

MYSTIC TREATISES BY
ISAAC OF NINEVEH

TRANSLATED FROM BEDJAN'S SYRIAC TEXT
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND REGISTERS

BY

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SIX TREATISES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF EXCELLENCE ¹⁾

I

The fear of God is the foundation of excellence; for excellence is said to be the offspring of faith. It is sown in a man's heart, when he allows his mind to confine the wandering impulses to continual meditation on the order of things to come, away from the distractions of the world. As to the foundation of ² excellence, the first among its peculiar elements is the concentration of the self, by freeing it from practical things, upon the enlightened word of the straight and holy ways, the word that by the inspired Psalmist is called the teacher.

There is scarcely to be found a man who is able to bear honours, or possibly such an one exists not; because man is very prone to err, even if he be an angel in his way.

The foundation of the way of life consists in accustoming the mind to the words of God and the practice of patience. For the draught provided by the former is helpful towards acquiring perfection in the latter; and, further, increased development towards accomplishment in the latter, will cause a heightened desire of the former. And the help provided by both of them will quickly bring about the rise of the whole building.

No one is able to come near to God save only he who is far from the world. For I do not call separation the departure from the body, but from the bodily things.

Excellence consists therein that a man in his mind be a void as regards the world. As long as the senses are occupied with [outward] things, it is not possible for the heart to rest from

¹⁾ Title taken from the end of VI on p. 99. All reference applies to the pages of Bedjan's text.

imagining them. Nor do the affections cease, nor evil thoughts end except in the desert and the wilderness.

While the soul has not yet become drunk by the faith in God, in that it has received an impression of its powers, the weakness of the senses cannot be healed and it is not able to tread down with force visible matter which is a screen before what is within and not perceived [by the senses].

3 Reason is the cause of freedom¹⁾ and the fruit of both liability to err. Without the first, the second cannot be. And where the second fails, there is the third bound as it were with halts.

When grace is abundant in man, then the fear of death is despised on account of the love of righteousness. He finds many arguments in his soul [proving] that it is becoming to bear troubles for the sake of the fear of God. And those things which are supposed to injure the body, and to repel nature unjustly, which consequently are of a nature to cause suffering, are reckoned in his eye as nothing in comparison with what is expected to be. And his mind convinces him firmly of the fact that it is not possible to recognize truth without gaining experience of the affections, and that God bestows great care upon man, and that he is not abandoned to chance. Especially those who are trained in praying unto Him and who bear suffering for His sake, see [these truths] clearly [as if painted] in colours. But when little faith takes root in our heart, then all these things are felt as contrary, not as serving for testing us.

And that we are not always successful in trusting in God, and that God does not care for thee as it is supposed, is often insinuated by those who lay ambushes and shoot their arrows in the darkness.

The foundation of man's true life, is the fear of God. And this does not consent to dwell in the soul as long as there
4 exists the distraction of [outward] things. For the heart, by the service of the senses, is turned away from the delight in God.

The inward impulses are bound up in their sensible faculty with the senses administering to them.

The doubt of the heart introduces fear into the soul. But faith is able to make manly the mind, even under the cutting off of the limbs. As long as the love of the body is strong in thee, thou art not able to be courageous and without fear

1) This term has nearly always the meaning of free will. Cf. Introduction.

because of the many adversaries that are constantly present in the neighbourhood of him who is loved.

If any one is fond of honour, he cannot be without causes of distress.

There is no man, whose mind suffers not likewise a change with things, in whatever respect it may be.

If there is a second apperception of the senses, which generates and gives birth to desire, as Euagrius says, then those who dwell in doubt must keep silence, promising to preserve their mind in peace.

Not that one is chaste from whom evil impulses that intended to combat him, are withheld, but he whose uprightness of heart renders chaste the gaze of his mind, so that he does not audaciously enter upon lascivious thoughts; and the saintliness of his heart is testified by the gaze of his pupils, which are guarded faithfully, so that bashfulness screens, like a curtain, the hidden place of his thoughts. So that his purity¹⁾, like that of a chaste virgin, is faithfully guarded for Christ.

There is nothing so apt to banish lascivious customs from the soul, and to restrain inciting memories which quicken the wild flames in the body, as burning for the love of teachings, and prosecuting investigations concerning the meaning of the
5 words of the scriptures.

When the impulses are immersed in delight, after [having tasted] the wisdom contained in the [divine] words, by means of the faculty that absorbs information from them, then every man will leave the body behind him. Forgetting the world and all that is in it, he will also banish from his soul all recollections on which are based the images of the material world. And often the soul in its thoughts during ecstasy will desist from the use of the wonted deliberations — natural practice — by reason of the novel [experiences] which reach it from the sea of their mysteries.

¹⁾ Even when the mind is floating on its upper waters, without being able to make its impulses deep as the depth of the waters (so that it can see all the treasures in its abysses) — still meditation, by its [power of] love, will have sufficient force to bind the thoughts firmly together with thoughts of ecstasy so that they are checked from thinking of and running after

1) Reading **तथा** in stead of **तथा**

the nature of the body. As one of those, who are clad with God says: "Because the heart is weak, it is not able to bear the evil influences that reach it from without, nor the struggle within. For you know, that the evil thoughts of the body are strong. And if the heart is not accustomed to teachings, it is not possible to bear the troubled thoughts of the body.

As the heaviness of the weight [impedes] the quick swaying too and fro^o of the tongue of the balance in the wild winds, so bashfulness and fear [impede] the aberration of the mind. And that which is an indication of deficiency in the former, is also a [sign] of the dominion of freedom¹⁾ in the latter.
 6 Just as in that case any additional decrease is the cause of the scales swaying too and fro^o with greater ease, having no solid foundation, so in this case, by the abolition of fear from the soul on account of freedom, the balance of the mind is able to turn aside quickly. So the faculty of emotion comes in the consequence of freedom; and inconstancy of the mind is the consequence of the faculty of aberration²⁾. Be wise enough to lay a foundation for thy course in the way of God; in a few days it will bring thee before the gate of the Kingdom, without windings in the way³⁾.

Do not in the way of those who are educated by teachers look at the words which in the way of test, are intended to elevate thy behaviour, in order that thy soul may be elevated by the height of sight that is in them. Distinguish the purport of the word in all the stories thou findest in the scriptures; so thou wilt be able to make thy soul deep so that it may dwell with the great wisdom that is in the writings of enlightened men.

Those who, by grace, are directed in their behaviour towards illumination, perceive constantly as it were an intelligible ray running between the words [of the scriptures]. This ray distinguishes for the mind the simple speech from those things that are said in spiritual loftiness in order to expand the soul.

He who simply reads lofty words, his heart will also remain simple and devoid of the holy power, that imparts to the heart a sweet taste by the meanings that stupefy the soul.

7 All things are accustomed to move towards that which is

1) Cf. p. 2 note 1.

2) Cf. Introduction.

3) Cf. *Book of the Dove*, Sentence 85: "Every serene soul seeks its original country, and directs itself towards it on the straight way, which is the nearest". And the inscription of chapter XVII: On the short paths to God.

akin [to them]. And the soul that possesses something of the spirit, on hearing anything wherein a spiritual force is hidden, fervently embraces that which it hears; and yet a tale that is told spiritually and wherein a great force is hidden, is not able to arouse every one unto admiration.

A word concerning excellence requires a heart free from the earth and earthly occupations.

If a man's mind is beset with care for transitory things, tales concerning excellence will not incite his thought to the desiring of its possession.

Solution from matter precedes the bonds in God¹). And though, as if by Providence of Grace, in some people the latter precede the former, so that love covers love, in the usual order of Providence the common sequence is otherwise. So thou hast to keep the common order. If Grace in thee comes first, it is for its own sake. If it does not, then, along the way that every man goes by tradition, ascend the spiritual tower.

Everything which is mentally performed and the commandment of which is fulfilled thus also, is entirely invisible to the eyes of the flesh; whereas every thing which is performed in practice, is wholly of a composite nature. For it is only one commandment that necessitates these two, viz. theory and performance. Because corporeity and non-corporeity and the adaptation of the two belong to all. Therefore the enlightened intellect — as has been ordered formerly by the blessed Moses — understands in a twofold way the commandment [lying at the bottom of theory and practice]: the simple as well as the complex is understood.

Works performed carefully by the pure, do not remove the impression of the recollection of previous reprehensible things; but they abolish in the mind the painful nature of recollection, so that what has passed through the mind often enough, now becomes something excellent.

The longing of the soul for the acquiring of excellence vanquishes the desire of its partner²) for visible things.

1) Cf. beneath p. 40 and Basiliius: λουθήσει δὲ τὸν δεσμὸν τῆς προσπαθείας τοῦ βίου τὸν ἀληθινῶς τῷ θεῷ ἀκολουθήσει μέλλοντα (Antonius et Maximus, p. 22). And Philo I 380 39: δεσμὰ μὲν οἷς πρότερον ἐσφίγγετο ἔκ περιψύχου καὶ τοῦ ἡμετέρου βίου κενὰ σπουδῶν, πάντα λύσει. . . πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἀγεννήτου παγκάλην καὶ αἰδόμενον ἕξου ἐπειχθήσεται. — Plotinus, *Enneades* IV, 8, § 1 points to the Platonic origin of the comparison, and uses it himself § 4, speaking of the soul: ἐπιστραφεῖσα δὲ πρὸς νόησιν λύσειαί τε ἐκ τῶν δεσμῶν, καὶ ἀναβαλεῖν . . .

2) the body

All things have their mean. Lacking that, even those things the use of which is apt to help, may turn aside and become harmful without meeting any obstacle.

If thou wishest to have mental communion with God, by acquiring the impression of that delight that is not subject to the senses, then cling to mercy. For the holy beauty is formed by that element within thee, which resembles mercy¹). And all the practices of mercy bring the soul, immediately, into communion with the unique splendour of the divine glory²).

Spiritual unification is a perpetual recollection, that is vivid in the heart without variation, with burning love. By constancy in clinging to the commandments, it acquires the force to remain in union; and there is found, in a way neither secondary nor natural, matter for spiritual vision, in which the soul may confide absolutely. So a man is drawn towards ecstasy by the closing of the two classes of senses: those of the flesh and those of the soul. There is no other way towards spiritual love which is modeller of invisible images, than to begin in the first place with mercy in accordance with the word of our Lord who commands it to those who obey him, in connection with the perfection of the Father, the foundation.

Very different is the word of practice from words of beauty. Even without experience wisdom knows how to adorn its words and to speak the truth even without having any acquaintance with it, and to express itself concerning excellence without any experience of [practical] performance. A word proceeding from practice, is a treasure to confide in. But idle wisdom is a pawn causing shame; it is as when an artist paints water on walls, without being able to quench his thirst by it; or as a man who dreams beautiful dreams.

He who from practical experience speaks about excellence, brings the word to his hearers as it were from the capital won by his own commerce; and, as from the stock of his soul, sows his teachings in the ears of his audience. He opens his mouth freely before his spiritual sons, in the manner of old Jacob before chaste Joseph, [saying]: I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow³).

1) Reading *mal* instead of *mal*.

2) Cf. Chapter LXXXI.

3) Genesis 48, 22.

10 So every man whose behaviour is stained, will love temporal life; so will also he who falls short of knowledge. Some one has well said: The fear of death distresses a fleshly man. But he who has a good witness in himself, will desire it as life.

Do not reckon as a truly wise man that one whose mind is subject to fear on account of temporal life.

All good and evil things which befall the body have all of them, to be reckoned by thee as dreams, which thou canst escape from not only by death, but which often leave thee even before death and disappear.

If thy soul is bound to some of them, then estimate them as thy possession for ever, accompanying thee also in the world to be. If they are beautiful, then rejoice and thank God in thy mind. If they are evil, then be sorry and sigh and seek to be delivered from them while being in the body. If any good is done to thee, open or concealed, then be sure that thy mediators concerning it have been baptism and faith, by which thou wert called in Jesus Christ unto good works; to whom and to the Father and to the Holy Ghost belong praise, honour and adoration, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

II

11 Gratefulness on the part of the recipient spurs on the giver to bestow gifts larger than before. He who embezzles petty things is also false and fraudulent concerning things of importance.

The sick one who is acquainted with his sickness is easily to be cured; and he who confesses his pain is near to health.

Many are the pains of the hard heart; and when the sick one resists the physician, his torments will be augmented.

There is no sin which cannot be pardoned except that one which lacks repentance, and there is no gift which is not augmented save that which remains without acknowledgement. For the portion of the fool is small in his eyes.

Think constantly of those who are superior to thee in excellence, so thou mayest see thyself at all times as being less than they are. And be aware at all times of the heavy troubles of those whose vexations are difficult and serious, so that thou mayest become grateful for the small ones found with thyself and thou mayest be able to bear them with joy.

When thou art in a state of subjection and languid and dejected, and thou art bound and fettered before thy foe in mournful wretchedness and laborious service of sin, then recall to thy mind the previous times of firmness: how thou shewest painstaking even concerning small things and how thou wert moved with zeal against the obstructors in thy course: how
 12 thou utteredst sighs on account of the small things which were despised by thee as accidental and thy whole person was winding a wreath of victory over these things. Then, by these and similar recollections, thy soul will be aroused as from the depth, and be clad with the flame of zeal; and it will rise from its immersion as if from the dead, and stretch itself and return to its former state, in hot strife against Satan and sin.

Recollect the fall of the strong, that thou mayest remain humble under thy virtues. And think of the heavy sins of those who fell and repented; and of the praise and honour they received afterwards, so that thou mayest acquire courage during thy repentance.

Be a persecutor of thy self; then thy foe will be driven away from thee.

Be on peaceful terms with thy soul; then heaven and earth will be on peaceful terms with thee. Be zealous to enter the treasury within thee; then thou wilt see that which is in heaven. For the former and the latter are one, and entering thou wilt see both. The ladder unto the Kingdom is hidden within thee and within thy soul. Dive into thyself [freed] from sin; there thou wilt find steps along which thou canst ascend.

What the things of the world-to-be are, the scriptures do not explain. How we may acquire the faculty to perceive their delight even now, without change of nature or local transition, they teach us plainly.

Though they call these things by beloved names of glorious things which are delightful and esteemed by us, in order to spur us on, still by saying that the eye has not seen, nor
 13 the ear heard ¹⁾ and so on, they show us that the things-to-be are not equal to any of the present things, by their being incomprehensible. They have to be reckoned by us as giving us even now spiritual delight, not the enjoyment of those things in themselves, such as are found outside the being of the

1) 1 Cor. 2, 9.

receivers and promised us for the future state. Otherwise "The Kingdom of God is within you" ¹⁾ and "Thy Kingdom come" ²⁾ would teach us that we possess within us a pledge of the delight which is in those things. For it is necessary that there be a resemblance between these and the pledge, partial for the present though it be, yet to be complete in the future. Again the word "as through a glass" ³⁾ shows us the comparability anyhow, even if they are not one in essence. If now, according to the trustworthy testimonies of the commentators of the scriptures, this is due to an intelligible influence of the Holy Ghost, and is a part of that total one, then — apart from the spiritual influence that by intelligible apprehension forms a communication between the Holy Ghost and those who are influenced — the delight of the saints in the world is not occasioned by any sensible mediator, be it senses or sense-organs, save only the wombs which contain all in defined order, which we may call the profusion of light, though not the intelligible profusion.

A friend of excellence is not he, who zealously practices beautiful things, but who gladly accepts the evil things adhering to him. Patiently to bear troubles for the sake of excellence, is not so great as this that through the determination of the good will, the mind be not confused by the allurements of exciting things.

For repentance which comes after the taking away of freedom, ¹⁴ never can be a source of joy nor can it be reckoned as a redemption of those who rue.

Protect the sinner without doing him wrong. But strengthen his courage for life; then the mercy of the Lord will bear thee ⁴⁾.

Support with thy word the weak and the distressed in spirit whenever thou canst; then the hand that bears the universe will support thee. Participate with those who are suffering in heart, in passionate prayer and mourning of the heart; then before thy demand a fountain of grace will be opened.

Be strenuous in prayer at all time before God, with a heart full of chaste deliberations mingled with passion; then He will preserve thy mind from impure thoughts, so that the way of God be not disordered in thee. Occupy thy gaze with constant

1) Luke 17, 21. 2) Matth. 6, 10. 3) 1 Cor. 13, 12.

4) An idea which recurs in the work. Cf. Epicteti *Diatribas* Lib. I, Cap. XVIII: ὅτι οὐ δεῖ χυλεπύπειν τοῖς ἀμαρτομένοις.

intercourse with intelligent recitation [of the scriptures], lest, on account of idleness, the sight of foreign things defile thy look.

Do not tempt thy mind, for the sake of examination, by consideration of impure seductive thoughts, thinking that thou shalt not be vanquished. Even wise men have been perturbed in this place and deviated. Do not take fire in thy bosom, as hath been said ¹⁾. Without severe bodily trouble, it is hard for the untrained youth to be bound under the yoke of saintliness.

The sign of the beginning of darkness of mind manifests itself in the soul by dejection, in the first place with regard to service and prayer. For it is not possible that the way in thy soul towards error should be opened if thou hast not fallen in ¹⁵ this point first. Then, being bereft of God's help — which [else] affords a way unto Him — thou wilt easily fall into the hands of the foes. And further, being without care for the matters of excellence, thou wilt be carried towards the contrary things in every manner. Departing, from any side, is the beginning [of approaching] to the opposite one. Let the service of excellence be firm in thy soul; meditate on it and so on.

Show thy weakness before God at all times, lest strangers come to examine thy strength while thou art separated from thy helper.

The service of the cross is a double one. And this is in accordance with its twofold nature which is divided into two parts: patience in face of bodily troubles, which is accomplished through the instrumentality of the anger of the soul ²⁾; this is called ³⁾ practice. And: the subtle intellectual service, in intercourse with God, constant prayer and so on, which is performed with the desiring part ²⁾ and called theory. The one purifies the affectable part ²⁾ by the strength of zeal; the other clears the intellectual part ²⁾ by the influence of the love of the soul, which is the natural appetite.

Every one, who, before being trained in the former part, passes to the latter, on account of the pleasures it affords, desiringly ⁴⁾ — or rather negligently — causes [God's] anger to ¹⁶ blow against him because, before having mortified his members

1) Proverbs 6, 27.

2) Cf. *The Book of the Dove*, p. 524/5.

3) The text has *κασαθητα*. Read: *κασαθητα*.

4) We have either to cancel the waw of *δουκωρα* or to suppose an anakoluth in Isaac's construction; I have cancelled the waw.

on the earth ¹), i. e. before healing the illness of his deliberations by endurance under the labours and the shame of the cross, he has dared to occupy his mind with the glory of the cross. This is what has been said by the ancient saints: If the mind desires to ascend the cross before the senses have become silent on account of weakness, the anger of God will strike it.

By the fact of the ascension of the cross causing anger he does not point to the first part, namely, the bearing of troubles patiently (which is the crucifying of the body) but to the theoretical ascension which is the second part, and which is [truly] subsequent to the healing of the soul. For he who hastens to meditate with his heart vain imaginations concerning future things, while his mind is still stained by reprehensible passions, will be reduced to silence on his way by punishment, because, before having purified his mind by means of the trials met in subduing the carnal desires, on account of what he has heard and read merely, he has hastened headlong to tread a path full of darkness, being blind --- a way which exposes to danger day and night even those whose sight is sound and full of light, and who possess Grace as their guide, while their eyes are full of tears, and with prayer and weeping they convert night into day, on account of the danger of the course and the hard rocks they meet, and the phantoms of sham truth that are frequently found on the way among those who pretend to be true. For divine things present themselves spontaneously, without thy perceiving them, if the place of the heart be pure and undefiled.

- 17 If the small pupil of thy soul has not been purified, do not venture to look at the globe of the sun, lest thou be bereft even of the usual sight, which is simple faith and humbleness and confession of the heart and light service in accordance with thy power ²), and thou be cast into one of the intelligible places, which is the darkness without God, like him who ventured to go to the meal in sordid habits ³).

1) Cf. Colossians 3, 5.

2) Faith, confession and work are also the three elements which are enumerated as the constituents of Islam. Cf. Ġibazāhī, Ihyā', I, 109.

3) This sentence occurs also, with slight variations, on p. 50 and 521 sq. In the last passage it shows its sententious character in an evident way, for here the context is not written in the 2nd person. Its sententious character appears also from the fact that it occurs three times in Isaac's book. Indeed it is not Isaac's spiritual property, but a popular sentence in Hellenistic literature. Stobaeus ascribes it to Rheginus and gives it in the following redaction: καλῶτερον δὲ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς οὐκ ἔστι: θεάσασθαι ἀσθενεί καὶ ἀδυνατῶ τῆ

From labour and watchfulness springs purity of deliberations. And from purity of deliberations inward light¹). And from here the mind is guided by Grace towards that which it is not allowed to the senses either to teach or to learn.

Let excellence be reckoned by thee as the body, contemplation as the soul. The two [form] one complete spiritual man, composed of sensible and intelligible parts. And as it is not possible that the soul reach existence and birth without the accomplished formation of the body, so it is not possible that contemplation, the second soul, the spirit of revelations, be formed in the womb of the intellect which receives the fulness of spiritual seed, without the corporeal performance of excellence, the dwellingplace of the knowledge which receives revelations.

Contemplation is the apprehension of the divine mysteries which are hidden in the things spoken.

When thou hearest of being far from the world, of leaving the world, of being pure from the world, thou art first in need of learning and knowing — not after the fashion of a novice, but with the impulses of gnosis — what the term world means, how many different meanings the word conveys. Then thou wilt be able thyself to know, in how far thou art distant from or connected with the world. If a man know not first what the world is, he cannot understand with how many limbs he is bound to or far from it.

There are many who think themselves wholly devoid of the world in their behaviour because on two or three points they refrain from it. [This is] because they have not understood nor perceived with discernment that they are dead to the world in one or two limbs, while others are living in the body of the

ὄφει οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ μᾶλλον τὴν ἀλήθειαν οὐκ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν ἀσθενεῖ καὶ ἀδυνατῶ τῇ διακοίᾳ. Basilios must also have been acquainted with it; in the collection of sentences by Antonius and Maximus it occurs on his name in this form: εἰδέναι ὀφείλομεν ἢ χρῆ λαλεῖν καὶ ἢ χρῆ σιωπᾶν. οὐ γὰρ πάντα ἤγχα τῆς γλώττης τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα μὴ ὁ νοῦς κατὰπερ ὀφθαλμῶς ὅλον τὸν ἥλιον θέλων ἀποβλέπειν ἀπολέσῃ ὃ ἔχει φῶς. But we can even go back to Plotinus (*Enneades* I, 6 § 9): ἐν δὲ ἴῃ ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν λημῶν κακίαις καὶ οὐ κεκαλιαρμένους ἢ ἀσθενῆς ἀναδράξαι, οὐ δυνάμενος τὰ πάντα λαμτρά βλέπειν, οὐδὲν βλέπει, κἄν ἄλλος δεικνύῃ παρῶν τὸ ὀραλῆναι δυνάμενον. Τὸ γὰρ ὁρῶν πρὸς τὸ ὀράμενον συγγενὲς καὶ ὅμοιον ποιητᾶμενον δεῖ ἐπιβᾶλλειν τῇ θεῇ. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν πῶποτε εἶδεν ὀφθαλμῶς ἥλιον ἡλιοειδῆς μὴ γεγενημένος οὔτε τὸ καλὸν ἢ ἴσοι ψυχῇ μὴ καλῇ γενομένη. Γενέσθω δὲ πρῶτον θεοειδῆς πᾶς καὶ καλὸς πᾶς εἰ μέλλει θεάσασθαι θεοῦ τε καὶ καλόν. Probably, however, Isaac did not borrow the sentence from any of these three authorities, but from the works of Dionysius, where it occurs (*Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, p. 75) in this form: καὶ μοι μηδεὶς ἀτέλεστος ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν ἰέτω καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ ταῖς ἡλιοτεύκτοις αὐγαῖς ἐν ἀσθενεῖ κόρησι ἀνταπεῖν ἀκίνδυνον οὐδὲ τοῖς ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἐγχερεῖν ἀβλαβές.

1) Literally: the light of the **κοινοῖδι**.

world. Therefore they even cannot perceive their affections and because they do not perceive them they are not anxious to be cured from them.

The world is said by speculative examination to be the extension of a common name unto distinct affections. If we wish to call the affections by a common name we call them world; if we mention the affections separately, we call them by their separate names.

The affections are parts of the usual current of the world. Where they have ceased, there the world's current has ceased. They are: love of riches; gathering of possessions; fatness of the body giving rise to the tendency towards carnal desire; love of honour which is the source of envy; exercising government;
¹⁹ pride and haughtiness of magistracy; folly; glory among men, which is the cause of choler, bodily fear.

Where their current has been dammed, there the world, after their example, has to some extent ceased to be maintained and to exist. In the same way as some of the saints, who though being alive, yet are dead; for they are alive bodily, but they do not live carnally. See in which of those thou art alive; then thou shalt know in how many parts thou art living to the world and in how many thou art dead.

When thou hast learned what the world is, thou wilt be instructed in these distinctions and also concerning thy being bound to the world or thy being free from it.

In short: the world is bodily behaviour and carnal thoughts. For the overcoming of the world is also to be recognised in these two: viz. from the change of behaviour and from the alteration of the impulses.

From the impulses of thy mind to the things towards which its impulses go astray, thou canst understand the measure of thy behaviour: viz. to which things thy nature turns without labour; which are the constant inclinations and which are those set into motion fortuitously; whether the mind is the agent for the apprehension of incorporeal impulses only, or whether it works wholly through matter; whether this materiality is an affected state, or whether the impulses are but the stamps of the mind's service to the body, so that the mind, not of its own will, is hallucinating concerning those faculties by which it performs virtues and from which, in a sound state, it derives
²⁰ its motive for fervour and concentration of thought, so that the mind can act corporeally, even with the loftiest aim, be-

cause of its lack of experience, even though it be in no affected state; and whether the mind is not distressed by the unseen touch of the stamps of the imaginations, in view of its excessive radiance in God, which is wont to cut off vain recollections.

The short descriptions of this chapter are sufficient for a man's illumination if he be quiet and intelligent; and they outweigh many books.

Bodily fear is strong in man, so strong that it often withholds him from praiseworthy and honourable things. But when it is face to face with psychic fear it is absorbed by it as coldness by the force of a flame.

III

The soul whose nature is not greatly solicitous for the gathering of possessions, does not require great diligence in order to find within itself impulses of wisdom unto God. For freedom from connection with the world will naturally set in motion flashes of intuition from which it can exalt itself unto God and remain in ecstasy.

When the waters from without do not enter the fountain of the soul, its natural waters will arise, viz. the wonderful intuitions which are moving towards God at all time.

21 As often as the soul is found not to be in this state, it has either found a starting point in foreign recollections, or the senses have caused it to be troubled by the touch of [outward] things, when the senses are fenced in by solitude without a break and recollections have grown dim by its helpful influence — then thou wilt see what the nature of the deliberations of the soul, and what the nature of the soul is, and what treasures are collected in it. These treasures are incorporeal intuitions which arise from the soul without care or labour being spent on them. Nay, a man does not even know that such deliberations could arise in human nature, nor does he know who was his teacher, or how he has found that which he cannot describe to his companion, or who has been his guide towards that which he has not learned from another¹).

1) The passage reminds in a remarkable way of Plotinus' description of the spontaneous character of the illumination. Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*¹, III, 2, p. 672 describes it thus: ohne Vermittlung und Vorbereitung, durch eine plötzliche Erleuchtung geht es in der Seele auf, sie kann nicht sagen woher es kommt, ob von innen oder von aussen, ja es kommt streng genommen, gar nicht, sondern es ist unmittelbar da.

This is the nature of the soul. So the affections are additions, entering the soul on 'account of [certain] causes. But naturally the soul is not affectable¹⁾.

When thou findest psychic or corporeal affections here or there in the scriptures, such things are said concerning those causes. But the soul naturally has no affections.

But the philosophers who are without do not believe this; neither do those who are their followers. But we believe that God has not made His image affectable. With His image I do²² not mean the body but the soul which is invisible¹⁾. Every image is a copy in which the prototype is depicted. And a visible image cannot be the copy of something invisible. So we believe that the affections of the soul are not natural as they say. If any one likes to dispute concerning this point we will ask him: What is natural to the soul? To be without affections, full of light, or moved by the affections and dark? Now if the nature of the soul is to be clear and a receptacle of the blessed light, it will be found in this condition when it returns unto its original state. But when it is moved by the affections, all the members of the church confess it to have abandoned its nature. Consequently the affections are later accessions to the nature of the soul. And it is not at all becoming to think the affections to be psychic. If the soul be moved by them, nevertheless it is clear that it is moved by something outside it, not by what is its own. And if these [affections] are thought to be natural, because the soul is moved by them through the intermediary cause of the body, then hunger, thirst and sleep would also be natural to the soul because it is affected and brought to rest by them along with the body. And this would also be true for the amputation of limbs, fever, pains, illnesses and so on, by which the body is affected because of its connection with the soul and the soul because of its connection with the body, being affected with joy because of bodily experiences, and receiving distress, along with the torments of the body.

What is natural to the soul; what is external to and what is above its nature²⁾.

²³ Natural to the soul is the understanding of all created things,

1) Cf. Introduction.

2) This terminology occurs in Stoic writings. Cf. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*³, III, 1, p. 264.

sensible and intelligible. Above its nature its being moved by divine contemplation; external to its nature its being excited emotionally by the affections. Also the light of the world, the victorious Basilus, says thus: when the soul is in its natural order, it is found above; When it has abandoned its nature, it is found beneath and on the earth. There are no affections above, where also the place of the soul is said to be. But when its nature abandons its order, it becomes affectable. Where then are the affections of the soul, now that it appears that they do not belong to its nature?

It is clear that the soul is moved by the reprehensible affections which are in the body, as also it is moved by hunger and thirst on account of the body. But because there are no laws concerning these, the soul is not reprehensible on account of them. Just as, sometimes, a man is ordered by God to do those things which are blameworthy and he receives, instead of blame and reprehension, good reward, as Hosea the prophet who contracted an unlawful marriage and as Elijah who committed slaughter in his zeal for God and as those, who on Moses' order, stabbed with swords their kindred.

But it is said that, apart from what belongs to the nature of the body, the soul has also that which belongs to its nature, viz. anger and choler; and these are its passions.

Second question. We ask: when the desire of the soul is kindled to a flame by divine things, does this belong to its nature, or rather when it is set upon earthly and bodily things? And when it is said that the nature of the soul is on fire for the sake of those things which excite its zeal, is then this passion natural when it goes hand in hand with bodily desire, envy, glory and so on, or when it goes in the direction opposite to them? We shall answer the disputed question and we too shall enquire into it.

The holy writ says many things allegorically ¹⁾; and often it uses metaphorical ²⁾ terms. Many times it applies to the soul that which belongs to the body and to the body that which belongs to the soul without distinguishing between the two, for the sake of succinctness. Now the intelligent understand what they read, viz. the aim of scripture. In the things related to the divinity of our Lord for instance, in a high and elevated

1) *אשר נאמר*

2) *משל*

way, applies to His humanity, that which does not suit human nature and to His divinity what does not suit it. And many who do not understand the aim of the language of scripture have stumbled here so that they never could rise again. — So it is also with the things which concern soul and body.

If excellence is the natural health of the soul, the affections however ailments accustomed to oppress it and to bereave it of its health, it is clear that health is prior in nature to accidental illnesses. And if this be so (as it is indeed true) then excellence necessarily must be natural to the soul and the accidental external to its nature. For it is not possible that what is prior should not be natural.

25 Third question. The affections of the body are they naturally inherent in it or of a secondary nature? And those which affect the soul, by the intermediary of the body, are they secondary or natural? To call those of the body not natural, is impossible. As to the soul — because it is known and universally confessed that purity belongs to its nature — no one will venture in view of this fact to maintain that it is primarily affectable; for it is generally conceded that ailment is secondary to health and it is not possible that one and the same things should be a good and an evil nature. One of the two, in any case, must be the prior of the other; and that which is the older one, is also the natural. Whatever is accidental, cannot be said to be natural and essential; but it is an irruption from without. And all accident and obtrusion is connected, whenever it be, with variation and change. Nature, however, does not change or vary.

All ¹⁾ existing affections are given to be a help to each of the natures to which they naturally belong and for the growth of which they were given by God. The bodily affections are placed by God in the body for the sake of profit and growth of the body; and the psychic affections, i. e. the psychic powers, for the sake of the growth and profit of the soul. And when the body is compelled to desist from its affectable nature, by withdrawing from the affections, and to follow the nature of the soul, it is injured. And when the soul leaves its own nature and follows that of the body, it is injured. Because, according to the word of the Apostle, the spirit desires that which harms

1) Cf. Introduction

Verh. Afl. Letterk. 1922 (Wensinck)

26 the body and the body desires that which harms the spirit¹). And these two are naturally opposites to one another. Therefore no one shall abuse God because He has implanted in our nature affections and sins. For, when He set in order each nature, He implanted in it that which gives it growth. But if one connects itself with the other, it is no longer in its own domain, but in a foreign one.

If these affections naturally belonged to the soul, why then should the soul be injured when using them? For that which is the property of nature, does not injure it. And how is it, that the accomplishment of the bodily affections is profitable and helpful to the body, whereas those of the soul injure the soul, if they belong to it? And why should, if this be true, excellence torment the body, but be beneficial unto the soul? Thou seest how what is external to their nature injures every one of these natures. For every one of these natures exults when it is near to what is its own. If thou art desirous to know what are the properties of every one of these natures, thou must observe that its properties are those things by the use of which it profits. And if it is tormented by [the use of] any of these things, then know that it is influenced by what is not its property. We conclude: If it is known, that the affections of every one of these natures are each other's opposites, then, consequently, all that gives profit and rest to the body when used by the soul has not to be reckoned as belonging to the soul. Because what is natural to the soul is fatal to the body, except those things which are connected with the soul in some secondary way. Because of the weak-
 27 ness of the flesh the soul can absolutely not be freed from them, as long as it is clad with the flesh. For its nature is connected with the troubles of the flesh because of the union of its impulses with the carnal senses, with which they are interwoven by the inscrutable wisdom. And, though intermingled in this way, nevertheless impulses are distinguished from impulses, and will from will, viz. the carnal from the spiritual one. And nature is not at all composite nor does it disavow what is its property. And though man renders the impulses in a high degree equal to each other, by sin or by excellence, at certain times every one exerts its will and shows its power.

1) Cf. Galatians 5, 17.

But when bodily thoughts have to some extent been lifted up, then their impulses manifest themselves wholly in the spiritual sphere, swimming in the heart of heaven with incomprehensible things. But even then the body cannot remain without some memory of what its own is, even as, when the impulses are in the domain of sin, the beautiful emotions of the soul are not brought to silence in the mind.

What is purity of mind? Not that one who does not know evil things, is pure of mind — that were to be a brute. Nor do we call pure of mind those whom nature has placed in the age of boyhood; that were to postulate that man should not belong to the class of created beings. But purity of mind consists in being captivated by divine things, [a state] that is only reached when many virtues have been practised.

We do not venture to say that he that has reached it, has acquired it without the experience of contrary deliberations. Else he would not be clad with a body. For we do not think
 28 that before the world-to-be nature can be purged from contrary [inclinations]. The temptation of the deliberations is not, in my opinion this, that one surrenders to them, but the beginning of the struggle within the deliberations which begins in the mind on account of the four kinds of bases which are the root of movement to all kinds of affections. So that in this life there is not found anyone exalted above earthly recollections, even if he belong to the masters of the battle and, like Paul, be reputed perfect.

But while the body by means of its impulses, in accordance with the order of nature, and the world by its natures through the intermediation of the senses, and the soul by deliberations, recollections and powers of deviation, and the demons by the co-operating forces of the things mentioned — while ¹⁾ the power of these fourfold affections is experienced by him ²⁾, he will be troubled to a small degree only ³⁾ and be drawn towards the excellent things which are seen by intuition. Decide thou, whether it is possible that one of these four be annihilated before the annihilation of the world, or by the transition that takes place at death; or whether the body can elevate itself wholly above its needs, without nature's urging it to seek any

1) I have retained the anakoluthic character of the original.

2) The mystic.

3) Other Mss: he will perceive this to a small extent only.

of the worldly things. If now this is deemed absurd, so long as these [four powers] exist, it is necessary that also the affections move themselves in all beings clad with a body, and consequently caution must be practised by every one. By the affections I do not understand one or two, but all the different ones which [occur in] those clad with flesh. But if a man should
 29 venture [to say that he experiences only] weak impulses and harmless strife, we would say that, whoever such people may be, they do not require works but great watchfulness.

What is the difference between purity of mind¹⁾ and purity of heart.

Purity of mind is something other than purity of heart, just as there is a difference between one of the members of the whole body and the whole body. The mind is one of the senses of the soul. The heart is the central organ²⁾ of the inward senses; this means the sense of senses, because it is the root³⁾. And if the root is holy, so also are all the branches. But this is not so if it is holy in one of the branches only. Now with but little acquaintance with the scriptures and a little exercise in fasting and solitude, the mind forgets its former occupation and is cleansed, while it refrains from foreign habits. But is also easily defiled.

The heart is purified through great trouble and by being deprived of all association with the world, together with a complete mortification in every point. And when it has been purified, its purity is not defiled by the touch of insignificant [worldly] things; this means: it has no fear even before severe struggles. For it possesses a sound stomach that easily digests all sorts of food which are difficult for others who are sick in their interior. For the physicians say: All meat which is difficult of digestion, increases the forces of the sound body, because it is taken up by a strong stomach. In the same way every
 30 purification that is brought about easily, in a short time and by small labours, is easily defiled again. But the purity that is acquired through great troubles and after a long time by the highest part of the soul, is not endangered by insignificant touches of the [worldly] things.

Quiet senses give birth to peace in the soul, because they do not allow it to experience strife. But since the soul has no

1) *ḥayyūṭ*

2) *ḥayyūṭ*

3) Cf. Introduction.

sensation of any thing, it is a victory without struggle. But when it becomes negligent, it is not able to remain steadfast, and when it strives to get rid of apprehension after the latter has got accession, the soul destroys its previous properties, viz. serenity and natural perfection. For the majority of men, and possibly the whole world, leave their first state on account of this cause¹⁾. Only one out of many returns to his first place when he has once adopted the second habit. Much better is simplicity than the different kinds of forgiveness.

Human nature needs fear in order to guard against the borders of the commandments being crossed, [it needs] love to excite the desire of good things, for the sake of which man hastens to perform beautiful things.

Spiritual knowledge is posterior to the performance of excellence. Prior to both are love and fear. And fear is prior to love. Every one who ventures to acquire the latter things before the former, undoubtedly lays a perishable foundation in his soul. For they are placed by God in such an order, that these proceed from those. Do not interchange the love of thy neighbour with the love of [worldly] things, for that which is precious above all things, is hidden in it.

³¹ A material object which is a mark for the eyes of the flesh, is also of such a nature as to affect the hidden visual powers; and the affections which cloud the second natural contemplation, acts in the same manner for the natural steadfastness. They are related to one another in the same way, up to where ceases the current of all kinds of contemplation. When the mind²⁾ is in a state of natural steadfastness, it is in angelic contemplation, which is the first and natural contemplation which is also named naked mind. When the mind is in the second state of natural knowledge, it sucks and is sustained by the milk from the corporeal breasts; this state is called the last garment of the afore-mentioned state; it is placed after [the state of] purity, which the mind enters first. It is prior in being, for it is the first stage of knowledge, although posterior in honour. On this account, therefore, it is also called the second one, as also on account of the indications of some of the tokens by which the mind is purified and trained for the ascent to a second order, which is the perfection of the intel-

1) Negligence.

2) 

lectual impulses, and the stage which is near divine contemplation¹).

The last garment of the mind are the senses. Its state of nakedness is its being moved by kinds of non-material contemplation. Leave the small things in order to find the honoured ones.

Be dead in life, then thou wilt not live in death. Let thyself die in integrity, but not live in guiltiness²). Not only those who suffer death for the sake of the faith in Christ are martyrs, but also those who die for the sake of keeping his commandments.

³² Be not inept in thy petitions, lest thou grieve God by thy ignorance.

Learn to pray with prudence, that thou mayest be esteemed worthy of glorious things.

Seek well-esteemed things from Him, who does not withhold; then thou wilt receive honour from Him, because of the choice of thy wise will.

Solomon sought wisdom and he received, apart from it, the earthly kingdom, because he knew how to ask wisely viz. great things from the King.

Elisha sought one or two parts of the spirit that was upon his master and his request was not withheld from him.

The honour of the King is lessened by him who seeks contemptible things.

Israel sought despicable things; it gained the anger of God. It neglected to wonder at the workings and terrible effects of His deeds and it sought the desires of its belly. And while their food was still in their mouth, the anger of God reached them. Present thy requests unto God in accordance with His glorious being, in order that thy honour be great in His eyes and He rejoice in thee.

When a man seeks from a king a measure full of dung he will not only be despised on account of his despicable request,

1) The above passage betrays its relation with Philonean thought at once by the term "naked mind" which often occurs in Philo (I 76 sq., 98, 179, 270). There is further concordance, but also difference between the two authors. Both of them distinguishes three kinds of nakedness. According to Isaac they are: the puerile state, the state of natural purity, and the purified state. According to Philo (I 76 sq.) they are: the puerile state; the state of Noah's drunkenness in which the soul has lost its faculties; the state of purity in which the soul has abandoned all earthly things.

2) Cf. Porphyrius, *Sententiae*, IX: ὁ τοῦ σώματος διπλοῦς· ὁ μὲν συνεγνωσμένος λυομένου τοῦ σώματος ἀπὸ ψυχῆς· ὁ δὲ τῶν φιλοσόφων, λυομένης τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος. And the Pythagorean sentence in Stobaeus (p. 158): τέναντι πολλῶ κρείττον ἢ δι' ἀκρασίαν τὴν ψυχῆν ἀμυρῶσται.

exposing thus his ignorance, but he also insults the king by his insipid demand: such also is he who in prayer asks corporeal things from God.

Lo, the angels and the archangels which are the chiefs of the angels look at thee in the time of prayer, [in order to know] which prayer thou wilt present unto their Lord. And they wonder at thee when they see the corporeal one leaving his dunghill and asking heavenly things.

33 Do not seek from God that which He is anxious to give us even if we do not beg for it, which He withholds not from his housemates and not even from those who are wholly foreign to the knowledge of Him, nay who do not even know that He is.

Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do ¹⁾. What is this "as the heathen"? The corporeal things are sought by the peoples of the earth; but give ye no thought saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink or wherewithall shall we be clothed? For your Father knoweth that ye also have need of all these things ²⁾.

A son does not ask bread from his father, but makes supplication concerning the great portions in store for him in the house of his father. That which our Lord has commanded concerning daily bread, namely that we pray for it, is a petition which he handed down to the common people, because of the weakness of their minds. Regard that which he commands to those who are perfect in knowledge and sound of soul, viz.: ye shall not take thought of food or raiment. If your Father bestows care upon the fowls that have no soul, how much more upon you. But ask from God the Kingdom and righteousness, then he will add these things too.

If He is slow in granting thy request, when thou askest without receiving promptly, then be not distressed. For thou art not wiser than God. When thou remainest as thou art ³⁾, [it is] either because thy behaviour does not agree with thy request; or because the ways of thy heart diverge from the aim of thy prayer; or because thy inner state is childish in comparison with the greatness of the thing.

It is not becoming that great things should fall into our
34 hands easily; lest the gift of God should be thought to be mean because of its being acquired without difficulty.

1) Matthew 6, 7.

2) Matthew 6, 31 sq.

