

# Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice

## First Century<sup>1</sup>

1. The Good that is beyond being and beyond the unoriginate is one, the holy unity of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is an infinite union of three infinities. Its principle of being, together with the mode, the nature and the quality of its being, is altogether inaccessible to creatures. For it eludes every intellection of intellectual beings, in no way issuing from its natural hidden inwardness, and infinitely transcending the summit of all spiritual knowledge.

2. The substantive and essential Good is that which has no origin, no consummation, no cause of being and no motion whatsoever, so far as its being is concerned, towards any final cause. The goodness to which such terms apply is not substantive since it has an origin, a consummation, a cause of being, and motion, so far as its being is concerned, towards some final cause. Even if what is not being in the substantive sense is said to be, it exists and is said to be by participation, through the will of substantive being.

3. Not only is the divine Logos prior to the genesis of created beings, but there neither was nor is nor will be a principle superior to the Logos. The Logos is not without intellect or bereft of life; He possesses intellect and life because the Father is the essentially subsistent intellect that begets Him, and the Holy Spirit is His essentially subsistent and coexistent life.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek *Philokalia* of St Nikodimos, this and the four following Centuries are numbered 'Third' to 'Seventh' respectively (see introductory note, p. 49 above).

4. There is one God, because the Father is the begetter of the unique Son and the fount of the Holy Spirit: one without confusion and three without division. The Father is unoriginate Intellect, the unique essential Begetter of the unique Logos, also unoriginate, and the fount of the unique everlasting life, the Holy Spirit.

5. There is one God because there is one Divinity, a Unity unoriginate, simple, beyond being, without parts and undivided. The same Unity is a Trinity, also unoriginate, simple and so on.

6. Everything that derives its existence from participation in some other reality presupposes the ontological priority of that other reality. Thus it is clear that the divine Cause of created beings – which derive their existence from participation in that Cause – is incomparably superior to all such beings in every way, since by nature its existence is prior to theirs and they presuppose its ontological priority. It does not exist as a being with accidents, because if that were the case the divine would be composite, its own existence receiving completion from the existence of created beings. On the contrary, it exists as the beyond-beingness of being. For if artists in their art conceive the shapes of those things which they produce, and if universal nature conceives the forms of the things within it, how much more does God Himself bring into existence out of nothing the very being of all created things, since He is beyond being and even infinitely transcends the attribution of beyond-beingness. For it is He who has yoked the sciences to the arts so that shapes might be devised; it is He who has given to nature the energy which produces its forms, and who has established the very is-ness of beings by virtue of which they exist.

7. God, in whose essence created beings do not participate, but who wills that those capable of so doing shall participate in Him according to some other mode, never issues from the hiddenness of His essence; for even that mode according to which He wills to be participated in remains perpetually concealed from all men. Thus, just as God of His own will is participated in – the manner of this being known to Him alone – in the surpassing power of His goodness, He freely brings into existence participating beings, according to the principle which He alone understands. Therefore what has come into being by the will of Him who made it can never be co-eternal with Him who willed it to exist.

8. The divine Logos, who once for all was born in the flesh,

always in His compassion desires to be born in spirit in those who desire Him. He becomes an infant and moulds Himself in them through the virtues. He reveals as much of Himself as He knows the recipient can accept; He does not diminish the manifestation of His own greatness out of lack of generosity but estimates the receptive capacity of those who desire to see Him. In this way the divine Logos is eternally made manifest in different modes of participation, and yet remains eternally invisible to all in virtue of the surpassing nature of His hidden activity. That is why the apostle, when wisely considering the power of this hidden activity, says, 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and throughout the ages' (Heb. 13 : 8); for he sees the hidden activity as something which is always new and never becomes outmoded through being embraced by the intellect.

9. Christ our God is born and becomes man by adding to Himself flesh endowed with an intellective soul. He who from non-being brings created things into being is Himself born supranaturally of a Virgin who does not thereby lose her virginity. For just as He Himself became man without changing His nature or altering His power, so He makes her who bore Him a Mother while keeping her a Virgin. In this way He reveals one miracle through another miracle, at the same time concealing the one with the other. This is because in Himself, according to His essence, God always remains a mystery. He expresses His natural hiddenness in such a way that He makes it the more hidden through the revelation. Similarly, in the case of the Virgin who bore Him, He made her a Mother in such a way that by conceiving Him the bonds of her virginity became even more indissoluble.

10. Natures are changed into something new and God becomes man. Not only is divine nature, stable and unmoved, moved towards what is unstable and subject to movement, in order to stop it from being swept away; not only does human nature produce without seed, in a way that is supranatural, the flesh which is brought to perfection by the Logos, in order to prevent it too from being swept away; but a star from the east shone in the day and guided the Magi (cf. Matt. 2 : 2-10) to the place where the Logos became incarnate, in order to show in a mystical way that the inner teaching of the Law and the prophets is superior to the senses and guides the Gentiles towards the supreme light of spiritual knowledge. For

clearly the inner teaching of the Law and the prophets, when contemplated devoutly like a star, leads to knowledge of the incarnate Logos those who freely respond to the call of grace.

