

**CHAPTER TITLES FOR BOOK III**

1. The maximum which is contracted to this or that, and than which there cannot be a greater, cannot exist without the Absolute [Maximum].
2. The maximum contracted [to a species] is also the Absolute [Maximum; it is both] Creator and creature.
3. Only in the case of the nature of humanity can there be such a maximum [individual].
4. Blessed Jesus, who is God and man, is the [contracted maximum individual].
5. Christ, conceived through the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary.
6. The mystery of the death of Jesus Christ.
7. The mystery of the Resurrection.
8. Christ, the Firstfruits of those who sleep, ascended to Heaven.
9. Christ is judge of the living and the dead.
10. The Judge's sentence.
11. The mysteries of faith.
12. The church.

**BOOK THREE**

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Prologue

Having set forth the few preceding points about how the universe exists in contraction, I will very briefly expound for Your most admirable Diligence<sup>1</sup> the concept of Jesus. [I will do so] to the end that—as regards Him who is both Absolute Maximum and contracted maximum, viz., the ever-blessed Jesus Christ—I may learnedly in ignorance investigate several points, in order to increase our faith and perfection. I will call upon Christ, in order that He may be the way unto Himself, who is the Truth.<sup>2</sup> By this Truth we are made alive—at present by faith and in the future by actual attainment—in Him and through Him who is Everlasting Life.

- 182**      *Chapter One:* A maximum which is contracted to this or that and than which there cannot be a greater cannot exist apart from the Absolute [Maximum].

- Book One shows that the one absolutely Maximum—which is incommunicable, unintermixable, incontractible to this or that—exists in itself as eternally, equally, and unchangeably the same. Book Two thereafter exhibits the contraction of the universe, for the universe exists only as contractedly this and that. Thus, the Oneness of the Maximum exists absolutely in itself; the oneness of the universe exists contractedly in plurality. Now, the many things in which the universe is actually contracted cannot at all agree in supreme equality; for then they would cease being many. Therefore, it is necessary that all things differ from one another—either (1) in genus, species, and number or (2) in species and number or (3) in number—so that each thing exists in its own number, weight, and measure.<sup>3</sup> Hence, all things are distinguished from one another by degrees, so that no thing coincides with another. Accordingly, no contracted thing can participate precisely in the degree of contraction of another thing, so that, necessarily, any given thing is comparatively greater or lesser than any other given thing. Therefore, all contracted things exist between a maximum and a minimum, so that there can be posited a greater and a lesser degree of contraction than [that of] any given thing. Yet, this process does not continue actually unto infinity, because an infinity of degrees is impossible,<sup>4</sup> since to say that infinite degrees actually exist is nothing other than to say that no degree exists—as I stated about number in Book One.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, with regard to contracted things, there cannot be an ascent or a descent to an absolutely maximum or an absolutely minimum. Hence, just as the Divine Nature, which is absolutely maximal, cannot be diminished so that it becomes finite and contracted, so neither can the contracted nature become diminished in contraction to the point that it becomes altogether absolute [i.e., altogether free of contraction.]<sup>6</sup>
- 183**      Therefore, it is not the case that any contracted thing attains to the limit either of the universe or of genus or of species; for there can exist a less greatly contracted thing or a more greatly contracted thing [than it]. The first general contraction of the universe is through a plurality of genera, which must differ by degrees. However, genera exist only contractedly in species; and species exist only in individuals,
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which alone exist actually.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, just as in accordance with the nature of contracted things the individual is positable only within the limit of its species, so too no individual can attain to the limit of its genus and of the universe. Indeed, among many individual things of the same species, there must be a difference of degrees of perfection. Hence, with respect to a given species, there will be no maximally perfect [individual thing], than which a more perfect [individual thing] could not be posited; nor is there positable [an individual thing] so imperfect that a more imperfect is not positable. Therefore, no [individual thing] reaches the limit of its species.

- 185** Therefore, there is only one Limit of species, of genera, or of the universe. This Limit is the Center, the Circumference, and the Union of all things. And it is not the case that the universe exhausts the infinite, absolutely maximum power of God so that the universe is an unqualifiedly maximum, delimiting the power of God. Hence, it is not the case that the universe reaches the limit of Absolute Maximality; genera do not reach the limit of the universe; species [do not reach] the limit of their genera; and individual things [do not reach] the limit of their species. Thus, all things are that-which-they-are in the best way [possible for them]<sup>8</sup> and between a maximum and a minimum; and God is the Beginning, the Middle, and the End of the universe and of each thing, so that all things—whether they ascend, descend, or tend toward the middle—approach God.<sup>9</sup> However, the union of all things is through God, so that although all things are different, they are united. Accordingly, among genera, which contract the one universe, there is such a union of a lower [genus] and a higher [genus] that the two coincide in a third [genus] in between. And among the different species there is such an order of combination that the highest species of the one genus coincides with the lowest [species] of the immediately higher [genus], so that there is one continuous and perfect universe. However, every union is by degrees; and we do not arrive at a maximum union, because that is God. Therefore, the different species of a lower and a higher genus are not united in something indivisible which does not admit of greater and lesser degree; rather, [they are united] in a third species, whose individuals differ by degrees, so that no one [of them] participates equally in both [the higher and the lower species], as if this individual were a composite of these [two species]. Instead, [the individual of the third species] contracts, in its own degree, the one nature of its own species. As relat-
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ed to the other species this [third] species is seen to be composed of the lower and of the higher [species], though not equally, since no thing can be composed of precise equals; and this third species, which falls between the other two, necessarily has a preponderant conformity to one of them—i.e., to the higher or to the lower. In the books of the philosophers examples of this are found with regard to oysters, sea mussels, and other things.

**187** Therefore, no species descends to the point that it is the minimum species of some genus, for before it reaches the minimum it is changed into another species; and a similar thing holds true of the [would-be] maximum species, which is changed into another species before it becomes a maximum species. When in the genus *animal* the human species endeavors to reach a higher gradation among perceptible things, it is caught up into a mingling with the intellectual nature; nevertheless, the lower part, in accordance with which man is called an animal, prevails. Now, presumably, there are other spirits. ([I will discuss] these in *Conjectures*).<sup>10</sup> And because of a certain nature which is capable of perception they are said, in an extended sense, to be of the genus *animal*. But since the intellectual nature in them prevails over the other nature, they are called spirits rather than animals, although the Platonists believe that they are intellectual animals. Accordingly, it is evident that species are like a number series which progresses sequentially and which, necessarily, is finite, so that there is order, harmony, and proportion in diversity, as I indicated in Book One.<sup>11</sup>

**188** It is necessary that, without proceeding to infinity, we reach (1) the lowest species of the lowest genus, than which there is not actually a lesser, and (2) the highest [species] of the highest [genus], than which, likewise, there is not actually a greater and higher—even though a lesser than the former and a greater than the latter could be respectively posited. Thus, whether we number upwards or downwards we take our beginning from Absolute Oneness (which is God)—i.e., from the Beginning of all things. Hence, species are as numbers that come together from two opposite directions—[ numbers] that proceed from a minimum which is maximum and from a maximum to which a minimum is not opposed.<sup>12</sup> Hence, there is nothing in the universe which does not enjoy a certain singularity that cannot be found in any other thing, so that no thing excels all others in all respects or [excels] different things in equal measure. By comparison, there can

never in any respect be something equal to another;<sup>13</sup> even if at one time one thing is less than another and at another [time] is greater than this other, it makes this transition with a certain singularity, so that it never attains precise equality [with the other]. Similarly, a square inscribed in a circle passes—with respect to the size of the circumscribing circle—from being a square which is smaller than the circle to being a square larger than the circle, without ever arriving at being equal to the circle. And an angle of incidence increases from being lesser than a right [angle] to being greater [than a right angle] without the medium of equality. (Many of these points will be brought out in the book *Conjectures*.)<sup>14</sup>

**189** Individuating principles cannot come together in one individual in such harmonious comparative relation as in another [individual]; thus, through itself each thing is one and is perfect in the way it can be. And in each species—e.g., the human species—we find that at a given time some individuals are more perfect and more excellent than others in certain respects. (For example, Solomon excelled others in wisdom, Absalom in beauty, Sampson in strength; and those who excelled others more with regard to the intellectual part deserved to be honored above the others.) Nevertheless, a difference of opinions—in accordance with the difference of religions, sects, and regions—gives rise to different judgments of comparison (so that what is praiseworthy according to one [religion, sect, or region] is reprehensible according to another); and scattered throughout the world are people unknown to us.<sup>15</sup> Hence, we do not know who is more excellent than the others in the world;<sup>16</sup> for of all [individuals] we cannot know even one perfectly. God produced this state of affairs in order that each individual, although admiring the others, would be content with himself, with his native land (so that his birthplace alone would seem most pleasant to him), with the customs of his domain, with his language, and so on, so that to the extent possible there would be unity and peace, without envy.<sup>17</sup> For there can be [peace] in every respect only for those who reign with God, who is our peace which surpasses all understanding.<sup>18</sup>

**190** *Chapter Two:* The maximum contracted [to a species] is also the Absolute [Maximum; it is both] Creator and creature.

