself the scorching assaults of the sun—meaning the trials of life—enters into the possession of the virtues.

¶ 53. The one who, having cut off the first stirrings of sin, keeps the sixth day according to the Gospel—renouncing every evil and vice—takes up a condition of untroubledness, like a spiritual desert, through the cultivation of the virtues, and thus sanctifies his mind. But the one who crosses the Jordan passes into the realm of knowledge, where, through the establishment of peace, his mind in the Spirit ascends to the dwelling place of God.

¶ 54. The one who, by divine operations and rational discipline of the soul, has fulfilled in himself the sixth day, and with God has brought his works to completion, transcends entirely, by intellectual contemplation, the whole realm of what is subject to nature and time and migrates to the mystical contemplation of the ages and of the eternal realities within them. Having, by an unknowable mode, left them behind and gone beyond them, he keeps Sabbath with his mind. But the one who is also found worthy to reach the eighth day rises from the dead—that is, from all things secondary to God that are apprehended by sense, intellect, and concept—and visits the blessed life of God, who alone is truly called Life, becoming, by deification, god.

¶ 55. The sixth day is the completion, for those devoted to practice, of all natural activities brought to fulfillment in virtue. The seventh is for those dedicated to contemplation, marking the cessation and rest of all

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natural thoughts and reasonings about the more hidden and esoteric wisdom. The eighth is for those deemed worthy of transition and change into deification. Perhaps, therefore, the Lord, in a more hidden way, names the seventh and eighth as “day” and “hour” of consummation, so as to gather into them all mysteries and all reasons of things—mysteries which no heavenly or earthly power could know before His Passion and the dread work He accomplished, but which are known only to the blessed divinity that has brought them forth.

¶ 56. The sixth day symbolizes the reason why things exist; the seventh reveals the manner by which they exist well and blessedly; and the eighth unveils the hidden mystery of how they will exist forever in the blessed state.

¶ 57. Whoever understands that the sixth day is the sign of divine working devoted to moral action and discipline, let him complete in it all labour in virtue, so that it may be said of him also: “And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”

¶ 58. The labor of this good work, which receives praise from God, is brought to completion by the one who diligently exercises his body, adorning it with the many virtues of the soul.

¶ 59. The one who has fulfilled the toil of righteousness—the “Preparation day,” as we might say—passes into the rest of wise and learned contemplation, wherein, having embraced the divine reasons of things, he rests from the restless wanderings of his mind concerning them.

¶ 60. The one who has become partaker of the seventh rest of God for our sake shall also, for our sake, partake of the eighth work through deification—that is, the mystical resurrection—leaving in the tomb the linen cloths and the napkin that had bound his head. Those who contemplate these mysteries, if they are Peters and Johns in understanding, will believe that the Lord has truly risen.

¶ 61. The Lord’s tomb is, perhaps, this world itself, or the heart, or the soul of any faithful person. The napkin signifies spiritual theology—that simple and utterly formless knowledge by which the Word was previously

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known to us, without which He is entirely incomprehensible and beyond the capacity of our thought.

¶ 62. Whoever honors the Lord's burial will also behold His glorious resurrection, at the very time when He remains unseen by others unlike himself. For He is no longer exposed to the plots of His enemies, being no more covered by the outward wrappings through which He had appeared vulnerable to those who wished to seize Him and by which He willingly embraced suffering for the salvation of all.

¶ 63. Whoever honors the Lord's burial becomes venerable in the eyes of all the devout; for having fulfilled the duty of piety toward the Crucified, he does not leave Him to disgrace and public scorn but frees Him from it. Those, however, who sealed the tomb and set soldiers to guard it are worthy of universal condemnation. When the Word rises, they try to make it appear that He has been stolen, filled with suspicion. Thus the false disciple—who represents a counterfeit virtue—along with the soldiers, bribed with money, fabricates accusations against Christ. But the truly spiritual and mature person recognizes the force of these mysteries; he understands how, and in how many ways, the Lord is crucified, buried, and raised—inasmuch as lustful thoughts, supported by demons, sit enthroned in the heart and, like garments, divide the patterns and forms of moral beauty through temptations, as if killing them; and through the occupation of sin, they imprint distorted forms of thoughts.

¶ 64. Every lover of money who outwardly imitates virtue in habit and behavior, when the opportunity arises to seize wealth that he desires, will at once disown the moral principles by which he had seemed to be a disciple of the Word.

¶ 65. When you observe haughty people who cannot bear to hear those better than themselves being praised, and who strive to darken the truth once it is made manifest—trying to suppress it with innumerable temptations and bury it under impious accusations—recognize in them those who crucify and bury the Lord, setting soldiers to guard the tomb. Yet their machinations only make the Word rise up more gloriously; for, as He is

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assaulted by their schemes, His endurance in suffering renders Him all the more radiant and unassailable.

¶ 66. The mystery of the Word's assumption of the body holds within itself the power of all the riddles and figures of Scripture, both those seen by the eyes and those grasped by the mind, revealing, through them, the knowledge of the Creator. Whoever understands the mystery of the Cross and the tomb has already contemplated the reasons of these signs; but whoever also learns the hidden power of the Resurrection knows the final purpose for which God first created all things.

¶ 67. Everything visible requires the Cross; the very nature of things affected in them needs the condition of the Cross to restrain their attachments and relations. Everything intelligible requires burial, in which all that acts upon the mind falls into stillness and repose. When affection and relation have been removed, and the natural operation and movement of the mind with respect to anything has ceased, then the Word alone appears by Himself, as One risen from the dead, holding circumscribed within Himself all that proceeds from Him, yet remaining naturally unrelated to anything. For it is by grace, not by nature, that the elect come to salvation.

¶ 68. Times, ages, and places are all “for something”—they exist as settings and frameworks in which understood realities appear; outside them there is none of these things. God, however, does not belong to the things that are “for something,” since nothing is coordinated with Him. Thus, if God is the inheritance and possession of the saints who have been counted worthy of this gift, He stands above all ages, times, and places, and His “place” is God Himself, as it is written: “Be for me a protecting God and a house of refuge, that You may save me.”

¶ 69. The end has nothing in common with the middle; otherwise it would not be truly end. The middle is whatever exists by nature as that which leads from the beginning toward the end. Therefore, since all ages, times, and places, together with all that is understood along with them, exist in relation to God who is without beginning, they remain infinitely far from Him and are as remote as possible from the ultimate End. And because God

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is Himself the End of the elect, no middle relation is discerned in those who have become like the Supreme Mind.

¶ 70. The entire cosmos, bounded by its own rational principles, is called “place” and “age” along with those who dwell in it. It is fitting that it contains in itself certain natural methods of reasoning which, by producing partial knowledge of God, are adapted to our condition. As long as these methods are in use, we cannot be without intermediary and partial comprehension. But what is partial, when it seems to reach its own perfection, will be abolished; mirrors and enigmas will pass away when truth comes face to face. Then the elect, in accordance with God, will transcend every world, age, and place, having been as children under tutelage until that moment.

¶ 71. Pilate prefigures the natural law; the Jewish people embody the written law. Whoever has not ascended, by faith, into the higher law of grace cannot receive the truth that is superior both by nature and by word; instead, he will crucify the Word, rejecting the Gospel either as a stumbling block, like the Jews, or as folly, like the Greeks.

¶ 72. When you see Herod and Pilate becoming friends in order to kill Jesus, discern within yourself that the demons of lust and of vainglory have joined their schemes to annihilate the discourse of virtue and knowledge. The demon of vainglory, putting on a counterfeit spiritual knowledge, hands the soul over to the demon of fornication; and the demon of fornication, deceiving under the guise of purity, returns it again to vainglory. Thus Herod, clothing Jesus in white, sent Him back to Pilate.

¶ 73. It is better not to serve the flesh and its passions and vices at all. For, as it is written, “They do not gather figs from thorns nor grapes from brambles”—meaning that virtue is not harvested from the flesh and its pleasures, but from knowledge that is according to God.

¶ 74. The ascetic who is tried by temptations, purified by bodily labors, and made complete through diligent care for lofty teachings is followed by divine consolation. For, as Moses says, “The Lord came from Sinai”—this signifies the temptations and assaults of evils—“and shone upon us from Seir”—from bodily labors—“and hastened from the mount of Paran

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with tens of thousands of saints”—from the mount of faith, with ten thousand holy teachings.

¶ 75. Herod signifies the flesh’s reasoning; Pilate, the sense power; Caesar, the things under sense; and the Jews, the soul with its reasonings. Thus, when the soul, through ignorance, clings to what is in the senses, the Word is handed over to death by those senses which lord it over the things that perish.

¶ 76. Herod rules over the deeds wrought by passions and lusts; Pilate over the dispositions shaped by deceit; Caesar over the darkness of this world; the Jews over the soul itself. Therefore, when the soul, enslaved to passions and lusts, betrays virtue by surrendering to the habits of vice, it passes from the kingdom of God into the ruinous bondage of the devil.

¶ 77. For the soul to taste spiritual gladness, it is not enough merely to subdue passions and vices; it must also fulfill the commandments and accumulate the fruits of virtue. “Do not rejoice that the demons”—that is, passions and vices—“are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven,” through the grace of adoption given by the cultivation of virtue and the entrance into the place of untroubled and most tranquil rest.

¶ 78. It is absolutely necessary that the one who possesses knowledge and piety also devote himself to practical works and the exercise of virtue. For it is written: “He who has a purse”—that is, the knowledge of spiritual things—“let him take it, and likewise a bag”—that is, the rich fruits of virtues that nourish the soul. But he who does not yet have purse and bag—that is, knowledge and virtue—must sell his cloak and buy a sword: with zeal he must dedicate his body to the labors of virtue and wisely fight for the peace of God against passions, vices, and demons, discerning what is worse from what is better, that is, vice from virtue.

¶ 79. The Lord, appearing publicly at thirty years of age, reveals and manifests Himself. In the number thirty, He secretly instructs the more discerning in His mysteries. The number seven signifies time, for time unfolds in sevens; five signifies nature, for nature is fivefold in the senses; eight signifies what is spiritual and intelligible, for the origin of intellect is beyond the cycle of time; ten signifies Providence, on account of the holy

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Decalogue, which orders human life well. By combining five, seven, eight, and ten, the number thirty is formed. Whoever knows how to follow the Lord rightly as Creator and Guide will also understand why He was revealed at thirty years, so that he might preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.

¶ 80. Whoever is dissolved by bodily pleasures and lusts, like one paralyzed, is useless for virtue and unfit for knowledge and contemplation. Such a one lacks the discernment—the right judgment of the soul—to step into the pool when the water is stirred. Virtue, which is capable of receiving knowledge, is not healed if the sick person, weighed down by sloth, refuses to let himself be carried by another and remains unhealed. This is why the paralytic lay thirty-eight years in his infirmity. For the one who does not see creation as subject to God's all-seeing glory and does not rise in his soul to understand the inner nature of things perceived by the mind, justly remains sick within that number of years. The number thirty, in a natural sense, signifies the nature that falls within sensation, and practically signifies the virtue worked out in action. The number eight, naturally, signifies the intellect and spiritual realities; and in a higher sense, it fills the mind with divine knowledge and theology. Therefore, whoever is not moved toward God remains paralyzed until the Word comes and teaches him the straight path of salvation, saying: "Rise, take up your bed, and walk"—that is, detach yourself from the pleasures and lusts that bind you, lift up your soul with the burden of virtue, and journey toward the heavenly homeland. It is better to ascend by the numbers of action into virtue than to be carried along by the ease of a luxurious life into ruin.

¶ 81. As long as our substance and nature, together with all realities secondary to God, have not yet entirely transcended the grasp of the mind and we have not obtained the habit of immutability which virtue grants, we have not yet reached that high dignity. But when, through love, we receive this state, we will understand the power of the divine promise. For there those who are worthy and upright will be established in a firm and unshaken condition, where the mind, rooted by charity, becomes immovable. Whoever has not yet gone beyond his own intellect and all that can be comprehended,

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and has not entered that silence which surpasses every thought, cannot yet be free from all change.

¶ 82. Every thought and every intellect of the mind possesses at least a twofold power and expression, or at minimum a single relational movement. It stands as a middle bond between two extremes—between what is understood and that which understands—and thus cannot maintain simplicity. What is understood stands under the power of the intellect that understands; and what understands stands in relation to what is understood, receiving it as something impressed within it. Nothing in created being is truly simple in itself, whether as substance, intellect, or indivisible unity. But God, whether named as essence, cannot bear a passive power of being understood lest He be composite; nor, if called intellect, can He require a subject to receive Him. God Himself is, by essence, Intellect; He is wholly intellect and only intellect, and in the same way He is essence and nature, surpassing both essence and intellect. He is indivisible Unity, without parts, existing in absolute simplicity. Therefore, whoever still has thought or intellect has not transcended duality; but the one who entirely abandons them has entered into the realm of Unity, having passed beyond every other mode of knowing.

¶ 83. In created things there is multiplicity, diversity, and distinction; but in God, who alone truly is, there is only identity, simplicity, and perfect sameness. It is neither safe nor wise to introduce discursive thought into contemplation of God before we have transcended the multiplicity of created things. Moses teaches this: when he set his tent outside the camp and then entered into converse with God, he indicated that to speak of God with the mind still entangled in duality is perilous. God is more fittingly contemplated in a silence beyond images, where He is indivisible Unity and not amidst multiplicity. The high priest, who enters once a year into the Holy of Holies, teaches the same mystery: only after surpassing everything perceived by sense and mind does one enter with a purified intellect to behold divine visions and contemplation.

¶ 84. The great Moses, having pitched his tent outside the camp—that is, having fixed his mind outside the visible world—began to worship



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God. Entering into the cloud—that obscurity and hiddenness of immaterial knowledge—he there celebrated the most holy mysteries and initiated himself into them.

¶ 85. The cloud is dark, invisible, and immaterial. It is an archetypal state of knowledge of things into which one who enters, like Moses, contemplates aspects of mortal nature that cannot be seen. There, divine virtues are imparted, and like a painted tablet it descends, bearing beautifully the form and splendor of the Creator for those who are called to imitate virtue in mind. This grace and gift of God is shown in great abundance.

¶ 86. Those who cultivate true philosophy in the fear of God derive immense profit from its knowledge: the mind, joined to things, is no longer subject to change but with steady constancy approaches virtue with a ready and joyful heart.

¶ 87. We who have been baptized into Christ through the Spirit await the supreme resurrection in spirit—that is, the continual increase of good works of the Spirit—while guarding the body beforehand in purity. Whoever has reached this inner resurrection no longer fears the loss of the good things he possesses.

¶ 88. Since God has ordained, in His mercy toward the mortal race, to send down from heaven the gift of divine virtue, He fashioned the sacred tabernacle and all its vessels as an image of wisdom and a symbolic figure of His divine essence.

¶ 89. The grace of the New Covenant is mystically hidden within the letter of the Old. Hence the Apostle says that “the law is spiritual.” According to the letter, the law is old and its necessity fades with time; according to the Spirit, it remains powerful, for grace is of such a kind that it suffers no loss or diminishment.

¶ 90. The law casts the shadow of the Gospel; the Gospel, in turn, is the image of the good things to come. The law forbids evil deeds; the Gospel both forbids evil and reveals the good works that are to be done.

¶ 91. All of divine Scripture is like a spiritual human being, composed of flesh and spirit. Whoever calls the literal text of Scripture its

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“flesh” and its inner meaning and understanding its “spirit” speaks rightly. Blessed is the one who, having set aside what perishes and corrupts, adheres entirely to what does not decay.

¶ 92. The law is the flesh of that spiritual man whom Scripture depicts; the prophets are the senses; the Gospel is the rational soul, which works through the flesh (the law) and the senses (the prophets) and manifests its power in deeds.

¶ 93. The law possessed only the shadow; the prophets held an image of the divine and spiritual goods contained in the Gospel. Finally, the Gospel itself presents to us the present truth of the realities which the law, by its anticipatory figures, concealed, and which the prophets portrayed more clearly in outline, though still only in part.

¶ 94. The one who follows the law in life and conduct is delivered from the conclusions of evil and vice—that is, from their extreme acts—by offering to God what was previously wrought by irrational impulses of passion and desire. In this way, spiritual infancy is sufficiently safeguarded unto salvation.

¶ 95. The one instructed in the prophetic word not only abandons the acts and effects of passions and vices but also uproots assent to them from his mind, so that he not only refrains from evil in the flesh, but also ensures that the higher part of his soul does not unwittingly act in a distorted manner.

¶ 96. The one who truly embraces the evangelical life in his heart cuts off from himself both the beginning and the consummation of evil and vice. He cultivates virtue in both action and thought, offering sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God, free from the agitation of desires and passions in both deed and intention. He is liberated from the conflict that once raged in his soul and is granted a joy that cannot be sated, being nourished and delighted by the hope of the blessings to come.

¶ 97. For those who labor diligently in the divine Scriptures, the Word of the Lord appears in a twofold manner. One mode is common, more accessible to the many but truly seen by only a few, concerning which it is said, “We saw Him, and He had no form or comeliness.” The other mode is

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hidden and perceived by fewer still—namely, those already sanctified—like Peter, James, and John, who beheld Him transfigured, surpassing the senses in brightness, by which the beauty of the Lord was unveiled, more beautiful than the sons of men. The first mode befits beginners and those being initiated; the second belongs to the perfected and those complete in knowledge. The first corresponds to His first coming, to which the letter of the Gospel refers and by which those who endure suffering are cleansed from evil. The second signifies His glorious second coming, to which we understand the spirit of the Gospel to refer, transforming those formed in spiritual knowledge into deification through the gift of wisdom by contemplation of the face of the Word.

¶ 98. The one who bears evil steadfastly for the sake of virtue first experiences the first advent of the Word, whereby he is cleansed from every stain. The one who, through contemplation, raises his soul to an angelic state experiences the second advent, which grants him immunity from evil and protects him from harm.

¶ 99. Sense accompanies the one engaged in active works. Whoever labors in virtue remains bound, to some degree, to natural inclinations toward the flesh. But for the wise and spiritual, there is a holy insensibility and a kind of stupor to sense by which the mind, turned away from flesh and world, is drawn wholly to God. The first, who struggles in action, wrestles continually to loosen the soul from the bonds of carnal nature and often grows weary. The second, who has plucked out the nails of this bondage through contemplation, is no longer enslaved to it; he is entirely freed from the world, which cannot touch him, because his state is no longer subject to it nor to any power that seeks to dominate him.

¶ 100. The manna given to Israel in the wilderness is the Word of God, who nourishes all who partake of Him with spiritual food adequate to every appetite. He adapts Himself to the desire of each participant, imparting taste and quality to all spiritual nourishment. To those born again from the incorruptible seed by the Spirit, He becomes pure, guileless milk; to the weak, He becomes tender greens, strengthening the mind weighed down by passions; and to those who have been trained to discern good and evil, He

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becomes solid food. Indeed, the Word of God holds countless other powers and virtues that no one in the present age can fully comprehend. All, or at least some, of these will be given to the faithful who, having been loosed from this mortal life, will be found worthy to be set in possession of much or even all of what is to come. For all the gifts of this present age are the smallest and least in comparison with those of the age to come.

### SECOND 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. One God—one divinity—simple, superessential, without division or composition: the unity of the Principle beyond all principles, indivisible and undivided, wholly One and wholly Trinity. The unity is entirely present in the Trinity, and the Trinity is entirely present in the unity. The same one essence is fully the Father, fully the Son, fully the Holy Spirit; and in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the whole divinity dwells indivisibly. Nothing of God is partial: the Father is not “part” of God, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. The divinity is simple and cannot be divided; and none of the Persons lacks anything of the divine perfection. The whole of the divinity is perfectly in the whole Father, perfectly in the whole Son, perfectly in the whole Holy Spirit. Thus there is one God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one essence, one power, one operation, for none of the Persons exists or is understood apart from the others.

¶ 2. Every act of understanding belongs both to the one who understands and to the thing understood. But God is neither the one who understands nor the thing understood, for He transcends both. Otherwise, the one who understands God would stand in necessary relation to Him as object, or God would stand under the mind as something comprehended. Therefore, God must be conceived as superior to both knowing and being known, for both pertain only to realities secondary to Him.

¶ 3. Every act of understanding, being a quality, resides in some substance and has a motion proper to that substance. Nothing absolutely simple can receive such motion unless it was not absolutely simple in the first place. But God is utterly simple in every way, not a substance “in a subject,”

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and the act of understanding has no place in Him as either subject or object. He exists beyond both substance and understanding, surpassing all that pertains to objects and acts of knowledge.

¶ 4. Just as straight lines drawn from a center exist indivisibly in their point of origin, so those who have been judged worthy to converse with God behold in Him, with simple and indivisible knowledge, the pre-existent logoi of all created beings.

¶ 5. Understanding, formed by the things it knows, produces diverse acts of knowing in accordance with the species and form of each object. But when it rises above the multiplicity of all things perceived or conceived, it becomes free of forms altogether. Then the Logos of the mind, transcending all thought, bears it upward into a state in which the understanding ceases from its shifting movements among forms. To the one in whom this occurs, rest is granted from his works, as God rested from His.

¶ 6. Whoever reaches in this life the highest perfection granted to mortals bears fruit for God: the fruits of love, peace, and long-suffering in the present age, and those of incorruption and eternal being in the age to come. For the first fruits pertain to those completing the works of action; but the latter belong to the one who has surpassed the created order through true knowledge.

¶ 7. As sin is the proper offspring of disobedience, so virtue is the proper work of obedience. Disobedience brings transgression of the commandment and separation from the One who commands; obedience brings observance of the commandment and union with the One who commands. Therefore, the one who keeps the commandment through obedience works righteousness and preserves union with God through love; while the one who transgresses through disobedience sins and severs himself from this unity.

¶ 8. Whoever is gathered back from the division that arises from transgression must first be separated from passions and vices; then from lustful thoughts and those that cling to vice; then from nature and its reasonings; then even from spiritual matters and the sciences concerning them. Finally, when overcome by the manifold providences of God, he

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comes to the unsearchable knowledge of unity itself. In this immutable unity the mind rejoices with ineffable joy, for it has found the peace surpassing all understanding.

¶ 9. Fear of Gehenna drives beginners to flee wickedness and vice. The love of the reward granted to the good stirs those who are progressing to practice virtue eagerly. But the mystery of perfect charity lifts the mind above all created things, blinding it to all that is second to God. For the Lord alone enlightens, showing divine things to those who have become blind to all that is not God.

¶ 10. The Word of God is like a mustard seed: small to sight before cultivation, but once tended, it grows so vast that the rational orders of creation—those perceived by the senses and those apprehended by the mind—rest within it like the birds under its branches. In it all reasons are gathered, though none of the created things contains what it contains. Thus the Lord says that whoever has faith as a mustard seed can move mountains—that is, cast down the dominion and power of the devil.

¶ 11. The mustard seed is the Lord Himself, sown by faith into the spirit of the receptive heart. Whoever cultivates it diligently by virtuous deeds removes from himself the mountain of earthly-mindedness—heavy and rooted in malice and vice—and casts it away. Then the logoi of the commandments and the divine virtues settle in him like the birds of heaven.

¶ 12. Whoever builds on the Lord as the foundation of faith and raises upon Him the high peak of goodness should build with gold, silver, and precious stones—that is, with pure doctrine of God, a luminous life, and minds radiant with the brightness of union. He must not build with wood, hay, or stubble—that is, with idolatry, with thoughts bound to earthly things, with lives resisting reason, or with lustful fantasies devoid of spiritual intelligence.

¶ 13. Whoever thirsts for knowledge should set his immovable steps before the Lord, as God said to Moses, “Stand here with Me.” For among those who stand before God there are many degrees. Some standing there do not taste death until they see the Kingdom coming in power. The Lord does not appear to all in the same form: to beginners He appears in

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servanthood; but to those who ascend with Him to the mountain of transformation, He appears in the form of God, as before the world was. Thus the same Lord appears differently to each according to the measure of faith.

¶ 14. When the Word of God becomes radiant and brilliant and His face shines like the sun, then His garments—namely, the sacred words of the Gospel—appear white, nothing obscured or hidden. Moses and Elijah also appear, that is, the spiritual reasonings of the Law and the Prophets, harmoniously converging with the Gospel in His light.

¶ 15. Just as the Son of Man will come with His angels in the glory of the Father, so too the Word of God transforms according to each person's progress in virtue, coming with the "angels of His glory"—that is, with the spiritual logoi of the Law and the Prophets. These, appearing with the transfigured Lord, preserve within themselves the same form of His glory in the measure they can receive.

¶ 16. Whoever has been instructed in the mystery of divine unity is also taught the logoi of providence and judgment that proceed from it. Thus Peter's desire to build three tabernacles signifies the three modes through which salvation's counsel is imparted: the virtue of practical action and purity, prefigured by Elijah; the equity of natural contemplation, signified by Moses; and the perfection of prudence, revealed by the Lord Himself. They are called tabernacles because greater and more glorious realities will be given in the age to come.

¶ 17. The one who labors in action is called a "stranger in the flesh," for by practicing the virtues he separates himself from the mind driven toward fleshly pleasure and withdraws from earthly delusion. The contemplative, spiritually trained, is also called a stranger, for he beholds truth only in images and enigmas, not yet face to face. Even those who shine with holiness, compared to what is to come, still walk in the image of the good and cry, "I am a stranger and sojourner, as were all my fathers."

¶ 18. Whoever devotes himself to prayer must not allow himself to be drawn away from the ascent toward God. This ascent moves from virtue to virtue, from clarity to clarity, through the cultivation of action and

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contemplation. Just as Scripture leads from the letter to the spirit, so prayer must lift the mind from human concerns to divine realities, following Jesus the Son of God who has passed through the heavens, so that through Him we may pass beyond all that is second to God and reach Him in the majesty of His natural immensity.

¶ 19. It is always better to seek God, for though in this life we cannot reach the summit of divine heights, we may at times glimpse them, and in the saints behold what is sanctified, and in the spiritual contemplate what is spiritual. This is taught by the high priest who enters from the holier sanctuary into the Holy of Holies.

¶ 20. The Word of God is not many words nor mere verbosity; it is one and simple, though expressed through many theological principles. Thus the one who prays for the sake of truth, even if he speaks at length, has spoken but one Word.

¶ 21. In Christ—the God and Word of the Father—the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily according to essence; but in us it dwells by grace. This occurs when we gather within ourselves every virtue and all wisdom according to what has been granted to human nature, so that we may imitate the divine archetype. For nothing prevents the fullness of divinity from dwelling in us by God's grace when we are adorned with the manifold truths of theology and spiritual knowledge.

¶ 22. Just as human speech proceeds naturally from the mind as the messenger of its inner motions, so the Word of God—the natural and essential Logos—reveals the Father and makes Him known to creation. Without the Logos nothing created could know the Father. Thus the great plan of God is announced through this Word.

¶ 23. The great plan of God, once hidden, is the mystery of the divine economy, made known by the Only-Begotten when He took flesh. Whoever knows this mystery and lives according to it becomes a herald of the divine plan, ascending by word and deed until he reaches the One who descended to him in humility.

¶ 24. When the Word descended to the lower parts of the earth through the Incarnation and then ascended above all heavens, He, who is



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naturally immovable, mystically rejoiced in the divine love of wisdom, contemplating the blessed end promised to those who love Him.

¶ 25. The Word of God and Son of the Father became man so that human beings might become gods and sons of God. We believe that one day we shall be where Christ is, our Head, who has gone before us to the Father. For God will stand in the midst of the assembly of the saved, bestowing the blessedness of the age to come, with no separation between the elect and the worthy.

¶ 26. Whoever is still enslaved by fleshly desires is like an idolater, dwelling in the land of the Chaldeans. But when he turns away from created things and perceives rightly the modes of nature, he leaves Chaldea and enters Haran—Mesopotamia—standing at the border of virtue and vice. But if he surpasses even this intermediate understanding and grasps the true sense of the good, he journeys to the promised land free from all vice, corruption, and ignorance, which God shows to those who love Him.

¶ 27. The Word of God was crucified because of our weakness and rose in the power of God. He acts spiritually for our sake, becoming all things to all that He might save all. Thus Paul judged it right to know nothing but “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” while also declaring that God “raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms.” The Word speaks according to the measure of grace in each person.

¶ 28. Before His manifestation in the flesh, the Word was spiritually present to the patriarchs and prophets, revealing beforehand the mysteries of His coming. Likewise, after His coming, He visits not only those who are spiritual children, nourishing them and leading them toward divine maturity, but also the perfect, revealing to them the form of the age to come.

¶ 29. As the Law and the Prophets, who preceded the Word in the flesh, guided souls to Christ, so the incarnate and glorified Word guides souls to His spiritual presence, converting the worthy from flesh to spirit and revealing hidden things at the end of the age.

¶ 30. As long as I remain imperfect in action, not subject to the commandments, and immature in knowledge, Christ will be imperfect in

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me. For I diminish myself if I do not grow with Him, since I am a member of His body and belong to Him.

¶ 31. Scripture says, “The sun rises and the sun sets.” Thus the Word is sometimes perceived above and sometimes below, depending on the dignity and disposition of the one who practices virtue. Blessed is the one who, like Joshua the son of Nun, keeps the Sun of righteousness from setting within himself—that is, free from the darkness of malice and ignorance—so that when the demons rise against him, they are defeated.

¶ 32. The Word of God, exalted in us through virtue and contemplation, draws all things to Himself—our thoughts, our reasonings, our senses—sanctifying even the members of the body and bringing them under His spiritual yoke. Therefore, the one who examines divine things must hasten to ascend after the Word until he reaches the place where the Word dwells. For there, as Ecclesiastes says, “the spirit goes,” and it “goes to its place”—that is, to the Holy of Holies where the Word has entered as our forerunner.

¶ 33. Whoever clings to the reasoning of piety and practices philosophy stands firm against invisible powers, armed with prayer, so that both natural discernment (whose faint light remains) and the illuminating grace of the Spirit may dwell and operate within him. The former trains the flesh through ascetic practice; the latter enlightens the soul to prize wisdom above all things, casting down the strongholds of malice and the pride set against divine knowledge. Joshua prefigures this by commanding the sun to stand still over Gibeon and the moon over the valley—signifying the continuous operation of divine knowledge and natural discernment without decline.

¶ 34. Gibeon signifies the lofty mind; the valley signifies the lowly flesh subject to corruption. The sun—the Word—illuminates the mind, freeing it from ignorance; the moon—the natural law—governs the flesh, urging it to submission to the spirit. Though nature is changeable, in the saints, through their fixed habit of virtue, it becomes steadfast.

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¶ 35. The Lord is not to be sought outside oneself, but within, by living faith. “Near you is the Word, in your mouth and in your heart.” Since Christ is this Word, He is precisely what is sought.

¶ 36. Let us never cast away hope in divine mercy, thinking that God’s infinite height prevents Him from reaching us, nor despair because of the infinite depth of our fall, thinking virtue cannot rise again in us. With God both are possible: He can incline toward us, enlighten our mind, awaken virtue anew, and exalt us through righteousness. “Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend to heaven? who will descend into the abyss?” For heaven signifies the hiddenness of God’s essence, and the abyss the profound mystery of His providence. Both are difficult to approach except through faith.

¶ 37. In the one devoted to action, speech becomes flesh, embodied as modes of virtue. In the one devoted to contemplation, speech becomes spirit, refined into concepts and perceptions, returning to what it was in the beginning: the Word who is God.

¶ 38. The one who makes speech “flesh” adjusts his words to the capacity of his hearers, teaching moral doctrine. The one who makes speech “spirit” interprets divine mysteries through lofty contemplations.

¶ 39. The one who speaks of God by positive propositions makes speech flesh, knowing God only through created effects. But the one who speaks of God apophatically, stripping away all that is known, makes speech spirit: “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God,” known only as Unknown.

¶ 40. Whoever, following the patriarchs, digs the wells of virtue and knowledge through action and contemplation will find Christ—the fountain of life—within himself. Wisdom commands us: “Drink water from your own cistern.” Whoever does this discovers within himself the treasures of divine wisdom.

¶ 41. Whoever lives according to the senses alone, like irrational beasts, turns speech into flesh, abusing passions created by God and ignoring the wisdom shining in all things. He does not recognize the purpose or end

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for which he was created by what is visible but walks in darkness, groping in ignorance of God.

¶ 42. Whoever binds himself solely to the letter of Scripture turns speech into flesh, believing God delights in the sacrifice of animals and focusing only on outward purity while neglecting the inner beauty of the soul. For this reason, the visible things and the divine Word were given—to reveal inner virtue.

¶ 43. The Gospel says the Lord is set for the fall and rising of many. The fall pertains to those who cling only to sense or letter, who cannot pass into the new grace of the Spirit; the rising belongs to those who contemplate both creation and Scripture spiritually, conforming themselves to the divine image.

¶ 44. Understood in praise, the Lord is set for the fall of passions and sinful thoughts within the faithful, and for the rising of virtues and holy thoughts.

¶ 45. Whoever thinks the Lord is merely the author of corruptible things, like Mary Magdalene, mistakes Him for a gardener. Therefore the Lord says, “Do not touch Me,” for one who holds such a lowly opinion cannot yet ascend to the Father.

¶ 46. Those who, out of fear of evil spirits, “sit in the upper room of Galilee with the doors closed”—that is, who remain in contemplation with the senses shut—receive the coming of the Word without knowing how. He enters without the senses, quiets their passions with peace, grants them immovability, and bestows the gifts of the Spirit as protection against evil.

¶ 47. To those who investigate divine doctrine with carnal reasoning, the Lord does not ascend to the Father; but to those who seek Him with spiritual senses, He does ascend. Let us therefore rise above earthly things lest He say to us as to the Jews, “Where I am going, you cannot come.”

¶ 48. The land of the Chaldeans symbolizes vice and sensuality; Mesopotamia symbolizes mixed and uncertain conduct; the promised land symbolizes complete goodness. Whoever abandons Israel’s ancient habit—forsaking virtue—returns to bondage under vice.

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¶ 49. None of the saints willingly descended into Babylon. If any were taken captive, this represents those who, by necessity for the salvation of others, descend temporarily from contemplation into moral instruction. Thus Paul, though desiring to depart and be with Christ, remained in the flesh for the benefit of his disciples.

¶ 50. Just as David, by playing the harp, refreshed Saul from the evil spirit, so every spiritual word, shaped by wise teaching, lifts and refreshes the soul, freeing it from the weight of a troubled conscience.

¶ 51. David's ruddy beauty and bright eyes signify the harmony of life ordered by divine reason, joined to the illuminating discourse of wisdom. Action and contemplation stand together: the former radiant with virtue, the latter shining with divine insight.

¶ 52. Saul's kingdom—the service of the corporeal law—was abolished because it could not bring perfection. David's kingdom signifies the evangelical law, which fully accomplishes God's will.

¶ 53. Saul symbolizes the natural law, entrusted with rule from the beginning; but having disobeyed—sparing Agag (the flesh)—and falling into vice, he was cast aside so that David, the law of the Spirit, might reign.

¶ 54. Samuel signifies obedience. As long as obedience ministers in us, even if Saul spares Agag, the Word, acting as priest, slays him—destroying the soul's attachment to sinful pleasure.

¶ 55. When the soul grows proud and ceases to consult the Word, it falls into ignorance and becomes enslaved to the vices from which it had fled. Through unwilling trials it approaches demons, seeking comfort from them, like Saul consulting the sorceress when he no longer listened to Samuel.

¶ 56. Whoever prays for daily bread receives not the whole of what the Bread is in itself, but only what he can contain. The Bread of Life freely gives itself to all but distributes according to each one's measure.

¶ 57. The Lord is partly absent and partly present: absent in regard to vision face-to-face, present through contemplation in a mirror and enigma.

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¶ 58. To the one devoted to action, the Lord is present through virtues; to the one ignorant of virtue, He is far. To the one pursuing contemplation, He is present through knowledge; to the one who neglects contemplation, He is absent.

¶ 59. The one who rises into contemplation as if “carried in the clouds” is far from the flesh but near to the Lord. The one who remains only with sense is far from the Lord. Whoever cannot receive the pure doctrine of God without enigma remains bound to what appears.

¶ 60. The Word is called flesh not only because He became incarnate but also because, in His original form, He is pure Truth without parable or figure. But when He speaks to those who cannot grasp pure spirit, He clothes Himself in varied words and images, becoming “flesh” to them. Many see only the outer words and not the Word Himself.

¶ 61. The beginnings of piety are carnal, for we cling first to the letter. But as we progress, the Spirit strips the letter of coarseness, revealing Christ in purity. Thus Paul says, “Even though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, now we know Him thus no longer.”

¶ 62. Whoever institutes his life in Christ surpasses both legal and natural righteousness. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything,” says Paul; the former signifies legal righteousness, the latter natural.

¶ 63. Some are born again of water and Spirit; others receive baptism in Spirit and fire. These four—water, Spirit, fire, Holy Spirit—are one and the same Spirit manifesting itself in different ways: cleansing, empowering, purifying, or illuminating with wisdom.