11. As man I deliberately transgressed the divine commandment, when the devil, enticing me with the hope of divinity (cf. Gen. 3 : 5), dragged me down from my natural stability into the realm of sensual pleasure; and he was proud to have thus brought death into existence, for he delights in the corruption of human nature. Because of this, God became perfect man, taking on everything that belongs to human nature except sin (cf. Heb. 4 : 15); and indeed sin is not part of human nature. In this way, by enticing the insatiable serpent with the bait of the flesh, He provoked him to open his mouth and swallow it. This flesh proved poison to him, destroying him utterly by the power of the Divinity within it; but to human nature it proved a remedy restoring it to its original grace by that same power of the Divinity within it. For just as the devil poured out his venom of sin on the tree of knowledge and corrupted human nature once it had tasted it, so when he wished to devour the flesh of the Master he was himself destroyed by the power of the Divinity within it.

12. The great mystery of the incarnation remains a mystery eternally. Not only is what is not yet seen of it greater than what has been revealed – for it is revealed merely to the extent that those saved by it can grasp it – but also even what is revealed still remains entirely hidden and is by no means known as it really is. What I have said should not appear paradoxical. For God is beyond being and transcends all beyond-beingness; and so, when He wished to come down to the level of being, He became being in a manner which transcends being. Thus, too, although transcending man, yet out of love for man He truly became man by taking on the substance of men; but the manner in which He became man always remains unrevealed, for He was made man in a way which transcends man.

13. Let us contemplate with faith the mystery of the divine incarnation and in all simplicity let us simply praise Him who in His great generosity became man for us. For who, relying on the power of rational demonstration, can explain how the conception of the divine Logos took place? How was flesh generated without seed? How was there an engendering without loss of maidenhood? How did a mother after giving birth remain a virgin? How did He who

was supremely perfect develop as He grew up (cf. Luke 2 : 52)? How was He who was pure baptized? How did He who was hungry give sustenance (cf. Matt. 4 : 2 ; 14 : 14-21)? How did He who was weary impart strength (cf. John 4 : 6)? How did He who suffered dispense healing? How did He who was dying bestow life? And, to put the most important last, how did God become man? And – what is even more mysterious – how did the Logos, while subsisting wholly, essentially and hypostatically in the Father, also exist essentially and hypostatically in the flesh? How did He who is wholly God by nature become wholly man by nature, not renouncing either nature in any way at all, neither the divine, through which He is God, nor ours, through which He became man? Faith alone can embrace these mysteries, for it is faith that makes real for us things beyond intellect and reason (cf. Heb. 11 : 1).

14. Because Adam disobeyed, human nature has come to be generated through sensual pleasure; banishing such pleasure from human nature, the Lord had nothing to do with engendering by means of seed. Because the woman transgressed the commandment, the generation of human nature begins in pain (cf. Gen. 3 : 16); expelling this from human nature through His birth, the Lord did not allow her who bore Him to lose her virginity. He did this in order to expel from human nature both pleasure deliberately sought and the resulting unsought pain, becoming the destroyer of those things which He did not create. Through this He also mystically taught us to embark of our own accord on another way of life, one perhaps begun in pain and labour but nevertheless ending in divine pleasure and everlasting gladness. That is why He who made man became a man and was born as a man, so that He might save man and, by healing our passions through His passion, might Himself supernaturally destroy the passions that were destroying us, in His compassion renewing us in the spirit through His privations in the flesh.

15. He who longing for the divine has overcome the soul's predilection for the body is free from physical limitations even though he is in a body. For God, who attracts the desire of the person who longs for Him, is incomparably higher than all things, and does not allow anyone who longs for Him to direct his desire towards anything sequent to Him. Let us therefore long for God with all the strength of our nature and let us keep our resolution unfettered by any bodily needs. Let us rise above all sensible and intelligible

realities, and let us not allow any physical limitation to compromise our resolve to be with God, who is by nature beyond all limitation.

16. The suffering of the saints lies in the struggle between malice and virtue, the former fighting to win control, the latter enduring all things to avoid defeat. The first struggles to nurture sin by chastising the righteous; the second to hold good men firm although they experience more than their share of misfortunes.

17. The task of virtue is to contend against hardship and suffering. The prize for victory, given to those who stand their ground, is the soul's dispassion. In this state the soul is united with God through love, and in inward resolution it is separated from the body and the world. Those who stand their ground find that the soul's strength lies in the body's affliction.

18. Beguiled from our original state by the deceitfulness of sensual pleasure, we chose death rather than true life. Let us then gladly endure the bodily hardship which puts such pleasure to death. In this way the death of pleasure will destroy the death which came about through pleasure, and we shall receive back, purchased with but slight bodily hardship, the life which we sold for the sake of sensual pleasure.

19. If when the flesh has an easy life the force of sin tends to grow stronger, it is clear that when the flesh suffers affliction the force of virtue will also increase. So let us bravely endure the affliction of the flesh, which cleanses the soul's stains and brings us future glory. For 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us' (Rom. 8 : 18).

20. When physicians are treating the body they do not administer the same remedy in all cases. Neither does God, when treating the illnesses of the soul, regard a single kind of therapy as suitable for all conditions; but He allots to each soul what is suitable for it and effects its cure. So let us give thanks while we are being treated, however great our suffering, for the result is blessed.

21. Nothing disciplines the disposition of the soul so well as the protests of the afflicted flesh. If the soul gives way to them, it will be evident that it loves the flesh more than God. But if it remains unshaken by these disturbances, it will be shown to honour virtue more than the flesh. Through virtue God will come to dwell in it – God who for the soul's sake patiently bears our human suffering –

and will say to it as He once did to the disciples, 'Have courage, for I have overcome the world' (John 16 : 33).