It is thoroughly clear that the universe is only contractedly-many-things; these are actually such that no one of them attains to the unqualifiedly Maximum. I will add something more: if a maximum which is contracted to a species could be posited as actually existing, then, in accordance with the given species of

191 contraction, this maximum would be actually all the things which are able to be in the possibility of that genus or species. For the absolutely Maximum is actually and absolutely all possible things, and for this reason it is absolutely and maximally infinite; similarly, a maximum which is contracted to a genus and a species is *actually* [all] possible perfection in accordance with the given contraction; in this [contraction] the maximum is (since a greater cannot be posited) infinite and encompasses the entire nature of the given contraction. And just as the [Absolute] Minimum coincides with the Absolute Maximum, so also the contractedly minimum coincides with the contracted maximum.<sup>19</sup> A very clear illustration of this [truth] occurs with regard to a maximum line, which admits of no opposition, and which is both every figure and the equal measure of all figures, and with which a point coincides—as I showed in Book One.<sup>20</sup> Hence, if any positable thing were the contracted maximum individual of some species, such an individual thing would have to be the fullness of that genus and species, so that in fullness of perfection it would be the means, form, essence, and truth of all the things which are possible in the species. This contracted maximum individual would exist above the whole nature of that [given] contraction—[exist] as its final goal.<sup>21</sup> It would enfold in itself the entire perfection of the [given contraction]. And it would be—above all comparative relation—perfectly equal to each given thing [of that species], so that it would not be too great [a measure] for anything nor too small [a measure] for anything but would enfold in its own fullness the perfections of all the things [of that species].<sup>22</sup>

192 And herefrom it is evident—in conformity with the points I exhibited a bit earlier—that the contracted maximum [individual] cannot exist as purely contracted. For no such [purely contracted thing] could attain the fullness of perfection in the genus of its contraction. Nor would such a thing qua contracted be God, who is most absolute.<sup>23</sup> But, necessarily, the contracted maximum [individual]—i.e., God and creature—would be both absolute and contracted, by virtue of a contraction which would be able to exist in itself<sup>24</sup> only if it existed in

Absolute Maximality. (For as I indicated in Book One,<sup>25</sup> there is only one Maximality through which what is contracted could be called maximum.) Suppose Maximum Power united to itself this contracted [maximum individual thing—united it] in such way that it could not be more united and the respective natures still be preserved. [And suppose that], as a result, this contracted thing—its contracted nature being preserved (in accordance with which nature it is the contracted and created fullness of its species)—were, on account of a hypostatic union, both God and all things. [In that case] this admirable union would transcend our entire understanding. For if this union were conceived as [analogous to the way in which] different things are united, then [this conception] would be mistaken; for Absolute Maximality is not other or different, since it is all things. If it were conceived as are two things which previously were separate but now are conjoined, [then this conception] would be mistaken. For divinity does not exist in different ways according to an earlier and a later time, nor is it *this* rather than *that*; nor was this contracted [maximum] able—before the union—to be this or that as is an individual person existing in himself; nor are [the divinity and the contracted maximum] conjoined as parts in a whole, for God cannot be a part.

194 Who, then, could conceive of so admirable a union, which is not as [the union] of form to matter, since the Absolute God cannot be commingled with matter and does not inform [it]. Assuredly, this [union] would be greater than all intelligible unions; for what is contracted would (since it is maximum) exist there only in Absolute Maximality—neither adding anything to Maximality (since Maximality is absolute) nor passing over into its nature (since it itself is contracted). Therefore, what is contracted would exist in what is absolute in such way that (1) if we were to conceive of this [being] as [only] God, we would be mistaken, since what is contracted does not change its nature, and (2) if we were to imagine it as [merely] a creature, we would be wrong, since Absolute Maximality, which is God, does not relinquish its nature, but (3) if we were to think of [it] as a composite of the two, we would err, since a composition of God and creature, of what is maximally contracted and of what is maximally Absolute, is impossible. For such a [being] would have to be conceived by us as (1) in such way God that it is also a creature, (2) in such

way a creature that it is also Creator, and (3) Creator and creature without confusion and without composition. Who, then, could be lifted to such a height that in oneness he would conceive diversity and in diversity oneness? Therefore, this union would transcend all understanding.

- 195**      *Chapter Three:*    Only in the case of the nature of humanity can there be such a maximum [individual].

With regard to these matters, then, we can readily ask: Of what nature should this contracted maximum be? For since it must be the case that this maximum is one (just as Absolute Maximality is Absolute Oneness) and since, in addition, [this maximum] is contracted to this or that: it is first of all evident that the order of things necessarily requires that some things be of a lower nature in comparison with others (as natures devoid of life and intelligence are), that some things be of a higher nature (viz., intelligences), and that some things be of an in-between [nature]. Therefore, if Absolute Maximality is in the most universal way the Being of all things, so that it is not more of one thing than of another: clearly, that being which is more common to the totality of beings is more uniteable with the [Absolute] Maximum.

- 196**      Now, if the nature of lower things is considered and if one of these lower beings were elevated unto [Absolute] Maximality, such a being would be both God and itself. An example is furnished with regard to a maximum line. Since the maximum line would be infinite through Absolute Infinity and maximal through [Absolute] Maximality (to which, necessarily, it is united if it is maximal): through [Absolute] Maximality it would be God ;<sup>26</sup> and through contraction it would remain a line. And so, it would be, actually, everything which a line can become. But a line does not include [the possibility of] life or intellect. Therefore, if the line would not attain to the fullness of [all] natures, how could it be elevated to the maximum gradation? For it would be a maximum which could be greater and which would lack [some] perfections.
- 197**      We must say something similar with regard to the Supreme Nature, which does not embrace a lower [nature] in such way that the union of the lower [nature] and the higher [nature] is greater than their



separation. Now, it befits the Maximum—with which the Minimum coincides—to embrace one thing in such way that it does not repel another thing but is all things together. Therefore, a middle nature, which is the means of the union of the lower [nature] and the higher [nature], is alone that [nature] which can be suitably elevated unto the Maximum by the power of the maximal, infinite God. For since this middle nature—as being what is highest of the lower [nature] and what is lowest of the higher [nature]—enfolds within itself all natures: if it ascends wholly to a union with Maximality, then—as is evident—all natures and the entire universe have, in this nature, wholly reached the supreme gradation.

- 198** Now, human nature is that [nature] which, though created a little lower than the angels, is elevated above all the [other] works of God;<sup>27</sup> it enfolds intellectual and sensible nature and encloses all things within itself, so that the ancients were right in calling it a microcosm, or a small world. Hence, human nature is that [nature] which, if it were elevated unto a union with Maximality, would be the fullness of all the perfections of each and every thing, so that in humanity all things
- 199** would attain the supreme gradation. Now, humanity is present only contractedly in this or that. Therefore, it would not be possible that more than one true human being [*homo*] could ascend to union with Maximality.<sup>28</sup> And, assuredly, this being would be a man in such way that He was also God and would be God in such way that He was also a man. [He would be] the perfection of the universe and would hold preeminence in all respects. In Him the least, the greatest, and the in-between things of the nature that is united to Absolute Maximality would so coincide that He would be the perfection of all things; and all things, qua contracted, would find rest in Him as in their own perfection. The measure of this man would also be the measure of an angel (as John says in the Book of Revelation)<sup>29</sup> and of each thing; for through union with Absolute [Maximality], which is the Absolute Being of all things, He would be the universal contracted being of each creature. Through Him all things would receive the beginning and the end of their contraction, so that through Him who is the contracted maximum [individual] all things would go forth from the Absolute Maximum into contracted being and would return unto the Absolute [Maximum] through this same Medium—[in other words,] through [Him who is] the Beginning of their emanation and the End [i. e., the Goal] of their return, as it were.