¶ 64. The Sabbath law—“Let your ox and your servant rest”—mystically concerns the body and the soul. The body is the ox bearing the burdens of virtue; the soul, the servant engaged in contemplation. Each receives rest according to its manner of good work.

¶ 65. One equipped with discernment bridle the body like a beast, compelling it to virtuous action; the contemplative servant performs virtue in its proper mode. The Sabbath is the tranquil and immovable habit of soul and body pacified by virtue.

## CHAPTERS ON THEOLOGY & ECONOMY

¶ 66. To beginners, the Word appears as chaff, for their souls remain tender and easily wounded by passions. To the more advanced, He is bread, nourishing the mind in divine perfection. Thus the patriarchs gathered both bread and fodder on their journeys, signifying nourishment for both soul and body.

¶ 67. The Word is called water, dew, spring, or river according to the capacity of the receiver. As dew, He quenches the burning of lust; as water, He refreshes those drowning in malice; as a spring, He grants wisdom to the contemplative; as a river, He pours out doctrine abundantly upon the rational, the animal-like, and even the plant-like souls, raising each to its proper nature.

¶ 68. The Word is a way for those who run the race of virtue without turning aside—neither toward vainglory on the right nor toward passion on the left, but straight toward piety. Asa, king of Judah, grew weak in his feet in old age, symbolizing a faltering in the straight course of virtue.

¶ 69. The Word is the door that opens to knowledge, the key that grants entrance, the way that guides, and the kingdom that possesses and is possessed. To the perfect, He reveals the treasures of wisdom.

¶ 70. The Lord is light, life, resurrection, and truth: light banishing ignorance; life moving those who love Him; resurrection raising the mind from dead passions; truth bestowing the stable disposition of the good.

¶ 71. The Word of God is present in every commandment. Whoever receives and keeps the divine command receives the Word dwelling within it; and with the Word, the Father; and with the Father, the Holy Spirit. “Whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” Thus the one who obeys the command receives the entire Trinity mystically.

¶ 72. The one who honors God with words alone does not glorify God in himself; but the one who endures hardships for the sake of virtue glorifies God and is glorified by Him. For virtue’s labor brings divine illumination, as the Lord said on His way to the Passion: “Now the Son of Man is glorified...”

## BOOK SEVEN

¶ 73. As long as we see the divine Word clothed in the figures and enigmas of Scripture, we do not yet behold Him as simple, incorporeal, and unitive. We must break through the letter and behold the Word as He is, lest clinging to the outward garment, like Pharaoh's wife grasping Joseph's cloak, we mistake the sign for the Reality.

¶ 74. Scripture's speech, when stripped of its external covering, is like the gentle breeze Elijah heard in Horeb. The cave is the secret place of the mind, where the wisdom of God dwells. Whoever enters it, through action and contemplation, beholds God in a knowledge beyond understanding.

¶ 75. Then the pure speech of truth shines in the mind, casting away preconceived opinions of the world, like scales falling from Paul's eyes. These scales are the opinions affixed to the soul through passion, obscuring the Word's brightness.

¶ 76. Paul received knowledge of the Word "in part"; John saw His glory as of the Only-Begotten. Paul speaks of the divine energies; John of the Incarnate Word full of grace and truth. Whoever preserves the pure doctrine of the Incarnate Word is filled with His fullness, and when He appears, "we shall be like Him."

¶ 77. As long as the soul ascends from virtue to virtue and from knowledge to greater knowledge, it has not reached its end but journeys toward the wondrous tabernacle of God, whose house is filled with exultation and thanksgiving—these being the feasts of the soul who has received the Spirit, crying "Abba, Father."

¶ 78. The wondrous tabernacle is the habit of virtues; the house of God is the soul filled with divine knowledge. Exultation is the triumph born of virtue; thanksgiving is the offering of gratitude for wisdom. Their harmony produces continuous mystical praise.

¶ 79. Whoever has fought powerfully against passions and demons seeks through prayer to purify his heart, that divine grace may transform his mind into a world of spiritual theorems—moral, natural, and theological.

¶ 80. The purified mind understands not only the reasons of lower things but also directs itself wholly toward God. God Himself inscribes His



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Word upon such a mind, like letters engraved on Moses' tablets, as virtue and contemplation increase.

¶ 81. A pure heart is one free from all natural movements toward any created thing, so that God may inscribe His laws upon it like a polished tablet.

¶ 82. A pure heart offers itself to God without the images of any created thing, receiving only the divine forms by which God is known.

¶ 83. The saints receive the "mind of Christ": not by losing their faculties, nor by becoming Christ in essence, but by being illuminated with His light, thinking and understanding according to His divine logoi.

¶ 84. We are called the Body of Christ, not because our bodies are changed into His, nor because His body is divided among us, but because we cast off sin and corruption as His human nature was free of sin. Clothed with His Spirit, we become sinless according to His will.

¶ 85. Scripture teaches of ages, the ends of ages, ages beyond ages, and the age of the age. Some ages belong to time; others extend beyond time. Let us not wander but return to the subject.

¶ 86. There is something above the ages: "The Lord reigns forever." This is the Kingdom of God, which neither began nor has natural definition. It is the inheritance of the elect, where all motion and disturbance cease, and no age or time touches them.

¶ 87. As long as we live, even the perfect know only in part. After the ages, they will receive the fullness of grace and truth, face to face, according to the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness.

¶ 88. Some ask whether the perfection of the Kingdom is growth or stability. As the body is nourished for growth until maturity, and afterward only for preservation, so the soul grows in virtue and knowledge until it reaches Christ's fullness, and then abides in immutable delight, revealing God alone.

¶ 89. Some ask whether the heavenly dwelling places differ by location or spiritual quality. The truth favors the latter: "The Kingdom of God is within you." And "In My Father's house are many mansions."

## BOOK SEVEN

¶ 90. The Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God differ not in substance but in subtle reason: the former is the eternal knowledge of divine things; the latter the participation in divine goods through grace—one before the end, one after.

¶ 91. “The Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near” does not signify time or appearance, but the nearness of the affections suited to it. “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

¶ 92. The Kingdom of God is truly within all believers, but only those who cast off worldly desires and live in the Spirit can say, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

¶ 93. Some say the Kingdom of Heaven is life in heaven; others that it is angelic likeness; others that it is the form of divine beauty. All three harmonize, for each receives according to the measure of justice and grace.

¶ 94. As long as one struggles in action, fighting divine battles, he retains the Word; but when he rests from conflict and ascends through contemplation, he leaves the world and returns to the Father. Thus the Lord says, “I came forth from the Father and entered the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.”

¶ 95. Whoever has mortified earthly members and conquered passions finds rest in Christ, the conqueror of the world. But whoever loves the world is continually pressed and troubled. Both the virtuous and the worldly experience pressure; the former beneficial, the latter destructive.

¶ 96. The title placed above the Savior indicates that the one crucified was the student of natural, divine, and moral philosophy: written in Latin (signifying practice), Greek (signifying natural contemplation), and Hebrew (signifying divine wisdom).

¶ 97. It is not enough to destroy bodily vices; one must also slay wicked thoughts, as the Psalm says, “In the morning I destroyed all the wicked of the earth.”

¶ 98. Whoever pursues virtue unwaveringly and holds upright knowledge perceives divine visitation as the tranquility of soul. “I will sing of the immaculate way when You come to me.”

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¶ 99. Beginners in piety must not only love good but train themselves with the memory of divine judgment. “I will sing of mercy and judgment,” that love and fear may work together.

¶ 100. Whoever has harmonized body and soul through virtue and knowledge becomes God’s harp, God’s pipe, and God’s temple: a harp—virtue in harmony; a pipe—the breath of the Spirit through divine perception; a temple—the dwelling place of the Word in purity of mind.

### SCHOLIUM

1. He does not speak as though some who seek knowledge for the sake of ostentation might perhaps attain it, but rather as though none would attain it at all. For by saying “in a certain vicinity or boundary,” he teaches that no one acquires true knowledge unless he first undertakes bodily labors—namely, continence and charity, through which the soul is purified. For, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
2. By these teachings we are especially exposed and convicted: we suffer from the sickness of avarice and continually offer sacrifice to Mammon.
3. These words also stand openly against the Iconoclasts. Yet note this: the knowledge given in this age is partial and fragmentary; but the wisdom of God shines wholly and entirely in the world, as the Theologian declares: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him.”
4. Further, each of us, through ignorance, becomes enslaved to earthly things, choosing Caesar as our king and delivering the Word to be crucified by Pilate—that is, handing Him over to the tyranny of the senses. Even when subject to Caesar, we are also ruled by Herod, who sins in deed and is habituated to evil. And we ourselves become Jews in this sense: betrayers of virtue, slaves of vice, renouncing the kingdom of God, and submitting to the tyranny of the devil.
5. From ignorance of God springs the blind love of the body and gluttony through which we immediately cling to the flesh and the world. But, by beholding the beauty of God, we ought to transcend these attachments, so that the commandments concerning love of neighbor may be truly

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fulfilled, leading us into firmness and immovability in the good—something not attainable in any other way.

6. All the saints are strangers and sojourners, beholding the truth “in mirrors and riddles”—that is, through obscure representations. But the Iconoclasts, who refuse to see even in mirrors, fall entirely away from the truth.
7. “God stands in the assembly of gods.” Behold the power of the angels. Furthermore, the one who denies the necessity of union between the members and the Head is an unbeliever and is already judged by that very name.
8. Who dwells in the land of the Chaldeans? Who remains in Haran of Mesopotamia? Who is transferred into the good land which God has promised to those who love Him? Let each of us discern spiritually where he stands.
9. Before the coming of Christ—and even now after His coming—the Word of God comes to us spiritually, advancing us by secret and imperceptible increase into those things which are more divine.
10. We too, by neglecting divine knowledge, fall into bondage to passions and vices. For Israel suffered a most grievous captivity; and with what fury and madness was he driven into Christ, like one possessed, unable to resist the compulsion of grace and judgment mingled.
11. Every saint is “ruddy with beautiful eyes”—that is, adorned with active knowledge in magnificent splendor.
12. And this has always been true: the soul does not enter into passions and vices spontaneously, but only when reason is absent or neglected—when it withdraws, the soul quickly falls into the deeds to which passion inclines it.

## BOOK EIGHT

### CHAPTERS ON VIRTUE & VICE

Published by Picus, President of the Inquisitorial Classes in the Parisian Senate—a man indeed upright and learned, but not so versed in theology as the nature of these chapters of Maximus seems to require, in which, as in the others, the greatest theologian himself shines. Nor do I approve of his method of caution, by which he warns the reader not to let his mind be turned away from reading by some few somewhat obscure chapters, placed at the beginning of the first century, which pertain to the Most Blessed Trinity. For once these are passed over, those that follow will be far more pleasing to you as a reader.

For Maximus, in what he expounds concerning the Trinity in these chapters, is no more obscure, nor less pleasing to the readers, than in the rest—if they are accustomed to discussions about God and theology, and not entirely strangers to them. Indeed, with marvelous clarity and skill, he treats everything, as Photius notes about the four hundred chapters of the work entitled *On Charity*. For this is not something he re-read, as if not everything came into his hands.

The same person also warns that the term *oikonomika* should be understood as referring to divine dispensation, for here there is nothing about domestic matters; this indeed is correct, except that it is somewhat excessive. For who, upon hearing *oikonomika* joined with *theologika*, thinks

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of matters pertaining to the household, and not those relating to the mystery of Christ and His dispensation in the flesh? This is why the Greek theologians readily call it *oikonomia*.

The title struggles, and what is lacking is the conjunction before On Virtue and Vice, as if the theological and economic chapters were the same, which is far from the case, and utterly alien to his mind. Therefore, these chapters indicate another subject matter or theme: some of them pertain to God, some to Christ, some to the shaping of morals, and even to virtue and vice. This is well declared by the particle *kai* as restored from the manuscripts.

From these, I also judged the particle *kai martyros* should be removed, wherever Picus found it. This way, the title is clearer, and it is more in line with the usage of others, even though I do not ignore that sometimes Maximus is called martyr. However, more frequently, he is called *homologetes*, because he suffered the gravest cause of faith without death, and ultimately finished his life in exile, worn out by suffering.

### FIRST 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. There is one eternal, superessential Good: the holy, trinitarian, self-subsisting Unity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the union of three infinite hypostases of one infinite and equal nature, whose manner of being, of existing, and of “what” They are remains utterly inaccessible to created things; for this Trinity entirely escapes every created mind, never stepping outside Its own hiddenness and natural mystery, and infinitely surpasses all knowing and even the very knowledge of knowledge.

¶ 2. That alone is truly and essentially Good which has neither beginning nor end, neither cause of being nor cause of existence, and which is not moved in relation to any cause; whatever does have beginning and end, a cause of existence and a motion relative to some cause, is not truly or properly so, and, though called “being” by participation, both is and is said to be only by the will of the One who truly and properly is.

## CHAPTERS ON VIRTUE & VICE

¶ 3. Since the Word precedes all creation, there neither was, nor is, nor will be any Word before the Word; and this Word is not without Mind or Life, but is the living and energizing Word, having with Himself the Father, who is essentially Mind, and the Holy Spirit, who is essentially Life, co-existent with Him.

¶ 4. There is one God, the Father of the one Son, the source of the one Holy Spirit: an unconfused Unity and indivisible Trinity, where the Beginningless Mind alone is Parent of the only-begotten, eternal, essential Word and Source of the one eternal Life, that is, the Holy Spirit.

¶ 5. There is one God who is one Divinity: a Unity without principle, simple and superessential, without parts and indivisible, the very same Unity and Trinity, in which the One whole Unity is the same as the whole Trinity, and the whole Trinity is the same as that one Unity.

¶ 6. Since every participation is first conceived in the mind before that which participates, the Creator and Cause of all necessarily surpasses all things absolutely and beyond all comparison; and just as a nature is prior to the things that share in it, so God is prior to all, not as substance to accidents—for otherwise Divinity would be composite and would require created substance to complete Its own being—but as essence or substance that infinitely transcends every essence and substance; for if human arts derive their forms from what they make, and created nature supplies the species contained in them, much more does God, who brought all substances forth from nothing, transcend every substance and every superessential affirmation, and it is He who even gave art its skill for discovering forms and bestowed on nature the power to produce them, Himself producing all and bringing everything that exists into being.

¶ 7. He who is, in His essence, wholly unparticipable by creatures chooses, in another mode, to be participated by those capable of participation, yet in no way abandons His essential hiddenness or secret mode of being; for the way in which He is, so to speak, “participated” remains forever inexpressible to all, and as God He is participated as He wills and according to the reason He alone knows, while those who partake of Him He has brought into being, by His will and knowledge, through the

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transcendent power of goodness; therefore whatever has been made by the Creator's will can never be coeternal with Him who willed it to begin.

¶ 8. The Word of God, once born in the flesh—this being His condescension of goodness and humanity—is always being born in the Spirit, continually willing to become a child in the virtues and shaping Himself within those who practice them; and in whatever manner He knows He can be received, He manifests Himself without envy or diminution of His own greatness, ever exploring, as it were, the measure of the capacity of those who long to behold Him, yet remaining invisible to all because of the majesty of the mystery; thus the divine Apostle, wisely pondering His power, says: “Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, the same forever,” indicating a mystery that is ever new and never grows old to the mind.

¶ 9. Christ God is born, assuming flesh endowed with an intelligent soul, and becomes man—He who granted all things to proceed from nothing; the Virgin, giving birth above nature, does not break the seal of her virginity, and just as He becomes man without any change in His divine nature or power, so He makes the Virgin both mother and virgin, joining one miracle to another and veiling one wonder by the other; for God, according to His essence, is always a mystery, and in revealing Himself from His natural hiddenness only as far as is needed for what appears to be seen, He makes even that revelation a greater hiddenness, just as in His birth He both reveals and guards the inviolate integrity of virginity.

¶ 10. Natures are renewed and God becomes man; He not only remains divine, stable, and unmoved, but also moves toward what is changeable and unstable in order to bring it to rest; and He not only brings into being a human nature beyond nature—flesh perfected by the Word so that it is no longer driven about by change—but also causes a star to rise from the East, shining even by day and leading the Magi to the place where the Word made flesh lies, symbolically signifying the higher understanding within the Law and the Prophets that guides the nations to the supreme light of knowledge, for the language of Law and Prophets, like a star, directs devout understanding and leads those called by grace according to purpose to the recognition of the incarnate Word.



## CHAPTERS ON VIRTUE & VICE

¶ 11. What I as a man transgressed by freely breaking the divine command, and that which weakened and dissolved the solidity of my nature, the devil, despising the Godhead, drew into the pleasures through which he boasted that he had become the author of death, delighting in the corruption and ruin of nature; therefore God became perfect man, altering nothing in nature except sin (which was never from nature itself), in order to provoke the insatiable dragon, the devouring serpent, to devour the flesh set before him, and so, by tasting it, be conquered and destroyed by the hidden power of the Godhead within that flesh; and thus human nature, by the divine power active within it, is restored to its former grace, for as the devil ruined nature by tasting the poisoned knowledge that corrupted it, so the Lord, offering His flesh to be tasted, overthrew him by His divine power and annihilated him through the very corruption and death he had introduced.

¶ 12. The great mystery of the divine incarnation remains always mystery and profoundly hidden: it does not merely shine for a brief moment so that those who are to be saved may see something of it, but beyond what has been revealed there is always something greater not yet disclosed, and even what is disclosed remains unfathomable in its essence, truly known by no one; for God, being superessential and infinitely beyond every superessentiality, has of His own will and by a mode beyond essence assumed essence, and, though He truly became man from human nature, the how of His becoming man remains forever obscure and beyond explanation, for He became man in a way utterly surpassing all human reasoning.

¶ 13. Let us contemplate the mystery of the divine incarnation in faith, praising and proclaiming it without curious intrusion, for God became man for our salvation; and who possesses such power in prayer or such weight in reason as to describe how the conception of the Word occurred, how flesh was formed without seed, how there was birth without corruption, how the Mother remained Virgin after childbirth, how the One more perfect than all others increased in age and stature, how the all-pure was baptized in water, how He who hungered fed others, how He who was wearied strengthened the weak, how He who suffered brought healing, how He who died bestowed life, and finally how God became man and, even more

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wondrously, how the Word in the flesh is the same hypostasis and homouosios with the Father, being at once fully God by nature and fully man by nature, without either nature being diminished or lost—a mystery that only faith can apprehend, as it is the substance and foundation of what surpasses every human sense and reason.

¶ 14. Adam, by willingly violating the command, taught that the beginning of human nature should be in pleasure and desire; the Lord, removing this from nature, did not accept conception from seed; and the woman, likewise guilty, showed that the origin of birth should be in pain, but the Lord, by His birth, cast corruption out of nature, so that His Mother did not suffer the corruption of childbirth, and at once He took away both the voluntary pleasure and desire and the involuntary pain that followed it, thereby teaching a new life which begins in toil and anguish but ends in divine pleasure and unending joy; for He who created man became man and was born as man to bring salvation to man, healing our sickness by His own suffering and conquering death and corruption by His own death.

¶ 15. The one who, through divine love and desire, inclines more toward the body, yet in that very body escapes being circumscribed by it, shows that God, who draws with a love and desire beyond all comparison and is above all things, does not allow the lover to be confined by anything that comes from Him; therefore let us love and desire God with all our strength, not surrendering to the distractions of the body, but, drawn by His will and attraction, let us rise above all things perceived by the senses or grasped by the mind, and transcend every natural limit, that we may enter into communion with God, who by nature is uncircumscribed.

¶ 16. Envy is a contest and warfare raised against virtue, in which virtue itself is the one striving for victory, and the one in whom virtue remains without being overcome is the combatant who bears all things; and while envy struggles to prevail, virtue, even in the midst of sufferings and the assaults of life, holds the better portion.

¶ 17. The gain of virtue and the labor of struggle bring victory to those who keep patience, for patience leads the mind into peace, and the soul that is joined to God by love is thereby separated from the world and the

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body; for the strength and endurance of the soul in patience is what bears and carries the sufferings of the flesh.

¶ 18. Since it was through the surrounding charm of pleasure that we were deceived from the beginning and, by the death that followed, brought true Life down into death, let us now gratefully accept the toil and suffering of the body, because through the death of that very “life according to pleasure,” which dragged us into death, we are given Life.

¶ 19. When it is clearly recognized that from the pleasures of the flesh the power of sin increases, it is evident that the disordered state of the soul grows out of this evil habit; therefore let us bear the hardships and discomforts of the flesh with strong resolve, that the soul’s defilement may be washed away and the glory to come may be obtained, for the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

¶ 20. Just as physicians do not apply the same remedy to everyone, but discern the proper cure for each bodily condition, so too the Physician of souls, God, knows the fitting treatment for every soul, giving to each what best suits its state and working healing for all; let us then give thanks when He applies His cure, even if it involves suffering, knowing that it ends in blessedness and joy.

¶ 21. Nothing so reveals the soul’s sickness as the labors and desires of the flesh: if the soul yields to them, it shows itself inclined to worship and love the body rather than God; if it remains unmoved, it manifests its superiority to the flesh, and by this steadfastness we welcome God as our companion, who for our sake became man and suffered as we do, He who said to His disciples: “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

¶ 22. Since all the saints were made sharers in chastisement, let us also, who suffer with them, give thanks, that we too may become partakers of their glory; for “whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

¶ 23. Adam, freely inclining to the pleasures of desire and consenting to them, brought the human race into paradise yet delivered it over to death; but the Lord, by laboring and suffering, opened paradise to

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the thief; therefore let us love the toil of the flesh and hate pleasure and desire, for by these the gate of corruption is opened and we are separated from the Good.

¶ 24. Since God, having become man, suffers in the flesh, who would not ardently long to suffer, seeing that God Himself is our companion in pain and labor, and that His co-suffering reconciles and secures the kingdom? For trustworthy is the saying: “If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him.”

¶ 25. Because it is necessary to endure hardships on account of the pleasure and lust which our forefather’s transgression introduced into nature, let us accept these brief and toilsome sufferings; they dull the sting of pleasure and desire and free us from the eternal punishments that spring from them.

¶ 26. The end of all good things is charity, for it leads those who walk in it to God, who is the sovereign Good and Author of all goods, and charity abides unailing, gathering and uniting us to Him; for faith is the foundation of all that follows (namely hope and charity), firmly establishing the truth, and hope is the strength and mutual bond of these extremes—faith and charity—showing both belief and love, and urging us toward their works, while charity is their perfection, embracing the whole of the supreme Good and granting rest and cessation from all motion within it, by which charity we believe and hope to enjoy and possess that final Good in Its presence.

¶ 27. The most perfect work and final operation of charity is this: that by a mutual exchange it makes the properties and names of those united by it pass over one to another, so that man is called and seen as divine, and God is called and seen as human, because of the one and undivided will and desire by which they are bound together.

¶ 28. Since we are wholly made according to the image of God, let us become wholly His and completely turn toward the one whole God, bearing nothing earthly within ourselves, that we may draw near to God and be made gods; for by His gift we are granted to become gods, and thus we

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honor the divine gifts and thankfully receive and approve the presence of divine peace.

¶ 29. Charity is a great good, the first and most excellent among goods: it gathers God and men into itself and around the one who possesses it, and even makes Him who created mankind appear as man because of the surpassing likeness to God of the one adorned with divinization, as far as this is granted to man; and I take it that this is what is shown in the commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.”

¶ 30. See how the devil, by a cunning deceit through *φιλαυτία*—a blind, carnal self-love—seducing man with the bait of pleasure, tore him away from God and from others, fragmenting souls and judgments through mutually hostile thoughts and opinions, so that nature itself was perverted, divided, and scattered into many discordant views and reasonings.

¶ 31. There are three chief and primordial vices, the root and source of all sins: ignorance, *φιλαυτία* (unrighteous self-love), and tyranny; these hang on one another and mutually produce each other—ignorance of God gives birth to *φιλαυτία*, excessive love of self; from *φιλαυτία* comes tyranny, the unjust domination over those joined to us by nature; and it cannot be denied that the most wicked misuse of our powers of reason, desire, and anger stirs up and generates these within us.

¶ 32. It is therefore right that, instead of ignorance, we move through true knowledge toward the one God; instead of unrighteous self-love, we direct our love and desire, purified of *φιλαυτία* and its stains, to God alone; and instead of wrath, stripped of all unjust force, we turn ourselves wholly toward Him, forming in ourselves the offspring of these virtues and, for this end, embracing divine and blessed charity, which unites us with God, makes us devout and reverent, and transforms us into lovers of God.

¶ 33. As has been said, when *φιλαυτία*, the root and principle of the vices, is uprooted, its whole brood and all the base growth that springs from it are likewise destroyed, and once *φιλαυτία* is removed, no trace or figure of malice can remain.

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¶ 34. It is fitting to love and care for one another in the measure Christ Himself exhibited, who willingly suffered and died on our behalf.

¶ 35. All the saints opposed sin for the sake of charity and, obeying its command, paid no regard to this present life, enduring many forms of death so that they might be united both in themselves and with God, separated from the world and restored to the harmony of their nature; this is the true and spotless divine wisdom of the faithful, whose end is both goodness and truth—goodness manifest as kindness and humanity, and truth arising from the faithful composition of piety and right worship—these are the genuine marks of charity, uniting men with God and with one another, and rejoicing in the unshaken and everlasting permanence of good things.

¶ 36. The power and proof of perfect charity toward God is the soul's true, voluntary goodwill and affection toward one's neighbor; for, as Saint John says, "He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."

¶ 37. The way of truth is charity, which, calling itself the Word of God, presents to God the Father those who walk in it, purified from every stain.

¶ 38. This is the gate through which one passes into the Holy of Holies and becomes worthy to behold the inaccessible beauty of the Holy and Royal Trinity.

¶ 39. It is truly dreadful and beyond all condemnation that we willingly destroy the life bestowed on us by the gift of the Holy Spirit through our love of fleeting and perishable things; and those who, through that passionate and carnal self-love, prefer falsehood to truth clearly perceive the terror of this.

¶ 40. Let us, as is fitting, embrace peace, casting off the friendship we have wrongly contracted with the world and its prince, making it null and barren; and let us extinguish within ourselves the war that the stain of vices and passions kindles against God, establishing instead an unbreakable bond of peace with Him by destroying the body of sin and thus bringing enmity to an end.

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¶ 41. It is impossible to bind ourselves in friendship with God if, through vices and passions, we remain rebels against Him and willingly submit to that cruel tyrant and murderer of souls, the devil. Unless we first estrange ourselves entirely from this wicked adversary, we cannot be reconciled to God; for as long as we serve shameful passions, we stand as enemies of God—even if we outwardly bear the name of believers. No benefit comes from peace with the world for those whose mind is hostile to their Creator, refusing submission to His authority, having sold themselves to countless harsh masters who drive them toward vice and malice, leading them by error to prefer the road of destruction over the way of salvation.

¶ 42. God created us for this purpose: that we might become partakers of the divine nature and sharers in His eternity, made like Him through deification by grace. [Thus says the divine Athanasius: "God became man that man might become god."] For this reason, He ordained the existence and continuance of all things and established the production and birth of beings not yet existing, so that all might, in due order, come into participation with Him.

¶ 43. If we desire truly to belong to God in both reality and name, let us strive for this: not to betray the Word (the divine Reason) through passions, as the Jews delivered Him up, nor to deny Him, as Peter once did. For to refuse to do good out of fear is to deny the Word; but to consent deliberately to sin is to betray Him.

¶ 44. The end of all suffering is joy; the end of all labor is rest; the end of all dishonor is glory. In a single word, the final goal of all hardships endured for virtue's sake is to reach God, to dwell eternally with Him, and to enjoy unending rest and everlasting blessedness.

¶ 45. Beyond the natural unity that binds humanity, God also willed to unite all through harmony of mind and shared will; and to bring the entire human race to this union, He, in His immeasurable goodness, inscribed for us His saving commandments and ordered that mercy be shown to those who show mercy, so that through mutual compassion, human nature might be drawn into a single concordant whole.

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¶ 46. Blind human self-love and earthly cunning, by defrauding and repelling one another through legal grievances, divided the unity of nature into many fragments, producing hardness, folly, and the callous insensitivity of the heart, arming nature against itself in discordant judgments. But whoever, through wise counsel and noble discernment, resolves this inequality first takes pity on himself, harmonizing his free will with the principles of nature; by the guidance of both nature and free will, he approaches God and reveals within himself the measure of the divine image, showing how in the beginning God created human nature resembling Himself—a bright image of His goodness, peaceful and unified in love toward God and toward itself.

¶ 47. The most benevolent God became man to gather human nature again into Himself and end its wandering; for the soul of man was at variance with itself, divided, unbalanced, without peace, cast into turbulence by uncertainty and inner agitation about all things, lacking rest or stability. In assuming humanity, God drew human nature back to unity and made peace.

¶ 48. Among all things secondary to God, nothing is more precious to the wise and sober-minded—nor more pleasing to God—than perfect charity, which unites what has been divided and brings together all into a single harmonious unity of mind and will. This is the very essence of charity: to make many into one heart and one will, dissolving every discord.

¶ 49. The very nature of the Good is to unite and preserve what is divided; the nature of evil is to separate and destroy what is united. Evil is inherently dispersed, unstable, ever-changing, and multifaceted, introducing division wherever it enters; good, being one and unified, gathers and binds.

¶ 50. True deliverance from all evil and the swift path to salvation consists in genuine love for God, accompanied by the renunciation of indulgent attachment to the body and the world. When we cast off the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain, we are freed from the blind and brutish love for the body and rise to knowledge of our Creator. In its place we gain love for the Good and for virtue, unstained by bodily passion. Thus we serve God ceaselessly, seeking from Him the preservation of the soul's integrity. This is



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true worship and truly acceptable to God: that we diligently guard the soul devoted to virtue.

¶ 51. Whoever neither desires bodily pleasure nor fears bodily pain is a soul freed from disturbances and vices; for having renounced both—together with their parent, that blind love of the body—and having destroyed in one stroke all the affections arising from them along with ignorance, the first and greatest of vices, such a person adheres wholly to the stable, unchanging, eternal Good. Remaining fixed in it and gazing with unveiled face upon the divine splendor as in a mirror, he beholds the inaccessible radiance of God.

¶ 52. Let us, as far as we can, renounce the pleasures and pains of this life; for in freeing ourselves from the stain of vices and the malice of demons, we become truly free. It is through pleasure that we embrace vices and passions; it is through fear of pain that we avoid virtue.

¶ 53. Since every vice, with the methods that sustain it, tends toward destruction, a person who recognizes by experience that pleasure is always attended by pain turns the soul's entire desire away from pleasure and toward the avoidance of pain. He then contends strongly against pleasure and strives diligently against pain, imagining—though falsely—that he might preserve his blind love of the body by separating pleasure from pain. But because passion darkens the intellect, he fails to see that pleasure and pain are inseparable companions: pleasure obscures the presence of pain when it dominates, for what is strongest always conceals what is bound to it. Thus, pursuing pleasure through blind self-love, we devise countless destructive passions and vices.

¶ 54. Whoever, even in the face of real danger, perceives the inseparable bond between pleasure and pain and nevertheless joins his soul wholly to God, who alone is desirable and beloved above all, showing himself free from all bodily affection and lust, reveals true spiritual wisdom.

¶ 55. Just as it is impossible to offer pure worship to God without total purification of the soul, so it is impossible to serve creation without devoting oneself excessively to the body. One enslaved to the body through carnal self-love continually experiences pleasure and pain, feeding always on

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the tree of disobedience, which is the experiential knowledge of good and evil. In truth, the tree of knowledge symbolizes creation visible to the senses, endowed by pleasure and pain with perceptible qualities.

¶ 56. Wherever reason does not prevail, the vigor of the senses—attached to the power of sin—dominates. Pleasure, closely allied to the flesh, draws the soul toward sympathy with the body; and adopting a mode of life indulgent and passionate, the soul departs from the natural life of reason and becomes a creator of evil and malice—things which in themselves have no true existence.

¶ 57. The vice of the intelligent soul is the forgetfulness of natural goods, arising from a lustful attachment to the flesh and the world. This vice is destroyed by spiritual knowledge, which governs through reason; for when reason examines the origin and nature of the flesh and the world, it leads the soul upward to those realities grasped only by the mind, where the law of sin has no power. As the senses fall away, reason becomes a bridge carrying the soul into pure intellection, severing the bond with the body, until the mind, having transcended the senses, no longer perceives them at all.

¶ 58. Just as reason, when ruling the passions, makes the senses instruments of virtue, so the passions, when ruling reason, turn the senses toward sin. The sober mind must therefore carefully consider how to employ the very faculties in which it once erred as instruments for the acquisition and preservation of virtue.

¶ 59. The Holy Gospel teaches the renunciation of carnal life and the profession of spiritual life; this applies to those who, though living in the flesh, die continually to the world and live only unto God in the Spirit, as the divine Apostle says. These no longer live their own life, but Christ lives in them; thus they are judged in the flesh—having died to it for God's sake—enduring many trials, persecutions, and sufferings with joy.

¶ 60. Every passion arises from attachment to something perceived by the senses—from the objects themselves, from the senses, and from natural powers such as desire or anger when misdirected. Therefore, the mind must examine each of these components, distinguishing the object from its sensory appeal, the senses from the passion they excite, and the

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natural faculty from the misuse that corrupts it. By this discrimination, the mind shatters the passion like the Israelites breaking the golden calf, drowning it beneath the waters of knowledge, restoring each element to its natural state, and thus erasing the stain of vice.

¶ 61. A life defiled by many sins born of carnal passions is like a filthy garment. Just as a person's life is manifested through a kind of clothing—virtuous or wicked—so the soul is clothed either with the radiant garment woven by virtues or with the stained cloak woven from passions. The flesh, through vices and desires, weaves a soiled garment that corrupts the soul's form; but the spirit, through rational virtue, weaves the incorruptible robe of glory.

¶ 62. Our firm confidence in deification lies in this: God became man so that man might become God, to the measure He became man. For He who became man without sin and without change in His divinity will deify human nature; and as much as He descended for our sake, so much will He exalt humanity for His sake. The Apostle reveals this mystery, saying that in the ages to come, God will show the immeasurable riches of His grace in us.

¶ 63. Reason, ruling over desire and anger, produces virtues; and the mind, discerning the logoi of created beings, attains true knowledge. But when reason sets aside what is unnatural and cleaves to what is naturally lovable, and when the mind transcends created knowledge to behold the Creator beyond essence and mind, grace brings about blessed deification. Then passion ceases, thought rests, and the mind, freed from natural contemplation, attains the stability of divine repose.

¶ 64. The soul stained by carnal pleasure is purified by toil; and its lust for earthly things is uprooted when it learns through sound judgment the harm such desires cause. Thus God, in His wisdom, permits us to be tormented by the devil, that through these severe remedies we may be healed.

¶ 65. Pleasure and pain, desire and fear, and all their accompanying passions were not created with human nature in the beginning, else they would belong to its definition. Following the great Gregory of Nyssa, we say that they entered when perfection was lost, attaching themselves to the

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lowest part of the soul. Once the divine image was obscured, humanity fell into a brutish state. God, in wisdom, permitted irrational conditions to discipline mankind, drawing it back to rational excellence.

¶ 66. Even passions, in the hands of the virtuous, can become instruments of good when redirected toward heavenly things: desire becomes longing for God; pleasure becomes delight in virtue; fear becomes diligent caution against sin; and grief becomes repentance. Just as physicians may use serpent venom to heal, so we may use passions to attain virtue and knowledge.

¶ 67. The Old Testament law cleanses nature from defilement through practical virtue; the New Testament elevates the mind mystically through contemplation to behold intelligible realities beyond the senses.

¶ 68. Divine Scripture calls those who remain in the vestibule of virtue “fearful,” those who advance “progressing,” and those who attain the summit of virtue and truth “perfect.” Beginners lack nothing needed for their stage; the progressing lack nothing proper to theirs; but the perfect, having cast off earthly thoughts, behold divine beauty with pure minds through contemplative theology.

¶ 69. There are two kinds of fear: unchaste fear, born of dread of punishment, which perishes with sin; and chaste fear, implanted by God, enduring forever, rooted not in guilt but in reverence for His majesty.

¶ 70. Whoever does not fear God as Judge but reveres Him as infinitely excellent has perfect love; such a one possesses the fear that remains forever and never fails.

¶ 71. From created things we know the Creator; from their multiplicity we learn His wisdom; from their motion we perceive the life of the One who is.

¶ 72. The Holy Spirit is absent from no creature—especially rational beings—for He sustains and preserves the knowledge of each being, enters all things by providence, moves them according to nature, and urges rational beings toward repentance.

¶ 73. The Spirit is in all things universally, sustaining and foreseeing; He is also in those under the Law, enlightening them concerning

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transgression and the promise of Christ; He is further in all who are Christians as the Author of adoption; but He is present as wisdom only in those who through prudent living make themselves worthy of His deifying indwelling. Those who do not do God's will, though believers, have foolish hearts, workshops of evil thoughts, and bodies enslaved to sin.

¶ 74. God, desiring the salvation and deification of all, curses human pride and arrogance, like a barren fig tree, so that people might become more eager to be just than merely to appear just, casting off the false garment of hypocritical virtue and adorning themselves with the sincere light of genuine virtue.