22. If all the saints had their share of discipline, we too should thank God that we are disciplined with them, so that we may be found worthy to partake of their glory. 'For whom the Lord loves He disciplines; He chastens every son He accepts' (Prov. 3 : 12. LXX).

23. When Adam accepted the sensual pleasure offered to him by Eve, who had come from his side, he expelled humanity from paradise (cf. Gen. 3 : 24). But when the Lord in His agony was pierced in his side by the lance, He brought the robber into paradise (cf. Luke 23 : 43). Let us, then, love the suffering of the flesh and hate its pleasure; for the first brings us in and restores God's blessings to us, while the second drives us out and separates us from those blessings.

24. If God suffers in the flesh when He is made man, should we not rejoice when we suffer, for we have God to share our sufferings? This shared suffering confers the kingdom on us. For he spoke truly who said, 'If we suffer with Him, then we shall also be glorified with Him' (Rom. 8 : 17).

25. If we have to suffer because our ancestor involved our nature with sensual pleasure, let us endure our temporary sufferings bravely; for they blunt the sharp point of such pleasure for us, and free us from the eternal torment which it brings upon us.

26. Love is the consummation of all blessings, since all who walk in it love leads and guides towards God, the supreme blessing and cause of every blessing, and unites them with Him; for love is faithful and never fails (cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 8). Faith is the foundation of what comes after it, namely hope and love, since it provides a firm basis for truth. Hope is the strength of the two pre-eminent gifts of love and faith, since hope gives us glimpses both of that in which we believe and of that for which we long, and teaches us to make our way towards our goal. Love is the completion of the other two, embracing entirely the entire desire of all desires, and satisfying the yearning of our faith and hope for it; for that which we believe to be and which we hope will come to pass, love enables us to enjoy as a present reality.

27. The most perfect work of love, and the fulfilment of its activity, is to effect an exchange between those it joins together, which in some measure unites their distinctive characteristics and

adapts their respective conditions to each other. Love makes man god, and reveals and manifests God as man, through the single and identical purpose and activity of the will of both.

28. If we are made, as we are, in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1 : 27), let us become the image both of ourselves and of God; or rather let us all become the image of the one whole God, bearing nothing earthly in ourselves, so that we may consort with God and become gods, receiving from God our existence as gods. For in this way the divine gifts and the presence of divine peace are honoured.

29. Love is a great blessing and of all blessings the first and supreme, since it joins God and men together around him who has love, and it makes the Creator of men manifest Himself as man through the exact likeness of the deified man to God, in so far as this is possible for man. This is what I take to be the actualization of the commandment, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself' (cf. Lev. 19 : 18; Deut. 6 : 5; Matt. 22 : 37-39).

30. The devil has deceived us by guile in a malicious and cunning way, provoking us through self-love to sensual pleasure (cf. Gen. 3 : 1-5). He has separated us in our wills from God and from each other; he has perverted straightforward truth and in this manner has divided humanity, cutting it up into many opinions and fantasies.

31. The greatest authors and instigators of evil are ignorance, self-love and tyranny. Each depends on the other two and is supported by them: from ignorance of God comes self-love, and from self-love comes tyranny over one's own kind. The devil establishes these in us when we misuse our own powers, namely our intelligence, our desire and our incensive power.

32. By intelligence we should be stimulated to overcome our ignorance and to seek the one and only God by means of spiritual knowledge; through desire – through a passion of self-love which has been purified – we should be drawn in longing to the one God; and with an incensive power divorced from all tyrannical propensity we should struggle to attain God alone. From these three powers of the soul we should actualize that divine and blessed love on account of which they exist, that love which joins the devout man to God and reveals him to be a god.

33. Since self-love is, as I have said, the origin and mother of evil, when this is eradicated all the things which derive from it are eradicated as well. For when self-love is absent, not the slightest trace or form of evil can exist in any way at all.

34. We should care for ourselves and each other in the way that Christ Himself, who patiently suffered for us, has already shown us in His own person.

35. For the sake of love all the saints resisted sin, not showing any regard for this present life. And they endured many forms of death, in order to be separated from the world and united with themselves and with God, joining together in themselves the broken fragments of human nature. For this is the true and undefiled theosophy of the faithful. Its consummation is goodness and truth - if indeed goodness as compassion and truth as devotion to God in faith are the marks of love. It unites men to God and to one another, and on this account contains the unchanging permanence of all blessings.

36. The actualization and proof of perfect love for God is a genuine and willing attitude of goodwill towards one's neighbour. 'For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen', says St John, 'cannot love God whom he has not seen' (1 John 4 : 20).

37. The way of truth is love. The Logos of God called Himself the way (cf. John 14 : 6, 1 John 4 : 8); and those who travel on this way He presents, purified from every stain, to God the Father.

38. This is the door through which a man enters into the Holy of Holies and is brought to the vision of the unapproachable beauty of the Holy and Royal Trinity.

39. It is a fearful and heinous thing for us, because of our love for things corruptible, deliberately to kill the life that was given to us by God as the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who have trained themselves to prefer truth to self-love will certainly know this fear.

40. Let us use peace in the right way: repudiating our evil alliance with the world and its ruler, let us at last break off the war which we wage against God through the passions. Concluding an unbreakable covenant of peace with Him by destroying the body of sin within us (cf. Rom. 6 : 6), let us put an end to our hostility towards Him.