3) The prayer not being heard.

All that is acquired with labour, is guarded with caution.

Thirst after Jesus; then he will satisfy thee with his love. Shut thy eyes to the precious things of the world; then thou wilt be deemed worthy of a peace given by God to reign in thy heart.

Restrain thyself from the allurements that are shining for the eyes; then thou wilt be deemed worthy of spiritual joy.

If thy behaviour is not worthy of God, do not ask from Him praised things, lest thou appear as a man who tries God.

Prayer accords strictly with behaviour.

No man desires heavenly things as long as he is bound with ties [impeding] his will, on account of the body. And no man asks divine things while he is occupied with earthly things. The desire of every man is known from his works; and that which he cares for, he will be anxious to seek in prayer. And he will be zealous in showing by his outward deeds that which he asks for in his prayer.

He who desires great things, has no intercourse with mean ones.

Be free even while thou art bound in the body and show submission in thy freedom for the sake of Christ; and be wise in thy innocence, lest thou be beguiled.

Love humility in thy dealings, that thou mayest be freed from the imperceivable snares which are continually to be found by the side of the paths on which the humble walk.

Do not reject the troubles, by means of which thou art led towards knowledge.

Do not fear temptations by means of which thou wilt find precious things.

35 Pray that thou mayest not be led into temptations of the soul. To those of the body thou shalt prepare thyself with all thy force and with all thy limbs thou shalt swim in them. For without them it is impossible for thee to approach unto God. For beyond them lies divine rest.

Who flees from temptations, flees from excellence; not from the temptations of desires, but from [those of] troubles.

How does the sentence "pray, that ye enter not into temptation" ¹⁾ concord with "strive to enter in at the strait gate" ²⁾ and "fear not them which kill the body" ³⁾ and "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" ⁴⁾

1) Matthew 26, 41.

2) Luke 13, 24.

3) Matthew 10, 28.

4) Matthew 10, 39.

In all these places our Lord recommends to us temptations; but in that he orders us to pray that we enter not into temptation. What kind of excellence can be accomplished without temptations? Or what kind of temptation is stronger than the which he orders us to undergo for His sake? And "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" ¹⁾. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation", but entering into temptations occurs everywhere in his teachings. And he has said: without temptations the Kingdom of heaven is not found.

O how strait is the way of thy teachings, our Lord! And he who does not discriminate with knowledge, as he reads, will always remain without it, as far as his insight is concerned.

When the sons of Zebedee and their mother desired of him to sit with him in the Kingdom, he postulated this: Are ye able to suffer gladly the cup of temptations? Are ye able to ³⁶ drink of the cup that I shall drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ²⁾? And how orderest Thou here, O our Lord: pray that ye enter not?

Which are the temptations into which we shall pray not to enter.

Pray that thou enterest not into temptation concerning thy belief.

Pray that thou enterest not into temptation through mental presumption, with the demon of abuse and haughtiness.

Pray that thou enterest not, under [God's] admission, into the manifest temptations of the senses, which Satan is able to instill unto thee with God's permission, on account of the foolish thoughts thou hast cherished.

Pray that the witness of chastity be not taken away from thee lest thou be tempted in the flames of sin without him.

Pray that thou enterest not into the temptation of abusing anything.

Pray therefore, that thou enterest not into psychic temptations, namely those which lead the soul into struggle, doubt and allurements. But prepare for the bodily ones with thy whole body and swim in them with all thy limbs, thy eyes full of tears, that thou be found amidst of them with thy guardian. For without temptations God's care cannot be perceived and familiarity of speech with Him cannot be acquired and

1) Matthew 10, 38.

2) Matthew 20, 22.

spiritual wisdom cannot be learnt and the love of God cannot be implanted in the soul.

Before [having experienced] temptations, man prays unto God as a stranger. But when he has entered into troubles for the sake of his love, without being changed, then, as one that has laid upon God [the obligation of paying] a certain loan, he is reckoned as His housemate and His friend, who has fought, for the sake of His will, against the host of His enemies. This
37 is [the meaning of]: Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

And further: pray that thou enterest not into temptations for the sake of thy self-exaltation, but for the sake of thy love of God, that His power may be conspicuous in thee. Pray that thou enterest not into such on account of the folly of thy thoughts and deeds, but in order that thou provest to be a friend of God and His power be glorified in thy endurance.

On the mercy of our Lord in this matter, who measures his word in accordance with human weakness.

Further he deals [with us] in this matter compassionately. If thou considerest bodily things [it appears that God], also in this point has remembered the weakness of nature; it was possible that, on account of the wretchedness of the body, we should not find fortitude against the power of the temptations whenever it should present itself, and consequently we should even leave [the path of] truth, being overcome by troubles. Therefore he orders us that, as much as possible, we should avoid entering wilfully into temptation. And not only this, but [he even says]: Pray that you be not found in it without just cause, if it be possible to please God without temptation.

But if very great excellence is desired, when temptations assail and that most terribly, and if that excellence cannot be accomplished without a man's bearing them, in that case it is not becoming to spare ourselves or anyone. Even on account of fear thou shalt not shrink from that great thing upon which the life of thy soul depends, putting forward as an apology
38 for thy laxness: Pray that ye enter not into temptation. For such are those, concerning whom it is said that they sin secretly by [fulfilling] the commandments.

If one of the divine commandments comes to be dissociated from a man, be it the state of chastity, or the habit of holiness, or the confession of faith, or the testimony concerning the word

of God, or the cautiously guarding of the other prescriptions of the Law — it is impossible that he should not fall if he be afraid of temptations. Therefore he has to despise the body with complete confidence, and to entrust God with its soul and to proceed in the name of the Lord. And He that was with Joseph in the land of Egypt and who was the witness of his chastity, and who was with Daniel in the pit of lions, and with Hananja and his companions in the furnace, and with Jeremia in the pit of mire and who saved him and made him an object of compassion in the midst of the camp of the Chaldeans; who was with Peter in the prison and brought him out of it through shut gates; and with Paul in the synagogues of the Jews; in short, He who in all generations was with His servants always and everywhere and showed in them His power and made them victorious and guarded them miraculously so that they saw His salvation manifestly at the time of their troubles, He will strengthen and guard him in the midst of the storms which surround him. Therefore he shall arm himself against the invisible foe and his hosts with the zeal of the Maccabees and of the other holy prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and recluses who have maintained the divine laws and the spiritual commandments in frightful places and
39 among difficult and fearful temptations and who have thrown the world and the body behind them and clung to the truth in them without giving way to the constraint pressing both body and soul and endured as heroes; in short, whose names are written in the book of life until the coming of our Lord. And their deeds are preserved in the book by God's decree for our instruction and encouragement according to the testimony of the blessed Apostle, so that we may get insight from them and learn the way of God, placing their stories before our mental eyes as living images, that we may resemble them and conform the ways of our behaviour unto theirs, after the pattern of the Ancients.

To the soul endowed with mind the words of God are delightful as oily food which makes fat the body, to the palate of those who are healthy.

The stories of the just are as desirable to the ear of the perfect, as a constant watering to young plantations.

Listening to God's providential leading of the Ancients be estimated by thee as precious drugs for weak eyes. And let

the recollection of it be kept with thee at all times of the day. Meditate and think of it and learn wisdom from it, that thou be able to receive in thy soul with honour the recollection of God's greatness and find for thyself everlasting life in Jesus Christ, the mediator of God and mankind, who was one in his two natures. Though the legions of the angels are not able to look upon the glory surrounding His majestic throne, yet for thy sake He has appeared before the world the most contemptible and humble of man; without form or comeliness; and while His invisible nature was not within the reach of the apprehension of created beings, He accomplished His providential dealings by [covering Himself] with a veil [made of the stuff] of our limbs, in order to save the life of all.

This is he through whom He has purified many peoples ¹⁾ and on whom the Lord has laid the sin of us all ²⁾, as Jesaja says. It pleased the Lord to humble him and to put him to grief ³⁾.

Sin has been placed in him who knew no sin ⁴⁾. To whom, for his providential dealings in all generations for our sake, be glory and praise and thanksgiving and adoration from all, now and at all time and for ever and ever. Amen.

IV

The soul that loves God [finds] its rest in God only.

First detach from thyself the outward bonds, then strive to bind thy heart to God.

To be detached from matter is prior to being bound to God ⁵⁾.

When a child has been weaned, bread is given him as food. And a man who wishes to become excellent in God, has first to wean himself from the world, as a child is weaned from his mother's breasts.

Bodily labours are prior to psychic service, as the creation of the body takes place before that of the soul.

For he who does not perform bodily labour, does not perform psychic labours either. For the latter are born out of the former as the ears from mere grains. And he who does not perform psychic service, is also devoid of spiritual gifts.

1) Jesaja 52, 15 in the Peshito.

2) Jes. 53, 6.

3) Jes. 53, 10.

4) 2 Cor. 5, 21.

5) The sentence occurs also p. 7. Cf. Introduction.

Temporary suffering for the sake of the truth is not to be compared with the delight preserved for those who perform labours of excellence.

As the weeping of the time of sowing is followed by the joys of harvest¹⁾, so are the labours for the sake of God followed by joy.

The bread earned with sweat, delights the workman; labours for the sake of righteousness, the heart that has received the knowledge of Christ.

Suffer contempt and²⁾ humiliation in the thought of excellence, for the sake of the heart's familiarity of speech with God. Every time a man suffers a hard word with discernment, save only when it is caused by his own fault, he receives a crown of thorns on his head for the sake of Christ; blessed is he! At other times he is crowned and knows it not.

He who flees from the fame [that rests] on knowledge, will perceive in himself the hope of the world to come.

He who promises to leave the world, yet quarrels with men concerning [worldly] things because he is not willing to give up anything of what is agreeable unto him, he is perfectly blind, because he has given up the whole world voluntarily, yet quarrels about a part of it.

If anyone flees from what is agreeable [unto him] in this world, his mind will behold the world to come.

He who is master of possessions, is the slave of passions. Do not estimate gold and silver only as possessions, but all things thou possessest for the sake of the desire of thy will.

He who cuts off impediments from fear of affections, he is a wise man indeed.

Without the constant service of excellence true knowledge
42 cannot be found.

Not by bodily works alone is the knowledge of life acquired, but by directing our efforts to the cutting off of mental affections.

He who labours without discernment will easily become the victim of the causes of sin when they present themselves to him. Never praise him who labours with his body, but concerning his senses is lax and without constraint, viz. whose ears and mouth are open and whose eyes are prone to wander.

1) Literally: full hands. Cf. Ps. 126, 6.

2) Reading of London Ms. 14632.

If thou settest up as thy aim to practice mercy, train thyself not to pursue justice in other fields, lest thou appear to work with one hand and to spill with the other. For there clemency is necessary, but here magnanimity.

Let the forgiveness of those who are guilty towards thee in these things, be reckoned by thee as a work of righteousness. Then thou wilt see peace springing up in thy soul from both sides, that is when thy path is superior to dignity and justice, and thou wilt favour the rise of freedom in all things. For one of the saints, speaking of these things, says: The merciful, if he be not just, is blind, in so far as he provides others from wealth which has been gathered with justice and by his own labours, and not from the acquirements of falsehood, oppression, iniquity and cunning.

In the same way, in another place, this man preaches: If thou sowest among the poor, sow from thy own possessions; what thou sowest from those of others is much more bitter
 43 than weeds. But I say: if the merciful be not even above justice, he is not merciful. This means, that he will not only show mercy unto men on his own part, but that he will voluntarily suffer iniquity with delight, so that he does not maintain and postulate full justice in his dealings with his fellow men, but is merciful towards him and surpassing justice by mercy, wreathing for himself the crown not of the just under the law, but of the perfect under the new covenant.

To give the poor from one's own possessions, and to cover the naked on seeing them, to love the neighbour as one self, not to do iniquity or falsehood, are things commanded also by the old law. But perfection in behaviour, according to the new covenant, commands thus: If a man takes from thee, do not demand back; give every one who asks from thee. And not only hast thou to suffer gladly iniquitous dealing in possessions and other outward things, but thou hast even to give thyself in behalf of thy neighbour.

Merciful is he, who shows his compassion towards his neighbour not only in gifts, but who after hearing or seeing anything that causes suffering to any one, cannot withhold his heart from burning; who, even if he receives a blow on his cheek from his brother, does not venture to repay him even with a word and so cause him to suffer intellectually.

Honour the works of vigils, then thou wilt find consolation

near in thy self. Be constantly occupied with recitation in solitude, then thou wilt be drawn towards ecstasy at all times.

44 Love poverty with endurance, that thy mind may be concentrated and so not wander.

Hate abundance, that thou be preserved against confusion of mind.

Cut off [intercourse with] the multitude and take care of thy behaviour that thy soul be saved from spilling its inward rest.

Love chastity lest thou be put to shame at the time of prayer before Him who exposes thee to strife.

Acquire a pure behaviour, that thy soul may exult during prayer and joy be kindled in thy mind at the recollection of death.

Keep control of small things, lest thou neglect great ones.

Be not lazy with regard to labours lest thou be put to shame when in presence of all comrades.

Pursue thy work with knowledge, lest it throw thee out of thy whole course.

Be not destitute of provisions; lest [thy companions] leave thee alone in the midst of the way and depart.

Acquire freedom in thy behaviour, that thou be freed from confusion.

Do not use thy freedom for the sake of comfort, lest thou become a slave of slaves.

Love abstinence in thy behaviour, that the deliberations leading to haughtiness of heart and lasciviousness may be restrained.

That he who loves finery should acquire a humble mind, is not possible. For the heart within and the habits without necessarily must be parallel one to another. Who would be able to acquire chastity of mind, when he is addicted to luxuriance? And who could acquire humble inward deliberations, when he is pursuing outward glory? And who is he, that being lascivious without and lax in his limbs, should be chaste in his heart and pious in his deliberations? When the mind is guided
45 by the senses, it feeds with them upon the food of the beasts; but when the senses are guided by the mind, they feed with it upon the sustenance of the angels.

Vain glory is a servant to fornication. If it is concerned with behaviour, to haughtiness. To humility brevity is proper.

Love of glory is connected with prolixity. The former through

constant concentration, attains to contemplation and arms the soul unto chastity. The latter through the continual wandering of the mind, gathers provisions¹⁾ through contact with [outward] things, and defiles the heart.

It touches lasciviously upon the nature of things and excites the mind through lascivious deliberations. The former is spiritually concentrated by contemplation and moves its possessors towards glory.

Compare not all powers and signs that are worked in the whole world, with a man's consciously sitting in solitude.


Love the ease of solitude rather than satisfying the hunger of the world and the converting of the multitude of heathen peoples from error unto adoring God. Let it be more excellent in thy eyes to detach thyself from the bonds of sin, than to detach the subdued unto liberty from those who subject their bodies.

Prefer to make peace with thyself, in harmony with the trinity within thee: body, soul and spirit, rather than to appease those who are angry at thy teachings.

Love simplicity of speech together with experienced know-
 46 ledge within, rather than the production of a Gihon of teachings by acuteness of mind and out of a deposit of hear-say and ink.

Be anxious to quicken the deadness of thy soul caused by affections, unto the emotion of the impulses in God, rather than to quicken those who are dead in the natural sense.

There have been many people who have exercised powers, quickened the dead, bestowed their labour upon the erring, done great signs and drawn many people towards God by exciting their admiration of the things done by them; but afterwards those who have saved others, have fallen into impure and disreputable passions. And after they had given life to others, they have brought themselves to death and caused themselves to stumble by the offence given by their works. The cause of this is, that, while they were still sick of soul, they did not care for their own healing, but plunged themselves into the sea of the world in order to heal the souls of others, being still sick themselves. So they have bereft themselves of the hope in God as I said before, because the weakness of their senses was not yet able to bear the touch of the rays

1) The London Ms. has  "bonds".

of [worldly] things that excite usually the vehemence of the affections in those who still are in want of caution. I mean the sight of women and comfort and money and worldly things, and the passion for governing and for exalting oneself above others.

Be despised by fools for simplicity, not by the wise for audacity. Seek poverty for humility's sake and do not seek riches
47 for the sake of audaciousness. Confound critics by the power of thy virtues, not by thy word; and the impudence of those who will not be persuaded, by the peacefulness of thy lips, not by sounds. Confound the lascivious by thy honourable behaviour and those of audacious sensuality by the chastity of thy eyeballs that are concentrated within thee in quiet.

Deem thyself a stranger wherever thou enterest all thy life-long¹⁾, that thou mayest be able to flee from the great damages rising from freedom of speech.

Think concerning thyself always that thou knowest nothing, that thou mayest be liberated from the reprehensible things caused in thee by conceit; then thou wilt be entitled to direct others.

Let thy mouth constantly administer blessing; then the scorn of any one will never hurt thee. Disdain gives birth to disdain, blessing to blessing.

Think concerning thyself always that thou needest teaching, in order that thou be found a wise man during thy whole life.

Do not hand down to others as thy own, the practical ethics²⁾ that thou hast not yet reached; lest thou be put to shame by thyself and thy deception appear from the comparison with thy behaviour. But if thou speakest concerning what is becoming, speak as one belonging to the class of pupils, not as an authority, having before subdued thy self and shown thyself as being less than thy listener. Then thou wilt give also thy hearers an example of humility and thy words will spur them unto the course towards [good] works and thou wilt be honoured in their eyes.

48 As much as is possible for thee, speak about such things with tears, so that it be profitable unto thyself and thy companions and attract grace towards thee.

1) Bukhārī, *Riḳāḳ*, b. 3: Be in the world as a stranger (كُن فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ). And according to Porphyrius man in this world is a stranger, who longs for home (Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*⁴ III, 2, p. 718). Cf. Hebrews II, 13 etc.

2) See beneath p. 40, note 1.

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1922 (Wensinck).

If, by the grace of Christ, thou hast reached the delight of the mysteries of the visible created things, which is the first summit of knowledge, then arm thy soul against the spirit of slander. For without arms thou canst not hold thy place in this country, but thou wouldst soon be killed secretly by the seducers. Let thy arms be: fasting and tears which thou shedst in constant self-humiliation; and prudence against reading books which accentuate the differences between the confessions, with the aim of causing schisms, which provides the spirit of slander with a mighty weapon against the soul.

When thy stomach is replenished, do not venture to scrutinize, or thou wilt regret it. Understand what I say: in a full stomach, there is no knowledge of the mysteries of God. Be occupied with the books of God's providence intensely, without becoming satisfied. They have been composed by holy men and show the aim of His different works in His establishing the different natures¹⁾ of the world. Let thy mind be strengthened by them and thou wilt acquire enlightened impulses from their subtlety; then thy mind will go its way with a clear consciousness towards the aim of [understanding] the right scheme of the creation of the world, according to the laudable wise intention of the Creator of the natures.

Read in the two Testaments which God has destined for the instruction of the whole world, so that it should be dazzled by the power of His Providence in every generation and be enveloped in wonder.

Such recitations and the like are very useful to this aim. Let thy recitation take place in complete rest, while thou art
 49 free from too great care for the body and from the disturbance of practice; then the recitation will give thy soul a delicious taste, by the sweet insight, exalted above the senses, which the soul, by constant intercourse with it, perceives in itself. Do not deem the words that are founded upon experience as the babbling of those who sell words, lest thou remain in darkness till the end of thy life, bereft of their profit, groping in the night in times of war, nay even falling into one of the pits, under the pretext of [clinging to] truth.

This shall be the sign for thee, when thou art near to enter that country: when grace begins to open thy eyes so that they

1) Isaac uses the word "nature" (طبیعیات) in a sense corresponding with our "species".

perceive things by essential sight, at that time thy eyes will begin to shed tears till they wash thy cheeks even by their multitude, and the vehemence of the senses will be calmed so that they will be shut up within thee peacefully. If any man teach thee otherwise, do not believe him. To ask from the body anything else — as a manifest sign of the real apprehension — than tears, is not allowed to thee, save only if the influence of the members of the body be silent. This takes place when the mind is elevated above [earthly] beings and the body is without tears, apprehension and emotionality, except only its natural animal existence. For this knowledge does not stoop to take with it as secondary companions of spiritual sight the
 50 ideas of the things of the sensual world. "Whether in the body or out of it, I do not know". It is God who knows this as well as the fact that he has heard unutterable words¹⁾.

All that is heard by the ears can be spoken. But he did not hear sensible sounds, nor did he [see] in a vision of corporeal sensible images, but with the impulses of the mind, in a state of rapture apart from the body, the will having no part in it²⁾. The eye never saw the like, the ear never heard its equal and his varied knowledge never dreamt of recollecting the likeness of what his heart saw, namely that which God has in store to show the pure in heart when they have become dead to the world: not corporeal sight received through the eyes of the flesh in gross distinctions, nor fantasies which they themselves form in their mind, in a secondary way, but simplicity of contemplation concerning things of intellect and faith — the contrary of partition and division — that show the images of the elements.

Fix thy gaze on the sphere of the sun according to thy visual strength and only with the object of enjoying its rays, noth with the aim of scrutinizing the course of its wheel, lest even thy limited sight be taken from thee³⁾. If thou find honey, eat in measure lest thou, having become satisfied, hast to reject it. The nature of the soul is of small dimensions; and sometimes it proceeds onwards, desiring to learn what is beyond its nature. And many times, during the course of recitation and
 51 the contemplation of things, it grasps one or more things; yet the sum of its knowledge is insignificant as compared with

1) I Cor. 12, 2—4.

2) Cf. above p. 14 note 1.

3) Cf. p. 17.

what it found. But how far does its knowledge penetrate? Until its deliberations are clad with emotion and trembling. Then it hastens to turn backwards from fear, venturing [from time to time] to penetrate into the luminous things.

But fear withholds it on account of the frightfulness of these things. And discernment warns in silence the mind of the soul not to be audacious lest it should die. What is too hard for thee, seek not; what is too strong for thee, search not. Scrutinize with thy intellect that which has been allowed to thee, and do not venture to approach unto hidden things. Adore therefore and praise in silence and confess thy inability to understand. For too much for thee has been shown to thee, but do not trouble thyself with the rest of His works. As it is not good to eat much honey, so it is not good to examine laudable words. Lest, desiring to gaze from a great distance before we have approached near, we be exhausted by the interminable way, without having the power to gaze, and be injured.

For sometimes in stead of truth fantasies arise; when namely the intellect becomes too weary to understand, and forgets its true essence. And the wise Solomon has well said that he that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is in ruins and without walls ¹⁾.

²⁾ It is not necessary to search for God in heaven and earth and to send out our mind to seek Him in different places.
 52 Purify thy soul, o man, and strip thyself from the thought of recollections which are unnatural and hang before thy impulses the curtain of chastity and humility. Thereby thou wilt find Him that is within thee. For to the humble the mysteries are revealed.

If thou wouldst give thyself to the service of the pure prayer of the mind and to constant vigils in order to acquire a mind clad with light, withdraw thyself from the sight of the world, and cut off intercourse by speech. And refuse to receive in thy cell thy accustomed friend, even [if he comes] for the sake of excellence, save only him that has the same aim as thyself and shares in the secrets of thy behaviour. If thou art in fear of distraction and secret psychic intercourse, which originates spontaneously without our seeking it, cut off from thee even outward intercourse.

1) Proverbs 25, 28.

" Let thy prayers be followed by works of excellence, that thy soul may see the flower of the light of truth." In consequence of the heart's freedom from external recollections, the mind will receive [the gift] of ecstatic understanding of things. The soul can easily be accustomed to interchange one occupation with another if we only bestow some little care and trouble upon it.

Burden it with the labour of reading books expounding the narrow ways of behaviour, contemplation, and the stories of the saints, even if it does not perceive delight in the beginning, because of the darkness and disturbance originating in present recollections; then it will interchange one habit with another.

53 Accordingly when thou risest for prayer and service, instead of meditating worldly things, scriptural thoughts will be pictured in the mind. And thereby the recollection of that which it saw and heard before, will be forgotten and effaced in it. So thy mind will reach purity. This is what has been said: the mind is made chaste by recitation when it comes to prayer, and by recitation it is enlightened during prayer. This means: the soul will find strength to interchange outward distraction with the habits of prayer, viz. essential understanding shining in the mind on account of the wondrous recollections of that world. How often at those times has the power of contemplation [stimulated] by the scriptures, made silent and stupefied [the solitary] during prayer and left him standing without impulses; the same power, that cuts off prayer by delight as I have said, giving rest to the heart and bringing to silence its impulses, the psychic and bodily members being in rest.

Those know what I say, who have experienced this in their soul, who have penetrated into its mysteries, who have not learnt it from others or snatched it from writings which so often are found to falsify truth.

A full stomach shrinks from examining spiritual questions, as a harlot from speaking of chastity. A conscience full of disease abhors fat food; a mind full of the world, cannot approach the investigation of divine service.

54 Fire cannot burn fresh wood; the love of God cannot be kindled in a heart that loves comfort.

A harlot cannot cling to the love of one man; neither can the soul, that is tied to many things, cling to loving spiritual teachings.

As he who has never seen the sun with his eyes is not able, on the basis of hearing about it, to imagine its light in his mind, or to receive some image in his soul, or to perceive the beauty of its rays, so he who in his soul does not have perception for the taste of spiritual service and whose behaviour has never brought him experience of its mysteries so that he is able to conceive in his mind an image resembling the truth, is unable to find real conviction in his soul nor to attain the essence of the matter through human teachings and training in writings¹).

If thou possessest anything above thy daily sustenance, go and give it the poor and then offer unto God prayer with frankness. This means: speak with God as a son with his father.

There is nothing which brings the heart so near unto God as mercy²); and nothing which gives peace to the mind as voluntary poverty. Many will scorn thee as an ignorant because of thy liberality and for thy giving thyself without stint for the sake of the fear of God; they will not call thee wise or steady of mind, because of thy asceticism.

55 If any one is riding on a horse and stretches out his hand, do not withdraw from him thy hand in which is that which his need truly requires. For at that time he is needy as one of the indigent. And what thou givest, give it with a bountiful eye, and make thy face glad towards him. And give him above what he asks, that which he does not seek. Cast thy bread upon the waters for thy shalt find remñneration after many days³).

Do not make any distinction between the rich and the poor nor know who is worthy and who is not worthy. Deem all men worthy of bounty on thy part. Especially because thou spurrest them unto truth thereby. The soul can easily be drawn by corporeal things to the thought of the fear of God. Also our Lord shared his table with publicans and harlots without making any distinction between those who were worthy and those who were not, seeking to spur them on thereby unto the fear of God and to bring them, through communion in bodily things, unto spiritual communion. Therefore deem all

1) Cf. *Book of the Dove*, Sentence 3

2) Cf. the title of Chapter LXXXI and p. 8 sq., 42 sq.

3) *Eccles.* 11, 1.

people worthy of bounty and honour, be they Jews or miscreants or murderers. Especially if they be thy brothers and comrades who have erred from the truth on account of ignorance.

When thou doest well, do not wish a remuneration in this world; for both thou wilt be recompensed by God. If possible, do not even wish a remuneration in the world-to-come; but be excellent only by the love of God. The degree of love is more intimate than that of service unto God; nay, it is more⁵⁶ intimate in its mystery, with an intimacy that surpasses that of service as the soul's the body's.

If thou hast set for thyself the aim of renunciation, and by the grace of God thou hast been freed from care, and exalted above the world by thy renunciation, take care lest, on account of thy love of the poor, thou desire to fall back into the care of possessions and things, even with the aim of giving alms, falling thereby into trouble, taking from one to give unto another¹⁾; for thou wouldst expose thy honour to contempt by thy propensity to accost others in thy search for these and cognate things and thou wouldst fall back from the height of thy liberated mind unto care for earthly things.

Thy rank is higher than that of almsgivers. I pray thee, do not make thyself an object of laughter. The latter is the class of adolescents being educated; the former is the way of perfection.

If thou possessest, spend at once. If not, be not desirous to possess. Purify thy life from luxuriousness and superfluous things; this will necessarily bring thee towards asceticism.

Necessity bears many things which our will, as long as possible, would not submit to bear. Those who have overcome outward struggle have also annihilated inward fear and no compulsion can force them to go its way by confounding them with strife before and behind.

Outward struggle I name that which a man excites by the senses against himself foolishly; viz.: worldly dealings, hearing⁵⁷ and seeing, speech and stomach, gradually and continually associating himself with the practice of life, so that the soul is blinded and becomes unable, because of external troubles that meet it, to discern its self in the hidden strife that arises; then

1) To take and give is an expression denoting worldly dealings.

for the sake of quiet, he subdues that which comes from within. But if a man closes the gates of the town, there will be a strife face to face; and he will not fear from the ambushes outside the town.

Blessed is the man who knows these things and endures them in silence without even then imposing upon himself much work, but interchanging the whole of his bodily service with the labour of prayer, if he is able to do so, who, proceeding from service to service, does not join anything to the worship of God consisting in prayer and recitation, but believes that, when serving God and meditating upon Him night and day, He will not leave him in need of the necessary things he needs, because he does not work for himself.

If anyone is not able to bear solitude without service, he must necessarily have recourse to it. But he shall take it as a helpful means only, without eagerness, and as a secondary thing, not as a principal commandment.

This applies to the weak. Manual work is called by Eua-
grius an impediment to the recollection of God. The Fathers
have prescribed service to the indigent and despondent, not to
those who are zealous to perform their legal obligations.

When God opens thy mind from within and thou givest thy-
self to frequent kneelings, let no care of anything take hold of
58 thee, though the demons secretly persuade thee to do so; then
see and wonder at what is born in thee from these things.

Do not compare any of the ethical practices¹⁾ with a man's
throwing himself day and night on his face before the cross,
his hands turned backwards. If thou desirest that thy fervour
may never abate, and that thy tears may never fail, then prac-
tice this. Blessed art thou, o man, if thou thinkest of what I
have told thee, without seeking any other thing night and day.
Then thy light will be spread out like dawn and thy righteous-
ness will shortly appear²⁾. Then thou wilt be like an exulting
paradise and like a fountain never destitute of water.

Behold, how many signs of grace happen to a man from
Providence. Sometimes a man will be on his knees at the time
of prayer, his hands spread out or stretched towards heaven,
his face looking to the cross, and, so to speak his whole
emotion and mind stretched out towards God in supplication;

1) אֲבוֹתָא

2) Cf. Ps. 37, 6.

and while absorbed in these beseechings and pains at this time, of a sudden a fountain of delight will spring from his heart, his limbs will relax, his eyes be darkened, his face bow down and his deliberations be confuse, so that even his knees are no longer able to lean on the earth, from the exulting joy of the sign of grace that spreads through his whole body.

Distinguish, o man, what thou art reading, can these things be known from ink? Or can the taste of honey be spread over the palate of the reader, from written documents?

59 If thou doest not seek, thou wilt not find. And if thou doest not wake and knock fervently at the gate, without a break, thou wilt not be answered. Who could hear these things and be desirous of outward righteousness, unless he who is not able to bear the bonds of the cell? But if there be anyone who is not able to do these things, since it is a gift of God that a man remain within the door, he should not however desist from this other part ¹⁾, lest he be bereft of the two parts of life. For until the outward man becomes dead to the ways of the world, not only to sin, but also to the whole bodily service, and the inward man to the seducing recollections of evil things, until the natural impulse is brought low and the body has almost died through labours, so that the sweetness of sin has no more mastery over the heart, the spirit of God does not spread its sweetness and man's limbs are not unveiled to life and divine impulses do not show themselves in the soul. And as long as a man's heart is not freed from earthly care, except those necessary things which nature imposes upon him at the time of his necessity — and which he leaves also to God to arrange — spiritual drunkenness cannot rise in him and that madness, for which the Apostle was disdained, he will not perceive; for the multitude of books had made him mad.

But I do not say this in despair; namely that unless a man reach the depth of perfection, the grace of God will not be given him and consolation will not come to him.

60 Verily, when a man rejects evil things and becomes wholly alienated to them, and clings to good things, in a short time he will be aware of profit. And if he shows only a little zeal he will find the consolation of the forgiveness of sins in himself, and he will be dignified with grace and receive many good

1) outward righteousness.

things. But he is little when compared with him who has become wholly alienated to the world and has found in himself as it were the blessings of the world to come and has reached that for the sake of which Christ reached us. To whom and to his Father and to the Holy Ghost be glory and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Here ends the fourth discourse.

V

God has made great the honour of man, by the twofold teachings he has given him. And from every side He has opened for him a door through which he has access unto knowledge.

Ask from nature a true witness concerning thyself, then thou wilt not err. If thou goest yet astray, let thyself be taught by that second witness who will bring thee back to the way from which thou hast erred.

A distracted heart cannot help but erring. And wisdom will not open its gate before it.

He who is able to understand through essential knowledge to what a degree of equality all men will come in the end, will not seek another teacher concerning the contemptibility of the world.

61 The first book given by God to the rational beings, is the nature of the created things. Written teachings have been added only after aberration.

He who does not willingly remain far from things causing sin will be drawn towards them involuntarily. Things causing sin are wine and women, riches and bodily health. They are not to be called sin in themselves, but on account of man's weakness and their unlawful use, nature is easily drawn by them — more easily than by any other thing — towards different sins and therefore there is need of peculiar caution in regard of them. If thou rememberst continually and recognisest truly that thou art weak, thou wilt never overstep the borders prescribed by watchfulness. Despised above all things among men is poverty. But much more despised by God is haughtiness of heart and a disdainful spirit.

Among men riches are honoured; by God a humble soul.

When thou intendest to begin with one of the virtues, first prepare thyself, lest, by the evil things which it causes, thou shouldst fall into doubt concerning the truth.

62 If the Evil one sees some one beginning with one of the virtues in the fervour of faith, he attacks him by vehement and terrible temptations, with the intention that he be frightened by them, so that the love of his mind may abate and his fervour not rise again to bring him near to the works of God. And thus, because of fear of temptations accompanying good works [he hopes that] nobody will practise them anymore. Thou, however, prepare thyself to meet the evil things accompanying virtues, bravely and strongly; and then begin. If thou doest not expect evil things, do not begin with excellence. The man who is in doubt concerning the Lord, is persecuted by his own shadow; at the time of satiety he will be hungry and at the time of peace his ruin will be heavy. But whoever confides in God, his heart will be strong and his honour will be manifest before the crowds and his glory before his enemies.

The commandments of God are better than the treasures of the whole earth. He who acquires His laws in his heart, will find the Lord in them. He who meditates upon God in the night, will acquire Him as a housemate. He who is pliable to His will, will find the angels of heaven his teachers.

He who trembles before sins will pass without stumbling even through a dangerous place and at the time of darkness he will find a light within himself. If any one tremble before sins, his footsteps will be guarded by the Lord and mercy will precede his failures. He whose faults are small in his own eyes will fall into those which are worse than the former ones and it will be necessary that he pay for them sevenfold. Sow alms in humility and thou wilt reap mercy in the court of justice.

63 Whereby thou hast lost goods, thereby thou shalt acquire them again. If thou hast to pay a penny to God in some way or other, He will not accept a pearl from thee in its place. For in this case that thing is necessary.

If thou hast lost chastity, let not fornication take its place. If thou givest alms as a reparation, He will not accept them from thee; He postulates saintliness for saintliness. And if thou wrongest not the poor, let not unjust possession take the place of that. While thou art refraining from bread, let not injustice usurp its place so that thou must struggle with some other thing.

Oppression is eradicated by compassion and renunciation. If thou leavest the plant in its place, thou wilt have to struggle with some other thing, according to the word of the great teacher Mar Afrem.

Take care not to fight against heat during summer in clothes destined for winter. Thus each will reap, with the contrary of that with which he sows injustice. And every illness he will combat with its peculiar antidotum. Now thou art deadly wounded by envy; while thou strugglest against sleep. When sin is still green, eradicate it, lest it cover the whole ground. He who neglects an evil thing while it is small, will find it at last a hard master and he will go in bonds before it. He who treats it severely in the beginning, will easily rule it. He who bears injustice with gladness while victory is in his hand, he has received from God the consolation of his faith clearly manifested. And he who bears oppression in humility, has reached perfection. The angels will admire him. There is no profitable action more difficult and more meritorious.

Do not believe thyself strong before thou hast been led into temptations and thou hast found thyself steadfast in them. In all things thou hast to try thyself in this way.

Acquire glory on account of the faith of thy heart, then thou wilt tread upon the neck of thy enemies, and thou wilt find thy mind humble. Do not confide in thy strength lest thou be left to the weakness of thy nature and thou learnest thy weakness in thy fall; nor in thy knowledge, lest thou be surrounded in thought with hidden ambushes and becomest confused.

Acquire a humble tongue; then disdain will never hurt thee; and pleasant lips; then thou wilt be found a friend of every one. Do not boast of any thing with thy tongue, because among creatures there is nothing exempt from change; and thy shame will be double when thou art found the contrary [of what thou didst boast of]. Everything of which thou boastest before men, will surely be altered by God, so that thou mayest have a cause for humility so that thou judge God's knowledge to be all, and believe not that there is anything true in creatures. And when thou thinkest thus, thy eyes will at all times be fixed upon Him.

[Divine] care surrounds all men at all times; but it is not seen, save only by those who have purified themselves from

sins and think of God perpetually. To these then it is revealed
65 clearly; for when they have been led into great temptations
for the sake of truth, then they receive a faculty of perception
clearly as if with the eyes of the flesh. [They receive it] when
they want it, in a sensible way, in accordance with the kind
and the cause of the temptation, in order to strengthen their
courage. As in the case of Jacob and Joshua the son of Nun,
Hananya and his companions, Petrus and others, to whom the
figure of a man appeared in order to encourage them and to
console their faith.

If thou sayest that these things were acts of Providence of
a universal nature, let then the holy martyrs console thee,
who sometimes together, sometimes one by one in separate
places have suffered for God. Not only a hidden force was
with them, by which the members of their bodies were fortified
against being hanged in irons and against torments of all
kinds, things beyond natural power — but sometimes also holy
angels were seen by them manifestly, in order that every man
should know that God's care is with those who suffer for His
sake for any reason, so that they themselves might receive
encouragement and their torturers be ashamed. For as the
former were made conspicuous by such visions, to the same
degree the latter were tormented by their endurance.

And what shall we say about many of the solitaries and
strangers and true monks, who have made waste land habitable
and an encamping ground of the angels, who visited them on
account of their worthy behaviour? As true comrades [serving]
one Lord the heavenly hosts mingled [with them] in their
66 dwelling place, solitaries who during their whole life loved
solitude, who made holes and rocks their dwelling places, who
gladly suffered cold and heat for the love of God. And be-
cause they left the earth and loved heaven like the angels, the
angels have not concealed themselves from their sight. But
sometimes they taught them concerning behaviour. And again
they answered the questions they asked them concerning other
things. And sometimes the angels showed them the way when
they wandered through the desert; sometimes they delivered
them from temptations; sometimes they saved them from some
net of danger which suddenly, without their foreseeing it, threa-
tened them, some serpent for instance, or falling from a rock,
or a stone that suddenly fell down with violence from a height.

Sometimes, also under the attacks of the open battles of Satan, the angels showed themselves to them manifestly, and clearly announced that they were sent in order to help them and encouraged them by their words. Sometimes also they cured their pain and healed some injuries which had befallen them in some way or other, by the touch of their hands. Sometimes again they imparted to their bodies, which had been weakened by abstention from all food, by their words or by the sudden
67 touch of their hands, a force foreign to nature, adducing in some secret way a force unto the lowered nature. Sometimes they brought them food, warm bread and olives, and to some of them various fruits. Others they informed concerning the time of their death. And how long must be the enumeration of things concerning the love of the holy angels towards our race and concerning the care they showed unto the righteous, as great brothers who fostered and guarded their little ones. All this serves to make clear for every one how near God is to His friends and how much care He bestows on those who entrust their life to His hands and follow Him with a serene heart.

If it is certain to thee and thou believest that God cares for thee, thou needest not be anxious for thy body nor have care concerning the guiding of thyself by means. But if thou doubttest this and desirest to care for thyself, without God, thou art more wretched than any man, and what does life mean to thee? Throw thy care on God¹⁾, that thou be strengthened against all fear. He who once has entrusted his life to God, will dwell in mental peace.

Without renouncing possessions, the soul cannot be liberated from confusion of thought. And without quiescence of the senses, peace of mind cannot be perceived²⁾. And without
68 entering into temptations, spiritual wisdom cannot be acquired. And without constant reciting, subtlety of thought cannot be learned. And without the deliberations being set at peace the mind cannot be moved by hidden mysteries. And without the confidence of faith one cannot venture to throw his soul amidst sorrowful and hard circumstances. Without the practical experience of God's care the heart is not able to confide in God. And when the soul does not taste sufferings for the sake of Christ, it is not united with Him in knowledge.

1) Ps. 55, 23.

2) Introduction

Deem him a man of God, who constantly takes upon himself the lot of want, being moved by great compassion. He who does good to the poor finds God his provider. He who suffers want for His sake finds Him to be a great treasure. God does not need anything; only He rejoices when anyone satisfies or honours His image¹⁾ for His sake.

When anyone asks thee and thou hast, do not say in thy heart: I will keep it for myself in order to have more comfort by it and I will let him pass quickly; God will provide for him from another; I will bestow it upon myself. Do not speak thus. For in this way think iniquitous men, and people who do not know God deliberate thus, fostering such thoughts. But a righteous man does not give his honour to another one nor does he let slip the opportunity for bounty. God will provide for him certainly in some other way; if He knows that he is in trouble. God will not abandon any one. But thou art willing
69 immediately to leave God's honour and to throw His bounty from thee. On the other hand rejoice if thou possessest and give, saying: Glory to thee, o God, who hast granted unto me that I find some one to comfort. And if thou possessest not, rejoice the more, thanking God with many thanksgivings, saying: I thank thee, o God, who hast granted me the honour of becoming poor for Thy sake, and who hast deemed me worthy to taste sufferings enjoined in Thy commandments namely illnesses and poverty such as the saints have tasted who have gone this way.

And if thou art ill, say: Blessed are those who find in the things which God sends us for our profit, the aim for which God has destined them. God sends sickness for the sake of the health of the soul.

One of the saints once said: The following I have taken as a sign. When a solitary does not serve God in the right way, and is not zealous in His works, God certainly will send him a temptation to occupy his thoughts, lest he be wholly idle and, by complete idleness, his mind turn aside to thinking of the things of the left hand. But if he is not willing to think of excellence, the influence of the temptations will cause him to think of it and not to think of idle things. This God does with every man who loves Him. When He sees that he begins

1) viz. man

to disdain His works, he sends a heavy sorrow in order to make him wise and to chastise him. Therefore, when such
 70 people call to Him, He does not pay attention, nor does He hasten to free them, till they have become weary and know that they have to bear these things on account of their neglect. 'When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear' ¹⁾. Even if this was said to others, still it is certainly applicable to those who leave the way. But if God is so compassionate, why do we then so frequently knock at His door in trouble and pray, and yet He turns away from our prayer? He says: Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear ²⁾. Remember the Lord at all times, then He will remember thee when evil approaches unto thee. He has made thy nature a receptacle of accident. And in the world where He has created and left thee He has made frequent the causes of accidents and temptations. He has made thy nature a small receptacle of these things. Evil things are not far from thee, neither are they a few in number. For they rise from within thee when He gives a sign, and from under thy feet and from the place where thou art standing. But like one eyelid is near the other, so temptations are near the children of men.

With wisdom God has provided these things for thee in this way, for thy profit, that thou mayest continually knock at His door and that, for fear of sorrowful events, the thought of Him may constantly recur to thy mind and thou be near to God in constant prayer and sanctified by constant thought of Him in thy heart.

And when thou callest unto Him and He answers thee, thou
 71 wilt know that thy saviour is God. And thou wilt perceive thy God who has created thee and is thy provider and preserver, therein that He has made in thy behalf two worlds. One for thy instruction, as it were a school for a short time; and another one, a paternal home and thy abode for ever and ever.