- 200** But [it is] *qua* Equality-of-being-all-things [that] God is Creator of the universe, since the universe was created in accordance with Him. Therefore, supreme and maximum Equality-of-being-all-things-absolutely would be that to which the nature of humanity would be united, so that through the assumed humanity God Himself would, in the humanity, be all things contractedly, just as He is the Equality of being all things absolutely. Therefore, since that man would, through the union, exist in maximum Equality of Being, He would be the Son of God—just as [He would also be] the Word [of God], in whom all things were created.<sup>30</sup> That is, [He would be] Equality-of-Being, which is called Son of God, according to what was previously indicated.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, He would not cease being the son of man, just as He would not cease being a man—as will be explained later.<sup>32</sup>
- 201** The things which can be done by God without any variation, diminution, or diminishment of Himself are not repugnant to our most excellent and most perfect God; instead, they besuit His immense goodness, so that all things were created by Him and in accordance with Him in a most excellently and most perfectly congruent order. Therefore, since it is not<sup>33</sup> the case that anything could be more perfect if this order were removed<sup>34</sup> no one—unless he denied either God or that God is most excellent—could reasonably find fault with these [created objects]. For all envy is far removed from God, who is supremely good and whose work cannot be defective; on the contrary, just as He is maximal, so too His work approaches as closely as possible to the maximum. But Maximum Power is not limited except with respect to itself; for there is not anything beyond it, and it is infinite. Therefore, [Maximum Power] is not limited with respect to any creature; rather, Infinite Power can create a better and more perfect [creature] than any given one.<sup>35</sup>
- 202** But if a human nature (*homo*)<sup>36</sup> is elevated unto a oneness with this Power—so that the human nature is a creature existing not in itself but in oneness with Infinite Power—then, this Power is limited not with respect to the creature but with respect to itself. Now, this [work, viz., such an elevated nature] is the most perfect work<sup>37</sup> of the maximum, infinite, and unlimitable power of God; in it there can be no deficiency; otherwise it would not be either Creator or creature. How would it be a creature [existing] contractedly from the Divine Absolute Being if contraction could not be united with it? Through it all things, *qua* existing,<sup>38</sup> would be from Him who exists absolutely;



According to the testimony of that most unique preacher of truth, Paul, who in a rapture was illuminated from on high,<sup>45</sup> we have in Him complete perfection, as well as redemption and remission of sins. “He is the Image of the Invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation because in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through Him and in Him; and He is prior to all things, and in Him all things exist. And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, so that He holds the primacy in all respects. For it was pleasing that all fullness dwell in Him and that through Him all things be reconciled unto Him.”<sup>46</sup>

**204** Such testimonies, together with more elsewhere, are exhibited by the saints regarding the fact that He is God and man. In Him the humanity was united to the Word of God, so that the humanity existed not in itself but in the Word;<sup>47</sup> for the humanity could not have existed in the supreme degree and in complete fullness otherwise than in the divine person of the Son.

To the end that we may conceive—above all our intellectual comprehension and in learned ignorance, as it were—this person who united a human nature to Himself, let us ascend in our understanding and consider [the following]: Through all things God is in all things, and through all things all things are in God—as I indicated earlier at a certain place.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, since these [statements] must be considered conjointly as “God is in all things in such way that all things are in God” and since the Divine Being is of supreme equality and simplicity: God, qua present in all things, is not in them according to degrees—as if communicating Himself by degrees and by parts. However, none of these things can exist without [its respective] difference of degree; hence, all things are in God according to themselves with a [respective] difference of degree.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, since God is in all things in such way that all things are in Him, it is evident that God—in equality of being all things and without any change in Himself—exists in oneness with the maximum humanity of Jesus; for the maximum human nature can exist in God only maximally.<sup>50</sup> And so, in Jesus, who is the Equality of being all things, the Eternal Father and the Eternal Holy Spirit exist (just as they exist in God-the-Son, who is the middle person); and [in Jesus], just as in the Word, all things [exist]; and every creature [exists] in the supreme and most perfect humanity, which completely enfolds all creatable things. Thus, all full-

ness dwells in Jesus.

**205** Let us somehow be directed to these [points] by the following example: Perceptual knowledge is a certain contracted knowledge because the senses attain only to particulars; intellectual knowledge is universal knowledge because in comparison with the perceptual it is free (*absoluta atque abstracta*) from contraction to the particular. But perception is contracted to various gradations in various ways. Through these contractions various species of animals arise according to grades of nobility and perfection. And although there is no ascent to the unqualifiedly maximum gradation (as I indicated earlier)<sup>51</sup> nevertheless in that species which is actually supreme within the genus *animal*, viz., the human species, the senses give rise to an animal such that it is so animal that it is also intellect. For a man is his own intellect. In the intellect the perceptual contractedness is somehow subsumed in (*suppositatur*) the intellectual nature, which exists as a certain divine, separate, abstract being, while the perceptual remains temporal and corruptible in accordance with its own nature.

**206** Therefore, by means of a certain similarity (howbeit a remote one) we must reason in a similar way regarding Jesus, in whom the humanity—since otherwise it could not be maximal in its own fullness—is subsumed in the divinity. For since the intellect of Jesus is most perfect and exists in complete actuality, it can be personally subsumed only in the divine intellect, which alone is actually all things. For in all human beings the [respective] intellect is potentially all things; it gradually progresses from potentiality to actuality, so that the greater it [actually] is, the lesser it is in potentiality. But the maximum intellect, since it is the limit of the potentiality of every intellectual nature and exists in complete actuality, cannot at all exist without being intellect in such way that it is also God, who is all in all. By way of illustration: Assume that a polygon inscribed in a circle were the human nature and the circle were the divine nature. Then, if the polygon were to be a maximum polygon, than which there cannot be a greater polygon, it would exist not through itself with finite angles but in the circular shape. Thus, it would not have its own shape for existing—[i.e., it would not have a shape which was] even conceivably separable from the circular and eternal shape.<sup>52</sup>

**207** Now, the maximality of human nature's perfection is seen in what is substantial and essential [about it]—i.e., with respect to the intellect, which is served by human nature's corporeal features. Hence, the

maximally perfect man is not supposed to be prominent with regard to accidental features but with regard to His intellect. For example, it is not required that He be a giant or a dwarf or [that He be] of this or that size, color, figure—and so on for other accidents. Rather, it is necessary only that His body so avoid the extremes that it be a most suitable instrument for His intellectual nature, to which it be obedient and submissive without recalcitrance, complaint, and fatigue. Our Jesus—in whom were hidden (even while He appeared in the world) all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom,<sup>53</sup> as if a light were hidden in darkness—is believed to have had, for the sake of His most excellent intellectual nature, a most suitable and most perfect body (as also is reported by the most holy witnesses of His life).

**208**            *Chapter Five: Christ, conceived through the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary.*

Furthermore, we must consider that since the most perfect humanity, which is subsumed upwards, is the terminal contracted precision, it does not altogether exceed [the limits of] the species of human nature. Now, like is begotten from like; and, hence, the begotten proceeds from the begetter according to a natural comparative relation. But since what is terminal is free of termination, it is free of limitation and comparative relation. Hence, the maximum human being is not begettable by natural means; and yet, He cannot be altogether free of origin from that species whose terminal perfection He is. Therefore, because He is a human being, He proceeds partly according to human nature. And since He is the highest originated [being], most immediately united to the Beginning: the Beginning, from which He most immediately exists, is as a creating or begetting [Beginning], i.e., as a father; and the human beginning is as a passive [beginning] which affords a receiving material. Hence, [He comes] from a mother apart from a male seed. But every operation proceeds from a spirit and a love which unite the active with the passive, as I earlier indicated in a certain passage.<sup>54</sup> Hence, necessarily, the maximum operation (which is beyond all natural comparative relation and through which the Creator is united to the creation and which proceeds from a maximum uniting Love) is, without doubt, from the Holy Spirit, who is absolutely Love. Through the Holy Spirit alone and without the assistance of a contracted agent, the mother was able to conceive—within the scope of her species—the Son of God the Father. Thus, just as

God the Father formed by His own Spirit all the things which by Him came forth from not-being into being, so by the same most holy Spirit He did this more excellently when He worked most perfectly [i.e., when He formed Jesus].