41. Rebelling as we do against God through the passions and agreeing to pay tribute in the form of evil to that cunning tyrant

and murderer of souls, the devil, we cannot be reconciled with God until we have first begun to fight against the devil with all our strength. For even though we assume the name of faithful Christians, until we have made ourselves the devil's enemies and fight against him, we continue by deliberate choice to serve the shameful passions. And nothing of profit will come to us from our peace in the world, for our soul is in an evil state, rebelling against its own Maker and unwilling to be subject to His kingdom. It is still sold into bondage to hordes of savage masters, who urge it towards evil and treacherously contrive to make it choose the way which leads to destruction instead of that which brings salvation.

42. God made us so that we might become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1 : 4) and sharers in His eternity, and so that we might come to be like Him (cf. 1 John 3 : 2) through deification by grace. It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence; and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence.

43. If we desire to belong to God in both name and reality, let us struggle not to betray the Logos to the passions, as Judas did (cf. Matt. 26 : 14-16), or to deny Him as Peter did (cf. Matt. 26 : 69-75). To deny the Logos is to fail through fear to do what is good; to betray Him is deliberately to choose and commit sin.

44. The outcome of every affliction endured for the sake of virtue is joy, of every labour rest, and of every shameful treatment glory; in short, the outcome of all sufferings for the sake of virtue is to be with God, to remain with Him for ever and to enjoy eternal rest.

45. Because He wishes to unite us in nature and will with one another, and in His goodness urges all humanity towards this goal, God in His love entrusted His saving commandments to us, ordaining simply that we should show mercy and receive mercy (cf. Matt. 5 : 7).

46. The self-love and cleverness of men, alienating them from each other and perverting the law, have cut our single human nature into many fragments. They have so extended the insensibility which they introduced into our nature and which now dominates it, that our nature, divided in will and purpose, fights against itself. Thus anyone who has succeeded by sound judgment and nobility of intelligence in resolving this anomalous state of our nature has shown

mercy to himself prior to showing it to others; for he has moulded his will and purpose in conformity to nature, and through them he has advanced towards God by means of nature; he has revealed in himself what it means to be 'in the image' and shown how excellently in the beginning God created our nature in His likeness and as a pure copy of His own goodness, and how He made our nature one with itself in every way – peaceable, free from strife and faction, bound to God and to itself by love, making us cleave to God with desire and to each other with mutual affection.

47. In His love for man God became man so that He might unite human nature to Himself and stop it from acting evilly towards itself, or rather from being at strife and divided against itself, and from having no rest because of the instability of its will and purpose.

48. Nothing sequent to God is more precious for beings endowed with intellect, or rather is more dear to God, than perfect love; for love unites those who have been divided and is able to create a single identity of will and purpose, free from faction, among many or among all; for the property of love is to produce a single will and purpose in those who seek what pertains to it.

49. If by nature the good unifies and holds together what has been separated, evil clearly divides and corrupts what has been unified. For evil is by nature dispersive, unstable, multiform and divisive.

50. The true love of God, grounded in real knowledge, together with the total repudiation of the soul's affection for the body and this world, is the short road to salvation and brings deliverance from all sins. In this way, casting off desire for pleasure and fear of pain, we are freed from evil self-love and are raised to a spiritual knowledge of the Creator. In the place of the evil self-love, we receive an uncorrupt and spiritual self-love, separated from affection for the body; and we do not cease to worship God through this uncorrupt self-love, always seeking from Him sustenance for our souls. For true worship, genuinely pleasing to God, is the strict cultivation of the soul through the virtues.

51. If you do not long for bodily pleasure and have not the slightest fear of pain, you have attained dispassion. For by overcoming such longing and fear, together with the self-love which has engendered them, you have killed at a single blow all the passions which have come into being through them and from them, as well as the principal source of all evil, ignorance. You have become full of

that goodness which is stable and permanent and always remains the same by nature; and in that goodness you stand absolutely immovable, 'with unveiled face reflecting the glory of the Lord' (2 Cor. 3 : 18) and contemplating through the radiant brightness within you the divine and unapproachable glory.

52. Let us reject the pleasure and pain of this present life with what strength we have, and so free ourselves entirely from all thoughts of the passions and all machinations of the demons. For we love the passions because of pleasure and avoid virtue because of pain.

53. Since it is the nature of every evil to destroy itself along with the habits which brought it into being, man finds by experience that every pleasure is inevitably succeeded by pain, and so directs his whole effort towards pleasure and does all he can to avoid pain. He struggles with all his might to attain pleasure and he fights against pain with immense zeal. By doing this he hopes to keep the two apart from each other – which is impossible – and to indulge his self-love in ways which bring only pleasure and are entirely free from pain. Dominated by the passion of self-love he is, it appears, ignorant that pleasure can never exist without pain. For pain is intertwined with pleasure, even though this seems to escape the notice of those who suffer it. It escapes their notice because desire for pleasure is the dominating force in self-love, and what dominates is naturally always more conspicuous and obscures one's sense of what is present with it. Thus because in our self-love we pursue pleasure, and because – also out of self-love – we try to escape pain, we generate untold corrupting passions in ourselves.

54. A man no longer experiences pleasure and pain when, freeing his intellect from its relationship with the body, he binds or rather unites it to God, the real goal of love, longing and desire.

55. Just as one cannot worship God in a pure way without utterly purifying the soul, so one cannot worship creation without pampering the body. By fulfilling, out of concern for the body, that worship which causes corruption, and by thus acquiring self-love, man became subject to the unceasing action of pleasure and pain; eating always from the tree of disobedience – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – in this way he acquired experientially through sense-perception a knowledge in which good and evil were intermingled. And it would not be untrue to say that the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil is the visible created world. For this world is by nature subject to that alternation which produces pleasure and pain.