He has not made thee apathetic, lest thou shouldst desire divine rank and receive what Satan received. Nor has He made

1) Is. 1, 15

2) Is. 59, 1 sq.

thee incapable of error or, lest thou shouldst be like the beings which are bound and thou shouldst receive thy good and thy evil without profit or remuneration as the other corporeal beings on the earth. How many blows and humiliations together with thanksgivings are born from the capacity for affections, and fear, and also error, is manifest for every one so that it should be known that our zeal for righteousness and our turning aside from evil are of our will, and that the honour and disdain, caused thereby, should be put to our credit. Thus we are put to shame and we fear on account of disdain; but we thank God and press towards the good on account of honour.

All these instructions He has multiplied for thee, lest freed from them on account of thy not needing them or thy nature not being capable of them, exalted above fear and affecting things, thou shouldst forget God and turn away from Him and invent many gods. For though subjected to affections and want, which scourges were sent against them on account of paltry
 72 riches and short-lived temporal power and precarious health, -- still many have not only invented many gods, but have even ventured in their insanity to pretend to be of divine nature.

Therefore He has turned thee away from all these things through that which troubles thee from time to time, lest He should be angry with thee on account of thy turning aside and destroy thee from before Him in punishment.

I omit the ungodliness and the sins that arise from health and lack of fear and comfort, even though that which has been mentioned above should not happen ¹⁾. Therefore, by sufferings and distress He has caused thee frequently to recall Him in thy heart; and by fear of adversities He incites thee to turn towards the gate of his mercy. By liberating thee from these [troubles] He sows in thee causes of love unto Him. And when thou hast found love he brings thee near to the honour of the sons; He shows thee the richness of His bounty and the steadfastness of His care for thee. Then He will make thee perceive the holiness of His honour and the hidden mysteries of the nature of His greatness. How shouldst thou have become acquainted with these things if there had not been adversities? For through these the love of God is able to increase, viz. by understanding His acts of bounty and by recalling His various

1) viz. that creatures pretend to be of divine nature.

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1022 (Wensinck).

acts of care. All this good is born for thee from things causing grief, if thou knowest to give thanks.

Therefore remember God, that He may remember thee constantly; and when He remembers thee and saves thee, thou wilt receive all these goods. Forget Him not in idle distraction, lest He also forget thee in thy temptations.

73 In prosperity be near to Him and obedient, that thou mayest have freedom of speech with Him in trouble because of thy constantly being near to Him in thy heart by means of thy prayer. Sit before His face all thy time, thinking of Him and recollecting Him in thy heart, lest, seeing Him only after long thou shouldst lack freedom of speech with Him on account of bashfulness. A high degree of freedom of speech is born from constant intercourse. Constant intercourse with men is of a bodily nature; that with God is psychic meditation and offerings in prayers.

On account of its intensity this meditation is sometimes mingled with ecstasy. For the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoices. Seek the Lord, ye sinners and be strengthened in hope in your thoughts. Seek His face by repentance at all time and you will be sanctified by the holiness of His face and you will be purified from your unrighteousness. Speed unto the Lord, ye unrighteous, the Lord who forgives unrighteousness and effaces sins. For He has sworn: I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that he turn from his way and live¹⁾. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious and disobedient people²⁾. And why will ye die, O house of Jacob?³⁾ Turn unto me, then I will turn unto you⁴⁾. And by Ezekiel He says: When the wicked turns from his way unto the Lord and do that which is lawful and right, the sins he has committed will not be remembered but he shall live, sayeth the Lord⁵⁾. Thus it is also with the righteous; when he turneth from his righteousness and comitteth sin and iniquity, the righteousness he has done will not be remembered but I will lay a stumbling block before him and by the iniquity he has done he shall die if he remains steadfast in it⁶⁾. Why is this? Because the iniquitous will not stumble on account of his iniquity after he turns unto the Lord. But the righteousness of the righteous

1) Ez. 33, 11.

2) Is. 65, 2.

3) Ez. 33, 11.

4) Zach. 1, 3.

5) Cf. Ez. 33, 19.

6) Cf. Ez. 33, 18.

will not save him when he sins, if he builds his building on that foundation.

And to Jeremia He spake thus: Take a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee, from the day of Josia the king of Juda even unto this day. It may be that [the house of Juda] will hear and fear and they may return every man from his evil way and turn again unto me, that I may forgive their sins¹). And the sage has said: He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper. But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy from God²).

And Jesaja, who was rich in revelations, says: Seek ye the Lord and call ye upon Him when ye have found Him. And when He is near let the sinner forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him turn unto me and I will have mercy upon him and to our God for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are my ways your ways³). Wherefore do ye⁴) spend money on that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good. Come unto me, hear and your soul shall live⁵).
 75 When thou keepest the ways of the Lord and doest His will, then thou wilt confide in the Lord. Then thou wilt call on Him and He will answer thee; thou wilt cry and He will say: Lo, here I am.

The wicked when evil befalls him has confidence in God to call on Him. And he is not able to expect His salvation, because he has left His ways in the days of his prosperity.

Seek a helper for thyself before thou hast to struggle.

Seek a physician for thyself before thou art ill. Pray before distress has reached thee; then in the time of distress thou wilt find prayer(?) and it will answer thee. Pray and ask before thou stumblest. Prepare thy gifts before thou makest a vow, they are thy provisions.

The ark was constructed in time of peace. A hundred years before its wood was planted. So when anger came, the wicked who had been comfortable in their wickedness, were confounded. But the ark was a refuge for the righteous.

The wicked shuts his mouth during prayer. Inward baseness takes away freedom of speech from the heart.

1) Cf. Jeremia 36, 2 sq.

2) Prov. 28, 13.

3) Is. 55, 6—8.

4) The Syriac text adds not.

5) Cf. Is. 55, 2 sq.

Steadfastness of the heart makes tears of joy to flow during the imploration [of God].

Strong endurance of injustice borne by free will purifies the heart. Endurance of injustice is based on contempt for the world. That a man remains steadfast during oppression without being distressed, is caused by the fact that the heart begins to see the truth. Joy on account of oppression and injustice borne by free will, exalts the heart. No one can bear oppression and injustice with a glad will, save those whose deliberations have wholly become dead to the world.

76 Those whose thoughts are wholly filled with the odour of this life, are made to blaze with anger at once through vain glory; or they fall into thoughts of spite, born of [the love of vain glory]. O how difficult is this excellence, and how honoured it is with God! He who denies this behaviour, has to go abroad and to leave his country. It is difficult for a man to accomplish this exalted excellence in his country; the eminent and the strong only are able to bear the grief that is born of this behaviour, among their acquaintances and also those who in their lifetime have become dead to this life and have abandoned hope of the consolation of this time. As Grace is near to humility, so are difficult accidents to haughtiness.

The heart of the Lord is towards the humble, to comfort them. The face of the Lord is against the haughty to humiliate them. Humility receives compassion, continually. But hardness of heart and unbelief meet hardships continually that seem hopeless till of a sudden evil rises against them and they are delivered to destruction.

Make thyself small among men, then He will exalt thee even above the heads of the people. Let thy prostration be low before all men and be the first to salute; then thou wilt be honoured more than he who brings gold from Ophir. Be despised and rejected in thine own eyes, then thou wilt see the glory of God within thyself.

77 Where humility sprouts, there glory will rise. If thou strivest publicly after dishonour among men he will make thy honour great. And if thou art humble in thy heart, He will show thee His glory in thy heart. Be disdained in thy greatness, not great in thy being disdained. Learn to be disdained, while being full of the honour of the Lord; not, to be honoured while being injured by ulcers within. Reject honour, then thou

wilt be honoured. Do not love it, lest thou be rejected. If thou pursuest honour, it will flee from thee. If thou fleest from it, it will rise for thee from the place where thou hidest thyself and it will be a herald of thy humility to every one.

If thou givest thyself to disdain in order to be honoured, the Lord will confound thee. If thou rejectest thyself for the sake of truth He will command the creatures to praise thee. And they will reveal to thee the glory of the creator who from eternity speaks through them and they will glorify thee as the creator, because thou art His throe image.

Has anyone found a man whose behaviour is exalted, who is despised among men and who is enlightened and wise and poor in spirit? Blessed is he who has humbled himself in all things, for he will be magnified in all things. He who has humbled and made himself small for the sake of God, will be glorified by God. And whoever for His sake is hungry and thirsty, He will give to drink him from His good a wine causing a drunkenness that never leaves those who drink it. And he who goes naked for His sake will be clad by Him with a garment of glory. And he who is poor and indigent
78 for His sake, his consolation will be established in His true richness. Make thyself disdained for the sake of God, then thy glory will be great, even if thou doest not perceive it.

During thy whole life deem thyself as a sinner, then thou wilt found to be a righteous man during thy whole life. Be despised though wise, and do not err in thy wisdom. Be simple in thy wisdom and do not assume the appearance of being wise if thou art simple. If humility elevates the despised how, much more will it elevate the honoured.

Flee from praise, then thou wilt be praised. Fear haughtiness, then thou wilt be exalted. For pride was not assigned to the children of man, nor haughtiness of heart to those born from a woman.

If thou hast voluntarily renounced the whole body of the world, do not quarrel with anyone concerning small parts of it.

If thou hast rejected glory, flee from those who hunt praise.

Flee from possessors as from possessions. Depart from the luxurious, as from luxury. Flee from the lascivious, as from fornication. If the memory of their habits troubles the mind, how much more if one see and be near to them. Be near to the excellent; through them thou wilt be near unto God.

Be an ascete with the humble, to learn from his ways. If to see his habits is profitable to those who see him, how much more the character of his behaviour and teachings received from his very lips.

Love the poor; through them thou wilt find mercy. Do not approach unto the quarrelsome, lest thou be compelled to leave thy peaceful customs.

Flee not from the ugliness of the illness of the sick, for thou art also clad with flesh. Do not contend with the bitter in
79 heart, lest thou be beaten with the rod with which they are beaten and seeking a consolator, wilt not find any. Do not reject the cripples lest thou enter Sheol with them.

Love the sinners but reject their works. Do not despise them because of their shortcomings, lest thou be tempted by the same. Remember that thou sharest in the stink of Adam and that thou too art clad with his illness. To him who needs passionate prayer and soft words, do not give blame in stead, lest thou cause his destruction and his soul be demanded from thy hand. Resemble the physicians who use cold medicines against symptoms of fever.

Compel thyself to show honour to thy fellow man, when thou meetest him; and kiss his hand and his foot, and warm thy heart with love unto him, piously. And take his hands several times and place them upon thy eyes and caress them with great honour. And attribute to his person beautiful things, that do not belong to him. And also when he is absent, speak about him fine and beautiful things and call him by several honourable names. By these things and the like, thou compellest him not only unto the desire of beautiful things, since he will be ashamed of the renown thou imputest him without his deserving it and so thou wilt be able to sow in him the seed of excellent things, but by means of these habits and the
80 like to which thou accustomest thyself, thou wilt found in thyself peaceful and humble customs and be liberated from many severe struggles, against which others learn to guard themselves by steady works. And not only this. But if he, who receives these honours from thee, has any shortcoming or fault of will, he will easily acquire from thee healing, if thou lettest him clearly perceive [it] but for an instant only; for he will be ashamed because of the honour shown to him and because of the sign of love he constantly perceives in thee.

This be thy aim regarding all men. And when thou becomest angry at any one and zealous for the sake of faith, or on account of his evil works, or thou reprehendest and vituperatest him, then be cautious. We all have a just judge in heaven. But if thou art merciful and seekest to turn him unto the truth, thou hast to suffer for him. And with tears and in love thou must speak to him without being enraged against him, effacing all sign of hostility from thy face. Love does not know how to be angry; it is not indignant, it does not despise so as to cause suffering. Wherever the sign of love and knowledge is present, it is profound humility rising from the inner mind.

VI

81 The fact that a man may fall into accidental faults, proves the weakness of his nature, namely that our nature necessarily is liable to such things. It has not seemed good unto God that it would be profitable for him that he should be wholly exalted above this [weakness], before his nature arrived at the second creation. The fact of his being subject to chance, is profitable for the subjugation of the mind. But the constant [falling into faults] causes audacity.

There are three modes by which every rational soul may approach unto God: by the fervour of faith; by fear; by punishment from God. For it cannot approach unto the rank of love by its own power; but only if it is based on one of these modes.

As from a disordered¹⁾ belly confusion of thought is born, so, from wantonness in speech and confusion of habits, ignorance and folly of mind.

The care of practical things confuses the soul, and the distraction of work disturbs the mind and makes it lose its quietness and drives away from it its peacefulness. It is becoming for the solitary who has devoted himself to heavenly work, that his mind be constantly free from care so that, when he examines his soul and deliberates, he may not see in it any thing belonging to this world, nor desire of any visible object,
82 but that, on account of his complete absorption from temporary

1) Cf. Thomas a Kempis' *inordinatus*.

things, he may be able to meditate upon the law of the Lord night and day, without any distraction.

Bodily works without mental beauty are like a barren womb and dry breasts; they do not bring any nearer unto the knowledge of God. They have no care for a body labouring to eradicate passions from the mind; so they do not reap anything.

As a man who sows on thorns and is not able to reap, so is he whose mind is injured by care and wrath and desire of gathering treasures, and who sighs on his bed on account of the frequency of his vigils and abstinence. Witness is the scripture that says: As a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in coming near unto God. Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not? Have we afflicted our soul and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and sacrifice unto all your idols ¹⁾).

This means: the evil designs and the evil thoughts hold you in yourself in stead of God and sacrifice to them your liberty, a thing esteemed at all times; ²⁾ the sacrifice which is honoured above all things and which you ought not to omit, consists of your good works³⁾ and pious inner being. A good land which makes its lord rejoice by yielding an hundredfold, is the soul ⁸³ that is made excellent by meditation on God, in vigil day and night. The Lord will build upon its foundations and around it, a cloud for shade during the day and a shining flame of fire during the night. From within its darkness, light will dawn.

As a cloud obscures the rays of the moon, so the vapour of the stomach obscures the divine wisdom so that the soul does not see it ²⁾). As a hearth burning with dry wood, so is bodily desire in a full stomach. As oily matter excites the fierceness of a flame, so does the humidity of food the carnal passion in the body.

The knowledge of God does not dwell in a body that loves comfort.

A man who loves his body will not be deemed worthy of divine gifts.

As from the travail a fruit is born that gladdens the woman, so from labours there is born in the soul the knowledge of God's mysteries. To the pusillanimous and those who love

1) Is. 58, 2 sq.

2) Cf. *Book of the Dove* p. 27 note 3.

comfort, a fruit is born that causes shame. As a father shows mercy unto his son, so Christ shows mercy unto the body that performs labours, and He is near its mouth at all times. The labour of wisdom is priceless.

A stranger is he who is strange in his spirit unto every habit of this world. A mourner¹⁾ is he, who spends all the days of this life in hunger, thirst and mourning, for the sake of the expectation of heavenly hope. A recluse is he who, ⁸⁴ removing his abode from the sight of the world, and looking beyond, has only one demand in prayer: the desire of the world to be. The riches of the solitary are in his heart²⁾. The riches of the solitary are either consolation granted him from the midst of mourning, or gladness that dawns from faith, the treasury of his spirit. The compassionate is he, whose spirit does not distinguish, when practising compassion, any of the classes of men. Virginitie is this, that a man not only guards his body from the corruptions of revelling, but that he also guards his chastity against his soul even when he is alone. If thou desirest chastity, restrain the course of impure deliberations, by occupying thyself with recitation and constant beseechings unto God. Then thou wilt be armed also in thy inner being against the things that spring from nature. Without those, man is able to see purity in himself.

If thou art desirous to acquire compassion, first train thyself to acquire contempt for [outward] things, lest their importance draw the mind away from the aim which it has set before itself. The purity of compassion is known from patience in bearing wrong, and the perfection of humility from idle oppression borne gladly. If thou art really compassionate, thou wilt not be angry within thyself, when thou art bereft of thy possessions iniquitously and with injustice; and thou wilt not show thy suffering openly unto others, but let the sin of thy injustice be effaced by pas- ⁸⁵ sionate compassion, as the headiness of wine is abated by [mixing it with] much water. But show thou the mark of purity that arises from great mercy, by adding there-unto other things and do well to those who do thee wrong, with gladness, as also the blessed Elisha did unto his enemies, which were come to take him prisoner who, by praying and by blinding their eyes

1) **ἄσκησις**, also a word for monk.

2) Supplied from London Mss.

by visions, made manifest the power at his disposal. And if he had wished this, they would have been annihilated before him; but by providing them with food and drink and letting them go away, he made manifest the mercy he possessed within himself.

If thou art truly humble, be not troubled if thou art oppressed. And do not excuse thyself in any point, but actually take upon thee the wrong laid to thy charge, without being anxious to persuade people that the matter is otherwise. On the contrary, pray that thou mayest obtain forgiveness. Some have taken upon them the evil name of fornication and others have taken upon them deeds of adultery for which they were too pious, and the fruit of a sin which they had not committed they made appear serious by bewailing it as if it were their own. And they implored forgiveness for sins which they had not committed from their oppressor with tears, while their soul was crowned with the full purity of chastity. Others, lest they should be praised on account of wonderful deeds performed in secret, have assumed the habits of lunatics, though they were in the full possession of their wits and their serenity; so that ⁸⁶ the holy angels, in admiration of these deeds, became spectators of the greatness of such men. Thou, however, hast assumed humility where those others have given witness against themselves; thou art not even able to keep silence if thou art accused, and yet thou deemest thyself to be humble? If thou art [really] humble, try thyself by these things, whether or not thou art troubled.

The many mansions in the house of the Father denote the spiritual degrees of the inhabitants of that place. This means: the different gifts and the spiritual ranks in which they rejoice spiritually, and the variety of the classes of gifts. It is not to be understood in such a manner, that every person has really his defined portion in the various local habitations, so that [these differences] manifest themselves openly in the variety of particular mansions apponited for every one; but they are to be compared with the personal advantage every one of us obtains by the personal yet common use of this apperceptible sun in accordance with the purity of his visual power. Thus as the eyelid regulates the effusion of the quality of light, and as a lamp¹⁾, in one and the same house, distributes the use of

1) The same comparison is used by Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, III, p. 4.

its light in a varied fashion, although the lamp itself is not bereft of the simplicity of its light, so as to become many with its varied aspects, so, those who have been deemed worthy of that place, although dwelling in one mansion, indivisible as it is into parts, attract, at a fixed time, from one and the same intelligible sun, every one according to the rank of his behav-
 87 viour, the own delight, in one air and one place and one abode and with one sight and one mode. The high degree of his neighbour's rank is not seen by him who is inferior, namely not as if it arose from the many gifts of his neighbour and from the scarcity of his own gifts, so that it should be to him a cause of grief and spiritual torment, absit! To think such things in the place of delights were impossible. Every one rejoices within himself at the gift he has been deemed worthy of, and at the height of his rank. But the outward aspect of them all, is one; and the place is one. And what is still truer, they dwell as in encampments of angels, in one aerial abode, in equality of actual vision, with secret consciousness of their [different] ranks, in contemplative revelations that vary according to their degree.

If real personal beings possess, apart from working apperceptive power, also spiritual impulses, no one will venture, even in the world to be, to proclaim in words an order of things deviating from this one: that [that the only differentiation is with regard to] the intellect and further [spiritual] powers, even though [this differentiation] be very manifest on account of the perfection of nature. True, therefore, is the word spoken by the Fathers: on the one hand there is ignorance for an undetermined time; on the other hand there is a limited time for the manifestation of its abrogation, together with [the revelation of] other peculiar mysteries that are defined in silence by the [supreme] being. For there is no mean between complete elevation and absolute abasement, in the future separation.
 88 Either one belongs wholly to the high ones or wholly to the low ones. But within this and the other [state] there are varying modes of retribution.

And if this be true, as it is true, what then is the folly of some, who say: I do not desire to be in the kingdom; if I only could strive after salvation from hell. Being saved from hell is the kingdom. And being without the kingdom is hell. For the scriptures do not teach three places [in the world to

be]. What do they teach? When the son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left¹⁾. Here the scriptures do not mention three classes, but two: those of the right hand and those of the left. The difference between the dwelling place is given distinctly. And these, it says, shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the father²⁾, and those [will depart] into everlasting fire³⁾. Further: They shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham in the kingdom⁴⁾. And the children of the promise that have not been obedient shall go into the darkness outside the kingdom. There will be psychic weeping and grinding of teeth, which is a grief more hard than the fire. Now thou understandest that to remain far from that elevation means torturing hell.

It is beautiful for a man to admonish mankind unto beautiful things and to bring them, by his constant care, from error to the knowledge of life. And this is the stage of our Lord and the apostles, and it is very elevated. But if he perceives within himself, that by familiar and constant intercourse, his inner being becomes injured by the sight of [worldly] things, and his serenity is disturbed so as to lose its discernment, and is darkened, since his spirit still acquires cautiousness and stricter submission of the senses. For he is sick as long as his senses are not yet healed: and wishing to heal others, he loses his own partial health of soul and quits the chaste freedom of his will for a troubled mind. Such a one has to recall the word of the apostle who says: Strong meat belongeth to the healthy⁵⁾, and he shall turn back, lest he hear from them, symbolically: How art thou a physician for others, yet full of wounds thyself? Accordingly he shall keep to himself and guard his own health only. Then instead of audible words he shall care⁶⁾ for a beautiful behaviour, and others will profit not by his spoken words, but by the health in which he holds himself, if possible. Thus by his health they will be healed, even though he be absent, [that is to say] by the zeal of his excellent deeds, which is a more excellent thing than to serve them merely with words, while sick himself, and in need of healing more than they themselves.

1) Matthew 25, 32.

2) Matthew 13, 43.

3) Matthew 25, 41.

4) Matthew 8, 11.

5) Hebrews 5, 14.

6) Read ~~care~~

For if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch¹⁾.
 90 For strong meat belongeth to the healthy and to those whose senses have been trained and strengthened so as to receive all kinds of food, that is [those that are strengthened] against all sensual shocks, because the heart is healthy on account of its training in perfection.

But when Satan desires to defile the chaste spirit by thoughts of fornication, he first tempts its endurance by vain glory, since the beginning of such a thought does not resemble that of the affections. This he does with the guarded spirit into which he cannot easily instill a thought which is purely evil. But when he that was strong, by meditating on old thoughts has left his fortress and when he is at some distance from it, Satan causes him to be assailed by full opportunity of fornication, by associating the spirit with lascivious things.

At first the spirit feels a sudden terror when it meets them, because of the chastity of the deliberations that meet the [worldly] things, for the mind, their governor, has refrained from looking at them before. But it falls from the height of its original thought, even though it be not defiled. And it does not turn and regains quickly the former deliberations which are the cause of the secondary ones, then, when it meets often with these things, custom will blind the discernment of the soul through frequency of meeting. So in accordance with the quantity and the character of the first affection, is the submission to the second.

To avoid the affections by the recollection of virtues is easier and more beautiful than to vanquish them in strife. For when the affections leave their place and are in motion so as
 91 to show themselves at strife, then they also print on the spirit forms and images. [People of] this rank²⁾ possess a great valiance, so that they draw strength from the spirit; but the mind is greatly disturbed and troubled. By the former way of proceeding mentioned, even the traces of affections are not known in the spirit when they have departed.

Bodily labours and meditating upon the scriptures preserve purity. And labours are made firm by hope and fear. Hope and fear are established in the spirit by seclusion from the

1) Matthew 15, 14.

2) Namely those who vanquish the affections.

children of man and by constant prayer¹⁾. Until man has received the Comforter, he needs written documents²⁾, in order to fix in his heart, by images, profitable recollections. And by constant meditation upon them, he will renew the attractions of excellence and see in himself caution against the narrow paths of sin; for he does not yet possess the dominating force of spirit which reduces to oblivion those powers which bereave man of profitable recollections and adduce in him languor by distraction of mind.

But when spiritual force enters and dwells in the intelligible forces of the operative soul, then there are fixed in the heart in stead of written laws spiritual commandments, which the heart learns secretly from the spirit, which does not need the help of sensible material³⁾ by the medium of the senses.

Whenever the mind learns from matter this instruction is followed by error and forgetfulness. But whenever it draws instruction from incorruptible things, its recollection will also be incorruptible, founded on their intelligible nature.

92 There are good deliberations and there is a good will. There are evil deliberations and there is an evil heart. The former, without the latter are of little account for remuneration. The latter are impulses which blow over the mind, as the winds that blow over the sea causing waves to arise. But the latter are the roots. And in accordance with the fundamental direction is also the good or the bad remuneration; not in accordance with the motion of the deliberations. For the soul does not cease from setting into motion varying deliberations, and if thou calculatest a remuneration for all these even though they have no root beneath, thou wilt be near to changing thy remuneration and thy retributions thousand times every day.

A young bird without wings is the mind that has lately left the bonds of the affections, by means of the works of repentance. At the time of prayer it strives to exalt itself above earthly things, but it cannot. For it creeps still on the surface of the earth, where also the serpent crawls. But it concentrates its deliberations by recitation and works and fear and care for excellent qualities. For beyond these it does not yet know anything. And these keep the mind pure for a short time. But

1) *rhass*

2) Litt.: impressions in ink.

3) *rkäls*

then recollections will return, troubling and defiling the heart. For he does not yet perceive the air of peace and liberty, which concentrates the mind for a long time, [keeping it] quiet without any recollection of [worldly] things. For it has still
 93 wings of flesh, viz. bodily virtues which are exercised openly. But he does not yet see and perceive the theoretical significance of the virtues exercised, which consists in wings of the mind by which it approaches unto heavenly things and is removed far from the earth.

As long as man serves God in a way that can be perceived by the senses and in [outward] things, the prints of things will be delineated in his deliberations and his mind will think of divine things in bodily forms. But when he perceives that which is within things, then, according to the measure of its apperceptive power, the mind will also be exalted above the forms of things in due time. The eyes of the Lord are upon the humble and His ears are willing to hear them¹⁾. The prayer of the humble [goes] as it were from his mouth unto [God's] ear: O Lord, my God, let my darkness be enlightened. When thou art [occupied] in solitude with the beautiful work of humility, when thy soul is near unto coming forth from under the darkness, this will be thy sign: thy heart will burn and glow as with fire, night and day, so that thou wilt esteem all earthly things as ash and dung. This means that it will not even please thee to touch food, on account of the pleasure of the new, fervent deliberations, which move continually within thee. Then, of a sudden, the fountain of tears will be given thee, so that they flow from thy eyes, as the waters of brooks, without compulsion, mingling themselves with all thy work, viz. with thy recitation and with thy prayer, with thy service and with thy meditation, with thy food and with thy drink, with
 94 all that thou doest tears will stream. If thou observest this in thyself, take heart, thou hast passed through the sea. Continue thy labours, keep thy cautiousness sound that thy grace may augment from day to day. As long as thou hast not yet met with these things, thy way has not yet finally reached the mountain of God.

If this state vanishes after thou hast found it and if this fervour abates, without thy proceeding to take another thing

1) Cf. Ps. 34, 15.

as its substitute, woe to thee, what hast thou lost! Either thou hast become haughty, or thou art lax. What is it that is situated after tears, and what a man meets after having passed beyond them, and what there is further after this latter state, we will describe beneath, in those chapters which deal with the course of behaviour, as a thing concerning which we are enlightened by the scriptures and by the Fathers who were entrusted such mysteries.

If thou hast no works thou shalt not speak about excellence. Dearer to God are trials for righteousness' sake, than all vows and sacrifices. And dearer is the odour of the sweat of the fatigue they cause, than all the drugs of sweet scent and exquisite perfumes.

All excellence, which does not vex the body, must be deemed by thee a miscarriage without a soul. The sacrifices of the righteous are the tears of their eyes, and their acceptable offerings are the sighs of their vigils. The saints lament because of the dulness of the body and they sigh and send their prayers unto God with suffering. And at the voice of their lamentations the
95 holy hosts assemble to them in order to give them heart through hope and to console them. The holy angels are their partners during the temptations and sufferings of the saints, because they are near to them.

Labours and humility make man a God on the earth. Faith and compassion give a speedy advance to clearness. Fervour and a broken heart cannot dwell in one soul; neither do those that are drunk know control of their mind. When fervour has been given, sorrow and mourning are taken away. Wine has been given for gladness, and fervour for the joy of the soul. The former warms the heart, the word of God the mind. Those who are kindled by fervour, are transported to the world to be in their deliberations by meditations of hope. As to those who are drunk with wine, various hallucinations present themselves, so he, who is drunk and is ablaze does not know trouble, nor the world nor anything in it. These things happen to those who are simple of heart and fervent with hope.

The many things which will happen unto those who go the traditional course of behaviour after long labours of purification are tasted by them, in the beginning of the way, by faith of soul only. All that the Lord wills, He does.

Blessed are those who, in the sea of troubles, keep themselves

simple and avoid investigation, in fervour to God, without turning their back, for they will quickly be safe in the harbour of the promises and rest in the mansions attained by all who labour well. There they are consoled for their toiling, exulting⁹⁶ with the joy of their hope.

Those who proceed with hope, are not liable to see the injuries on the way; neither are they able to investigate the like. But when they have gone ashore they appear unto them, and they praise God [thinking of] how they have been guarded amidst all those storms and the many cliffs of which they were unconscious, because they were not anxious to look at such things. But those who cherish serious thoughts and wish to deal very prudently, and give themselves up to evolving deliberations and to bear and make many preparations, and wish to see and to deliberate the causes of injuries and thoughts of relaxation, such are usually constantly found at the door of their houses. For the slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets¹⁾. And as those who said: And there we saw the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers²⁾. And the cities are strong and walled up to heaven³⁾. These are the people who at the time of death are found at the beginning of their way. They are those who constantly wish to act prudently, but never to begin. But the simple swims and passes with his first ardour. He does not think of the body nor of the possibility that his commerce will not prosper.

Let not the greatness of thy wisdom be a stumbling-block for thyself and a snare before thee, preventing thee from beginning manly and quickly, in the hope in God, thy course⁹⁷ cleansed with blood, lest thou be constantly needy and devoid of the knowledge of God.

He who looks at the winds will not sow. Better for us is death in the war for [the sake of] God, than a life of shame and baseness⁴⁾. If thou wilt begin with one of the works of God, make thy testament beforehand as one who has no further life in this world and as one prepared for death. Draw near to it without hope, as one whose end will be reached in that action and as if it will be the end of thy days without thy seeing any more. Let this be truly decided in thy mind, lest victory

1) Proverbs 22, 13

2) Numbers 13, 33

3) Deut. 1, 28

4) Cf. p. 31

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 102 (Wensink).

be taken from thee through hope of life, being a cause of spiritual laxity.

Therefore let not wisdom reign wholly over thy actions. Give quickly room also to faith in thy spirit. Remember constantly the days after death and let laxity never enter thy soul, according to the word of the sage who has said: A thousand years in this world are not like one day in the world of the righteous ¹⁾.

Begin manly with every work of excellence; do not approach it with a double heart. Do not doubt in thy heart, on the way of thy course, of the hope of God's grace, lest thy toiling become in vain and the work of thy service become heavy for thee. But believe in thy heart that God is merciful and gives grace to those who seek Him, not in accordance with our service but in accordance with the love of our soul and with our faith in Him. For as thou hast believed, so it will happen unto thee.

⁹⁸ Some are occupied by knocking their head the whole day in stead of by their services; and with some, perpetual kneelings take the place of the number of their prayers. Some are occupied by the course of their tears in stead of by their canonical [duties] without seeking any thing besides, because it is better to them than all other things. Some fulfill the laws prescribed to them by their zeal for their spiritual meditations, by their suffering from hunger which eats away their flesh. Some are withheld from accomplishing their work, by the torments which torture their stomach. Some do not make a break in their reciting of Psalms on account of their spiritual fervour. The heart of some is set aflame by written words; some are captivated by the understanding thereof. And there are some whose lips are withheld from their ordinary course by the stupor caused by the contents of their recitation. Some taste all these things and are satisfied and turn away and desist. Some taste a little from them only, and become puffed up and insolent and forget.

Some are held back from them by the severe suffering from their plagues; some by all kinds of allurements; some by power, some by glory among men, others by passion for [worldly] things; some by wanton occupations. Some however advance

1) Cf. Ps. 84, 11

well and making up their mind, they do not turn their back before they have taken possession of the pearl.

Begin every work for the sake of God joyfully. And if thou art pure from affections and from doubt of heart, God will remunerate thee and help thee and give thee wisdom, and according to His will and in a wonderful way He will bring thee to perfection. To whom be glory and power and adoration and exaltation for ever and ever. Amen.

Completed are the six treatises on the behaviour of excellence.

VII

ON OTHER SUBJECTS, CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, IN SHORT SECTIONS. ON THE CHARACTER OF TRUST IN GOD AND FOR WHOM IT IS BECOMING TO TRUST IN GOD. AND FURTHER: WHEN A MAN TRUSTS, HE WILL HAVE POWER ACCORDING TO [THE STATE OF] HIS MIND. AND WHO TRUSTS FOOLISHLY AND WITHOUT DISCERNMENT

There is a trust in God, with a faith of the heart, which is beautiful and which rises from the discernment of knowledge. And there is another trust which is insipid and rises from folly; and this is false trust.

That a man who has absolutely no care for any of these passing things and whose soul is night and day given to the works of God, without thought of any work of this world because of his great zeal for excellence and because of his absorbing anxiety for the divine things, and who, therefore, neglects to prepare dress and food and to fix and to prepare a place for his shelter and the like, — that such a man trusts in God that He will prepare in its due season all he needs and that He will care for him — this is really true trust and a trust of wisdom. And in truth, for such a man it is also beautiful to confide in God, because he is His servant, and he is laden with thoughts concerning Him and he bears the weight of His works without neglect. And so it is becoming

to Him to show care for him, which is distinguished from His care for the rest of mankind, because he has eminently maintained in his person the word of our Lord saying: seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness¹⁾ and: Take no thought for your body²⁾. And if ye care for this, the world will prepare all for you, like as a servant. And as unto a master it will be obedient unto your words without hesitation, without thwarting your will in anything.

Therefore, because such a man does not desist on account of [worldly] causes from standing perpetually before Him, he will not surrender himself to those things which the body needs. For he does not care for other things either, but he abstains from them all equally, be they small or great, be they things of comfort or pleasure — an abstention based on fear of God. So he will find sustenance in a wondrous way, even though he does not touch any of these things, nor fatigues himself with them.

Another however, whose heart is wholly buried in the earth and who constantly eats dust with the serpent without caring in any way for the things pleasant to God, who fatigues himself in every respect by the bodily things and is occupied by and constantly cares for intercourse and pleasure and luxury, and who has manifold worldly connections, — when such a man, given to such laxity and indifference regarding excellence, from time to time gets into trouble or want, or the fruits of sinfulness disturb him in any way, and [when he] says as follows:

101 I trust in God, He will work for me without doubt and He will comfort me, — o fool, till now thou hast not recalled God but thou hast disdained Him by the laxity of thy works and His name was slandered among the nations, as the scripture says. And now thou sayest with a full mouth: I confide in Him who will help me and care for me. God has well said through the prophet, scorning such people: They seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice³⁾. To them belongs the fool who does not even spiritually come near unto God, but, at a time when the darkness of troubles surrounds him, elevates his hands unto Him in confidence. That such become wise, requires that they

1) Matthew 6, 33

2) Matthew 6, 25

3) Jes. 58, 2

be branded several times. For, although they have no works such as could be a basis for trust in God, yet they have been thought worthy of chastisement and loaded with mercy, as it were from [the midst] of their evil works and their indifference regarding their duties. They should not mislead themselves and, forgetting the rank of their previous way of life, say: I trust in God. Such have to be chastised, lest they, though not possessing works of faith, stretch out their feet in idleness, saying: I believe that God will give me to eat, as if they were toiling in the works of God.

Or it may come to pass that some one goes and falls into a pit through his own folly, and although he has never thought of God before, he says now: I trust in God, He will
 102 deliver me. Err not, thou fool. Trust in God has to be preceded by works for the sake of God and by the sweat of His service. If thou believest in God thou doest well. But also faith requires works; and confidence in Him requires the testimony of the heart which is born of the toils [for the sake] of excellence. Believe that God is He who cares for His creatures and who is clad with all power. But connect with this faith the works which suit it. Then He will answer thee. Take no wind in thy fist, viz. faith without deeds.

If a man travel a road without being conscious of the fact that there are evil beasts or murderers on it, or the like, how many times will this universal care of God cause [the danger] to pass, by retaining him at the place where he is, for any cause, till the danger is over, or by some one meeting him and causing him to return. Or another time, a dangerous serpent lies on the way, which he has not noticed. If God will that he be not entangled in evil, the animal will at once make a sound or leave its place and disappear, or it will creep farther so that he sees it and is cautious. Thus God will save him, even if he be not worthy, for motives which God alone knows, especially for His mercy's sake. Or, another time a house or a wall or a rock is on the point of falling or slipping
 103 from its place and coming down instantly [at the place] where some men are sitting. Thereupon God will order an angel and will hinder this accident and prevent it till those people have risen [and left] that place, for any reason whatsoever that makes them go away, so that none will remain under [the falling thing]. But as soon as they have left [the place], it will

fall. But if it happens that anyone be under it, he will not be damaged. By this God desires to show the greatness of His power.

Such things and the like are [signs of] universal care. The righteous possesses this grace perpetually; as an individual, not ¹⁾ as a member of the community. The rest, however, are ordered by God to govern themselves with insight and to mingle in their affairs intelligence with the care of God. But the righteous does not need this insight in order to govern with it his affairs. In stead of this insight he possesses faith by which he storms strong fortresses. And such things as we have enumerated he does not fear. As scripture says: the righteous is bald as a lion ²⁾ and he ventures all through his faith. Not as one who tempts God but as one who possesses confidence in Him and as one who is armed and strongly clad with the force of the spirit. And concerning His great perpetual care for him God has said thus: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him, and shew him my salvation ³⁾. He who is ¹⁰⁴ weak in his works and lax or negligent, or whose deeds are evil, it is impossible that this hope be his. But it will be for him that is constantly with God in all things and who is His relative by his beautiful works, who directs constantly the gaze of his heart towards God's grace, as David says: My eyes fail while I wait for the Lord ⁴⁾.

VIII

WHAT IT IS THAT HELPS A MAN TO COME NEAR UNTO GOD WITH HIS HEART AND WHY IT IS THAT HELP COMES NEAR UNTO HIM SECRETLY AND WHAT IT IS THAT CAUSES A MAN TO COME NEAR UNTO HUMILITY

Blessed is the man who knows his weakness. This knowledge becomes for him the foundation and the beginning [of his coming] unto all good and beautiful things. When a man

1) Lacking in one of the London Mss.

2) Proverbs 28, 1

3) Ps. 91, 15

4) Cf. Ps. 119, 123

knows and perceives that he really and in truth is weak, then he restrains his soul from profuseness which is dissipation of knowledge and he will augment the watchfulness of his soul.

Unless a man has been remiss in some small thing and a slight negligence has appeared in him and tempters have surrounded him either with temptations that arouse bodily affections or with temptations which stir the affectable power of the soul, he cannot perceive his own weakness. Then, however, he recognizes the greatness of God's help by comparing it with his own weakness.

Thus if he sees that his heart does not rest from fear, even though he be provident and very cautious, withdrawing and
105 hiding his soul in innumerable apartments and providing his soul with causes of trust, then he understands and knows that this whole impulse of his heart denotes some other thing which is lacking and which is very necessary to him, viz. that he needs other help. For the heart testifies to [this] within, by the fear that moves in it, denoting the lack of something. And therefore he cannot remain in confidence. For the help of God is necessary for deliverance.

When he knows that he needs divine help, he will frequently pray. And by much beseeching the heart becomes humble. For there is no man who is needy and asking, without being humble. And God will not despise a broken and contrite heart¹⁾. Until the heart has become humble, it will not rest from distraction. Humility restrains the heart. And as soon as man has become humble, mercy will surround and envelop him. And when mercy draws near, the heart will perceive help at once, because some confidence and force will also move in it. When it perceives that divine help approach unto it and that He is its support and its helper, then the heart will be filled with faith at once. Then it will see and understand that prayer is the port of help, the fountain of salvation, the treasure of confidence, the sheet-anchor amidst the storms, the light in the darkness, the stick of the weak, the shelter at the time of temptations, the medicine at the time of illness, the shield of protection in the
battle, the sharp arrow against the enemies.

106 And because by prayer he has found the entrance unto all this good, he will delight in prayer of faith for ever more,

1) Ps. 51, 17

while his heart exults in confidence, not blindly and with words only, as it had been till then.

When he knows this, he possesses prayer as a treasure within his soul. And from joy he changes the tenor of prayer into sounds of thanksgiving. And the following word has been said by the sage among the saints, Mar Euagrius, who did every thing which he did with a purpose: Prayer is a joy that gives place to thanksgivings. Concerning this prayer, which takes place after receiving the knowledge of God, he says: This prayer that gives place [to thanksgiving], in which a man does not pray nor act as in the other passionate prayers which he prayed, perceiving grace, consists therein that in the heart, which is filled with joy and ecstasy, frequently emotions of thanksgivings and gratitude stir themselves, in the silence of kneelings. Then, on account of the inner ardour, which is set in motion by wonder at the understanding of God's bounties, he will of a sudden raise up his voice and praise without being wearied, while the inner ardour gives place to thanksgivings also of the tongue; and so he will give utterance [to his feelings] long and wonderfully. Who has experienced these things clearly, not dimly, and has noted them with intelligence, will understand when I say that it occurs without variation, for it has been experienced many times. And furthermore [such a man] will leave idle things and be constantly with God, without a break, in constant prayer, fearing that he will be bereft of the current of its helping forces.

All these beautiful things are born from a man's perceiving his own weakness. For from this, because of his longing for help, he turns to God with beseechings. And as he brings near his spirit unto God, He comes nigh unto him with His gifts. And He does not take away from him His inspiration, because of his great humility. For as a widow unto the judge, he cries at all times: avenge me on my adversary. Therefore God, the merciful, necessarily will delay his petitions, that he have the better reason to approach unto Him. And because of his need he will constantly remain at the fountain of help, while God grants some of his demands quickly, others not: [He grants] those concerning which He knows that they are necessary for life, the rest He delays. And in some cases He withholds from him the ardour of his enemies, and in others He gives an opening to temptations, that this, as I have said,

should be a cause for approaching unto God, and that he should become prudent by temptations. And this is what is said in the scripture: The Lord left many peoples and He did not destroy them at once, nor did He give them into the hand of Joshua, in order to test Israel by them so that the generations of the children of Israel should learn war ¹⁾.

108 As for the righteous who is not acquainted with his weakness, all his affairs are in peril. He is not far from falling, the destroying lion is not removed from him nor the demon of haughtiness. Who lacks knowledge of his weakness, lacks humility. Who lacks humility, lacks perfection. Who lacks perfection is still in a state of peril. And the enemy can attack him at every quarter, because his town is not fortified with iron bolts nor with a brazen lintel.

Neither is humility to be acquired except through the causes which bring about a continually broken heart and destroy the deliberations of presumption. Without humility the service of man cannot be sealed: the seal of the spirit has not yet been placed on the charter of his freedom, he is still a slave and his service cannot be established without his being made humble, neither can he acquire wisdom without temptations, neither can he reach humility without wisdom. Therefore God necessarily sends the saints things which cause humility and brokenness of heart and passionate prayer without distraction. Sometimes he afflicts them by accidents that arise from the natural affections or by transgressions arising from impure deliberations; sometimes by disdain or by idle oppressions which they have to endure from men, or by bodily pains; sometimes by poverty or need of necessary things; sometimes by vehement affections
109 of fear in the open war of the demons which He allows in order to keep them continually in motion, or by terrible varying states of which one is still more strong and sorrowful and hard than the other.