- 210** To instruct our ignorance by an example: When some very excellent teacher wants to disclose to his students his intellectual, mental word (in order that they may feed spiritually upon the conceived truth once it has been shown to them), he causes his mental word to be indued with sound, since it is not disclosable to his students unless he indues it with a perceptible figure. But this cannot be done in any other way than through the natural spirit [i.e., breath] of the teacher. From the inbreathed air he adapts a vocal figure that befits the mental word. To this figure he unites the word in such way that the sound exists with the word, so that those listening attain to the word by means of the sound.
- 211** By means of this admittedly very remote likeness we are momentarily elevated in our reflection—[elevated] beyond that which we can understand. For through the Holy Spirit (who is consubstantial with the Father) the Eternal Father of immense goodness (who willed to show us the richness of His glory and all the fullness of His knowledge and wisdom) indued with human nature the Eternal Word, His Son (who is this fullness and the fullness of all things). Making allowance for our weaknesses—since we were unable to perceive [the Word] in any other way than in visible form and in a form similar to ourselves—the Father manifested the Word in accordance with our capability. As a sound [is formed] from inbreathed air, so, as it were, this Spirit, through an outbreathing,<sup>55</sup> formed from the fertile purity of the virginal blood the animal body. He added reason<sup>56</sup> so that it would be a human nature. [To it] He so inwardly united the Word of God the Father that the Word would be human nature's center of existence. And all these things were done not serially (as a concept is temporally expressed by us) but by an instantaneous operation—beyond all time and in accordance with a willing that befits Infinite Power.<sup>57</sup>
- 212** No one should doubt that this mother, who was so full of virtue and who furnished the material, excelled all virgins in the perfection of every virtue and had a more excellent blessing than all other fertile women. For this [virgin-mother], who was in all respects foreordained to such a unique and most excellent virginal birth, ought rightfully to have been free of whatever could have hindered the purity or

the vigor, and likewise the uniqueness, of such a most excellent birth. For if the Virgin had not been pre-elected, how would she have been suited for a virginal birth without a male seed? If she had not been superblessed of the Lord and most holy, how could she have been made the Holy Spirit's sacristy, in which the Holy Spirit would fashion a body for the Son of God. If she had not remained a virgin after the birth, she would beforehand have imparted to the most excellent birth the center of maternal fertility not in her supreme perfection of brightness but dividedly and diminishedly—not as would have befit [this] unique, supreme, and so great son. Therefore, if the most holy Virgin offered her whole self to God, for whom she also wholly partook of the complete nature of fertility by the operation of the Holy Spirit, then in her the virginity remained—before the birth, during the birth, and after the birth—immaculate and uncorrupted, beyond all natural and ordinary begetting.

- 213** Therefore, Jesus Christ—God and man—was born from the Eternal Father and from a temporal mother, viz., the most glorious Virgin Mary; from the maximum and absolutely most abundant Father and from a mother most filled with virginal fertility, He was filled, in the fullness of time, with a heavenly blessing. For from the virgin-mother [Jesus] was able to exist as a human being only temporally—and from God the Father only eternally; but the temporal birth required a fullness of perfection in time, just as [it required] in the mother a fullness of fertility. Therefore, when the fullness of time arrived: since
- 214** [Jesus] could not be born as a human being apart from time, He was born at the time and place most fitting thereto and yet most concealed from all creatures. For the supreme bounties (*plenitudines*) are incomparable with our daily experiences. Hence, no reasoning was able to grasp them by any sign, even though by a certain very hidden prophetic inspiration certain obscure signs, darkened by human likenesses, transmitted them; and from these signs the wise could reasonably have foreseen that the Word was to be incarnated in the fullness of time. But the precise place, time, or manner was foreknown only to the Eternal Begetter, who ordained that when all things were in a state of moderate silence, the Son would in the course of the night<sup>58</sup> descend from the Heavenly Citadel into the virginal womb and would at the ordained and fitting time manifest Himself to the world in the form of a servant.



**215** Chapter Six: The mystery of the death of Jesus Christ.

It accords with the expression of my intent that a short digression here be made—in order to attain more clearly unto the mystery of the Cross. There is no doubt that a human being consists of senses, intellect, and reason (which is in between and which connects the other two).<sup>59</sup> Now, order subordinates the senses to reason and reason to intellect. The intellect is not temporal and mundane but is free of time and of the world. The senses are temporally subject to the motions of the world. With respect to the intellect, reason is on the horizon, so to speak; but with respect to the senses, it is at the zenith, as it were; thus, things that are within time and things that are beyond time coincide in reason.

- 216** The senses, which belong to the animal [nature], are incapable [of attaining unto] supratemporal and spiritual things. Therefore, what is animal does not perceive the things which are of God,<sup>60</sup> for God is spirit and more than spirit.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, perceptual knowledge occurs in the darkness of the ignorance of eternal things; and in accordance with the flesh it is moved, through the power of concupiscence, toward carnal desires and, through the power of anger, toward warding off what hinders it. But supraexcellent reason contains—in its own nature and as a result of its capability of participating in the intellectual nature—certain laws through which, as ruler over desire's passions,<sup>62</sup> it tempers and calms the passions, in order that a human being will not make a goal of perceptible things and be deprived of his intellect's spiritual desire. And the most important of [these] laws are that no one do to another what he would not want done to himself,<sup>63</sup> that eternal things be preferred to temporal things, and clean and holy things to unclean and base things. The laws which are elicited from reason by the most holy lawgivers and are taught (according to the difference of place and time) as remedies for those who sin against reason work together to the foregoing end. Even if the senses were subject to reason in every respect and did not follow after the passions which are natural to them, the intellect—soaring higher [than reason]—sees that nonetheless man cannot of himself attain to the goal of his intellectual and eternal desires. For since from the seed of Adam man is begotten with carnal delight<sup>64</sup> (in whom, in accordance with propagation, the animality prevails over the spirituality): his nature—which in its basis of origin is immersed in the carnal delights through which the man springs forth into existence by way of a father—re-
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mains altogether unable to transcend temporal things in order to embrace spiritual things. Accordingly, if the weight of carnal delights draws reason and intellect downward, so that they consent to these motions and do not resist them, it is clear that a man so drawn downward and so turned away from God, is altogether deprived of the enjoyment of the most excellent good, which, in the manner of the intellectual, is upward and eternal. But if reason governs the senses, still it is necessary that the intellect govern reason in order that the intellect may adhere—by formed faith<sup>65</sup> and above reason—to the Mediator, so that it can be drawn unto glory by God the Father.

- 218** Except for Christ Jesus, who descended from Heaven, there was never anyone who had [enough] power over himself and over his own nature (which in its origin is so subject to the sins of carnal desire) to be able, of himself, to ascend beyond his own origin to eternal and heavenly things. Jesus is the one who ascended by His own power and in whom the human nature (begotten not from the will of the flesh but from God)<sup>66</sup> was not hindered from mightily returning to God the Father. Therefore, through its union [with the divine nature] the human nature in Christ was exalted to the Supreme Power and was delivered from the weight of temporal and burdensome desires. But Christ the Lord willed to mortify completely—and in mortifying to purge—by means of His own human body all the sins of human nature which draw us toward earthly things. [He did this] not for His own sake (since He had committed no sin) but for our sakes, so that all men, of the same humanity with Him, would find in Him the complete purgation of their sins. The man Christ's voluntary and most innocent, most shameful, and most cruel death on the Cross was the deletion and purgation of, and the satisfaction for, all the carnal desires of human nature. Whatever humanly can be done counter to the love for a neighbor is abundantly made up for in the fullness of Christ's love, by which He delivered Himself unto death even on behalf of His enemies.
- 219** Therefore, the humanity in Christ Jesus made up for all the defects of all men. For since it is maximum [humanity], it encompasses the complete possibility of the species, so that it is such equality-of-being with each man that it is united to each man much more closely than is a brother or a very special friend. For the maximality of human nature brings it about that in the case of each man who cleaves to Christ through formed faith Christ is this very man<sup>67</sup> by means of a most perfect union—each's numerical distinctness being preserved. Because of this union the following statement of Christ's

is true: “Whatever you have done to one of the least of my [brethren], you have done to me.”<sup>68</sup> And, conversely, whatever Christ Jesus merited by His suffering, those who are one with Him also merited—different degrees of merit being preserved in accordance with the different degree of each [man's] union with Christ through faith formed by love. Hence, in Christ the faithful are circumcised; in Him they are baptized; in Him they die; in Him they are made alive again through resurrection; in Him they are united to God and are glorified.<sup>69</sup>