56. Where intelligence does not rule, the senses naturally assume the dominant role. The power of sin is somehow mingled with the senses and induces the soul by means of sensual pleasure to have pity for the flesh, to which it is joined. When the soul pursues the impassioned and pleasurable cultivation of the flesh as its natural task, it is diverted from a life lived in accordance with nature and is impelled to become the author of evil, which has no substantial existence.

57. Evil is the noetic soul's forgetfulness of what is good according to nature; and this forgetfulness results from an impassioned relationship with the flesh and the world. When the intelligence is in control it dispels this forgetfulness through spiritual knowledge, since intelligence, having investigated the nature of the world and the flesh, draws the soul to the realm of spiritual realities which is its true home. Into this realm the law of sin cannot penetrate; for the link between the soul and the senses has now been broken, and the senses, limited to the world of sensible objects, can no longer function as a bridge conveying the law of sin into the intellect. When the intellect transcends its relationship with sensible objects and the world to which they pertain, it becomes utterly free from the sway of the senses.

58. When the intelligence dominates the passions it makes the senses instruments of virtue. Conversely, when the passions dominate the intelligence they conform the senses to sin. One must watchfully study and reflect how the soul can best reverse the situation and use those things through which it had formerly sinned to generate and sustain the virtues.

59. The holy Gospel teaches men to reject life according to the flesh and to embrace life according to the Spirit. I am speaking of those who are always dying to what is human – I mean human life in the flesh according to this present age – and living for God in the Spirit alone, after the example of St Paul and his followers. They do not in any way live their own life but have Christ living in them in the soul alone (cf. Gal. 2 : 20). Those, then, who in this age are truly dead to the flesh can be distinguished in this way: even though they suffer much affliction, torment, distress and persecution, and

experience innumerable forms of trial and temptation, nevertheless they bear everything with joy.

60. Every passion always consists of a combination of some perceived object, a sense faculty and a natural power – the incensive power, desire or the intelligence, as the case may be – whose natural function has been distorted. Thus, if the intellect investigates the final result of these three inter-related factors – the sensible object, the sense faculty and the natural power involved with the sense faculty – it can distinguish each from the other two, and refer each back to its specific natural function. It can, that is to say, view the sensible object in itself, apart from its relationship to the sense faculty, and the sense faculty in itself, apart from its connexion with the sensible object, and the natural power – desire, for example – apart from its impassioned alliance with the sense faculty and the sensible object. In this way, the intellect reduces to its constituent parts whatever passion it investigates, in much the same way as the golden calf of Israel in Old Testament days was ground into powder and mixed with water (cf. Exod. 32 : 20), it dissolves it with the water of spiritual knowledge, utterly destroying even the passion-free image of the passions, by restoring each of its elements to its natural state.

61. A life stained with many faults arising from the passions of the flesh is a soiled garment. For from his mode of life, as if from some garment, each man declares himself to be either righteous or wicked. The righteous man has a holy life as a clean garment; the wicked man has a life soiled with evil actions. Thus a 'garment stained by the flesh' (Jude, verse 23) is the inner state and disposition of the soul when its conscience is deformed by the recollection of evil impulses and actions arising from the flesh. When this state or disposition constantly envelops the soul like a garment, it is filled with the stink of the passions. But when the virtues, through the power of the Spirit, are interwoven in accordance with the intelligence, they form a garment of incorruption for the soul: dressed in this the soul becomes beautiful and resplendent. Conversely, when the passions are interwoven under the influence of the flesh, they form a filthy, soiled garment, which reveals the character of the soul, imposing on it a form and image contrary to the divine.

62. A sure warrant for looking forward with hope to the deification of human nature is provided by the incarnation of God, which

makes man god to the same degree as God Himself became man. For it is clear that He who became man without sin (cf. Heb. 4 : 15) will divinize human nature without changing it into the divine nature, and will raise it up for His own sake to the same degree as He lowered Himself for man's sake. This is what St Paul teaches mystically when he says, '. . . that in the ages to come He might display the overflowing richness of His grace' (Eph. 2 : 7).

63. When the intelligence is in control of the incensive power and desire, it produces the virtues. When the intellect devotes its attention to the inner essences of created things, it reaps genuine spiritual knowledge. Thus the intelligence, after rejecting everything alien, discovers what is desirable according to our true nature; and the intellect, after passing beyond the things that are known, apprehends the Cause of created things that transcends being and knowledge. Then the passion of deification is actualized by grace: the intelligence's power of natural discrimination is suspended, for there is no longer anything to discriminate about; the intellect's natural intellection is brought to a halt, for there is no longer anything to be known; and the person found worthy to participate in the divine is made god and brought into a state of rest.

64. Suffering cleanses the soul infected with the filth of sensual pleasure and detaches it completely from material things by showing it the penalty incurred as a result of its affection for them. This is why God in His justice allows the devil to afflict men with torments.

65. Pleasure and distress, desire and fear, and what follows from them, were not originally created as elements of human nature, for in that case they would form part of the definition of that nature. I follow in this matter St Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>1</sup> who states that these things were introduced as a result of our fall from perfection, being infiltrated into that part of our nature least endowed with intelligence. Through them the blessed and divine image in man was at the time of our transgression immediately replaced by a clear and obvious likeness to animals. Once the true dignity of the intelligence had been obscured, it was inevitable and just that human nature should be chastised by those witless elements which it had introduced into itself. In this way God in His providence wisely made man conscious of the nobility of his intellect.