All these things happen, that man should have a reason for being humble, lest he should sleep in neglect either of things present from which the struggler suffers, or of fear of things to be. Therefore temptations will necessarily be profitable unto men. Now I do not say, that, in order to have a cause of humility, he ought to let loose his will unto evil

1) Cf. Judges 3, 1 sq.

things, with the purpose of humbling himself by the recollection of them, or that he should hasten unto other temptations. But it is beautiful for him that, apart from his performing good works, he should constantly spur himself and remember that he is a creature and naturally prone to be seduced. And whosoever is a creature, requires an external power, viz. to help him. And he who requires external help, the deficiency of his own nature is manifest. And every one who knows that he is deficient, to him humility is becoming in order to receive what he needs from Him who is able to give it.

If he knows all these things from the beginning and looks to them at all times, he will not sleep. And if he does not sleep, he will not be delivered into the hand of the powers which endanger his vigilance. Therefore it is becoming for him
 110 that goes the way of God, that he confess and reproach and rebuke his soul for all [evils] that overtake him, knowing that either because of his negligence it is excited by the tempter by order of the Governor, or because he has exalted himself. Therefore he shall not leap up nor be shaken, but keep his soul quiet without accusation [of God], lest his evil be doubled. For there is not iniquity with God, on the contrary, He is the fountain of justice.

IX

ON SINS [COMMITTED] INTENTIONALLY AND WITH EVIL WILL AND ON THOSE [COMMITTED] ACCIDENTALLY

There are sins in which a man is entangled through weakness and accidentally. And there are sins the source of which is the will; others [spring] from an uncultivated mind. Some are committed occasionally, others continually; others are customary. And all these classes and kinds of sins, though bound by the common verdict of reprehension, have a different character and their punishment may be greater or smaller.

Some sins are reprehended severely; others are near to mercy. God has also shown unto Adam, Eve and the serpent, though not one of them was exempted from receiving the retribution of his fault, a great variety in the curse which was directed

against each one of them; and so He did in the curses directed against their offspring. In accordance with the propensity and inclination of each unto sin, is judgment made more heavy.

111 If any one be not inclined to follow sin, but he be drawn towards it on account of neglect regarding righteousness, although he be not zealous for it, his judgment will be severe even if the connection with sin be difficult for him. But if he be diligent and temptations rise, mercy is near to purify him, without doubt. For it is another thing that a man who is careful regarding excellence and constant in its works, meditating on it even in the night, should fail in any of its duties; while by day he is loaded with its burden and goes around with it, all his thoughts concentrated upon justness — it is a different thing that, while he is occupied with such things, through ignorance or the compulsion of opposition on the way of excellence and the mighty waves that arise every moment in his limbs, and the propensity towards aberration which is implanted in him as a test of freedom, the indicator of his scale should point somewhat to the left, and through the sickness of the flesh he should be entangled in any kind of sin and suffer and be sorry on account of it and bewail himself passionately because of his miserable weakness in the face of what overtakes him now and then.

It is a very different thing, that one being lax in the works of righteousness or wholly neglectful of the way, should run like a slave in complete obedience to all the delights of sin, and try to find the means of its accomplishment; and that like 112 a slave he should purpose zealously to perform the will of his adversary, his limbs serving him as weapons on behalf of Satan in complete obedience and that he should not even think of repentance so as to draw nearer unto excellence and end his path of shortcomings.

Different are the trespasses and the stumbling-blocks laid on the way of virtue and in the course of righteousness. As the Fathers say: On the way of excellence there are stumbling-blocks, there are varying states, there is compulsion, and the like.

A different thing is death of the soul and complete destruction and total abandonment. This is known thereby that, although one falls, he does not forget the love of his Father; and although he is loaded with trespasses of every kind, his zeal for the service of good is not held back, nor does he

desist from his course, nor abhor to stand in struggle against these things anew and with the same chance of being vanquished, nor cease from demolishing every day his building and beginning a [new] foundation.

And the word of the prophet is in his mouth: Till the hour of my departure from this world, rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me ¹⁾. And he will not cease to struggle till death. He will not allow himself to be vanquished, as long as there is breath in his nostrils. And though his ship is wrecked every day and the sweat of his commerce becomes a prey to the depths, he does not cease to borrow and fit out ships and navigate with good hope; till the Lord, seeing his zeal, has mercy for his shipwrecks and inclines unto
 113 him in compassion and gives him strong impulses towards patience and towards braving the burning arrows of the Evil one. This is wisdom from God and whoever is sick in this way, is wise.

To abandon hope profits not. It is more expedient for us to be judged on account of special [sins] than on account of complete abandonment. Therefore the blessed commentator ²⁾ warns us against becoming weary in face of the many struggles and the frequent various kinds of strife to be met on the way of righteousness lest we should turn back and give our adversary the opportunity of a complete victory in any kind of evil. And so the blessed commentator says, arranging the strugglers as it were in classes: If you are truly zealous to look towards excellence and anxious for serenity of mind unto God, and to practise those things which are agreeable unto Him, you must necessarily bear for the sake of these things, all the struggles which will arise continually against you on account of the natural affections and the attractions of this world and the evil of the demons, without relaxing in spite of the constant and never ceasing strife, without fear of the tenacious vehemence of war, without dread of the hosts of enemies, and without dejection if it happen that you trespass somewhere and sin, but receiving on your faces the blows and wounds such as are [to be expected] in so great a war. On account of these things, therefore, you must not let yourself be moved

1) Micah 7, 8

2) Theodore of Mopsuestia

even from your will's decision; on the contrary you must maintain the choice of your behaviour, deeming it a beloved and ¹¹⁴ glorious thing to show yourselves in the war besmeared with the blood of your blows, without pausing in the slightest degree from strife against the enemies. These are the warnings of the blessed commentator.

Thus, it is not becoming in us to relax because of these things. Woe to the solitary who is unfaithful to his covenant and, treading down his conscience, gives Satan entrance into him, in small and great matters of sin, so that he does not find strength to defend against the enemies the breach [Satan] has made in his soul. And with what countenance will he behold the chaste, his companions, when they are brought together from whom he has separated his way to go the way of destruction, and the freedom of speech with God which the pious possess, and the prayer which arises from the chaste heart towards God and uplifts itself and even passes the hosts of the angels and stops not until it reaches God's majesty, holding the keys in its hands ceasing not until it has acquired its demand, returning unto the mouth that has sent it, with gladness. [And with what countenance will he look upon] what is harder than all these things, viz. that, as he has separated his way from them here, so Christ will separate him from them on that day. When the brilliant clouds will bear on their backs¹⁾ the bodies that have become splendid by purification and that enter the great gate of heaven. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment²⁾, because their work is already judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous³⁾, in the resurrection before the judgment, nor the impure in the ranks of the saints.

1) Literally: hips

2) Ps. 1, 5

X

¹¹⁵ ON THE WORDS OF THE SCRIPTURES BEING SPOKEN AS IT WERE TO PATIENTS IN MODERATION LEST THEY SHOULD WHOLLY ABANDON THE LIVING GOD. BUT THIS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN BY US AS A REASON FOR GREATER FREEDOM REGARDING SIN

The encouragement which our Fathers give us in their writings and the help towards repentance which is in the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles, should not be taken by us as a reason to disregard the threats of the divine acts of judgment, nor the punishment which God has decreed firmly against the transgression of the borders which should not be passed, through the mouth of all His saints and by means of all kinds of laws, in order to eradicate sins. As if the hope of repentance could be reason for us to strip from ourselves the feeling of fear in order to sin more freely and without dread. These [threats] are confirmed by the seals of the word of God, in all the scriptures of our salvation, and by the [divine] decrees fixed against them, [threatening] all kinds of terror. Some of these He has partly revealed to the many or to the few [people] by the punishments He brought upon them in order to show that He hated sin. Or why then were drowned in the Deluge the generations of the days of Noah? Was it not on account of the vileness of lasciviousness, because they had violated the
¹¹⁶ beauty of the daughters of Kain? In that time there was no love of money nor adoration of idols, nor sorcery, nor wars waged [by men] against one another.

Or again, why were five towns of the Sodomites for ever burnt? Was it not because they had given way to lust of the flesh, which had taken possession of them according to its good pleasure, consisting in all kinds of impurity? Was it not because of the fornication of one man that in Israel, the first-born of God, there fell twenty-five thousand by the plague in an instant? Why then was Simson rejected by God, Simson, the man of strength, the Naziræan from the womb, the sanctified to God, whose birth was annunciated by an angel like that of John the son of Zecharia, through whose hand [God] wrought marvels and signs, and who by the supernatural strength

which God infused into his body smote a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass and became a saviour and a judge unto Israel? Was it not because he made impure and defiled his hallowed limbs by intercourse with a harlot, that the Lord left him and gave him into the hands of his enemies? David, the heart of God, for whose excellence the promise made unto the righteous Fathers was carried out in his offspring from whom sprouted Christ the Saviour of the whole world — was it not by adultery with one woman and for the feebleness of one moment that from a glance of his eye he got an arrow in his soul and wrought evil against himself from within his own house; for the son which was to come forth from his loins was to pursue him?

And this happened although he showed repentance and the
 117 Lord said to him: Also have I put away thy sin; thou shalt not die¹⁾, and he wept a flood of tears so that he moistened his bed during the nights.

I return to what I was saying before: Why then did distress and destruction hit the house of Eli the priest, the righteous old man, a priest and a judge of Israel during forty years? Was it not because of Pinehas and Hophni his sons who treated the women scornfully that came to pray in the tabernacle, though he himself did not sin, at any rate not wilfully, but only in so far as he was silent and reprehended with words only, without showing fervour against the fornication of his sons, so that the judgment of the Lord took revenge on them? And lest any one should think that the Lord shows His zeal only against those who are sinners in their lifetime, He also displays it against this audacious sin hated of Him, in the case of those who are near to Him, His priests and judges and the heads of the people and against those men who were holy unto Him and by whose hands He had done wonderful things, yet whom, when they violated the laws He had laid down, He did not spare. As is written in Ezechiel where He says to the man whom He orders to smite the people of Jerusalem with a hidden sword: Begin before my altar and do not spare, neither old man nor boy nor youth²⁾; to show that it was the people near to Him, those who walked in fear
 118 and chastity before Him and performed His will. The saints

1) Cf. 2 Samuel 12, 13

2) Ezechiel 9, 6

of the Lord and those near to Him are good works and a pure heart. But when they reject the ways of the Lord's will, He also rejects them and puts them away from before Him and takes His grace from them.

And why then did the judgment of the Exalted smite Belshazzar by the sign of the hollow hand? Was it not because he had behaved audaciously against the holy vessels which he had taken from Jerusalem and in which he drank with his concubines? And in the same way the judgment of the Exalted will of a sudden smite him who in abandoned audaciousness uses for worldly purposes the limbs that once were set apart for the holiness of the Lord, just as Belshazzar was smitten who behaved audaciously against the holy vessels taken from the sanctuary of the Lord.

Therefore we should not make use of the confidence in repentance and the heart-giving words of the scriptures as a motive for disregarding the words and the threats of the Lord and disdain Him by evil deeds, disdaining thereby also the limbs that once we have offered as a sacrifice for the ministration of His sanctuaries and for the use of His service.

Verily we are the sanctified of the Lord and the Naziraeans abstaining from women, as Elijah, Elisha and the prophets and the other sanctified Naziraeans and holy virgins by whose hands great and amazing things were done, who spake with God face to face; and as those who lived afterwards, John the virgin and the holy Simeon and the other preachers of
 119 the New Testament who sanctified themselves to the Lord and received mystic secrets from Him, some from His own mouth, others by revelation. And so they became mediators between God and mankind, and the receptacles of His revelations and the preachers of the Kingdom to the inhabitants of the world.

XI

WHEREBY THE BEAUTY OF SOLITARY LIFE IS TO BE PRESERVED AND HOW IT CAN BE A CAUSE OF GOD'S BEING GLORIFIED

It is becoming for the solitary to be in every way a vision of stimulation unto those who look at him, so that because of the beauties which radiate from him on all sides as the rays

of the sun, even the enemies of truth unwillingly acknowledge that the Christians have a well-founded hope; and from every side they will flow to their place of refuge, and thus the head of the church will be elevated above its enemies.

Thus the glory of the solitary's deeds will be a stimulus for many to withdraw from the world. And [it is becoming] that he be revered by every one on account of his excellence, so that the mouth of the members of the church will be opened on his account and their head exalted above all creeds.

The pride of Christ's church consists in the behaviour of the solitaries. Therefore it is becoming to the solitary that the beauties of his habits shine on all sides; in the humble attitude of his limbs, in the simplicity of his habit, in his elevation
 120 above visible things, in the veracity of his renunciation, in his rigorous fasting, in his being continuous silent, in the subduing of his senses, in the continence of his aspect, in his not being quarrelsome with other people for any reason, in the sparingness of his speech, in his being pure from rancour, in his discriminate conscious simplicity. And [it is becoming for him] that it be known that he is alien to this harmful and fleeting life and near to true and spiritual life, from his constantly being by himself, from his being unknown among men, from his not being tied to any one by the bonds of comradeship and intimacy, from his quiet dwellingplace, from the small space of his habitation, from his few and mean utensils, from his avoiding men, from his constant prayer, from his hating and avoiding honour, from his not being bound by temporal life, from his great patience, from his endurance in temptations, from his keeping aloof from rumours and from inquiries into worldly affairs, from his constant care for and meditation upon his true country, known by his sad countenance and his shrivelled face¹⁾, from his constantly weeping night and day, and above all from his cautious chastity and his freedom from covetousness in small and great things.

These are, in short, the manifest beauties of the solitary
 121 which testify to his being wholly dead to the world and near unto God.

It is becoming for him to think of these things constantly in order to acquire them.

1) ,mäkära nāśānta

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1922 (Weinink).

If any one asks: Wherefore are these lengthy descriptions necessary? I answer: they are very necessary. For if any one search for them, one by one, in himself, and if any fail him who cares for his life, he can ascertain from these distinctions his deficiency in any of the virtues. And thus these descriptions may become to him admonitions. And if he possess personally all the things described and also those omitted, the knowledge of them is given him [in this way] and so he will become a cause of God being praised among men and angels. And then he may prepare for his soul a place of rest before departing this world.

XII

THAT IT IS NOT BEAUTIFUL FOR THE SERVANT OF GOD WHO HAS RENUNCIATED THE WORLD AND HAS GONE FORTH TO SEEK EVEN THE TRUTH, OUT OF FEAR THAT HE SHALL NOT FIND THE TRUTH TO DESIST FROM SEEKING IT OR FROM THE FERVOUR WHICH IS BORN FROM THE DESIRE OF DIVINE THINGS, OR FROM THE INQUIRY AFTER THEIR MYSTIC SECRETS WHICH ARE DESCRIBED MYSTERIOUSLY. THAT, BY THIS SEEKING, THE MIND MAY DESIST FROM EVIL DISTRACTION AND RECOLLECTIONS OF THE AFFECTIONS

There are three degrees which constitute the whole course of man. The degree of novitiate, the middle one, and that of perfection.

122 And although the mind of the first degree looks with all its occupations and recollections towards excellence, yet it is connected with the affections.

The second degree, the middle one, lies between the affectable and the spiritual state. Righthand and lefthand deliberations are stirred equally in it. And neither the fountain of light nor that of darkness ever cease to flow on its side, as it has been said. If the [solitary] cease for even a short time from meditating restlessly on spiritual writings, or from thinking of divine things, such as enflame him as fire by their tending towards the truth, in union with outward heedfulness as strict

as possible which includes inward cautiousness and sufficient works — then he is swept away towards the side of the affections.

But if he heighten his natural warmth in the way mentioned, without desisting from seeking and inquiring, and if he follow these things from afar without seeing them, except their designation in the scriptures, and if he multiply his deliberations and dominate them by those which do not decline unto the left side, and receive not any seed of phantasies coming from the demons instead of from truth, but be desirous on the contrary, long and guard himself and beseech God in passionate, enduring prayer — then, as soon as it will please God to give it, He will open His gate before him. Especially on account of his humility, for to the humble the mysteries are revealed.

If he dies, however, in that expectation, without having seen that country at a short distance, I think that his heritage will be with the ancient righteous, who have expected perfection, according to the word of the Apostle, but have not seen it ¹⁾,
 123 yet have worked in expectation of it all their lifetime and have departed. But what shall we say, if any one does not reach [the degree which enables him] to enter the promised land which is the stage of the perfect and to find truth eye to eye in so far as nature is capable of this? Shall he then resign this [and remain] on that low stage which is wholly connected with that of the left side? And because he has not found the whole truth, shall he remain in this low state which does not even know to desire these things, or shall he elevate himself unto the middle stage mentioned, even though he does not look as it were in a mirror, but expects it from afar, and in that expectation will be gathered unto his fathers?

Even though he is not deemed worthy of the fulness of that grace here, yet he shall occupy his mind through intercourse with it at a distance and by its stimulating influence during his lifetime he shall eliminate and fly from bad deliberations. And in this hope, his heart being full of God, he shall depart this world.

All that takes place in humility, is beautiful. The uncorporeal thoughts of the mind inclining towards the love of God [engendered] by the understanding of the scriptures, are a

1) Cf. 1 Peter 1, 10—12

fence for the gates of the soul against foreign deliberations. They guard the spirit by ardent recollections of future things, against its being distracted through idleness to the recollection of [worldly] things; this would quench the ardour of its emotion and it would fall into desires.

XIII

124 ON THE VARYING STATES WHICH COME TO THOSE WHO LIVE IN SOLITUDE, AS IS JUSTLY ORDERED BY GOD CONCERNING THIS [SPIRITUAL] WAY: NOW SADNESS AND PSYCHIC SUFFOCATION, THEN, SUDDENLY, GLADNESS AND JOY AND HOT FERVOUR AND UNUSUAL STRENGTH. PRAISE TO HIM THAT HAS ORDERED OUR WAY AMEN

To him who has determined to order his being in lonely dwelling and to pass the remainder of his days in service and in the ordering of the way of solitude, it will come to pass that, while he is as usual, in solitude, such as is justly prescribed by divine grace, his soul will be hidden in darkness. And just as the radiance of the sun is hidden from the earth by thick clouds, so, for a short time he is bereft from spiritual consolation and from the rays of grace, by the clouds of the affections; and some of the joy-giving force is withdrawn from him, while an unusual darkness falls upon his spirit; yet his mind is not troubled nor inclined towards dejection; but he remains patient, occupying himself with the writings of divine men and with prayers to which he forces himself, looking for help.

Then of a sudden it will be given him unexpectedly¹⁾. For, as the face of the earth is gladdened by the rays of the sun when the dense atmosphere is torn asunder, so the words of prayer are able to tear away and to remove from the soul the
125 dark cloud of the affections and to gladden and to illuminate the spirit by the rays of joy and consolation which is born in our deliberations.

Especially when the soul is able to have recourse to the profit from the holy books and from vigils that make the mind pure. Constant meditation upon the holy scriptures will perpetually fill the soul with incomprehensible ecstacy and joy in God.

1) Literally: though he does not know it.

XIV

AS TO WHEN THOSE WHO LIVE IN SOLITUDE BEGIN TO KNOW, EVEN TO A SLIGHT EXTENT, HOW FAR THEY HAVE ADVANCED IN THEIR SERVICE IN THE UNFATHOMABLE SEA OF SOLITARY LIFE SO THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE SOMEWHAT ON THEIR LABOURS THAT THEY BEGIN TO BEAR FRUIT

I shall tell thee a thing at which thou must not laugh; for I tell the truth. Do not doubt it, for those from whom I have received it, are trustworthy.

If thou hangest on they eyelids before God, do not think that in behaviour thou hast reached anything till tears come forth; for thy hidden being still ministers unto the world. This means, that thou art on the same stage of behaviour with faithful lay people. For thou workest with thy outward man in the service of God but the inward man is still without fruits. His fruits begin at the point which I have indicated. When thou hast reached the place of tears, then understand that the spirit has left the prison of this world and set its foot on the way towards the new world. Then it begins to breathe the
126 wonderful air which is there, and to spend tears. For now the throes caused by the spiritual child, become vehement. And grace, the common mother, hastily delivers, as it were, the soul, God's image, unto the light of the world to-come. And when the time of birth is come, then the mind will perceive a something belonging to that world, like a faint perfume, which the child has received in the members into which it has grown.

But he who does not patiently bear what is unusual, will move his body with weeping mingled with joy which excels the sweetness of honey. Together with the growing of the child within there will be an increase of tears. The stream of tears begins when the spirit begins to become serene. I mean the flowing of tears belonging to the stage which I have described, not that partial one, which takes place from time to time.

This consolation which takes place from time to time, will come to pass to every one who serves God in solitude. Sometimes during spiritual contemplation. Sometimes when hearing or reading the words of the scriptures. Sometimes while occupied with beseechings.

But I propose to speak of that complete one, which continues night and day without a break, and which comes to him who has found truth in solitude by the sincerity of his behaviour, when the eyes become fountains of water for a period of nearly two years. This happens during a transition-period; I mean symbolical transition¹⁾. At the end of the period of tears thou wilt reach peace of deliberations; and by this peace of deliberations thou wilt reach the divine rest of which Paul speaks, rest in part, according to [our] nature.

From the beginning of [this period of] rest onward, the mind
 127 will see hidden things. Then the Holy Ghost will begin to reveal unto it heavenly things, while God dwells in thee and promotes spiritual fruits in thee. Then thou wilt perceive the state which the whole nature will receive in the renewal of all things, dimly and mysteriously.

This I have written to the profit of myself and of every one who comes across this book, being that which I have attained by contemplation of the scriptures and from the mouth of veracious men (and to a small part by experience) that I also may gain profit by the prayers of those who have gained profit from these things, because I have toiled upon them.

Listen also to another thing which I tell thee, as I have heard it from a mouth that does not lie: As soon as thou hast entered this place where the deliberations are set at peace, then the violence of weeping is again taken from thee and thou reachest the state of moderation.

This is the exact truth in a few words; and it is true and confirmed by the whole church, by the excellent among her sons and by her chief protagonists.

1) אֲשֶׁר הָיָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

XV

ON THE COURSE OF THE SOLITARY CAREER, SUC-
CINCTLY AND WITHOUT PROLIXITY. AND ON THE
QUESTION HOW AND AT WHAT TIME ITS VIRTUES
ARE BORN ONE FROM THE OTHER

Lucidly and distinctly, the course of virtues shows itself so.

From works performed by compulsion, in solitude there is
128 born a blazing and immeasurable heat, which is generated in
the heart by fervent deliberations, newly born in the spirit.

Works and watchfulness polish the mind by their heat and
give it sight. And sight gives birth to the fervent deliberations
mentioned, because of the depth of psychic sight which is
called contemplation.

Contemplation gives birth to fervour; from this fervour sight
given by grace is born; and then outbursts of tears begin. At
first partial ones; this means that a man's tears will flow
several times every day. Then he will come to [the state of]
tears without a break. Through the tears the soul receives
peaceful deliberations. From peaceful deliberations it rises unto
serenity of insight. And by serenity of insight a man reaches
the sight of hidden things. For purity is brought about by
being free from war.

And after these the mind will reach that which is denoted
by the symbol of the brook in Ezekiel the prophet ¹⁾, a symbol
which contains the type of those three psychic stages which
are near to divine things and of which the third is the utmost
which a man can reach.

The beginning of all these is a good will unto God and
various works in solitude and that uprightness which is born
from severe reclusion from the world.

It is not necessary to enumerate the distinctions between
the works, for they are known to every man. But as soon as
any one occupies himself with them it is not possible that he
deteriorate; I know, on the contrary, that he will profit by

1) Ez. 47

129 them. They are the following: the work of hunger, of reciting, waking during the night, according to every one's strength; frequent prostrations, several times in the day and often during the night. Some will perform thirty prostrations at one time, salute [the cross]¹⁾ and go away from it. Some will perform even a greater number. Others will prolong prayer during three hours and stay in concentration while prostrated, without compulsion and without distraction.

These two varying states show the great richness of grace, which works in various ways with every man according to his measure, be it that he multiplies the number [of his prayers] on account of his fervent ardour, be it that he acquires quiet in his soul so that he reduces to one the large number of his former prayers.

As to the question of the cause of that other prayer and its duration without compulsion, it seems to me that it is not becoming for us to treat such things in detail, by describing their nature in speech or writings lest the reader, being unable to understand anything of it, should judge it to be something insipid; or, if he should be acquainted with these things, should despise him who is not able to cross the border of certain things. From the one blame, from the other laughter would be the consequence; and thus I would become a barbarous writer to such ones, according to the word of the apostle
130 concerning him that speaks in prophecies²⁾.

But he who is desirous to know these things should know that their course has been described above. He may combine works with deliberation, by the grace of our Lord. And what practically happens in these states he may experience personally.

Stay therefore in thy cell and the cell will teach thee everything.

1) Cf. p. 140

2) Cf. I Cor. 14

XVI

HOW PROFITABLE IT IS FOR THE SOUL WHILE IN SOLITUDE TO BE FREE FROM WORKS AND HOW INTERCOURSE HARMS THE MIND OF THE NOVICE WHICH HAS BUT LATELY BEGUN TO HAVE INSIGHT FOR ITSELF AND HOW IT IS CLEAR THAT BODILY WORKS NECESSARILY BRING ABOUT IN THE SOLITARY A DEFICIENCY IN DIVINE WORKS

That a man who is beset with care, should be quiet and in a state of peace, is impossible. For the necessary things which cohere with those things upon which he expends his labour, cannot but have the effect that he be shaken; and they will bereave him of his rest and quiet. For the only opportunity for Satan to enter the soul is distraction. Therefore it is becoming for the solitary to place himself constantly before God's face and to look for His will¹⁾, if it be his intention to keep his mind in watchfulness and if it be his will grasp quickly the small deviations as soon as they begin to stir in him, and, in peace of spirit, learn to recognise what passes in him²⁾.

131 Frequent oscillations are a sign of the solitary's relaxation as to the preparation of Christ's service, and they are signs of deficiency in divine things.

Without being free [from cares] thou canst not demand lucidity from thy soul; nor rest and quiet if the senses are set free; nor concentration of the senses when the oscillations of practice [are frequent].

Keep thy self free from accidents; then thou wilt find no trouble in thy mind.

Without constant beseechings it is not possible to be near to God. And to think of other things at the same time with the work of beseechings, is distraction of the heart.

If fervent emotions befall thee sometimes when thou tastest God in the hot fire of divine things, but when thou seekest them again thou findest them to have become insipid and cold

1) *מבחי*

2) Literally: those who go in and out.

within thyself, [this is because] the distraction of intercourse with men has assailed thee somewhere, or because thou hast estimated bodily work above them, and on account thereof the fervour of thy deliberations has become cold. Tears, however, and beating the head [on the ground] during prayer, and fervent self-humiliations quicken again their warm sweetness in the heart. And in lauded madness the heart will fly after God, crying: My soul thirsteth for thee, the living God: when shall I come and see thy face¹⁾? He that has tasted this wine and has been bereft of it, he only knows in what a torment he has been left and what has been taken from him on account of his relaxation.

O, how evil is the sight of men and intercourse with them¹³² for him that lives in solitude, especially him that is relaxed and left alone²⁾. Verily, my brethren, as a strong blast of cold, that suddenly hits the buds of the trees and nips their small heads germinating from the twigs, so intercourse with men, even though it be short and in a congregation with a good purpose, withers the sprouts of the virtues which have but lately shown their heads because of the good air³⁾ of solitude, and which beset with their humidity the tree of the soul, planted by the brooks of repentance. And as the sharpness of the cold strikes the new sprouts of the roots, destroying and pushing back their heads into the earth, so intercourse with men destroys the root of the mind which but begins to grow green by reason of the herbs of virtues, thrusting them back to their original place and destroying their tenderness. And if intercourse with those who are nearly master of themselves is so obnoxious to the soul, be it only on account of their hindering the customary service, this must happen to a larger extent if a man speaks with and sees stupid and uncultivated men or even lay people, which has the effect of fire upon small wood. And as the humility of an honourable and estimable man, who forgets himself frequently by drinking wine, is troubled and his honour stained and his chastity shaken by the foreign deliberationſ which dominate his spirit on account of the force of the wine, so the chastity of the soul is shaken by intercourse¹³³ with and sight of men; and it forgets the aim of its watchfulness and is bereft of the whole intention of its will; and

1) Ps. 42, 2

2) viz. by grace

3) literally: the mixture of the air

intercourse and recreation and the use of luxury eradicate from its depth the whole foundation of laudable behaviour.

And even if a man be silent and only in the presence of such men in person, hearing and seeing, the mere fact that the doors of his eyes and his ears let in [what is seen and heard], is able to turn his spirit from divine things and to trouble it greatly.

If thus the mere sight of men and the bare hearing of their speech for only a small time is able to cause so much harm to the solitary who is watchful, what then shall we say about regular meetings or about those of a longer duration?

The vapour rising from the stomach obscures¹⁾ the knowledge of divine things, as the inhalations rising from the damp earth obscure the face of the sun²⁾.

Haughtiness does not understand that it proceeds in darkness without knowing insight and wisdom. In its own thoughts it is elevated above all things, but it is poorer and lower than any thing. It is unable to know the ways of God, and the Lord will hide His will from it, because it does not like to go in the way of the humble.

XVII

134 ON THE SHORT PATHS TOWARDS GOD WHICH ARE REVEALED TO ONE FROM THE SWEET WORKS IN VIGILS AND THAT THOSE WHO ARE GIVEN TO VIGILS ARE SUPPORTED BY HONEY THEIR WHOLE LIFETIME

Do not think, O man, that among all the works of ascetics there is any one greater and more profitable than that of vigils. In truth, my brethren, if during the day the ascetic is not distracted by corporeal things and temporal care, but cuts himself off somewhat from the world, and is watchful to even a low degree during vigils, then I do not object to declare unto you in truth, that soon his spirit will fly as with wings and ascend unto God to be in delight. And he will easily look at that glory, and in that knowledge which is higher than

1) In one Ms. only

2) See p. 83

human spirit he will quickly swim. The solitary who during his vigils abides by the discernment of the mind, will no longer seem to be clad with flesh. Verily, this work belongs to the class of the angels. And it is impossible that those who apply themselves to this behaviour, should be left without great divine gifts, on account of the vigilance and serenity of their heart, and because their deliberations tend to Him only.

The soul, therefore, which applies itself in its labours to the duty of vigils, becomes trained, and acquires Cherubs' eyes in the swiftness and acuteness of their gaze, so that at all times it gazes on heavenly contemplations.

I am of the opinion that he who on account of vast know-
 135 ledge and with discernment has chosen for himself this great and divine work, and is wholly devoted to bear the load of the glorious part he has chosen, will necessarily be zealous to guard himself also during the day against the trouble of occupations and of care for [worldly] things, and that he consequently will not be devoid of wonderful fruits and the great delight he will gather from them. And I may say deliberately, without lying, that he who despises this, does not even know for what purpose he performs all this toil: the loss of sleep, the many repetitions, the fatigue of the tongue, the standing on his feet during the whole night, while his mind is not there where he recites his Psalms and prayers; but he performs these works as a matter of custom, as something which is devoid of discernment. And if this were not as I say, how could he suffer to be bereft of and to remain without reaping profitable fruits from the constant occupation with his work? But he strives towards these [results] through the holy occupation of the recitation of the scriptures, which is a fortification of the mind and, principally, a cause¹⁾ of prayer, a helper and a companion of vigils, a light of the mind, a guide on the way and the seed²⁾ of manifold contemplation during prayer. It is a check against the distraction of the spirit and against its occupying itself with idle things. It sows in the soul constant recollection of God and [of] the ways of the saints who have pleased Him. And it causes the mind to acquire wisdom and subtlety.

Wherefore then, O zealous man, doest thou order thy occu-

1) ~~causa~~

2) literally: the sower

136 pations in this way, without discernment? For thou showest care for thyself in that thou standest upon thy feet during the whole night, fatiguing thyself with glorifications and Psalms and prayers. It would be easy for thee, by little watchfulness during the day, to be made worthy of the divine grace for thy strenuous efforts in other duties. Wherefore doest thou fatigue thyself and sow in the night, whereas during the day thou renderest useless thy works so as to lose the fruits, dissipating this vigilance and fervour which thou wouldst acquire by vigils, through the distraction of intercourse with men and through different occupations, and destroying thy profit by wandering idleness?

If thou wouldst associate to thy nightly meditation, o man, service during the day without breaking in twain the fervour of the occupations of the heart, thou wouldst quickly embrace Jesus' bosom.

And from this thou seest that thou sufferest for lack of discernment. For thou doest not perceive why vigils are necessary for the ascetic. Thou thinkest it is for the sake of toiling only, and not in respect of another thing which is expected to be born from it.

But he that by grace has almost been made worthy of understanding that for which the sages hope in combating sleep and compelling nature to such a degree that during the whole night, awake bodily and mentally, they offer prayers — also knows the strength given by watchfulness during the day and the profit it grants the spirit in its nightly solitude while 137 at its vigils with discernment, and the power it supplies over the deliberations and the purity¹⁾ and concentration with which it endows the mind, so that without compulsion and strife the spirit gazes at the greatness of the words [recited].

I say this also, that though the body may fall short in the work of fasting on account of its great weakness, yet vigils, by their lonely character, afford the mind steadfastness in prayer, and enable the heart to recognize spiritual powers by means of insight. This can only take place if it is not assailed by any disturbance through relaxation caused by things met during the day.

Therefore I admonish thee, o man of insight who wishest to acquire vigilance of mind in God and knowledge of the

1) Reading of some Mss.

new life, that during thy lifetime thou mayest not despise this duty ¹⁾ of vigils, by which thy eyes will be opened so as to see the whole glory of ascetic work and the power of the way of righteousness.

And if it should happen — unfortunately — that a thought of relaxation should make its nest in thee, and thou shouldst think, on account of [previous] experience, that thy usual helper is training thee and making thee prudent by means of varying states, such as coldness and heat, or by variety of chance and occasion, or on account of thy body being ill or weak; and if this should induce thee to forego sleep in the evening, though thou shouldst not be willing to fatigue thy body — then I beseech thee with love to desist from all this zealous labour, the reciting of Psalms, the performing of the service, the frequent kneelingings during regular praying. I advice thee to sit ¹³⁸ in solitude, awake, if thou art able to do this, without recitation of Psalms and without prostrations. And if thou art able to do so, pray with thy heart only. But do not sleep. And by all means pass thy night, sitting, in the usual beautiful meditation. Only — do not make thy heart heavy ²⁾ and dark by sleep. Then the old swiftness and force and fervour will be given thee by grace and thou wilt rejoice and exult and thank God. For such heaviness and coldness ³⁾ are admitted unto man in order to test him.

If a man rouse himself fervently and shake off and cast away [despondency], compelling himself somewhat, suddenly grace will approach as before. And another force will impart itself to him, in which ten thousand [gifts of] grace and profitable states are hidden. And man will be astonished while thinking of the former heaviness and the swiftness and strength following it, and of how such a state of a sudden has overcome him.

Therefore he will be prudent henceforth, so that, when this heaviness comes again at other times, he will recognize it. But if he had not been daring on former occasions, he would not have acquired this knowledge.

Thou seest how prudent a man becomes if he rouse himself a little and if he be valiant at the time of struggle. But when

1) **קִבְּוֹת** 2) Literally: thick

3) Reading **קִבְּוֹת** with the London Mss.

his nature really subsists only and no longer struggle, but sickness or natural weakness, it is useless to resist. If a man compel himself in other points, strength in all things will be given him.

¹³⁹ Constant solitude, with recitation and moderate food, easily arouse in the spirit a state of ecstasy ¹⁾, if perpetual solitude be not broken for any cause. Insight brought about by works performed in solitude, will of itself, automatically and suddenly, impart to these two eyes a kind of baptism, by tears which burst forth and moisten the cheeks by their profuseness.

If thou perceivest in thy body, humbled by the asceticism of watchful solitude, the vehement passion of fornication, — not the usual dark impulse of nature, — know then that thou art tempted in thy spirit by haughtiness. Mix thy food with ashes, press thy belly against the dust and scrutinize what thou hast thought. And recognize the varying states of thy nature and thy service which is above thy nature. Perhaps God will have mercy upon thee and send thee light so that thou wilt know how to be humble, lest thy evil become greater.

So we will not desist from carefulness, till repentance dawns in our heart and we find humility and our heart finds rest in God.

XVIII

THINGS WHICH I HAVE HEARD FROM OLD MEN
AND STORIES OF HOLY PEOPLE, THEIR PIOUS
WORDS AND WONDERFUL BEHAVIOUR. MAY GOD
PRESERVE US BY THEIR PRAYERS AMEN

¹⁴⁰ One day I went to the cell of a holy brother and lay down in a corner as I was ill, expecting that he would visit me for God's sake. There was nobody in that country [whom I knew]. I had seen this brother several times at night, as he stood, a long time ago. He usually woke for the service earlier than any of the brethren. Then he would begin with Psalms and would recite them diligently. Then, of a sudden, he would leave the service, fall on his face, and beat, so to speak a hundred times, with his head on the earth violently and quickly, on

1) *ῥηῆσις ἐπὶ τὰ κινήματα* amazing attitude regarding things

account of the fervour which grace had kindled in his heart. Thereupon he would rise and salute the cross. Then again he prostrated himself, rose, saluted the cross and again fell down on his face. This he repeated so many times that I was not able to count them. Who could have counted the many kneelings which that brother performed these nights?

He would also approach the cross and kiss it twenty times, full of reverence and of fervour, in love mingled with fear; thereafter he continued his reciting of Psalms. From time to time, when he was no longer able to bear that flame of joy, he was suddenly overwhelmed by frequent currents of deliberations, which kindled him with their fervour; and he would elevate his voice because he could not restrain himself.

And I was astonished at the grace which was with that brother and I wondered at his zeal and alacrity in the works of God.

¹⁴¹ After the morning service, when he sat down for recitation, he was like one in the state of rapture. At every verse he recited he would fall on his face several times; and at many of the words he would stretch his hands towards heaven and utter the glorification several times.

He was a man of middle age, nearly forty years old. He ate but little; his temperament was dry and hot. And because he compelled himself, when his body could not bear it, he looked like a shadow from time to time, so that one pitied him on account of his thin face, which was vanishing and becoming as small as two fingers. Several times I said to him: moderate this strict rule of behaviour, my brother, and this beautiful way which thou treadest and do not disorder nor break thy rule as a spiritual chain, out of desire to add a small quantity of works with the result that thy whole course will be brought to a close. Eat moderately, but eat regularly. And make not thy way too long for thy strength, lest thou shouldst have to desist from it wholly.

Further he was compassionate and very bashful, he was glad to show compassion. He was honest by nature and easily persuaded, and prudent in God. Because of his honesty and joyous disposition he was liked by every one and they all loved him. He worked with all the brethren in clay in their cells, when ¹⁴² they had any, now for three, now for four days; every evening he returned to his own cell, till the work of the brother was finished. He was very well skilled in this work.

If he possessed any thing, and one of the brethren begged him to give it him, he gave it him even though he was in great need of it¹⁾. He was very sensitive before all sorts of persons and was not able to say: I have not, or: I want it myself. And that he regularly left his cell to work with the brethren, was because of his sensitiveness before others; so he compelled himself, although not inclined to go out. And several times he spoke to me about his aversion to leave his cell. This was the divine behaviour of that wonderful brother.

Concerning another solitary²⁾. Once I went to the cell of an old solitary, an excellent man who loved me greatly. He was somewhat quaint in his words, but illuminated in his thoughts and profound. And what he choose to tell, he spoke with a certain goodheartedness. He scarcely left his cell, except for the holy mysteries³⁾. He was constantly concentrated and in solitude.

Once I said to him: Father, I purpose going on Sunday and sitting down in the galery of the church and to eat early in the morning. Then every visitor will see and despise me. The solitary said to me: It is written: He who offends the lay people, will not see light. Nobody knows thee in these regions, neither do people know what thy fame is. So they will say: The solitaries eat early in the morning. There is a
 143 greater reason. There are novices of weak deliberations, many of whom will be edified by thee now; but if they see thee [eating], they will turn back. The ancient Fathers could do such things, because of the signs and the forces which were wrought through them and because of the great name and fame they possessed. These things they practised, each of them in order to be despised and blamed, and to obscure the fame of his behaviour and to keep far from him the cause of haughtiness. But what is the necessity for thee to act in this way? Doest thou not know that even for the behaviour [of solitaries] moderation is necessary and a fixed time for every one of their works? But what necessity is there for thee regarding such things? Thou doest not follow a distinct discipline, nor art thou famous. Thou hast the same discipline as the other brethren. Therefore, thou doest not gain profit for thyself by doing so, but thou art harmful for others.

1) Translation according to the London Mss.

2) 

3) The Eucharist

And this behaviour ¹⁾, is not profitable for all men, but for the great and perfect only, because it involves relaxation of the senses. For the novices and those of the middle state however it is very harmful. For they, on the contrary, need watchfulness and subduing of the senses. For the trained solitaries have passed [the period of] watchfulness, as has been said, and mix with what they like, yet know to gain profit. A simple merchant will lose greatly in great affairs; in small ones he often easily comes forward. Therefore, as I have said, ¹⁴⁴ in all work moderation is necessary; and every discipline has its fixed time. Every one who, before its time, begins with what is above his rank, will be injured and gain no profit.

If thou desirest this, first suffer that disdain which Providence sends thee without thy willing it, gladly, without being troubled thereat and without hating those who disdain thee.

Concerning another solitary. Once I was in intercourse with the virtuous one that had tasted from the tree of life in the sweat of his soul, from the morning of youth until the evening of old age. And after much conversation in which he taught me concerning excellence, he also said this to me: Every prayer, in which the body does not participate and by which the heart is not affected, is to be reckoned as an abortion without a soul.

Further he said to me: Have not the slightest intercourse with any man who strives after victory in his words, and is astute in spirit and of keen senses, lest thou destroy the serenity thou hast acquired by works and thy heart become full of darkness and trouble. —

Once I went to the cell of one of the Fathers. This saintly man scarcely ever opened to any one. When he saw from his window that it was I, he said: Thou wishest to enter? I said to him: Ay. When I had entered and we had prayed and sat down and he had spoken with me concerning many things, I asked him at last: What shall I do, my lord? There are persons who constantly visit me, without my profiting by their inter- ¹⁴⁵ course. To forbid them to enter would be painful to me. They often hinder me even in my usual service. But I am not able to say so to them openly. So I am much troubled by this matter.

1) Assuming the habits of sin

This blessed man said to me: When such people visit thee, people who like to be lazy and who spread ¹⁾ idle words, and when they have sat down a little time, assume the air that thou desirest to stand for service. And say to [thy visitor], whosoever he be, with an obeisance: My brother, we will perform the service. For the time of my service is come and I may not overlook it. For it would be hard for me to combine it with the next prayer; that would cause me trouble; and I may not omit any service without [the plea of] necessity. At present there is no necessity to let the time pass. — This shalt thou urge till he stand up with thee for the service. And if he say: Perform thou thy service, now I will go away — make an obeisance before him and say: Be kind to me and perform with me this single service, that I may be helped by thy prayer. Then, when he agrees and you are standing, make thy service longer than usually. So thou shalt do with them as often as they enter. And when they see that thou art not of their kind and that thou doest not love idleness, then they will no more come where they hear that thou art. Behold, thou shalt be no respecter of persons and neglect none of the works of God.