¶ 75. There is a manner of acting and a manner of suffering; acting belongs to the natural power to perform virtues, while suffering pertains either to the grace of what is above nature or to events beyond nature. We have no faculty for attaining what is beyond nature—we can only suffer deification through grace, but we suffer evil and vice contrary to nature through our own will.

¶ 76. We act according to the natural rational power producing virtues, and our intellect naturally surpasses created things. But when we transcend all created principles and come to the unknowable Creator, we impose rest on our faculties. This is not achieved by nature, for nature cannot grasp God; rather, it is the work of grace, illuminating the creature beyond its natural limits.

¶ 77. After this life, we cease acting, but we do not cease suffering deification, for divine grace continues to deify without limit. Evil, being contrary to nature, has no true being, for it is weak and obscure.

¶ 78. The forms of divine goods are both modes of virtue and principles of things; through them God always becomes man: as body, bearing virtues; as soul, bearing knowledge. These deify the worthy, granting true virtue and certain knowledge.

¶ 79. The practicing soul, like Peter, is imprisoned by Herod—carnal prudence—under double guard and an iron gate, representing the habits of sin in deed and thought. Through philosophy and angelic guidance, the soul passes beyond both guards and reaches the iron gate of sensory

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habits, which opens effortlessly through natural contemplation, freeing the mind from Herod's madness.

¶ 80. The devil is both enemy and avenger: enemy because he hates God and harms us through temptations, drawing our will from eternal goods; avenger because, when we become subject by sin, he demands punishment, delighting in human suffering, fiercely assaulting the soul so that it despairs of God.

¶ 81. Those who seek glory from men for their virtues or contemplative gifts are delivered to hardships so that, through suffering, they may learn the humility that pride prevented them from receiving.

¶ 82. Each demon provokes temptation according to its kind; one inflames one vice, another a different one—each demon suited to a specific evil.

¶ 83. Even demons cannot act without God's permission. God, in mercy, allows punishment through them for our correction, as shown in Job, whom Satan could not touch without divine decree.

¶ 84. Faith becomes effective when the Word is embodied in works; by practicing the commandments, the faithful are led by the Word to the Father, in whom the Word eternally exists.

¶ 85. The mystery of the New Testament proclaims the transformation of life into angelic worship, the voluntary separation of soul from bodily domination, and the beginning of spiritual renewal, called in Scripture "spiritual circumcision," which cuts away the soul's passionate attachment to the body.

¶ 86. God, desiring to eradicate the seed of evil—pleasure and lust—permits the devil to inflict suffering, that the soul may be purged and acquire hatred for worldly flattery, recognizing its use only as punishment. Thus God uses the devil's malice to compel the fallen toward virtue.

¶ 87. It is just that those who willingly embraced the devil's seductions should also be punished by him, for he entices by voluntary pleasure but torments through involuntary suffering.

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¶ 88. The contemplative mind is often given to the devil so that, through trials, it may learn humility and right philosophizing, being purified of the vanity that arises from pride in spiritual things.

¶ 89. Whoever suffers the withdrawal of grace but understands the providential purpose of chastisement accepts sufferings gratefully and corrects his fault; whoever fails to discern this loses grace and is abandoned to his passions, fulfilling in deed what he once desired only in thought.

¶ 90. Whoever, struck by awareness of sin, accepts involuntary sufferings with thanksgiving is not cast away but remains in virtue, like one willingly submitting to the king of Babylon—offering true worship through humble obedience.

¶ 91. Those who refuse to accept corrective trials are justly given over to captivity, exile, famine, and death—the loss of virtue and knowledge. Refusing humility, they lose the treasures of the soul.

¶ 92. Whoever does not cling to the pleasure of visible things but seeks their inner principles learns that nothing in visible creation is impure, for all things are exceedingly good in themselves.

¶ 93. Whoever remains unchanged by the shifting of sensible things practices true virtue; whoever is not shaped in thought by their forms has true knowledge; whoever transcends even their essence through subtle intellection becomes a perfect theologian, beholding the divine unity beyond all.

¶ 94. Every contemplative mind possesses the joy of the Spirit, having put to death the motions of visible creation within; having severed thoughts from forms, it finds truth in the logoi; having risen above essence, it is illumined by divine unity where true theology dwells.

¶ 95. God is revealed to each according to the mode of his understanding: to those whose desire transcends earthly composition, God appears as unity and Trinity; to those whose longing clings to matter and form, He does not appear as He is but as they are—perceiving only the duality of created things.

¶ 96. The Apostle teaches that the varied operations of the Spirit are different gifts, distributed according to the measure of faith. Each

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receives inspiration according to his disposition and capacity to fulfill the commandment.

¶ 97. As one receives wisdom, another knowledge, another faith, so one receives perfect love for God, another perfect love for neighbor, another some other grace—each one receiving the habit needed for a particular commandment, each habit itself a gift of the Spirit.

¶ 98. The Lord's baptism is the death of our will toward this world; the cup is the renunciation of even our bodily life for the sake of truth.

¶ 99. Baptism symbolizes voluntary toils in virtue, cleansing the conscience and dying to visible things; the cup symbolizes involuntary sufferings endured for truth, whereby lovers of God prefer divine love to life itself and accept the death that comes through trials.

¶ 100. Baptism slays the will's attachment to the pleasures of life; the cup compels those who worship God to prefer truth even above their own nature—such is the distinction between the two.

## SECOND 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. He who places the primordial baptismal chalice before the latter declares that virtue exists for the sake of truth, and not truth for the sake of virtue. Therefore, the one who practices virtue for the sake of truth is not wounded by the arrows of vain glory; but he who seeks truth only as an adornment for his virtue carries along with him a companion of vainglory: the swelling of the soul and an empty estimation of himself.

¶ 2. Truth, he says, is divine knowledge; virtue is the toil for truth undertaken by those who are held fast by desire for it. Thus, he who endures the labors of virtue for the sake of knowledge does not labor for empty glory, knowing that truth, which is by nature incomprehensible, is attained only through such labors; for that which is first by nature is not circumscribed by what is second. But he who pursues knowledge for the sake of the labor spent upon it is wholly seized by the sickness of vainglory, imagining that he has received crowns before the struggle. He does not understand that labors exist so that crowns may be obtained, and not that crowns exist as a mere



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acknowledgement of labors. For once the inborn power of genius has brought the work to its proper end, every method and rationale of art ceases, together with that for whose sake it came into being, or for whose sake it was believed to exist.

¶ 3. He who pursues only the outward form of knowledge, which is mere discourse, and the mere image of truth, which is the simple uprightness of moral behavior, and in this mental swelling delights in the mere figures of truth and in self-pleasing, becomes a Jew in his own mind.

¶ 4. He who does not regard all the manifest worship prescribed by the law merely according to the rationale of the senses, but contemplates each visible symbol with the intention of the mind, and in each of them is instructed concerning the perfect Word of God hidden within, finds God in the law. Beautifully grasping, by the faculty of the mind, wherever in this collection of legal ordinances he may discern the Word, who altogether escapes the grasp of the senses while being hidden in the flesh of the law, he discovers therein the mystery of union.

¶ 5. Likewise, he who does not define the nature of visible things by sense alone, but wisely scrutinizes the inner rationale within each created thing, finds God, being taught from the greatness of the things themselves that God is their maker and author.

¶ 6. Since discernment of one's own faculties is crucial, he who wisely reads the symbols of the law and skillfully contemplates the manifest nature of things, distinguishes and separates Scripture and creation and himself. He divides Scripture into letter and spirit; creation into surface and rationale; himself into mind and sense. From Scripture he receives the spirit; from creation, the rationale; from himself, the mind. Binding these together with an indissoluble bond, he finds God, who exists as Mind and Rationale (or Word) and Spirit, to the degree fitting and permitted to his faculty, having been set free from all that seduces and drives men into innumerable errors of opinion—namely, from the letter, the surface, and the sense, in which there is multiplicity opposed to unity. But if anyone confuses the letter of the law, the surface of visible things, and his own senses, linking

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them together as one, he is blind and gropes for the way with his hands, suffering from ignorance of the Author of all.

¶ 7. The divine and great Apostle, defining faith, says: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And if one should further define it as an inner good laid up in the soul, or as true knowledge revealing those hidden goods, he would not be mistaken.

¶ 8. Faith is, so to speak, a powerful affection and disposition by which the believer is granted an immediate and supernatural union with God, the One in whom and of whom he believes, and by whom this union is perfectly wrought.

¶ 9. Man, composed of soul and body, is tossed between two laws, that of the flesh and that of the spirit. The law of the flesh is active in the senses, while the law of the spirit is active in the mind; and thus the former, working through the senses, has the power to bind man to earthly things, whereas the latter, active in the mind, at once unites him to God. Rightly, therefore, it is said: “Whoever has not doubted in his heart”—that is, has not divided in his mind, nor cut asunder the immediate union with God that is through faith—this man, made undisturbed in mind and in a manner a god through faith, will say to this mountain, “Pass over,” and it will pass over. By such language He as it were points to sense and the law of the flesh, showing that it is heavy and hard to move, and, in terms of natural power, altogether immovable and unshaken.

¶ 10. Thus the irrational power has driven deep roots, through the works of sense, into human nature, so that the greater part of mankind thinks that man is nothing other than flesh endowed with sense, by which he merely enjoys the present life.

¶ 11. “All things,” He says, “are possible to the one who believes”—to him who is not divided, who is not severed from the union of the mind with God through faith, nor from the union of soul with body through the senses. All things are possible to him that call the mind back from the world and the flesh and, as it is perfected by the virtues, reconcile it to God. This is what we must understand in the saying: “All things are possible to the believer.”

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¶ 12. Faith is knowledge that cannot be demonstrated. If this is so, faith is a disposition that transcends nature, through which, by an unknown rationale and not by one founded on demonstration, we are united to God in a union surpassing all thought of the mind.

¶ 13. The soul, having attained an immediate union with God, receives a power wholly beyond both understanding and being understood. Whenever it dissolves this union, turning to contemplate things that are second to God, it becomes divided, having cut itself off from that union which surpasses every intellectual understanding; yet so long as it adheres to God, it is in some sense lifted beyond nature and deified by divine commerce, and from itself, like an immovable mountain, it removes the law of nature.

¶ 14. The one newly introduced into piety and still rudimentary in it, when instructed in works of justice, fulfills only the outward acts. In obedience and faith he, as it were, eats the flesh, that is, the visible aspects of the virtues, namely their moral practice. But he entrusts to God through faith the inner rationales of the commandments, wherein the knowledge of the perfect is stored, because to this point his capacity for knowledge cannot yet be extended.

¶ 15. The perfect man, who has passed not only through the rank of beginners but also of those advancing, does not remain ignorant of the rationales of the commandments given him; rather, having first drunk them in by the spirit, he then eats all the flesh of the virtues by performing their works, and in so doing raises the movement of the virtues—which is accompanied by sense—up to the knowledge of the mind.

¶ 16. When the Lord says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” that is, first of all the knowledge of the truth, and then the proper cultivation of the corresponding ways of life, He clearly reveals that the one primary object of the faithful is divine knowledge, and virtue is to be sought as its adornment through works.

¶ 17. Since many things are fittingly sought by the faithful in relation to knowledge and virtue—such as freedom from passions and vices, endurance of temptations, understanding of the rationales of the virtues, the

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modes of their exercise, the restraint of the soul's inclination toward the flesh, the recall of the senses from their attachment to sensible things and their desires, and a complete withdrawal of the mind from all created things—in short, innumerable matters by which we abstain from malice and ignorance and accomplish knowledge and virtue, the Lord rightly says: “Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” By this He teaches that absolutely all things, and only those things that lead to knowledge of God and to virtue, are to be sought and asked with diligence and faith by the worshipers of God; for all these contribute to our rational faculties, and the Lord bestows them wholly upon those who ask.

¶ 18. Therefore, he who, for faith alone—that is, for immediate union with God—seeks all things that belong to it and are reconciled to it, shall surely receive them. But he who, without this cause and for some other end, seeks either other things or even these same things will not receive them; for he does not truly believe, but like an unbeliever, uses divine things to arrogate glory to himself.

¶ 19. He who is free from the stain and corruption of sin corrupts the corruption that belongs to those who are themselves corruptible. For the incorruption of the soul and will, which is the incorruptible grace of the Spirit dwelling in it, is accustomed, through providence, to preserve the corruption of nature itself, not allowing the stain of destruction to be brought upon it through contrary qualities.

¶ 20. Since the rationale of nature and that of grace is not one and the same, we should not anxiously question how it is that certain saints are sometimes above evils and harms and at other times seem to succumb to them, for it is evident that miracle belongs to grace, whereas suffering and the liability to harm belong to nature.

¶ 21. He who diligently imitates and keeps a strong remembrance of the manner of life of the saints, and within himself has slain the passions and vices, thereby receives the living energy of the virtues.

¶ 22. God, who before the ages in the manner that pleased Him distinguished the life of each, leads each one to the end fitting to his life, whether that of justice or of injustice.

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¶ 23. Where Paul, cast into a dark storm, seems in my judgment to have been weighed down by violent temptations, the island signifies a firm and immovable habit of divine hope; the fire, a habit of knowledge; the bundle of brushwood, the nature of visible things which he handles with the mind's faculty, so as to nourish the habit of knowledge in his reflections and senses and in this way to ease the sorrow of his soul, though not shaken by the tempest of temptations. The viper is the most wicked and destructive power lurking secretly in the nature of sensible realities, which indeed struck the hand—that is, the operative power of the mind—yet did not harm that most clear-sighted mind at all; for the light of knowledge itself, as in a fire, consumed that destructive power clinging to it from the contemplation of sensible things, reducing its activity and motion to nothing.

¶ 24. The Apostle was a fragrance from life to life, either because by his example he moved the faithful to strive for the perfume of virtues through deeds, or because, as a preacher, he transferred those who obeyed the doctrine and the proclamation of grace from life lived according to the rationale of the senses to life lived according to the rationales of the Spirit. But he was also a fragrance of death to death for those who passed from the death of ignorance to the death of unbelief, into whose souls he sent the perception of abiding condemnation. Again, he was a fragrance of life to life to those who advanced from action to contemplation; and a fragrance of death to death to those who, from the death that is cessation from sin, made evident to themselves by inactivity and by having mortified their members on earth, passed over to the praiseworthy mortification of vicious, lustful thoughts and of the soul's passions and perceptions.

¶ 25. The three powers of the soul are reason, anger, and desire. Through reason we seek; through desire we long for the good that has been sought; through anger we contend to guard it. Supported by divine love, those who wisely order these faculties and apply them assiduously to the rationale and the proclamation of divine virtue and knowledge—seeking in part, desiring in part, and contending ardently in part for its preservation—receive incorruptible nourishment for the mind, namely the knowledge of created realities.

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¶ 26. Human nature, having been emptied of the knowledge originally granted to it, has been filled again when God the Word became man; and enduring henceforth without any further change, He deified this nature not by essence but by quality, sealing it with the Spirit so that it lacks nothing, as when water is mingled with the quality of wine and thereby acquires its potency. For this reason He truly became man, in order to make us gods by grace.

¶ 27. When God created human nature and by His will bestowed upon it existence, He immediately joined to it the power of doing what is honorable and according to duty. By this I mean the natural power or faculty: that intrinsic motion implanted by nature for the exercise of the virtues, through which the intention of the mind may shine forth in its works according to the will of the one who possesses it.

¶ 28. We possess a natural judgment and a natural tribunal within, this natural law teaching us that our appetite for truth ought to precede wisdom in all things, so that we might learn thereby the author of all.

¶ 29. Jacob's well is Holy Scripture; the water contained in Scripture is knowledge; its depth is the position of the obscure sayings from which one does not easily emerge. The bucket is the discipline of the divine word acquired by learning letters; this the Lord, who is Himself the Word, did not possess, nor does He impart to the faithful as knowledge through the drawn-up discipline and exercise. Rather, from spiritual grace, ever-flowing and unfailing, He bestows wisdom on those who are worthy by divine generosity. For the bucket, that is, discipline, receiving only a very small portion of knowledge, lets slip the whole which no rationale can contain; but that knowledge which is given by grace contains the entire wisdom that has been granted to humanity, flowing diversely according to the rationale of its use.

¶ 30. By their very description—the one being called the tree of life, and the other not—the tree of life and its contrary, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, are distinguished by an immeasurable difference. The tree of life is of such a nature and rationale that it bestows life; whereas the tree that is not of this kind, and is therefore not called the

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tree of life but only of the knowledge of good and evil, necessarily has a rationale that brings forth death. For what lacks the power to give life, and for that very reason is not named the tree of life, clearly possesses the power to confer death; for what is severed from life by opposition is nothing else.

¶ 31. The tree of life, which for this very reason is also wisdom, differs greatly from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which neither is wisdom nor is so called. For it is proper to wisdom both to see and to possess rationale; but the habit contrary to wisdom belongs to the absence of both reason and sense.

¶ 32. Since man, composed of an intelligent soul and a sensing body, has been brought into being, let the tree of life in one sense be the mind, wherein wisdom dwells, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil be the bodily sense, in which there is a motion devoid of rationale. This motion was forbidden by God for man not to touch through experience, yet man did not keep the commandment.

¶ 33. According to Scripture, both trees—mind and sense—have a certain power of discernment. The mind discerns what belongs to intellect and what to sense, what is temporal and what is eternal. Since the very faculty of the soul in which this discerning power resides is such by nature, its author has endowed it with the ability to embrace some things while surpassing and transcending others. Sense has the power of discerning bodily pleasure and pain; as a faculty belonging both to the soul and to animate bodies, it persuades us to accept pleasure and to flee pain.

¶ 34. If man is intent solely on the discernment of sense—on the pleasure and pain of bodies—he becomes a debtor to the divine commandment and a transgressor. In this, he eats from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, he experiences the irrational movement of sense, being strong only in that discernment which seeks bodily well-being, by which he embraces pleasure as good and flees pain as evil. But if he attends only to the discernment of the mind, which distinguishes temporal things from eternal, and thereby keeps the divine commandment, he eats from the tree of life, that is, from wisdom dwelling in the mind, having only that discernment which aims at the salvation of the soul, by which he

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embraces the splendor of eternal things as good and is separated from the corruption of earthly things as evil.

¶ 35. The good of the mind and soul is its calm, passionless affection toward the spirit, free of lust; its evil is a lustful and passionate disposition turned toward sense. The good of the senses is that movement in bodies which tends toward pleasurable enjoyment; the evil of the senses is the state and affection that arises from its deprivation.

¶ 36. He who has, as it were by nature, the author of conscience within himself, and yet uses the good entrusted to him for deeds that are worst, stretches forth his hand—that is, his power of acting—and takes from the tree of life in a damnable way, thinking to possess by nature the immortal good even in the midst of evil deeds. Therefore God, who implanted in man by nature the ability to judge and condemn evil by conscience, by man's own will and choice when he became evil, separated him from life, lest, while he practices evil, he persuade his conscience that what is worst is by nature good.

¶ 37. The vine produces wine; wine produces drunkenness; drunkenness produces the excess of mind. In like manner, effective reason, which may rightly be called a vine, when cultivated by the virtues begets knowledge; knowledge produces a good excess, by which the mind surpasses carnal and sensual desire.

¶ 38. To weave together the concepts of sensible things with the soul's rationales and with their forms and shapes is the work of a most wicked ingenuity. Through it, passions and lusts arise around the sight of what we behold, while the motion of the rational faculty in us is hindered from passing through the intermediate sense to spiritual realities and those grasped only by the mind. Thus the soul is violently torn away and dragged down into the confusion of lusts and vices.

¶ 39. The Word of God is both lamp and light: lamp, in that it illumines the natural rationales of the souls of the faithful and burns away what is contrary to nature; lamp also for the sense of life, since by its rationale it disperses the darkness for those who, fulfilling the commandments, strive for the life laid up in hope. Finally, it is a fire of



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judgment and burning, consuming those whom the darkness of this life holds fast through the soul's bondage to the lust of the flesh.

¶ 40. Unless a man first comes out from himself, casting away the base and far-flung unnatural passions so as to ascend to his Author and Cause, God, he will never truly be with God, nor receive by grace the good things that transcend all the power of nature. For the soul must be separated from created things if it is truly to be gathered into God.

¶ 41. The work of the written law is liberation from passions and vices; the work of the natural law is the impartial bestowal of honor upon all by a kind of equal distribution. The perfection of the spiritual law, insofar as it has been granted to man, is an exact likeness to God.

¶ 42. The faculty of the mind is capable of knowing both corporeal and incorporeal things; yet it receives indications and representations of the Holy Trinity only under the guidance of grace, believing only that God is, and not presuming to know what He is in essence and nature as the divine Mind knows Himself. For he who is deprived of knowledge knows nothing of the way by which the filth of vices is cleansed.

¶ 43. He who loves falsehood is handed over to destruction, so that by the very evils that afflict him he may learn that he has freely fostered them, and from the peril of his condition come to know that, instead of life, he has unwittingly embraced death.

¶ 44. God has knowledge only of good, for in His essence He is both the nature and the knowledge of good; but He is ignorant of evil, for evil is that to which no faculty in Him corresponds. Whatever things belong to the nature of a being, of those it possesses essential knowledge.

¶ 45. The breast in Leviticus signifies a loftier and more elevated contemplation; the shoulder signifies action, that is, the habit and operation of the rational soul—knowledge and virtue. For knowledge immediately raises the mind to God, while virtue, by cultivating action, removes it from every passion and from attachment to created origins. Scripture therefore designates these as belonging to the priests, who, having God alone as their inheritance, possess absolutely nothing earthly in their reckoning.

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¶ 46. Those who are imbued with knowledge and virtue through the Spirit with their whole soul render the minds of others capable of piety and of God by teaching and preaching. Transferring to others their own habit and power of acting, they prevent them from abandoning themselves to pursuits tainted by the stain of corrupt nature, and lead them instead to incorruptible goods surpassing all natural power, so that these may be accomplished in deeds. Hence the divine Word rightly commanded that the elevating breast—belonging to those who lift up heart and mind—and the shoulder—symbolizing their action—offered in sacrifice to God, should be assigned to the priests.

¶ 47. All justice of this life, when compared with that of the age to come, is like a mirror that bears only the image of archetypal realities and not the realities themselves as they truly exist in their species. Likewise, all the lofty knowledge of the present age, compared with that which is to come, is an enigma, a poor likeness of the truth, lacking the very truth that will one day be made manifest in its proper subsistence.

¶ 48. Since divine things are apprehended by virtue and by knowledge, Scripture likens virtue to a mirror, in order to show that it reflects the archetypal form; and it likens knowledge to an enigma, to signify that it represents the principal patterns and exemplars of truth.

¶ 49. He who has proved his work before God through action conducts his soul, by the cultivation of contemplation, into the realm of those things that are grasped by the mind, and by such reflection beholds death enthroned in the passions and vices that arise through the senses; and those who seek to enslave him find no foothold within.

¶ 50. He who, with the eye of faith, has beheld the beauty of future blessings, obeys with a ready and joyful mind, as though leaving his native land, his kin, and his father's house. He forsakes every attachment and desire for the flesh and all that stirs the senses, and in the midst of assaults and contests he becomes superior to nature, having preferred the Author of nature, just as the great Abraham esteemed God more highly even than Isaac.

¶ 51. He who strives after virtue and the meditation of divine sayings, not for the sake of glory, nor for gain, nor for flattery, nor for

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pleasing men, nor for display, but does, says, and even thinks all things for God, walks in the way of truth in knowledge. For the divine Word does not willingly abide in crooked paths, even when such paths have been prepared and made ready in some respects.

¶ 52. A man may fast and abstain from that kind of food which inflames passions and vices, and may perform all other practices that lead to freedom from evil and depravity, and in this way prepare the so-called way of the Lord. But if he pursues such modes of life and cultivates such manners for the sake of vain glory, or to claim superiority, or to flatter, or to please men, or to achieve anything other than to be approved by God and to gain Him Himself, then he has not made the paths of God straight. He has indeed endured the toil of preparing the way, but he has not obtained that God should walk in his paths.

¶ 53. “Every valley shall be filled” does not mean that all without exception, nor in every way, shall be filled, for this does not apply to those who have neither prepared the way of the Lord nor made His paths straight. When the valley—that is, the flesh, or the soul of those who have prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight—has been filled with knowledge and virtue by the presence of the Word of God walking in them through the commandments, every falsely named knowledge and all spirits of wickedness are cast down. The Word tramples and subdues them, destroying their power and preventing them from exalting themselves against the human race, as He hews down and levels the proud mass and lofty peaks of mountains and hills with the valleys. For as the passions that are alien to the rationales of nature are cast out, and the virtues belonging to those rationales come in, the soul, formerly sunken like a valley, is filled, while the arrogant power of evil spirits, raised high like mountains, is humbled and brought low.

¶ 54. The “rough places”—that is, the violent temptations that beset us against our will—shall be made smooth ways, especially when the soul has learned to rejoice and exult in infirmities, necessities, and tribulations, and finds them agreeable to itself. Through involuntary sufferings, it removes from itself the craving for voluntary passions and lusts.

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Such temptations, which befall the unwilling, Scripture calls “rough places,” that is, rugged ways; and it makes them smooth ways through thanksgiving and patient endurance.

¶ 55. Whoever is possessed by the desire for true life and understands that all toil, whether voluntarily undertaken or imposed from without, brings about the death of pleasure and lust, the very parent of death, will gladly welcome the harsh and unwelcome assaults of temptations. Through patience he makes these hardships easy and smooth ways, which lead him directly to the prize of the heavenly calling, as he runs the divine race piously amid them. For pleasure and lust are indeed the parents of death, while their death is effected by labor, whether freely assumed or brought on by external constraint.

¶ 56. He who, by continence, dissolves the pleasure or lust entwined and interwoven in countless forms and clinging to every sensible object, has made crooked ways straight; and he who by patience has trodden down the steep, harsh, and rugged burden of afflictions has made rough paths smooth. As the prize for virtue and for the labors willingly undertaken or involuntarily endured for its sake, as one who has lawfully striven, conquered pleasure and lust through love of virtue, and trampled down pain through love of knowledge, and has fought the divine contests in both, he shall behold the Saving Power of God, as it is written.

¶ 57. He who loves virtue quenches of his own accord the paths of pleasure; and he who saturates his mind with the knowledge of truth is in no way hindered, even by violent afflictions, from the constant movement of his longing toward God.

¶ 58. He who has straightened the crooked ways of voluntary passions and lusts—the movements of pleasure—through continence, and has leveled the rough calamities of involuntary temptations—the modes of pain—through patience, making them smooth ways, will rightly, as one purified in heart, behold the Saving Power of God. Being pure in heart through virtues and holy contemplations, he sees God at the end of his struggles in accordance with the saying, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” having received as a gift that state of imperturbability

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which he has acquired through labors for virtue, and by which nothing else makes God more manifest to those who possess it.

¶ 59. Scripture calls “cisterns” the hearts of the heavenly-minded, capable of receiving the gifts of holy knowledge, which are hollowed out and toughened by habitual practice of the commandments. These hearts reject the soul’s tendency to be inclined toward vice and its affection for sensible things, so that they may be filled from above with spiritual knowledge coming from heaven, which washes away the filth of lust and quickens and nourishes the virtues.

¶ 60. The Lord digs cisterns in the desert—that is, in this world and within human nature—when He opens the hearts of the worthy, cleansing them from earthly heaviness and worldly prudence, enlarging and widening them to receive the divine showers of wisdom and knowledge, that from these they may water the sheep of Christ, namely those who, because of the soul’s infancy, are in need of moral instruction.

¶ 61. Scripture calls “mountainous” the lofty contemplation of nature in the Spirit, cultivated by those who, having put aside thoughts of sensible things, have passed through the intermediate virtues to the spiritual rationales within them.

¶ 62. So long as the soul has a vigorous remembrance of God within itself, it seeks the Lord by contemplation, and not lightly or perfunctorily, but in the fear of the Lord—that is, by fulfilling the commandments. For he who seeks the Lord solely by contemplation and not by action does not find Him, because he has not sought Him in the fear of the Lord. “And the Lord prospered him,” it is said, for the Lord prospers and directs everyone who devotes himself to action illumined by knowledge, teaching him the modes of the commandments and revealing to him the true rationales of things.

¶ 63. Sublime teaching and doctrine concerning the Godhead are like a tower for the soul, fortified by the observance of the commandments. This is what is meant by the words, “Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem.” For he who is rightly guided to seek the Lord through contemplation, together with the fitting fear that accompanies it—that is, by fulfilling what has been

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commanded—builds towers in Jerusalem, in the simple and tranquil state of the soul raising up lofty discourses concerning the Godhead.

¶ 64. As particular rationales approach the universal ones, they unite what had been divided among themselves, because universal rationales uniformly contain within themselves the rationales of particular things, toward which these particulars naturally tend. Moreover, there exists in the spirit a certain habitual rationale that binds together heaven and earth, the sensible and the intelligible, nature and reason, so that, being joined one to another, they may be united.

¶ 65. He to whom it has been granted to tear sense away from passions and vices and to separate the soul from the lust of the senses, and who has been able to block the passage that the devil had opened for himself into the mind through the intermediate operation of the senses, has, in the desert of natural contemplation, erected pious opinions about things like firm and safe towers. Whoever flees to these towers does not fear the robbers who roam this desert of visible nature—that is, the demons who, through the works of the senses, seduce the mind and drag it down into the darkness of ignorance. For he who thinks and senses piously concerning each thing does not fear the seducing demons through the objects of sight.

¶ 66. Every mind strong in the power of contemplation is a true farmer, by whose diligence the field is kept free of tares and receives the divine seeds of good things, as long as the mind retains the remembrance of God as its sure stronghold. For Scripture says: “He was seeking the Lord in the days of Zechariah, who understood the fear of God.” And we know that Zechariah in our tongue signifies “remembrance of God.” Therefore, let us continually implore the Lord that His saving remembrance may be preserved within us, lest this very activity that is rightly and virtuously carried out should bring destruction to the soul by lifting it up, and, like Uziah, it rashly attempt things beyond the capacity of nature.

¶ 67. Sound and unailing contemplation demands a mind free of passions and vices, called “Jerusalem” both because of an immaterial and perfect virtue and because of an immaterial knowledge free from anything

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earthly. Such contemplation is approached only when not merely passions and vices, but even the thoughts of sensible things, have been set aside.

¶ 68. No vice at all is destroyed without faith, hope, and love, just as no virtue is fully realized without them. Faith, when the soul is besieged, is the source of flight to God, and through it the whole array of spiritual weapons, by which we gain confidence, becomes our consolation. Hope most truly guarantees divine assistance, promising that the opposing powers will surely be overcome. Love finally renders the soul scarcely movable, indeed absolutely immovable, by the sweetness of divine longing, even while it is under attack, fixing every power of its desire firmly upon God.

¶ 69. Faith comforts the soul under assault, strengthening it with the expectation of salvation; hope, placing before the eyes the assistance for which faith has been employed, repels the onset of adversaries; and love at last makes the hostile line of enemies and its attack dead and powerless for the devout and God-worshipping soul, through its intense desire for God.

¶ 70. The initial and unique foundation of the divine part in us—namely, of true knowledge—is the word of faith concerning the divine resurrection within us, combined with a fitting dispensation, that is, with discernment and judgment of soul and will, patiently enduring the assaults of temptations both from within and from violent external causes. For the first resurrection of God in us, which we had extinguished through ignorance, is faith, which is properly preserved and nourished when the commandments are fulfilled in deeds.

¶ 71. Conversion to God, by its very meaning, clearly implies the rationale of divine hope, without which no one can in any way incline toward God in mind or give assent to Him. It is hope's office to set before our eyes as present the things that are future, and to persuade us with firm assurance that God, our protector, is not absent from those whom the opposing power attacks; indeed, on account of them and for their sake, such warfare is permitted for the saints. Without some expectation, whether easy or difficult, no one will ever be moved to turn toward what is honorable and according to duty.

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¶ 72. Nothing so gathers and unites those who are scattered and breathes into them one will by the bond of concord as love, whose distinguishing mark is the glory of equal dignity. Thus it is through love that the powers of the soul—reason, anger, and desire—are brought together into one around divine things. By love, those who have attained equality of honor with God through grace bear in the ruling faculty of the soul, the mind, an indelible longing for divine love, inscribing and engraving an immortal seal therein.

¶ 73. Every mind girded with divine power possesses, as it were, certain elders and leaders: the faculty of reason, from which proceeds faith, knowing and wise, by which it learns that God is always present by a hidden rationale, and from which also hope arises, enabling it to deal with future things as though they were already at hand; and the faculty of desire, in which divine love resides, through which, wholly bound to the longing for the immaculate Godhead, it acquires an immortal hunger for the One desired and loved. To these is joined the faculty of anger, by which it firmly embraces divine peace, binding the movement of desire to divine love. Every mind possesses these powers as prompt helpers for the destruction of vice and the establishment and preservation of virtue.

¶ 74. Without the power of reason there is no knowledge; without knowledge there is no faith, from which hope springs forth as a noble shoot, enabling the believer to treat future things as present. Without the power of desire there is neither longing nor love, of which charity and affection are the fulfillment, for to love something is properly an act of desire. Without the faculty of anger, which strengthens desire in its union with that which delights, there can be no peace, since true peace is the calm and undisturbed full possession of that which charms and pleases.

¶ 75. Whoever has not yet been cleansed from passions and vices must carefully guard himself from engaging in natural contemplation, on account of the images of sensible things that can imprint themselves upon his mind and inflame it with lust, for he is not yet perfectly free from passion. The mind that lingers in thoughts about sensible sights, seeking to gratify the senses, becomes the craftsman of impure passions and vices,



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because it is not yet granted to it, in contemplating, to pass on to the related intelligible realities.

¶ 76. But when one has fortified the senses and courageously blocked their budding impulses, has thoroughly banished from himself every thought and memory of objects that excite the senses, and has likewise constrained the natural movements of the soul from prying into external things, then, aided by the divine right hand, he confounds as a victor the most wicked tyrannical power that had arisen against him.

¶ 77. When unbridled reason degenerates into madness, anger becomes reckless, desire is without reason, knowledge is replaced by ignorance, and might becomes lasciviousness, then the soul is enslaved to them, and a strong and effective habit of evil arises, woven together with a multitude of sensory lusts.

¶ 78. It is fitting that the mind, wisely trained to avoid invisible collisions, when the evil powers attack, should neither engage in natural contemplation nor undertake anything else, but apply itself solely to prayer, subdue the body by toil, and with all care destroy earthly sense and worldly prudence. Let it guard the bulwarks of the city—that is, the virtues by which the soul is fortified—and also the rationales and paths that guard the virtues, namely continence and patience, lest he who shakes the soul with turbulent upheavals should, under the guise of prosperity, secretly divert desire from God, and through things that appear honorable gradually draw the mind that seeks such things toward worse things.

¶ 79. He who, by deliberate and restraining continence and patience, has firmly shut the senses and cut off the entry of sensory images into the mind through the soul's powers, easily scatters and destroys the most wicked machinations of the devil, forcing him to retreat in shame by the same road on which he came. For the path by which the devil comes is the array of earthly supports that seem to contribute to building up and preserving bodily life.

¶ 80. The soul that has united the senses to itself by the mediation of reason, as nature has ordained, reaps from natural contemplation a true knowledge of creation.

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¶ 81. The fountains outside the city—that is, outside the soul—which Hezekiah stopped are all sensible realities; the waters of these fountains are the rationales and impressions of these things formed in the mind. The river flowing through the midst of the city is the knowledge gathered by natural contemplation from the concepts of sensible things, running through the middle of the soul as something contiguous to both mind and sense. For knowledge of sensible things is neither wholly alien to the mind's faculty nor altogether reducible to the operation of sense; being intermediate, it connects sense and mind with one another. Through sense it receives the impressions of visible forms, and through the mind it transforms these forms into rationales. Thus the river that divides the middle of the city is rightly called the knowledge of things perceived by sight, since it is contiguous to the two extremes—mind and sense.

¶ 82. He who, when temptations arise, abstains from natural contemplation and gathers his mind from all things into himself and into God, devoting himself to prayer, destroys the habitual root that begets evil, and, as I have said, compels the instigating habit, the devil, to return in shame, relying upon which he had entered the soul in arrogant presumption and lifted it up in proud thoughts against the truth. Perhaps even the great David, having known this from experience of all spiritual wars, both suffered and practiced it, and therefore said: "When the sinner stood against me, I became dumb and was humbled, and I kept silence even from good things." The divine Jeremiah, following him, commands the people not to go out of the city while the sword of the enemies surrounds them.

¶ 83. For this reason the blessed Abel, had he kept this principle and not gone out with Cain into the field—that is, into the broad expanse of natural contemplation—before he had acquired the habit of imperturbability, would never have been killed by him who rose against him deceitfully: namely by the law of the flesh, which both is and is called Cain, who beguiled him with smooth and seemingly favorable words while he was still inexperienced in contemplation.