<sup>1</sup> See *On the Creation of Man* 18 (P.G. xliv, 192B).

66. Even the passions become good if we wisely and diligently detach them from what is bodily and direct them towards the acquisition of what is heavenly. This happens, for example, when we turn desire into a noetic yearning for heavenly blessings; or when we turn pleasure into the gentle delight which the volitive energy of the intellect finds in divine gifts; or when we turn fear into protective concern to escape punishments threatening us because of our sins; or when we turn distress into corrective remorse for present sin. In short, the passions become good if – like wise physicians who use the body of the viper as a remedy against present or expected harm resulting from its bite – we use them to destroy present or expected evil, and in order to acquire and safeguard virtue and spiritual knowledge.

67. The law of the Old Testament through practical philosophy cleanses human nature of all defilement. The law of the New Testament, through initiation into the mysteries of contemplation, raises the intellect by means of spiritual knowledge from the sight of material things to the vision of spiritual realities.

68. Those who are beginners and stand at the gate of the divine court of the virtues (cf. Exod. 27 : 9) are called 'God-fearing' by Scripture (cf. Acts 10 : 2 ; 13 : 16, 26). Those who with some measure of stability have acquired the principles and qualities of the virtues, it describes as 'advancing'. Those who in their pursuit of holiness have by means of spiritual knowledge already attained the summit of that truth which reveals the virtues, it entitles 'perfect'. Thus he who has abandoned his former passion-dominated way of life, and out of fear has submitted his entire will to the divine commandments, will lack none of the blessings which are appropriate to beginners, even though he has not yet acquired stability in the practice of the virtues or come to share in the wisdom spoken among those who are perfect (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 6). And he who is advancing will not lack any of the blessings which belong to his degree, even though he has not yet acquired the transcendent knowledge of divine realities possessed by the perfect. For the perfect have already been initiated mystically into contemplative theology: having purified their intellects of every material fantasy and bearing always the stamp of the image of divine beauty in all its fulness, they manifest the divine love present in their hearts.

69. Fear is twofold; one kind is pure, the other impure. That

which is pre-eminently fear of punishment on account of offences committed is impure, for it is sin which gives rise to it. It will not last for ever, for when the sin is obliterated through repentance it too will disappear. Pure fear, on the other hand, is always present even apart from remorse for offences committed. Such fear will never cease to exist, because it is somehow rooted essentially by God in creation and makes clear to everyone His awe-inspiring nature, which transcends all kingship and power.

70. He who does not fear God as judge but holds Him in awe because of the surpassing excellence of His infinite power will not justly lack anything; for having reached perfection in love, he loves God with awe and fitting reverence. He has acquired the fear that endures for ever and he will lack for nothing (cf. Ps. 19 : 9; 34 : 9-10).

71. From created beings we come to know their Cause; from the differences between created beings we learn about the indwelling Wisdom of creation; and from the natural activity of created beings we discern the indwelling Life of creation, the power which gives created beings their life – the Holy Spirit.

72. The Holy Spirit is not absent from any created being, especially not from one which in any way participates in intelligence. For being God and God's Spirit, He embraces in unity the spiritual knowledge of all created things, providentially permeating all things with His power, and vivifying their inner essences in accordance with their nature. In this way He makes men aware of things done sinfully against the law of nature, and renders them capable of choosing principles which are true and in conformity with nature. Thus we find many barbarians and nomadic peoples turning to a civilized way of life and setting aside the savage laws which they had kept among themselves from time immemorial.

73. The Holy Spirit is present unconditionally in all things, in that He embraces all things, provides for all, and vivifies the natural seeds within them. He is present in a specific way in all who are under the Law, in that He shows them where they have broken the commandments and enlightens them about the promise given concerning Christ. In all who are Christians He is present also in yet another way in that He makes them sons of God. But in none is He fully present as the author of wisdom except in those who have understanding, and who by their holy way of life have made them-

selves fit to receive His indwelling and deifying presence. For everyone who does not carry out the divine will, even though he is a believer, has a heart which, being a workshop of evil thoughts, lacks understanding, and a body which, being always entangled in the defilements of the passions, is mortgaged to sin.

74. God, who yearns for the salvation of all men and hungers after their deification, withers their self-conceit like the unfruitful fig tree (cf. Matt. 21 : 19-21). He does this so that they may prefer to be righteous in reality rather than in appearance, discarding the cloak of hypocritical moral display and genuinely pursuing a virtuous life in the way that the divine Logos wishes them to. They will then live with reverence, revealing the state of their soul to God rather than displaying the external appearance of a moral life to their fellow-men.

75. The principle of active accomplishment is one thing and that of passive suffering is another. The principle of active accomplishment signifies the natural capacity for actualizing the virtues. The principle of passive suffering signifies experiencing either the grace of what is beyond nature or the occurrence of what is contrary to nature. For just as we do not have a natural capacity for what is above being, so we do not by nature have a capacity for what lacks being. Thus we passively experience deification by grace as something which is above nature, but we do not actively accomplish it; for by nature we do not have the capacity to attain deification. Again, we suffer evil as something contrary to nature which occurs in the will; for we do not have a natural capacity for generating evil. Thus while we are in our present state we can actively accomplish the virtues by nature, since we have a natural capacity for accomplishing them. But, when raised to a higher level, we experience deification passively, receiving this experience as a free gift of grace.