If, however, [thy visitor] be one of the Fathers, or a foreign ¹⁴⁶ brother who is fatigued, then deem it an important service to remain in intercourse with him. But if this stranger also should be one of those who love idle words, content him as much as thou canst and dispatch him quickly.

Once one of the saints said to me: When I hear, that there are people who perform work in their cell and also accomplish the rules of the cell without failure, I wonder how it is possible that they are not troubled.

He also said a wonderful thing: verily, I say that even when I go to make water, this troubles my constancy [of mind]; because practice turns away from me the complete discernment which I have mastered.

A solitary asked a brother: What shall I do? Often I desire a thing and am in need of it on account of illness, or work, or some other reason, so that by its aid I would nigh well be able to lead a life of solitude. But if I see anyone who needs this thing as I do, then compassion causes me to give it him.

1) حقايم

Or if any one asks me for this thing, I am pressed by love and by command so that I give it him. But afterwards I require this thing. And my need causes me care and disturbance and troubled thoughts, and it takes away my concentration of spirit and my care for the usual service of solitude. So that I am
 147 compelled many times to leave my solitude and go and ask for this thing. And when I restrain myself from going out, I am in great need and perturbation of mind. On account of this thing I am constantly shaken and disturbed without knowing which of the two I shall choose: that which destroys and disturbs my peace for the sake of the peace of my neighbours; or to abandon this, so as to remain in solitude and renunciation, and to care for the small things of my self only, without any inclination to think many thoughts or to care for others.

I beg to learn, in answer to this, what is good and worthy of recommendation. The solitary answered saying: All compassion is either love, or alms, or a gift. And every becoming thing, and every deed reckoned as being godly which destroys thy solitude and bereaves thee of thy freedom regarding the world, and causes thee care and troubles thy thoughts concerning divine things, and breaks the order of thy prayers and brings about troubled deliberations and takes from thee the concentrated occupation with recitation and freedom from distraction, and destroys thy watchfulness and makes thee instead of a prisoner one who walks where he likes and [changes] thee from a solitary into one who mingles [with other people] and awakens in thee buried passions and relaxes the asceticism of thy senses and quickens thee again who wert dead to the world and casts thee out of thy angelic service which is concentrated solitary thought, and sets thy part with the service of the laity — this [sort of] righteousness may perish. To accomplish alms of love to thy neighbour, consisting in bodily
 148 comfort, belongs to the service of lay-people, or of those solitaries who are inferior to service in solitude or practice a mingled solitude in the company of one another and through constant visits¹⁾. — But those solitaries who have earnestly chosen to be free from the world in body and in spirit in order to establish in their mind the prayer of solitude which is the being dead to the things that perish and to all thought

1) literally: entering and departing

of practice and seeing and recollecting [worldly] things, they do not serve Christ by any service in these bodily things or with a righteousness founded upon manifest deeds with the intermediation of persons in order to be justified thereby, but [they serve Him] by mortifying their members which are upon the earth ¹⁾, according to the word of the Apostle, offering at all times the pure sacrifices of their thoughts as the first fruits of their service and their bodily affections through patience in trouble for the sake of that which they expect. The behaviour of the solitaries is like that of the angels. So it is not just to neglect the service of heavenly things and to gather righteousness by [practising] earthly things.

A brother was blamed because he provided the wants of the poor from his own possessions. He answered proudly: Solitaries are near to alms. He that blamed him said: Well known is the solitary who is not near to alms; who without shame can say to our Lord, as has been said: Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ²⁾. This is he that does not possess any-
 149 thing on the earth, nor does he perform bodily labour for earthly things, his thoughts do not turn to any of the visible things in the world, nor does he expect to acquire anything. If any one offers anything to him, he only accepts according to his want; he never looks at aught else. But he is in his dealings like a bird, the which does not think of giving alms; for he has a service more excellent than alms.

How can he give others from that of which he is liberated? But as long as a man works with his hands and receives from others, he is also obliged to give alms. To neglect this would be a manifest transgression of God's commandment. But if he does not make progress with God in hidden things, and does not know to serve God in spirit and despise the manifest things which lie within his power, what further hope has he to acquire life? Be he anathema.

ADMONITION OF ONE OF THE FATHERS CONCERNING THE RIGHT SOLITUDE

I wonder at those who trouble themselves in their course of solitude because they desire to comfort others by bodily things.

1) Colossians 3, 5

2) Matthew 19, 27

He also said: It is not becoming to mingle with the service of solitude the thought of any thing in the world, save only those which it is possible to perform in solitude. And we have to honour every solitary performance in its place, lest we become confuse in our solitary course. For he who cares about
 150 many things, is a slave of many persons. He who lets go all and cares for the steadfastness of his soul, is a friend of God. Behold, those who practise alms and completely show their love of neighbours by bodily things, are many in the world. But those who beautifully serve in solitude and have intercourse with God are scarcely to be found. Or who are, among those who practise righteousness and gain it by earthly things, those from whom we may receive one of the gifts which those who work in solitude receive from God?

The same has further said: If thou art a lay man, practise the behaviour which suits lay people. But if thou art a solitary, gain profit by the labours by which the solitaries gain profit. If, however, thou wilt practise both, thou wilt fall short in both. The work of solitaries is this: to become liberated from sensible things and to be constantly with God in the thoughts of the heart and through fatiguing the body by prayer. Judge thou thyself whether it be possible to despise these things and to fill their place with worldly excellence. Or should a solitary be able to practise in solitude two kinds of behaviour, the outward and the inward one viz. meditation on God and burdening his heart with the care of others? I say even this that he who has honestly willed to lead a life with God, and leaves all, fixing his attention solely upon matters of behaviour — that
 151 even he will not be able to accomplish without shortcomings all the duties of the practice of solitude. He is found wanting in the bearing of his load, though he desists absolutely from the use and the care of the world — not to mention the case of his being occupied by many other thoughts.

To our Lord are given¹⁾ those who administer and visit His servants and His sons. He has also chosen those who minister before Himself.

We do not only see, in the affairs of earthly kings, that those who are constantly with the king and participate of his secrets are more glorious and elevated in their ranks than those

1) **עבדים**

who accomplish their outward affairs with love, but, also in divine affairs, it is easy to see what a freedom of speech those possess who, in intercourse with Him possess the mysteries of prayer at all times; and over what riches of heaven and earth they reign, and how apparent is their mastership over all created natures, which, without dispute, obey their words as those of God. They are stamped with the manifest sign of His image, with a glory greater than that of all rational and irrational¹⁾ beings, greater than that of those who serve God with possessions and earthly things and seek to content Him in [the company of] their companions. This may be very beautiful, but as to us, we have not to take as examples those who stand at a low degree in the service of God, but those who are athletes in our path²⁾ and the saints who go our course, and those who once for all have given up and turned their back on the earth and have taken hold of the vault of heaven.

Whereby have the ancient saints pleased God, those who¹⁵² have trodden the way of our behaviour and have excelled: the holy John of Thebaïs, that treasury of excellence and fountain of prophecy? Did he comfort his companions with bodily things, in his reclusion, or did he please God by prayer? I confess that there have been [solitaries] who also in these things pleased [God] and gained profit. But they are less in number than those who pleased God by prayer and by renouncing all things. What their help to their followbrethren who live in solitude is, is well known. It consists in helping them as often as they are in want of a profitable word or [in helping them] by offering prayer in behalf of them. Apart from these things, it is not wise for him who dwells in solitude to give place in his heart to recollections or thoughts concerning any one as far as bodily things are concerned. 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's'³⁾ and what belongs to a neighbour is his, and what belongs to God is His' does not apply to those who dwell in solitude, but to those who walk without. It is not the duty of him who performs the service of the angels with the thoughts of the soul, to please in earthly things; namely to have thought

1) Literally: speaking and mute

2) In the sense of: mystic course, *طريقته*

3) Matthew 22, 21

for manual work or to taking from others and giving to others. His service is in heaven.

It is not becoming for the solitary to allow the thought of anything to move and drive away his spirit from before God. If, however, anyone dare to adduce the example of Paul, who
 153 also performed [manual] work and also gave alms, we reply to him : Paul was unique and a master in all things. We know not that another Paul has ever existed who was a master in all things like him. Show it me, if thou art found to be another Paul, and I will believe thee. Do not, therefore, compare the matters of government with the inner practice. For the work of the heralds is different from that of solitude.

But if thou wilt master solitude, be like a Cherub who has no care for earthly things. And think that there is no other man in the created world, excepted thee alone, and God about whom thou thinkest, as thy Fathers who have gone the way before thee, have taught thee. Unless a man harden his heart and restrain his compassion forcibly so as to be far from the thought of any man, should it be for the sake of God or of any bodily being — but he shall only be in prayer, at the times appointed to him, lest love or care of anyone enter his heart — it is not possible for him to be freed from the trouble of thought or to be in solitude. So much is certain. But when a deliberation is awake in thee, urging thee to the thought of anyone under the pretext of excellence, the purpose of which is to drive away from thee the peace that was becoming customary to thy heart through the recollection of God, then say to it : it is beautiful to lead a life of love and compassion for the sake of God, but I do not seek it, even for the sake of God, so it only remains to me to drive thee away for the sake of God. Thus the solitary will speak. Then the deliberation
 154 will say to him : And I flee from thee for the sake of God.

Aba Arsenius, for the sake of God, did not open his mouth to speak, neither profitable nor gratuitous words. Another, however, for the sake of God, spoke the whole day and received all the strangers that visited that place. The former, in stead of this, chose silence and solitude.

Thus he voyaged with the spirit of God on the ocean of this world in the ship of solitude, in exalted peace, as is shown in revelation to the athletes who investigate this thing.

This is another denomination of solitude: rest from all

things¹⁾. If thou art full of trouble even in solitude, because thy body is troubled by manual service and various affairs, and because thy soul is troubled by the thought of others, what peace doest thou possess then to care for many things and to please God? Judge thyself. It appears to me ridiculous to talk about mastering the course of solitude without abandoning all things and the care of all things.

XIX

ON THE REVELATIONS AND POWERS WHICH HAPPEN TO THE SAINTS IN IMAGES

The degree of revelation is not the same as that a man deepen his emotions by the study of wisdom and by intellectual labour so as to arrive at some understanding and contemplation 155 of anything by mental investigation. For it is said: Revelation is silence of intellect. And by zealous efforts and human thoughts no one can imagine that he has found knowledge; this happens by spiritual power so that he to whom the revelation is imparted, at that time is not aware of any thought of his soul nor of those things which present themselves to his senses; neither does he use them nor is he acquainted with them.

This we do not assert on our own authority, but it can be proved sufficiently from the writings of the prophets, who, when revelations happened to them, did not perceive any of the usual things nor could they use their thoughts at will nor had they any sensual apperceptions, because they were in ecstasy. Their mind was wholly concentrated upon those things which appeared to them during the revelation. As it happened to the blessed Peter when he was hungry and ascended unto the roof in order to pray: when the revelation began, he did not perceive his hunger. Even the recollection of food was effaced from his mind, because he was in ecstasy, as scripture says²⁾.

Concerning all these things one may be well instructed in particulars from the writings of the blessed bishop Theodore, the light of the whole world³⁾. For he speaks about the kind

1) *ἡ ψυχὴ ἀποκαταλείβεται*

2) Acts 10, 10

3) Theodore bishop of Mopsuestia

and the rank of revelations, especially in the three volumes on
 156 Genesis and in the two volumes on Job and in the last one
 about the Twelve Prophets, and in the commentaries on the
 Acts and the Gospel of Matthew.

Scripture mentions six kinds of revelations. The first: that
 by the senses. The second: by psychic sight. The third: by
 rapture ¹⁾ of the spirit. The fourth: by the rank of prophecy.
 The fifth: in some intellectual way. The sixth: as it were by
 a dream.

Revelations by the senses are divided into two different kinds:
 those which take place by means of the elements and those
 which take place without matter. Examples of the former
 kind are the revelation in the thornbush, in the cloud, in the
 tables and so on, things which were also seen by the people;
 also those wondrous things which every day happen in the
 whole world and the causes and details of which are gained
 by the saints in revelations; and also the works and deeds
 and things which are hidden or far away, yet are revealed
 unto some at the time of their actual occurrence.

Without matter: as for instance the men that appeared
 unto Abraham, the ladder of Jacob, the revelation about the
 tabernacle (try only to look at and to act with the likeness
 that appeared unto thee on the mountain, and so on), the
 divine light of exalted rays that shone for Paul on the way
 and blinded his eyes. It is well known that, though a revelation,
 it was visible and perceptible by the senses, so that also
 those who were with him saw and heard it; yet it was not a
 material revelation, nor a natural and elementary light, as the
 157 blessed commentator denotes in his commentary on the story
 in the Acts: And those who went on the way with Paul,
 stood in amazement while they heard the voice, yet did not
 see anyone. He comments on the words, in amazement' thus:
 In silence without [uttering] a word, also seized with doubt,
 because they had caught the voice that had spoken to him
 and, as far as it was possible for them, had seen the light
 that appeared unto him. Lest it should be surmised later that
 Saul had invented what had happened and that which had
 been wrought unto him, while none of those who were with
 him had heard or seen it. But they did not see anyone. For

1) *reafu*

they did not see Jesus, because, as I have said, that which appeared was even no sensible light, but an incomprehensible apperception which in an immaterial way was given him by divine action in the likeness of a vision of light, so that he thought that the heavens were opened and so on. — These are the revelations which have taken place through the medium of the bodily senses. They are exalted above any commixture with the elements or any of the sensible and human events.

But those who receive these revelations are not enveloped in ecstasy of mind, as in the case of the revelation that takes place through the eyes of the soul in the vision of the soul, as: I saw the Lord sitting on a high throne and Seraphs each with six wings round it ¹⁾, and as in the revelation unto Ezekiel, in the revelation of the wheels and the amazing images, and the sound from the wheels resembling the sound of the ¹⁵⁸ sea, and the glorifications heard from the Cherubs with many eyes, which say: Blessed is the majesty of the Lord in His place. How much subtler these revelations are than those of the first mentioned class, is known to the illuminated. [To the second class also belongs] for instance the vessel that appeared to Peter and the animals in it, with the other things described. And he who wishes, may recognize these things from the scriptures.

Rapture of the spirit, as for instance when he was taken up unto the third heaven, and whether this was in the body or without, I do not know. But he was taken to Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter ²⁾.

Prophecy, as for instance the things that happened unto the Prophets, who foretold future events, many ages before they took place, as it was also given unto Balaam the sorcerer to foretell many things through the spirit of prophecy, things even more numerous than what prophets had prophesied.

In some intellectual way. As for instance the blessed Paul says: I pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ³⁾. And: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge

1) Isaiah 6, 1

2) 2 Cor. 12, 2—4

3) Colossians 1, 9

of Him: the eyes of your hearts being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and the riches of His glory in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power in us who believe ¹⁾ and the other things which were given to the Apostle in a revelation of knowledge concerning
 159 the things of the world to be, and the order of resurrection and the alteration of human bodies and so on. And as for the degree of exalted understanding and the knowledge of the divine nature, as for instance that [man] is the likeness of the invisible God and that with His hand He has made the worlds, God has given us revelation by His spirit. Again we know in part and we understand in part ²⁾; and: In the beginning was the word ³⁾; and: Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God ⁴⁾ and so on. Again, unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ⁵⁾; and: He who worketh all after the counsel of His own will ⁶⁾; and: God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all ⁷⁾ and so on.

These are designations of the insight which was given unto them that they sought to know and understand through the Spirit the divine nature.

By dreams, as for instance happened to Abimelek and Joseph and Pharaoh and Nebukednesar; and when the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph the husband of Mary, and so on.

Also this it is necessary to know: that all revelations, which God has granted for the sake of teaching mankind and instructing them concerning things, take place by means of images, especially revelations unto those who are of simple understanding and of small insight in the truth. But those which are destined to comfort and to instruct some person, and to console to
 160 some extent and to instruct a single person, take place without images and by intelligible apperception. This is clearly proved by the blessed commentator ⁸⁾ in the second volume on Job. For how much greater, as compared with other revelations, are the things which are given in a revelation for the intellect and the understanding through an intellectual medium and how much higher are the mysteries which serve to instruct all concerning God. This is perfection of knowledge.

1) Ephesians 1, 17—19

4) Matthew 16, 16

7) Romans 11, 32

2) I Corinthians 13, 12

5) Romans 11, 33

8) Theodore

3) John 1, 1

6) Ephesians 1, 11

And also this it is becoming to know : Revelation and [divine] action are different from truth and knowledge in so far as revelation is not the exact truth, but only shows indications and signs corresponding to human strength. Neither may the action and the wondrous things in those revelations be called knowledge and truth. They are called inspiration caused by [divine] action. So that it is impossible to gain from them instruction concerning God's foreknowledge or His incomprehensible nature or His different qualities or the understanding of the mysteries of His will concerning mankind and the other things which are to be attained by sound knowledge concerning Him. Therefore: the mysteries which are attained by the intellect through insight into the divine nature is different from the action by which the mind is inspired during a certain time. Therefore it is not absolutely necessary that every one to whom a revelation is imparted or who is influenced by a consoling action, must know the truth and the exact knowledge concerning God. For many are those to whom such things were
 161 imparted, yet knew God as children only.

XX

ON VARIOUS INTELLIGIBLE FORCES OF THE MIND
 IN CONNECTION WITH THE ACTION OF REVELATIONS
 AND SPIRITUAL VISIONS

Divine sight is a non-apperceptible mental revelation. Divine revelation is an emotion of the mind by spiritual understanding, concerning the divine being. It is not even a faculty of the nature of the angels to be stirred into emotion at will, without a revelation granted by [divine] grace. Emotion by revelations concerning God's activity is different from emotion by revelations concerning the nature of His being. The former is of a nature to have analogy with apperceptible things. The latter has absolutely no analogy with the intellect or anything. It is threefold purity as to its parts and its nature, as it is said. And it is impossible that one of the thousand righteous should be deemed worthy of this high apperception. Also speculation concerning the incarnation of our Lord and His revelation in the flesh is said to belong to divine speculation.

The true sight of the angels is emotion by spiritual understanding concerning their domain. But it is impossible for us
162 to see the nature of spiritual forces without the mind.

When man is deemed worthy of seeing them in their nature and in their place and as they are in their spiritual creation, grace moves his mind by the revelation of spiritual insight concerning them. When the soul has been purified and is worthy of seeing its fellows, their sight is¹⁾ perceived with these eyes. They are not objects and they cannot be seen as they are, without alteration, but by psychic sight which is true contemplation. This means: without deterioration of their nature by sight. This sight cannot be acquired by any man without the second purification of the mind.

But the fact that the angels appear unto some men in images, is not due to true sight; but the angels minister unto the order of government by their mission. Or they show themselves for the consolation and encouragement of the simple, [in forms] perceptible by sight.

Such visions even happen to those who are not pure. But the first kind happens to illuminated and initiated people, who, by the glorious course of solitude, have been elevated unto the rank of purity.

XXI

ON THAT WHICH HAPPENS DURING PRAYER [UNTO
THOSE WHO LIVE] IN SOLITUDE

Who is he that knows that delightful bending of the knees, when the tongue is silent and the heart silently utters some glorification, and its delightful emotion does not abate, the
163 body resting on the knees in silence? Blessed who eats from these things perpetually. But they do not happen at will, nor when one seeks them. This is in part the delight which is given for the consolation of him who walks without a blame before the Lord in the course of solitude.

If he continues this course in all simplicity, and seeks the purity of his service, and if his behaviour is worthy, after some time he will be deemed worthy of the things mentioned above.

1) In some Mss.: not

As to those who are novices in this course and who have a fixed aim, Grace at first will make them apt for the taste of these and similar things by recitation and it will draw their thoughts towards its self, away from earthly thoughts. Then they will work and wake and pray without becoming fatigued. Unto those who are trained to some extent in the mysteries of solitude, apperceptive power during prayer and service will be imparted.

XXII

ON VARIOUS [EXPERIENCES] DURING PRAYER AND ON THE LIMITS OF THE POWER OF THE MIND. AND IN HOW FAR IT HAS POWER TO MOVE ITS ARBITRARY IMPULSES BY THE VARIOUS HABITS OF PRAYER. AND WHAT IS THE LIMIT PRESCRIBED TO NATURE DURING PRAYER, THE LIMIT WHICH PRAYER IS NOT ALLOWED TO SURPASS. AND HOW WHEN IT HAS PASSED IT AND HAS PROCEEDED FARTHER, IT IS NO LONGER PRAYER, EVEN THOUGH WHAT HAPPENS IS CALLED BY THE NAME OF PRAYER

Glory to Him whose gift has been poured out upon mankind, in that He has ordained that they, although of the flesh, should serve on the earth the class of immaterial beings and has deemed worthy the nature of mortals to speak about such
 164 mysteries, especially sinners as we are, who are not even worthy of hearing speech concerning such things. In His bounty He has opened our blind heart to understand, by the contemplation of the scriptures and the instruction of the great Fathers even although I have not been deemed worthy of experiencing for personal zeal one thousandth of what I have written with my hands, especially in this tract, which we have ventured to write for the illumination and exhortation of our soul and of those who come across it, that perhaps, on account of its desire, it may be incited to approach unto practice.

How then? Delight during prayer is different from sight during prayer. The latter is more excellent than the former, as an adult man is superior to a little boy. It will happen

that the words become sweet in the mouth and that one word of prayer is repeated infinitely so that no feeling of satiety with it causes thee to proceed and to pass over to a second.

Sometimes from prayer a certain contemplation is born which also makes prayer vanish from the lips. And he to whom this contemplation happens becomes as a corpse without soul, in ecstasy. This we call sight during prayer and not an image or form forged by phantasy, as fools say. Also in this contemplation during prayer there are degrees and differences in gifts. But till this point there is still prayer. For thought has not yet passed into the state where there is no prayer, but a
165 state superior to it. For the motions of the tongue and the heart during prayer, are keys. What comes after them is the entering into the treasury. Here then all mouths and tongues are silent, and the heart, the treasurer of the thoughts, the mind, the governor of the senses, the daring spirit, that swift bird, and all their means and powers and the beseeching persuasions have to stand still there: for the master of the house has come.

For like as the whole force of the laws and the commandments which God has laid down for mankind, have their term in the purity of the heart, according to the word of the Fathers, so all kinds and habits of prayer with which mankind prays unto God, have their term in pure prayer. Lamentations and selfhumiliations and beseechings and inner supplications and sweet tears and all other habits which prayer possesses, — as I have said: their boundary and the domain within which they are set into motion, is pure prayer.

As soon as the spirit has crossed the boundary of pure prayer and proceeded onwards, there is neither prayer, nor emotions, nor tears, nor authority, nor freedom, nor beseechings, nor desire, nor longing after any of those things which are hoped for in this world or in the world to be.

Therefore there is no prayer beyond pure prayer, and all its emotions and habits by their authority with freedom conduct
166 the spirit thus far and there is struggle in it; but beyond this limit it passes into ecstasy and is no longer prayer. From here onwards the spirit desists from prayer; there is sight, but the spirit does not pray.

Every kind of prayer which exists is set into motion by the impulses of the soul. But when the mind has entered the emotions of spirituality, then it can no longer pray.

Prayer is different from contemplation during prayer, though they are caused by each other. One is the seed; the other the load [of harvest] borne by the hands, while the reaper is astonished by the undescrivable sight of how from the mean and bare grains of seed glorious ears suddenly grow up before him. And during sight he remains without motion.

Every prayer which exists, is demand and request, or praise or thanksgiving. But judge whether there exists any of these modes, or demand of anything, when the mind has passed into this domain and has entered this place.

I ask this of those who know the truth. It is not given to every one to enquire into these distinctions, but only to those who have been personally witness and ministers of this matter or have been brought up in the presence of the spiritual authors¹⁾ of such experiences and have received the truth from their mouth and have passed their days with such occupations, asking and answering concerning matters of truth. As among ten thousand men there is scarcely to be found a single one
167 who has fulfilled the commandments and the laws to any extent and who has been deemed worthy of serenity of soul, so there is rarely to be found one among many, who on account of strenuous vigilance has been deemed worthy of pure prayer and who has made his way into this domain and been deemed worthy of this mystery. Not many are deemed worthy of pure prayer, only a few. But as to that mystery which lies beyond, there is scarcely to be found a single man in every generation who has drawn near to this knowledge of God's grace.

Prayer is a beseeching for, a caring for, a longing for some thing, either liberation from the evil things here or [in the world] to come, or a desire for promised things, or a demand for something by which man wishes to be brought nearer unto God. In these emotions are included all habits of prayer. But its being pure or not depends upon the following circumstances. If, when the spirit is prepared to offer one of the emotions which we have enumerated, any foreign deliberation or distraction mingles itself with it, prayer is called non-pure, because it has brought upon the altar of the Lord an animal which it is not allowed [to offer], the altar which is an upright, intelligible heart.

1) literally: the Fathers

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1922 (Wensinck).

But when the spirit gives itself with longing to one of these emotions, in accordance to the necessity of the case, at the time of beseeching, and when on account of its alacrity the gaze of the emotion is directed by the eye of faith beyond the curtain of the heart, the entrances of the soul are closed thereby against the foreign deliberations which are called ¹⁶⁸strangers ¹⁾, whom the law does not allow to enter the tabernacle. This is called the accepted offering of the heart and pure prayer. Its boundaries are to this point. What lies beyond cannot be called prayer.

If any one should mention what by the Fathers is called spiritual prayer, without understanding the force of the words of the Fathers, saying: This belongs also to the domain of prayer, I think that, if he should reach true insight, it would prove a blasphemy if there should be found any of the creatures who should say that spiritual prayer can be prayed at all. For all prayer that can be prayed, lies on this side of spirituality. And all that is spiritual, is in kind free from emotion and prayer.

Now if man is hardly able to pray pure prayer what must be said of spiritual prayer? The holy Fathers are accustomed to designate all profitable emotions and all spiritual working by the name of prayer. And the blessed commentator ²⁾ even counts beautiful deeds as prayer; though it is clear that prayer is different from deeds which are things done. But sometimes they designate by spiritual prayer that which they sometimes call contemplation; and sometimes knowledge; and sometimes revelations of intelligible things. Doest thou see, how the Fathers ¹⁶⁹change their designations of spiritual things? This is because accurate designations can only be established concerning earthly things. The things of the world-to-be do not possess a true name, but only simple cognition, which is exalted above all names and signs and forms and colours and habits and composite denominations. When, therefore, the knowledge of the soul exalts itself above this circle of visible things, the Fathers use concerning this knowlegde any designations they like, though no one does know the real names in order that the psychic deliberations may be based on them. We use denominations and riddles, according to the word of the holy Dionysius ³⁾ who

1) ~~κῆρα~~ proselytes

2) Theodore of Mopsuestia

3) Areopagita

says: We use signs and syllables, conventional names and words in behalf of the senses. But when by spiritual working our soul is moved unto divine things, then the senses and their workings are superfluous to us, as also the spiritual forces of the soul are superfluous as soon as our soul becomes the image of the godhead through unification with the incomprehensible and radiant in the rays of the sublime, by those impulses which are not for the eyes.

Therefore, my brother, of this thou mayest be sure: that the power of the mind to use the emotions with discernment has its limit in purity during prayer. When the mind has reached this point, it will either turn backwards, or it will desist from prayer; so prayer is, as it were, a mediator between the psychic and the spiritual state. As long, however, as
170 it is in emotion, it is in the psychic state. But as soon as it has passed this limit, prayer ceases.

As the saints, in the world to come do not pray, when the mind has been engulfed by the [divine] spirit, but they dwell in ecstasy in that delightful glory, so the mind, when it has been made worthy of perceiving the future blessedness, will forget itself and all that is here, and it will not be moved any longer by the thought of anything¹⁾.

Man, therefore, may freely go so far as to say: all excellence whatever and all orders of prayer whatever, in body or in spirit, are in the realm of free will, as well as the mind that dominates the senses. But when the influence of the spirit reigns over the mind that regulates the senses and the deliberations, freedom is taken away from nature which no longer governs but is governed. And how could there be prayer at that time, when nature does not possess power over its self, but is conducted by an outward force without knowing whither. Nature then does not direct the emotions of the spirit according to its will, but captivity reigns over nature in that hour and conducts it there where sensual apperception ceases; because nature even has no will at that time, even to this extent that it does not know whether it is in or without the body, as scripture testifies. Has therefore such a one prayer who is a captive to this degree and who even does not know himself? So no one should say with blasphemy that there is anyone

1) Cf. Plotinus's description of the mind's delight when it has forgotten matter VI, 7 § 34.

who could venture to say that it is possible to pray spiritual
 171 prayer. This audaciousness the Meşalleyānē vindicate for them-
 selves, those haughty ignorants who proclaim concerning them-
 selves that they are able to pray spiritual prayer when they
 like. But those who are humble and have insight and are in-
 clined to learn from the Fathers and know the limits of nature,
 do not abandon their deliberations to this audaciousness.

And therefore, when there is no prayer, can then this un-
 speakable gift be designated by the name of prayer? The
 cause, as we say, is therein, that at the time of prayer [this
 gift] is granted unto those who are worthy. And in prayer it
 has its starting-point, because this glorious gift cannot be granted
 excepted at this time, according to the testimony of the Fathers.
 Therefore it is called by the name of prayer, because from
 prayer the mind is conducted towards this blessed state, and
 because prayer is its starting-point and it does not occur on
 any other occasion, according to the testimony of Mar Euagrius
 and others. And we see also that the majority of the saints
 say that during prayer their mind was snatched¹⁾.

If any one asks: How is it that at this time only these
 great and unspeakable gifts are granted? we answer: Because
 at this time, more than in any other hour, man is concentrated
 and prepared to look unto God and to desire and to expect
 compassion from Him. In short: it is the time that the
 demand of him who is at the gate of the king and asks desi-
 172 ringly and beseechingly, is likely to be heard. And what time
 is there when man is so cautious and fit and prepared, as the
 time when he prays? Or should it be becoming that he should
 be deemed worthy of this at the time when he sleeps or settles
 any affair or is distracted of mind? However, the saints do not
 even know a time of idleness, because at all times they are
 occupied by spiritual things, for when they are not standing in
 preparation for prayer, they often meditate upon some stories
 of the scriptures, or their mind meditates in contemplation of
 the created things, or [their mind is occupied] with other things
 meditation of which is profitable.

At the time of prayer the gaze of the spirit is exclusively
 fixed on God and the tendency of its emotion is wholly directed
 towards Him, and it offers to Him the beseechings of the

1) *aljudas*

heart with the necessary zeal, with fervour and ardour. Therefore it is becoming that at this time, when a single thought dominates the soul, divine mercy should well forth from Him. For we see also that when we offer the visible sacrifice, while every one is prepared and standing in prayer, supplicating and beseeching, the mind being concentrated upon God, the gift of the spirit descends upon the bread and wine which we lay on the altar. To Zechariah also the angel appeared at the time of prayer and announced to him the conception of John. And ¹⁷³ to Peter appeared, while he was praying on the roof the prayer of the sixth hour, the revelation that made him acquainted with the accession of the gentiles, by the cloth that descended from heaven and by the animals that were on it. And to Cornelius appeared, when he prayed, that which is written concerning him. And God spoke with Joshua the son of Nun while he was prostrated in prayer. And over the ark was placed a plate, from which the priest was taught by divine revelation what was required, at the time when the high priest, once in a year, entered the inner sanctuary at the dreadful time of prayer while all the tribes of the children of Israel were gathered and stood in trembling and fear in the outer tabernacle in prayer. And while the high priest was prostrated the voice of God was heard from the plate over the ark, in a dreadful, unspeakable revelation. How dreadful was the mystery that was ministered in this ceremony! So all the revelations and visions that happened unto the saints, happened at the time of prayer.

What time is so holy and fit for sanctification and the receiving of gifts as the time of prayer, in which man speaks with God? At this time man utters his desires unto God, beseeching Him and speaking with Him and his whole emotion and thought are concentrated from all sides upon Him with ¹⁷⁴ compulsion; of God alone he thinks and Him alone he supplicates; his whole thought is absorbed in discourse with Him and his heart is full of Him. It is in this state, therefore, that the Holy Ghost joins with the things which man prays, some unattainable insights, which it stirs in him in accordance with his aptitude of being moved so that by these insights the emotion of prayer ceases, the mind is absorbed in ecstasy and the desired object of prayer is forgotten. The impulses are drowned in a heavy drunkenness and man is no longer in this world. Then

there is no longer discrimination of body or of soul, nor recollection of anything, as Euagrius says.

Prayer namely is steadfastness of mind, which is terminated only by the light of the holy Trinity through ecstasy. Thou seest, how prayer is terminated when those insights which are born in the spirit from prayer, pass into ecstasy, as I have said in the beginning of this treatise and in several places further on.

Further he ¹⁾ says: Steadfastness of mind is highness of intelligible apperceptions ²⁾, which resembles the colour of the sky over which rises, at the time of prayer, the light of the holy Trinity. When is a man deemed worthy of the whole of this grace such that during prayer he is exalted unto this height? He says: When the mind puts off the old man and puts on ¹⁷⁵ the new one by grace, then it also sees its steadfastness at the time of prayer, resembling sapphire or the colour of heaven, as the place of God was called by the elders of Israel, to whom it appeared on the mountain ³⁾.

So, as I have said, this gift is not to be called spiritual prayer, but what then? The fruit of pure prayer, which is engulfed in the spirit. The mind has ascended here above prayer. And, having found what is more excellent, it desists from prayer. And further there is no longer prayer, but the gaze in ecstasy at the unattainable things which do not belong to the world of mortals, and peace without knowledge of any earthly thing. This is the well known ignorance ⁴⁾ concerning which Euagrius says: Blessed is he who has reached, during prayer, unconsciousness which is not to be surpassed.

XXIII

ON THE SPEECH OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Every apperceptible thing, be it action or word, is the revelation of what is hidden within, if its cause be not entirely accidental, but return constantly. The latter element only is

1) evidently Euagrius

2) literally: things

3) Exodus 24, 9—11

4) Cf. Dionysius Areopagita p. 274 ¹⁰

considered in connection with reward; the former is taken into consideration to a small extent only. For the strength or the weakness of will is evidenced in the doing of evil or of good things, not by anything that happens accidentally; but the proof of its freedom is the constant repetition.

To fate is given power; sometimes even so as to dominate
 176 freedom of will. Good or bad accidents meet man be it in order to spur him on, or to test, or to train, or to reward him. That which serves to spur on, is good; that which serves to test, is considered as being bad; that which serves to train and to remunerate is indifferent.

There are no fortuitous accidents; for nothing fortuitous happens to man, good or evil. There is a governor who governs the things of this world. There is a guardian with each of us, whom nothing escapes and whose attention never fails. But all accidents are foreseen by this appointed guardian. And in these four kinds [of accidents] his providence is active.

Passionate prayer, the companion of a course [of life] in harmony with its passionate nature, alters the character of those [who are subject to accidents] and brings about amelioration. The good are strengthened and corroborated by it; to the bad it causes a change to the opposite direction. Therefore, doubt not what I have said: there is no accident fortuitous or without a governor. If indeed prayer combined with steadfastness is able to alter or to direct, we have to believe that there is a governor to every accident. Blessed is he who compares every accident which happens to him, with his hidden [state], who scrutinizes its cause and beholds its governor. He that is desirous to acquire experience with God, cannot but become a fool to the world and a hater of human glory.

Admirable is the man who conceals the greatness of his work by lowliness of soul. Such a one is admired by the angels.

As guardians of righteousness have to be reckoned by thee
 177 involuntary defects, which sometimes are found with those who are watchful.

There is no prayer which is heard so soon as when a man asks to be reconciled with those who are angry with him. And when a man charges himself with the fault, this prayer is answered without delay. If thou fulfillst thy duty and art watchful in thy domain, yet art weak and despicable in thy

own eyes, hating human glory, then know that thou art surely in the way of God. But if thou perceivest that thou art not in this state and, when thou explorest thyself, thou seest that thoughts of blame cause thee pain, then know that thou art void of truth and in secret relation with falsehood.

XXIV

ON THE THINGS A BROTHER IS PROVIDED
WITH IN HIS CELL

It occurs many times in a day, that a brother, even if thou shouldst give him the kingdom of the world, would not consent at that hour to leave his cell or to [allow] any one to visit him. For the time of commerce ¹⁾ has presented itself, of a sudden. Such things happen on days such as are considered as days of relaxation. Often on such days and even on those wherein he has intercourse with others, grace of a sudden will visit him, in tears without measure, or a vivid affection moving ¹⁷⁸ the heart, or a certain gladness without cause, or the delight of kneelings.

I know a brother who put the key in the door of his cell in order to shut it, for he was going out in order to be occupied with idle things as the scripture says ²⁾. And there grace visited him, so that he returned immediately. Nobody, therefore, shall blame a brother if, on the days on which he does not keep canonical solitude, he should happen to neglect the congregational service sometimes. Especially if he be not reputed base or given to inane occupations, and if he does not neglect it on account of bodily labour. You know, my brethren, that our work is not only that which is accomplished before the eyes of men; but we have also a service which is hidden from the eyes of men and which is not known to novices and lay people. For you are acquainted with the fact, that the solitary is under a rule and not his own master. Therefore if any of his brethren comes to visit him and he answers him not, he shall return immediately without blaming his brother. For he

1) Often the image of spiritual things

2) Eccles. 1, 14 etc.

does not know that with which his brother is occupied at that time. The cell of a solitary is the cave of the rock in which God spoke with Moses, as the Fathers say. Those solitaries who have not been put to the test by the service which consists in the true taste of solitude, do not know these things. They despise their brethren and judge, claiming for themselves equality with them in all things.

179 It also happens sometimes that a brother is suddenly set face to face with some necessary strife, and, with his hands laid on his heart, he is in danger of flying away. Being prostrated he beseeches God, not able to bear the voice of any one. These varying states are known to those who once have crossed this ocean and are acquainted with the winds blowing [there].

It may also happen that the thought of repentance may rise in a man and that his past may suddenly be united with the memory of his death and present itself before him. And this brilliant sun will be darkened before his eyes and every recollection of the world will be effaced from his heart.

It may also happen that suddenly billows may rise against him and his ship be engulfed in hidden abysses; things which are not known to every one, but which unexpectedly assail the solitary in his solitude owing to the violent struggles of Satan, so that the cell becomes a place of mourning.

Numerous are the varying states of this ocean and who knows its labours and its multifarious connections, the wonderful pearls in its depth and the animals rising from it? Blessed is he who sleeps not during the whole of his course until the port of death.

No one loves anything without multiplying his connections [with it].

No one is able to occupy himself with divine things without having cast away and despised temporal ones; becoming a stranger to worldly honour and delights, following the disdain of the cross, drinking every day vinegar and gall on account of the affections, men, demons and poverty.

Be alert, my brother, and be like a prudent merchant, bearing thy pearl and wandering through the world, anxious that its excellent beauty be not besmirched. Be careful, lest it be stolen from thee on account of thy laxity and thou go to Hell in distress.

180 Pursue the small consolation which is gained from labour in

its time, that thou may be deemed worthy of that great consolation which liberates those who have found it, from torment in this place of distresses. Do not reject small things, lest thou be bereaved of the great ones. No one has ever seen a child which sucks milk putting meat into its mouth. By means of small things the gate unto great ones is opened. Thou disdainest God, o my brother who desirest that God shall govern thee without His rule. No one has been entrusted with great things, without having been first tried in small ones. Think of this, o my brother, and remember me in due time: every station which on the morrow thou attainest to in this way of excellence and knowledge of the truth, will be found by thee more glorious and excellent than that in which thou hast spent the night before. Thou departest, wondering at the beauty of the station which thou has entered to-day. But its beauty vanishes by the beauty of that which thou wilt reach to-morrow. Who can perceive the mind's varying states, full of delight? Pray only, that the gate may be opened before thee.

Be on thy guard against dejectedness. Thou servest not under a tyrant; thy service is under a kind Lord, who has given thee all, without taking from thee anything and who, before thou didst exist at all, destined thee to occupy thy present place. Who can do justice to His grace even as shown by His calling us into existence?

181 O, for His immeasurable grace! Who can sufficiently tell the glory of Him who has given us the knowledge of all things? Not only of those which are manifest, but also of those which are hidden, so that we know that, if there is anything that we know not, we must ask it of Him; who has taught thee, o mortal, to be moved by the desire of seeking that of which the knowledge is not in thy nature? Never seek a consolation that lies without the heart, which is the knowledge of discernment. Exalt thyself above all consolation administered by the senses, that thou may be worthy of that consolation which lies beyond. The solitary who has become alien to the consolation of the world, without expecting every day the consolation of Christ, is dead in his living state.

For God is compassionate and prone to give; but He desires that we give the opportunity. For He rejoices when man offers a wise prayer.

The mark of him who is recovering from illness is that he

is desirous of the hidden things. There is delay, however, if he beholds essential health. He who wearies of asking is the companion of him who wearies because of delay. Weariness declines to ask in prayer, viz. it is an impediment to asking. Dejectedness shortens prayer and bars its prolongation. Expectation gives patience and incites us to prolong prayer. Expectation makes light the weight of fatigue in the limbs. It also knows how to impart rest to the heart in its troubles. There is no load the weight of which is more agreeable than work with expectation; nor is there any comrade with whom
182 intercourse is more desired than with it. Prison is a pleasant habitation if it be there. Make it thy companion, o repentant brother, then thou wilt not perceive any of the labours of thy struggle. If thou art in thy cell, it will be with thee. If thou art found among men, fix thy mind on it. And if at any time thy heart errs after anything on the earth, this world and all that is in it will be found alien to thee. If thou sleep, make it thy bed-companion; and converse with it until thou art enfolded in sleep. Then no depraved deliberation will draw near thy heart, because thy occupation is of an immaterial kind and no object clad with matter, which by its appearance moves the spirit, is able to show itself there; and no demoniac deliberation knows how to show itself detached from material appearance.

The fruit of life sprouts from endurance in prayer. And expectation is a helper during prayer to those who possess it. When thou prayest, remember the husbandman who sows in hope. And He who causes to return twofold the seed of the husbandman who sows in faith, and who has estimated the seeking of His kingdom and His righteousness higher than the temporal things, He will incline himself to our prayer to our demands, as He has promised. Amen.

XXV

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SOUL THAT SEEKS
PROFOUND CONTEMPLATION TO IMMERSE ITSELF
IN IT AND SO TO ESCAPE FROM BODILY DELIBERA-
TIONS WHICH ARISE FROM THINGS RECOLLECTED

Every ¹⁾ thing that is above another one is concealed from what is beneath it. And this is not caused by its being covered ¹⁸³ by other bodies. For it possesses naturally the faculty to unveil its secrecy whenever it likes to do so. Thus all things which are essentially intelligible have no external distinctions of rank; these distinctions are confined to their emotions. This implies manifestly that they are more suited to receive, without any intermediary, the primeval light, than things of a lower ²⁾ rank, not materially nor locally, but in relation to the high degree of purity or moderation of the minds, with reference to the faculty that receives hints from above.

All things which are by their nature intelligible, are hidden from what is beneath them; not on account of natural divergences, but on account of excellence of impulses. This I say in respect of the members of [different] classes, viz. the classes of holy forces, the classes of souls, the classes of demons. The first have the middle place; the last the lowest in a natural and local respect and also with regard to their emotions.

Each of the classes is hidden from the other as to their intelligible character, whether they see or not; from the inferior ones they are also hidden by nature.

Now then, because incorporeal beings are not to be seen by other beings in the same way as corporeal beings, but their [power to] see one another is said to be dependent upon their emotions, namely the excellency and temperance of the emotions — therefore they see one another if they are equal

1) With the ideas of this chapter compare Frothingham, *Stephen Bar Sudaili*, p. 92: "Every intelligent nature is determined, known and comprehended by the essence which is above it; and determines, knows and comprehends the essence which is below it; but to the pure mind alone belongs the vision above and below". This seems to be the opening sentence of the *Book of Hierotheos*.