¶ 84. By a similar rationale, had Dinah, daughter of the great Jacob, not gone out among the daughters of the foreign land—that is, not mingled

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with the thoughts of the sensing soul—Shechem, the son of Hamor, would never have violated her.

¶ 85. It is better for us, who have not yet attained perfect habit, not to undertake natural contemplation, lest while seeking spiritual rationales in visible creation we unconsciously gather passions and lusts. For in the imperfect, the images of visible things that delight the senses are more powerful to attract the soul than the rationales of created beings hidden within. In like manner, those who, after the fashion of the Jews, have attached their souls only to the letter, expect the immortal blessings promised by God to be bestowed in this present age, remaining ignorant of the natural goods of the soul.

¶ 86. He who bears the image of the heavenly man endeavors with utmost care to follow, in all things, the spirit of Holy Scripture, wherein, united with virtue and knowledge, the salvation and health of the soul reside. But he who bears the image of the earthly man pursues only the letter, in which the lower inclination of the soul toward the body is fostered, and in which lie the roots of passions and lusts.

¶ 87. The power of God is virtue, which destroys vices and passions and strengthens and defends pious rationales—the offspring of action when we fulfill the commandments. By this power of God alone we rout the most wicked forces opposed to the good. The loftiness of God is the knowledge of truth brought forth by strenuous labor in contemplating created things and by the sweat of the labors that establish virtue. Through such knowledge we totally abolish all the strength of falsehood that opposes the truth, casting down and destroying every proud height of malignant spirits raised against the knowledge of God. For as action begets virtue, so contemplation begets knowledge.

¶ 88. Lest forgetfulness obscure what is noble, knowledge, moving without limit around the divine infinity and surpassing all thought of the mind, by its limitless breadth expresses the glory of truth as greater than all infinity. The imitation of goodness, freely adopted by the wise from the rationales of providence, expresses, to the extent granted to man, a likeness in honor to God.

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¶ 89. The tongue symbolizes the operation of the wise soul; the throat signifies the natural inclination of love and desire toward the body. He, therefore, who joins these with reproach—using the tongue to serve the throat—cannot retain the peaceful habit of virtue and knowledge, for he finds greater delight in the tumult and confusion of bodily passions and lusts.

¶ 90. Natural appetites and pleasures do not, in themselves, inflict the stain of sin on those who experience them, since they are a necessary adjunct of natural desire itself. Nature, whether we wish it or not, supplies the pleasure arising from basic nourishment, easing former hunger; likewise it offers drink to soothe thirst, and sleep to restore powers exhausted by wakefulness. Whatever else is naturally required by us, these things too are necessary for sustaining nature and very useful for preparing virtue in those who are zealous. Yet all such things are held in check by every soul that flees the confusion of sin, lest because of them it become enslaved to voluntary passions that are harmful and contrary to nature, and have no other origin in us than the movement of natural appetites themselves—a movement not destined to pass with us into the immortal and everlasting life.

¶ 91. The words of God, when uttered merely in speech, are not truly heard, because they lack the voice of action—that is, the fulfillment of what is spoken. But when they are brought forth in the execution of the commandments, then demons tremble at such a voice, and men, won by the progress of righteousness in works, with obedient mind build within themselves the divine temple of the heart.

¶ 92. Just as God, with respect to His essence, species, and nature, is beyond comprehension, so too His word cannot be fully grasped by our knowledge. For although the written word of Scripture, at the level of the letter, is circumscribed and terminates with the events it narrates, yet at the level of the spirit it remains uncircumscribed forever in the contemplations of those who understand it.

¶ 93. Whoever would wisely and competently expound Holy Scripture to the soul, according to Christian teaching, must be diligently trained in the interpretation of the very names it uses, so that by them he

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may elucidate the entire sense of what is written. He must take great care to penetrate to the true meaning of its contents, and not, like the Jews, drag down the loftiness of the spirit to the body and to earth, circumscribing the divine and immortal promises of spiritual blessings within the corruption of transient things.

¶ 94. Just as a vow is the solemn promise of good things offered to God by men, so supplication and prayer are rightly a clear request for those good things bestowed by God for the salvation of men, bringing a recompense to those who offer them with a right mind. Clamor is the advancement and progress of those who labor in virtue, by practicing the ways of good action and by contemplation and spiritual reflections whenever the most wicked demons attack. Such clamor God hears above all, for by nature He accounts the soul's fervent love of virtue and knowledge as a great voice.

¶ 95. The most wicked and destructive dominion of the devil, prefigured by the Assyrian kingdom, kindles war against virtue and knowledge by inciting the natural powers of the soul, and seeks to pour out and overthrow these goods. It first provokes desire to yearn for what is against nature and induces it to prefer what is perceived by the senses to that which is apprehended only by the mind. Then it rouses anger to prepare battle for the sake of what sense perceives and desire has chosen. Finally, it instructs reason to devise means whereby the senses may be affected by pleasures.

¶ 96. It is characteristic of divine goodness not only to fashion the divine and incorporeal intellectual beings as images of its hidden and ineffable majesty, which, to the extent that their nature allows, reflect the form and beauty of that inaccessible splendor surpassing all thought, but also to impress upon the sensory realm, so far beneath these intelligible substances, certain extremities and traces of its magnificence. These traces are such that they are able to direct the human mind, which shines within them and is implanted in them, straight toward God, raising it above all visible things, as though it had already ascended into supreme beatitude.

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¶ 97. The soul that, like the great Hezekiah, has been crowned with virtue and knowledge and has obtained rule over Jerusalem—that is, over the state of peace that sees only peace, a condition free from vices and from every disturbance—has all creation subject to itself. Through the forms that compose it, creation offers to God, as it were, spiritual rationales of knowledge as gifts; and, as gifts present within it, the soul measures the modes of these rationales in relation to virtue according to the standard of the natural law. Receiving and embracing both in a noble manner, such a soul becomes able to shine forth with great splendor in both spheres, that is, in a philosophy perfectly accomplished in word and in life, in action and in contemplation.

¶ 98. He who, through the labors of action, has brought virtue and knowledge to their highest strength is rightly exalted. Through action he rises above carnal and vice-clinging passions; through contemplation he rises above the natural bodies, as they are called, which come into being and pass away, and indeed above all forms and natures perceived by the senses, together with all the rationales of knowledge that they contain. Such a one has lifted up his soul to those realities that are akin to God and divine.

¶ 99. He who, by the toils of action that establish virtue, has learned to cultivate, like a new Jerusalem, the habit of a calm and unshaken mind free from every turmoil of sin, acts and speaks and hears and thinks of nothing but peace. Having received through natural contemplation the knowledge of visible creation, and offering through himself its more divine rationales as gifts to the Lord, and, as a king, weighing the laws present in it as gifts, he is exalted in the sight of all nations, shining above them. He surpasses the carnal passions through action and transcends natural bodies and all forms through contemplation and the spiritual rationales and modes that are in them.

¶ 100. Philosophy that devotes itself to action makes its practitioner superior to the passions; philosophy that devotes itself spiritually to contemplation makes its adherent superior to visible things, raising the mind to those intelligible realities that are its kin.

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### THIRD 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. He who cultivates knowledge with action as its constant companion, and action with knowledge as its inseparable partner, becomes both throne and footstool of God: throne by reason of knowledge, and footstool by reason of action; and if anyone should further call the human mind “heaven,” when it has been cleansed of all earthly thoughts and is wholly devoted to, indeed splendidly adorned with, divine and spiritual rationales, such a one would not in any way transgress the bounds of truth.

¶ 2. Every truly pious and religious philosopher, fortified by virtue and knowledge, that is, by action and contemplation, when he beholds the massed wedge of passions and lusts—this most evil power—rising up against him, just as the king of the Assyrians rose against Hezekiah, recognizes that he has only one refuge from such evils: God as his helper; and by silently crying out to Him, while striving with even greater zeal in virtue and knowledge, he renders God propitious and receives as a fellow warrior, or rather as the very author of his salvation, an angel, that is, the higher discourse of wisdom and knowledge, which utterly destroys and abolishes every strong and warlike adversary and the leader of the hostile host encamped against him.

¶ 3. Every passion and lust arises easily from some sensible object that is fitting and congenial, for without some subject—some thing perceptible through the intermediate ministry of the senses that can attract to itself the powers of the soul—no passion, vice, or lust can ever subsist; for if there is no object falling under sense, there is no passion, no affection: if there is no woman, there is no fornication; if there is no food, there is neither gluttony nor belly-obsession; if there is no gold, there is no avarice; thus every vicious and lustful movement of our natural powers takes its rise either from a sensible thing as its author, or from a demon who, through that thing itself, exploits the soul’s proneness toward sin.

¶ 4. Contrition, so to speak, is the destruction of the outward operation of vice; attrition is the destruction of the very thought of vice

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itself. For contrition is the overthrow of the sinful, lustful deed in act alone, whereas attrition is the full and complete extinction of the perverted inner motions of the soul.

¶ 5. Sensible and intelligible realities are, in a manner, a middle realm between God and men, by which the human mind, drawing near to God, becomes superior to them both, in that it neither serves sensible objects through action nor clings inordinately to intelligible objects through speculation.

¶ 6. Creation stands as accuser of the impious, proclaiming its Maker through the rationales with which it has been endowed, and instructing man in virtue through the natural laws imprinted in each species. The rationales are made known through the continuous persistence of the various species and genera, while the laws shine forth in the stable natural operations proper to each kind. To these we have failed to apply our mind, and thus became ignorant of the Author of all things and fell into corruption through all manner of unnatural passions and vices.

¶ 7. Scripture commands us to offer gifts to God, thereby signifying the infinite abundance of divine goodness; for He who, as though nothing had preceded Him, brings all things into being, yet receives our gifts as if truly given from us, and returns them to us as accepted, thus shows the manifold and ineffable goodness He bears toward us, since He receives as though from us what is already His own, and declares Himself bound in debt to us on account of them, as though they were alien to Him.

¶ 8. When man considers the spiritual rationales of visible things, he learns that there is an Author of these realities, yet who precisely He is, and what His intellect and nature may be, he does not attempt to grasp, but leaves uninvestigated; for the creature under the gaze plainly testifies that He is Creator, while the “who” and “what kind” of His being remain incomprehensible.

¶ 9. The wrath of God is the painful and troublesome experience attached to those undergoing punishment; this consists in a compulsion of involuntary labors by which God often leads the soul, puffed up by the name of virtue and knowledge, into modesty and humility of sense, granting that it



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may come to know itself and discern its own infirmity; and when it perceives this by direct experience, it casts down from itself the swelling of pride lodged in the heart.

¶ 10. The wrath of the Lord also takes the form of a temporary cessation of divine gifts, as though there were a truce in the outpouring of His goodness toward us; and this happens beneficially to every lofty and self-exalted soul that glories in the blessings given it by God as if they were from its own merits.

¶ 11. A soul that is wise and truly philosophical possesses both Judah and Jerusalem: Judah as the cultivation of action in philosophy, and Jerusalem as the contemplation of sacred knowledge. Thus, when the pious and religious mind, accompanied by divine grace, both cultivates what it does and studies what it contemplates through philosophy, and thereby utterly repels all powers hostile to virtue and knowledge, achieving a complete victory over wicked spirits, yet fails to render due thanks to God, the author of its victory, and instead, exalted in heart, imagines that it alone is the source of its own achievements and vows, then, having not repaid God according to the strength He granted, it incurs not only the wrath of abandonment but also the loss of Judah and Jerusalem—that is, of its habits of action and of contemplation. For God permits shameful passions immediately to rise up against its action, defiling the conscience that once shone with purity, and allows false rationales and thoughts to intertwine with its speculation, perverting what until then had been a sound judgment of knowledge; for the one who glories in his action is chastened by the ignominy of inner perturbations, while the one inflated by knowledge is, by God's just judgment, allowed to err in his search for truth.

¶ 12. The divine rule and law are implanted in things through the rationales of Providence, instructing us—if we possess a grateful and rightly disposed mind—through experiences contrary to what we desire; we who, supported by gifts and virtues, had been ungrateful are advanced by the encounter with opposites so that we may recognize the divine power that bestows good things. This prevents us, as we prosper in virtue and receive blessings by the permission of Providence, from falling into hardened and

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inviolable pride of mind before God, imagining that the possession of virtue and knowledge belongs to our nature and not to grace, and thus abusing the good in order to forge evil, so that through the very gifts by which our recognition of God should have remained ever more clearly entwined and unshaken, we might instead, God forbid, be buried in the darkness of ignorance.

¶ 13. We know that the divine rule and law, inherent in things and preserving them, is Providence, which clearly instructs us with just judgment through the lack and need of good things, so that we, who were ungrateful when abounding in gifts, may acquire a grateful sense toward the Giver and, by experiencing their opposites, may be led to knowledge of Him who is the author and bestower of all goods. For that which, under the name of virtue, is taken by empty opinion and fleeting elation to be our own achievement, unless restrained by some chastisement, easily generates the disease of pride, an affection contrary to God.

¶ 14. He who thinks he has reached the end of virtue no longer seeks the source and author of good things, drawing the force of his desire within himself and thus, by his own fault, losing the end of his salvation, which is God Himself. But he who is conscious of his natural poverty regarding what is good and honorable never ceases to hasten toward Him who alone can supply the lack.

¶ 15. The person to whom the boundless breadth of virtue has been made manifest never ceases to pursue its course, lest he lose Him who is both the principle and end of virtue, that is, God, and lest, believing himself to have attained a foolish and imprudent perfection, he confine the movement of desire to himself and fall away from the One who truly is and toward whom the mind of every lover of virtue directs its contemplation.

¶ 16. Just wrath, in the case of the lofty and wise soul, takes the form of abandonment, as was said, or of being allowed to be troubled by demons and afflicted both in action and in contemplation, so that, perceiving its own natural infirmity, it may acknowledge the divine power and grace that guards it and provides every good, humble itself, and utterly cast away loftiness as something foreign and contrary to the rationales of

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nature, lest a further wrath come upon it, by which the gifts given are withdrawn and, having been humbled, it comes to know the very One who previously bestowed the good things.

¶ 17. The one who has not been corrected by the first form of wrath—that of abandonment—and brought to humility, as by a pedagogue of true gratitude, will certainly experience a second form of wrath, in which the strength and operation of good things are taken away, and he who was once clothed in power and virtue is stripped bare. For concerning ungrateful Israel God says: “I will take away its hedge, and it shall be for plunder; I will break down its wall, and it shall be for trampling; and I will forsake my vineyard, and it shall not be pruned nor digged, and thorns shall spring up in it as in a wilderness; and I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.”

¶ 18. It is a path steeped in impiety when, through hardness of heart, a person does not even perceive the loss of virtues; for he who, for the pleasures and lusts of the flesh, has trained himself not to obey God, will also readily deny God Himself when opportunity offers, preferring the life and safety of the flesh to God, whose lusts alone he has placed above the divine will.

¶ 19. Whatever we suppose the soul to suffer in any way, we must also suppose that its powers of acting and of contemplating suffer in like manner; for the subject never undergoes an affection without the qualities inhering in the subject being correspondingly affected. By “subject” I mean the soul as capable of virtue and knowledge; by “in the subject” I mean action and contemplation, which are as accidents to it. These therefore are affected equally, having their own pattern of change corresponding to the soul’s movement.

¶ 20. Any religious soul, a cultivator of virtue after the manner of Hezekiah, armed with the strength of wisdom and knowledge against demons, who, when the most wicked spirits rush upon him, has obtained through prayer that an angel be sent from heaven to him—that is, the loftier and principal word of wisdom—by which he scatters the whole array of the devil’s assault, yet fails to ascribe such victory and salvation to God as its

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author, but attributes it to himself, has not repaid God according to the gift bestowed. He has neither matched the magnitude of his thanksgiving to the greatness of his deliverance, nor rendered, in the affection and goodwill of his soul, a fitting return to Him who granted his salvation.

¶ 21. Let us illumine the mind with divine concepts, and let us adorn the body nobly with ways of acting that correspond to the rationales of a God-filled mind, making it a rational workshop, free from base passions; for if the body's innate affections are governed by reason, they remain free from all guilt, but if they are moved apart from reason, they are transformed into vice. Hence, we must reject those affections whose natural motion is indeed from nature, but whose usage is frequently unnatural because they are not at all ruled by reason.

¶ 22. Whoever, on account of the gifts he has received, grows high-minded and wise in his own eyes, as though he had not received but originated them himself, justly incurs wrath in this matter; for God, permitting the devil to contend with him in a spiritual contest, allows him to overthrow the modes of virtue in practice and to disturb and cloud the rationales of knowledge in contemplation, so that, taught by experience of his own infirmity, he may come to know the one power that truly conquers passions and lusts in us, and, being led to repentance, may humble himself, cast away the swelling of empty pride and vain opinion, and, propitiating God once more, may avert the wrath that comes upon the impenitent, which strips the soul of the grace that adorned it and leaves the ungrateful mind empty.

¶ 23. Wrath is salutary when it consists in the divine permission that demons assail the proud and high-minded soul with temptations of lust and passion, so that the one who gloried in the mere name of virtues may learn, through shameful and ignominious experience, who is their true Giver—or else be completely stripped of those alien things which he imagined he possessed as his own, as though he had not received them.

¶ 24. Truly blessed is the soul that has laudably died to all things: to what is sensible, by renouncing the operation of the senses; to what is intellectual, by ceasing from the movement and function of discursive

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understanding. Yet we must understand this death of the soul as praiseworthy only when it is a voluntary departure and cessation from all things, in intention and will, after it has received through grace that life which is from God, and has come to receive the Author of all things in place of created things by a rationale that no one can comprehend.

¶ 25. Blessed is he who has yoked the power of acting to natural good and dedicated the power of contemplating to natural truth; for every action should be performed for the sake of good, and every contemplation or speculation should seek knowledge solely for the sake of truth. When these are accomplished and perfected, there will remain nothing that can wound or disturb the active power of the soul, and nothing alien, extraneous, or novel that can trouble and vex its contemplative power; for, having overcome all that is and is thought, it hastens into God Himself, who alone is good and true and beyond all essence and intellect.

¶ 26. They say that the end of virtue as exercised in action is the good, which is the perfection of divine operation, toward which reason, employing anger and desire in accordance with nature, hastens, and in which the beauty of that which is according to the likeness shines forth. They also say that the end of philosophy that studies contemplation is truth, namely, the simple and undivided knowledge of all things subsisting around God, toward which the pure mind is borne when it has completely extinguished within itself the judgment of the senses; and in this knowledge the unadulterated dignity of the divine image appears in great splendor.

¶ 27. No one can truly bless God unless first he has sanctified the body through the virtues, illumined the soul by knowledge, and ennobled the affections with holy notions; for the disposition of virtue is the countenance of the contemplative soul, raised as it were upward into heaven toward true cognition and knowledge.

¶ 28. Blessed is he to whom it has been truly revealed that God accomplishes all things in all: using both action and contemplation as instruments, and in us bringing about virtue and knowledge, victory and wisdom, goodness and truth, while we contribute nothing but a will inclined toward what is honorable and according to duty. Endowed with such

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understanding, the great Zerubbabel, in addition to what has been said, thus addresses God: “Blessed are You, who have given me sufficiency, and in You I trust, Lord of the fathers. From You is victory, from You is wisdom, and bright radiance is Yours; I am Your servant.” As a faithful and grateful servant, he refers the gifts received back to God who has given all things, ascribing wisdom to Him as Lord and openly confessing that the overthrow of enemies comes from Him, that is, from the union of victory and wisdom, and likewise of virtue and knowledge, action and contemplation, goodness and truth; for these, joined one to another, shine forth as one brightness and splendor of God.

¶ 29. All the merits and rightly accomplished deeds of the saints are beyond doubt gifts of God; no one at all possesses any good except that which has been given from God as Lord, according to the measure of rectitude and the grateful and benevolent disposition of the one who receives; and each has only those gifts that are pleasing to the Giver.

¶ 30. The soul that guards the laws of virtue and knowledge and yet is willing to endure the wretched slavery of passions and lusts says: “The wicked prevail, and truth conquers all,” calling the deifying virtues “women,” for by their union with God and the concord they foster among men, charity is realized, drawing the soul away from all things that come to be and pass away to the higher spiritual substances and filling it with a certain sober measure of love for God, as much as human nature can bear, binding it to Him and forming a perpetual and divine mystical intercourse. By “truth” it signifies that which, having a certain rationale or author, is the principle, cause, root, power, and glory of all, from which and through whose grace all things have been made and are, and are plainly maintained in being; and toward this truth, finally, all the strenuous effort of pious and religious men is directed.

¶ 31. By “women” he designates the end of the virtues, namely charity, which is the firm and unchanging will and indivisible union of those who by nature participate in the good; and by “truth” he designates the end of all cognitions and of all realities that are known and understood, into which, as into the principle and end of all things, their natural movements

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are compelled by a universal rationale, since truth conquers all as the principle and cause of beings, and draws the movement of created things back into itself.

¶ 32. Through the privation, by way of excellence, of many things, truth shines forth as one and unique by nature, overshadowing the faculties of all who can understand or be understood, for it transcends, by its superessential mode of existence, both the knowers and the known. By its infinite power it circumscribes the extremes of all things, both as principle and as end, and gathers the movement of all things equally into itself: to some, deprived of its grace, it grants a clear knowledge; to others, by a hidden sense and taste, it bestows that goodness for whose sake they were held in desire, making it plainly recognizable through experience.

¶ 33. Intellect is the instrument of wisdom; reason is the instrument of knowledge; and the natural certainty of both is the instrument of faith, which subsists through them. The gifts of healings manifest as natural humanity and kindness. For the divine gift, appropriated in us as a power or habit or disposition, always has some suitable instrument. Thus he who has purified his soul from every thought of sensible things receives wisdom; he who has established reason as the arbiter over the affections naturally implanted in us—anger and desire—receives knowledge; he who has attained unshakable assurance in mind and reason concerning divine things acquires faith, which can do all things; and finally, he who has entirely put away blind self-love and carnal affection, which the Fathers call *philautia*, and has attained to natural humanity, possesses the gift of healings.

¶ 34. Each of us, according to the rationale of the faith that is in him, receives the manifest operation of the Spirit; thus every man is the measure and arbiter of his own grace, and no one of sound mind has ever envied another on this account, because he shines with spiritual gifts, since the disposition and affection of soul capable of divine goods lies in his own free choice.

¶ 35. The cause of the distribution of divine good things, he says, is the measure of each one's faith; for according to what we believe, we also possess a greater zeal for acting. He, therefore, who works according to his

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own rationale shows the measure of his faith, having received a measure of grace corresponding to what he has believed; but he who refrains from working in accordance with his own sloth reveals the measure of his unbelief and is punished by deprivation of grace in proportion to his disbelief. Thus he acts unjustly who, eaten up by envy, wastes away at the virtue of others, since the power to believe, to act, and to receive grace in proportion to his faith lies clearly in himself and not in another.

¶ 36. The lover of what is honorable hastens freely, by the providential rationales of wisdom, toward the grace of deification; whereas he who is reluctant to do so is unwillingly recalled from depravity and evil by modes of chastisement under a just judgment: thus the first, as a lover and worshiper of God, is deified through Providence, while the second, as a lover of earthly things, is prevented by judgment from sinking into damnation. For God, as good, by the rationales of wisdom cares for those who are inclined by their will toward Him, but heals those who are slow to virtue by chastening modes.

¶ 37. True faith is truth without any falsehood mixed within it, preserving the soul in safety; and a good conscience pours in the wine of charity, since it harbors no transgression of the commandments.

¶ 38. "Upon him," it is said, "shall rest seven spirits: the spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of knowledge, of prudence, of counsel, of fortitude, and of the fear of God." To these spiritual gifts it belongs: to fear, that we abstain from evils; to fortitude, that we accomplish good works; to counsel, that we discern between contraries; to prudence, that we truly and sincerely know what is according to duty; to knowledge, that we rightly grasp the divine rationales contained in the virtues; to understanding, that we be inwardly affected in mind by the rationale of the things we have come to know; to wisdom, that by the mind's being wholly taken up into God, the power of holy desire may yield itself to worthy possession and enjoyment, making the participant, by intimate communion, a god, and providing him as an interpreter of divine beatitude for others by the constant, humble, and fuller exposition of the divine mysteries to those in need.



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¶ 39. The spirit of the fear of God is that we abstain in deed from what is truly evil; the spirit of fortitude is the prompt stirring and movement of the soul toward executing and fulfilling the commandments themselves; the spirit of counsel is the habit of discernment by which, with reason as companion, we carry out the divine commands and distinguish vices from virtues; the spirit of prudence is the firm and certain knowledge of the modes by which action and virtue are cultivated, so that in acting we never depart from the right judgment of reason; the spirit of knowledge is the comprehension of the commandments and of the rationales contained in them, wherein the modes of the virtues are grounded; the spirit of understanding is the soul's being drawn or, more aptly, transmuted into these modes and rationales of the virtues, by which transmutation the natural powers themselves are tempered with the modes and rationales of the divine commandments; the spirit of wisdom is the union of the spiritual rationales present in the commandments with their Author and Cause, by which, through an ineffable rationale, we learn, as far as is granted to men, the rationales of the things that are in God, and from the heart as from a spring we variously express to others the truth that exists in all things.

¶ 40. From those things that are last from God yet closest to us, as if adhering to us, we ascend by a certain ordered way to the first things that are remote from us but near to God. From abstaining from evils by fear we progress to doing the works of virtue through fortitude; from performing virtues we advance to the discernment of counsel; from discernment we pass to the stable habit of virtue, which is prudence; from the habit of virtue we rise to the knowledge of the rationales in the virtues themselves; from such knowledge we are led to the habit of being conformed and transformed to the explored rationales of the virtues, namely understanding; and from understanding we are elevated to the simple and exact contemplation of truth in all things. From this contemplation we are further raised up to render many and diverse rationales concerning the truth, clinging to piety in both sensible and intelligible realities.

¶ 41. Scripture has placed fear first for us in act as a good, and yet it also designates fear as the last, as though it were the beginning of wisdom;

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from fear, by ordered movement, we ascend to the end of wisdom, which is understanding, and once we have obtained understanding we cling closely to God, possessing wisdom alone as the middle bond of union with Him. For no one can anywhere comprehend wisdom unless he has first, through fear and the other intervening gifts, thoroughly shaken from himself both the filth of ignorance and the dust of malice. Hence Scripture orders wisdom nearest to God and fear nearest to us, so that we may grasp the rationale and law of this structured order.

¶ 42. Through these illuminations of faith—these “eyes” of the soul—we are drawn into the divine unity of Wisdom, gathering into its very Author and Cause that division of gifts which existed for our sake, by particular progressions of the virtues, omitting nothing that has been said, with God as our guide. Otherwise, while gradually neglecting them, we may render our faith blind and eyeless, and in the absence of works the illuminations of the Spirit fail; and we may deservedly be punished for endless ages, as those who have extinguished within themselves the divine eyes of faith.

¶ 43. Whoever, through idleness in fulfilling the commandments, digs out these eyes of faith within himself becomes completely reprobate, no longer having God looking upon him; for since Scripture calls the operations and inspirations of the divine Spirit the “eyes of the Lord,” he who does not open these eyes within himself by practice of the commandments does not have God beholding him from within. There are no other eyes by which it is fitting that God should regard earthly things, since the radiance of our virtue is a ray of the divine countenance.

¶ 44. Wisdom is a unity, indivisibly present in the manifold virtues that proceed from it and uniformly understood in their operations; and conversely, a simple unity is manifested in those virtues as they return to their origin in wisdom, when we—for whose sake the generation of the particular virtues goes forth—are, through the cultivation of each virtue, gathered by a higher ascent back into wisdom itself.

¶ 45. He is blind in faith who does not keep the precepts of divine faith; for since the commandments of God are lights, it is evident that he

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who does not do them lacks the divine light and bears only the empty name of God's faith, not knowing what it truly is.

¶ 46. No one who sins can put forward the weakness of the flesh as a pretext, for that flesh which was united by nature to God the Word, having been freed from the curse, has been entirely restored to honor through virtue, so that every excuse drawn from the flesh's inclination toward vice and lust has been taken away. For the divinity of the Word, always present to the faithful, extinguishes the law of sin that was at work in the flesh.

¶ 47. He who, through faith in God and through love, has conquered the desires or motions of unnatural and irrational affections has surpassed even the natural law itself and passes wholly into the realm of intelligible things, and he leads with him what is by nature akin and of the same kind, freeing it from alien bondage along with himself.

¶ 48. Knowledge, unless restrained by the practice of action and the fear of God, engenders the swelling of the mind; and the one puffed up by it acts as an author in order to display as his own what he has in fact received by grace, presenting it in the form of a word so as to draw to himself praise for the gift. But that action which, together with divine love, produces growth, does not claim a greater knowledge than is fitting for what is done; it trains the one who practices it in modesty of sense, causing his own faculty to be folded back upon itself at points where rationales exceed its grasp.

¶ 49. The heavenly dwelling is a tranquil state of soul devoid of passions, and a knowledge that is not assailed by any thought of error or falsehood.

¶ 50. Just as the movement of unity, when it reaches its end, yields a myriad, and the beginning of the movement of a myriad is unity (since the end of every beginning is the completion of its movement, and the beginning of every end is its fixed immovability), so faith, being by nature the principle of the virtues, has as its end the fullness of the good conferred through them; and goodness, as the natural end of the virtues that take their rise from faith, is inwardly united with it. For faith is the inner good of the soul itself, and the good is faith in act. God by nature is both faithful and good: faithful as the first Good, and good as the supremely desirable Object. Yet these are all

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one among themselves, distinguished by no rationale except that subtly discerned from the movement that begins from Him and returns to Him. Thus, the myriad, as bearing the form of the supremely desirable, defines the perfect appetite of those that move toward it, while unity, as the symbol of the first Good, furnishes the perfect foundation and starting-point for those that move from it.

¶ 51. The first form of apatheia—imperturbability and freedom from passions—is that in which we abstain wholly from evil in deed, and it appears in those still being led forward; the second is that in which we drive from the mind every lustful and vice-bearing thought, so that, according to this mode of prior apatheia, the motions of desire are extinguished because the thoughts that would inflame them are absent; the third is that in which the desiring power no longer inclines at all toward passions and lusts, this being also the perfection of the second mode, which consists in the purity of thoughts, and it occurs in those who behold the spiritual rationales through the forms of things perceived by the senses; the fourth and final apatheia is the full and complete purification even from the bare thought itself, in those who through knowledge and contemplation have made the mind a clear and transparent mirror of God. Thus, whoever has purified himself from the very deed of vices, and from assent to them in thought, and from being stirred or lured by them at all, and finally has rendered his mind pure even from the slightest thought of them, having attained these four modes of apatheia, departs from earth and earthly things and hastens toward the divine and longed-for spiritual rest and blessed abodes.

¶ 52. He calls the first apatheia the unblemished stillness of the body from sinful deeds; the second, the total rejection of lustful and vice-loving thoughts in the mind, through which the prior apatheia extinguishes the actual movements of desire, since without such thoughts desire is not inflamed; the third, the perfect cessation of the desiring power toward vices and lusts, which thereby becomes the second, consisting in the purity of thoughts; the fourth and final apatheia, that by which we utterly rout even those thoughts that touch upon sense, from which the third had previously

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arisen, and thus the soul is deprived of thoughts that form the images and likenesses of vices within it.

¶ 53. For the cultivator of action, reason and the mind's thought labor like servants and handmaids, contriving and shaping the methods of diligent activity, directing all their force against the wicked spirits opposed to action; yet once the philosophy concerned with action has been completed—which Scripture symbolizes by the number six, because six designates that portion of philosophy which deals with action—the free faculties, namely reason and the thought of the mind, are released to things spiritual, returning to the contemplation of the kindred rationales existing within beings.

¶ 54. Anger and desire are the foreign servant and the handmaid, whom the soul dedicated to contemplation subdues by fortitude and temperance and keeps always under the dominion of reason in service to the virtues, granting them no freedom nor releasing them until the law of nature is absorbed into the law of the Spirit, and until, as though emerging from mortal life, the death of the wretched flesh is overcome, and the entire image of the eternal kingdom shines forth clearly in the soul, expressing every feature of the exemplar through imitation. When this is attained, the contemplative soul grants liberty to desire and anger—desire is transformed into the immaculate delight and pure longing of divine love, and anger is transformed into spiritual fervor and sober exaltation, stirring ceaseless movement toward God.

¶ 55. The image and likeness of the eternal kingdom is the soul joined to the body, both made incorruptible by virtue and immovable by truth, bound together by the single divine law of the Spirit, wherein sense is transfigured into mind through the Spirit's operation. Through this, an everlasting and wondrous motion and vivifying operation of reason pervades all things in us, wherein no dissimilarity from God remains.

¶ 56. They say that desire fulfilled in action is pleasure, for the presence of the good defines its nature; but unfulfilled pleasure is itself desire, for the absence of the good defines its nature. Anger stirred within the soul is wrath; wrath expressed outwardly is fury. Therefore, whoever has

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subjected these faculties to reason finds desire transformed into pleasure through the soul's undefiled union with God in grace, and anger transformed into immaculate fervor, avenging only the pleasure found in God, and into sober ardor by which the appetitive power transcends created things entirely. Thus, while the world lives in us and the soul's voluntary affection remains fixed upon earthly things, we must beware not to free these powers, lest, mingling with the things perceived by the senses as with their kin, they wage war against the soul and carry it captive into vices, as the Babylonians once carried Jerusalem away. For the age by which the whole law commanded the foreign servants to serve signifies the soul's judgment and will when its affection and desire cling to this world, indicating through the narrative events what is to be understood spiritually.

¶ 57. He calls evil "begotten," because it arises from our unnatural movement; but he calls good "unbegotten," because it is by nature good, prior to all time. He calls intelligible good that which we alone should understand; he calls evil unintelligible, for it is better never to understand or contemplate it. He calls good "spoken," since it alone is fitting to be spoken by us; and he says good is "made," not because it is made—being innate to nature—but because the surpassing generosity of God allows it to be made by us through deification, which we enact and declare, making it more readily received through grace; this alone is supremely worth doing. Evil, he says, is "not made," for it ought never to come into being. He calls evil corruptible, because its nature is corruption and has no being or substance; but he calls good incorruptible, for it eternally is, and never ceases, and imparts stability and immortality to those in whom it dwells. Therefore, by reason we seek the good; by desire we love it; by anger we preserve it; by the senses we discern it clearly from its contraries; by speech we manifest it to the ignorant; by the generative faculty we multiply it—or rather, we ourselves are multiplied through its rationales.

¶ 58. The intellect devoted to contemplation must possess an unfruitful habit concerning vice and malice—that is, a habit that neither conceives nor begets them at all; equipped with this sterility it is borne upward to contemplation. For otherwise, while applied to the spiritual vision

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of things, it may unexpectedly fall into the hands of one of the wicked spirits, who by some subtle intrusion of sensible images corrupts the chaste disposition of the heart.

¶ 59. He who, in the name of virtue or knowledge, is pricked by any sting of vainglory, and foolishly nurtures the flowing “hair” of his mind—that is, the swelling of pride—resembles Absalom; he displays a moral discipline that is painted and hybrid, like a mule, so as to seduce onlookers, and by such swelling imagines he will overcome his own spiritual father, transferring to himself tyrannically the radiance of virtue and knowledge that belonged to the one who begot him by divine gift. But such a one, going forth into the breadth of natural speculation to war for truth by reason, is easily caught by the tangled hair of earthly concepts, the sensory power weaving again the vanity that destroys him, suspending him between heaven and earth. For, beset by vainglory, he neither rises by knowledge nor descends by humble action. His spiritual father grieves for him as dead, following God’s own pattern, who desires not the death of the sinner but that he turn and live.

¶ 60. The beginning of each man’s salvation is piety, which at first produces fear, restraining the soul from vice; but when perfected it establishes desire and love. Indeed, piety itself is fear in the beginning—according to the economy suited to us—so that it may hold back the loving power from depravity; but in the end it is naturally found as love itself, filling with spiritual joy those who have embraced its communion before all else.

¶ 61. Wisdom is at once fear and love: fear, considered as a privation in those who do not yet desire it; and love or desire, considered as a habit in the soul that delights in it. Thus wisdom both engenders fear—by freeing us from the expectation of punishment—and also produces love, which accustoms the mind to foresee the things to come by acquiring virtue.

¶ 62. Every confession humbles the soul: one confession, through grace granting justification; the other, through the soul accusing itself by acknowledging its own negligence and guilt.

¶ 63. Confession has a twofold rationale: one is thanksgiving for benefits received; the other is the examination and accusation of evils

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committed. Both are properly called confession, for both create humility: the grateful soul deems itself unworthy of gifts received, and the penitent soul begs for forgiveness for its offenses.

¶ 64. Pride consists of a twofold ignorance: ignorance of divine aid and ignorance of human weakness. Combined, these two form one confused imprudence. Therefore, pride is the deprivation of the knowledge of both God and man; for by denying two great truths, it affirms one great falsehood.

¶ 65. Vainglory is a deviation from the divine goal and the divine rationales, a turning to some other goal than God. The vainglorious man practices virtue for the sake of his own glory, purchasing fragile and non-existent human praise by his labors.