**220** Therefore, our justification is not from ourselves but from Christ. Since He is complete fullness, in Him we obtain all things, if we possess Him. Since in this life we attain unto Him by formed faith, we can be justified only by faith, as I will explain more fully in a later section.<sup>70</sup>

This is that ineffable mystery of the Cross of our redemption. In this mystery Christ showed (in addition to the things already touched upon) that truth, justice, and the divine virtues ought to be preferred to temporal life—just as eternal things ought to be preferred to transitory things. And [herein He also showed] that in the most perfect man supreme constancy, strength, love, and humility ought to be present—just as the death of Christ on the Cross showed that these and all other virtues were maximally present in Jesus, the maximum [individual]. Therefore, the higher a man ascends in the immortal virtues, the more Christlike he becomes. For minimum things coincide with maximum things. For example, maximum humiliation [coincides] with exaltation; the most shameful death of a virtuous man [coincides] with his glorious life, and so on—as Christ's life, suffering, and crucifixion manifest all these [points] to us.

**221** *Chapter Seven: The mystery of the Resurrection.*

The man Christ, being passible and mortal, could attain unto the glory of the Father (who is Immortality itself, since He is Absolute Life) by no other way than [the following]: that what was mortal put on immortality.<sup>71</sup> And this was not at all possible apart from death. For how could what is mortal have put on immortality otherwise than by being stripped of mortality? How would it be free of mortality except by having paid the debt of death? Therefore, Truth itself says that those who do not understand that Christ had to die and in this way enter into glory are foolish and of slow mind.<sup>72</sup> But since I have already

indicated<sup>73</sup> that for our sakes Christ died a most cruel death, I must now say the following: since it was not fitting for human nature to be led to the triumph of immortality otherwise than through victory over death, [Christ] underwent death in order that human nature would rise again with Him to eternal life and that the animal, mortal body would become spiritual and incorruptible. [Christ] was able to be a true man only if He was mortal; and He was able to lead mortal [human] nature to immortality only if through death human nature became stripped of mortality.

**222** Hear how beautifully Truth itself, speaking about this [matter], instructs us when it says: “Except a grain of wheat falling into the ground die it remains alone; but if it die it brings forth much fruit.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, if Christ had always remained mortal (even if He had never died), how would He, as a mortal man, have bestowed immortality on human nature? Although He would not have died, He would have remained a mere deathless mortal. Therefore, through death, He had to be freed from the possibility of dying, if He was to bear much fruit—so that, when exalted, He would draw all things unto Himself,<sup>75</sup> since His power would be present not only in this corruptible<sup>76</sup> world and on this corruptible earth but also in incorruptible Heaven. Now, if we keep in mind the points that have already been frequently made, we will be able in our ignorance to apprehend the present point to some extent.

**223** In what precedes I indicated that the maximum man, Jesus, was not able to have in Himself a person that existed separately from the divinity. For He is the maximum [human being]. And, accordingly, there is a sharing of the respective modes of speaking [about the human nature and the divine nature], so that the human things coincide with the divine things; for His humanity—which on account of the supreme union is inseparable from His divinity (as if it were put on and assumed by the divinity)—cannot exist as separate in person.<sup>77</sup> But a man is a union of a body and a soul—the separation of which is death. Therefore, because the maximum humanity is subsumed in the divine person: at the time of [Jesus's] death neither the soul nor the body could have been separated (not even with respect to spatial separation) from the divine person, without which the man [Jesus] did not exist.

**224** Therefore, Christ did not die as if His person had forsaken Him; rather He remained hypostatically united with the divinity—there not

being even spatial separation with regard to the [personal] center, in which the humanity was subsumed. (But in accordance with the lower nature—which in conformity with the truth of its own nature was able to undergo a separation of the soul from the body—a separation was made temporally and spatially, so that at the hour of death the soul and the body were not together at the same place and at the same time.) Therefore, in His body and soul no corruptibility was possible, since they were united with eternity. But the temporal birth was subject to death and temporal separation, so that when the circle of return (from temporal composition to dissolution) was completed and when, furthermore, the body was freed from these temporal motions, the truth of the humanity that is beyond time and that, as united to the divinity, remained undestroyed united (as its truth required) the truth of the body with the truth of the soul. Thus, when the shadowy image of the truth of the man who appeared in time departed, the true man arose, free from all temporal passion. Hence, the same Jesus most truly arose above all temporal motions (through a union of soul to body—[a union] beyond all temporal motion) and was never again going to die. Without this union the truth of the incorruptible humanity would not have been unconfusedly and most truly united hypostatically with the nature of the divine person.

**225** Assist your smallness of intellect and your ignorance by Christ's example about the grain of wheat.<sup>78</sup> In this example the numerical distinctness of the grain is destroyed, while the specific essence remains intact; by this means nature raises up many grains. But if the grain were maximum and most perfect, then when it died in very good and very fertile soil, it could bring forth fruit not only one hundredfold or one thousandfold but as manifold as the nature of the species encompassed in its possibility. This is what Truth means [when it says] that [the grain] would bring forth much fruit; for a multitude is a limitedness without number.

Therefore, discern keenly: with respect to the fact that the humanity of Jesus is considered as contracted to the man Christ, it is likewise understood to be united also with His divinity. As united with the divinity, [the humanity] is fully absolute; [but] as it is considered to be that true man Christ, [the humanity] is contracted, so that Christ is a man through the humanity. And so, Jesus's humanity is as a medium between what is purely absolute and what is purely contracted. Accordingly, then, it was corruptible only in a given respect; but absolutely it was incorruptible. Therefore, it was corruptible according

to temporality, to which it was contracted; but in accordance with the fact that it was free from time, beyond time, and united with the divinity, it was incorruptible.

**226** But truth, as temporally contracted, is a “sign” and an “image,” so to speak, of supratemporal truth. Thus, the temporally contracted truth of the body is a “shadow,” so to speak, of the supratemporal truth of the body. So too, the [temporally] contracted truth of the soul is, as it were, a “shadow” of the soul which is free from time. For when the soul is in time, where it does not apprehend without images, it seems to be the senses or reason rather than the intellect; and when it is elevated above time, it is the intellect, which is free from images. And since the humanity was inseparably rooted on high in the divine incorruptibility: when the temporal, corruptible motion was completed, the dissolution could occur only in the direction of the root of its incorruptibility. Therefore, after the end of temporal motion ([an end] which was death) and after the removal of all the things which temporally befell the truth of the human nature, the same Jesus arose—not with a body which was burdensome, corruptible, shadowy, passible (and so on for the other things which follow upon temporal composition) but with a true body which was glorious, impassible, unbehindered, and immortal (as the truth which was free from temporal conditions required). Moreover, the truth of the hypostatic union of the human nature with the divine nature necessarily required this union [of body and soul]. Hence, Blessed Jesus had to arise from the dead, as He Himself says when He states: “Christ had to suffer in this way and to arise from the dead on the third day.”<sup>79</sup>

**227** *Chapter Eight: Christ, the Firstfruits of those who sleep,*<sup>80</sup>  
ascended to Heaven.

Now that the foregoing points have been exhibited, it is easy to see that Christ is the Firstborn from the dead.<sup>81</sup> For before Him no one was able to arise [from the dead]—since human nature had not yet, in the course of time, reached a maximum and was not yet united with incorruptibility and immortality, as it was in Christ. For all human beings were powerless until the coming of Him who said: “I have the power to lay down my life and the power to take it up again.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, in Christ, who is the Firstfruits of those who sleep,<sup>83</sup> human nature put on immortality. But there is only one indivisible humanity and specific essence of all human beings. Through *it* all individual human

beings are numerically distinct human beings, so that Christ and all human beings have the same humanity, though the numerical distinctness of the individuals remains unconfused. Hence, it is evident that the humanity of all the human beings who—whether temporally before or after Christ—either have existed or will exist has, in Christ, put on immortality. Therefore, it is evident that the following inference holds: the man Christ arose; hence, after [the cessation of] all motion of temporal corruptibility, all men will arise through Him, so that they will be eternally incorruptible.