2) literally: later

in this respect even at a distance and not as phantoms, but with real sight and in their true nature.

184 Only — the cause of all is exalted above these distinctions, He, who is alone to be adored.

The demons, though they are very impure, are not deprived of seeing the members of their own classes. But they do not see the two degrees that are above them because spiritual sight is serenity of emotions. These are their mirror and their eyes. And when the emotions have become darkened, they do not see the orders which are above them. [Only] one another they see, because they are more material than the order of spiritual things, in comparison with them. Such is the state of the demons.

The souls, in accordance with their being impure and obscure, have not the faculty to see even the members of their own classes. Being deprived of seeing one another, they are also deprived of seeing themselves. But if they are purified and return unto the original state in which they were created, they clearly gaze at the three classes, viz. at those which are beneath themselves, at those which are above themselves, and at one another. This does not mean that they see all these classes only when they are transformed into material similitudes: angels, demons or the cognate soul. But they see them in their nature, being in their spiritual state, angels, demons and souls.

185 If thou sayest, however, that it is impossible that demon or angel be seen in their spiritual state without being altered, then it is not the soul that sees, but the body; or wherefore, then, is purification necessary? Demons are seen sometimes, and also angels, it is true, by those who are not pure. But they see them with their bodily eye when they see them, where no purification is needed. But the soul that has been purified sees not thus; it sees them in their spiritual state with its natural eye, viz. with its intellectual faculty.

That the souls see one another, even when they are in the body, is not surprising. Of this fact there is an evident proof which thou wilt acknowledge, because its witness is trustworthy. The blessed Athanasius, the confessor and Catholicus, gives witness to it in his book on the dealings of Mar Antonius. One time when Mar Antonius prayed, he saw a man's soul ascending with great honour. He uttered a blessing over him that had been

deemed worthy of all this grace. This was the blessed Ammon, the recluse. And the mountain the blessed Antonius inhabited was at a distance of thirteen days from Nitria. — Here is a proof of the three things we have maintained, viz. spiritual beings see one another even at a distance, without their being impeded by space and the presence of objects; souls see one another when they have been purified; when they see they do not see in a bodily way but by spiritual faculty, for it is clear that bodily sight can see what is before it; but as for seeing at a distance a different sight is needed.

These highest classes possess an unlimited multiplicity of number. And distinctions and orders are noted among them. Some of them are called princes and magistrates, powers and lords. Perhaps those which are entrusted with magistracy and authority are smaller in number than those which are compelled to obey their commandment, says the master of teachers Diodorus Rhetor¹⁾. For they are in the possession of power and great if partial insight, in accordance with the highness of their orders, being gradated so that they ascend from degree to degree till they reach the one who is older and mightier and more glorious than any other and who is the head and the foundation of all creatures. The head, I say, not the creator of the primeval wonderful works of God.

The angels and the archangels are very far from attaining to the wisdom of God, their and our creator. They are as far from it, as those of the lower degree are from them, but also no farther. Far, I say, as to their being higher or lower in their mutual relations; not in a spatial sense, but in respect of power and insight. Thus we say that they are higher or lower in respect of natural power and insight; for in accordance with the measure they have reached, greater or lesser knowledge is inherent in them.

All heavenly beings are named by the divine instruction with nine designations. It divides these three classes each into three subdivisions. The first comprises thrones exalted, high and holy; and Cherubs with many eyes; and Seraphs with many wings. The [second] class [comprises] lords and powers and magistrates. The third: princes and archangels and angels.

According to the meaning of the Hebrew, these terms are

1) Cf. Introduction, also for the provenience of the following classification of heavenly beings.

to be interpreted thus: Seraphs means those who cause heat and fire. Cherubs means magnitude of knowledge and effusion of wisdom. Thrones means divine acceptance and good pleasure.

This first class is called [that of] the Initiated, not because they see spiritually by the intermediary of the various apprehensible symbols, or because from spiritual writings they have acquired understanding concerning the Essence; but because they are full of the exalted light of the whole of immaterial knowledge and have been saturated with the essential contemplation of the threefold rays of the beauty that creates all beauties, so far as it has been permitted to them. And because they have been deemed worthy of communion with Jesus, not by means of images of holy formation, which with a certain exactness depict the divine likeness; but because they are in truth near to Him, stamped by Him with the mark of the primary acceptance of the knowledge of His divine illuminated. By the godhead they are filled with essential knowledge, as it is among the angels, and with primary insight into the godhead.

Another and clearer [description] of the designations of the highest orders.

188 Thrones are honoured [beings]. Lords are those who rule kingdoms. Princes the governors of the air. Magistrates are those who rule the peoples and human individuals. Forces are those whose sight is frightful, viz. who are powerful with strength. Seraphs are those who sanctify. Cherubs are bearers. Guards¹⁾ are those who watch. Angels are messengers.

On the first day eight kinds were created, seven in silence, one by voice, viz. light. On the second day the firmament. On the third the gathering of waters and the sprouting plants. On the fourth the different luminaries. On the fifth the fowls, the reptiles and the fishes. On the sixth the beasts and men.

The form of the whole world is length and breadth. The head is the East; the end is the west; the right part is the North; the left part is the South.

The earth is as a bed; and the highest heaven as a vault; the second heaven as a wheel adapted to the higher one. And the borders of heaven and earth are joined one to the other. The Ocean surrounds them as a belt. Beyond it are high mountains ascending unto the sky. The sun goes its way

1) **ܩܘܪܝܢܐ**, also a usual term for angels in Syriac.

behind these mountains the whole night. The great sea is beyond them. And this encompasses four times the area of the dry land and one fourth is dry land.

XXVI

189 AGAINST THOSE WHO SAY: IF GOD IS GOOD
WHEREFORE HAS HE MADE THESE THINGS?

Sin, hell and death do not at all exist with God. For they are facts, not persons. Sin is the fruit of will. There was a time, when it was not. And there will be a time, when it will not be. Hell is the fruit of sin; at some time or other it had beginning; but its end is not known. Death, however, is provided by the wisdom of the creator. It will rule a certain time only over nature; then it will vanish altogether. Satan is the name of the deviation of will from the truth, but it is not the designation of a natural being.

Although thou findest, o my brother, some of these things also in other books, still we may not be reckoned by thee as those who seek their own glory, because we pretend the work of others to be our own, but, on the contrary, as those who are humble, since we suck from the milk of our fore-fathers those things which we have collected and placed before ourselves as objects of contemplation, with the aim of enriching the intellect with their stores in which we may pasture and be fed.

For we have not forgotten that we are not above the rank of disciples so long as we dwell in the flesh. The faculty of discernment is the emotionality of the natural ideas. When these go the natural way in their emotions, they meet with the changing elements and worlds. But when [they go] a subsidiary way, another use will be found for the former ones. For when the natural [faculties] are twofold in their intellectual use, they will be understood in one of these only, and that the non-psyhic state.

When thou catchest the delight of the words of the service, then the mind is eager to remain in it continuously. If thou desirest, however, to fulfill its wish, then haste towards the knowledge of its cause. If thou hast attained this quickly, as

one discerning and not blind, it is not difficult for thee to taste this [delight] constantly without impediment. And what then is the influence which is also called cause? By a file, which does not add anything to it, iron is brought to brilliancy and radiance; for these properties belong to its essence. But what happens? The file removes from it the rust, which has come upon it, although no one is responsible for that. The same theory holds true as to the nature of the mind. Bring it into contact with the file; then thou wilt find how it shines at the time of service, imitating the rays of the stars. For a thing is not able to go its way [without aid]; it delays, if no one cares for it. Therefore have I said that during the recitation of Psalms (not during the prayer of the heart and recitation) the heart can hardly be captivated. It is otherwise with those; with them only small care is needed. They are able to make [recitation of Psalms] profitable. But without them, care for recitation will ¹⁹¹ be found to be in vain. The latter will be promoted, even if there be no other increase to it, if the former be a stock already present ¹).

Hunger is able to procure food; but it is not inclined to abstain from eating.

Delicious for the husbandman is the bread won by his sweat. Without previous sweat, the bread of truth does not give saturation. The body which is the husbandman, sweats and feeds the rational mind. And this happens even when the mind is deprived of its customary, non-natural food.

Spiritual excellency is the daughter of excellency of will and this it is necessarily. For freedom is the natural force of reason, and not slavery. But on that side, towards which it inclines and where it abides, it gives birth to a different force, which is not natural. And when this is born, freedom becomes ruled and governed by compulsion. I dare to say: it becomes bound, without self-government. Before, compulsion was voluntary; now compulsion has mastered will.

And I say that this is to be seen on both sides, when a man subdues himself on the right side and when he gives an opportunity to the left one. But the mind that has learnt to see discriminately, is able to observe how compulsion on both sides dominates freedom, when the force which is not from nature, is born

1) I am not quite certain of the meaning of the last sentences.

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1922 (Wensinck).

from the submission of the will. I do not mean the usual force, 192 which is very difficult; but that which is called secondary.

Custom at any rate is subject to the will; though it strives to resist it. Apart from this we know two forces; one subdues the will; the other dominates nature. It has even power to alter nature. That influence dominates nature, is known to those who have been tested by it.

The varying states of the hearts and the deviating minds which are usually born from them (free and bound, living and dead) are promoted to a large extent by the disparity¹⁾ of contemplation which rises in human minds, concerning divine judgments. By the mediation of this disparity the world²⁾ has been preserved for thousands of years. This disparity is largely helpful towards changing the course of mortal life, and what is greatest of all, towards the contemplation of judgments which engender trust in God.

Many hearts as soon as trust has entered them, resemble a man who has taken deadly poison.

Even to true and veracious sons, with ten parts of love five parts of fear are mixed together.

Nature liable to deviation is not able to receive here the perfection of divine truth, or to know the whole will of God regarding the class of rational beings; even Paul and his equals are not sufficient for this; till the liability to err has been taken

1) Disparity (*κἀνάσας κλ*, cf. Register) is a term which, as well as its opposite, often occurs in cognate works, but of which it is not easy to give a clear definition. Dionysius the Areopagite is well acquainted with the idea (*ισότης* and *ἀνισότης*): *τὴν γὰρ ἀνισότητα εἴ τις ἐκλάβει τὰς ἐν τῷ ὕλῳ τῶν ὄλων πρὸς ὅλα διαφοράς· καὶ ταύτης ἡ δικαιοσύνη φρουρητικὴ, μὴ συγχωροῦσα συμμιγῆ τὰ ὅλα ἐν ὅλοις γενόμενα διαταραχθῆναι· φυλάττουσα δὲ τὰ ὅτα πάντα κατ' εἶδος ἕκαστον, ἐν ᾧ ἕκαστον εἶναι πέφυκε* (*De divinis nominibus*, Chapter VIII). On the other hand, in the ninth chapter, Dionysius argues that *ισότης* is a divine property, corresponding to some extent with justice; it means that God is not composed and pervades and reaches the Universe in an equal way.

Going back in literature, we find the terms in the Neo-Platonists. Of importance is the following passage in Plotinus (*Enneades* III II § XVII): *καὶ δὴ ὁ λόγος ὁ πᾶς εἰς· μεμέρισται δὲ οὐκ εἰς ἴσα· ὕεν καὶ τοῦ παντὸς διάφοροι τόποι βελτίους καὶ χείρους καὶ ψυχῶν οὐκ ἴσαι ἐναρμόττουσιν οὕτως τοῖς οὐκ ἴσοις* (cf. also § XVIII and III III § 3, 5 and Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. Creuzer § VII).

Going further back, we find that Philo was well acquainted with the ideas of *ισότης* and *ἀνισότης*. Ed. Mangey I 493 sqq. is very instructive. And in the fragments Mangey gives the following sentences from Philo (II 665): *ὡσπερ τῶν τελειοτάτων ἀγγέλων τὸ ἰσομετρον αἴτιον, οὕτω τῶν μεγίστων κηκῶν ἡ ἀμετρία, τὸν ὠφελιμώτατον λύουσα δεσμὸν ἰσότητος*. And: *τὸ ἀνισον λυπηρὸν καὶ δικαστικὸν ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ ἴσον ἄλυτον καὶ συνδετικὸν εἰς ὠφέλειαν*. — *Τὸ ἔννομον καὶ τὸ ἴσον εἰρήνης σπέρμα, καὶ σωτηρίας αἴτιον, καὶ τῆς εἰς ἅπαντα δαιμονίας*. *Ἀνισότης δὲ καὶ πλεονεξία ὀρηγητήρια πολέμου, καὶ λυτικά τῶν ὄτων*.

2) Reading *κἀνάσας* in stead of *κἀνάσας*

193 away, so that nature no longer errs through being aware of this.

What is parity and disparity? Disparity of contemplation — differences and variations in one soul — is the eternal thought of God being unattainable. Parity is truth being revealed.

If a nature able to err should receive in this world the exact truth, it would die by the power of its liability to err. This is 'O, depth of the riches' ¹⁾ and 'How unsearchable are His judgments' and 'Who has known the mind of God' and the like, which in an astonishing way and among sighs rise in the mind from time to time, which by some is called the Cloud. From this, disparity of contemplation and divergence of insight are born concerning the unattainable inquiry into God's judgments.

When, however, the perfection of nature will have come, in a world without deviation, nature will be no longer afraid to know divine truth, as if it would deviate to the left because of trust. Trust engenders contempt and profusion of spirit. Fear, on the other hand, is wonted to check aberration, so that it becomes bridled. This fear thou findest in thy soul by the contemplation of the different judgments and worlds and the disparity of behaviour and the non-correspondence between the retribution provided to men in this world and the righteousness which shows itself from time to time, and [God's] constant
194 patience, and the righteous and the sinners, and the contrary and incongruous meetings of repugnant persons, as ordered by Providence. When the intellect observes all this, emotion takes hold of the whole soul. And then is born in it examination of deliberations, of words and actions and of the outlines of the domain of divine righteousness.

Now when the intellect withdraws itself from this and is exalted unto the unique Essence, by the contemplation of the properties of that good Nature ²⁾ which possesses eternal knowledge, which is anterior to all existence, and of all His other properties, fear is expelled at once and the mind is supported by confidence.

When the intellect descends again from that place and returns again to the worlds and their distinctions, it will fly and give way to fear, because Providence does not allow it to be always in the presence of this contemplation of truth. Therefore from

1) Romans 11, 33

2)  viz. God

time to time [fear] will take away from the heart the strength of trust which is inspired by true contemplation, and it will let the intellect be tortured by diverse opinions; lest [the intellect] should desist from judging constantly the veracity of its deliberations and actions and thus acquire cautiousness, for it does not know how it will meet the judgment of God. To whom be praise for ever and ever Amen.

XXVII

195 IN HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS THE SIGHT
OF INCORPOREAL BEINGS IS RECEIVED BY
HUMAN NATURE

All simple and subtle kinds of rational bodies can be attained to by the apperception of human nature in three ways: by personal density [which is a] non-essential way; by personal subtlety [which is a] non-essential way; by true contemplation which is essential sight.

The first way is dominated by the senses; the other by simple psychic sight; the third by the natural force of the spirit. Further one is dominated by will and reason; one by will and psychic light and all that strengthens the latter.

Will is in the first place cause; and these are the children of freedom, even if at the time of use freedom and will are silent, so long as influence is active and potent. And one only is dominated by the demonstrating [power], even without the will of the recipients and essential knowledge, even as the senses are the recipients of all accidents without the will.

These three ways are ministered by holy forces which mingle themselves with us for the sake of our instruction and in order that we may find life. Those who are impure have power to minister two of them, which they may use when they come
196 near unto us, for perdition, not for profit. To the third kind they do not approach with the purpose of using it, so as to acquire power over us to lead us astray.

For it is not possible for the children of darkness to approach light; the demons do not possess the power to set into motion the natural insights of the mind. The holy angels, however, possess this faculty of setting into motion and of

illuminating. The demons, however, possess the false insights, the children of darkness, as their power and government. From the illuminated the recipient takes light, from the dark, darkness. And what is the reason that this was given to those, and not to these? The insight which every one of these teachers shows and teaches, is first seen by him in his own person, and learnt and tasted; then he is able to transmit to us the truth of things on account of their true knowledge concerning them, which they have found first by the swift attaining power of the light and pure mind. The demons also possess swiftness, but no illumination. Swiftness is different from illumination. The former without the latter leads its possessors to destruction and insipidity; the latter teaches truth, the former sham truth; for light shows the veracity of things entirely and it becomes greater or less in accordance with behaviour.

From their knowledge the holy angels pour out into us, through the emotions caused by things, that which they taste
197 and acquire first and thus transmit to us. And these secondary teachers also set into motion in us, in correspondence with their knowledge, emotions caused by things. In the domain where they have no freedom, it is necessary [for them] to quicken in us right deliberations concerning these things. As I have said, therefore, this may be certain to thee, that even if we were able to receive it, they would not be able to teach us true contemplation, though they should be acquainted with it from of old. Every member of one party or the other — holy angels or those of the opposite group — teaches and incites us, the disciples, to behave according to his own behaviour.

To me this is true: that the mind of itself, even without the mediation of the holy angels, tends towards the good, even without instruction, but that it is unable to receive the knowledge of evil things without the mediation of the demons or the senses, [and is unable] to tend towards them of its own accord. In our nature good is implanted, evil not. And all that is foreign and is taught from without, needs an intermediary. What is planted within, however, unfolds itself naturally, even without instruction, even if dimly. But even though our nature tends of its own towards the good, it is unable, without the tutorship of the holy angels, to increase this and to be illuminated by it. We have them as teachers, as they have each
198 other, namely those who are lower [have for their teachers]

198 those who are more instructed and enlightened than themselves.

So they have each other [for teachers] up to the one who has as a teacher the holy Trinity. And even he [does not receive instruction] of his own, but he has as a teacher the mediator Jesus, through whom he receives [instruction] and transmits it to those who are on the same plan and lower.

I think also this. As we naturally do not at all possess the force to be moved by divine contemplation, and we share in this deficiency with all heavenly beings, it is only by grace, without exercise or computation [on our part], that we are moved by something which naturally is foreign to the human and angelic mind. For contemplation concerning the godhead is not to be compared with other kinds of contemplation; for we possess contemplation as to their natures through our participation in the twofold nature that is theirs, because of that which is in us and also in them; but we do not participate in the nature of the Essence, nor do we possess contemplation concerning Him. As the faculty of being set into motion by this contemplation does not naturally belong to any of the rational beings of the first and middle class, it must be a gift of grace in all heavenly and earthly minds.

It is not like other faculties caused by nature, however illuminated and purified. But I think — and this is true — that the mind of us, children of man, is to be conducted [only] by revelations and insights so far as to reach this essential contemplation which is the same as true revelation; without their
199 mediation, however, our mind could not be conducted. And our mind does not possess a strength like that of those high and exalted beings who receive all revelations and contemplation from the Essence, without an intermediary. But even they [receive these revelations] through an image of the Essence, not from the Essence itself. So that our mind also is in the same degree as the other classes, not able to receive revelations and contemplation of their own, without an intermediary, but only from Jesus who sways the sceptre of the Kingdom. The other classes, viz. other primary classes receive [revelations] by handing them down one to the other, concerning all matters of government and the understanding thereof (not concerning the Essence), from the first to the second and so on till the mystery has gone through all the classes.

But many are the mysteries which remain in that one primary

class without spreading through the other classes, because, apart from that one, they are not able to receive such a great mystery. There are other mysteries again which proceed from the primary class and are revealed only to the second, but are preserved there in silence; the other classes do not perceive them. Others again are revealed to the third and fourth classes. There are also [differences of] superiority and inferiority of revelation in the case of individual angels. Some of them
200 are rich in revelations and mysteries of a high order are revealed unto them, and they receive plentiful light. Some are lower and their impulses are too weak for these mysteries. And thus among the spiritual classes there is excellency and deficiency, superiority and inferiority concerning the receiving of revelations. Apart from that upper class which is the primary of all classes, the remainder without exception receive contemplation and hints concerning the entire divine government from their fellows. And if this is the case with them, how much less are we able, without them and without an intermediary, to receive such mysteries. But as often as an apperception falls in the minds of the saints, this revelation of whatsoever mystery it be, comes from these [heavenly beings]. When it is allowed by God, revelation is handed down by each higher class to that which is lower, unto the lowest; in the same way, when it is allowed by the godhead, the mystery is handed down by those who are worthy of it unto human beings.

By their intermediary, at any rate, the saints become receivers of the light of contemplation, by which they behold the praised Essence, which is a mystery which they do not learn from each other. Those [higher beings] are administering spirits, which are sent to those who are to inherit life through the apperception of such insights of the truths as are peculiar to them.

201 In the world to be, however, this kind of transmission will be annihilated. For then one will not receive the revelation of God's glory for the delight of his soul, from his comrade, but it will be given to every one himself in so far as is in accordance with the measure of his excellency, and as he is deemed worthy of by the Lord of the Universe; but he will not receive the gift through his comrade, as is the case in this world. For there are none who learn and none who teach and none who desire to receive from their comrades what fails themselves. For one giver reveals himself there without intermediary unto

all receivers. And those who receive all spiritual delight receive from Him. So that they do not perceive Him by means of single insights but by [direct] revelation of Himself, without the outward intermediary of impulses. There is abrogated the degree of the learner and the teacher and every one's swift love is fixed on one.

Also I say that even those who are scourged in Hell are tormented with the scourgings of love. Scourgings for love's sake, namely of those who perceive that they have sinned against love, are more hard and bitter than tortures through fear. The suffering which takes hold of the heart through the sinning against love is more acute than any other torture. It is evil for a man to think that the sinners in Hell are destitute of love for the Creator. For love is a child of true knowledge such as is professed to be given to all people. Love works with its force in a double way. It tortures those who have ²⁰² sinned, as happens also in the world between friends. And it gives delight to those who have kept its decrees. Thus it is also in Hell. I say that the hard tortures are grief for love. The inhabitants of heaven, however, make drunk their soul with the delight of love.

Some one was asked when one could believe that he had been deemed worthy of forgiveness of sins. He answered: when he perceives that he inwardly hates them with a complete hate, and that his mode of life is the contrary of what it previously was. He who is in such a state, will trust that his sins have been forgiven by God, on account of the witness borne by the conscience of his soul, according to the word of the Apostle. The heart which does not blame is a witness concerning itself.

XXVIII

A SYMBOLICAL DEMONSTRATION CONCERNING THE THEORY OF SABBATH AND SUNDAY

Sunday is the symbol of true knowledge which is not received by flesh and blood, and which is elevation above [mere] opinion. In this world, however, there is no eighth day; but neither is there a true Sabbath. The fact that God rested on the seventh day is a symbol of the rest of our nature from the course of

this life. For the grave is also of a bodily nature; it belongs to this world. Six days are accomplished in the service of life; the seventh is accomplished in the grave; the eighth in departing from it. As those who are worthy receive in this world the mysteries of the Sunday in a symbol — they do not receive the day as long as they are in their bodily nature — so ²⁰³ those who are worthy receive in this world the mysteries of the Sabbath symbolically, not the true Sabbath which is perfect rest from wanton influences. God has given us to taste of a mysterious indication of all things, but He has not decreed that we should walk here in intercourse with the real truth. For the real, not the symbolical Sabbath, will happen in the grave, viz. rest which finishes the torments of the affections and the toil against them. The whole man gives rest there to the body together with the soul.

In six days God established the existence of this world and created the elements ¹⁾ and connected their existence with the administration of never resting motion and [ordered] that they should not rest from their course before their dissolution. And from the force of these, viz. the primeval elements, He has composed our body. He did not give those rest from their motions; neither did He grant our body, their offspring, rest from service. As the term of our nature He fixed rest, when we shall follow our first relatives, rest consisting in the dissolution of life. Thus He said to Adam: In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread ²⁾. Till when? Till thou returnest unto the dust, for out of it wast thou taken. Thou shalt work in the ground and it shall bring forth to thee thorns and thistles. This denotes symbolically that this world is a world of service as long as it exists.

Our Lord, since the night when He sweated, has changed this sweat caused by working in the earth which brings forth thorns and thistles, into the sweat which also rises during prayer and which man should produce in the service of right- ²⁰⁴eousness. For five thousand years He left man to work in his sweat, for the way of the saints had not yet been revealed, as the Apostle says. He appeared, however, with His grace in the latter days and ordered our free will to replace sweat by sweat. At any rate this change does not show that He

1) **קמאצפור**, also the planets and zodiacal signs

2) Gen. 3, 19

ordered rest. But He was merciful upon us for the sake of our long and weary work in the earth. If, however, we desist from sweating for this [spiritual service], we must necessarily reap thorns; for desisting from this, means the service of the material earth which brings forth thorns and thistles according to her nature. In reality the thorns are the affections which grow in us from bodily seed. As we bear the image of Adam so we necessarily bear his affections too. The earth is not free to desist from bearing; for it brings forth on account of its nature. The earth is our relative according to God's witness unto us 'the dust out of which thou wast taken'. The one [brings forth] thorns; the other, the rational [earth], affections.

If now our Lord has been a symbolical example for us in every respect, viz. in all his different dealings — for till the ninth hour Friday He did not take rest from work, not even from the toilsome work which symbolically represents our whole life; the Sabbath He expected in the grave only — where then are those¹⁾ who pretend that there is a Sabbath in this world, viz. rest from affections? Concerning the Sunday, however, it is difficult to speak. Our Sabbath is the day of the grave. In reality our nature rests there. So every day it is
 205 necessary to eradicate thorns from this earth as long as it exists. For constant service brings about decrease of weeds. But even thus the earth does not wholly become pure. If thou relaxest but a short time in this respect, the weeds will grow and cover the surface of the earth and choke thy seed and thy previous work as if it had not existed. Therefore, it is necessary to purify, every day; for a pause in this work produces a multitude of weeds.

XXIX

ON THE DIFFERENT EXCELLENT METHODS OF WISE PROVIDENCE IN EDUCATING PUPILS

All wisdom comes from the Lord, as hath been said²⁾. And we exercise ourselves in our own things in order to become wise in the dealings of the Lord with us. The Father of truth

1) the Meşalleyānē?

2) Jesus Sirach 1, 1

deals in different ways with his sons; He avoids uniformity which consists in showing always the same face, for the profit of his sons. On the contrary, for the sake of exercise He withdraws his love. Thus He displays in appearance an order such as exists not; but what is, He retains. A wise son recognizes in different attitudes his father's care for him and his discerning love.

The practice of love appears in two ways when rightly understood: in joyful events, but also in sorrowful ones. This proves that love is constantly tending towards the pleasure of its object. But sometimes it makes its object suffer, because of its fulness; if it makes suffer, it suffers also itself. It resists the motions of natural compassion because of the fear of later harm. Love urges us to participate; knowledge gives strength to resist [these] feelings.

Parallel to the differences in its election are the varying forms of wise love regarding those who receive its sustenance. Let us not ask of a wise friend foolish love. He who kills his son by feeding him with honey, is not different from him that kills his son with a knife.

It is namely not worthy of the wisdom of love to sustain its object in a uniform way, the same in health as in illness. That is to say the variations which depend upon the will in the choice of the emotions, not bodily changes. If we are able to choose those [varying] times when we love some one, with discrimination, especially when such a one is under our command, is it not then but right that we attribute to God the faculty of performing the offices of his discriminating love unto us, even if we do consider them in the same way as the variations we are able to show to our friends? This is difficult to bear, as I know myself; but it is profitable nevertheless. Thy nature which is liable to deviation makes thee in need of this, if not as a retribution for what has passed, then to excite in thee fear of what will certainly happen.

Distressing accidents are to the inner education what wholesome medicines are to bodily disparity.

All that is simple among creatures, is without struggle in its dealings; this is applicable to bodily as well as to non-bodily beings. Action is of such a nature that it is only possible in connection with disparity. Disparity exists only in composite beings, on account of a united duality. And though non-composite

and simple beings are also said to be liable to aberration, still this takes place wholly to the right side, and not in the way of action, because they have no experience of that which is on the opposite side. They are only affectable regarding the good. For their liability to deviation is checked by swift love; and where there is love, there is no struggle and no fear. Yet they are bound in nature; and from this being bound, their liability to aberration is said to originate.

Good and evil are the offspring of freedom. Where the latter is lacking, to practise the former is superfluous with respect to remuneration. For nature knows no remuneration. Reward is decreed for strife. There can be no mention of victory where there is no struggle. When opposition is removed, freedom vanishes at the same time. Then nature remains without strife. A time is reserved for the annihilation of freedom; then a limited rationality comes into existence, among men as well as among the angels. Rationality, not sensible emotionality. In conception ¹⁾ rationality possesses two peculiarities, namely two forces, a rational and a conceiving force. The former is altogether limited. In the latter nature is complete, in so far as ²⁰⁸ it is conceiving. But again it is limited, not compulsorily, but rather delightfully, with a delightful bond. Sometimes this [delight] happens unto a few in this world in a symbolical way; but only in trance. Unto the primeval rational beings [this happened] without trance, as far as this was possible, though they were not perfect. What was it which happened without trance unto persons who were not perfect? There are mysteries that cannot be received before the time appointed. Those persons are imperfect therefore, who do not possess it at all, not those who possess what they do here possess, only in trance.

Therefore constancy [is necessary], rather than trance. If trance [at all], then it is for those things which are most excellent. So trance for those people was an excellent change; with us it is annihilation, because of the sickness of the flesh.

1) *κατανοησις*

XXX

ON THE POWER AND THE EVIL ACTION OF SIN
AND CONCERNING THOSE IN WHOM IT MAINTAINS
ITSELF AND THOSE IN WHOM IT IS ANNIHILATED

A man is not freed from the allurements of sin in his heart until he hates from [the depth of] his heart and sincerely the cause of sin. This causes the vehemence of the struggle which opposes man in the blood and in which his freedom is testified to through the purity of his love of virtues.

This is the power which is called seduction, by the scent of which the weak soul is defeated because of its mighty attraction. This is the strong power of sin by which it troubles the ²⁰⁹serenity of the chaste and overpowers the pure emotions by things the knowledge of which they have never experienced. Here we have to show our endurance, my beloved.

This is the time of the unseen martyrdom in which the order of the solitaries is said to excel at all times. By the shock of this war the mind of the steadfast is troubled and upset, if it is not extremely watchful. Our Lord, who possesseth almighty power, fountain of all help, support Thou in these times of martyrdom the souls who joyfully have betrothed themselves to thee, heavenly bridegroom, and who have given thee the promise of sanctity, in entire purity of emotions without an afterthought. Fill them with the force which subdues the resistance of fortresses and of heights that raise themselves against sanctity, lest they be driven away from their proposed aim by the unbearable compulsion of this time in which the struggle in the blood rages.

Not always does this severe strife take place in the struggle of chastity. Remittance may occur that a test may be applied. Woe to the weak who is put to the test in this decisive strife. It possesses great strength and maintains its customary force against those who have given themselves wholly, even though it be but once, to defeat, by submitting their deliberations to it.

Be on your guard against idleness, my beloved; intelligible death is hidden in it. Without it it is impossible that the solitary should fall into the hands of those who wish to captivate

him. Not that God will judge us on that day on the basis of
 210 the Psalms we have recited or whether we have passed in
 idleness the times of service occasionally; but by our neglecting
 them, the demons win access. And when they have found an
 opportunity to enter and have shut our rooms, they accomplish
 in us tyrannically things which will necessarily bring their per-
 petrators under divine judgment in view of the severe punish-
 ment allotted for them. So we become enslaved through negli-
 gence in small matters which by the prudent are treated in
 a painstaking way, for the sake of Christ. As it has been said:
 Whosoever does not subject his will to God, he becomes a
 slave to his foe. We have, therefore, to consider as walls
 against those who desire to captivate us, those things which
 are reputed to be of a humble nature and which are accom-
 plished in the cell, things which by those who maintain the
 strict institutes of the church have been laid down in prudence
 in a spirit of revelation, for the preservation of our life, the
 neglect of which is deemed insignificant by the imprudent, the
 harm of which, however, they do not consider. The beginning
 and the middle of their path is untrained freedom, which is
 the mother of wrongs. To trouble oneself with the care of
 small things is better than to give opportunity for sin by re-
 missness regarding them. This is freedom at the wrong time;
 the end of which is grinding slavery.

As long as thy senses are alive to the shock of every
 accident, thy soul is to be deemed dead. For in that case the
 flames of sin will never be absent from thy limbs, whatever
 be thy states, and no peace will be able to settle in thy soul.
 If any of the solitaries promises in his heart to be watchful in
 211 such a state, he does not desire to be conscious of punishment.

When a man deceives his companion he deserves the curse,
 such as is according to the law. When, however, a man
 deceives himself, he is not deserving those punishments; for
 while conscious he has made himself unconscious, because it is
 demanded from him that he shall eradicate the cause from his
 heart. But this is difficult in his eyes; and, for this reason,
 while conscious, he desires to be unconscious. O how sweet is
 the cause of affections. He will cut them off sometimes and
 be pleased to drive them away. Often he rejoices on account
 of their being appeased; to eradicate their cause he is, however,
 not able. Therefore we are put to the test, though it be against

our will, and are distressed by the affections although we like that their causes be strong in us.

Sins we desire not; their conductors, however, we receive with delight; so secondary reasons become a mighty cause of primary ones. For he who desires the causes of the affections, is subject to them, though not of his will.

Who hates his sins, abstains from them. He who confesses his faults, receives forgiveness. There is no abstaining from customary sins without acquiring hate, nor receiving of forgiveness without confession of faults. The latter is accompanied by true humility; the former by grief, through shame rising in the heart. So long as we have not advanced to the point of hating blameworthy things, it is not possible to perceive the foetid odour they spread when perpetrated, nor their stinking²¹² smell, bearing them, as we do, in ourselves. So long as thou hast not cast evil away, thou knowest not what shame thou wilt foster nor what chastisement will rise from it. If thou seest in others that with which thou art charged, then thou knowest the shame with which thou art clad. Remove thyself from evil, then thou wilt know. For thou inhalest the foetid odour as a sweet scent, and [considerest] the nakedness of thy shame as a glorious cover.

Blessed is he that has removed himself from darkness and seen himself; so long as he is in it, sight and discernment are impossible. Blessed is he that has come forth from the dizziness of his wine and has seen in others the shamelessness of his drunkenness; then he will understand his own shame. As long as he himself is under the drunkenness of sins, all that he does is beautiful in his eyes. When nature has deviated from its order, it is all alike, to be drunk with wine or with desires; both [states] remove [a man] from what is becoming; both excite in their bearer, the body, the same heat; they are different as to their idea, but one in appearance; and one in madness. There is no equality in their causal ideas; but in their bearers there is no diversity.

All rest is followed by vexation; and all vexation by rest. If all in this world is liable to change, nevertheless man undergoes it in an attitude of opposition, either here or there or at the time of departure. This is especially the case with rest²¹³ from lasciviousness or vexation which precedes it, in the way of sanctity. This is administered by God with compassion, so

that man has to taste this torment either on his way or at its end; then he passes away. And on account of the richness of God's compassion He [uses] this as a means of remuneration, like a deposit; so that the wages of good do not diminish the capital; but the wages of evil do.

As has been said: He who is chastised here, diminishes [his torments in] Hell.

Beware of freedom preceding subjection, beware of consolation preceding strife. Beware of knowledge older than the shock of temptations; beware of it rather than of love preceding the accomplishment of repentance.

If all of us are sinners, and none is exalted above their experience, then none among the virtues precedes repentance. Recollect that all delight is secondary to aversion and bitterness.

Beware of joy also, to which is not joined variation without cause. Concerning all things provided from above thou wilt find the cause of their variation unattainable to knowledge. Fear that which is reputed to be joined with equality; it is said to lie besides the way which is trodden. He who knows to steer the ship of the world with prudence, has connected variation with all that belongs to Him. Different from this is likeness.

Distraction of the thoughts is connected with the rest of the limbs; dejection with immoderate labour; distraction with dejection. Distraction differs from distraction. The former is ²¹⁴ accompanied by the strife of wantonness; the latter by the inclination to leave the cell and to [inhabit] various places. Moderate labour connected with constancy is priceless; where it fails, there is exuberant desire; where it prevails, there is room for trouble.

Bear the folly of nature prevailing in thy body, o brother, because thou art destined to possess that wisdom which possesses the everlasting crown of government. Be not troubled by the disturbance of the body, [the inheritance] of Adam, which is destined as soon as it is clad with that heavenly image which is the king of peace, to dwell in that delight of which the knowledge would overpower in this world the minds of those who are clad with flesh.

Be not troubled on account of the wild variations of nature. For the short duration of the labour caused by them is, to him who endures, as a delightful gift. They are hounds accustomed

to the butcher¹⁾; a sound from the mouth is sufficient to make them flee. But if thou shouldst condescend to have connections with them, thou wouldst make them strong lions.

Despise mean pleasures, lest thou become subjected to the force of their heat²⁾. A little patience regarding small things repels the danger of the approach of large ones. It is not possible to overcome great evils without a small victory over trifling ones.

215 Recollect the kind of way thou wilt go, o brother; there is no longer life there sustained by chemicals driving mortality; nor warmth of temperament exciting the young nature by the allurements of its pleasure. Bear the labour of the struggle into which [He] has introduced thee in order to put thee to the test; then thou wilt take the crown and pass; for after a little time thou wilt have rest from this world. Think of that rest without end, of that life without allurements, of that state of perfect manhood, of that course of life without shocks, of that compulsory force of divine love reigning over nature.

XXXI

THE STRUGGLE OR RATHER THE DANGER OF FALLING THAT EXCELLENT WORKS INCUR

It is not possible to vanquish the bad deliberations that accompany the bodily allurements; or rather it is hardly possible. They have been called by some a double weapon [directed] against us. There is no rest from them as long as there is satiety of bread, water and sleep, and access to the things that cause emotions by their accidental character. It is better to depart life than to bear shame in it. When we are anxious to fulfill our duties, the influence of the flesh will be extinguished from our limbs.

It is not possible to have care for apperceptible things and to correct our personal affections [at the same time]. For without affectionate beseechings and constant bending [of the knees] it is not possible to draw [divine] compassion towards

1) viz. the butcher's shop

2) when it has grown strong

Verh. Afd. Letterk. 1922 (Wensinck)

us; and thus it is necessary to practise them constantly. Without painstaking in small things it is not possible to escape great evils.

XXXII

216 ON THE AIM OF GUARDING THE HEART AND ON
SUBTLE SPECULATION THAT LOOKS INTO THE
APARTMENT

Let there not be hidden to thy knowledge the power that lies in spiritual songs, when we use it with understanding. For it turns the deliberation away from the world. It also drives distraction from the mind, though it is reputed to be useful for children [only]. The unsteady mind profits by it at once. Spiritual allurements are more valuable against the affections than the force of knowledge. When thou art alone, guard thy heart by them if thou possessest not yet the force to be watchful in thy being, through contemplation which is familiar intercourse with the knowledge of discernment; or — if this is not [sufficient] — by the constant recollection of the departure from the body and by the recollection of things expected and hoped for; this must be accompanied by [the fulfilling of] the duties which cause delight, namely: the withdrawal from things which cause emotions, and the little observances within the cell. If, after long slavery, thou findest that thy harbour is to be reached with freedom, pursue it [in this way]. If thou seest that this is a foolish method, combine it with [the practice of] the law. For here it is easy to be rectified.

While with these and such variations thou advancest with insight, in a ship loaded with the treasures of the cell — a great festival full of the merchandise of the virtuous — then look with subtlety at the unequal children which are born to thee from apperceptible variations. Thou wilt namely see how every spiritual delight is preceded by the pains of the cross; 217 how the pleasure of sin, however, is born from bodily comfort; [and thou wilt see] why in the harbour of chastity, spiritual love is caused by spiritual contemplation, which heals the mind. There is nothing secondary without a preceding cause, nor a third virtue without a foregoing one. Thou wilt find growing

in the womb of chastity the wings with which the mind ascends unto divine love, in which one may venture to approach the cloud.

This insight will give a man a considerable force, so as to mingle watchfulness with his affairs, and incitement unto zealous efforts.

Behaviour without eyes will prove idle. For it quickly brings about dejectedness on account of distraction. Pray our Lord that He endow thy behaviour with eyes. Then joy will begin to sprout; then troubles will become sweet to thee as honey comb; then thou wilt think thy enclosure a festival chamber.

It is not possible to vanquish the affections without appreciable virtues, nor fortuitous distraction without intercourse with spiritual knowledge. Our mind is an agile thing; if it is not bound to an object with discernment, it will not cease to be distracted. And if the antecedents have not been fulfilled, there is no room for such a process. For there is no peace without victory over the enemies. And if peace does not reign, [how is it possible] to find that which lies beyond peace?

Affections are the fence of hidden virtues. If they are not vanquished first by the manifest virtues, it is not possible to see
218 what lies within them. For it is not possible for one standing without a wall, to speak about what is within. It is not possible to see the sun in a cloud, nor the natural virtues of the soul among the trouble of perpetual affections.

Pray God that He may give thee to perceive spiritual allurements. If these take hold of thy soul the world will depart from thee and thou from the world. But they cannot be perceived without solitude and emaciation and attentive intercourse with recitation. Without the latter thou must not pray for the former. If thou prayest for the former without [these virtues], they will change quickly and become of a bodily nature. Who is able to understand, will understand. It has pleased the wise Lord that we should eat this bread with sweat; not for malignity, but lest we should be attacked by a malady of the stomach and die.

Every virtue which is the mother of a second, which is anterior to it, is a viper to the souls of those who find it, if they do not cast it from them quickly.

XXXIII

ON THE ACTION OF DIVINE LOVE

Now that we have written the above¹⁾ about spiritual allurements, it is time to explain [this idea]. It is a dim power which arises from love in the heart, at first without sensible causes, for it sets in motion the temperament, without personal vision or practical understanding or reasoning. And therefore it is thought to be without cause, because the mind is still vague.

²¹⁹ This is its impression on the untrained. To the perfect the cause is revealed later, in connection with examination of it; and then the [impression] is still stronger, for delight is moving in the heart. A part of it is reserved in the body by the recipient; and another part is sent to the psychic forces. For the heart is in the middle between psychic and bodily apperceptions; to the former it belongs organically, to the latter naturally. And the recipient directs the taste of its action towards both sides. Therefore the world is compelled to depart from it as it itself departs from the things of the world. We must necessarily inquire into the cause [of this phenomenon]. Love is something hot by nature. And when it alights on any one without measure, it renders that soul as it were mad. Therefore the heart that perceives it, cannot contain and bear it without unusual excessive variations becoming manifest in it. And these signs it publishes in an apperceptible way, openly: at once the face becomes reddy and joyous, the body grows hot; fear and bashfulness are thrown away and it becomes as it were wanton; the power of concentration flees; impetuosity and disturbance reign. His own life forthwith is estimated as nothing in comparison with his Friend. Therefore even death, which was more dreadful to him than any thing, is the same to him as pleasure. And with all this, the gaze of the mind is not free from fantastic thoughts on Him. Afar, he speaks with Him as with one who is near. His knowledge inquires into the hidden state of Him who is concealed from sight. His

1) End of chapter XXXII

220 gaze is natural and hostile to sensual apperception. In his actions, as in his sight, he is enflamed. He dwells in solitude, and deliberation entertains itself as it were with a partner and is stupefied.

This passion has enebriated martyrs and, driven by it, apostles have travelled through the whole earth in trance, the saints have been tormented, have suffered derision and were erring in the wilderness. Composed, they have become deranged; wise, they have wilfully become foolish; bashful, they have become wanton with discernment; exempt from affections [they have walked] in the flesh. Constantly demanding, they have become quiet without compulsion. May we be worthy to reach their madness by the compassion of our adorable God. Amen ¹).