¶ 66. The flatterer labors for one thing: to arrange his conduct by outward gesture and habit so as to please; he also crafts flattering speech, by which he charms those delighted by appearances and sounds, who measure virtue only by the senses. Thus flattery—*anthropareskeia*—is the vice of displaying virtue for human approval in manner and word.

¶ 67. Hypocrisy is feigned friendship; or hatred concealed under its mask; or enmity clothed in the guise of goodwill; or envy disguised as affection; or a life appearing virtuous but lacking true righteousness; or justice simulated only in outward form; or error bearing the face of truth. Such things are cultivated by those who imitate the creeping serpent in the depravity of their conduct.

¶ 68. God is the author both of things and of the good within things. Therefore, he who is lifted up by virtue or knowledge and does not, according to the measure of the progress granted him by grace, acknowledge his own infirmity, does not escape pride. He who practices virtue for his own glory places himself before God, nailed to vainglory. He who does virtuous deeds or speaks divine things merely to appear praiseworthy before men is enslaved to the disease of flattery. And he who performs outward piety only to hide evil habits redeems apparent virtue through hypocrisy. Whoever behaves thus attributes the glory of the good to another rather than to God, its true author.



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¶ 69. None of the demons restrains the eager zeal of one cultivating virtue; rather, by deceitfully cutting away the defects of virtues, they incite him to still more effort, imitating his zeal so that his entire motivation turns away from God and toward themselves, thus losing the balance of moderation and unknowingly traveling toward a different, alien goal.

¶ 70. The demons do not hate chastity, fasting, almsgiving, hospitality, psalmody, study, silence, solitude, lofty ascetic practices, sleeping on the ground, vigils, nor any other work belonging to a pious life—so long as the intention of these deeds is secretly directed toward them.

¶ 71. One who practices virtue can easily detect and escape the demons that promote vice; but who among men can discern those demons who appear as partners and helpers in virtue, building outwardly with us the temple of the Lord, unless he possesses the living and active Word that penetrates soul and spirit, discerning which works, sensations, and thoughts arise merely from natural virtue and which are spiritual and from God; distinguishing the proper joining of bones and marrow—that is, the modes of virtue with the spiritual rationales—and laying bare the hidden thoughts and intentions of the heart, to which nothing is invisible but all things are naked and open, even those that will be done or thought by us in the future?

¶ 72. He calls the “division of soul and spirit” the distinction between virtues that arise from our natural rational powers and those that arise from the Spirit through grace. The discerning Word divides these clearly.

¶ 73. He calls the spiritual affections of the mind in divine rationales and thoughts, together with their hidden causes, the thoughts and intentions of the heart, which the discerning Word judges; for thought arouses memory, whose proper affection is intention, and intention attends to the goal—these denote the same inner reality.

¶ 74. Since God is essentially knowledge and precedes all created knowledge, and since He transcends even the mind into which we attempt to receive Him, it is manifest that God is superior to knowledge and infinitely surpasses both the intellect that receives and the knowledge it receives.

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¶ 75. Who, unless the divine Word abides within his high heart, can stand alone and resist the hidden wiles of unseen demons who imitate virtue, so as not to mix themselves with him in the building of the temple of the Lord, as Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the heads of the families once declared with a loud voice to the spirits of pride, vainglory, flattery, and hypocrisy: “It is not for us and for you to build a house to the Lord our God; but we ourselves alone will build to the Lord our God,” knowing well that by mingling with them the entire structure collapses and the beauty of divine gifts is lost.

¶ 76. No one who welcomes any of these demons as helpers and companions in his cultivation of virtue can build the house of the Lord, for such a one does not have God as the object of his works, but rather the passion or vice to which he dedicates those works.

¶ 77. Those who attack the demons from a deficiency of virtue fall into fornication, drunkenness, avarice, and envy; but those who attack them through excess fall into pride, arrogance, vainglory, and conceit. Through these secondary virtues the demons secretly sow greater evils.

¶ 78. Would that we too might say to the evil spirits who approach us under the guise of spiritual friendship, plotting secretly to inflict the death of sin while pretending a partnership in good—when they say: “We will build with you a temple to the Lord”—may we answer: “It is not for us and for you to build a house to the Lord our God; but we ourselves alone will build to the Lord of Israel,” alone meaning free from the demons who attack through deficiency and excess, though not alone in truth, for we have the holy angels as helpers, and above all God Himself, building us into a holy temple without stain.

¶ 79. The rationale of virtue is the union of human infirmity with divine power through the recognition of that infirmity. He who confines himself within the awareness of his natural weakness does not reach the rationale of virtue, but through sloth falls from it and is worthy of pardon. But he who opposes his weakness proudly as though it were strength and attempts to perform divine works of duty without divine aid surpasses the rationale and end of virtue, errs grievously, and sees virtue itself as sin.

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¶ 80. Since it is written, “The supplication of the just availeth much,” this is true in two ways: first, when the one who prays fulfills the commandments in act, so that his prayer is not empty sound but living and effective through his deeds; for the substance of prayer is the practice of the commandments. Second, when the one who seeks the prayers of the righteous amends his own life and performs virtuous deeds, thus strengthening the prayer offered for him.

¶ 81. The prayer of the righteous avails nothing when the one requesting it is more pleased by his sins than by virtue; for even Samuel could not reconcile God to Saul when Saul remained impenitent. God therefore commanded Samuel not to mourn uselessly for him, saying, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?”

¶ 82. Likewise Jeremiah, compassionate in the extreme, was not heard when praying for the Jews who remained enslaved to idolatry, because their impenitence rendered his intercession fruitless. Hence God commanded him: “Do not pray for this people, nor ask mercy for them, for I will not hear you.”

¶ 83. It is great folly—even madness—to seek salvation through the prayers of the righteous while delighting inwardly in destructive sins. If the evils displeased him, he would not render the prayers offered on his behalf idle and inert, but would strengthen them by his own virtues, enabling them to soar to God who grants forgiveness.

¶ 84. The supplication of the just avails greatly, both from the just one who offers it and from the one for whom he intercedes. For it gives the intercessor boldness before God and leads the sinner away from previous wickedness into virtue.

¶ 85. The Apostle says: “You will rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you are grieved by various temptations.” How can one rejoice in that by which he is saddened?

¶ 86. True doctrine knows two forms of sadness: one forged secretly within the soul by hidden rationales, the other impressed upon the senses by outward circumstances. The first occupies the depths of the soul,

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scourged by conscience; the second burdens the senses, weighed down by external troubles. The first is the end of sensual pleasure; the second, the end of spiritual joy—indeed, the first arises from the soul’s voluntary affections toward sense, and the second from involuntary trials.

¶ 87. Sadness is the state of soul deprived of pleasure; the deprivation of pleasure is labor; labor is the defect or withdrawal of a natural habit; defect of natural habit is passion and sickness in the faculty subject to that habit; and this passion or sickness arises when the faculty abuses its natural operation, moving toward what is contrary to nature.

¶ 88. The end of the soul’s sadness is the bodily pleasure that occasioned it, just as the end of the soul’s pleasure is the sadness or pain of the flesh. Thus the soul’s joy becomes the chastisement of the flesh.

¶ 89. There is a twofold sadness: one of the senses, from the absence of bodily pleasures; the other of the soul, from the lack of its proper goods. Temptations also are twofold: some arise from voluntary will and produce sensual pleasure and spiritual grief; others occur without our will and produce spiritual joy and bodily pain.

¶ 90. Just as sadness is twofold, so is temptation: voluntary temptations forge sensual pleasure and spiritual pain; involuntary temptations bring bodily suffering and spiritual profit.

¶ 91. Voluntary temptation produces pleasure in the senses and grief in the soul; involuntary temptation produces pain in the senses but joy in the soul.

¶ 92. When the Lord taught His disciples to pray, saying, “Lead us not into temptation,” He meant the voluntary temptation that arises from the movement of our own will, which leads to sensual pleasure and spiritual harm. But James exhorts us to rejoice when we fall into involuntary temptations, which bring pain to the body but joy and profit to the soul, teaching patience that leads to perfection.

¶ 93. Thus the Lord commands us to pray against voluntary temptations, while James urges us to rejoice in involuntary ones: the first remove sensual pleasure and spiritual grief; the second remove sensual grief and produce spiritual joy.

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¶ 94. The perfect man resists voluntary temptations by continence and remains steadfast in involuntary temptations by patience; the entire man practices both active virtue with knowledge and contemplation that is not idle.

¶ 95. Consisting of both body and soul, man experiences both pleasure and sadness in each. He who embraces spiritual pleasure and accepts bodily sadness becomes approved, perfect, and entire: approved by enduring adversities, perfect by conquering bodily pleasure and pain, entire by maintaining harmony between action and contemplation.

¶ 96. He who has experienced both the pleasure and pain of the flesh is “approved”; he who has conquered both by the word’s power is “perfect”; he who preserves the union of action and contemplation in unwavering love for God is “entire.”

¶ 97. Sadness of soul is twofold: one arising from oneself, the other from another’s offense. Its cause is always the love of sensual pleasure—either in oneself or in another—just as every virtue arises from rejecting sensual affection.

¶ 98. Without the soul’s lust for sense, no sin exists in man; and bodily pleasure always precedes the sadness that afflicts the soul.

¶ 99. The true origin of virtue is the soul’s voluntary alienation from the flesh; and the body disciplined through willing labor imparts spiritual joy to the soul.

¶ 100. When the soul, for virtue’s sake, has rejected its attachment to the senses, it cannot desire the sensory pleasure that belongs to labors, because the faculty that seeks delight has been redirected; but the soul that restrains natural pleasures through continence and endures violent trials with patience remains unmoved by both pleasure and pain. The body’s pain arises from the soul’s being engrossed in natural concerns, and every unnatural movement of the soul introduces sensual pleasure and lust, for no other root of such forging exists except the soul’s departure from its natural rationales.

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¶ 1. The soul's inventive power is the intelligent faculty itself. When this faculty, by the firm resolve of the mind, separates itself from the necessity and craving of the senses, leaving the flesh unattended and without care for pleasure and delight, it does not even consent to mitigate bodily pain, because the whole strength and affection of the mind is wholly fixed upon divine things.

¶ 2. The mind and the sense possess naturally contrary operations, by reason of the extreme dissimilarity of the realities entrusted to them. For the mind has as its proper objects intelligible and incorporeal substances, which it apprehends by an incorporeal and spiritual logos; whereas the sense has as its proper objects what is sensible and bodily, which it is by nature constituted to perceive.

¶ 3. From this there readily arises pleasure of the senses, when the soul rejects what is according to nature. For as long as the soul labors for goods that are natural, there is no faculty at work that fabricates modes of sensual delight.

¶ 4. When reason, in its consideration of things that fall under the senses, goes before and governs the sense, every natural pleasure of the flesh fails and withers; for the sense, being then bound and held in service to reason, no longer stands free to minister to its own pleasures. Thus, whenever in us reason rules and is enslaved to the service of virtue, it follows of necessity that the flesh is afflicted.

¶ 5. But when the mind comes to regard the power of sense as something that belongs to it by nature, it becomes entangled in the shapes and colors of sensible things, and begins to devise pleasures of the flesh, being unable to master the desirability of such objects, to which it is ensnared by a passionate attachment through the senses.

¶ 6. Since it is impossible for the mind to pass to kindred intelligible realities without contemplating the sensible things that lie in between, and impossible to contemplate these without sense, which adheres to the mind and is by nature akin to sensible things, then if, in touching them, the mind clings to their figures and colors as to desirable objects, regarding this as a simple operation when it is in truth compound, it falls

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from what is intelligible and spiritual and, with both hands as it were, grasps and embraces what is contrary to nature. Moved and stirred in a way other than reason prescribes, on account of the victory of the senses over it, the mind becomes the begetter of the soul's sadness, often scourged by the lash of conscience, and openly the author of the pleasure of the senses, which is made fat and overindulged by its inventions for pampering the flesh. If, however, as soon as it has touched and perceived, the mind dissects the outward appearance of visible things, and beholds instead the spiritual logoi that lie within them, purified of their sensible figures, it engenders a delight proper to the mind, which is not held by any visible thing, and establishes pain for the senses, deprived by nature of all sensible sweetness.

¶ 7. Since, therefore, the soul's sadness or pain (that is, its labor—for these are one) naturally generates the pleasure of the senses, and the pain (that is, labor) of the senses produces the soul's joy, it is altogether fitting that the one who, in hope fixed on life, is seized by longing for God and our Savior Jesus Christ through the resurrection from the dead, for an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance laid up in the heavens, should rejoice in mind and exult with ineffable joy, ever rejoicing in the hope of the good things to come, while in the flesh and in the senses he suffers pain, namely the labors arising from manifold temptations which inflict hardship upon the body. For every virtue bears with it both labor and delight: labor of the flesh, when the smooth and gentle activity of sense is withdrawn; and delight of the soul, when it is flooded with the pure spiritual logoi discerned in and through the sensible.

¶ 8. It is fitting in this present life (for thus, I think, we should understand the "now" of Scripture) that the soul, grieving and mourning in the flesh on account of the manifold labors of those temptations that assail it for virtue's sake, should nevertheless always rejoice inwardly and be delighted in itself, resting on the hope of the blessings to come, even while the senses are troubled by hardships. For, as the divine Apostle says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

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¶ 9. The flesh belongs to the soul, and not the soul to the flesh. For the higher is said to be “of” the lower, not conversely the lower “of” the higher. Since, then, the law introduced by transgression has grown old in the flesh—namely, the law of sensual pleasure and desire—by whose ordained condemnation the punishments of the body have been wisely contrived to abolish the law of the flesh, it is evident that the one who knows that death has entered the world for the sake of sin and to destroy it, always rejoices in mind when he sees the law of sin being cut away from his flesh through various labors, so that he may receive, in the Spirit, the blessed life to come. This no one can otherwise attain unless, in the vessel of this present life, he first empties out from his flesh the law of sin, by which the will is led through its affections and desires.

¶ 10. He who, for the sake of virtue and according to right reason, grieves in the flesh under labors and hardships, rejoices in his soul by that same reason, as one who beholds the beauty of the future blessings as though already present. For their sake, like the great David and with the deliberate purpose of his mind turning away from the flesh, he dies daily, that by a continual spiritual regeneration he may be made new. Thus he comes to possess both a saving joy and a profitable sorrow: sorrow not irrational as in the many, which torments and crushes the soul because affections and pleasures are lacking and earthly abundance does not flow, as is the case with those who against nature desire what is unfitting and flee what they ought not to flee; but rather considered sorrow, approved by powers drawn from divine wisdom, and indicating the presence of what is truly evil. For he calls sorrow or pain a present evil when it turns in the soul and the sense usurps the judgment-seat of reason; whereas that sorrow which resides in the senses appears when the course of virtue proceeds unimpeded in the soul, subduing the senses with such labors as create joy for the soul, that it may be brought near to God through a kindred brightness of virtue and the illumination of knowledge.

¶ 11. He calls “saving joy” the soul’s delight arising from virtue, and “useful sorrow” the pain of the flesh for virtue’s sake. Therefore, he who gapeingly pursues passions and sensible things desires what is unfitting, and



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he who refuses to accept those events by which the removal of such passions and things is accomplished, flees what he ought not to flee.

¶ 12. Divine grace does not bestow illuminations of knowledge unless there is present a natural faculty capable of receiving such light; nor does that which is capable, if grace does not act, produce in itself any illumination of divine knowledge.

¶ 13. The grace of the all-holy Spirit does not work wisdom in the saints without a mind capable of receiving it; nor knowledge without a reasoning power fitted for it; nor does He act without a mind ready to grasp, with rational certainty, those future realities that are now hidden to all; nor does He grant the gifts of healings apart from natural compassion; nor any other gift apart from a habit and faculty in us apt for that particular grace. But likewise, none will ever attain the use of what has just been named by natural forces alone, unless divine power bestows it. All the saints clearly show this, for after the divine revelations they received, they still sought and inquired into the logoi of what had been revealed.

¶ 14. He who seeks without inner turmoil receives grace by which, cultivating action, he is empowered to work the virtues; and he who inquires without agitation discovers truth in things by the strength of natural contemplation. Finally, he who knocks without perturbation at the door of knowledge enters unhindered into the hidden grace of mystical theology.

¶ 15. He who seeks divine things without turmoil and with a mind free of passions will surely receive that which he seeks. But he who seeks with any passion, disturbance, or lust will by no means attain it. For it is written: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask badly.”

¶ 16. The Holy Spirit “searches” and “examines” the knowledge of things in us—not that He seeks anything for Himself, for as God He transcends all knowledge, but for our sake, to whom such seeking is necessary. Even as the Word becomes flesh, not for Himself but for us, accomplishing the mystery through the assumed flesh, so also the Spirit does not work the knowledge of mysteries in the saints without the natural faculty that searches and investigates the sciences.

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¶ 17. Just as the eye cannot perceive visible things without the light of the sun, so the human mind never undertakes spiritual contemplation without spiritual light. One light, by nature, illumines the senses so that they perceive bodies; the other illumines the mind so that it clearly beholds realities that transcend the senses.

¶ 18. The powers of seeking and searching divine realities are essentially implanted in human nature from its first constitution by the Creator; but divine revelations themselves are granted through grace when the power of the all-holy Spirit comes. Yet in the beginning, through sin, the evil one fixed this seeking power to the surface and “bark” of visible things, so that “there was none who understood or sought God,” because all who shared in this nature had the faculty of intellect and reason confined to what appeared outwardly to the senses, and wandered in every thought and perception concerning what lies above sense. Therefore, the grace of the all-holy Spirit, to those who had not willingly surrendered to error, tore this faculty away from earthly things to which it was bound, restored it to itself, and, purified by grace, it first sought and searched—and thus, seeking, it was itself “searched out” by that same grace of the Spirit.

¶ 19. The proper salvation of souls is the end of faith. The end of faith is the true revelation and manifestation of what has been believed. The true revelation and manifestation of what has been believed is the hidden comprehension, according to each one’s measure of faith, of the very reality believed. This comprehension of what is believed is the return of the believer to the Principle, in accord with the logos of the end. This return of the believer to his own Principle, for the sake of the end, is the fulfillment of desire. The fulfillment of desire is the rest of the perpetual motion of him who desires in relation to the Object of desire. This rest of the perpetual motion of those who desire in relation to the Desired is the unending and continuous enjoyment of the Desired. This unending enjoyment of the Desired is a participation in and communion with divine realities that surpass nature. This participation and communion in what is beyond nature makes those who rejoice in it like unto Him whose participation and communion they enjoy. And this likeness of those who rejoice in such

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communion to Him whose communion they share is, as far as possible in act, an identity by similitude. Finally, this identity by similitude in act, of those who enjoy participation and communion with Him whose communion they enjoy, is the deification of those judged worthy to be adorned with piety.

¶ 20. Nature possesses neither the logoi of realities that are above nature, nor the laws that govern what is beyond nature. By “above nature” I mean that divine delight, surpassing every thought, which nature is granted to bestow upon those who are united to God by grace; and by “beyond nature” I mean that pain arising from the privation of this delight, a pain inexpressible in words, for which God, united beyond grace to those unworthy, is by nature the author. For God, according to the quality of each person’s underlying disposition, unites Himself to all in a way known to Himself alone, and in the end He will be wholly united to all; yet He imparts to each a sense and experience of Himself only in the measure in which each has prepared and disposed himself to receive Him.

¶ 21. The Holy Spirit guides those who seek the salvation of souls in the Spirit and who search out the spiritual logoi and modes of this salvation, so that they may assent in mind. He does not permit in them an idle or inert state of that power by which they can readily seek divine things.

¶ 22. First, a man seeks to mortify sin in the will and the will in sin; then he searches out the mode and logos by which these two, different from one another, mutually mortify one another. And again, once sin and the will have been perfectly mortified in each other, he seeks and searches out the life of the will provided by virtue and the life of virtue provided by the will, considering how and by what logos the life of each might be mingled with the other. Thus, what we seek, as it were defining it, is a desirable good; and what we search out is the mode whereby that desirable is brought to fulfillment.

¶ 23. For the one who is to be saved, it is necessary not only that sin be put to death in the will, but also that the very will toward sin be mortified; and not only that the will be made alive toward virtue, but that virtue itself be enlivened in the will, so that sin, dead to the dead, entirely separated from the whole person, no longer feels or acts in him, and the will,

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living to the living, wholly and indivisibly united, experiences virtue. For he who has mortified the will toward sin has been planted in the likeness of Christ's death; and he who has raised this same will to virtue has been planted in the likeness of His resurrection.

¶ 24. Between sin and the will, which mutually mortify one another, there exists a twofold absence of sensation; and between justice and the will, which mutually live to one another, there exists a twofold sense and perception.

¶ 25. Christ, who is by nature God and man, is possessed by us as God above nature through mystical participation and communion, which is by inheritance; and for our sake, as man in a form like our own, He possesses us in Himself, claiming and, so to speak, arrogating us to Himself by an inclination that surpasses all comprehension of the mind, also by inheritance. The saints, foreseeing this mystically in the Spirit, judged it fitting to teach it, so that they might manifest beforehand the future reward and glory of virtue in Christ, and might show that the passions and sufferings in Him precede, for our sake, the current struggle for virtue.

¶ 26. The mind, moved by a bare desire for a logos concerning the Author of all, only seeks; but reason, which constructs various true logoi about Him and contends by way of argument, this searches.

¶ 27. Seeking is the first and simple stirring of the mind by desire toward its own Author; but searching is the first and simple discrimination of reason, with an intention of judgment, concerning its own Author. Again, inquiring is the movement of the mind according to spiritual and wise knowledge toward its own Author, with a desire now kindled by insight; and to search out is the discrimination of reason, according to the operation of the virtues, concerning its own Author, with a prudent and wise intention.

¶ 28. The holy and divine prophets, as they inquired and searched concerning the salvation of souls, were animated by a fervent and burning movement of the mind toward God, with a desire kindled by spiritual knowledge, and were mighty in prudent and wise discernment for the exercise of divine things in action. Those who emulate them inquire with understanding and knowledge concerning the salvation of souls, and by

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searching with prudence and wisdom they cultivate right judgment in divine works.

¶ 29. Scripture recognizes a twofold knowledge of divine realities. One is habitual and relational, “intentional” as it were, residing only in reason, in the spiritual senses, and in thoughts of the mind, without any experiential sense of what is known in actual reality; by this we are guided and governed in this present life. The other is truly and properly real, situated in experience alone, in act, without reasoning, concepts, or mental images, and imparts the entire sense of what is known through participation and communion by grace, in which, in the repose and blessedness to come, we will unceasingly undergo in act the efficacious deification that surpasses all natural power. The first kind, as they say, dwelling in reason and in the mind’s spiritual senses and thoughts, has power by its activity to draw forth desire and longing toward that other knowledge, which is real in participation and communion. But the latter, which imparts by experience the very sense of what is known and understood, in its own perception makes superfluous the prior knowledge that was lodged in reason, sense, and thoughts of the mind.

¶ 30. He teaches that there is a twofold knowledge: one, lodged in reason and in divine senses and notions yet lacking the actual experiential sense of the realities understood; the other, in the very act, without reasoning or mental concepts, possessing the enjoyment of true realities in their own mode. For such is the power of reason and speech informed by knowledge, that through cognition it both reveals and as it were removes what is known and understood, and moves the desire of those stirred by it toward the enjoyment of the indicated reality.

¶ 31. The wise say that no logos about God can ever be identical with the experience of God, nor can thought or notion co-exist with the sense of God. By “logos concerning God” I mean the spiritual and learned contemplation and speculation drawn by proportion and analogy from created things; by “sense of God” I mean that experience of the good beyond nature which comes through participation; by “thought” and “notion” I mean the simple and unitary knowledge concerning Him formed from

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created things. Perhaps something similar may be said of anything whatsoever; for the experience of a thing, when it is present, renders reason about that thing silent, and the sense of a thing, when it is tasted, lays aside thought or commentary. By “experience” I mean the very knowledge in act of the thing known, which appears after all reasoning and discourse; and by “sense,” the very perception and commerce with the thing known and understood, shining forth beyond all thought and mental apprehension. It is perhaps in this mystical way that the great Apostle says: “Whether prophecies, they shall be brought to nothing; or tongues, they shall cease; or knowledge, it shall be destroyed,” speaking of that knowledge which resides in reason and in the mind’s spiritual senses and thoughts.

¶ 32. It was altogether fitting that He who is Creator of beings in respect of the nature of their essence should also be the author of the deification of creatures through grace, so that He who bestowed being might likewise grant well-being and the eternal blessedness of unending being. Since no being at all knows either itself or another according to what it is in essence, it follows rightly that no creature has by nature a foreknowledge of future things; God alone is excepted, who both knows Himself according to essence and foreknows the being of all He creates even before they are brought into existence. He it is who, more liberally still, will grant through grace that both He Himself and they in turn may mutually know what they are by essence, making manifest to them the *logoi* of their origin, which pre-existed in Him uniformly before all ages.

¶ 33. God, who created human nature, did not implant in its senses either pleasure or pain when He created it; rather, He fashioned within the soul a certain power for forging pleasure, according to which, by a secret *logos* ineffable in words, He Himself might be pleased. This power—the mind’s natural desire for God—the first man, once created, attached to the senses and turned toward the visible things set before him; and by this first movement, through the mediation of sense, he exercised a vigorous and actual pleasure that was contrary to nature. To this pleasure, He who in His providence cares for our salvation affixed pain as a kind of avenging force, by which the law of death, taking deep root in the height of the body’s nature,

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might cut off and expel the unnatural desire of the imprudent mind, incited toward objects presented to the senses.

¶ 34. Pleasure and pain did not come forth together as one and the same nature with the flesh. Rather, transgression fashioned pleasure as a stain of the will of the mind, and from the resulting condemnation introduced pain as the destruction of nature: pleasure and desire engendering the voluntary death of the soul, which is sin, and pain, by dissolving the body, the destruction of nature itself. God, by His providential governance of human affairs, added involuntary pain and death for the chastisement of this willful, sensual pleasure, of which He is the wise ordainer and author.

¶ 35. Because the old, irrational pleasure of nature had grown strong, there entered a rational pain in its place, through manifold hardships—whose source and end is bodily death—cutting off unnatural pleasure, without, however, entirely abolishing or destroying it, so that that pleasure of the mind which comes by grace, divine and spiritual, might have room to appear and be revealed.

¶ 36. Labors freely designed and voluntarily embraced, as well as those involuntarily imposed and inflicted, indeed remove that pleasure by arresting its movement in act, but they do not annihilate the underlying power that, like an original law, is implanted in nature. For philosophy that cultivates virtue brings about the impassibility of the will of the mind, but does not uproot all affection from nature; and once impassibility of the will has been gained, the grace of divine pleasure takes its seat in the mind.

¶ 37. Every labor, having as its cause a preceding pleasure or desire, is manifestly a debt that all who share this nature pay, as from guilt. For labor is everywhere naturally the companion of pleasure in all things whose origin is preceded by the law of pleasure, which itself has no prior cause. By “pleasure without cause” I mean that pleasure of transgression which no preceding pain ever chastened.

¶ 38. It was in no way possible that nature, having subjected itself to both voluntary pleasure and violent pain, could be recalled and restored to its original life unless a man himself became its craftsman—one who, by his own will, would assume a pain devised against nature, not originating in

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any prior pleasure, in order to punish the pleasure acquired by nature's will; and thus liberate nature from the ruin that had entered from its beginning through birth, by undertaking a birth which had no origin at all from pleasure.

¶ 39. Since, after the transgression, all mortals had as the origin of their birth a pleasure that preceded their very coming-to-be, and no one at all was by nature free from the stain of this pleasure, but all, paying a natural debt, endured labors and, as their attendant, death, and there was no means of acquiring liberty for those pressed under the unjust tyranny of pleasure and subjected by nature to just labors and most just death on its account; and since it was necessary to destroy this most unjust pleasure and abolish the labors most justly brought in for its sake, by which wretched man, whose beginning lay in the stain of pleasure and whose end was in death's corruption, was torn asunder—there had to be found a labor and destruction of death, itself unjust and without cause, for the restoration of suffering nature. “Without cause,” in that it had no preceding pleasure; “unjust,” in that it was joined to no life of lust. Standing thus midway between the unjust pleasure and the labors and just death arising from it, this labor and most unjust destruction of death would utterly abolish the lawless origin from pleasure and the just end of nature that had grown old under the sway of death; and would thereby free once more the human race from pleasure and pain, restoring nature to its pristine brightness, unmarked by the brands of birth and corruption. Therefore, since God was in all things perfect by nature, the Word of God became, in all things, a perfect man, of an intelligent soul and a mortal body like ours, save only for sin; that is, He had no share whatsoever in that pleasure and lust which had grown old from the transgression and which precedes temporal birth from a woman, even though for its sake He voluntarily accepted the pain brought in as the end of nature. In suffering and dying unjustly, He destroyed the first origin from unjust pleasure that held nature violently in bondage. Thus His death, unlike that of other men, was in no way due as a debt to such pleasure, but was rather contrary to it and abolished the just end of nature by the overthrow of



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death; against which unjust pleasure and lust, for whose sake death had grown old, would no longer suffice as a righteous avenger.

¶ 40. It was truly fitting and righteous that the Lord, who is by nature wise, just, and almighty, should show His wisdom by knowing unfailingly the mode of healing; His justice by not openly bestowing salvation upon man apart from man's own free submission; and His omnipotence by failing in nothing required for the completion of our health.

¶ 41. God's wisdom shines in this, that He truly became man according to nature; His justice in that He assumed, through a birth like ours, the passible aspect of our nature; and His power in that, through His sufferings and death, He established for nature an eternal life, impassibility, and immutability.

¶ 42. The Lord clearly manifested wisdom in the manner of our healing, becoming man without any change or least stain of His divinity; and He displayed the balance of justice in the magnitude of His condescension and descent into our condition, by voluntarily undergoing condemnation in the passible part of nature and hastening by this to abolish sin and the death that arises from it; transforming these very passions—pleasure and the pain that had grown old on its account—into weapons for their own destruction. In this passible part lay the power of sin and death; there sin's tyranny hardened itself through pleasure and lust, and by its guilt death's power was strengthened through toil and suffering. For plainly the realm and strength of pleasure and pain reside in the passible aspect of nature. We strive to alleviate the more vehement punishment of pain by a measure of pleasure; wishing to soften the harshness of pain's sensation, we flee to delight, striving thereby to ease the nature afflicted by the scourge of pain. Yet while we seek to blunt the goads of pain by pleasure's enticement, we only tighten its bonds against ourselves as much as we are able.

¶ 43. He shows the excellence of His power in that, through the very opposites He endured, He established the immutable genesis, existence, and subsistence of nature. For through His passion He grants us freedom from passion; through His labors, remission; and through His death, eternal life for nature. Thus He restored nature to its original blessedness, renewing

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the habits of nature through the very deprivations He underwent, and bestowing upon nature that grace which surpasses all nature—deification—wherewith He clothed the flesh.

¶ 44. God indeed became truly man and granted to nature a new beginning, a second birth; a beginning that arises from toil and terminates in the delights of the age to come. For just as the first father Adam, because of the transgression of the divine commandment, introduced—besides the first creation—another beginning of birth driven by pleasure and lust, and through intervening toil and hardship concluding in death, by a later rash counsel and the serpent's persuasion, devised a pleasure not following upon labor but itself yielding to labor and hardship; and thereby, as author of this unjust origin in pleasure, dragged all born from him in like flesh, together with himself, into the end of death and corruption; so also the Lord, becoming man and bringing about, through the Holy Spirit, a new beginning of second birth for nature, undertook Adam's death through toil and hardship (though this death was supremely unjust in Him, who lacked the unjust origin from unlawful pleasure), and removed both extremes—the beginning and the end—of human birth by the logos of His own economy; so that what did not originally come from God might be abolished, and all reborn from Him might be mystically released from Adam's guilt.

¶ 45. By removing pleasure and lust that proceed from the law of sin, the Lord allows those reborn in Him by grace through the Spirit to undergo, for the condemnation of sin, that same death which previously lay upon nature's condemnation; so that they no longer have Adam's pleasure-filled origin, but only the toil and hardship introduced by Adam as their author—not as due retribution for their own sin, but by a certain rational and wise dispensation aimed against sin and for its abolition through death. Where its parent—pleasure and lust, which it was accustomed to avenge—is absent, death now plainly becomes the parent of eternal life. For just as Adam's voluptuous life of lust became the parent of death and destruction, so the Lord's death on account of Adam, wholly free from Adam's pleasure and lust, becomes the parent of life everlasting.

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¶ 46. From the transgression the human race received for the origin of its birth a voluptuous conception from seed and a coming-to-be from flux; and for its end, the destruction of death brought about by toil and hardship. The Lord, however, had neither such a beginning of carnal birth nor was He by nature subject to such an end, that is, to death.

¶ 47. Sin, presenting itself as food, first enticed Adam to transgress the divine command, making him thereby the author of pleasure and lust; and, through this, fixed sin deep in the very core of nature, condemning all nature to death. Through that one man's guilt, sin sought to push the whole race of creatures into the abyss of non-being and to bring them to utter dissolution. This was the intent of that most wicked sower of sin and father of evil, the devil, who first, through pride, thrust himself from divine splendor, and then, through envy, drove Adam from paradise, acting equally against us and against God, to destroy God's works and annul those beings which had been brought forth and established in existence.

¶ 48. With the envy which burns in him against both us and God, the devil deceitfully persuaded man that God envied him, and so made him the transgressor of the commandment. He envies God, lest His power—worthy of all praise—be revealed in making man divine; and he envies man, lest by cultivating virtue he become a sharer in divine glory. Thus the evil one not only envies us in respect of that splendor which we attain with God through virtue, but also envies God because of that all-praiseworthy power by which He grants us salvation.

¶ 49. As in Adam death became the condemnation of nature, having as its beginning a pleasure-filled birth, so in Christ death became the condemnation of sin, in whom nature has recovered a beginning that is pure of pleasure and lust.

¶ 50. If we who have been made sons of God by the gift of grace through the Spirit must exhibit, with gladness of soul, such endurance of sufferings and hardships for the sake of justice, and even a most ignominious death as though we were criminals, no matter how great our virtue; what, then, will be the end of those who do not believe the Gospel of God? What will be their outcome or judgment, who have not only zealously preserved to

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the end Adam's living, vigorous, and operative lust, both in soul and body and in the intention of the mind and in nature, but have not received God the Father, who exhorts them through the Son made flesh, nor the Mediator, the Son, who fulfills the Father's mission? For He, that He might reconcile us to the Father, of His own will gave Himself over to death for us according to the Father's good pleasure, that He might glorify us in Himself by the beauty of His divinity, in proportion as He consented, for our sake, to be dishonored by His own sufferings.

### FIFTH 100 CHAPTERS

¶ 1. Natural reason, working through the intermediary virtues in the one who diligently practices them, readily bears the mind onward toward understanding; and the mind, by exercising contemplation and desiring knowledge, is led to wisdom. But that irrational passion, abhorrent to reason, hurls itself down into the realm of the senses through the will of its author, the one who neglects the divine commandments; and its final aim is that the mind should cleave to lust and be fastened immovably to it.

¶ 2. He calls virtue a most tranquil and unshakable habit of what is honorable and right, lacking anything on either side that would oppose the character of God, whose image it bears, and against which nothing truly stands in contradiction. God Himself is the cause and author of the virtues; and the active knowledge of God is the very imitation, in the stable habit of the spirit, of Him who has truly known God.

¶ 3. Since reason has discerned the essence and nature of each thing according to the measure for which it has been prepared, there is nothing which by nature surpasses itself or falls below itself. Thus the end and limit of all things is the recognition of the desire of their Author; and the mode is the imitation of Him which things are able to attain in act. But when the appetite of those who are moved seeks to go beyond both end and mode, their whole course becomes vain, because they do not attain to God, in whom every movement of desire, having reached the truly existing end—namely the blessed possession of God—comes to rest. If, however, the

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appetite of those stirred to movement is carried aside from this end and mode, it runs a futile course, falling instead into sense in the place of God, where there is forged a vain and empty enjoyment of pleasures and lusts.

¶ 4. The mind wholly fixed upon the cause and Author of all things becomes altogether ignorant, perceiving no “reason” in God, who in His very essence transcends every rationale and every cause. Gathered into Him from all things, it no longer knows the reasons of those things from which it has departed, but sees and considers only Him to whom it has fled by grace, through a rationale that cannot be expressed. For the mind that goes out of itself toward God in excess confuses in its vision the incorporeal and the corporeal; it no longer properly distinguishes spirits and bodies. It is not fitting to suppose that any of those realities which are from God as secondary causes are apprehended together with God Himself.

¶ 5. The vice and passion that must truly be uprooted is the swelling of a puffed-up mind—its arrogance and insolence—arising from a twofold evil: pride and vainglory. Pride denies the Author of both virtue and nature; vainglory adulterates nature and virtue alike. For the proud man accomplishes nothing truly divine or pious; and he who labors in vainglory does nothing in accord with the true reasons of nature.