**228** And although there is a single humanity of all human beings, there are various individuating principles which contract it to this or that person (*suppositum*)—so that in Jesus Christ there were only the most perfect and powerful principles and those nearest to the essence of the humanity that was united with the divinity. Through the power of His divinity Christ was able to arise by His own power, which came to Him from His divinity; hence, God is said to have raised Him from the dead. Since Jesus was God and man, He arose by His own power; and—except in the power of Christ, who is God—no man besides Christ can arise as Christ.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, Christ is the one through whom, according to the nature of His humanity, our human nature has contracted immortality and through whom, as well, we (who were born altogether subject to motion) will (when motion ceases) rise beyond time and unto a likeness to Him. This will occur at the end of time. But Christ, who was born temporally only insofar as He issued forth from a mother, did not, as regards His resurrection, wait for the whole course of time [to end], for time did not wholly affect His birth. Remember that in Christ human nature put on immortality. Therefore, all of us, whether good or evil, shall arise; but not all of us shall be changed through a glory which transforms us—through Christ, the Son of God—into adopted sons. Therefore, all shall arise through Christ, but not all shall arise as Christ and in Christ through union; rather, only those who are Christ's through faith, hope, and love [shall so arise].<sup>85</sup>

**229** If I am not mistaken, you see that [a religion] which does not embrace Christ as mediator and savior, as God and man, as the way, the truth, and the life<sup>86</sup> is not a perfect religion, leading men to the final and most coveted goal of peace. Think of how discordant is the belief of the Saracens, who (1) affirm that Christ is the maximum and most perfect man, born of a virgin and translated alive into Heaven

but (2) deny that He is God. Surely they have been blinded, because they assert what is impossible. But even from the points stated in the foregoing manner one who has understanding can see, clearer than day, that a man who is not also God cannot be maximum and in all respects most perfect, supernaturally born of a virgin. These [Saracens] are mindless persecutors of the Cross of Christ, being ignorant of His mysteries. They will not taste the divine fruit of His redemption, nor are they led to expect it by their law of Mohammed, which promises only to satisfy their cravings for pleasure.<sup>87</sup> In the hope that these cravings are extinguished in us by the death of Christ, we yearn to apprehend an incorruptible glory.

**230** The Jews likewise confess with the Saracens that Messiah is the maximum, most perfect, and immortal man; but, held back by the same diabolical blindness, they deny that He is God. They also do not hope (as do we servants of Christ) to obtain the supreme happiness of enjoying God—even as they also shall not obtain it. And what I deem to be even more remarkable is that the Jews, as well as the Saracens, believe that there will be a general resurrection but do not admit its possibility through the man who is also God. For suppose [the following] be granted: that if the motion of generation and corruption ceases, the perfection of the universe cannot occur apart from resurrection, since human nature (which is an intermediate nature) is an essential part of the universe; and without human nature not only would the universe [not] be perfect but it would not even be a universe. And [suppose it also be granted] that therefore the following is necessary: that if motion ever ceases, either the entire universe will cease or men will rise to incorruptibility. (In these men the nature of all intermediate things is complete, so that the other animals will not have to arise, since man is their perfection.) Or [suppose] the resurrection be said to be going to occur in order that the whole man will receive, from a just God, retribution according to his merits. [Even if all of the foregoing be said], still, above all, Christ—through whom alone human nature can attain unto incorruptibility—must be believed to be God and man.

**231** And so, all those who believe that there is resurrection and who deny that Christ is the medium of its possibility have been blinded, since faith in resurrection is the affirmation of the divinity and the humanity of Christ and of the death and the resurrection of Christ, who, according to the aforesaid, is the Firstborn from the dead. For He arose



in order thereby to enter into glory through ascending to Heaven. I think that this ascent must be understood to have been above all motion of corruptibility and all influence of the heavens. For although in accordance with His divinity Christ is everywhere, nevertheless His place is more properly said to be where there never is change, emotion, sadness, and other [accidents] which befall temporality. And we say that this place of eternal joy and peace is beyond the heavens, although it is not apprehensible, describable, or definable in respect to space.

**232** Christ is the center and the circumference of intellectual nature;<sup>88</sup> and since the intellect encompasses all things, Christ is above all things. Nevertheless, as if in His own temple, He dwells in the holy rational souls and in the holy intellectual spirits, which are the heavens, declaring His glory. So, then, we understand that Christ—in that He “ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things”—ascended above all space and time unto an incorruptible mansion, beyond everything which can be spoken of.<sup>89</sup> Since He is God, He is all in all. Since He is Truth, He reigns in the intellectual heavens. And since as the life of all rational spirits He is their- center, it is not the case that, with respect to location, He is seated on the circumference rather than at the center. And, therefore, He who is the “Fount of life”<sup>90</sup> for souls, as well as their goal, affirms that the Kingdom of Heaven is also within men.<sup>91</sup>

**233** *Chapter Nine: Christ is judge of the living and the dead.*

Who is a judge more just than He who is Justice itself? For Christ, the head and the source of every rational creature, is Maximal Reason, from which all reason derives. But reason<sup>92</sup> judges discriminatively. Hence, Christ—who (while remaining God, who is the rewarder of all) assumed rational human nature with all rational creatures—is rightfully the judge of the living and the dead. But through Himself and in Himself Christ judges—above all time—all things. For He embraces all creatures, since He is the maximum human being, in whom, because He is God, all things exist. As God He is Infinite Light in which there is no darkness.<sup>93</sup> This Light illumines all things, so that in it all things are most manifest to it. For this infinite, intellectual Light enfolds, beyond all time, what is present as well as what is past, what is living as well as what is dead—just as corporeal light is the basis

(*hypostasis*) of all colors. But Christ is as purest fire, which is inseparable from light and which exists not in itself but in light. And He is that spiritual fire of life and understanding which—as consuming<sup>94</sup> all things and taking all things into itself—tests and judges all things, as does the judgment of material fire, which examines all things.

- 234 All rational spirits are judged in Christ, as what is heatable by fire [is judged] in fire.<sup>95</sup> Of these [heatable things] the one, if it remains in the fire for a long time, is transformed into the likeness of fire (e.g., most excellent and most perfect gold is so gold and so intensely fire-hot that it appears to be no more gold than fire); but some other thing does not participate in the intensity of the fire to such a degree (e.g., purified silver, bronze, or iron); nevertheless, they all seem to be transformed into fire, although each [is transformed] in its own degree. And this judgment belongs only to the fire, not to the things heated by fire, since each thing heated by fire apprehends in each other such thing only that very radiant fire and not the differences between each such thing. By comparison, if we were to see gold, silver, and copper fused in a maximum fire, we would not apprehend the differences of the metals after they had been transformed into the form of fire. However, if the fire were an intellectual [being], it would know the degrees of perfection of each [metal] and to what extent (according to these degrees) the fire's capability for intensity would be differently present
- 235 in each thing. Hence, there are certain things—things heatable by fire, continuing incorruptibly in fire, and capable of receiving light and heat—which on account of their purity are transformable into the likeness of fire; and this occurs differently, according to greater and lesser degrees. But there are other things which, because of their impurity, are not transformable into light, even if they are heatable. In a similar manner, Christ, who is judge, according to one and the same most simple judgment, imparts most justly and without envy, at one instant and to all [rational spirits] (imparts not in the order of time but in the order of nature) the “warmth,” so to speak, of created reason—in order to bestow, by the heat which is received, a divine, intellectual light from on high. Thus, God is all things in all things;<sup>96</sup> and all things are in God through the Mediator; and [every rational spirit] is equal to God to the extent that this is possible in accordance with each's capability.