If thou considerest thyself as having peace from the assault of the affections, before thou hast entered the town of humility, do not trust this. There is some ambush prepared for thee. Expect, after this peace, great trouble from them. While passing along all the apartments of virtues, thou wilt not find rest
221 from thy tribulations nor relief from thy persecutors, till thy course will have reached the apartment of humility.

XXXIV

ON THE NATURAL CHILDREN OF VIRTUES AND THE LIKE

Asceticism is the mother of saintliness; from it is born the taste of the first apperception of the divine mysteries and it is called the first period of spiritual knowledge. That no one deceive himself and become a false prophet. For the impure soul does not ascend to the pure kingdom, neither in the symbolical nor in the common sense, and it cannot mingle with the holy spirits. But when the elements have mingled with their relatives, the distinction of the natural unity being

1) In the text there follows: "who has taken a mediator from our race and given us these things through his hand; who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4, 15). On account of the equality of his natural flesh with ours, eternally without mixture, in the unity preserving the properties of the natures, He has made himself worthy of sitting to the right hand. Therefore praise and power and adoration to Him, now and in life without end for ever and ever". The passage is lacking in the Greek translation and looks like a Nestorian addition.

preserved, that miserable [soul] will be preserved for the great future judgment.

Keep pure, o brother, the beauties of thy chastity, by tears and fasting and sitting alone by thyself. When the right course of the natural sphere has been finished and [the soul] has reached that great luminary, which supports the spheres of the stars multitudinous in their personal distinctions, as Paul says in order to prove the future resurrection, and when it has mingled with its rays — I do not mean in the natural sense — then the vehicle of the will shall be bound with the bonds of unconsciousness and the two exuberant fountains will dry up in their basins. And then the priests will leave the sanctuary on account of the cloud of God's majesty¹⁾. At that time the king of Israel will be Solomon, viz. that peace which is born from humility; he will build a house for the Lord and completely provide it with all the sacred vessels.

A little trouble for God's sake is more excellent in God's eyes than much service without suffering. Because trouble borne from free will is a manifestation of love. Service in comfort, however, rises from inward satiety. Therefore by troubles, not by service with satiety the saints were tested concerning the love of Christ. Service without labour is the righteousness of lay people who wish to be justified on account of what they possess, but do not acquire excellency in their person.

Thou, however, who art victorious, taste the suffering of Christ in thy person, that thou also mayest be deemed worthy of tasting His glory. For if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him. The mind cannot be glorified with Jesus, if the body does not suffer for Jesus. He who despises glory will receive glory at the same time. He will be glorified in his body as well as in his soul. The glory of the body is humble subjection before God. The glory of the mind is true contemplation concerning God. Right subjection is twofold; it follows from labour and from disdain; so that when the body suffers, the heart also suffers with it.

If thou doest not know God, it is not possible that His love should be excited in thee. It is not possible for thee to love God, if thou hast not seen God. Thou seest Him as soon as thou knowest Him. Sight is not prior to knowledge. Make me

1) Allusion to 1 Kings 8, 11

worthy of knowing Thee, my Lord, then I shall love Thee too. [I do not desire] that knowledge which arises amidst distractions of the mind, in the training of instruction. But make me worthy of that knowledge by which the mind, while gazing at Thee, will be glorifying thy nature; gazing with that gaze which banishes from the mind the apperception of the world. Make me worthy of becoming exalted above arbitrary sight from which come phantastic thoughts, so that I gaze at Thee by the compulsion of the bonds of the cross, the latter half of which is the crucifixion of the mind whose position of freedom is annihilated by the service of the impulses, with that gaze which nature gives not, but is constantly directed towards Thee. Place in me the pure metal of Thy love, so that, following Thee, I become alienated from the world. Move in me the understanding of Thy humility by which Thou hast lived in the world clad with the cover taken from our limbs, that by the constant and never weakening remembrance of it I may accept with delight the humiliation of my nature.

Two are the parts of the ascension on the cross. One is the crucifixion of the body. The second is the ascension unto contemplation; but the former is a matter of freedom; the latter of influence.

The mind will not be subjected, if the body is not subjected. The reign of the mind is the crucifixion of the body. The mind is not subjected unto God, if freedom has not been subjected to reason.

It is hard to trust an elevated matter to boyish rank. For woe to thee, O town, when thy king is a child²⁾.

He who subjects himself, nearly all will be subjected unto him. He who knows himself, the knowledge of all things will
 224 be given him. The word 'know thyself' means the accomplishment of all knowledge. As all is encompassed in thy being, so in the knowledge of thy being all knowledge is encompassed, and in the subjection of thy being, the subjection of all the world. At the time when humility dominates thy behaviour, thy being will be subjected to thee, and with it everything, because in the heart a divine peace will be born. As this has not yet happened to thee, thou art perpetually persecuted not only by the affections, but also by accidents. Verily,

1) Ecclesiastes 10, 16.

O Lord, if we do not humble ourselves, thou ceapest not to humble us. True humility is the offspring of knowledge; right knowledge the offspring of temptations.

XXXV

A TREATISE IN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING CONSTANT BEHAVIOUR AND EVERY KIND OF EXCELLENCE WHICH IS EMINENTLY USEFUL FOR THOSE WHO HAVE STRIPPED OFF THE WORLD AND DWELL IN THE WILDERNESS, FOR RECLUSES AND FOR THOSE WHO IN VOLUNTARY MORTIFICATION AT ALL TIMES EXPECT THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The disciple says: Which are the bonds captivating the mind [and withholding it] from running after evil things?

The teacher says: The constant search after wisdom and desire for the teachings of life. For bonds stronger than these against the unruliness of mind do not exist.

The disciple says: Where is the limit of the course of wisdom for those who seek it, and where does the course of teachings end?

The teacher says: The way of this course is foreign to any limit, to such an extent that even the holy angels do not reach perfection. The course of wisdom is without end. It ascends to such a height that it mingles with God him that follows it. And even this is a sign of its unlimitedness, that its distinctions are without end; wisdom is God.

The disciple: What is the first and principal way leading towards wisdom?

The teacher: That a man seeks God with all his might and that he is quick in seeking Him with his whole person, so that he even does not dislike to give up and throw down his life on account of his love.

The disciple. To whom is it becoming to be called a man of understanding?

The teacher. He that really understands that there is a limit to his earthly life, is also able to put a limit to his sins. What knowledge or understanding is greater than this, that a man has wisdom to depart this life without harm, while his limbs are

are not strained with the odour of desires, nor his soul with the filth of their sweetness? If a man subdues his impulses in order to penetrate into the mysteries of all classes of beings, and is filled with insight into all kinds of knowledge, so to say, yet his soul is defiled by the filth of sin so that he cannot hope on account of the witness of his soul that he shall safely reach the harbour of trust — then there is none more foolish among the creatures than such a man who, though being constantly occupied
226 by his works, is brought by them to the hope of this world only.

The disciple. Who is really strong?

The teacher. He that during the temporary troubles by which the glory of his victorious power is hidden, does not long after the comfort by which a shameful life is enveloped and which at all times compels those who find it, to drink the goblet of sighs.

The disciple. Is it harmful to his course towards God, if a man makes a pause in his labour?

The teacher. It is not possible for a man to come near to Christ without troubles, nor can his righteousness be preserved unchanged without them. When righteousness already acquired is bereft of labours which served to augment and at the same time to guard it, it resembles a treasure which of a sudden finds itself without guardians, or an athlete who is stripped of his arms while a host of enemies surrounds him; or a ship that is left in the ocean without the utensils of her equipment; or a garden rich in fruits from which is cut off the fountain that watered it.

The disciple. Who is the illuminated in his impulses?

The teacher. He who is able to understand the bitterness hidden in the sweetness of the world and who withholds his mouth from drinking its goblet. Who zealously enquires after the salvation of his life and who does not cease from running, up to the day on which he is freed from the world; who shuts the gates of his senses, lest the love of the world enter and dwell within him and bereave him of his hidden treasures.

The disciple. What is the world and how can we recog-
227 nize it and how can it do harm to those who love it?

The teacher. The world is a whore and by the desire of its beauty it attracts those who see it so that they love it. And he that during a short time has been entangled in its love is not able to escape from its hands, before it has stripped him even of his life and sends him from its house through

death, bereaved of all. But a man recognizes it as soon as he endeavours to leave its darkness. Then he is able to see the many cords of its nets. As long as he is in it, he cannot see its ensnarements. For it is not only its disciples and sons and captives which are within its fortress, but also the renunciators, ascetics and those who have once broken its bonds and were once above it — those also it now gradually begins to entangle in its service, making them litter for its feet.

The disciple. Now that thou hast convinced me of the fact that the world really suffocates those who dwell in it and of how difficult it is to understand its artificial bonds, I beg to learn first, what is the first impulse to the mind's doubt concerning the world, since its bonds are so very sweet and the schemes of its fetters are hidden?

The teacher. When the deliberation of the love of his soul awakens in him, this impulse of deliberation begins to make the world hated in his eyes and it throws into him doubt concerning it.

228 The disciple. Whence comes this emotionality which brings about that which appeared always praiseworthy and beautiful, now suddenly appears as ugly, so that he repents his life and his previous knowledge, thinking that he did not think rightly concerning the world?

The teacher. In the first place it is nature which beakoning to him in silence, awakens in him the critical impulse as to the unstable duration of the world and of the future and of its course; and as to the ephemere nature of those who enter into it, so that he considers this world as a place of transition for those who enter into it; as also for the many generations before him, the number of which is unlimited. They have entered it as an inn for a night and left it as travellers on a journey over the whole earth, without thinking of return. Some of them kings, some governors, some wise, some honoured. Some of them scribes, some orators, some judges, some commanders of armies. Some of them possessors of riches, some lords of goods. And now after their death there is neither the order of their degrees, nor the crowns of their government; nor their dreadful thrones, nor their lordly pleasures, nor the praise of those who honoured them, nor the love of their friends, nor the luxuriant pleasures of their bodies, nor the comely beauty of their grace, nor their proud majestic stature, nor their erudite

mind, nor their spirit rich in impulses, nor the rich effusions
229 of the Gihon of their learning which streamed from their mouth
and captivated by its grace the heart of the hearers.

They have slept in Sheol for long years as if it were one night. And it is not known how many years they yet have of this long sleep, nor when the dawn of resurrection will rise for them and awaken them from their slumber. And to consider for what purpose they are left in this state, causes great suffering; and he will think of how many generations are cloistered under this earth, forgotten [now]. And I too will pass as any one of them. Cursed be riches and comfort. And under this deliberation, great confusion will arise in his heart and his spirit will be filled with suffering. And on account of the severity of suffering he will pour forth tears in great sorrow. Then he will despise the world and bewail his life and lament over his soul with various bitter lamentations. And with sighs he will say to himself: Where wilt thou be, my miserable soul and where wilt thou find thyself after my death? Perhaps even this deliberation will rise in him: Would I had not entered the world of creatures and I had not left the womb!

In this kind of lamentation he will shed sweet tears because of the sorrow of his heart, and moisten his garments with his tears. And forthwith this world will be in his eyes as a prison and its first sweetness will be more bitter than any bitter thing and the love of his life and its desirable beauty will seem the type of hell.

Then his mind will turn to scripture which will awake in
230 him faith in the resurrection and the end awaiting all the things of this world, and in the promises given to those who have lived well in the world and the divine judgments threatened against the transgressors of the law and against those who, during their short lifetime have lived in the broad way of sin. And then, as one who has discovered some light, he throws away the burden of sorrow, and great joy is awakened in him, because he has found a hope, excellent and true. These things and the like, nature is not able to prompt from his inward emotion: they are understood from the words of scripture by faith alone. Man is not able to acquire instruction concerning himself wholly from nature and from the critical impulses which are within him. Concerning the dealings of God in the Past and in the Future we are able to gain this in-

struction from the scriptures or from spiritual revelation. Then by the rays of faith and scripture the eye of the spirit will be enlightened and the natural critical faculty will radiate and man will be incited to care for his soul. And further he will think of means to make his life free from the world, so that, before departing the body, he will be able to prepare for himself provisions useful for the world to be.

The disciple. How can man wholly give up the world?

The teacher. By desire of the future good that is recollected, which divine scripture sows in his heart with the sweetness of its words full of hope. When the things that are thought to be glorious and delightful and in which man is entangled, are not contrasted with the desire of still more excellent things, 231 the spirit is not able to despise its former love.

The disciple. But nature is weak and not able to give up suddenly all its former customs and embrace a life of troubles.

The teacher. If the greatness of the future life does not cause a man's spirit in the greatness of wisdom to compare it with the miserable shortness of this temporal life, it is not possible for him to take heart to bear troubles in order to begin his course on the way of the new world. Pray, compute in thy mind the number of years of this our place and elevate thyself as much as possible, and compare it with the days of the future world, and say whether that which thou givest is equal to what thou wilt receive.

And, considering what thou leavest and what thou wilt receive in stead of it, say whether thy exchange is an equal one. Therefore the wise, while he wonders at the greatness of that world and its unlimited life over against the shortness of temporal life, will say: The number of man's days if he lives long, are a hundred years ¹⁾; this is like filling a bucket from the sea or taking one corn of sand. A thousand years in this world is not as much as one day in the world of the righteous ²⁾.

The disciple. And what shall we do with the body? As soon as it is surrounded by distress, the desire of the will towards the good is relaxed as well as its former zeal.

232 The teacher. This will usually happen to those the half of whose being has sought God, whereas the other half has remained in the world. This means that their heart is not yet

1) Cf. Ps. 90, 10

2) Cf. Ps. 84, 11

free from earthly things, but they are in doubt, sometimes looking behind, sometimes forward; and I think that the sage admonishes those who approach the way of God in this state of indecision, saying: Do not approach it doublehearted, but approach it as one who sows or as one who reaps. And our Lord, seeing that among those who wish to renunciate completely, there are some in such a state of mind, that their will is ready but their thoughts are drawn backwards by fear of troubles, on account of their love of the body which they have not yet thrown away — He will take from them this lassitude of mind saying to them briefly: If any man will come after me, let him first deny himself¹⁾. What is the denial that is spoken of here? It is the denial of the flesh. And one who is destined to suffer crucifixion, he accepts the thought of death, and goes forth, as one who does not think that he has any further share in this life. This is [what is meant by] taking up the cross and following me. The cross denotes the will prepared for any trouble. And declaring why this is so, He says: Whoever will save his soul in this world, will lose it in the true²³³ life²⁾. And whoever will lose his individuality here for my sake, will find it there. This means: he that sets his steps on the way of crucifixion and yet still cares to think of this bodily life, bereaves his soul of the faith for which to suffer he is gone out. Because this thought does not allow him to approach trouble; but, being always with him, allures him gradually and makes him leave the centre of the struggle for blessed life. Such thoughts grow in him till they have overpowered him. But he whose mind has complied with the loss of his self for the sake of finding the love of Me, he will be preserved, without harm, for life everlasting. This is, he who gives up his life for my sake will find it'.

This means: make free thy soul as it were from thyself and prepare it for a complete loss of life. If the departure from this life finds thee in this state of mind, I will give thee life everlasting, according to my promise. And if thou perseverest in this life, I will show my promise in thee later as a confirmation of the future goods. Therefore, thou wilt find that immortal life when thou despisest temporal life. If thou enterest the strife with such a preparation, all that was most sorrowful and

1) Matthew 16, 24

2) Matthew 10, 39

difficult, will be contemptible in thy eyes. The preparation of such a will even is not a struggle for his life in his mind, ²³⁴ even when peril of death threatens him. In short: If a man does not hate his temporal life, because of love of the future life, he cannot bear troubles.

The disciple. In what way can a man cut off his former customs and accustom himself to a life of privation?

The teacher. The body is not to be persuaded to live in need, so long as it is surrounded by things of luxury and relaxation. For the sight of [worldly] things, their splendour and existence kindles in it a desire for them. Therefore justly our Saviour has commanded those who follow Him, in the first place to renunciate and to leave the world. First He frees them from the causes of relaxation; then He commands them to begin work. And our Lord himself, when He began His strife with the Devil, combated him in the dry and desert wilderness. And Paul also commands those who bear the cross of Christ to leave the town. So we will leave the town with Him, bearing his disdain, which He also suffered without the town.

By the abandonment of the world and what belongs to it, man easily forgets his former customs and his trouble will not last a long time. But the coming near to [worldly] things easily relaxes the fervour of the spirit. It is also becoming and very profitable in the strife, that a man's life be ordered with the utmost privation and indigence, free from all things that ²³⁵ excite [the desire of] comfort. When thus the causes leading towards relaxation are removed from man, he will not be tormented by the double strife, the outward and the inward one. Lo, how much easier is the strife if the things a man desires are afar off and not near, alluring the thoughts by their aspect.

Thus we see that there is a double strife. When a man's way of life is poor and his wants are small, he will not look with desire at these things even when indigent and he will content his body with little, because even the body is despised and contemptible in his eyes; and he does not approach unto it because of its beauty and the pleasure it gives, but only in order to sustain nature.

These ways easily lead man to asceticism, without harm and strife and deliberations. It is becoming for a man to refrain from the sight of those and to remain far from those things,

against contact with which he can be on his guard only with a great effort. This I do not say in view of things of the belly only, but also in view of those things which by their temptation put to the test the solitary's freedom and the avoiding of which he has promised in his bond with God. So I mean also the sight of a woman's face, the sight of superb things, superb persons and their luxury, splendid persons and their garments, all things belonging to worldliness also speaking and hearing concerning them. For the affections possess a strong power, ²³⁶ when [worldly] things are near, to weaken the strugglers and to turn aside their mind. If the sight of beautiful things spurs on the mind to follow their service with zeal, it is well known that also those which are the contrary of beautiful, have the power of captivating the mind. And if further harm does not happen than that the quiet mind is cast into strife, there is this loss at any rate, that a man by his own will is thrown from peace into perturbation.

If one of the saints, an industrious father, thought the sight of a man with a womanlike face a harm for the mind and an injury in the strife, when once he approached one of the convents, who then should neglect other [dangers]; for this blessed man was not to be persuaded even to enter and prostrate himself there. This wise father deliberated with insight thus: 'if it should come to my memory even only in the night I pass here, that there is here such a thing, this would be a great loss'. And therefore he did not enter the convent. 'I am not afraid, my brethren' [he said]. 'But wherefore useless strife'? This means, that even such recollections hinder the serenity of my service.

For all the things which belong to this body and against which a man must guard himself by a great effort, will cause him little strife as long as they are at a distance from him. Thus even when they are near, so long as a man uses the pleasant things [of this world] with fear, he desires their proximity only because of the use which is in them.

²³⁷ We see that many roots are buried and hidden under the earth, of which no one has any knowledge as to their existence while it is summer, because of the force of the sun and the strength of heat. But when the raindrops reach them and the influence of the fragrant air, then all of them suddenly begin to show themselves wherever they are buried. Doest thou not

see, that by the strong heat of asceticism and the rays of the grace of solitude, the affections leave thee in quiet; but if thou approachest the things [of the world], thou shalt see that all of them are quickened and thrust up their heads from their places, that is: if they smell just a little of the odour of comfort.

These things I have said in order to show that no one should have confidence before he dies and departs this life and how helpful in our strife flight and withdrawal from the world are. Those things which we are ashamed to recollect secretly, we must also fear to meet. And we may not tread down the heart and despise conscience. For in a lonely place without contact [with the world] we have to examine our body in order to acquire training in endurance.

There is also another thing, more important than the rest: namely as often as that which is a cause of strife, is afar from a man, even if he be vexed in mind he will not fear that, vanquished by desire, he might employ it on account of its being near.

238 The disciple. If a man has thrown away all impediments and has entered the arena, what is the beginning of his strife against sin, and where does he start fighting?

The teacher. This much is known to every one, that all strife against sin and its desires is to be preceded by the labour of fasting, especially if one is combating inward sin. And the token of hate against sin and its desires, visible in those who are engaged in this invisible strife, is this that they begin with fasting.

Afterwards comes standing during the night. He that during his whole life loves the use of fasting, is a friend of chastity. As at the root of all the boons of the world and of all its evils, is sexual pleasure and the relaxation of sleep which incites to impure cohabitation, so the beginning of the holy way of God and of all virtues, is founded upon fasting and strict punctuality in the service of God, with the crucifixion of the body during the whole night in the strife against the pleasure of sleep.

Fasting is a strengthening of all the virtues, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the Naziræans, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the preservation of chastity, the beginning of the way of Christianity, the father of prayer, the fountain

of placidity, the teacher of quiet, and the forerunner of all good qualities. As the delight of light belongs to sound eyes, 239 so the desire of prayer follows fasting with discernment. For as soon as a man begins to fast, his mind forthwith will be desirous of intercourse with God. A fasting body cannot endure lying on its bed during the whole night. For fasting naturally excites vigilance unto God; not only by day, but also during the night. And the empty body of him that fasts does not grow fatigued in the struggle against sleep. And though his senses are weak, his mind is awake unto God in beseechings. It is better to neglect service for weakness caused by fasting, than on account of indolence caused by food.

To dwell at length upon the beauties of fasting is not necessary. Many of the teachers and fathers have spoken about the victories of fasting and the many beautiful things originating in it. And all books inform us concerning the importance of fasting and the victories it has given generation after generation, and concerning the mighty help afforded by it, and the high praise deserved by those who fast. And by experience it is known to every one, that it is the fountain of all good [qualities].

As long as the seals of fasting are on a man's mouth, his mind meditates on the soul's penitence, his heart sends forth prayers and his face is dark with sadness. Evil impulses are afar from him; neither is gladness seen on his brow at all. For he is an enemy of desires and idle occupations. There has never been seen a man who was fasting with discernment who was subjected to evil desire. For fasting is a storehouse of all virtues. And he that despises it, makes all virtues totter.

240 As the first commandment imposed upon our nature in the beginning was against the tasting of the food, and in this point the head of our race fell, therefore those who strive for the fear of God begin the building there where the first injury originated, when they begin the task of keeping His commandments. And also our Saviour, when He manifested Himself to the world at the Jordan, began from that point. For when He had been baptised, the spirit led Him into the wilderness, and then He fasted forty days and forty nights. And all those who follow His steps, base the beginning of their struggle upon this action. That weapon was polished by God, who should despise it without being blameworthy? If the lawgiver has fasted, to

which guardian of the law is it not necessary to do likewise?

Till then the human race had not known victory, and Satan had never experienced defeat on the part of our nature; through this weapon, however, he was vanquished for the first time and the first victory was won which set the crown on the head of our nature. — Thus it is that as soon as this weapon appears in the hand of a man, immediately fear falls upon the deliberations of Satan, that head of rebellion, and at once his mind is struck by the recollection of that defeat in the desert and that first defeat he had to suffer. His strength will be broken when he sees the weapon which our commander has placed in our hands. As soon as he sees this weapon worn by any man, he knows that this one is prepared for the strife. What weapon is stronger than this and which gives encourage-
 241 ment to the heart in the struggle with evil spirits as hunger for Christ's sake does? To the degree in which a man's body is fatigued and kept down at the time when the hosts of Satan surround him, to the same degree his heart is supported by confidence. And he that is constantly in this state, will at all times be burning with zeal as it were with fire.

Constant fasting is a symptom of zeal and fervour in war. Even that zealot Eliyah took upon him this tribulation when he fought for the divine law. Forty days he restrained his mouth from food, during the long walk through the desert.

Fasting reminds those who practise it of the spiritual commandments; for it was a mediator in the ancient law and by the grace of our Lord Jesus we have received it. But what more shall I say concerning its merits which are known to every one? He that despises fasting, will also be weak and without vigour in the other good works, because he lacks the weapon by means of which the godlike athletes have been victorious. And he that from the beginning shows in himself a sign of relaxation, gives his adversary a chance of victory and enters battle in a state of deprivation. And it is certain that he will leave it, without the victory, because he has bereaved himself of the force which divine zeal had stirred in him. Thus he begins strife in a state of cold in stead of in a state of heat. For his limbs are not clad with the flame of hunger, namely of fasting during which the mind endures the strokes of all hard and unexpected events motionless.

It is said concerning many of the holy martyrs that, when

²⁴² they were informed by a spiritual revelation or by one of their friends, regarding the day on which they would receive the crown, they did not taste anything the preceding night, nor did they take any food. But from the eve till morn they would stand in prayer, awake, praising God in songs and glorifications and hymns and spiritual melodies, being joyful and exalting and expecting that moment as people destined to enter a bridal house. They expected, while in a state of fasting, to receive the blow of the sword and to be crowned with the crown of the confessorship.

And we too have to keep this state of preparation perpetually, o my brethren, expecting invisible martyrdom and the winning of the crown of holiness, [being on our guard] lest in any of our limbs a sign of unbelief be given to our enemies. Thus our outward senses and our inward impulses being clad with all the weapons of God, we shall receive this crown deserving it and so we shall go in unto His glory with the holy martyrs, striking our enemies with amazement. For without labour nobody wins the crown, as the teacher, the great Diodorus ¹⁾ says. For it is well known that it would be most unworthy that merchants may not bring home riches without labour and dangerous storms, and that yet the righteous should expect the remuneration of the crown, without injury and labour for the sake of righteousness.

²⁴³ The disciple. Many are those who perform these labours, yet do not perceive rest as to the affections, nor peace as to the deliberations.

The teacher. The affections hidden in the soul, o my brother, cannot be appeased by the works of solitaries which are performed with the body alone, nor do these hinder the deliberations from being constantly stirred by the senses. These labours guard man against being vanquished by desires and against harm caused by the demons. But they do not give peace and rest unto the soul too. Labours cause apathy and mortify our limbs on the earth and give rest on the part of deliberations, only if they are combined with solitude, when also the outward senses rest from turbulence and have become addicted during some time, to the service of wisdom. Until a man refrains from meeting his fellow-man and until he checks

1) One of the London Mss. has: Basil

his limbs from mingling with many things, and concentrates his self, — he will not be acquainted with his affections. For solitude, the blessed Basilus, the shining torch of the whole world, says — is the beginning of the purification of the soul. For when the outward senses have rest from outward turbulence, then the mind will return from distraction unto its place and the heart will be stirred to examine the inner impulses of the soul; and if it perseveres well it will reach in its course even the purification of the soul.

The disciple. Is it not possible for the soul, if it be strong, to be purified while having connections with the outward world?

The teacher. If a tree is watered every day, when will its roots become dried up? A vessel whose contents increase daily, when will it be empty? If purity be nothing else than to forget the dealings belonging to non-freedom and to have peace from their recollection, and if a man, either personally and practically, or through others, renews in his soul by the medium of the senses this recollection, viz. the knowledge of evil things, when shall he be purified from them? Or when shall he be liberated from the strife with outward things, so that it will be possible to see inward things and gain peace? When the heart is defiled every day, when can it be purified from filth?

Perhaps it cannot even dominate practice, not to speak of purifying the root. For it stands in the centre of the camp and every day its ears are struck by the rumour of battles, how then can it venture to proclaim peace to itself? But if it be far from these, then it will be able to grant peace to the inward things gradually. Before the stream from above has been shut off, the nether waters will not dry up.

But when a man has found solitude, the soul is able to expel the affections and to test its own wisdom. Then the inward man will be stirred unto spiritual service and day by day he will perceive the hidden wisdom moving in his soul.

The disciple. What are the true marks and the undubitable signs that from a man's labour the hidden fruits are beginning to show themselves in the soul?

The teacher. When he is deemed worthy of the gift of tears, flowing abundantly and without compulsion. Tears are to the mind the sure distinction between the bodily and the spiritual state, between the state of apperception and that of purity. As long as one has not yet received this gift, the

labour of his service is still in the outward man, and this to such an extent that he does not even perceive anything of the hidden service of the spiritual man. When he begins to leave the bodiliness of this world and moves in that territory which lies beyond this visible nature, then at once he will reach the grace of tears. And from the first apartment of that hidden behaviour these tears will begin and they will conduct him to the complete love of God. When he has reached this point, tears will be so copious that he drinks them with his food and his drink, so constant and abundant are they. This is a true token of the mind's leaving this world and its apperceiving the spiritual world. And the more the mind approaches unto this world, the more these tears will diminish. And when the mind is wholly in the worldly things, it will also be completely without tears, and this is the sign of its being enveloped by the affections.

Some tears cause a burning heat, others render fat. All tears which flow for grief and distress of heart caused by sins, make the body lean and burning with heat. And often when these tears are shed, one will even feel that his marrow is injured. Man will necessarily enter this order of tears first. ²⁴⁶ Then by them the gate leading to the second order will be opened for him, an order which is by far superior, because it contains the sign of the receiving of mercy. What is this? Those tears which have their origin in insight, make the body fat; they flow spontaneously and compulsion has no share in them. They also anoint the body and the aspect of the face is changed. For a joyful heart renders the body beautiful. These tears moisten the whole face when the mind lives in solitude. The body acquires by them as it were some sustenance and joy is diffused over the face. Whosoever has experienced these two varying states, will understand.

The disciple. What is the resurrection of the soul, namely if ye be risen with Christ? ¹⁾

The teacher. This is what is said by the apostle in another place: For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts ²⁾. Resurrection he calls leaving the old state, which in the likeness of Hell hindered him from seeing the light of the Gospel rise, so to say, which

1) Coloss. 3, 1

2) 2 Cor. 4, 6

is the breath of life in the hope of the resurrection by which the dawn of divine wisdom rises in the heart, so that he now is a new man in whom is nothing of this world. As it has been said: A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you¹). Then in truth Christ is imprinted on them, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in knowledge concerning Him.

The disciple. What is, in short terms, the power of the practice of solitude?

247 The teacher. It mortifies the outward senses and quickens the inward impulses. Intercourse, however, works in the inverse way.

The disciple. What is the cause of the visions and revelations granted unto some? To others however, who have laboured more than the former, such things are not granted.

The teacher. The causes of revelations and visions are many, not one. The first cause of revelations and visions is God's will to give a token of His mercy; in this case God provided men with them in order to help them. Some take place on account of divine providence. These are the common cases. The rest take place in order to strengthen and to encourage the weak, and to console and instruct them.

[An instance of those revelations which take place by] providence are the angels which were seen at the side of the grave, and those which at the Assumption appeared unto the Apostles who were both distressed and stupefied and in confusion on account of the Lord's departure from them. And at once two angels appeared who stood by them in white apparel, and those which appeared in the prison and in any place where [the apostles] fell into the hands of men. Unto single persons and unto the other saints after them they appeared, and even to this day. For these three classes of men such visitations are usually provided: for those who are simple and irreproachable above measure; or for holy and perfect persons; or for those who on account of fervent zeal have fled from
248 the world; abandoning it entirely in despair and retiring from any part inhabited by men, following God, naked, without hope or help from anything visible, assailed by the fear of desolation or surrounded by the peril of death from hunger or illness or

1) Ez. 36, 26

any evil whatever and near to dejection. That such consolations happen to some people, whereas others who are their superiors in works remain without anything of that kind, is in the first place founded on purity or non-purity of the heart, I mean. A second cause is certainly this, that as long as a man receives consolation from his fellow-man or from any of these visible things, such [heavenly] consolations do not happen to him, save only by providential decree and this bears a common character.

But our discourse is for solitaries. A witness to this is one of the saints who has announced that there came a voice unto him saying: Enough of consolation from and intercourse with men! Another witness¹⁾ to this is he who led a solitary life in reclusion, and often tasted from consolations granted by grace, and divine care often became visible to him in manifest apperception; but when he came near the inhabited world and sought these things as usual, he did not find them. He besought God that the truth concerning this matter might become
249 known to him, saying: Perhaps, my Lord, grace has been withdrawn from me on account of my episcopal rank? It was said to him: No. But then, there was the desert, there were no men, but God provided for thee. Now, there is the inhabited world and men provide for thee. — So we say that it is impossible for a man to share in visible as well as in spiritual consolation.

The disciple. Are vision and revelation one, or are they different in fact as they are different in names?

The teacher. There is a difference between vision and revelation. The name of revelation covers the two, because it denotes the revealing of a thing that hitherto was hidden and now becomes manifest in any way. But not all that is revelation is at the same time vision. But what is vision is also called revelation, because it is a hidden thing which is revealed. But not all that comes to be revealed and known, is vision.

Revelation is usually connected with what is intelligible and tasted with the intellect. Vision, however, always happens in similitudes; as those things which were ministered unto the ancients, be it in the depth of sleep, or in the state of waking; sometimes clearly, at other times dimly, while he to whom the

1) See Introduction

vision was given often did not know whether he saw awake or in sleep. Even after he had regained consciousness, he did not know whether the thing had in reality happened to him, or as in a dream. Sometimes a voice of help was heard; sometimes a symbolical representation was seen; sometimes there was a clear apparition, face to face, and sight and speech, questions and intercourse; and those holy hosts appeared to those who were worthy. It is clear that in the desert and the wilderness and in lonely places and in places of retreat from the world, such things happen; where man decidedly needs them, because he has no help from any side.

Revelation of those things which are apperceived intellectually, is received through purity. And the latter only belongs to the initiated and perfect.

The disciple. When any one has reached purity of heart, what is the token thereof? And when shall he know himself whether his heart has come to purity?

The teacher. When he sees all men in a good light, without any one appearing to him unclean or defiled. Such a man has really reached purity. If this were not true, how could it be possible to fulfill the word of the Apostle: When a man possesses all excellence, he reckons every one superior to himself in heart and truth¹).

But when he has reached the point mentioned, he whose eyes are pure, does not see evil.

The disciple. What is purity and where is its limit?

The teacher. I think that purity is oblivion of those kinds of knowledge which do not belong to nature, those namely which nature has found in the world. Its limit consists therein that we are freed from that knowledge to such a degree that we reach the original simplicity and integrity of nature in the way of a child, apart from small exceptions only.

The disciple. It is possible for a man to reach this order?

The teacher. Ay. One of the Fathers was come so far, that he repeatedly asked his pupil whether he had eaten bread or not. And one of the saints who was then an old ascetic, had become so pure and simple and had reached such a perfection and serenity, that he was nearly as a babe, having forgotten all wordly things. And perhaps many will not

1) Cf. Philippians 2, 3

believe us what we say (for it is a real wonder) that even at the oblation of the Eucharist he could not observe [the fast] so as to receive the Eucharist; he did not even know whether he had observed [the fast] or not, till his disciples kept watch on him in his cell and brought him to the sanctuary, as a little boy. So very serene and pure was this blessed man. And being thus in worldly things, in his soul he was perfect with God.

The disciple. Which meditation and occupation should a man have in his reclusion and solitude, lest his intellect should be found to be occupied with accidental deliberations?

The teacher. Thou askest what shall be the meditation of him that is dead to the world in his cell. Should a man who is zealous and whose soul is awake, need to ask what his work should be in his solitude? What is the meditation of the solitary in his cell but weeping? Should he be able to turn his gaze from weeping towards a different deliberation? Which ²⁵² meditation would be more profitable? For his dwellingplace, lonely like the grave and deprived of all worldly pleasures, teaches him that his service consists in weeping. And even his name turns him into this direction; for he is called *abila*, which means: bitter in heart. All the righteous have departed this world with weeping. If the saints would weep and their mouths at all times were filled with their tears and they thus departed this world, who should not weep then? The consolation of the recluse is born from weeping. If those who were victorious have shed tears in this world, how then should he that is covered with wounds dare to abstain from weeping? If before the housefather his beloved is laid dead, should he need instruction concerning the thought which should move him to tears? Thy soul which is dead in sins is laid before thee, thy soul which is of greater value to thee than the whole world. If we come to solitude, we can also get accustomed to weeping. Therefore we should steadily beseech our Lord to give us this. If we receive this gift, excellent above any other, through weeping we shall reach purity. And when we have reached it, it will not be taken from us again, to the day on which we shall depart the world.

Blessed therefore are the pure in heart who at all times enjoy this delight of tears and through it constantly see our Lord. While tears are in their eyes, they are deemed worthy ²⁵³ of seeing His revelation at the height of prayer; for they even

know of no prayer without tears. And this is what has been said by our Lord: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted¹⁾. For by mournfulness a man reaches purity of soul. When therefore our Saviour says: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted, He does not explain what comfort is. When the solitary is deemed worthy on account of his mournfulness to pass beyond this place of affections and to reach the plain of purity of soul, where he will find a consolation that will not leave those who have found it — then it is clear that the consolation which at the completion of mournfulness is received through purity, is promised by our Lord to the mournful. For if any one weeps constantly, the affections will not approach his heart; for weeping lies beyond affectibility. If tears are able to efface from the mind of him that mourns and weeps for but a short time, the recollection of the affections, what shall we say about him who has imposed upon himself a definite service during day and night? Who knows the profits of weeping, save those who have given themselves to it? All the saints desire this [means of] introduction; and by weeping, a gate is opened before them through which they enter that place of consolation, in which the footsteps of God's love are impressed by revelations.

The disciple. But because man is not able to adhere to this practice, on account of the body's weak nature, it is necessary for him to have some other thing serving to captivate his mind, lest the affections should assail him through the idleness of the intellect.

The teacher. The affections are not able to assail the soul and to trouble the solitary whose heart is cut off from the world by dwelling lonely in the complete solitude of the desert, separated from all the sounds and voices of the commotion of mankind — unless he neglect his duties, especially that of being occupied with the scriptures and the profitable deliberations with which he is occupied, by the excellent understanding of which paltry thoughts are driven away from him and his mind is not able to free itself from them, but [in this state] he gazes upon the whole world, because of the great delight of that occupation by which the intellect is completely satisfied in that extreme loneliness of the desert. So he loses

1) Matthew 5, 4

consciousness of himself and forgets his nature and he becomes as one who is mad without any recollection of the world; especially when he thinks of God's greatness, the glory of His nature and His wondrous works and when he recollects how high his own despicable being has been elevated. To think about Him and to dare foster such thoughts for the sake of delight and to get drunk at all times by ecstatic impulses as in the life after resurrection, are things greatly promoted by solitude, because the intellect has the opportunity of being with itself, in the peace that has its origin in solitude. At the same time it will adapt its recollections to the aim of its course, and it will direct itself towards the glory of the world to be, the hope preserved for the righteous, life in spiritual emotion
255 wholly originating in God. This is the new way of life, without recollection and without emotion concerning anything in this world. And when he is satisfied with these things his contemplation turns from them towards the things of this world in which he is still abiding, saying with amazement: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge and unsearchable mind of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out¹⁾. Since He has prepared a different world which is so amazing, into which He shall introduce all rational beings and keep them without variance in life without end. What then is the reason why He has made this world first, which He has made large and has provided with a great many species, and has made a place of a multitude of affections? And He has set us first in this world and implanted in our nature a strong love of its own life; then He expels us from it, gradually, by death and prescribes to us a long interval in a state without sensual apperception, like stones and wood, a state during which He destroys our image and pours out our mettle and mixes it up with the earth. And He permits our building to be demolished and ruined, till it has lost all likeness with [its previous] composition. Then, at the time appointed by His wisdom, working according to His free will, He resurrects us in a different likeness which He knows and introduces us into that new order; and not only us, but also the holy angels, who do not need the use of this world
256 on account of their amazing nature. For all of them are nearly

1) Romans 11, 33

perfect, awaiting the resurrection and the elevation of our fallen state, when the human race shall rise from the dust, and its fallen state be quickened unto new life. For on account of us they are hindered from entering, till once the gate of that new world will be opened, which they expect. For even the class of the angels sighs with us in that it sees us loaded with the weight of the body while it hopes and expects the revelation of the children of God, so that it itself may be freed from slavery that perishes, in the freedom of the glory of the children of God ¹).

First he will free this whole [world] from its state so that it is reduced to nothing, analogous to the first state of the body. Then he will elevate himself intellectually beyond the beginnings of the creation of the world, when there was no creation nor anything, no heaven, no earth, no angels, nor any of the created things. Then of a sudden he will bring all things into existence, his will being sufficient to effect that all is before him in a state of perfection. Then he will descend in his mind and visit all God's creatures. And in his high and wondrous works the wisdom of his creating power will show itself. His power subdues all minds, the amazing and powerful strength of his creating force brings into existence out of nothing a creation with innumerable different kinds.

Then he will think of how He again will destroy this, so that perishes the wondrous order, the ornament of kinds, the prescribed course of the creatures, the times and occasions, the harmony of night and day, the useful seasons of the year, the embellished earth, the different kinds sprouting from it; the fine buildings of the cities and the beautiful palaces in them; the continual course of mankind, nature submitted and tormented from man's entering it until he leaves it.

And how suddenly this wonderful order will be destroyed and how a new world will begin in which no recollection whatever of the first creation will occur to any man's mind, in which there will be a different mode of life, different deliberations and different thoughts. Then human nature will no longer recollect this world nor the former way of life in it. For the gaze of their mind will be captivated by the sight of that [new] order, and it will not be able to turn in its memory

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 21. On the following passage cf. the Introduction.

towards the races of flesh and blood; for as soon as this world is destroyed, the new one will begin¹).

O mother that suddenly has been forgotten by the sons which she has borne and educated and instructed — and in the twinkling of an eye they are gathered unto another bosom, and have become real sons of the barren one that which has never borne. Rejoice, o barren, thou that didst not bear, at the sons which the earth has borne to thee. And the mind thinks in amazement, of how a new world will take the place of this, and of when its beginning will be; and of how long these bodies will lie in that state, body and dust mingled together; and what like that mode of life will be; and in what likeness this nature will rise and in what way it will come to the second creation.

By such thoughts rest will spread over the mind. And the
 258 apperception of its bodily state will vanish; and it will remain a long time in silence, wondering at the incomprehensible deeds of God. At that moment the solitary will kneel down and render thanks with many tears to God who is wise in His works, and whose deeds are incomprehensible, as are also the secrets of His exalted mind, concerning what He has done and what He will do. What heart of stone would not become unconscious under such impulses, struck with silence and stupor, and turned away from the emotions of senses and impulses? Blessed is he who has been deemed worthy of these things. Blessed is he who has thought of this, day and night. Blessed is he who has been occupied with these things during his whole life. To every man this thought is useful, but especially to him that lives in solitude. And it is becoming that these recollections should always be with him. These indications a man should take to mind and, having finished prayer, he should think of them and meditate upon them.

When he is occupied with these thoughts, there will be no room for foreign recollections in his spirit, which could hinder him from the constant recollection of God. And if at first he does not perceive the profitable influence of these things, on account of his being distracted, he should not be dejected. When the husbandman casts seed on the earth, it is not pos-

1) The two sentences which follow could be an interpolation; the sentence "And the mind thinks" etc. is the direct continuation of the present one.

sible that he should see the oars at the same time. Dejection and despondency are connected with sowing. It is sweet to the peasant to eat of his bread; but his sweat is still sweeter.

259 This thought, in solitude, will pour endless delight into the heart and will quickly draw the mind towards unspeakable ecstasy. Blessed is he to whom this fountain has been opened and who drinks from it at all hours of the day and the night.

The disciple. What is the acme of all the labours of asceticism, which a man, when he has reached it, recognises as the summit of his course?

The teacher. When he is deemed worthy of constant prayer. When he has reached this, he has touched the end of all virtues and forthwith he has a spiritual dwelling-place. If a man has not received in truth the gift of the Comforter, it is not possible for him to accomplish constant prayer in quiet. When the spirit takes its dwelling-place in a man he does not cease to pray, because the spirit will constantly pray in him ¹). Then, neither when he sleeps, nor when he is awake, will prayer be cut off from his soul; but when he eats and when he drinks, when he lies down or when he does any work, even when he is immersed in sleep, the perfumes of prayer will breathe in his soul spontaneously. And henceforth he will not possess prayer at limited times, but always; and when he has outward rest, even then prayer is ministered unto him secretly. For the silence of the serene is prayer, says a man clad with Christ. For their deliberations are divine impulses. The motions of the pure mind are quiet voices with which they secretly chant psalms to the Invisible One.