76. We accomplish things actively in so far as our intelligence, whose natural task is to accomplish the virtues, is active within us, and in so far as there is also active within us our intellect, which is capable of receiving unconditionally all spiritual knowledge, of transcending the entire nature of created beings and all that is known, and of leaving all ages behind it. We experience things passively when, having completely transcended the inner essences of created beings, we come in a manner which is beyond conception to

the Cause itself of created beings, and there suspend the activity of our powers, together with all that is by nature finite. Then we become something that is in no sense an achievement of our natural capacities, since nature does not possess the power to grasp what transcends nature. For created things are not by nature able to accomplish deification since they cannot grasp God. To bestow a consonant measure of deification on created beings is within the power of divine grace alone. Grace irradiates nature with a supra-natural light and by the transcendence of its glory raises nature above its natural limits.

77. We cease to accomplish the virtues after this present stage of life. But, on a higher level than that of the virtues, we never cease to experience deification by grace. For an experience, or passion, which transcends nature is limitless, and so is always active and effective; while an experience, or passion, which is contrary to nature is without real existence, and so is impotent.

78. The qualities of the virtues and the inner principles of created beings are both images of divine blessings, and in them God continually becomes man. As His body He has the qualities of the virtues, and as His soul the inner principles of spiritual knowledge. In this way He deifies those found worthy, giving them the true stamp of virtue and bestowing on them the essence of infallible knowledge.

79. An intellect faithful in the practice of the virtues is like St Peter when he was taken captive by Herod (cf. Acts 12 : 3-18). The name 'Herod' means 'made of skins or leather', and so Herod signifies the law of leather, that is, the will of the flesh. St Peter is guarded by two squads of soldiers and shut in by an iron gate. The two squads signify the attacks suffered by the intellect from the activity of the passions and from the mind's assent to the passions. When through the teaching of practical philosophy, as though with the help of an angel, the intellect has passed safely through these two squads or prisons, it comes to the iron gate which leads into the city. By this I mean the obdurate and stubborn attachment of the senses to sensible things. None the less, the gate is opened automatically through spiritual contemplation of the inner essences of created beings; and such contemplation then fearlessly impels the intellect, now liberated from Herod's madness, towards the spiritual realities where it truly belongs.

80. The devil is both God's enemy and His avenger (cf. Ps. 8 : 2). He is God's enemy when he seems in his hatred for God somehow to have acquired a destructive love for us men, persuading us by means of sensual pleasure to assent to the passions within our control, and to value what is transitory more than what is eternal. In this way he seduces all our soul's desire, separating us utterly from divine love and making us willing enemies of Him who made us. He is God's avenger when – now that we have become subject to him through sin – he lays bare his hatred for us and demands our punishment. For nothing pleases the devil more than punishing us. When he has been given leave to carry this out, he contrives successive attacks of passions inflicted against our will, and like a tempest he pitilessly assails us over whom, by God's permission, he has acquired authority. He does this, not with the intention of fulfilling God's command, but out of the desire to feed his own passion of hatred towards us, so that the soul, sinking down enervated by the weight of such painful calamities, may cut itself off from the power of divine hope, regarding the onslaught of these calamities not as a divine admonition but as a cause for disbelief in God.

81. When those who have acquired moral stability and contemplative knowledge employ these for the sake of human glory, merely conveying an outward impression of the virtues, and uttering words of wisdom and knowledge without performing the corresponding actions; and when in addition they display to others their vanity because of this supposed virtue and knowledge, then they are rightly handed over to commensurate hardships, in order to learn through suffering that humility which was unknown to them before because of their empty conceit.

82. Each demon promotes the attack of this or that particular temptation according to his innate propensity. For one demon is productive of one kind of evil, while another is clearly more abominable than his fellow and has a greater propensity for some other form of evil.

83. Without divine permission even the demons themselves cannot assist the devil in any way at all. For it is God Himself in His loving providence who allows the devil, in appropriate ways, to inflict various sufferings through his ministers. The book of Job shows this plainly, describing as it does how the devil was utterly unable to approach Job unless God willed it (cf. Job 1 : 11-12).

84. Real faith is faith which is manifest and active. Accordingly, to those engaged in the practice of the virtues the Logos of God is revealed embodied in the commandments, and as Logos He leads them by means of these commandments up to the Father, in whom He subsists by nature.

85. Reformation of life, angelic worship, the willing separation of the soul from the body, and the beginning of divine renewal in spirit – these are proclaimed in the veiled language of the New Testament. For instance, by the term ‘spiritual circumcision’ Scripture denotes the excision of the soul’s impassioned attachment to the body (cf. Phil. 3 : 3 ; Col. 2 : 11).

86. Since God is full of goodness and wishes utterly to eradicate from us the seed of evil – that is to say, the sensual pleasure which draws our intellect away from divine love – He allows the devil to afflict us with suffering and chastisement. In this way He scrapes the poison of past pleasure from our souls; and He seeks to implant in us a hatred and complete revulsion for the things which belong to this world and pander to the senses alone, by making us realize that once we have acquired them we gain nothing from their use save chastisement. For He wishes to make the devil’s power of chastisement and hatred of men the contingent cause of the return to virtue of those who have by their own free choice lapsed from it.

87. It is entirely fitting and just that those who gladly accept the devil’s cunning suggestions to commit sins through their own volition should also be chastised by him. For through the passions to which we willingly accede the devil is the begetter of pleasure, and through the experiences that we suffer against our will he is the inflicter of pain.