But some things, because of the fact that they are more unified and pure, are able to receive not only heat but also light; other things are barely [able to receive] heat and are not [at all able to receive]

236 light. This results from [the disposition or] indisposition of the [receiving] objects. Hence, since that Infinite Light is Eternity itself and Truth itself, it is necessary that a rational creature desiring to be illuminated by that Light turn to true and eternal things, which are above these mundane and corruptible things. Corporeal and spiritual things are related to each other as contraries. For example, vegetative power is corporeal; it converts nourishment which is received from without into the nature of that which is nourished; an animal is not converted into bread but conversely. However, when an intellectual spirit—whose operation is supratemporal and, as it were, on the horizon of eternity—turns toward eternal things, it cannot convert these things into itself, since they are eternal and incorruptible. But since it itself is incorruptible, it also is not converted into these things in such way that it ceases to be an intellectual substance. Instead, it is converted into these [in such way] that it is absorbed into a likeness to the eternal things—[absorbed], however, according to degrees, so that the more fervently it is turned toward these things, the more fully it is perfected by them and the more deeply its being is hidden in the Eternal Being. But since Christ is immortal and still lives and is still life and truth, whoever turns to Him turns to life and truth. And the more ardently [he does] this, the more he is elevated from mundane and corruptible things unto eternal things, so that his life is hidden in Christ.<sup>97</sup> For the virtues are eternal: justice remains forever, and so too does truth.

237 Whoever turns to the virtues walks in Christ's ways, which are the ways of purity and immortality. Now, the virtues are divine illuminations. Therefore, if during this life someone turns by faith to Christ, who is virtue, then when he is freed from this temporal life, he will exist in purity of spirit, so that he can enter into the joy of eternal possession. But the turning of our spirit occurs when in accordance with all its intellectual powers our spirit turns by faith to the eternal and most pure truth (which it places before all else) and when it chooses and loves such truth as being alone worthy to be loved. For to turn by most assured faith to the truth which is Christ is to forsake this world and to tread on it in victory. But to love Christ most ardently is to attain unto Him through spiritual motion, for He is not only lovable but is Love itself. For when through the grades of love the spirit attains unto Love itself, it is plunged into Love itself—not temporally but above all time and mundane motion.

**238** Therefore, just as everyone who loves is within love, so all who love truth are in Christ. And just as everyone-who-loves loves through love, so all who love truth love it through Christ. Hence, no one knows the truth unless the spirit of Christ is in him. And just as it is impossible that there be a lover without love, so it is impossible that someone have God without [having] the spirit of Christ; only in this spirit can we worship God. Accordingly, unbelievers—who are unconverted to Christ and who are incapable of receiving the light of transforming glory—have already been condemned to darkness and to the shadow of death, since they have turned from the life which is Christ.<sup>98</sup> Through union [with Christ] all [who love Christ] are gloriously filled with His fullness alone.<sup>99</sup> Later, when I shall speak about the church, I will add—on the same foundation and for the sake of our consolation—some more points regarding this union.<sup>100</sup>

**239** *Chapter Ten: The Judge's sentence.*

It is evident that no one among mortals comprehends the judgment and sentence of this judge. For since it is beyond all time and motion, it is not disclosed by comparative or inferential investigation or by vocal utterance or by such signs as indicate a delay or a protraction. But just as all things were created in<sup>101</sup> the Word (for He spoke and they were created),<sup>102</sup> so in the same Word, which is also called Reason, all things are judged. And there is no interval between the sentence and its execution, but what happens at an instant is the following: the resurrection and the securing of the respective end (*viz.*, glorification with regard to the translation of the sons of God and damnation with regard to the exclusion of the unconverted) are not separated by a moment of time—[not] even by an indivisible [moment].

**240** The intellectual nature, which is beyond time and is not subject to temporal corruption,<sup>103</sup> contains, in accordance with its nature, incorruptible forms—e.g., mathematical forms, which in their own way are abstract (but are also present in natural objects) and which are hidden away in the intellectual nature and are easily transformed.<sup>104</sup> These [incorruptible forms] are, for us, guiding signs of the intellectual nature's incorruptibility; for [the intellect is] the incorruptible locus of incorruptible [forms]. Now, by its natural movement [the intellectual nature] is moved toward most abstract truth—as toward the goal of its own desires and toward the ultimate and most delectable object. And since such an object as this is all things, because it is God:

the intellect—immortal and incorruptible—is not satisfiable until it attains unto God, for it is fully satisfied only by an eternal object.

**241** But suppose that an intellect, upon being freed from this body in which it is subject to temporal thoughts, does not attain the desired goal but rather falls into ignorance when it should be seeking the truth and when with utmost desire it should be desiring nothing other than to apprehend the truth, not by a symbolism or signs but assuredly and “face to face.”<sup>105</sup> In that case, since (because of its turning away from truth at the hour of separation and because of its turning to what is corruptible) it falls toward corruptible objects of desire, toward uncertainty and confusion, and into the dark chaos of pure possibility (where there is no actual certainty): the intellect is rightly said to have descended unto intellectual death. Indeed, for the intellectual soul to understand is for it to be; and for it to understand the object of desire is for it to live. Hence, just as, for it, eternal life is finally to apprehend the unchanging, eternal object of its desire, so, for it, eternal death is to be separated from this unchanging object of desire and to be hurled into the chaos of confusion, where in its own manner it is eternally tormented by fire. [This manner is] graspable by us only analogously to the torment of someone who is deprived of vital nourishment and health—and [deprived] not only of these but also of the hope of ever obtaining them, so that he is ever dying an agonizing death, without extinction and termination.

**242** The foregoing is a life wretched beyond what can be conceived. It is life in such way that it is death; it is existence in such way that it is not-existence; it is understanding in such way that it is lack of understanding. Now, earlier<sup>106</sup> I proved [all of the following]: The resurrection of men occurs above all motion and time and quantity and other [determinations] which are subject to time, so that the corruptible is resolved into the incorruptible and the animal is resolved into the spiritual. Accordingly, a whole [resurrected] man *is* his intellect, which is spirit; and a true body is engulfed by his spirit. Thus, the body does not exist in itself (i.e., in its corporeal, quantitative, and temporal relations) but exists as translated into the spirit (i.e., exists in a manner contrary to our present body). *Here* [in this lifetime] not the intellect but the body is seen, and in the body the intellect seems to be imprisoned, as it were; but *there* [in the resurrected life] the body exists in the spirit, just as here the spirit exists in the body. Accordingly, as here the soul is weighed down by the body, so there the

body is lightened by the spirit. Therefore, [in accordance with the foregoing proven points]: as the spiritual joys of the intellectual life are the greatest (which joys are participated in by even the body, which is glorified within the spirit), so the infernal sorrows of spiritual death are the greatest (which sorrows are experienced even by the body, which is in the spirit). And since our God (who is understood to be eternal life) is comprehensible [only] above all understanding,<sup>107</sup> these eternal joys which exceed our entire understanding are greater than can be conveyed by any sign; likewise, the punishments of the damned occur beyond all conceivable and describable punishments. Therefore, with regard to all the musical and harmonic signs of joy, delight, and glory which, as signs for thinking what is known to us, are found to be indicators-of-eternal-life handed down by the Fathers: they are very remote perceptible signs—infinately distant from the intellectual [realities], which are not perceivable by any imaging. Similarly, with regard to the punishments of Hell, which are likened to a fire of the element sulphur, to a fire from pitch, and to other perceptible torments: these latter do not admit of any comparison with those fiery intellectual miseries from which Jesus Christ, our life and our salvation, deigns to save us. He is blessed forever. Amen.

**244**      *Chapter Eleven: The mysteries of faith.*

All our forefathers unanimously maintain that faith is the beginning of understanding. For in every branch of study certain things are presupposed as first principles.<sup>108</sup> They are grasped by faith alone, and from them is elicited an understanding of the matters to be treated. For everyone who wills to ascend to learning must believe those things without which he cannot ascend. For Isaiah says “Unless you believe, you will not understand.”<sup>109</sup> Therefore, faith enfolds within itself everything which is understandable. But understanding is the unfolding of faith. Therefore, understanding is guided by faith, and faith is increased by understanding. Hence, where there is no sound faith, there is no true understanding. Thus, it is evident what kind of conclusion erroneous beginnings and a weakness of foundation imply. But there is no more perfect faith than Truth itself, which is Jesus.<sup>110</sup>

Who does not understand that right faith is a most excellent gift of God?<sup>111</sup> The Apostle John states that faith in the incarnation of the Word of God leads us unto the truth in order that we may be made

sons of God.<sup>112</sup> At the outset John plainly discloses this [faith]; then in accordance with it he expounds the many works of Christ, in order that the intellect may be illumined in faith; finally, he draws the conclusion when he says, “These things were written in order that you would believe that Jesus is the Son of God.”<sup>113</sup>