¶ 6. Pride is characterized by its denial of God as creator of virtue and nature; vainglory, by its division of nature into parts so as to belittle and depress it. From this division arise the swelling, arrogance, and insolence of the mind—this “typhos,” a composite habit of malice which spontaneously denies God and disregards the equal honor that nature itself bestows upon all.

¶ 7. The swelling of an elated mind, its arrogance and insolence—its typhos—is a mixture of pride and vainglory. Toward God, it is contempt, detracting from His very providence and readily slandering it. Toward nature, it is the disposition of an alien mind, which unnaturally assaults and tempts whatever belongs to nature, thereby corrupting its beauty by abuse.

¶ 8. The ardor of the spirit signifies not only temptations but also abandonment by God, as prefigured in the removal of the administration of divine gifts from the Jews. Yet that necessity and bond wrought through the

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Spirit dissolves the mind's attachment to the flesh and, fastening it with desire, binds it wholly to God.

¶ 9. The natural law, since it does not possess a vigorous sense overpowering reason, spontaneously leads all, without external instruction, to embrace those united to them by kinship and kindred bonds. Nature itself teaches that help is to be given to those in need, and that everyone ought to desire for all others what each would willingly have another provide for himself. To teach this, the Lord said: "Whatever you wish that men should do to you, do also to them."

¶ 10. He says the work of the natural law is to establish in the mind a harmonious affection and fellowship of all toward all. For in those whose nature is ruled by reason, there is in truth one mind and one and the same disposition of mind. Where mind, affection, and the rationale of customs are one, the course of life must plainly also be one. Where both the rationale of customs and the course of life are one, there exists a single, common bond of alliance among the intentions of all, drawing everyone by one will and aim into a single rationale of nature. In this there is no division of nature such as now exists through the stain of carnal love. The written law, on the other hand, restraining the disordered movements of the appetites of the foolish by fear of punishment, teaches the mind to attend to just distribution alone and accustoms it to this. Thus, in time, the power of justice, strengthened by practice, passes into nature, so that fear gradually becomes an affection stabilized by the upright intention of the mind, and the habit, cleansed from the oblivion of former practices and bringing forth mutual love, is transformed into a good habit.

¶ 11. The written law, he says, by restraining injury through fear, introduces the custom of cultivating justice and equity; and this custom, increased over time, produces in the mind an affection that loves justice, whereby a firm habit of uprightness is formed, bringing about forgetfulness of previous wickedness.

¶ 12. The law of grace teaches those whom it leads to imitate God Himself immediately, who has loved us beyond what we are by nature—if it is right so to speak—and that even while we were His enemies through sin.

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He who is above all nature and essence superessentially condescended to draw near to our nature and essence without any change, willed to become man and to be called one of men, and did not refuse to make our guilt His own. Through grace He has deigned to deify us to the same degree that He, according to the economy, became man. Thus we are not only to know by nature how to embrace one another, nor merely to love one another spiritually and mutually, but also, according to divine reasons, to care for one another more than for ourselves; and to manifest this mutual love so fully that, by virtue, we may freely and gladly desire even to face death for one another. “For,” He says, “no one has greater love than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

¶ 13. In sum: the law of nature is natural reason, having brought sense into submission and thus removing the passion contrary to reason, by which those united by nature are torn apart. The written law is natural reason which, after that irrational affection of sense has been removed, also assumes spiritual desire and love, so that the mutual cohesion of those joined by kinship may be established and preserved. Finally, the law of grace is reason above nature, immutably transfiguring nature unto deification, as though showing, in the image and likeness within human nature, the exemplar of that which transcends the essence of nature and is incomprehensible, and granting the perpetuity of eternal blessedness.

¶ 14. The command that you should “have your neighbor as yourself” looks only to this: that you should care for his life and his existing being, which belongs to the law of nature. But that you should “love your neighbor as yourself” means that you must also provide that he may be well in virtue, which pertains to the written law. Yet that you should love your neighbor above yourself is the most proper gift of the law of grace.

¶ 15. He who restrains himself from the causes that procure pleasure and lust learns thereby the reasons of Providence, which limits the matter that easily kindles passions and vices; and he who voluntarily undergoes self-inflicted scourges and bodily pains learns the reasons of judgment, cleansing the filth of a former life by laborious struggles.

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¶ 16. Since Scripture presents the prophet grieving over the tent and the gourd—figures of the flesh and carnal pleasure—while God Himself contends for Nineveh, it is clearly shown that, among the things men value and love, this one thing (the salvation of rational beings) appears so dear to God that it is more excellent and noble than all else; indeed more than those things which are in truth non-existent yet are thought to be by a presumptuous and erring judgment. Of such things there is no true rationale of substance, but only a deceptive thought that mocks the mind, offering an empty image and appearance to what does not truly exist, and not attributing to the affection and passion the reality of true being.

¶ 17. Exquisite and certain knowledge of the utterances of the Spirit can be manifested only to those who are worthy of the Spirit—those who, by diligently cultivating the virtues and cleansing the mind through works from the filth of vices, make it like a shining, transparent mirror. To such souls, at the very first contact and movement of the mind, the knowledge and understanding of divine realities are imprinted and flow into them as a living image. But those whose life is pricked and stained by the pollutions of vice are scarcely granted even a conjectural grasp of divine things through probable signs, much less the capacity to presume to comprehend them precisely and to declare them in words.

¶ 18. He who has acquired, in the divine Spirit through the virtues, the form of the mind which is true knowledge, is rightly said to “suffer divine things,” for he has obtained this not naturally by the very rationale of his substance, but through grace by participation. But he who has not received even the least knowledge that comes from grace—however ingeniously he may speak spiritual things—remains ignorant by experience of the power of what he utters. Mere discipline alone does not grant that knowledge which exists as a stable habit.

¶ 19. The mind that has acquired through the virtues a certain highest power of purity is thereby made fit to learn the reasons of the virtues according to merit, displaying to itself its own countenance, divinely imprinted by the knowledge arising from them. For the mind, devoid in itself of all figure and form, receives an adventitious form—either knowledge



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in the Spirit proceeding from the virtues, or ignorance arising from disturbances and vices.

¶ 20. Whoever has fallen away from divine love is ruled by the carnal law of pleasure and lust, under whose dominion he neither can nor desires to observe any of God's commandments. For the one who has preferred a life drunk with pleasure and lust over that life and kingdom ordered and governed by virtue has taken ignorance in place of knowledge.

¶ 21. He who does not allow his mind to pass on to the divine beauty of the inner, spiritual letter of the law is accustomed to generate in himself a lustful disposition of mind—worldly and age-loving—from the discipline of the law when it is confined to bare verbal utterance.

¶ 22. "Oral confusion" is the worldly meditation of the mind's thoughts and its lustful love of bodies. For wherever, from the corporeal data shining forth in the letter of the law, there is engendered in will and mind the love of the world and of this present age, there too arises a sensual meditation of thoughts in the mind. Whatever we are passionately attached to, these things also we unceasingly ponder within.

¶ 23. Again, "oral confusion" is an agitation of the mind that gives form to the passions and fashions a seductive beauty out of the rationale of the senses. For without the mind's capacity to invent and shape forms, passions and affections do not advance. It is also an anathema, a base, earthly, and formless stirring of disturbances and passions. And this same "oral confusion," which fashions passion into a visible guise through the rationale of the senses and supplies the mind with subtle material suited to passion and vice, is the mind's agitation.

¶ 24. Whoever imagines that God has commanded the lawful sacrifices and feasts, and instituted Sabbaths and new moons, for the sake of enjoying carnal pleasure and rest will be utterly enslaved to passions and vices, to the reproach and shame of filthy thoughts and arguments, to the corruptible world, and to sensual meditations poured forth upon bodies. In the end he becomes wholly given over to both the matter and form of his vices and passions, so that he recognizes nothing as truly valuable beyond those things that perish through corruption.

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¶ 25. When someone is firmly persuaded that the law commands indulgence in bodily delights as a divine gift, he accepts gluttony with the joy of his belly as a legitimate principle of life, and from this he generates customs and modes through abuse that defile the proper working of the senses.

¶ 26. When the mind's faculty of contemplation, being clever, has readily appropriated pleasure from the letter of the law as something divine and has made it a guiding rationale of life, it cultivates an unnatural use of the senses, allowing nothing of their activity to shine forth from the true rationales of nature. It thus engenders both the habit and the act of vices and disturbances and, under the guise of the law, leads its throat by the law of marriage into abuses of sensual custom and mode, by whose stain it destroys the natural reasons and seeds placed by God in things.

¶ 27. Whoever devotes his mind solely to the bodily observance of the law can in no way recover the natural rationale and the proper thoughts and perceptions of the mind, for symbols are not identical with nature itself. He who remains in the symbols of the law cannot behold the nature of things as reason has fitted them to be, nor can he acquire the rationales essentially implanted in them by the Creator, because of the difference that stands between symbols and the nature of things.

¶ 28. He who makes his belly his god and glories in his shame as though it were a magnificent title of honor, knows only the most disgraceful passions and vices as divine objects of serious devotion. Consequently he is concerned only with temporal realities: with matter and form, and with the fivefold, fragmented operation of the senses which functions in abuse. For in a sense enmeshed and intertwined with matter and form, it is understood that, as a parent of lust and vice, it desires to destroy the natural rationales once they are removed from it. Vice, lust, and disturbance cannot coexist with the natural rationale of being. It is not at all conceivable that, together with vice, passion, and lust, the rationale of nature should also shine forth as their source.

¶ 29. Whoever does not believe that Scripture is spiritual remains unaware of his poverty in respect of knowledge, even if he perishes with

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hunger. True hunger is the absence of good things known by experience and taste themselves—a scarcity and want of spiritual food by which the strength of the mind is forged. For how could anyone consider it deprivation or loss to be stripped of what he has never truly known?

¶ 30. The multitude of the faithful, and even of those who have come to know the truth, suffers from hunger; and likewise the souls of individuals, when spiritual contemplation in grace has been dismissed, become subjected to the servitude of the merely literal sense. They no longer nourish the mind with lofty meanings, concepts, and notions, but feed sense alone with the bodily images of Scriptural symbols, mingled with lustful thoughts.

¶ 31. Whoever refuses the sacred, spiritual contemplation of Scripture has thereby rejected the natural law along with the law given to the Jews in its proper use, and remains ignorant of the law of grace, which grants deification to those who are governed by its rationales. Thus he who receives the written law according to a fleshly rationale does not nourish his mind with virtues. He who does not direct his mind toward the rationales of created things is not magnificently recreated and nourished by the manifold wisdom of God. Finally, he who does not know the great mystery of the new grace does not rejoice in the hope of future deification. Therefore, where spiritual contemplation of the written law is lacking, poverty necessarily accompanies it, so that the manifold wisdom of God is not discerned through the natural law, and ignorance of deification granted by grace through the rationale of the new mystery inevitably follows.

¶ 32. Every Christian mind, sharpened by piety and firm in vision, always seeks and desires the face of the Lord. The face of the Lord is the true contemplation and knowledge of divine things, prepared in the soul by virtue, and the one who seeks it learns thereby the cause of his own poverty and want. Just as each person's face is his distinctive mark and sign, so too spiritual knowledge reveals and characterizes the mind; therefore, the one who seeks this knowledge is said to seek the Lord's face. But the man who is utterly carnal because he interprets the law only according to the literal sense, offering bloody sacrifices, embraces a pitiable ignorance: he understands the

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command solely according to fleshly lust and its reasoning, and clings corporeally only to the bark of the letter, inasmuch as this alone suits his senses.

¶ 33. He who keeps the legal cult only in a bodily mode, treating it as matter, generates thereby the act of sin; and as form, he shapes his mind's assent in a way suitable to sensory pleasures. But he who receives Scripture spiritually destroys both the act of sin (as matter) and the consent of sin (as form), together with the lascivious character of the senses formed by abuse and their customs, thus overturning, on the high summit of contemplation, the operations of the rationales embedded in nature.

¶ 34. The spiritual law—that is, the mind itself—delivers up the matter and form and the modes of the five senses that have been employed in abuse regarding matter and form (namely, the lustful and unnatural entanglement of the senses with sensible things and all that is temporal and perishable). Once the bodily observance of the law, bound to the letter, has been set aside and ignorance overcome, these are put to death by loftier rationales and thoughts of natural contemplation. Thus, by advancing to the high axis of contemplation of the law, they abolish and destroy the universal necessity of the temporal symbols which belong to the rationale of sense and body.

¶ 35. Without natural contemplation, no one can discern the divine rationale hidden beneath the legal symbols that appear discordant with it. Unless one first carefully examines the divine and intelligible meaning that lies at variance with the outward figures, driving sense wholly away from the sacred depths and leaving aside the external forms, and then strives in mind to behold the beauty of the same spiritual and intelligible realities, he cannot be freed from the corporeal multiplicity of figures. So long as he clings to the letter's rationale in this way, he rightly fails to alleviate the poverty and hunger under which he labors, having handed himself over to the deceiving serpent to feed upon the "earth" of Scripture—its body—rather than, through Christian understanding, feeding upon its "heaven," that is, its spirit and mind, the heavenly and angelic bread. This bread is the spiritual contemplation and knowledge of Scripture in Christ as food, which

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God Himself bountifully provides to those who love Him, according to the saying: “He gave them bread from heaven; man ate the bread of angels.”

¶ 36. It is fitting that we put away that reception of Scripture which is adapted to the body and rests in the rationale of sense, as being the parent of disturbances and vices and of a lustful attachment to what is temporal and fleeting—that is, of the vicious operation of the senses toward external things, their “sons and grandsons,” as Saul’s offspring were called. By means of natural contemplation, as upon a mountain—the higher understanding of divine sayings, elevated and removed from sense—we should slay these, if indeed we desire to be filled with divine grace.

¶ 37. Both the law understood only according to the letter and the Jewish multitude offend against the truth whenever anyone inwardly follows them, defining the power of the law solely by the letter and refusing to assume natural contemplation—this mean between the figures and the truth—for the unveiling of the mystical wisdom hidden in the letter. Such contemplation would lead those instructed by the figures on to the truth, but they, as it were, wholly deny the truth and send it far away from the more secret initiation into divine doctrines. Therefore those who are zealous for divine visions and meanings must destroy this bodily and temporal acceptance of the law—subject as it is to time and passing away—by means of natural contemplation, as on a mountain, in the height of knowledge.

¶ 38. He utterly abolishes the bodily understanding of Scripture who, by the practice of virtue and through natural contemplation, destroys the necessity and affection that the soul has contracted from the written law—a lustful love of bodies and of unstable, fleeting matter. This is like slaying the sons and grandsons of Saul, that is, the lowly understanding of the law, on the mountain—in the lofty summit of knowledge—through that middle, natural contemplation. By confession he manifests before the Lord the higher interpretation of the law, more indulgent toward the body. This is what is signified by the words: “To expose them to the sun before the Lord.” “And they exposed them,” it says, “to the sun on the mountain before the Lord”—that is, they brought into the light, by knowledge, the opinion held captive by error in the rationale of the letter and clinging to it; they

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manifested the dead letter of the law through spiritual knowledge in the height of contemplation.

¶ 39. “The letter,” he says, “kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Therefore, for the one whom it slays, it is necessary that he be put to death by the life-giving Spirit. For the carnal aspect of the law and the divine aspect of the law—the letter and the Spirit—cannot simultaneously be active in the same person, since life-giving and death-dealing realities cannot naturally agree or exercise their power together.

¶ 40. The Spirit is endowed with the power to give life, while the letter possesses the power to take it away. Therefore, the letter and the Spirit cannot at the same time exert their respective operations, just as what gives life and what brings death cannot coexist as active principles.

¶ 41. Mystical circumcision is the complete and absolute cutting away of the mind’s lustful affection toward the adventitious origin of generation. For when we apply our mind to realities, we know by nature that perfection does not consist in stripping away the natural integrity given by God. Nature, mutilated by art, does not thereby attain perfection, nor by being cut off through human contrivance does it acquire what belongs to it from God through the rationale of creation. Otherwise we would be introducing an art stronger than God to supply for the deficiencies of justice in creation, and would make an artificial defect in nature a remedy for an alleged defect of justice. Rather, by the local cutting of that member which is circumcised, we learn to circumcise, by our own will, the mind’s lustful affection, and by this amputation the mind is set in order, so that, correcting the law of lust tied to the adventitious origin of generation, it chooses instead to agree with nature and its proper companion.

¶ 42. The foreskin itself is natural; and whatever is natural is the work of divine creation and “very good,” according to the saying: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” Yet the law of circumcision commands that the foreskin, as though unclean, be cut off, and so it seems to introduce God as correcting His own work through human art, which is an impious thought. Therefore, he who attends to the symbols of the law as guides to nature does not understand God to be amending

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nature by the aid of art, but rather commanding that the passible faculty of the mind—symbolized by the bodily member—be circumcised in obedience to reason. Knowledge, armed with the power of strong action, can cast this passion out of the mind. The circumcising priest signifies this knowledge, as one armed with iron against affection, vice, and disturbance by the force of resolute practice. Thus the bodily tradition of the law is abolished by the recognition that the Spirit prevails over the letter.

¶ 43. The Sabbath is the rest and cessation of passions and disturbances and of the mind's movement with respect to the nature of created things; it is the calming and inertia of all such motions and the end of the mind's universal movement around creatures, and thus its perfect passage into God. Whoever has escaped into God through virtue and knowledge, as far as is permitted, must take care that he does not, like gathering firewood, conceive within his mind any material that might feed passions and disturbances. He must not gather the rationales of created things in such a way that, like the Greeks, we establish God as rejoicing in passions or as confined within the limits of nature. Rather, the perfect religion of silence alone proclaims Him, and a full ignorance according to excellence represents Him.

¶ 44. The crown of lovingkindness is a pure idea woven like a circlet of jewels and precious stones, interlaced with lofty dogmas and spiritual meanings, which, like a headband, encircles the devout mind. Or rather, the crown of lovingkindness is the Word of God Himself, who, with the manifold modes of providence and judgment—continence regarding voluntary passions and patience regarding involuntary evils—as a head encircles the mind; by the commerce of His deifying grace He makes the mind more beautiful and noble than it is by nature.

¶ 45. In this passage, he says that continence is the work of Providence, cleansing the mind from voluntary passions; and that patience is the work of judgment, enabling resistance to involuntary temptations. Together they symbolize that part of philosophy which is practical, leading those subject to it from Egypt—that is, from sin—to virtue.

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¶ 46. God did not command the observance of the Sabbath, new moons, and feasts because He wished men to honor days and render service to them. If that were so, He would be teaching His servants, so far as the letter of the command goes, to serve the creature rather than the Creator; they would think the days venerable by nature and therefore worthy of worship. Rather, through the rationale of the days He figuratively indicated the honor due to Himself. For He Himself is the true Sabbath, the rest from toils and labors in the flesh; He is the Passover, the liberator of those enslaved by the bitter bondage of sin; He is Pentecost, the beginning, end, and reason in which all natures subsist. Observe how the law destroys those who interpret it only in a bodily manner, since it persuades them to serve the creature instead of the Creator, leading them to suppose that what was made for their sake is by nature worthy of veneration, while they remain ignorant of Him by whose grace they themselves exist.

¶ 47. The world is a finite place and a circumscribed resting ground, while time is a circumscribed movement. Hence the movement of the lives of those who dwell in it is transformed by those qualities that wear down and affect the senses. When, however, nature transcends both place and time in actual reality and in subtle thought—that is, it passes beyond finite rest and movement—and immediately adheres to Providence, it receives a rationale of Providence that is simple, naturally stable, and devoid of all circumscription and end, so that it no longer experiences movement at all.

¶ 48. While nature is occupied with the temporal world, it undergoes a movement such that it is altered from one set of qualities to another, and by these variations it affects the senses; this changing of qualities is called “alteration.” But when nature has entered into God, then, on account of its natural unity in Him, it enjoys the rest of eternal movement and the constancy of the same motion revolving forever around the one and only God. Scripture speaks of this as a stable, immediate dwelling and seat around the First Cause from whom all things proceed.

¶ 49. The mystery of Pentecost is the immediate union with Providence of those governed by Providence—the joining of nature with the



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divine reason according to the concept of Providence, in which there is no trace of time or of generative origin. Our “trumpet” is speech itself, which resounds in us with divine and hidden knowledge and concepts. Propitiation is that mystery by which He, having become like us in all things except sin, dissolves our offenses and, by the gift of the Spirit’s grace, imbues the nature guilty of sin with deity. Finally, the Feast of Tabernacles signifies that our action in good, formed into a habit that imitates God’s immutability and transforms us into immortality, may become a bond that preserves and contains us in that good.

¶ 50. He who delights in mere bloody sacrifices is himself enslaved to passions and lusts, and fashions those who sacrifice into the same likeness, so that they, too, serve passions. For the true worshiper delights only in those things that are pleasing to the very Divinity he serves. Hence Scripture understands sacrifices primarily as the slaying of passions and the offering of natural powers to God: the ram as a figure of reason, the bull as a symbol of anger, and the goat as a symbol of desire.

¶ 51. We recognize spiritual sacrifices not only because, with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we slay and mortify the passions and pour out all carnal life like blood by the deliberate purpose of the mind, but also because we offer to God all customs established according to the rationales of true philosophy and all natural powers dedicated to Him. By the fire of the Spirit’s grace, we present them as a whole burnt offering, that they may pass entirely to Him.

¶ 52. The earthly sense of Scripture, once it has seized and ruled the mind, drives out and destroys the natural rationales by abusing the natural faculties. For as long as the man lives who defines the law according only to the flesh, he indeed consumes, persecutes, and destroys the natural rationales and thoughts, as one who cultivates the most shameful passions in place of divine ones. All these natural rationales, through the freedom granted them by the Spirit of the law, in turn utterly destroy and slay such passions.

¶ 53. As soon as someone pursues the philosophy of virtues in accordance with reason, he simultaneously transfers the sense of Scripture by

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nature into the Spirit, so that he truly serves God in “newness of Spirit” through lofty meanings, and no longer in the “oldness of the letter” through a lowly interpretation fitted to the body. Thus he ceases to be a shepherd of passions and a cultivator of sin after the manner of the Jews.

¶ 54. As soon as someone no longer receives Scripture according to the bodily rationale of sense, he passes in mind, through the middle, into the Spirit by nature, and begins to perform spiritually those things which the Jew practices only in bodily form, thereby ceasing to serve an imagined angry God.

¶ 55. Every mind that is exalted and made sublime by divine piety simultaneously slays and destroys both the acts of vices and lusts and the unseemly movements of thoughts and rationales toward them, together with the lascivious modes of sensory operation that arise from abuse. For as the sublime rationales of nature triumph in contemplation, the passions, lusts, and their instigating thoughts are given over to death.

¶ 56. The strength of sin—that is, the wisdom of the flesh—is understood to be abolished by the grace of holy baptism, and further to be slain by the obedience that fulfills the divine commandments through the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of divine knowledge in the Spirit. This sword mystically cries out against the stain of sin, just as the great Samuel spoke to Agag: “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women this day.”

¶ 57. The vice of gluttony, like a sword driven by mature pleasure, has deprived many virtues of their offspring. It extinguishes the seeds of temperance and chastity through incontinence and a life of luxury; it corrupts the balance of justice through an insatiable and measureless desire for possessions; it destroys the union and fellowship of humanity and kindness which, according to the rationales of nature, should be common and necessary to all. In short, there is no germ of virtue that the stain of gluttony does not readily destroy.

¶ 58. The vice of gluttony swiftly lays waste all divine seeds of virtue; but the grace of faith, by fulfilling the divine commandments, seriously hands this vice over to death through knowledge.

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¶ 59. Our Lord is the light of the Gentiles, truly uncovering and opening the eyes of the mind, which were closed by the darkness of ignorance, by the shining light of true recognition within them. By His divine teaching and discipline He has made Himself the tried and perfect example for the imitation of virtue among the faithful peoples, becoming for them a beautiful pattern and norm of virtue. Looking to Him as the author and leader of our salvation, we carry out the virtues of His imitation, as far as has been granted to us, through the practice of good works.

¶ 60. Whoever, out of envy, hates, maligns, and detracts from one who surpasses him in ascetic contests and excels him in the abundance of spiritual knowledge and speech, is a Saul tormented by an evil spirit, unable to bear the splendor of that man's virtue and the blessedness of his knowledge. From this he rages with greater madness because he cannot destroy the one who has been judged superior. Often he even harshly repels his beloved Jonathan—that is, his own natural reason—when it reproves his unjust hatred and recounts with frankness the noble deeds of the one he hates.

¶ 61. Let us also implore the spiritual David, that the “harp” of spiritual contemplation and knowledge may sound within our mind, which is possessed by earthly affection and seized by passions, and may drive away the wicked spirit of earthly multiplicity of sense, so that we may be granted to understand the law spiritually and uncover the mystical word hidden in it, and thus find in it what suffices for the provision of eternal life.

¶ 62. Whoever is held by love of salvation turns his mind either wholly to action or wholly to contemplation. For by virtue and knowledge alone, in their separation, no one has ever attained salvation. Virtue orders the movement of the body, like a bridle guided by right judgment, lest it slip down into base pleasures and luxury. Contemplation, for its part, judges things rightly and prudently and declares them worthy of choice.

¶ 63. Since the “intellectual” (νοερόν) is that which understands, and the “intelligible” (νοητόν) is that which is understood, and since the nourishment and as it were the substance of the understanding subject is that which is understood, God, as the Spirit of minds, both the very intellect and,

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as far as they may attain Him, the intelligible for them, illumines them from within, so that the mind both understands and is nourished.

¶ 64. The intelligible (νοητόν) is one thing, and the intellectual (νοερόν) another. The former, as has been said, is in a manner the food of the latter, for what is understood is greater than and prior to the subject that understands, which is the νοερόν, the intellectual. Those beings are called separate and intellectual because, being minds, they understand realities superior to them which are intelligible (νοητά). The intelligible is that which is understood, and it becomes the nourishment of the intellectual or intelligent being.

¶ 65. One should note that effects, such as they are, can serve as images of their causes. Effects are those things which have been produced and established within the order of nature, whereas the causes are those realities which have brought them into being. Yet between causes and effects there is never a complete and exact likeness.

¶ 66. There is no absolute and total similarity between effects and causes. Effects possess only such images of their causes as they are able to receive, while causes always surpass their effects and hold a position superior to them in the rationale of their primacy, containing abundantly and essentially within themselves the realities of the effects in a pre-existent manner.

¶ 67. All things that have been produced and established within nature, whether in heaven or upon the earth, are effects; while their causes are the three Persons of the most holy Trinity, who brought them forth. It is therefore clear that there can be no perfect similarity in all respects between these causes and their effects.

¶ 68. We must note that our mind is endowed with an intellectual faculty by which it beholds intelligible things, and also with a unitive power that lifts it above what is natural to the mind, by which it is joined to what is superior to it. Accordingly, we must understand divine things not in a merely human manner, but in such a way that, remaining wholly ourselves, we wholly transcend ourselves and are made wholly of God. For it is better to be

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of God than to be of ourselves; thus only are divine things given to those who seek converse with God.

¶ 69. When the mind wishes to understand and think, it descends below itself into intellections and thoughts. Intellections are inferior to the intelligent subject, for they are what is understood and grasped, and they exist as a dispersion and division of the unity of the mind. The mind itself is simple and undivided, while intellections and mental concepts are manifold and scattered—forms, as it were, assumed by the mind. Thus the νοερά, the intelligent realities, are inferior to the νοητά, the intelligible things. He calls the mind's union, as he explains more clearly thereafter, that state by which it stretches itself toward what is above it, engaging in divine contemplation according to that rationale by which it transcends all things sensed and all things merely understood, and even surpasses its own natural movement, thereby receiving the luminous radiance of divine knowledge.

¶ 70. Because the intelligent being, according to its proper rationale, is moved as an intellectual subject, it necessarily understands and thinks. If it understands and thinks, it certainly loves the intelligible which it has apprehended. If it loves, it necessarily undergoes an ecstasy toward what it loves. If it undergoes this ecstasy, it is stirred and urged onward. If it is thus urged, it intensifies the fervor of its movement. If it intensifies this movement, it does not rest until the whole of it is moved toward the whole of the beloved, and is willingly circumscribed by the beloved as by a whole. In this way the whole subject receives a saving circumscription from the beloved, so that it is wholly pervaded by what circumscribes it and wills no longer to be known from itself, but only from that by which it is circumscribed; like air irradiated on every side by light, or iron wholly mastered and ignited by fire, or anything else analogous.

¶ 71. There exists a great and necessary relationship between those who understand and what is understood, and between those who perceive and what is perceived. Man, composed of a soul and a sentient body, is therefore both circumscribed by and circumscribes each part of creation. By his being he is circumscribed by the intelligible and sensible things, because he is soul and body; and by his powers he circumscribes them, because he is

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intelligent and sentient. God, however, is simply and immeasurably above all that both contains and is contained; He stands utterly beyond all.

¶ 72. Every forbidden pleasure, arising from passion and affection toward some sensible object, is produced through the mediation of the senses. Pleasure is nothing other than a form impressed upon the sensing faculty by the operation of a particular sensible object, or else a mode of sensory operation rooted in irrational desire. When desire is conjoined with sense, it becomes pleasure, imparting shape and form to sensory experience; and the sense, moved by desire and having obtained something that affects it, produces pleasure. Knowing that whenever the soul moves unnaturally through the intermediary flesh toward earthly things it assumes an earthly form, the holy ones instead, by moving through the intermediary soul from the rationales of nature toward God, have judged it fitting to reconcile even the flesh to God, adorning it as far as possible with divine likeness through the practice and exercise of the virtues.

¶ 73. The saints, by a true and unerring movement from nature alone, have magnificently transcended this age of signs and sand. They have united sense with mind, instructing it by the simple rationale of the reasons of things, and have directed the mind—freed from every movement toward any created thing and withdrawn even from its own natural operations—entirely toward God. Thus, gathered with all their strength into God, they have been found wholly mingled with the whole God through the Spirit, bearing the entire heavenly image as far as is granted to human beings, and drawing down such a measure of divine likeness as they have allowed themselves to be drawn up into God.

¶ 74. It is said that God and man are mutual exemplars: God is made man by such condescension and kindness toward humanity as man, through love, has been able to be deified in relation to God; and man is taken up by God into knowledge to the extent that he manifests, by the adornment of his virtues, the God who by nature cannot be seen.

¶ 75. Whoever has put to death the “members that are upon the earth,” extinguished all sensation of the flesh, and utterly cast off the affection that divided the single love owed to God into multiple

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attachments; whoever has renounced all marks of the flesh and of the world for the sake of divine grace, so that he can say with the blessed Apostle Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” and what follows—such a one has become, in the likeness of the great Melchizedek, “without father, without mother, and without genealogy,” having nothing by which he may be held down by flesh and nature, because of the union he has received with the Spirit.

¶ 76. I think it right to call the end of this present life “death,” but more fittingly liberation from death, the cessation of corruption, the vindication of freedom, the calming of disturbances, the cessation of wars, the dispelling of darkness, rest from labors, coolness from scorching heat, the laying aside of confusion, and the end of the struggles of passions and perturbations—in sum, the boundary and limit of all evils. The saints, by courageously carrying out voluntary mortification, have shown themselves to be strangers and sojourners with respect to this life and age. Fighting bravely against the world and the body and all that arises from them, and choking off the deception that springs from the interaction of the senses with their objects, they have preserved the inviolable dignity of a mind upheld in freedom.

¶ 77. Nature itself subtly instills in us the knowledge of Providence planted within us, providing a powerful argument by the fact that, without any teacher, we run to God in sudden misfortunes and implore Him in prayer, seeking salvation from Him. Suddenly seized by necessity, with no prior counsel of reason or deliberate reflection, we invoke God, as though Providence itself were drawing us to Himself without rational arguments and, outstripping the quickness of our own understanding, were extending a help that is more powerful than all things. Nature would never impel us thus, without reflection and without reason, toward something that could not in truth be accomplished. Whatever is naturally joined to a being clearly possesses an unshaken and irresistible force of truth.

¶ 78. Since among things some are good and others evil, and each may be either present or future, the expectation of a future good is called desire, while the possession of present good is called pleasure. Conversely,

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anticipated evil is fear, and present evil is sadness or pain of soul. Thus, with regard to good things—whether truly good or merely thought to be so—both desire and pleasure are present and understood; and with regard to evil things, fear and sorrow. Desire, when it attains what it seeks, begets pleasure; when it is disappointed, it gives rise to sorrow and pain of soul.

¶ 79. All sadness and pain of soul are said to be evil according to their own specific character. Even when the lover and cultivator of virtue takes on sorrow for the evils of others and grieves inwardly out of compassion, he does not do so primarily by the intention and purpose of his own mind, but secondarily, inasmuch as the nature of the misfortune itself compels such grief. The one advanced in contemplation, however, who has joined himself to God and separated his mind from all earthly things, remains unharmed even by such griefs.

¶ 80. All the saints, having seized with their whole heart the divine and utterly sincere word of truth, passed through this age without leaving behind any fixed footprint of their mind in the things that delight it here. For they learned to rise to the supreme rationales concerning God—namely His goodness and love—as far as human thought is allowed to strive, and by these they concisely unfolded the reason why God, being moved, as it were, brought beings into existence and granted them to exist well and blessedly; if indeed it is right to speak of “movement” in God, who alone is immovable, and not rather to speak of His will, which sets all things in motion, produces them, and sustains them in being, while never itself undergoing any motion.

¶ 81. The soul, endowed with the powers of understanding and reason, both understands and reasons. Its faculty is the mind; its movement is intellection; its energy and the consequent result is the notion or concept. The concept is the end both of the knowing subject and of the object known, and serves as the circumscription of these two extremes in their relation to one another. The knowing soul, once it has completed its intellection, ceases to strive to understand the object; and thus in the concept of what is known it rests, as in the final term of its intellectual movement.

¶ 82. Just as ignorance readily scatters those who err, so the presence of spiritual light swiftly gathers, unites, perfects, and converts those



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who are illumined, turning them from the many appearances of truth to that which is truly and simply so. This light gathers the mind's diverse visions—or, more accurately, the manifold forms assumed by the mind—into one pure and uniform knowledge, filling it with a single unifying radiance.

¶ 83. The beautiful and the good are one and the same, since by every rationale all things seek the beautiful and the good, and nothing is altogether deprived of them. For to all beings what is beautiful and good is truly admirable, desirable, lovable, pleasing, and worthy of choice and dearest. Consider how divine love, pre-existing in the Good, has brought forth in us the love of the good, by which there arises in us a desire for what is beautiful and good, according to the saying: “I have become a lover of her beauty,” and again: “Love her, and she will keep you; embrace her, and she will exalt you.”

¶ 84. Theologians sometimes call God Love, sometimes Charity or Affection, sometimes the Lovable and Loved, or the Most Dear. According to the rationale by which He is Love and Charity, He is said to be moved; according to that by which He is Lovable and Loved or Most Dear, He draws to Himself all beings capable of love and affection. More precisely, He is moved inasmuch as He engenders within the minds capable of Him the inner affection of love and charity; and He moves, inasmuch as He has power to draw the desire of those who are moved toward Him. He both moves and is moved, as One who thirsts to be loved and loves to be loved in return.

¶ 85. Moreover, divine love is ecstatic; it does not allow lovers to belong to themselves, but wholly to those whom they love. This is clearly shown in higher beings, when they become, as it were, the property of those beneath them by their care for them; in beings of the same order by their mutual union; and in lower beings by their more divine conversion toward those above them. Thus the great Paul, seized by divine love and made a partaker of its ecstatic power, declared with a divine voice: “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me,” speaking as a true lover and one ecstatic in God, as he himself says. He no longer wished to live his own life, but the life of the Beloved, whom he esteemed above all.

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¶ 86. We must further say, for the sake of truth, that the very Author of all things, by His love of the beautiful and good for all beings, goes out of Himself by the surpassing excellence of His goodness in His providential care; and He is, as it were, softened and delighted by goodness and charity and love. He who is exalted above all and beyond all communion is brought down, by a superessential ecstatic power, to be in all things and to be present within all, while never departing from Himself. Therefore the divine man and Theologian calls Him a “zealot,” as One who surpasses all by the force of His love of the good toward creatures, provoking them to emulate His own loving desire, and presenting Himself as an exemplar whom those who are loved must in turn imitate, and as One who is affected by the zeal of those over whom He exercises Providence.

¶ 87. They call Charity and Love itself—namely God—the producer and parent, for He who possessed these in Himself brought them forth outwardly in relation to creatures. Hence it is said, “God is love,” and again, “Sweetness and desire, which is love.” He Himself is what is most loved, most dear, and truly lovable. As the love of affection flows from Him, He is said, as its parent, to be moved; as He is Himself the truly lovable, most loved, and most desirable Good, He moves all beings that look toward Him and in whom the power of desire is implanted according to the measure and capacity of each.

¶ 88. Consider God as the One who produces, leads forward, and draws souls into a nuptial union of love in the Spirit—mediating and interceding so as to fit and dispose them for that union, that He Himself may be loved and cherished by His creation. He is said to move, in that He allures each being according to its own proper rationale, so that it may be converted to Him. The term “leading forward,” though among the profane it indicates something impure, here signifies that holy mediation which brings about and prepares the union found in God.