88. The contemplative and gnostic intellect is often committed for punishment to the devil, deservedly suffering hardship and affliction at his hands. This is so that by suffering it may learn patiently to endure affliction rather than to trifle arrogantly to no purpose with things that do not exist.

89. If he who suffers for having transgressed one of God’s commandments recognizes the principle of divine providence which is healing him, he accepts the affliction with joy and gratitude, and corrects the fault for which he is being disciplined. But if he is insensitive to this treatment, he is justly deprived of the grace that was once given him and is handed over to the turbulence of the

passions; he is abandoned so that he may acquire by ascetic labour those things for which he inwardly longs.

90. A person who, knowing what faults he has committed, willingly and with due thankfulness endures the trials painfully inflicted on him as a consequence of these faults, is not exiled from grace or from his state of virtue; for he submits willingly to the yoke of the king of Babylon (cf. Jer. 27 : 17) and pays off his debt by accepting the trials. In this way, while remaining in a state of grace and virtue, he pays tribute to the king of Babylon not only with his enforced sufferings, which have arisen out of the impassioned side of his nature, but also with his mental assent to these sufferings, accepting them as his due on account of his former offences. Through true worship, by which I mean a humble disposition, he offers to God the correction of his offences.

91. If you do not accept gratefully the trials which, by God's permission, are inflicted on you for your correction, and do not repent and rid yourself of your conceited opinion that you are righteous, you are given up to captivity, manacles, chains, hunger, death and the sword, and dwell a complete exile from your native land; for you resist the just penalties decreed by God and refuse to submit willingly to the yoke of the king of Babylon, as God has commanded. Banished in this way from your state of virtue and spiritual knowledge as if from your native land, you suffer all these things and more besides, because in your pride and vain conceit you refuse to make full satisfaction for your offences and to 'take delight in afflictions, calamities and hardships' (cf. 2 Cor. 12 : 10), as St Paul did. For he knew that the humility produced by bodily sufferings safeguards the divine treasures of the soul; and for this reason he was content and endured patiently, both for his own sake and for the sake of those to whom he served as an example of virtue and faith, so that if they suffered when guilty, like the Corinthian who was censured (cf. 1 Cor. 5 : 1-5), they might have him who suffers innocently as an encouragement and as a model of patience.

92. If, instead of stopping short at the outward appearance which visible things present to the senses, you seek with your intellect to contemplate their inner essences, seeing them as images of spiritual realities or as the inward principles of sensible objects, you will be taught that nothing belonging to the visible world is unclean. For by nature all things were created good (cf. Gen. 1 : 31; Acts 10 : 15).

93. He who is not affected by changes in sensible things practises the virtues in a manner that is truly pure. He who does not permit the outward appearances of sensible things to imprint themselves on his intellect has received the true doctrine of created beings. He whose mind has outstripped the very being of created things has come, as a true theologian, close to the One through unknowing.

94. Every contemplative intellect that has 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 6 : 17), and that has cut off in itself the activity of the visible world, has attained virtue. When it has excised from itself the image of sensible appearances it finds the truth existing in the inner essences of created beings, which is the foundation of natural contemplation. And when it has transcended the being of created things, it will receive the illumination of the divine and unoriginate Unity who is the foundation of the mystery of true theology.

95. God reveals Himself to each person according to each person's mode of conceiving Him. To those whose aspiration transcends the complex structure of matter, and whose psychic powers are fully integrated in a single unceasing gyration around God, He reveals Himself as Unity and Trinity. In this way He both shows forth His own existence and mystically makes known the mode in which that existence subsists. To those whose aspiration is limited to the complex structure of matter, and whose psychic powers are not integrated, He reveals Himself not as He is but as they are, showing that they are completely caught in the material dualism whereby the physical world is conceived as composed of matter and form.

96. St Paul refers to the different energies of the Holy Spirit as different gifts of grace, stating that they are all energized by one and the same Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 11). The 'manifestation of the Spirit' (1 Cor. 12 : 7) is given according to the measure of every man's faith through participation in a particular gift of grace. Thus every believer is receptive to the energy of the Spirit in a way that corresponds to his degree of faith and the state of his soul; and this energy grants him the capacity needed to carry out a particular commandment.

97. One person is given the quality of wisdom, another the quality of spiritual knowledge, another the quality of faith, and someone else one of the other gifts of the Spirit enumerated by St

Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 8-11). In the same way, one person receives through the Spirit, according to the degree of his faith, the gift of that perfect and direct love for God which is free from all materiality; another through the same Spirit receives the gift of perfect love for his neighbour; and another receives something else from the same Spirit. In each, as I have said, the gift that conforms with his state is energized. For every capacity for fulfilling a commandment is called a gift of the Spirit.

98. The baptism of the Lord (cf. Matt. 20 : 22) is the utter mortification of our propensity for the sensible world; and the cup is the disavowal of our present mode of life for the sake of truth.

99. The baptism of the Lord typifies the sufferings we willingly embrace for the sake of virtue. Through these sufferings we wash off the stains in our conscience and readily accept the death of our propensity for visible things. The cup typifies the involuntary trials which attack us in the form of adverse circumstances because of our pursuit of the truth. If throughout these trials we value our desire for God more than nature, we willingly submit to the death of nature forced on us by these circumstances.

100. The baptism and the cup differ in this way: baptism for the sake of virtue mortifies our propensity for the pleasures of this life; the cup makes the devout value truth above even nature itself.