260 The disciple. What is spiritual prayer; and how are we made worthy of it?

The teacher. It is the psychic impulses which partake of the influence of the Holy Spirit, on account of veracious purity. One man in ten thousand is found worthy of this. It is a symbol of the future way of existence, for nature is elevated and exempt from all the impulses from the recollection of things in this world. It does not pray, but the soul perceives the spiritual things of the world beyond (which is something greater than the mind of man); the understanding of these is kindled by spiritual force. — It is inner sight, and

1) This is apparently the meaning of the sentence, which in the original is not quite clear.

not the impulse and the beseeching of prayer. It has its starting point in prayer. Because such men have reached the summit of purity and because at all times their inner emotions are stirring in prayer — as I have said before — the Spirit, whenever it looks at them, will find them in prayer; and from there it will conduct them by contemplation, which is interpreted spiritual sight. They do not want prolonged prayer nor the defined order of frequent service.

For the recollection of God alone will be sufficient for them, and at once they will be governed by love, as if captives. But because of this state they are not absolutely negligent, but attribute honour to prayer by standing on their feet at fixed times; but they do not practise continual prayer.

For we see that the holy Antonius, when standing on his feet ²⁶¹ in the prayer of the ninth hour, perceived that his mind was taken up. And another saint found himself in ecstasy for four days, while he stood in prayer with outspread hands. And, on examination, it will be seen in the stories of many others that they were found in the well known attitude of prayer, when granted this gift. A man is deemed worthy of this, when he puts off outward and inward sin, by observing the commandments of our Lord, which are anterior to this state. If one will practise these in his own degree, it is inevitably necessary for him to forsake all human things. This means: he shall put off the body and be outside it, so to speak; not its nature, but the use of it. There is nobody who has practised these things in the sense of the lawgiver, and with whom sin has persevered to dwell.

Therefore our Lord has promised in the Gospel, that He shall make His dwellingplace the man who observes these things.

The disciple. And what is the perfection of all spiritual fruits?

The teacher. This is when man is deemed worthy of the complete love of God.

The disciple. And how can he that has reached this point, acquire certainty?

The teacher. Every time when the thought of God is stirred in his spirit, the heart will become hot with love at once, the eyes will shed multitudinous tears; for love is accustomed to shed tears at the recollection of the beloved. He

that is in this state will never be found destitute of tears, because he is never without abundant recollection of God, so that even during sleep he speaks with Him. Love is accustomed to practise these things and this is the accomplishment of man in this life.

The disciple. He that after many labours and fatigues and victories fought and won, is assailed by the thought of haughtiness that is based upon the beauty of his excellence, when he recalls the many labours he has borne — how can he restrain his thoughts and regain watchfulness so as not to give way?

The teacher. When he knows that he falls from God as a withered leaf falls from the tree, then he will also know his own strength and recognise whether he has acquired these virtues by his strength and whether he could have withstood all the struggles face-to-face if God had withdrawn from him His help and had left him alone in his strife with Satan without being accompanied by that force that usually accompanies the victorious combatants in their struggles. For here their strength, or better their weakness, comes to light. So that it is God's care for man which at all times guards and strengthens him and through which he overcomes all classes of men, be it in the struggle of chastity, or in the sufferings of martyrdom or in the other hardships while he suffers for the sake of divine things.

This is well known and no doubt concerning it is possible. For how else could nature vanquish this mighty force of never resting allurements which have their seat in man's members and torment him and yet he does withstand them? How is it that others which love and long after the same purity, are not able to reach it, though they strive after it, nay daily they are cast back, tormented and sad and weeping over themselves, whereas thou bearest easily the difficulties of nature, which are so hard, and yet thou art not oppressed by them? Or how were it possible that another should endure in his sensitive flesh the cutting iron and the combs in all his members without being vanquished by suffering under all kinds of tortures, whereas else he could not endure a little thorn inserted under his nail? But these totally diverse tortures he bears without suffering in the natural way. How should this be possible unless some force, apart from that of nature, were sent to him and

from another direction and unless this force restrained and mitigated the force of the tortures?

There is nothing that withholds us from mentioning here a story that is really amazing to one who hears it. Because we have pointed to God's care for man which makes him victorious in all battles for the sake of excellence, it would not be becoming to omit this story. Socrates, in his work on the history of the church, when mentioning the Roman emperors, relates in a succinct way the evil which the members of the church had to suffer under Julianus; then passing on to particulars he tells a story of that which happened in the city of Antioch.

A certain adolescent, Theodore by name, was brought by the heathens before Sallustius, to whom the jurisdiction in these matters had been entrusted. He gave him up to suffering and torture, commanding that his whole body should be combed. Then he set him free from torture, thinking that he was dead. But God was the saviour of that blessed man, who lived for a long time after his testimony. For Rufinus, who has written about ecclesiastical things in Greek, says that a long time after he had conversation with this blessed Theodore. He asked him whether he had felt the pain keenly when being tortured. The latter answered that he had been conscious of pain to a very trifling extent only. For a young man had been standing near him, wiping off the sweat of the struggle and strengthening his soul and making the time of the struggle of the tortures a delight to him. O, for God's compassion, how near is His bounty to those who begin the warfare for His sake in order to bear sufferings for Him gladly. Do not injure God's bounty to thee, o man.

If it is manifest, that thou art not the victor but that thou art as an instrument and that the Lord wins the victory for thee whereas thou obtainest the name of victor as a present, what then hinders thee from beseeching at all times the same power, that thou mayest always obtain the same victory as a witness? Hast thou not heard, o man, from of old and from the beginnings of time, how many champions have fallen from the height of their victories because they have injured grace?

On the same subject. The gifts of God unto the human race being many and various, there is also a difference in their smallness or greatness in relation to those who receive them.

Though all of them are wonderful and glorious, one is more than the other in glory and honour. One degree is higher than the previous one, according to the word of scripture.

And further, that a man be elected to practise good works and a steady behaviour, this is one of the principal gifts of Christ. But many forget this grace, namely those whom God has distinguished above others so that they belong to the receivers of His gifts, even to the degree that they are elected to the service of the Lord; then, in contrast to the gratitude which was always on their lips, they turn aside to presumption and become haughty in mind. And though they have been made worthy to serve God with pure behaviour and spiritual labours, yet they do not deem themselves receivers of grace but as those who deserve this through God, forgetting that they have been elected from the rest of mankind unto familiarity with Him and knowledge of His mysteries. Nor do they tremble in their whole soul when they think of how their comrades, who fostered the same thoughts, were suddenly deprived of that strength with which they had been entrusted, and of how in the twinkling of an eye they lost the great honour they had possessed and declined quickly unto lasciviousness and turned towards the base behaviour of the irrational animals. And because they know not the strength of their soul, nor perpetually recollect Him that made them worthy of the great boon of serving Him and of abiding in the honour of His kingdom and that made them comrades of the spiritual beings and brought them near unto the behaviour of the angels, He rejects them from their service. Thus He shows to them by the sudden variations of their behaviour, that it was not by their own [strength] that they adhered to a steady behaviour under all the assaults of nature and the demons and the other impediments, but that this strength was a gift from Him.

What other men cannot even endure to listen to, on account of its difficulty, this they have endured a long time without being vanquished, because the strength that accompanied them was able to help them under all circumstances and to guard them at all times. Accordingly, since they have forgotten this, the word has been fulfilled in them. Namely as they have not willed concerning themselves that they should know God, viz. their Lord who has made the service of the spiritual beings descend to earth, God has delivered them up to vain know-

ledge and so they have received in person the retribution which their forgetfulness had deserved.

The disciple. Is it possible that a man should so to speak daringly leave the dwellingplaces of men suddenly and
 267 go naked into the uninhabited desert and the terrible wilderness in beautiful zeal and that he should die there from hunger or from the absence of shelter or the like?

The teacher. He that has prepared a dwellingplace for the beasts before He created them and who provides their wants, will not neglect those who fear them, especially when they follow Him simply, without forethought. He whose will accords with God in all things will never, for fear of bodily evils and dangers, consent to adhere to a filthy behaviour and to endure a life of humiliation because he fears troubles. But he will count it an exquisite and delicious thing to become estranged to the whole world in purity of behaviour, and to lead a life of deprivation among hills and mountains and to wander in the haunts of beasts and not to lead a life of filth, in bodily comfort, delivering up his soul so that it be for ever destitute of a pious and pure behaviour unto God, to whom belongeth the glory and the honour and who preserves us in His goodness and sanctifies us by His spirit to the honour of His name, that we may praise Him worthily all the days of our life, Amen.

For one of the saints says¹⁾: The body becomes a comrade of sin; for it is afraid of troubles, thinking it may receive an injury and have to give up its life. For the spirit of God oppresses the body so that it dies; it is well known that it cannot vanquish sin unless it die. Who desires that our Lord should dwell in him, will oppress his body and minister unto his Lord those spiritual fruits which the apostle describes; and he will guard his soul against the works of the flesh which
 268 Paul describes. For the body that is mingled with sin takes pleasure in the works of the flesh. And the spirit of God takes pleasure in its own fruits. When the body is weak by fasting and mortification, the soul is spiritually strong through prayer. When the body is vehemently oppressed by solitude and penury and its life is near its term, it will beseech thee: Leave me a while to behave with moderation. Now I give directions because

1) Introduction p. 32

I know by experience that evils are of this nature. And when thou releasest the body somewhat from oppression, giving it some comfort by sparing it so that it can take breath again, then it will whisper to thee quietly again and again: Let us leave even the wilderness. For its allurements are very strong; [it says]: from now onward we shall be able to behave well, even in the neighbourhood of the inhabited world. For we have been put to the test in many things and we shall be able to continue this [behaviour] even there. Put me to the test and if I do not comply with thy will, we can begin anew for the desert lies before us. — But do not believe [the body] even if it beseeches and promises greatly, for it will not keep its promises. When thou hast granted it some of its wishes, it will drive thee on towards greater concessions from which thou canst not retract thy steps. When thou art dejected on account of thy being filled with troubles, say to thyself: Doest thou desire this filth and this sordid life? And if the body says to thee: It is a great sin that thou killest thyself, — say to it: I kill myself because I cannot live purely. I will die now and not further see my soul's essential die away from God. It is
 269 better for me to die now for the sake of purity than to live a shameful life in the world¹). This death I willingly choose on account of my sins. I kill myself because I have sinned before God and will not further rouse His anger. What to me is life afar from God? I will bear these evils and through them I will not be a stranger to heavenly hope. Why have I been created in the world, if I simply enter and leave it? And what should God profit by my life in the world, if I lived badly in it? On the contrary, I would but rouse His anger.

XXXVI

ON THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH SATAN WARS AGAINST THOSE WHO TREAD THE NARROW WAY WHICH IS ABOVE THE WORLD

Our enemy Satan has also other methods, when he cunningly proposes to attack those who engage themselves in this strife. His way of warfare varies according to their character and in relation to their personal tendencies.

¹) See p. 31, 97

As to those whom he sees to be of a weak will and of feeble thought he combates them vehemently from the beginning by submitting them to heavy and terrible temptations, in order to make them taste the nature of his evil from the very beginning of the way. In this way he intends to instill into them a horror of the first battle so that this way shall appear to them difficult to walk. And if the beginning is very
 270 difficult, who could endure to the end, facing all the battles which are ranged in the middle? Thus they will not again venture to withstand him or to look for other help, on account of their being totally occupied with the thought of his attacks. And when he has pressed them a little vehemently they take to flight. Or better: God lets him oppress them, without helping them in any way because they have engaged in the battle of the Lord, with a cold heart and hesitatingly. Cursed is every one who performs the work of the Lord without diligence, retaining his hand from bloodshed. But also: His help is near those who fear Him ¹⁾; and He commands that we should not meet the foe with a cold and fearful heart. Begin to destroy him and to wage war with him and I will begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven ²⁾.

If thou doest not voluntarily die to the senses for the sake of the love of God, thou wilt die intellectually away from God, against thy will. That which belongs to thy lot thou shalt not refuse to take upon thee willingly, though it is connected with temporary suffering; afterwards thou shalt enter the glory of God. If thou perishest bodily in the strife of the Lord, the Lord will even crown thee; and to thy triumphant limbs He will attribute the honour of the martyrs.

So, as I have said above, if they have not girded themselves up from the beginning and strengthened themselves and vowed themselves to death, then they will appear to be inferior in all battles, especially because God overlooks their relaxation ³⁾ in that they try to accomplish the work of the Lord in
 271 a frivolous and tentative way. And even Satan knows them from the beginning, examining what their thoughts are: pusillanimous, loving themselves, even sparing their body. So he persecutes them like a hurricane, because he does not find in

1) Ps. 145, 19

2) Deut. 2, 25

3) ~~accidental~~ as the London Mss. have

them the intelligible power which he usually finds in the triumphant. As a man's will tends towards God, for whose sake he loves labours, so God will send him His help and show him His care. For it is not possible for Satan to approach unto anyone or to bring forward his temptations, except by permission of the godhead; or else that his will has become relaxed and he has given himself to impure thoughts and to distraction; or because doubt has taken hold of him. Concerning such persons Satan does not ask [permission] to try them as in the case of those who are perfect and great; as to the latter he knows that they are not given over into his hand. For he knows that it is not possible that the power of God's care be withdrawn from them. Except because of one of the causes mentioned.

This is one way in which the foe makes war. As to those whose will he sees to be vigorous and who reckon death as nothing and who have begun with keen zeal giving themselves over to every temptation and to death, and who trample upon life and the world and the body with its temptations — ²⁷² he does not meet at the outset, nor does he usually show himself to them. But he withdraws himself and gives way to them. He neither encounters them with his principal force nor does he enter into battle with them. For he knows that the beginning of battles is usually hot and the antagonist is zealous and zealous champions are seldom vanquished.

This method he follows, not because he is afraid of them, but of that divine power which sets them ablaze through the forces working in them till they begin to emit it through their own will in full confidence. But he leaves them for some time till their zeal is abating and their attention is withdrawn from the exercise of the weapon for which they had trained themselves and with which they had armed their mind, viz. different divine words and profitable and strengthening recollections; and thus awaits the time of negligence. And when the first thoughts have abated somewhat, how often will they find within themselves occasions of defeat on account of allurements that have their origin in the mind. They dig a ditch in themselves through the distraction of thoughts that arise in their mind through tediousness, through which a chill overpowers them.

It is not spontaneous when Satan acts thus, delaying the time of battle; for neither when he spares them nor when he

withdraws himself from them, does he account them nothing. But I think that a certain power surrounds those who are blazing with fervour unto God and who have begun in a youthful way, without forethought, confiding in Him on account
273 of their faith, without knowing however against whom they have to fight. Therefore he conceals his evil nature from them, approaching not near. For his nature is checked by the guardian which he sees with them continually. Now if they do not cast away the causes of profit: beseeching, labours and humbleness, the helper will never withdraw Himself from them. The love of comfort is a cause of [God's] withdrawal. But if they adhere to these [works] sedulously, they will never be destitute of help and the foe will not be allowed to approach them. And if [God] withdraws himself from time to time, this is for the sake of training. For while the holy force governs and accompanies them, they do not fear seducers; the mind is full of courage and therefore it despises them. But He trains them as a man who teaches swimming to a little boy; as soon as he begins to sink, the teacher lifts him up, for the boy swims upon the hands of his teacher. And when the courage of the boy begins to diminish, from fear that he will be drowned, the man who supports him with his hands, cries: be not afraid, I support thee. Or, as a mother who teaches her little child to walk, places him at a distance from her and calls him; but when the boy will go to his mother on those little tottering feet of his, they tremble on account of their weakness. Then when the boy is about to fall, the mother will run and take him
274 in her arms. So God's grace will bear up and train the children of man, namely those who trust themselves clearly and simply to the hands of Him that created them and who with their whole heart turn from the world and follow Him.

And thou, O man, who hast begun to follow God, recollect perpetually during thy whole struggle, the beginning and that first zeal at the outset of the way and the fervent thoughts with which thou didst leave thy former life and range thyself in the order of battle. And examine thyself every day [in order to state] whether the fervour of thy soul has abated in comparison with the zeal with which thou wert blazing. Or whether thou lackest any weapon with which thou wert girded at the beginning of thy struggle. And elevate constantly thy voice in the camp and encourage those of the right hand with familiar

thoughts. And show the opposite party that thou art awake. And if thou meetest impetuosity in the beginning, because the temptator will frighten thee, do not then relax. Perhaps this will be profitable to thee.

It is not without reason that thy saviour permits anything unto thee but only when He has foreseen it and ordered it to thy profit. Show thou no relaxation from the beginning; for if thou shouldst show relaxation here, thou wouldst not be able to withstand what follows: hunger, sickness, fearful sights and so on. Do not turn into its opposite the intention of Him that commands thee to fight, which serves to thy profit, lest
 275 thy foe find thee as he hopes to find thee. But cry unto God unceasingly and weep before His grace and weary thyself out with beseeching, till He sends thee a helper. And if thou once seest the saviour who is with thee, thou wilt no more be vanquished by thy foe who is standing before thee.

Thus far these two kinds of strife.

Another way in which Satan makes war against those who are girded.

When after all this Satan is still opposed by a man without being able to overpower him in battle, or rather his helper, for whose sake man resists him, and who helps and strengthens him to such an extent that he who is compact flesh and body vanquishes him that is spiritual and unbodily — when Satan sees all the help which that man receives from God so that his outward senses are not vanquished by sights and sounds nor his thoughts weakened by excitations and allurements, nay he even despises the blows they give him, then he seeks for a means to separate that man from the angel that helps him, or rather he purposes to blind the mind of him that is helped so that he is left without support.

So he stirs that man's thoughts of presumption namely those of [imaginary] strength, so that he thinks his mind the cause of all this vigour and of the glorious wealth which he possesses in his soul. His preservation from all these obstacles, sad, un-
 276 speakable, and bloodthirsty, he sometimes ascribes to accident, sometimes to their being weak. I do not mention other things the bare recollection of which makes the soul shiver on account of their blasphemous nature.

It also happens that he advances his betrayal insidiously under the appearance of divine revelations. During sleep he

imparts information and in the state of waking he assumes the likeness of an angel of light. And all this [is of such a nature] that, should a man surrender to it even to a small extent, he will become its victim. But if a man be wise and keep his thoughts under control, or rather if God helps him and he fixes the gaze of his heart on heaven in order to turn away from incantators, then the foe plans another kind of war. This is the only one left to him now; and because it has some affinity to nature he expects the more that man will be entangled in it. What is it? He contrives in all manner of ways to set man in contact with those things through which he usually becomes guilty on account of his nature. The mind of the warrior namely becomes blinded by sight of and contact with [worldly] things, and it is easily vanquished in battle when it is near them, especially when they are ranged before his eyes. The clever one knows this cunning thoroughly on account of his experience with many valiant champions who were van-
277 quished through it. Therefore he prepares this means cunningly. And when it is not of a nature to be practised because of the [warrior's] utter solitude and his dwelling far from things that cause [sin], then he contrives to bring it near him through phantasy. So he shows him fallacious images in the habit of reality, in order that by these visions he be rendered desirous and incited to conceive impure thoughts and become guilty and to alienate Him that helps him. For Satan knows that the solitary's victory and defeat, his treasure and his help and all that belongs to him, depends upon deliberation, and that, if deliberation be moved from its place, one short moment is able to throw him down from the nest of life on to the earth, if his will be pointed in this direction for even a moment only. Thus it has happened to many of the saints that he showed them the image of a beautiful woman.

Those who dwelt at a distance of one or two or even ten parasangs from the inhabited world he did indeed contrive to bring in contact with a woman. But to those, to whom he could not do this on account of their distant dwellingplace being too far off, he showed the images of womanly beauty by appearing to them, now in splendid dress and finery and in a seducing aspect, now even in the form of a naked woman. Some of the solitaries he overpowered by these means and the like, some by real seduction, some by things of the ima-

gination which brought about their fall¹⁾ through the relaxation of their deliberations; so they fell down into the abyss of despondency and turned unto the world, cutting themselves off from heavenly hope.

Others however who were steadfast and illuminated by grace,
 278 have vanquished him and his fantastic representations and trampled upon bodily pleasures; and they have been found to be elected by the love of God.

Often also he represents to them images of gold and precious things as treasures that were hidden somewhere. It even happens that he shows them these things in reality, expecting that by one of these various [artifices] it will be possible to impede some one of the solitaries so as to bar his course through his being entangled in one of the snares of his nets. Lead me not, o Lord, into these temptations; for even the strong and the elect scarcely pass this gate victorious.

The seducer is allowed to make war upon the saints in all these ways of temptation, in order that the love of God which is in them may be proved under these circumstances; namely, whether they are friends of God and whether they adhere to His love because [worldly] things are at a distance, far off and absent; or whether they love God really, so as to make war on and to despise these things even when present, without being vanquished and without giving up their love of God through the allurements of those temptations. This does not happen that they may be known to God through these [temptations], but to the Devil, who is very desirous of recognizing them, if possible. As he also said concerning Job, asking God about him: Doth Job fear God for nought²⁾? If then a little negligence creeps in, the temptator approaches with authority in accordance with the power he has over them. Then the unjust appears in the desire which these things excite in him.
 279 And through these things those are proved who are strong in their love of Him, those who despise all these things, which in their eyes are counted as nothing in comparison with the love of God. In this they are humble, ascribing merits only to Him who strengthens all and who is the cause of their victory and into His hands they entrust the battle. For Thou art the

1) litt. derision

2) Job 1, 9

powerful, and the battle is Thine. Fight, o Lord, and be victorious on our behalf.

Then they are tested by these things as gold in the furnace. But those who are untrustworthy are recognized there through those trials, and thrown out as refuse. They give way to their foe and have to leave the battle, defeated through the relaxation of their mind, or perhaps through their haughtiness which has made them unworthy of that strong power which is always ready to help the saints.

For never to be defeated is the power of Him that helps us, the omnipotent, the almighty, the victorious at all times whenever He descends into the body of mortals to fight for them. But it is manifest that those who are defeated, are defeated without Him. They are those whose will is stripped of Him because of their injustice, who are not worthy of that power which is the support of the victorious. They also perceive at the time of battle that they lack the usual strength, which they found in themselves in all hot and difficult battles. How do they perceive this? They see in themselves that their defeat gives them comfort and that the hardships of strife are
280 difficult for them to bear, hardships under which at all times they were wonted to win a clear victory. And the emotions of zeal which at such times used to stir nature vigorously and which were strengthened by a fiery heat — they do not find them in themselves.

Now those who are shaken from their foundation are terrified not only by these and the like struggles, but even by the sound of the leaves of the trees¹⁾, and give way and renounce and turn their back under light trouble, for hunger or slight illness. The true and elect, however, do not even satisfy their hunger with herbs and vegetables. But, feeding upon drugs and dry stubble, even then they are not to be persuaded to open their mouth for food, before the fixed time. Lying on the earth, with an emaciated body and eyes blinded²⁾ on account of bodily weakness, their soul near their mouth³⁾ through tribulation, even then they do not give way so as to be vanquished and give up their firm will. For it is more delightful for them to be troubled for the sake of love, with

1) Cf. Lev. 26, 36

2) Isaac himself is said to have become blinded

3) i. e. on the point of leaving the body

labours for excellency, than to possess temporal life and all its comforts. So, when adversities approach them, they rejoice; for they know that these will lead them to perfection. And not only have they no doubt of the love of Christ in spite of the bodily tortures they have to suffer, but it would be delightful
 281 even to bear for His sake loss of life; even then they would not separate themselves from Him.

XXXVII

ON THE THINGS THE EXACT USE OF WHICH I HAVE LEARNT BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF DISCERNMENT

Having been tested many times by things of the right and by things of the left, and examined myself in these two states many times, and received innumerable blows from the opposition, and been deemed worthy of important, hidden support, and having continued the examination of myself during a range of years, I have learnt by experience that the principles of all good things and the regaining of the soul from the captivity of the enemies, and the way towards life and light, consist in two things: abiding in one and the same place, and constant fasting. This means: that a man, being wise, shall lay down a fair law for his belly, by untroubled, constant sitting [alone]. Proceeding from here he will reach the subduing of the senses; further: watchfulness of mind; further: tranquillizing of brutish passions stirring in the body. Further: quiet thoughts. Further: enlightened impulses of the spirit. Further: application to excellent works. Further: high and subtle insights. Further: immeasurable tears at all times. Further: watchful chastity, without any connection with the experience of the image in the spirit.
 282 Further: a quick and far gaze. Further: a deep intelligence, penetrating and attaining to the hidden things in all depths, the power of words and the hidden motions in the soul; and the distinctions of spirits and holy powers; of true sight and deceitful images. Further: fear of the [many] ways and tracks in the sea of the spirit — fear that cuts off negligence; and blazing zeal which tramples upon all dangers and sets its foot upon all things feared; and fervour despising all desires and effacing from the mind the recollection of all transitory things;

and many other things. In brief: the liberation of true man and the renewal of the soul and the resurrection with Christ in the kingdom, away from here.

He that neglects these two¹⁾, should know that he not only bereaves himself of these, but that he shakes the foundation of all virtues by despising these two. And as the beginning of all other virtues in the soul is formed by these principles of all divine service, which are the gate and the way unto Christ, for him that takes hold of them and sticks to them, so the deviation and the departure from them towards those which are their opposite, I mean distraction of the body and a lawless belly, constitute in the soul a place for the beginning of all things contrary to those mentioned above. And also this attitude takes its source in one action, viz. in the fact that the submissive senses are first freed from the bonds of lonely dwelling. And what are the consequences? Unexpected, impure²⁸³ contact; threatening danger of falling; agitation and heavy billows stirred by sensible sight; almighty flames kindled in the body; small spiritual shortcomings; uncontrollable deliberations, prone to falling; lack of love of service; gradual forgetting of the distinctions of solitude; complete negligence of the canons of behaviour; renewal of former things which had become effaced, and instruction concerning other new things, unknown before and caused by audition on various and perpetually recurring occasions and by a multitude of unintentional cases of sight, presenting themselves on account of perpetual travelling from country to country and from place to place. All this has the effect that those affections which by God's grace were already slumbering in the soul on account of the oblivion into which obliterated recollections had passed, begin to be stirred into motion anew, forcing the soul to work. And there are yet other [injuries] which I will not mention all of them; taking their origin in that first one, they are let loose against the miserable one, and he has to bear them.

And what is the second fault? This, that he begins to resemble the swines in his deeds. What is it that the swines do? They do not check their belly, filling it at all times without having an hour fixed for food, as rational beings have.

And what further? From this comes heavy sleep, great

1) solitude and fasting

284 bodily heaviness and a slackening of the shoulders; the compulsion to desist from services, aversion to the inclinations¹⁾ connected with them; contempt of the usual prostrations, darkness and coldness of spirit; a dull mind that does not distinguish, confusedness and great darkness of deliberations; thick clouds and obscurity spread over the whole soul; great dejection concerning every godly work, also concerning recitation [of the scriptures], originating therein that the sweetness of the sense of the words is not tasted; frequent neglect of necessary things; an uncontrolled mind, made blunt by wandering through the whole world, many humours gathered in the limbs; impure phantasies during the whole night, consisting in sordid representations and unclean voluptuous images, which cling to the soul and act in it according to their impure pleasure; and a cover and a body wholly defiled by the large stream of shameful things flowing from [the body] as from a fountain. And this does not happen at night only, but also by day the body sends forth [this stream constantly], defiling the mind thereby.

And on account of these things, [the solitary] disavows his chastity. Sweet allurements working in the whole body with unbearable and incessant heat; exciting deliberations full of beautiful faces representing them before him lasciviously and perpetually and thereby seducing him; a mind delivering itself unhesitatingly to intercourse with them, joining itself with them in longing and meditation, because its distinctive faculty has
285 been blinded; all this is what has been said by one of the great philosophers: he that provides his body with many things, exposes his soul to penury. And though he recollects his soul now and then, trying to compel himself, yet it is impossible for him to keep his soul under control because of the hot emotions in the body which by the power of their allurements, forcibly captivate the soul, according to their pleasure. As the clever and acute Mar Diodorus of Tarsus says: to support the body in softness and luxury, quickly imparts to the soul a sensation of suffering, so that death becomes to it something deplorable and God's judgment is thought of with fear. The soul, however, that constantly thinks of becoming things, is quiet in its being; it has small solicitude, as it feels no grief.

Care for excellence is the driver of the affections, the guardian

1) *كآاا*

of excellence, a secure education, joy without solicitude, a good life and a safe port. Bodily luxury strengthens the affections and makes them dominant upon the soul, nay they even totally eradicate it. And apart from all this, it inflames the belly on account of wantonness and lack of rules as to hours. Yet [the solitary] does not wish that gradually the passion of hunger should gain power over his soul which in a compulsory way could be brought by it under the dominion of the affections.

These are the fruits that come forth from the shameful [passions] of the belly; and these are the fruits produced by ²⁸⁶ the lack of power to cling to one spot in peace. As now our foe, who follows us constantly, knows that on these two occasions nature is usually capable of being troubled and affected with passion to a higher degree and also the mind easier to be perplexed through sensible vision and the comfort of the belly, therefore he contrives to surpass nature, and at these times casts into the mind different haughty deliberations in order to strengthen the power of passion over nature, if possible, by a more intense flame, and so ruin a man utterly.

Just as our foe knows these times, it is, therefore, necessary for us to know them also as well as our own weakness and the [want of] strength of our nature which is not able to withstand the vehement emotions of those times nor the deliberations subtle as the dust of the earth which are before our eyes so that we cannot see ourselves nor remain upright before fate.

By such experiences on many occasions we have miserably learnt from our foe to be prudent henceforth and not to allow ourselves to relax so that we indulge in the desire of consolation or to be defeated by hunger however we may be incited by it; or to be removed from the place of our solitude unto a place safe against such accidents, thinking out reasons and devising means for turning our back to the desert. Such thoughts are manifest machinations of Satan. But if thou remainest in the desert, thou wilt not be tested. For thou seest no woman ²⁸⁷ in the desert nor anything that does harm to thy behaviour, nor [doest thou hear] evil sounds. What hast thou to do with the ways of Egypt and with drinking water from the Nile? Understand what I say. Show thy foe thy training by enduring small things; then he will not demand great things from thee. Constantly thou shalt have to keep the laws of these small things, thereby throwing before his feet a bait, namely, in the

struggle concerning them. So he will not have rest from them, so as to have occasion to set up dangerous snares for thee in secret.

How is it possible that he should persuade a man, who is not to be persuaded to go five steps outside the door of his hut, to leave the desert or to approach unto the town? And he that can not be induced to look through his window from the place of his reclusion, how should he persuade him to leave it? He who is not to be persuaded to take food in the late evening being desirous of vigils, how is it possible that his deliberations should be excited so as to begin [his meals] before the appointed time? And how is it possible that he should induce as to important matters him who was even ashamed to satisfy [his hunger] by contemptible food? And how can he allure towards foreign beauty him, that even refused to look at his own body? First man is vanquished by small things when he despises them and then he causes himself to be driven towards serious ones. But how can he deter from troubles that lead to death him who loves [death], and does not care in the least to continue temporary life? Thus is the war carried on with understanding: the wise do not allow
 288 their foe to invite them to great struggles. But the endurance which they show in small things, preserves them from falling while they perform large works. First the [solitary] desists from constant prayer consisting in beseechings of the spirit, and then he persuades him to despise canonical prayer [performed] by the body at fixed times.

Firstly deliberation is relaxed, so that, within a short time, it gives way in insignificant and small things. And when it has given up its endurance, it will trespass in a wanton way.

Firstly the solitary will be vanquished, or rather: it will be a trifling thing in his eyes to look at his naked body or to contemplate the beauty of each of his limbs, without clothes; or he will loose control over his senses in a vile way when he goes to fulfill a bodily want; or he will daringly and unblushingly introduce his hand within his clothes and touch his body; and then one thing and another will happen to him. As soon as the watchfulness of his spirit relaxes, showing negligence in any of these things, the gate towards serious offences will be open for him.

Our deliberations are as water, as is well known. As long

as they are confined on all sides, they proceed in their [right] order. If they once find a small outlet, however, they escape through it, causing breaches and ruins. For the subtle one who is spying us and waiting, sitting night and day before our nostrils and looking which gate will be opened for him in any of our senses or in which of the things enumerated there will appear any foulness — he will of a sudden direct against us his weapons. Sometimes it will be our own nature which loves consolation and evil intercourse, and frivolity and pleasure and relaxation, which is a fountain of affections and a sea of agitation. Sometimes it will be our foe. Let us therefore vary great labours and circumstances perilous with ruin, with slight labours, that we may show in these small ones which are nothing, that they may give rise to important struggles if they are neglected, and to labours whose accomplishment is difficult, and to intricate battles and to large ulcers. Who would not like to have a quiet sleep at a small expense?

O wisdom, how admirable art thou! And how thou doest foresee all things from afar! Blessed is every one who has found thee, who has been liberated from the torpidity of youth that buys great detriment with a slight negligence. One of the sages says beautifully, that once he was suddenly struck by emotion so that thereupon he straightway sat down, for a mere fortuitous thing, which was not of a nature to cause fear. For this, some one in a light mood laughed at him. He answered and said: Not of this am I afraid. I am afraid of the experienced fact that often negligence as to small things causes danger of great ones. So, by my emotion and my sitting straightway down, I have proved concerning myself that I am awake; and also that further on I will not neglect those things which are not to be feared.

For philosophy is this that a man gather great consolation for his soul by the attention he bestows on trifling things; that he will not slumber ere fate come and reach him; but that he will take in hand the previous things and will buy that which is of importance, in exchange for a thing which will cause injury, a little before [this happens]. Fools attach a greater value to a little consolation which is near, than to a kingdom which is far. It is better to bear tortures in probity, than to relax on a comfortable royal bed in shameful baseness. For the sages prefer death to disdain on account of neglect in

affairs. Wake for thy life, says a philosopher; for drowsiness of mind is cognate to real death. The divine philosopher Basilus says: he that is weak in small things, do not believe that he will be trustworthy in great ones. Do not shrink from dying for the sake of those things for which thou wilt live.

XXXVIII

291 SHORT SENTENCES CONCERNING THE DISTINCTION
OF THE MIND'S IMPULSES

Pusillanimity is a sign of despondency; the mother of both is negligence.

A timorous man shows that he suffers from two illnesses: from love of the body and from want of faith. Love of the body is a sign of unbelief. But he that despises it, shows concerning himself that he trusts God and expects the future things.

If there is anyone who has approached God without being troubled, try then on thy part to resemble him.

Courage of the heart and contempt for danger arise from one of two causes: either from hardness of heart, or from a deep belief in God. The former is accompanied by haughtiness, the latter by humbleness of heart.

It is impossible for a man to acquire confidence in God, if he has not before fulfilled His will in part. Confidence in God and manliness of heart rise from the testimony of conscience. For on account of the true testimony of our mind we acquire confidence in God. The testimony of the mind has its origin therein that a man is not despised by his soul for neglect of his duty, as far as this is possible.

If our heart does not despise us, then we are frank with God. Frankness has its origin in a firm behaviour and in an unstained mind.

It is hard to serve as a slave to the body. He that is aware of his hope, though to a small extent, will refuse to serve again the stern will of this hard master.

292 Endurance in perfect silence and preservation of solitude arise from one of three causes: from the [love of] glory among fellow-men; or the fervent zeal for excellence; or a certain

inward working of God towards which the mind is attracted. He that is destitute of the two latter causes, will suffer from the first as it were by necessity.

Excellence does not consist in many manifest distinctions of bodily performances, but in a heart prudent in its hope, accompanying the works with a right intention. For often these performances do not favour service, and the mind will be able to gain profit even without them. But without the prudence of the heart the body cannot profit even when it performs service. For if there is an opportunity to perform beautiful works, a godly man cannot refrain from showing his love, in the performance of manifest deeds. The former kind is always successful; the latter sometimes, and sometimes not.

Do not reckon it a small thing when the causes of the affections are afar off and removed from a man. The stirring of the inferior limbs which comes quickly into existence, without deliberations, that is to say impure pleasure which springs from under a wall with fervour and captivates the soul with madness, the will being of no use — undoubtedly arises in the body from a repleted belly.

As a strong weapon in this strife reckon this, that a man be far from seeing women. What nature works by its power, even the foe cannot work it. Do not think that nature will forget till death that which God has sown and hidden in its roots, serving for the carrying on of our race and for testing us by strife. So every desire, whatever it be, is lulled to sleep in our limbs by keeping things at a distance; and its memory is given over to absorption and oblivion.

Thoughts of far off things which make a simple passage through the mind, are different from the dark and cold impulses that arise from the soul itself. Those thoughts also which arise from living contact which immerses the mind in a sight not to be forgotten and which excites passion near-at-hand, feeding it as oil feeds the flame of the lamp which was already flickering and nearly extinguished, are different from the stirring of the sea of the body through the impulses which agitate it against the ship of the mind.

The emotionability which exclusively rises from nature and which by God the creator has been deposited in us in order to educate the world of the body, is not able, without an increase from without, to bereave the will of its clearness, to

confuse it so that it lose its chastity. For God does not impart strength to nature so that it overcome the virtuous will.

294 But when a man is defeated by anger and by desire, it is not that which lies in nature which compels him to leave nature's domain and to cut the bonds of duty, but it is something which we add to nature by the intermediary of the will. All that God has made, He has made beautiful and in due proportions. And as long as the measure of natural things is rightly preserved in us they do not cause us to be swept from the way of God's law as it were by a deluge; only peaceful impulses stir in a body provided with the faculty of emotions, so long as we only know that passion exists, but not so when we also experience that it allures, or that it troubles the course of chastity and that it causes confusion or that it changes the state of peace into anger. If, however, we sometimes crave for things of the senses which are usually the source of unnatural anger, or for copious food and drink, or for constantly having the opportunity of seeing a woman near us, or of hearing tales about her which use to enflame in the body the fire of desires — then we cause the natural state of peace to be changed into that of bestiality, be it on account of the many humours in the arteries, or by various sights of [worldly] things.

It occurs also on account of that abandonment that arises from presumption. But this does not really belong to this category. The former cases we call strife for freedom and they belong to the common way of nature. Strife through abandonment arising from presumption we experience when we are occupied by labours and watchfulness for a long time and then, in spite of them, the force of desire rushes in upon us with unnatural vehemence. But in other cases such events take place on account of our relaxation.

295 When nature is augmented in force by the senses or by the belly, it is not to be persuaded to keep henceforth the original measure of its stamp. He that rejects troubles and loneliness is involuntarily compelled to love sins. Without these we are not able to remain far from spiritual allurements. The latter diminish in accordance with the growth of the former. For troubles dissipate the pleasure of the affections; consolation, on the other hand, strengthens and induces them.

So it is clear that God and His angels rejoice at troubles;

Satan and his servants, however, at consolation. For if God's commandments are performed under bodily tortures and we reject these, it is clear that we contrive to reject Him that is the giver of the commandments. As by the affections, which are the offspring of consolation, we annihilate that which is the cause of excellence, namely hardship, so we make room for the affections to the same extent as we admit consolation. For in a tortured body deliberations cannot be distracted by idle things. When a man bears tortures with gladness, he has also strength enough to check the deliberations; because even the deliberations do not abhor labours.

Thus, when a man flogs himself with troubles, on account of the recollection of his previous sins, God, on His side, will ²⁹⁶ care for his peace; because He rejoices when He sees that the sinner himself has executed a judgment against himself because of his deviation from His way — a sign of repentance. And as he greatly troubles himself, so to the same extent the signs of honour granted to him by God, will increase. Every joy which is not caused by excellence will at once stir emotions of desire in him that has found it. This is to be understood of all desires connected with the affections, not of the natural ones only.

XXXIX

HELPFUL ADVICE BASED ON LOVE

Hardships for the sake of the good are loved as the good itself. Nobody can acquire real renunciation save him that is determined in his mind to bear troubles with pleasure. Nobody can bear trouble save him that believes that there is something more excellent than bodily consolation which he shall acquire in reward for trouble. Every one that has devoted himself to renunciation, will first perceive the love of trouble stir within himself; thereupon the thought of renouncing all worldly things will take shape in him. Every one who comes near unto trouble will at first be confirmed in faith; then he will come near unto trouble. He that renounces [worldly] things without renouncing the senses, sight and hearing, he prepares twofold trouble for himself and he will find tribulation

in a twofold measure. Or rather: while he refrains from the use of things, he delights in them through the senses; and by the affections which they cause he experiences the same from them that he had to endure in reality before; because the recollection of their customs is not effaced from the mind. If then imaginary representations existing in the mind alone can torture man, apart from the things corresponding to them in reality, what shall we say when the real things are close at hand?

Beautiful therefore is solitary life and very helpful, because it silences the deliberations with force and gives us strength to train ourselves in endurance; and teaches a man patience by the exercise given by cruel troubles, which accompany the life of the solitary necessarily.

Do not seek the advice of him that is not thy fellow in behaviour, though he be very prudent. A layman who has experienced things is more to be trusted than a sage who speaks on the basis of theoretical knowledge but without experience.

What is experience? Experience is not this that a man goes and touches things, without acquiring knowledge concerning their advantages and their defects and without remaining with them during a certain time. How often the faces of things give the impression of defect, whereas within them is found matter full of advantages. In the same way are to be judged things of the opposite aspect.

Many are those who from profitable things gather defects. Neither is the testimony of these concerning their knowledge to be trusted. This is only the case with him that has learned to examine things with patient distinction. Not all man's advice, therefore, is to be trusted; but [only] that of him who has behaved well before, who has knowledge founded upon experience in all things, who does not love himself, or who does not shun disdain.

As often as thou findest thy course in peace, without variations, then be suspicious. For thou art deviating from the divine ways trodden by the weary footsteps of the saints. The more thou proceedest on the way towards the city of the kingdom and approachest its neighbourhood, this will be the sign: that thou meetest hard temptations. And the more thou approachest, the more thou wilt find difficulties.

So, as often as thy soul on its way perceives varying states which cause difficulty thou must know that thy soul has secretly been advanced to a higher state and that it has acquired a gift of increase in comparison with the degree it occupied before.

The hard temptations into which God brings the soul are in accordance with the greatness of His gifts. If there is a weak soul which is not able to bear a very hard temptation and God deals meakly with it, then know with certainty that, as it is not capable of bearing a hard temptation, so it is not worthy of a large gift. As great temptations have been withdrawn from it, so large gifts are also withdrawn from it. God never gives a large gift and small temptations. So temptations are to be classed in accordance with gifts. Thus from the hardships to which thou hast been subjected thou mayest understand the measure of the greatness which thy soul has reached. In accordance with affection is consolation.

What then? Temptation, then gifts; or gifts and afterwards temptation? Temptation does not come if the soul has not received secretly greatness above its previous rank, as well as the spirit of adoption as sons¹⁾. We have a proof of it in the temptation of our Lord and of the Apostles; for they were not allowed to be tempted before they had received the Comforter. Those who partake of good have also to bear temptations. Along with good are the oppressions [in behalf of it]. So it has pleased God, who is wise in all things.

Thus is the state of things; and accordingly, the apperception of temptations is anterior to the apperception of gifts, in order to test freedom. Grace never reaches a man before he has tasted temptations. In reality it is anterior; to the apperception it is posterior.

It is true therefore, that there are with thee at those times two opposite feelings, not resembling one another. What are they? Joy and fear. Joy, because thou findest thyself as appears from the sign of the temptations going the way that has been trodden by the saints, nay even by the saviour of the world. Fear, lest thou be tempted by these temptations through haughtiness. But the humble are gifted with prudence by grace, so as to be able to recognize the distinctions of these things, namely [to distinguish] between the temptations that arise from

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 15