¶ 89. The loving movement of the good, pre-existent in the good, simple and self-moved, flows forth from the good and returns again to it, for it has no beginning or principle other than itself. This movement signifies

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our unceasing desire and union directed toward God; for the union of love with God transcends and surpasses every other union.

¶ 90. Let us understand love—whether we call it divine or common, whether of the intelligent mind or of sentient nature—as a certain unifying and mingling power: it moves higher beings to the care of those beneath them; it compels those of the same rank into mutual fellowship; and it converts lower beings toward the higher and more excellent.

¶ 91. Since knowledge has such power as to join the knower to what is known, while ignorance is always the parent of change and separation from what is unknown, nothing will move the man who truly believes according to holy Scripture away from the firmness and constancy of his faith. Remaining immovable and unchangeable in it, he will possess the perpetuity of identity. He who cleaves to the truth knows well that he is rightly disposed, even if the crowd, with their restless minds, accuse him of having gone beyond due measure. They do not perceive that he has passed beyond error into the truth of the faith that truly is; and he himself knows that he is not carried away by madness or frenzy, as they suppose, but that, abiding always in the simple, self-consistent truth, he has obtained freedom from the shifting agitation caused by the manifold variety of falsehood.

¶ 92. The saints have shone forth abundantly in goodness, humanity, mercy, and clemency, and thus have been illuminated with a unique affection of watchful concern for the whole human race. Through this ministry they steadfastly preserved, above all, that singular good—humility—by which all good things are safeguarded and their opposites destroyed, and they were not overcome by any assault of temptations, whether arising from their own will and rational judgment or forced upon them unwillingly from without. The first kind they weakened and extinguished through continence; the second they repelled and set aside through patience.

¶ 93. Right faith and pure fear of God bring the practice of virtue to perfection; natural practice is perfected by the ascent to the contemplation of certain truth, with an understanding cleansed of every

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stain; and deification by assumption is brought to perfection by perfect love and a mind made utterly blind, according to excellence, to all created things.

¶ 94. The philosophy that cultivates action aims to furnish the mind with purity from all lustful thoughts; natural contemplation teaches all true knowledge of things; and theological instruction, finally, by grace and through habitual participation, makes a person like and equal to God, as far as is granted to man—so that he stands, by supreme excellence, beyond all secondary realities that proceed from God, and feels no attachment to anything adventitious.

¶ 95. What in the visible world, as an object of sense, is ether—the fiery element—that in the world of the mind is prudence, a habit of illumination that properly receives the spiritual rationales residing in each thing, revealing through them with certainty the Author and cause of all and attracting the mind's longing toward God. What in the sensory world is air, in the world of the mind is fortitude, a moving habit that awakens, sustains, and rightly exercises the innate life of the spirit, and vigorously strives for the perpetual circulation of the mind's movement around God. What in the sensory world is water, in the mind's world is temperance, a vital habit that gives birth to spiritual fruitfulness and generates the allurements of love by an unceasing spring of desire for God. Finally, what in the sensory world is earth, in the world of the mind is justice, a habit that begets all rationales of things according to their species, imparts an equal vital distribution to each in the spirit, and stands as the firmness of its seat founded in the good, an immovable throne.

¶ 96. Just as by a carnal and gross habit the soul is burdened and darkened by passions, and the habit of virtue and the illumination of knowledge gradually withdraw, so also the outward man is corrupted while the soul is strengthened and made radiant with the beauty of virtues and the light of knowledge. In this way, the intrusion and presence of carnal reasoning loses its natural good disposition and vigor.

¶ 97. It would not have been possible for created man to be made, through the grace of deification, both son of God and god, unless first, by the free choice of his will—endowed with a nature implanted in him that is self-

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moved and enslaved to no other faculty—he had been born of the Spirit. When the first man abandoned this deifying, divine, and heavenly birth, preferring the delights of the senses and manifest pleasures to the higher goods perceived by the mind alone and still obscure, he was condemned to bodily generation, without a steadfast will of choice, and thus to an earthly and mortal existence.

¶ 98. Man is now moved either toward irrational, passionate thoughts and disturbances for the sake of pleasure and lust, which arise from error; or toward the precepts of the arts and the contingencies of events out of necessity; or toward the natural rationales from the law of nature for the sake of discipline. None of these movements originally governed man by necessity—and rightly so, since he was created superior to them all. He ought from the beginning to have remained undistracted by anything secondary to him or attached to him, and to have aimed at a single perfection: to strive with his entire free and unimpeded capacity for love toward God Himself, who is above all.

¶ 99. For the first man nothing stood between himself and God as an obstacle to the necessary free movement of his mind, through love, toward God. By divine gift he was subject to no passion; he did not admit into himself the seduction of lustful thoughts through the allure of pleasure. Since he lacked nothing, he was free from the labor of cultivating the arts by which the necessities of life are ordinarily supplied. Finally, shining with wisdom that brought with it knowledge, he stood above the need for natural speculation.

¶ 100. God, who has created all nature with wisdom, implanted within each rational being a hidden seed of the knowledge of Himself, suited to the rationale, measure, and capacity of every nature. As the most generous Lord, He has also bestowed upon us a natural desire and love for Himself, containing within itself the power of reason that can discern how this desire may be fulfilled and how we must be vigilant not to fall away from what we seek by error. Moved by this desire, we are compelled to search for those things that lead to truth, and to the wisdom and governance that shine in orderly fashion through all things; and through these we strive to attain Him

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from whom we have received both desire and love by His grace. Thus are concluded the divine chapters of Maximus.

**BOOK NINE**  
A LETTER FROM MAXIMUS THE MONK TO  
THEOPEMPTUS THE SCHOLASTIC

Concerning him who inquired about the judge of iniquity, and concerning that saying, “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek,” and likewise that other, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” For those who hold the Word and Discourse as the very object of their worship, life itself is so disposed that by its activity it becomes an interpreter of that same Word and Discourse. Thus, having obtained the very seal of true knowledge from the real dangers of action, they learn, as far as their sufferings allow, how much greater and more weighty it is to do than merely to know, and indeed to persevere in doing ever more, until they receive an undivided union with the Author, when rest itself circumscribes movement and brings desire to its end in the mind’s irrevocable fixation upon Him. To such a one, deification—inseparable companion of grace—is bestowed as the prize of the sacred and Godlike discipline in this present age. From this rationale, you also, divinely preserved lord, wisely ordering your life, seek with burning desire that reality which, because it is good, lies open to all, and because it is without measure, withdraws from all: on the one hand manifest, in order to draw all things to itself by awakening desire through its immeasurable beauty; on the other hidden, that it may endure, cutting off and restraining the presumption that would grow insolent before

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the wonder of such infinite and divine excellence, from which there springs a ready contempt and injury in those who do not foresee the extended wings of the Cherubim and the whirling flaming sword, nor turn without fear to virtue—and thus to that very guardian. Hence, by equal progress in honorable deeds, manifesting the disposition of a modest mind, you are enabled, secure from all peril, to bear richer fruit; so that you deem the knowledge of me—unknown and lowly as I am—worthy to be sought and attained by effort and study, in that manner which nature herself has granted through its own rationales, namely through letters and epistles. For this kind of speech unites those who are far distant and makes manifest those never seen in the flesh, disclosing as much of the mind's understanding and teaching, still unknown to the senses, as the writer himself, being embodied, can thicken and convey through sense. By this same speech you have drawn my poverty and insignificance into a greater longing for you, since you have made present your own countenance and presence by an incorporeal rationale; showing that by the reciprocity of speech you have received even more than others receive from the grace of your words, so that in this you surpass the rest. Thus adorned in life, you have judged it worthwhile, in whatever way you thought fitting, to draw my as yet darkened mind toward contemplation, and toward such sacred discourse as surpasses its present capacity, not yet having fully overcome the origin of our unstable, divided, and fragmented nature—much less mine, who plunge myself of my own accord into filth and, like a worm, wallow and delight in the mire of impure affections. Yet with an obedient mind, and in order to honor your affection, I attempt what is beyond my strength, that I may speak concerning the matters you have commanded—not as one who pronounces judgment, but as one who ventures only a conjecture.

I believe that the judge of iniquity in the Gospel, by way of figurative speech and comparison, is to be understood and named as our mind, which at the very beginning of transgression rendered an unjust judgment: for it despised the Creator's command and chose the counsel of the deceiver, preferring thereby to become earthly rather than to be made divine. I understand his "city" to be the realm of the senses, or the visible



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world, in which foolish counsel, resting in lust, has taken up its dwelling and settled abode. There, neither fearing God nor truly reverencing Him who for our sake became man—the one neglected through folly and pride, the other through contempt—the mind falls into those sins by which folly and pride fail to avert the greatness of divine judgments, while contempt, which divine goodness has until now restrained in hope of a change, does not yet provoke the severity of judgment and punishment. Into such things the mind has thrust itself rashly and shamelessly, having abused the dignity of the freedom granted it by its Author for the performance of what is fitting, and has gone beyond all right and outside of duty, to the point—shameful even to say—of judging that what merely appears good and is grasped by the eye of the mind should be preferred to that which truly is.

I understand the widow who petitions the judge to be the soul endowed with reason. For when it comes to producing the fruits of holy and devout works, it is bereft of that reason which, through nature, sows good things. This reason is held within the soul by one single, total force and affection of love, and yet it does not remain there continually. Thus, when reason denies its assent, it drives the freedom of our will down toward earthly things.

I take the soul's adversary to be the wretched earthly movement and sense, the carnal prudence by which impure demons strive to stain in us the beauty and dignity of the divine image and to darken its radiance—especially when, as we yield to lust, they immediately inject into us the basest vices and most shameful passions. By their guilt, the witness of nature and the condemnation of morals make clear that the soul has refused from the beginning to enjoy the life that truly is. I consider the “reproaches” to be the lashes of a certain silent cry of conscience that exhorts us: arising from the soul and increasing within it, this cry gradually bends and softens the austerity of the mind, and the hardness of that power which, by long habit, has become stiffened toward base things and even toward those that are its duty. This conscience, lying hidden within and continually scourging and assailing us, cannot endure the more grievous torment it inflicts, until it has destroyed the passions and lusts that are laying waste the soul, through

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continence and the voluntary mortification of the members of the flesh. From there it advances to the necessity of reason itself, by the cultivation of piety and more diligent labor in all that belongs to virtue; and thus, as it is disposed according to nature in this way, it becomes like its Father and origin, who is higher than all in essence and nature, God our Lord Jesus Christ. And of Him it is said: "God will not avenge you through me," that is, through me who have assumed flesh, and who, when I destroy it, will also destroy what belongs merely to nature.

Thus have I briefly set forth what pertains to this passage, as far as it was possible for me to attain according to the measure of my mind, although others have understood it differently, some interpreting it of Christ, others of the Antichrist. Yet I am afraid and held back from embracing either interpretation without caution: the former, because it rejects all comparison; for the vengeance of the Son is not less, nor the vengeance of the Father greater, nor is one effected through another and by means wholly different from the Son or through the Son. How then, given that They are one and the same, does He say by way of comparison, "God will not avenge you"? For in that case either the Father would not have a place here, or He would be shown as wholly different and of a nature incapable of accomplishing the same work, and therefore not at all of the same order, but only as an eminent image referring and representing the One who surpasses Him. The latter I reject even more, namely that it should in any way be admitted, or that the matter could bear the thought, that the author of malice, its inventor and teacher, should be said to provide good. "For," He says, "a good tree cannot bear bad fruit"; and vengeance, being just, is good, as the work that sets free and drives away the annoyance of the petitioner. Or shall we in impiety assert that the Antichrist is analogous to the Father through the Son, and that, like the Only-Begotten—of the same nature and goodness, the author of all virtue and life—he accomplishes such things? It is not naturally conceivable that what is good and honorable should be typified by what is evil, just as neither light can be signified through darkness nor life through death, nor, finally, that what is least should prefigure what is greatest. I do not say these things to disparage those men, whose teaching I prize more

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than life itself, but that I myself, conscious of my insignificance, may proceed with extreme fear. As for giving a precise explanation of the term ὑπωπιᾶζειν, this belongs not so much to me, on account of my great ignorance in such matters, as to the learned and to those who have diligently devoted themselves to the disciplines. They say that it must be observed thus: that it should be pronounced rather with a grave accent than with a circumflex. For they maintain that no word is circumflexed unless it has resulted from a contraction of the grave, as in νοῦς, ποιῶ, χρυσῶ, and similar forms, which also retain the accent when compounded with a preposition.

I understand the “right cheek” to signify right action and what turns out well—indeed the divine life granted to us and upheld by the observance of the commandments. This the evil one strikes by insinuating into us the false opinion of good and honorable deeds, and from this blow the plague of arrogance rises up through vainglory, swelling against those of lesser or perhaps unequal virtue with a kind of inner inflammation. To forestall this evil, it is fitting that we turn to “the other” as a διαστροφή, a reversal: namely, to that former life with which the error of this age has already polluted us, so that by its constant remembrance we may be unceasingly smitten as sinners, restrained and composed into modesty rather than exalted as saints, and thus be preserved from the fall that comes through pride, when sacred humility fails us as our firm foundation. Let the bodily acts be honored together with, and even before, their spiritual reception as signs of sacred preparation and prior purification for the grace of the Lord who commanded them, and who from them has attributed the habit of meekness to those who fulfill His word. Then the one who strikes will cease from unbelief, seeing how the eager and steadfast endurance of the one who receives the blow dulls the aggressor’s impulse; if nothing else, he will at least feel reverence for this, that he is inferior to so many, and that his victim does not resist, though he has the power to do so, lest perhaps the single obedience of the command restrain him.

The saying, “Do not touch me,” was spoken by the Lord to Mary Magdalene when she supposed Him to be the gardener. It signifies this mystery and indicates that every soul endowed with understanding, which

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has not yet overcome the tabernacle joined to it—that is, the body—and therefore regards the Word as the maker of those things which arise and perish (which differ little from sown plants, for in both the growth and decay, the limitation and span of time are alike), on account of His descent and condescension to these things and even to those further below, is not yet worthy to touch Him in the Spirit. When such a soul seeks Him among things that fall under sight, it recognizes only the flesh assumed for our sake, but does not confess Him as the Majesty, God begotten of God the Father. In this sense we rightly understand the words, “I have not yet ascended to my Father”: that He has not yet been exalted by such a soul through the highest theology and contemplation, by which the nature of visible things is transcended and circumscribed. Rather, the soul still has need—like one led by a guide and pedagogue—to ascend through contemplation to Galilee, that is, to the habit of divine revelation, to a more perfect understanding of Him; and with the rationales and discourses preannounced and presented by Him, to grasp, as far as it is permitted, the whole mystery of God: who He Himself is, what He became, what we are, and what we are shown to become with Him—He without sin, we without the limitations of nature—when we are made partakers of the Good. This Good you will attain, in the measure that you have believed, now veiled under the gift of hope and duly honored by works befitting it; and you will be true in the measure that you have labored; and even more, beyond all measure, in the measure that the Giver of the gift Himself exceeds, by His superessential preeminence, the comprehension of every nature and of the whole age.

**BOOK TEN**  
OTHER MORAL AND MYSTICAL CHAPTERS OF  
OUR DIVINE FATHER MAXIMUS

Here you will discover a flowing spring and the dew of moral discourses, if you read them truly from the heart, O friend. Embrace these sayings of Maximus the Confessor, and learn their profit.

**PART ONE**

¶ 1. Whoever as a Christian believes in God rightly ought not to be without care and less vigilant, but should always be expecting and awaiting temptation, lest when it comes it strike and disturb him as something unforeseen. Rather, being poured out in thanksgiving, let him patiently endure the hardship and toil of affliction, and let him ponder within himself the words he chants with the Prophet: “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me.” Nor did he say, “Your discipline has overthrown me,” but, “has corrected me in vain,” that is, without finding in me what it seeks.

¶ 2. The beginning of good is the fear of God, but its end is His love. The beginning of every good is speech supported by action, and action in turn imbued and instructed by speech. Therefore neither is action good without speech, nor is speech itself rightly uttered without action.

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¶ 3. The action of the body is fasting and vigil; that of the mouth is psalmody. But psalmody is a more powerful prayer, and silence is more excellent than speech. The action of the hands is whatever they perform without murmuring; that of the feet is whatever they carry out immediately at the first command. The action of the soul is continence with simplicity, and simplicity is effective continence. Finally, the action of the mind, which is contemplation, is prayer; and in prayer, the contemplation of God.

¶ 4. Mercy and truth preside over all the virtues, and humility is their offspring. From humility arises discernment, as the saying of the Fathers bears witness; and if discernment is lacking, neither mercy nor truth will be able to see their own proper end.

¶ 5. Action which despises the yoke and rationale of speech, and is scattered here and there among useless things, appears like an undisciplined youth. And speech and reason, having cast away the precious garment of action, do not shine with seemly cultivation, even if in outward appearance they seem to do so.

¶ 6. A manly and strong mind, like a wise woman in her household, performs throughout life all that is its duty, kindled by a twofold torch—the power of action and of contemplation. By contrast, the one who is soft and slack in pleasures does not perform what is of duty.

¶ 7. It is not enough for the mind to be perfectly freed from vice by voluntary affliction, unless it is also tempered and purified by those evils which befall it unwillingly, as iron is tested by fire in a furnace.

¶ 8. A mind hardened like a sword for the perfect rejection of vice, unless it passes through fire and water—that is, through voluntary and involuntary labors—will not be preserved inviolable in the assaults of misfortunes and adversities.

¶ 9. Just as there are three more general causes of temptations arising from the will of the mind—health, riches, and glory or renown—so also there are three causes of those temptations that befall us unwillingly and from without: loss or damage of goods, infirmities, and curses or reproaches. These come to some for edification, and to others for destruction.

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¶ 10. Desire and sadness arise in the mind as certain shoots, while pleasure and pain belong to the body. The cause of pain is in fact pleasure: wishing to avoid the troublesome sensation of pain, we flee to pleasure. Likewise, the cause of sadness or grief is desire or sickness.

¶ 11. The diligent cultivator of virtue has good stored and deeply implanted in his mind; but the man enslaved to vainglory has only a thought or opinion of good. The diligent man bears evil only on the surface; the lustful and pleasure-loving man has evil rooted deep in his breast.

¶ 12. He who hates evil only rarely and not from the heart easily turns back to it; but he who is still affected by its causes turns to it more often and more tenaciously.

¶ 13. For those who do not repent from the heart, sin is continual; but for those who have determined by a true will and purpose to sin, there follows also a certain heartfelt repentance, and the occasions for such sin become less frequent.

¶ 14. Let sense and conscience be companions of the mouth's speech, so that the divine Word, who promised to be in their midst, may not be ashamed on account of the impudence or excess of what is said or done.

¶ 15. He who has not wounded his soul by his deeds has also kept it undefiled by words; and he who guards his tongue has not in any way defiled his thoughts. For sin comes to be in a threefold manner: in deeds, in words, and in thoughts.

¶ 16. You will not be able to behold the face of virtue while you still take pleasure in the mental gaze of vice. The one will appear hateful only when you have desired the beauty of the other and turned your countenance far away from such a form.

¶ 17. Demons chiefly attack the mind through the incursion of thoughts rather than of things. For things in themselves, as they are, are necessary; hearing and sight bring us into contact with things, but custom and the power of the demons engender the thoughts.

¶ 18. The sin of the soul is divided in three ways, inasmuch as it is found in deeds, words, and thoughts. But the good of not sinning consists in six parts: we must necessarily keep the five senses and the speech of the

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mouth free from offense. Whoever does not stumble in these is a perfect man, able also to bridle the members of the body.

¶ 19. The non-rational part of the soul is divided into six parts: the five senses, and speech uttered by the mouth. In itself it is indivisibly joined to what it is drawn toward, remaining itself without passion; but it contracts vice and malice when it is found stirring up aroused passions and disturbing minds.

¶ 20. The body cannot be purified without fasting and vigil; the soul cannot be purified without mercy and truth; and the mind cannot be purified without contemplation and converse with God. For in these three the noblest unions are found.

¶ 21. The soul, fenced about with these virtues of which I have spoken, guards its own defense—that is, patience—so as to be immune to the clamors of temptations. For Scripture says, “In your patience possess your souls.” But if it lacks patience, it will, like a city without walls, be shaken all the more violently by the levers of fear, even at distant noises.

¶ 22. Not all who are prudent in speech are also prudent in the inner sense of the mind, but all who are prudent in the sense of the mind will be found also externally prudent in their senses. For although the mind has all the senses tributary to it, they do not all return the same tribute, since most, through simplicity, do not know how to cultivate the mind as it requires.

¶ 23. Prudence, though indivisible by nature, is distributed in different measures. To some a greater portion is given, to others a lesser, until growing virtue in the active life, together with it, has fulfilled all the common virtues in proportion to the good allotted to each. Many, through a defect in active life, have failed also in the offices of prudence.

¶ 24. In matters that belong to nature, few prudent men are found; but in those that go beyond nature, many more. For out of fear of such things, they empty themselves of all natural prudence and engage little there, but occupy themselves very much with superfluous concerns that have no praise from nature.



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¶ 25. Opportunity and right measure belong to those who follow and accompany a becoming and reasonable silence; its “feast” is truth, through which the father of lies, coming to the wandering soul, finds none of the things he seeks.

¶ 26. The truly merciful person is not the one who freely bestows superfluities, but the one who grants what is necessary even to robbers.

¶ 27. Some compare spiritual wealth to earthly riches in the matter of almsgiving; others, having tasted the unfailing good things that are from above, reject earthly wealth for spiritual riches.

¶ 28. All desire to abound in good things, yet it is a grave matter if one who has received riches as a gift from God does not long continue to enjoy and delight in them.

¶ 29. The health of the soul appears outwardly, while deep within the senses its inclination to sickness lies hidden. If indeed the condition of things is such that this health arises from the cleansing of reproaches outwardly and from the renewal of the mind within, then he is foolish who rejects reproaches and is not ashamed to lie continually in the hospital of stupor.

¶ 30. Do not bear it heavily in your mind or be offended against the one who applies a painful remedy to you unwillingly with his hand. Rather, turn your gaze to the bitterness that has been wiped away, lament yourself, and glorify magnificently God, the author of His providential care for you.

¶ 31. Do not despair in your mind because of the severity of your infirmity, but with careful preparation and the diligence of more effective remedies, withdraw far from it, you who bear responsibility for the health of the soul.

¶ 32. Do not shrink back from the one who in due season strikes or touches you, but rather join yourself to him; he will show you how much hidden decay lies beneath your sense, and when the bitterness that was displeasing to your taste has been consumed, you will feast on the sweetness of restored health.

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¶ 33. Insofar as you feel the hardship of labors, so willingly keep near you the one who, as if pointing with his finger through rebuke, reveals your wounds. He is the author of your complete cleansing, without which the mind cannot stand in the place of prayer.

¶ 34. When someone is being reproved, it is necessary either that he remain silent or that he respond gently, excusing the one who reproves—not that the one reproved may establish his own cause, but that the one who has perhaps offended by reproving in ignorance may be lifted up.

¶ 35. He who opens the bosom of benevolence to the one who has injured him, before being asked, has lost nothing of what is his duty. But he who, after being asked to be reconciled, refuses, has forfeited half of the greater fruit. He who, out of sorrow and resentment of mind, is never found withdrawing his presence from his offender recovers what had been sown. And he heaps up reward for himself who in all things casts the blame on himself.

¶ 36. The man lifted up in mind does not know how great his own defects are; nor does the man of humble and modest sense know his own good qualities. For in the one, ignorance hides his evil; in the other, modesty hides the things pleasing to God.

¶ 37. The proud man refuses to be compared with his equals in good things; but when compared, in evils and vices, with those greater than himself, he considers his own wickedness altogether tolerable.

¶ 38. Reproach makes the mind firm and strong; praise makes it lax and soft, and sluggish toward the things that are its duty.

¶ 39. The substance of riches is gold; the substance of virtue is humility. Just as the one who lacks gold is poor, though he may not seem so to those outside and ignorant, so he who contests in the arena of virtue without humility will never truly be found a combatant, however he may appear.

¶ 40. As a merchant without gold—however skilled he may be in trade—cannot at all be a merchant, so he who practices piety without humility will never become a partaker of the fruits of virtue, however much he trusts in his own ability.

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¶ 41. He who ascends by modesty and humility of mind becomes more lowly in his inner sense; but the one who ascends by other means exalts himself and does not even wish to be compared with the least. From this it happens that he betrays sadness and disquiet in the first gatherings.

¶ 42. The arena of virtue prefers that the fighter know less than his works might suggest, but that he act better than his fears and cowardice would predict. Thus he will be found both venerable before men and active without wavering before God.

¶ 43. Whoever fears lest he be found a stranger to those reclining in the bridal chamber must either fulfill all the commandments of God or else give himself diligently to humility alone.

¶ 44. Mix continence with simplicity, and join truth to humility; as companions of justice, all the other virtues will willingly assemble around them as at a common table.

¶ 45. That truth is blind to which humility is not joined as companion. Hence it comes about that such truth employs contradiction as its teacher, and, however much it labors, is supported only by the fervor of resentment, never finding anything beyond it.

¶ 46. Gracious manners reveal the beauty of virtue, and the firm composure of the bodily members reveals the peace and tranquility of the soul.

¶ 47. The first good is to neglect no part of your duty. Next to this, not to hide through shame what you have done amiss, nor even worse to glory in it, but rather to be humbled, and when accused, to accuse yourself in like manner, and willingly accept correction. Unless this be done, whatever you have offered to God remains without effect.

¶ 48. Both what is voluntarily undertaken with affliction and what happens unwillingly must be endured: namely, calumnies inflicted upon us, losses of goods, and infirmities. He who refuses to bear these and endures them with indignation is like a man who wishes to eat his bread not with salt but with honey alone; yet pleasure is not his companion everywhere—satiety and nausea are always near.

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¶ 49. When a lord, by divine discourses, washes the torn garment of his neighbor, or sews it by the largesse of alms, he seems to display the form of a servant. Let the one who does this beware, lest while acting as a servant and awaiting the reward owed to such service, he lose the dignity of his authority through the vice of vainglory.

¶ 50. Just as faith is “the substance of things hoped for,” so prudence is the substance of the mind, and humility the substance of virtue. It is a wondrous thing how realities perfect in themselves are found imperfect when the “accidents” that belong to them are lacking.

¶ 51. “The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in”—that is, of foods and of words—through continence or abstinence. For he who is temperate and sober in the entrance and exit of foods and words avoids the desire of both and subdues anger born of madness and the insolence of mind. Above all else the arena of virtue must strive with all diligence for this, that there may be careful watchfulness; for in these both the power to act gains strength and the soul acquires firmness for contemplation.

¶ 52. There are some who exercise great diligence regarding the entrance of foods, but in the exit of words they are slow and negligent. Such men do not know, according to the saying of Ecclesiastes, how to remove anger from the heart and desire from the flesh, which the renewing Spirit alone has the power to do when He creates a clean heart.

¶ 53. Praiseworthy frugality and sparingness in food is found more in the quality of what is eaten than in mere reduction for the sake of pleasure; and blameless use of speech will be found to lie more in the measure of words than in simple silence.

¶ 54. Scorch your reins by abstinence from food, and test your heart by abstinence from words, and you will find the powers of desire and anger obedient to the ministry of virtue.

¶ 55. In those who labor in the arena of virtue, the pleasure of sexual indulgence fades as bodily strength declines; yet the provocations of gluttony remain, unless it is first chastised with fitting correction. Therefore one must strive to wipe away the disgrace of the effect by attacking its cause,

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lest, being found a stranger to the virtue of abstinence and continence, he be put to shame in the end.

¶ 56. Whoever practices piety must know precisely when and with what foods he should treat the body as an enemy, when he should refresh it as a friend, and when again he should console it as a sick person. Otherwise, through imprudence, he will apply what belongs to the sick man to the friend and what belongs to the friend to the enemy, and, having offended both alike, will find both rising as enemies in time of temptation.

¶ 57. When the one who makes use of food has preferred what is necessary to the delights of gluttony, then the grace of tears, drawing near, begins to urge and persuade him to forget all other sweetness, now swallowed up in the incomparable sweetness of these tears.

¶ 58. For the one whose heart has been “enlarged” in worldly ways, the power of tears is narrowed; but tears flow with abundant stream for the one who has loved the narrow way.

¶ 59. Neither the sinner nor the just man is without pain of soul: the former grieves because he has not wholly abandoned evil, the latter because he has not yet attained to what is truly good.

¶ 60. Among the things in our power, the foremost are the virtues, speech, and silence; among the things not in our power but largely dependent on the temperament of the body, the chief are fasting and vigils. What is more expedient for the fighter, this he must cultivate and practice.

¶ 61. The house of prayer is patience, for through its walls and ramparts it is enclosed and guarded. But the true substance of prayer is humility, by which it is nourished and sustained.

¶ 62. He who cannot endure harsh words will not be honored by praises; but he who considers pain before pleasure will avoid the harm that comes from it.

¶ 63. Beware lest you be conquered by a lesser evil, and you will not come to serve a greater; for it is contrary to moral order that a greater evil should be preferred to a lesser.

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¶ 64. If you fix your gaze on greater things, you will be formidable to lesser ones; but you will seem contemptible to these lesser things if you despair in your mind of the greater.

¶ 65. You cannot attain to greater virtues unless you have first climbed to the highest summit of those that are within your power.

¶ 66. In those in whom mercy and truth flourish, everything pleasing and acceptable to God flourishes equally. For the merciful man judges no one without mercy softening his judgment, and the truthful man exercises no kindness or clemency outside the bounds of truth.

¶ 67. If you temper continence with simplicity, you will become a partaker of the blessedness that springs from both.

¶ 68. You will never root out all the vices that assail you unless you first leave uncultivated the field from which they draw their nourishment.

¶ 69. Some strive to cleanse only the material of the body; others strive to cleanse also that of the soul. Some have received strength only against sins committed in outward deed; others also against the affection and vice or disturbance of the soul. But those who contend against desire itself are very few.

¶ 70. The evil material of the body is libidinous affection; of the soul, voluptuous affection; of the mind, a prone and inclining affection. To the first belong the sense of touch; to the second, the other senses; to the last, the contrary movement of the mind.

¶ 71. The voluptuous man is not far from the libidinous, and he who is led by a prone affection is not far from the voluptuous. But the one who is without passions (*ἀπαθής*), of an unperturbed mind, is far from both.

¶ 72. The libidinous man is one whose impulsive force toward sinning overwhelms reason, even if he has not yet sinned outwardly in deed. The voluptuous man is one whose act of sin is weaker than reason, even if he is inwardly affected in mind. Prone affection is that disposition which clings freely—or rather servilely—to what lies in between. The impassible man (*ἀπαθής*) is he who no longer recognizes the distinctions of any of these within himself.

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¶ 73. Libidinous affection perishes in the soul through the cultivation of fasting and prayer; voluptuous affection is overcome by the discipline of vigils and silence; prone affection of the mind is cured by quiet solitude and diligent self-attention. Impassibility and tranquility of mind are forged through the remembrance of God.

¶ 74. From the lips of the impassible and tranquil mind there flow, like honeycombs dripping with honey, words of life. Who then will be found worthy to press his lips to them, to rest in that man's bosom, and to be affected by the fragrance of the scent of his garments? Let him rather delight in the laws of the virtues, which surpass all perfumes, and in his knowledge and discernment, held firm by the power of the senses.

¶ 75. In the body visible to the eyes, every soul is liable to be deceived; but in the "body of sin" few of those who have enjoyed the pleasures of this life remain undeceived.

¶ 76. All the living see the dead, but only those will truly die to sin who hate it from the heart.

¶ 77. Who, before the common death of the body, has yet seen himself freed from sin? Or who has known himself and his nature before the coming nakedness of the age to come?

¶ 78. By the same teacher: let the soul, sanctified by the love of the Bridegroom, thus learn through prayer how to join itself to the Bridegroom. When the soul endowed with reason stands on the border between the perceptible light of sense and the light of the intellectual mind, it is permitted on the one hand to see and do the things of the body, and on the other the things of the spirit. Yet because the light and intelligence of the mind are obscured for it, while the sense of the perceiving body shines more clearly on account of long habit, it cannot intend divine things with all its strength unless it has been entirely vacant of worldly thoughts and its own light for the sake of prayer. Rather, it is constrained to stand on the boundary of darkness and light: darkness from passion and lust, light from the soul's own inner knowledge and thought.

¶ 79. Prayer joined to the mind and indivisibly accompanying it is like a ray of the sun; when this is lacking, the cares of things perceived by the

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senses, like dry and drifting clouds, circle around and keep the mind from its own clarity.

¶ 80. The mind enslaved to passions cannot pass through the narrow gate of prayer until it first lays aside the cares by which it is bound to them by desire. Remaining constantly scattered around its surrounding tabernacles, it will grieve.

¶ 81. The way of prayer is the voluntarily assumed hunger of food; and the way of hunger is neither to see nor even to hear any of the things of this age, unless absolute necessity requires it. Whoever neglects these things has neither laid the dwelling of fasting upon a firm foundation, nor built the upper chambers of prayer as separate in every part.

¶ 82. Unless the mind has cast away all superfluous care for things perceived by the senses, it cannot be lifted up, nor come to know its own dignity.

¶ 83. Prayer strengthened by tears drives all hostile thoughts from the soul; then, trusting in the law of spiritual delight, it draws the wandering mind back again. Whoever has exterminated idle talk has cast down one of the chief causes of all evils—unrestrained speech.

¶ 84. Fasting is the symbol of day, because it is openly practiced outwardly; prayer is the symbol of night, because it is hidden and secret. Whoever rightly practices each within the other will arrive at the city of the watchers, where sorrow and sadness and groaning flee away in Christ.

¶ 85. Spiritual activity is able to exist even without bodily work. Blessed is he who, while laboring at earthly work, values more the operation that is free of matter; for through it he completes what is lacking to his outward work, living a hidden life that is manifest to God through the cultivation of prayer.

¶ 86. The Apostle exhorts us to endure in tribulation, to rejoice in hope, and to persevere in prayer, that the good of joy may remain with us. If this is so, then he who does not endure evils with patience is not faithful; and he who does not rejoice is not of good hope. For he has lost prayer, the mother of joy, because he does not persevere in it nor continue steadfastly in it.



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¶ 87. If the soul, having first been occupied with earthly and worldly thoughts, has acquired such a strong bond with them, how great a bond, I ask, will it not acquire if it constantly devotes itself to prayer? For in those things, He says, with which it lingers, in those it is also accustomed to be enlarged.

¶ 88. Just as the soul, when separated from its bodily dwelling, forgets its former brightness, so it is necessary that by deliberately forgetting worldly things, and with the help of prayer, it should quickly return again to that brightness.

¶ 89. As an infant finds comfort at its mother's cool breasts, so the mind will be found to return to prayer, which alone cannot soothe it with consolation; but to the mind properly disposed, prayer is like an infant falling asleep in the tranquil bosom of its mother.

¶ 90. "There," He says—let the diligent soul say this in prayer to its Beloved, as the bride in the Canticle—"there, in the mournful bed of this life, I will give you my breasts," if only you will give yourself to me wholly and entirely.

¶ 91. He cannot attain friendship with prayer who has not renounced all earthly things, except what is necessary for food and clothing. You who wish to be occupied in prayer with the mind alone must withdraw from all the rest.

¶ 92. A sure mark of a devout soul is a unified reason and an unshaken prayer; of a prudent reason, timely and fitting speech; of a free and healed sense, a uniform and rightly ordered taste. In these three, they say, the sanctity of the soul consists.

¶ 93. The disposition of the one who prays should be subdued and gentle, like that of children, so that the illumination poured into him through prayer may be received easily and without resistance. Take care, therefore, not to neglect this, you who wish to be joined to prayer.

¶ 94. Not all have the same end in prayer; one has one end, another another. One prays that, if possible, his mind may always be engaged in prayer and, as it were, pass beyond its own boundaries; another prays that he may not be interrupted in prayer by thoughts. Yet all pray either that they

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may be preserved in good things or that they may not be drawn away by agreement with evil.

¶ 95. Since everyone who prays is humbled—for the one who prays is crushed in humility—it is clear that he does not pray in humility who is outwardly insolent.

¶ 96. When, in prayer, you observe the soul pleading its cause like a litigant before a severe judge against the widow, beware lest you despair in your mind, even if you are more slowly brought into the good things of prayer.

¶ 97. Your prayer will not be constant if you linger inwardly in thoughts and outwardly in idle talk; yet it will return to its former vigour if, through its own practice, you cut away many such distractions.

¶ 98. Unless the words of prayer have flowed into the bosom of the mind, it will not be granted that the cheeks be watered with a copious stream of tears.

¶ 99. Tears spring up for the farmer not when he sees the seeds in his hand, but when he no longer sees them as they lie hidden in the soil. So too tears gush forth for the monk not when he runs through the words of prayer carelessly, but when he does not pass over them without toil.

¶ 100. The key of the kingdom of heaven is prayer. Whoever holds it as is fitting sees its good things laid up for his friends; but he who does not trust in prayer fixes his gaze only on present things.

¶ 101. The mind cannot say to God in prayer with confidence, “You have loosed my bonds; I will offer you a sacrifice of praise,” unless it has freed the soul from sloth, heaviness, and drowsy greed by the desire for virtue.

¶ 102. The mind distracted in prayer stands outside the first veil; the one who prays with collected thoughts, with a mind not wandering, passes within. But only he gazes into the Holy of Holies who, with the peace of natural rationales, also contemplates those things concerning the essence that surpass every movement of the mind, and from there is deemed worthy of a certain divine light.

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¶ 103. A mind wandering outward among earthly things, like a flame rolling over iron, makes it glow as if heated through and through, and yet it remains the same mind which cannot be touched in its fervor, just as one cannot touch red-hot iron from without.

¶ 104. Blessed is he who in this life has been accounted worthy to be regarded in such a way and has seen a statue of clay by nature become fiery by the gift of grace.

¶ 105. At first a heavy yoke of the law of prayer rests upon those who begin and are newly engaged in it; but for those who have advanced, it becomes as it were a love that drives the hungry to a rich feast.

¶ 106. For those who rightly cultivate the active life, prayer sometimes, like a cloud overshadowing them, wards off burning thoughts; and at other times, sprinkling them with drops as of tears, it discloses spiritual theorems and sacred mysteries.

¶ 107. Let song be as a seasoning to the harp, which is struck outwardly, but the soul is not easily moved unless a mystical address in the Spirit comes to its aid in prayer. For that saying, “We do not know what we should pray for as we ought,” readily guides the understanding to one who prays in this manner.

## PART TWO

¶ 108. The mind is illumined, and the spiritual things of contemplation are lifted on high, when it reads these discourses. It is necessary that the spiritual man, whom they call the “Gnostic,” should know when his mind is engaged in the senses and concepts of the soul, when it is in thoughts and rationales, and when it is moving in the realm of sense; and, again, within this realm, whether it is occupied with things opportune or with those that are inopportune.

¶ 109. When the soul is not occupied with the senses and their concepts, it is wholly engaged with thoughts and rationales; and, conversely, when it is occupied with thoughts and rationales, it is not engaged with the

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senses and concepts of the soul. But when it is immersed in sense, it is engaged with all the senses together.

¶ 110. Through the senses and concepts of the soul, the mind passes on to spiritual realities and to those things understood by it alone; through reasoning and discourse it ascends to those things that are rational and subject to reason; finally, from sense it passes to action through that power which shapes images, the faculty of phantasy and thought.

¶ 111. The mind, when gathered into itself, considers none of the things perceived by sense, nor those known through reasoning and discourse, but beholds only the bare divine intellections and flashes, broad and tranquil, pouring forth within it by grace.

¶ 112. The understanding of a thing is one reality, its rationale is another, and what is brought under sense is yet another. The first, understanding, pertains to substance; the second, rationale, to accident; the third, what is reduced under sense, to the differentiating quality of the subject.

¶ 113. When the mind goes out along many paths, it is known as insatiable; when it is gathered into one way, which is prayer, it appears narrowed, because it has not yet attained perfection and begs to be dismissed back to the things whence it came, that it might share again in them.

¶ 114. The soul cast down from on high will not come forth restored to its former height unless, made vacant for divine things, it has come to despise these lower earthly things.

¶ 115. If it is not yet possible to compose the mind so that it is occupied only with thoughts concerning itself, compel even your body into solitude, continually reflecting upon the misery that clings to it; in this way, in due time, by the mercy of God, the soul will be allowed to return even to its former excellence of insight.

¶ 116. The one engaged in action can easily subject the mind to prayer; but the one devoted to contemplation subjects prayer to the mind. The former does so by contracting the senses away from the forms of visible things; the latter by translating the mind to the rationales hidden within words. Thus the one teaches the mind to consider the rationales of bodily

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realities; the other leads it to perceive incorporeal realities. The incorporeal aspects of bodies are their properties and essences.

¶ 117. When you have freed your mind from the voluptuous affection and lust for bodies, foods, and money, then whatever you do will be reckoned as a pure offering to God, and you will receive in return that the eyes of your heart be opened, so that you may clearly meditate in the hidden laws of God which, for your spiritual palate, will seem sweeter than honey and the honeycomb because of the sweetness that spreads from them.

¶ 118. You will not make your mind superior to the desire for bodies, money, and necessary foods unless you lead it into the pure region of the just, where the remembrance of God and of death, overgrowing all else, destroys every sprout of desire from the earthly heart.

¶ 119. Nothing is more terrible than the thought of death, and nothing more admirable than the remembrance of God. The former brings a saving sorrow; the latter bestows joy of mind. For the Prophet says, “I remembered God and was delighted,” and the Wise Man, “Remember your last things and you will not sin.” One cannot truly obtain the latter unless he has experienced the bitterness of the former in its peril.

¶ 120. Until the mind, with unveiled face, has beheld the brightness of God, the soul cannot say within its sense, “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will exult in God my Savior.” For the veil of blind and carnal love lies upon the heart, so that the foundations of the earth—that is, the rationales of created things—are not uncovered to it; nor will this veil be removed without labors both voluntarily assumed and those sent from without.

¶ 121. Not immediately after the flight from Egypt—that is, after abandoning outward sin—nor after the crossing of the sea, when the slavery of lust has been overcome, but only after the sojourn in the desert that lies between the effects and movements of malice, was it granted to the leader of Israel to scout the promised land, the state of most tranquil soul and impassibility, his contemplative sight being sent for this purpose and beholding it from afar.

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¶ 122. Those who sit in the desert, that is, who are free from evils, have perceived the good things of that blessed land only through hearing. Those who have also acted as explorers, using their sight in regard to these things, have grasped them more subtly in mind. But those who have been deemed worthy to enter and dwell there are filled in all their senses with the rationales that flow from it like milk and honey—the first and second contemplations.

¶ 123. He is not yet crucified with Christ who still harbors the natural movements of the flesh, nor is he buried with Him who continues to foster the desires and cupidities of the soul. How then will such a one rise again with Him to walk in newness of life?

¶ 124. Since there are three more universal virtues of the soul—fasting, prayer, and silence—it is necessary that he who is to desist from prayer should end in contemplation; he who leaves silence, in measured moral discourse; and he who ceases from fasting, in another kind of permitted food.

¶ 125. As long as the soul remains within its own realm, it preserves that which is according to the likeness of God, so that it is good and merciful. But when it goes down to those things that pertain to the senses—if rashly and for light cause, and not as the rule of duty demands—and, becoming strong and vigorous in them, returns again to itself only later when necessity brings it back, it will have behaved as a leader rash and imprudent, who has lost a great part of his army even before the battle. Not all, however, who fail to keep themselves within the fortress of the inner life will be found free of this damage.

¶ 126. The sun visible to sense does not pour the light of its rays into a house whose doors are shut; in the same way, the spiritual Sun will not send His rays into the soul unless its senses are closed to visible things.

¶ 127. A spiritual and wise man is he who arranges his descents magnificently and his ascents of the soul with a humble and modest mind.

¶ 128. As the bee wandering over the meadow gathers its material for honey, so the soul, carefully surveying the world, instills diverse sweetnesses into the mind.

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¶ 129. The stag, after devouring serpents, runs to the fountains of water to quench the poison; so the soul pierced by divine arrows draws from the very wound an immortal love for the Wounder.

¶ 130. Naked and simple thoughts grow readily in a solitary life; but those who live with two or more tend to entertain thoughts in series and repetition. And from the soul divided among many things, images and thoughts depart, while only the bare minds, freed from bodies, draw near and manifestly appear—the uncovered rationales of Providence and Judgment, like the very foundations of the earth.

¶ 131. Thoughts are neither parts of the soul using reason, for there is no discursive thought in brutes, nor are they of the pure mind, since they are not in angels. Being the seeds of the rational faculty, they function like a ladder: using the power that forms images, they ascend from sense to the mind, reporting what belongs to it, and then descend from the mind back to the soul, delivering its gifts to it as instructions.

¶ 132. As some who rise from the deep strive to grasp someone's hand in order to cling to him as a helper, so evil thoughts behave when, like a raft, vice is brought into peril upon the flood of tears.

¶ 133. According to the inner disposition of the soul, thoughts and rationales circle around it either like pirates or like rowers: pirates drag the soul down into the sea of shameful thoughts, while true rowers hasten toward the nearby shore, urging the mind to the calm letters of divine knowledge.

¶ 134. The seventh vice, vainglory, is such that if the soul attempts to cast off its outer garment, it cannot afterward put on the eighth thought, which the divine Apostle calls the heavenly habitation, unless it first strips away the higher, earthly attachments, by which this garment, composed of pride and self-love, has everywhere been woven.

¶ 135. Thoughts usually array themselves against perfect prayer: some are angelic, some intermediate and spiritual, others rudimentary and natural.

¶ 136. As the generous strength of the grain is revealed through the ear, so the truth of contemplation is manifested through prayer. The ear is

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surrounded with bristling awns that ward off birds—that is, thoughts that rob the seed—while prayer has its own barbs, which, philosophically exercised in temptations, destroy the adversaries that oppose it.

¶ 137. Those works visible to the eyes of the soul—that is, to action—are like the silver-clad pinions of a dove; but those discerned by the mind, the “back parts,” belong to contemplation and consist in the pale gold of spiritual knowledge. Unless the soul is thus beautiful and adorned, it cannot fly away and rest where the dwelling of all the joyful is.

## PART THREE

¶ 138. Once it was commanded that the first-fruits of the threshing floor and the winepress be offered in the temple. Now it is fitting for us to offer to God Himself the first-fruits of action: continence and truth; and of that virtue that leans on contemplation: charity and prayer. By these we extinguish in some the alien appetites of irrational desire and anger, and in others vain thoughts and the snares and deceits that spring from them.

¶ 139. The beginning of that virtue which cultivates action is continence, humility, truth, temperance, chastity, modesty of mind, and sobriety; its end is a mind pacified by rationales and a body sanctified.

¶ 140. Action is not only to perform what is honest in an honest manner, but also to perform it with the proper rationale of its performance, so that the doer brings together both time and manner in harmony with what is to be done.

¶ 141. Contemplation is not only to consider what is the nature and character of bodies, but also to perceive to what end their rationales are directed.

¶ 142. Neither is action safe without contemplation, nor contemplation safe without action. Action must be imbued and instructed by reason, and must in turn cling to contemplation; thus, on the one hand, malice is found weak, and on the other, virtue is made strong for bestowing the most gentle gifts it pleases to bestow.



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¶ 143. The goal of the one devoted to action is the mortification of passions and lusts; the end of the Gnostic is the contemplation of the virtues.

¶ 144. As matter derives its appearance from form, so action derives its character from contemplation; and as the eye reveals the face, so contemplation will be recognized from action.

¶ 145. Many run in the stadium of the virtue that cultivates action, but only one receives the crown—he who desires to reach its goal by the shortcuts of contemplation.

¶ 146. The active man drinks a draught of compunction in prayer; the contemplative is made drunk by the best wine. The former philosophizes concerning things of nature; the latter, in prayer, no longer recognizes himself.

¶ 147. The one engaged in action is not permitted to remain long in spiritual contemplation; he is like a guest received into someone's house who quickly departs.

¶ 148. The active, in prayer, enter through the gates of God's commandments; the contemplative, in psalmody, enter into the courts of the virtues. Some give thanks that they have been freed from their bonds; others that they have also captured the enemies who once held them captive.

¶ 149. There must be vigor both in action and in contemplation, lest the soul be like a ship poorly equipped with sails: through sails too large it risks shipwreck under violent winds, and through sails too small it fails to catch the winds and suffers loss.

¶ 150. In that ship governed by reason, the rowers are pious thoughts; the oars are the vital faculties of the soul—anger, desire, will, and counsel. The one devoted to action always needs these; not so the one devoted to contemplation. For this latter, having taken leave of all in prayer, places himself at the helm of judgment and certain knowledge, and keeps vigil in contemplation through the night, offering praises to the Preserver of all that is. At times, taking up a certain loving melody, he sings to his own soul, considering the heaving of the sea and marveling at the roaring waves—that is, the divine words and just decrees.

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¶ 151. The man who stands between action and contemplation does not always advance with the toil of rowing like the sailors, nor entirely with spiritual sails; he completes his voyage by using both for a blessed passage. He bears sweetly the labors of action, by which he shines even moderately with the light of contemplation; and he endures the incompleteness of his contemplative rationales with the added help of action.

¶ 152. The contemplative, having nature as a docile and attached follower of his will—through spontaneous, secondary delights—sails without labor. But the man of action, with affections and desires opposing nature, is more harshly buffeted by the storm of colliding thoughts, and comes near to despairing in mind under the bitterness of his toil.

¶ 153. As a field cannot pour back a rich and approved harvest to the sower unless it is rightly cultivated, so neither will the active man see abundant and pure fruit from prayer unless he diligently cultivates action without all boasting.

¶ 154. In earthly matters the mind has reason and thought as helpers; but in spiritual matters and those beyond matter, unless it rejects them in their worldly form, it finds them to be goads that buffet it.

¶ 155. The man devoted to action has a veil over his heart in prayer, unable to manifest the knowledge of things perceived by sense, to which he is attached by affection. The contemplative, being free and unbound from such affection, can in part behold the glory of God with unveiled face.

¶ 156. Prayer joined to spiritual contemplation is the promised land, from which, like milk and honey, flow the rationales of God's providence and judgment. Prayer joined merely to natural speculation is Egypt, through which the remembrance of grosser desires creeps upon those who pray. But simple prayer is manna in the desert: uniform, admitting no stain of greed, hiding within itself the good things of the promises, yet providing a better and abiding taste to those who constantly feed on that narrow food.

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¶ 157. Action supported by contemplation is like a body animated by a ruling spirit; but action lacking contemplation is counted as mere flesh moved only by the spirit of free will.

¶ 158. In the rational soul, the forecourt is sense, the temple is the mind, and the priest is reason. Thus the mind distracted by untimely thoughts stands in the forecourt; the mind occupied with timely thoughts stands in the temple; but the mind that has been deemed worthy to enter the divine sanctuary stands in neither.

¶ 159. In the house of the man who cultivates action there are lamentation, song, and wailing on account of his labors; but in the house of the contemplative the voice of exultation and thanksgiving is heard on account of knowledge.

¶ 160. The one devoted to action, oppressed by the bitterness of his toil, longs to depart and be with Christ; the contemplative, however, prefers to remain in the flesh, both for the pure joy he receives from prayer and for the benefit he gives his neighbor in things earthly.

¶ 161. In those more learned and endowed with greater wisdom, contemplation precedes action; in the simple and unlearned, action precedes contemplation; yet both arrive at one and the same good end. That path, however, in which contemplation precedes action seems the swifter.

¶ 162. The contemplation of things understood by the mind is paradise. Into it the spiritual and wise man enters inwardly in prayer as into his own house. The active man stands like a traveler near its walls, wishing indeed to peer within, but not permitted, because its enclosure rises somewhat higher than his spiritual stature.

¶ 163. Bodily passions and affections are like beasts, while the affections of the soul are like birds. The active man can ward off the first, as by a fence, from the rational vineyard, but he cannot drive away the birds unless he has attained spiritual contemplation, however much diligence he has employed in guarding the soul's own goods.

¶ 164. The cultivator of action cannot become more excellent in moral beauty unless he, like the patriarch Abraham, has "gone out" from his country, that is, from the natural law, and from his kindred, that is, from the

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life coeval with himself which clings to desire. Thus he too will receive, as it were, a seal by which common pleasure and lust are to be removed, and by which the veil that surrounds us from birth and does not allow us to be wholly free is taken away.

¶ 165. Just as a young horse does not willingly remain long in the stall feeding from its manger, so the mind grown great through perfection cannot endure long in the narrowness of prayer, being continually engaged therein. Rather, according to its custom, it rejoices to go out into the broad field of natural speculation, among psalms to be sung and readings to be received as they arise.

¶ 166. For action, its loins are girt with the vital powers of fasting and chastity; for contemplation, its lamps burn with the wise and learned virtues of silence and prayer. Thus action sets before these powers discursive reason as a pedagogue, while contemplation sets before them recollected speech as a master of the bridal chamber.

¶ 167. The imperfect mind is not permitted to enter into the fruitful vineyard of prayer; it is allowed only, and that with difficulty, as a pauper, to glean the remaining clusters after the vintage, the bare and final sounds of the psalms.

¶ 168. Not all who are admitted to converse with the king share in his royal banquet; likewise, not all who gather for prayer become partakers of contemplation.

¶ 169. At its proper time, the bridle of anger is silence; against irrational desire, temperate reason in food; and for the restless, wandering thought that you can scarcely hold in check, the remedy is one-rational, steadfast prayer.

¶ 170. Both the one who wishes to descend into the depths of the sea and the one who wishes to ascend into the heights of heaven—this one to seek a pearl in what is perceived by sense, that one in what is grasped by the mind alone—will not obtain what they seek unless both become naked: the one of clothing, the other of sense and its attachments.

¶ 171. The mind gathered within itself by deep thought will be found in prayer as a bridegroom conversing with the bride in the bridal

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chamber. But the one not permitted to enter stands outside and cries with groaning, “Who will lead me into the fortified city? Who will guide me, that in prayer I may no longer look back to vanities and false insanities?”

¶ 172. As food without salt tastes insipid to the throat, so prayer will be judged by the soul that cultivates it, if compunction is not its companion.

¶ 173. The soul that is still striving toward prayer is like a woman in labor; once it has attained prayer, it is like one who has given birth and is filled with joy because of the child.

¶ 174. Once the Amorite dwelling in the mountains attacked and wounded those who strove to cross over; so now evil forgetfulness pursues those who, not yet having attained chastity, presumptuously attempt to ascend to higher, simple prayer.

¶ 175. Demons, by their very nature, pursue pure prayer with great hatred. Yet a multitude of good men, as if placed like soldiers against external enemies, do not themselves directly strike the demons; what strikes them is the concord of three: the mind with reason, and reason with sense.

¶ 176. Simple prayer appears as bread, comforting beginners and the untrained; prayer which has some contemplation joined to it appears as oil, enriching them; while prayer that admits no forms or images appears as most fragrant wine, by which those who are full pass beyond measure and seem, as it were, to be beside themselves.

¶ 177. They say that the wild ass mocks the crowded city, and that the unicorn cannot be bound by anyone. Likewise the mind which has gained dominion over nature and over the rationales concerning it, in prayer mocks vain thoughts and is not subjected to the power of anything that falls under sense.

¶ 178. He who contends in the spiritual contest must restrict his sense to one kind of food and compel his mind to one, unchanging rationale of prayer. Thus freed from passions, he will abundantly attain to being caught up to the Lord in prayer.

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¶ 179. Let the one who aims to perform pure prayer unleash “dogs” against himself—that is, let him stir up vigilant rebukes against his own passions.

¶ 180. Voluptuous and libidinous men, as earthly, have thoughts croaking around them like frogs; those whose passions have been moderated have rationales like nightingales, delighting them as they flit from branch to branch—that is, from one cultivated thought to another. But for those who, free from passions, have ascended the citadel of tranquility, there is great silence and rest from thoughts, rationales, and concepts during prayer.

¶ 181. Formerly Mary, the sister of Moses, when she beheld the slaughter of the enemy, took a timbrel and began the songs of victory with a chorus of women. Now, in praise of that soul which has conquered vices and passions, charity itself, holding first place among the virtues, takes a cithara in its hands, and with song—as if with contemplation long labored for and radiant with beauty—does not cease to exult and to praise God with the fellowship of the virtues.

¶ 182. When, through constant exercise and cultivation of prayer, the words of the psalms have adhered to the heart of the one praying, then he, like fertile soil, begins spontaneously to produce: as roses, the contemplation of incorporeal things; as lilies, the more radiant rationales and concepts of bodily realities; and as violets, the manifold consideration of divine judgments, not easily grasped by the mind.

¶ 183. Fire bound to matter casts forth sparks of light; but the soul liberated from matter and earthly concerns is found full of God and inspired by Him. The first can be lifted up only to the level of physical nourishment; the second can be lifted even to the end and consummation of divine love.

¶ 184. The soul that has perfectly denied itself and has given itself wholly to prayer so lofty that it rises above creation does not descend to earth whenever it pleases, but only when it seems just and fitting to Him who orders and governs all human affairs in measure and weight.

¶ 185. When acedia has been cast out of the soul, and wickedness and perversity shaken from the senses, then the mind, naked in simplicity and living without artifice, without a cloak of shame or a garment of

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vainglory, sings a new song to God and, striking the chords of spiritual joy, gives thanks that, with glad anticipation, it celebrates the dedication of the life to come.

¶ 186. When the praying soul begins to sense certain more divine inspirations and to be set in motion by them, then it too, like the Bride in the Canticles, sings to its companions and to those who delight in similar moral cultivation: “My beloved put his hand through the opening, and my inward parts trembled within me.”

¶ 187. When a soldier returning from battle lays aside the heavy burden of his armor, so the soul engaged in action lays aside the rationales and thoughts of the soul when it comes to contemplation. For the soldier needs arms only in war, and the soul devoted to contemplation needs the rationales and thoughts of the soul only in action.

¶ 188. The active consider bodies according to their position and arrangement; the contemplative, according to their nature and character; and only the Gnostics—the wise and spiritual—see in one and the same light the rationales of both.

¶ 189. In the rationales of bodies, incorporeal things are known; and in incorporeal things, the superessential Word, to whom every diligent soul hastens to draw near.

¶ 190. The rationales of bodies are like bones sheathed by things perceived through the senses; no one sees these bones unless he has turned away from lust and attachment to such things.

¶ 191. When the soldier leaves military service, he lays down his weaponry; and thus the contemplative lays aside rationales and thoughts when he surrenders himself wholly to the Lord.

¶ 192. Then, just as the emperor is saddened when he returns from war without spoils, so the active soul, in prayer, grieves if it finds itself not a spiritual partaker in contemplation.

¶ 193. As the stag runs to springs of bodily water, so the soul wounded by the sweetest dart of prayer hastens toward the splendors of spiritual realities.

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¶ 194. Just as the bodily eye cannot see a grain of wheat unless the thin membrane is removed, so the mind of the active soul cannot see its own nature unless the covering of desire is taken away.

¶ 195. Let the stars grow dim when the sun has risen, and let thoughts cease when the mind has returned to its own kingly realm.

¶ 196. When action has been brought to its fullness, spiritual contemplations that surround the mind, like solar rays rising from the horizon, appear to come from without, while those contemplations that are its own and adhere to it by its shining purity are seen as conjoined from within.

¶ 197. Supported by contemplation, the mind can utter such things when, by a certain necessity of its nature, it has descended from the heights of heaven, as did the one who said: "What is more wondrous than divine beauty? And what thought more delightful than divine magnificence?" For there is a love so sharp and irresistible, poured into the soul by God after all vices have been purged, that from its very affection it cries, "I am wounded with love."

¶ 198. It belongs to such a one to say, "My heart grew hot within me, and while I was musing, fire was kindled," who does not weary in laboring after God through prayer, nor desires to see "the day of man."

¶ 199. Let the soul that cultivates action, after casting off the burden of evils, speak as the Bride in the Canticle when evil demons and thoughts again attempt to force it to look back to vanities and false insanities: "I have put off my tunic; how shall I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

¶ 200. O religious and devout soul, which dares to say to God, "Tell me, O good Shepherd, where you pasture your sheep, where you make your lambs lie down at noon, that I may follow them and not wander, as one that goes veiled among the flocks of your companions."

¶ 201. Action, seeking to possess the discourse of prayer and yet unable fully to grasp it, cries out like the Bride in the Canticles: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him and did not find him. I called him, and he did not answer me. I will arise now, more intent



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and diligent in prayer, and I will go about the city; in its streets and squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. Perhaps when I find Him, who is in all these things and beyond the universe, 'I shall be satisfied when His glory appears to me.'"

¶ 202. When the soul, filled with joy in prayer, begins to melt wholly into tears, then it also, taking confidence toward the Bridegroom Himself, cries: "Let my beloved come down into his garden and eat of the precious consolation of my fruits."

¶ 203. When the soul, cultivating action, begins—from the grandeur of created things—to marvel at the Creator and to be greatly delighted with the sweetness that flows from them, it exclaims in astonishment: "How beautiful you have become, O Bride, paradise of your Father, a field adorned with flowers! Your cedars are like the cedars of Lebanon. Under His shadow I have desired and sat, and His fruit was sweet to my throat."

¶ 204. If the one who hospitably receives a king into his house is counted so illustrious and honored and filled with manifold joy, what shall become of the soul which, by its own purity, as He Himself promised, has received the King of kings? And what of the soul that casts Him out because it does not perceive what pertains to its refreshment, yet readily welcomes what pleases and is acceptable to Him?

¶ 205. He who is to appear before the king on the morrow, suspended in expectation, turns over no other cares in his mind than to ponder and rehearse the words by which he will conciliate the king's favor. Whoever understands this will not be found unprepared for the future judgment.

¶ 206. Blessed is the soul that expects its Lord to come today, counting as nothing the labor of the whole day—and even that of the night—because in the morning He will straightway show His presence to it.

¶ 207. God indeed sees all; but those who, while praying, see nothing by the senses truly see God. All who see God are heard by Him; those who are not heard do not see Him. Blessed is he who believes that he is

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seen by God, for his foot will not be moved in the way he seeks to please Him.

¶ 208. The soul that loves the world within us has not seen the good things of the kingdom of heaven, nor has the ambitious ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart unfilled by the Holy Spirit. Yet these are the firstfruits of those good things which will be bestowed upon the just in the future kingdom of Christ. Whoever does not take delight in them—the fruits of the Spirit—cannot attain to their enjoyment.

¶ 209. The thoughts and rationales of souls that cultivate action are not unlike stags. As deer sometimes take to the high places of the mountains for fear of hunters, and sometimes descend to the low valleys drawn by desire for pastures, so these rationales can neither always remain in spiritual contemplation because of their weakness, nor always stay in natural speculation because they do not continually seek repose and refreshment. But the souls of those devoted to contemplation readily despise lowly senses.

¶ 210. Drops of dew moisten and intoxicate the furrows of the earth; so in prayer the affections of the soul are like irrigating groans that pour forth from the heart.

¶ 211. No one will be seen as master in contemplating the Godhead understood in the Trinity who has not risen above the earthly duality and the monad close to it. Nor will he become more sublime than these who has not rendered his single mind, as it were of one kind, wholly fixed upon those realities that are understood by the mind.

¶ 212. It is not so difficult to restrain the course of a river rushing headlong and to turn back its flow, as it is to check the impulse of the mind so that it is not dissipated among visible (earthly) things, but gathered when one prays toward heavenly and kindred realities, even though this gathering is itself according to the rationales of nature, while its dissipation toward earthly things is contrary to them.

¶ 213. Those who, having attained purity, direct the eye of the mind to visible things and to what lies beyond sense are filled with such amazement and joy that they cannot grasp anything else of earthly matters,

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even if everything worthy of emulation and esteem should pour itself out before them.

¶ 214. The laws of nature alone, rightly understood, suffice to awaken the greatest wonder; but the intelligible powers are meadows in joyous bloom, which, with immortal flowers, pour out as heavenly nectar the delights of a more sumptuous spiritual banquet.

¶ 215. In the dewy flowers of the meadows, the bees surround the queen of the hive; so the intelligent powers, surrounding prayer that is perpetually engaged in compunction, as necessary energies proceeding from the soul, desire to remain with it in united longing.

¶ 216. In the world visible to the eyes there is, as it were, another world—man; and in the man understood by the mind is the rationale of the soul. Man is the messenger of the heavens and of all things contained within the vault of heaven; the soul is the interpreter of sense and mind and the realities belonging to them, without which either world would remain mute.

¶ 217. No one released from long captivity walks so freely as does the mind, freed from the desire for earthly things, which leaps toward heavenly realities as to what is truly its own and necessary.

¶ 218. To one who prays inattentively, with a scattered mind, the psalm will seem barbarous, and he will seem barbarous to the psalm; and both, as if mad, will be judged so by the demons.

¶ 219. It is not the same thing for the world to be crucified to a man and for a man to be crucified to the world. For to the former, the nails are fasting and vigils; to the latter, renunciation of possessions and contempt of self. Without the second, the labors of the first bear no fruit.

¶ 220. He cannot pray with a pure mind who is captivated by a taste for elegant living and honor. Because vain desires and thoughts are bound up with these, they wind themselves around him like thin cords, drawing him down like sparrows during the time of prayer as he strives to take flight.

¶ 221. The mind cannot be peaceful in prayer unless it possesses continence and loving-kindness. Continence, from the body against the soul, labors to dissolve its enslavement; loving-kindness, for God's sake toward

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one's neighbor, makes peace. Then the peace that surpasses all understanding comes with its own peace to dwell in the one thus composed.

¶ 222. The labor of the one striving to enter the kingdom of God must abound in good works: almsgiving, supplying what his neighbor lacks at his own cost; and endurance in hardship for the sake of peace, through the proving of his patience in the Lord.

¶ 223. Neither will the slothful fall short of virtue alone, nor will the one who indulges in excess and boasts in vain enter the gate of impassibility. For he has not become a partaker of the just measure of good, since both defect and excess fail to attain the middle way.

¶ 224. As the earth cannot relieve the farmer's need nor free him from scarcity unless it returns his toil with a multiple harvest according to the measure of the seed and even beyond its own strength, so neither can the deeds produced by the active man justify him before God unless an even greater diligence of will and intention has been added.

¶ 225. Not all who fail to love their neighbor can be said to hate him; nor can those who do not hate him be said to love him. To envy his virtue is one thing; not to hinder him so that he may profit is another. The extreme degree of malice is when a man not only is stung by another's virtues, but also slanders his good works as if they were neither good nor honorable.

¶ 226. Some passions belong to the body, others to the soul; some are natural, others contrary to nature. Therefore, he who removes some but neglects others is like a man who builds a high and strong wall against beasts, yet willingly allows the birds free access to devour the noble grapes of the rational vineyard.

¶ 227. First the soul apprehends evil by a simple thought; then it is stirred by desire for it; then it is affected by pleasure or distress; afterward it is touched by sense; and finally, by contact, whether visible or invisible. Rationales and thoughts are present at all these stages, except the very first motion; if this first movement is not admitted, all that follows loses its force.

¶ 228. Those who approach near to impassibility are still moved by thoughts; those whose passions are moderate and tempered, by desires; and

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the voluptuous, by lusts. Those who touch evil only from just necessity almost unwillingly and with pain of soul experience its sensation; but those who act without pain and with no reluctance descend into the domain of touch.

¶ 229. Pleasure clings to the unwilling and fixes itself in the bodily members, yet it does not dull all equally: in some it exerts its force chiefly in the concupiscible part of the soul, in others in the irascible part, and in others again in reason itself, through gluttony, rash anger, and the morose wickedness of mind which is the parent and author of the most grievous vices.

¶ 230. Thus the senses must be opened as the gates of a city are opened; but one must be on guard lest, while opening what is necessary, one also admits with them those things that favor the enemies and become causes of conflict and turmoil.

¶ 231. The active power of pleasure is concupiscence; of anger, acute and precipitate wrath; of envy, the sullen malice of mind. He who does not wage war against these heads will not have peace with the extremities; nor can he enter the harbor of moderated passions who fulfills the commandments by force and compulsion.

¶ 232. Those who repel suggestions and first movements do not permit thoughts, as beasts, to enter the rational vineyard and plunder its fruits. Those who welcome these thoughts, as it were, giving them the right hand of fellowship yet stipulating that they not touch anything shameful—and who, by consorting with them, grow accustomed to vices and passions even while not yet agreeing with them—are like men who admit a single wild beast within the wall yet do not allow it to be sated with grapes; later, finding themselves unequal to it in strength, they give their consent to vices and passions.

¶ 233. He has not yet reached simplicity who still needs the protective wall of continence. For, He says, the one who is perfect is not merely continent. Such a soul is like a man who has a vineyard or field, not in the midst of many others, but far off in a corner, requiring much diligence and watchful care. But the vineyard of the man who has attained simplicity is

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inaccessible and secure on all sides, like the estate of a king or some great prince, fearsome to thieves and travelers, who dare not even think of violating it.

¶ 234. Many ascend the cross of affliction, but few receive its nails. Many serve in voluntary obedience, but only those who have crushed the craving for human glory accept the involuntary confusion and shame that complete this obedience.

¶ 235. Many indeed have laid aside all the “tunics of skins,” but only those who have cursed the vice and stain of self-pleasing as their own mother have stripped off the last tunic of vainglory.

¶ 236. He who approves but does not accept human praise, so that he may have his body more chastened, has stripped off the last garment of vainglory, and has already been granted to put on the radiance of the heavenly dwelling which we seek with much groaning.

¶ 237. It is one thing to perform an act, and another to bring forth its result and the thing done by it. The act is the subject of completed sin; the result is the pleasure and passion that exist vigorously within the soul but have not yet gone forth into outward deed—like those who, though remaining in their homeland, still pay the tribute demanded by their lords by an act of the will.

¶ 238. Since taste holds the first place among pleasures, it inevitably draws all the senses with it, though in those who have grown cold passions may appear to lie quiet, especially venereal ones, as in the aged who no longer feel the burning of fire. But an infertile woman is not judged chaste in her generative members if she commits adultery. I would call chaste only one who neither fornicates nor indulges in immodest delight with his eyes.

¶ 239. In foods, forms, and sounds, the strength of the soul’s concupiscence is disclosed—what it is in the will either to accept or to reject appetites of taste, sight, and hearing; whether it uses them rightly, abuses them, or holds itself in a middle way between both.

¶ 240. Where fear does not go before, the rationales and thoughts of the soul are in disorder, like sheep without a shepherd; but when fear has

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arranged them and gathered them into the fold by the rationale of right feeding, then it accompanies and precedes them as their shepherd.

¶ 241. The offspring of faith is fear, and this fear is the shepherd of the commandments. He who has not obtained this parent will not be found worthy to be numbered among the sheep of the Lord's pasture.

¶ 242. Some possess only the beginnings of good; others the middle as well; others finally also the end. If the end is lacking, each will be found like a mere soldier or hired laborer, without a gratuity and just rewards. Thus one man preserves his own house alone, and that with difficulty, from the injury of invaders; another is not found worthy of the honor fitting to the work in which he has been employed.

¶ 243. Those who urge us, on the plea that we are perfect, to indulge again in the pleasures of the throat act like those who, when wounds have healed and scars have formed, bid us dig them open, scrape away the scab for the sake of the pleasure, or feast on things that inflame a fever; or like those who wall and fence a vineyard, yet allow that together with good thoughts the prudence of the flesh may enter, like a beast, to devour the grapes. We must beware of complying with such men, lest we be charmed by the flatteries of importunate persons and of our own passions. By continence let us rather strengthen the wall, until the beasts—that is, carnal affections—have ceased their roaring, and the bird-like vain thoughts no longer swoop down to ravage the soul, rich and extended like a vine in contemplation and spread out in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**BOOK ELEVEN**  
FROM THE WORK OF THE LXIII DOUBTS, TO THE  
MOST DIVINE KING OF ACHRIDA

These are the people later called Bulgarians, whose metropolis is this same Justiniana Prima. The profound silence of others concerning this work—though composed by the most sublime genius of Maximus—is itself witnessed by this very excerpt, so deeply theological is it, copied from the Royal Codex of old. Whether even then the princes and rulers of Bulgaria were truly “kings,” as the Greeks afterward granted them to be called, may indeed be doubted.

The Holy Spirit, just as He is essentially of the nature of God and the Father, so also is essentially of the nature of the Son, as He who proceeds substantially from the Father through the Son, who was begotten according to a rationale beyond all speech. For this reason, no partition or division is ever to be conceived, as though the Father could be thought without the Son, or the Son without the Spirit. In Them there is, beyond all expression and all understanding, both a union and, at the same time, a distinction: so that neither does the distinction of the Persons break or disperse the unity of the one nature, nor does the essential unity confound or erase the proper characteristics that mark and distinguish each hypostasis. In Them there is a care that is one, joined with distinction, and a distinction that itself is inseparably conjoined.



## TO KING ACHRIDA

For the sake of some knowledge of this mystery, it is possible to set before our eyes a certain obscure image, or rather a shadow of the truth: that bow which shines in the sky with manifold colors. In it the various splendors appear distinct, because they shine from afar; and yet they also seem united, because the boundaries by which each color is distinguished from the others escape the sharpness of our sight. Thus we cannot at all determine precisely where the fiery radiance, or the emerald, or the green hue ceases in its own hue and where another begins. This, I think, is so ordered that even through a creature, speech may instruct us not to take offense in dogmatic discourse, as if something novel had befallen us, when we are brought into contact with things lofty and hard to grasp, and our mind falls into a kind of hesitation and obscurity before assenting to what is said.

For just as, in what is visible to the eyes, the very experience of the thing surpasses any account we can give in words, so in realities that far exceed the grasp of the mind and are exalted above it, faith is stronger than what we can encompass by the rational workings of our intellect.



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