**245** But soundest faith-in-Christ, made steadfastly firm in simplicity, can, in accordance with previously given instruction in ignorance, be increased and unfolded in ascending degrees. For although hidden from the wise, the very great and very deep mysteries of God are revealed, through faith in Jesus, to the small and humble inhabitants of the world.<sup>114</sup> For Jesus is the one in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden,<sup>115</sup> and without Him no one can do anything.<sup>116</sup> For He is the Word and the Power through which God (who as alone the Most High, having power over all things in heaven and on earth) created even the aeons. Since God is not knowable in this world<sup>117</sup> (where by reason and by opinion or by doctrine we are led, with symbols, through the more known to the unknown), He is apprehended only where persuasive considerations cease and faith appears. Through faith we are caught up, in simplicity, so that being in a body incorporeally (because in spirit) and in the world not mundanely but celestially we may incomprehensibly contemplate Christ above all reason and intelligence, in the third heaven of most simple intellectuality. Thus, we see even the following: viz., that because of the immensity of His excellence God cannot be comprehended. And this is that learned ignorance through which most blessed Paul, in ascending, saw that when he was being elevated more highly to Christ, he did not know Christ, though at one time he had known only Christ.<sup>118</sup>

**246** Therefore, we who are believers in Christ are led in learned ignorance unto the Mountain that is Christ and that we are forbidden to touch with the nature of our animality.<sup>119</sup> And when we attempt to view this Mountain with our intellectual eye, we fall into an obscuring mist, knowing that within this mist is the Mountain on which, alone, all living beings possessed of an intellect are well pleased to dwell. If we approach this Mountain with greater steadfastness of faith, we will be snatched from the eyes of those who live sensually, so that with an inward hearing we will perceive the sounds and thunderings and frightening signs of its majesty. [And thus too] we will easily perceive that Christ alone is Lord, whom all things obey, and

we will progressively come to certain of His incorruptible footprints (as if [coming to] certain most divine marks). At this point we [shall] hear, in the holy instruments and signs of the prophets and the saints, the voice not of mortal creatures but of God Himself; and we [shall] see God more clearly, as if through a more rarefied cloud.

**247** Thereupon the believers, who continue to ascend with more ardent desire, are caught up unto simple intellectuality; and leaping beyond all perceptible things, they pass as if from sleeping to waking, from hearing to seeing. There they see things which, because they are things beyond all hearing and all vocal instruction, cannot be revealed. But should it be claimed that they are there revealed, then the unsayable would [there] be said and the unhearable would [there] be heard—even as the invisible is there seen. For Jesus—who is blessed forever,<sup>120</sup> who is the goal not only of all understanding (because He is Truth) but also of all sensing (because He is Life), and who, further, is both the goal of all being (because He is Being itself) and the perfection of every creature (because He is God and man)—is, as the goal of every utterance, *there* heard incomprehensibly. For every utterance has come forth from Him and terminates in Him. Whatever truth is in an utterance is from Him. Every utterance has as its goal instruction; therefore, [every utterance] has as its goal Him who is Wisdom itself. “Whatever things were written were written for our instruction.”<sup>121</sup> Utterances are befigured in written characters. “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, all created things are signs of the Word of God. Every corporeal utterance is a sign of a mental word. The cause of every corruptible mental word is an incorruptible word, viz., a concept. Christ is the incarnated Concept of all concepts,<sup>123</sup> for He is the Word made flesh.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, Jesus is the goal of all things.

**248** Such things are progressively manifested to one who ascends to Christ by faith. The divine efficacy of this faith is inexplicable. For if this faith is great, it unites the believer with Jesus in order that he may be above all things which do not exist in oneness with Jesus Himself. If the [believer's] faith is whole, then with the power of Jesus, with whom he is united, he commands even the evil spirits and has power over nature and motion. And it is not he himself but rather Jesus who—in him and through him—works wondrous things, as the deeds of the saints bear witness.

It is necessary that perfect faith in Christ be—to the extent that this



is really possible—most pure, maximum, and formed by love. For this faith does not allow anything to be mixed with it, since it is faith in the purest Truth's power for all things. In the preceding [sections] there can very frequently be found repeated [the doctrine] that the minimum coincides with the maximum. This doctrine applies to the faith which is unqualifiedly maximum in actuality and in power. [This maximum faith] cannot be in a pilgrim, who is still not a full attainer [of his goal], as was Jesus. However, the pilgrim must will actually to have for himself maximum faith in Christ—[to have it] to such an extent that his faith will be elevated to such a level of indubitable certainty that it will also be not at all faith but supreme certainty devoid of all doubt in any respect whatsoever. This is the mighty faith which is so maximal that it is also minimal,<sup>125</sup> so that it embraces all the things which are believable with regard to Him who is Truth. Even if, perhaps, one man's faith does not reach the level of another man's,<sup>126</sup> because of the impossibility of there being equality (just as one visible object cannot be seen in equal measure by many [different perceivers]), nevertheless it is necessary that each [person], as best he can, actually believe maximally. And thus, [as regards] him who in relation to others would attain a faith scarcely [the size of] a grain of mustard: his faith would be of such immense power that he would find obedience even on the part of the mountains.<sup>127</sup> For he would command with the power of the Word of God, with whom he would be (as much as he could) maximally united by faith and whom nothing could resist.

**250** Notice how great your intellectual spirit's power is in the power of Christ, provided [your spirit] cling to Him above all else, so that it be nourished by Him—being, through union, subsumed in Him (its numerical distinctness being preserved) as in its own life. But since this occurs only through the conversion of the intellect (which the senses obey) to Christ by maximum faith, this [faith] must be formed by uniting love. For without love faith cannot be maximum. For if every living thing loves to live and if every understanding thing loves to understand, how can Jesus be believed to be immortal life and infinite truth if He is not loved supremely? For life per se is lovable; and if Jesus is most greatly believed to be eternal life, He cannot fail to be loved. For without love faith is not living but dead and is not faith at all. But love is the form of faith, giving to faith true being; indeed, love is the sign of most steadfast faith. Therefore, if for the sake of Christ all things are set aside, and if in relation to Christ the body and

the soul are counted as nothing: this is a sign of maximum faith.

- 251** Moreover, faith cannot be great apart from the holy hope of enjoying Jesus. For how would anyone have assured faith if he did not hope for what was promised him by Christ? If he does not believe that he will have the eternal life promised by Christ to believers, in what sense does he believe Christ? Or how is it that he believes that Christ is truth if he does not have assured hope in His promises? How would he choose death for Christ's sake if he did not hope for immortality? Because the believer believes that [Christ] does not forsake those who hope in Him but rather bestows on them eternal happiness: on account of such a great reward of recompense he counts it as a small matter to endure all things for Christ.<sup>128</sup>
- 252** Assuredly, the power of faith is great: it makes a man Christlike, so that he abandons perceptible things, divests himself of the contaminating things of the flesh, walks in the ways of God with reverence, follows the steps of Christ with joy, willingly bears a cross with exaltation—so that he exists in the flesh as a spirit for whom (on account of Christ) this world is death and for whom removal from this world (in order to be with Christ) is life. Who, in your opinion, is this spirit in which Christ dwells by faith? What is this admirable gift of God which is such that we, who on this pilgrimage are constituted with frail flesh, can by the power of faith be elevated to this power over<sup>129</sup> all the things which are not Christ through union? Be aware that as someone's flesh is progressively and gradually mortified by faith, he progressively ascends to oneness with Christ, so that he is absorbed into Christ by a deep union—to the extent that this is possible on [this pilgrim's] pathway. Leaping beyond all things which are visible and mundane, he obtains the full perfection of his nature. This is the perfect nature which we who have been transformed into Christ's image can obtain in Christ after the flesh and sin have been mortified. It is not that fantastic [nature] of the magicians, who allege that by faith and through certain practices a man ascends to a nature of influential spirits who are akin to himself—so that by the power of such spirits, with which the magicians themselves are united by faith, they perform many special wonders as regards fire or water or musical knowledge, visible transformations, the revealing of hidden matters, and the like. For it is evident that with regard to all these [wonders] there is deception as well as a departure from real life and from truth. Accordingly, such [magicians] are bound to alliances, and to pacts of unity,
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with evil spirits. [They are bound] in such way that that which they believe by faith they display by deed in incense-offerings and acts of worship due only to God. These they devote (with great observance and veneration) to spirits [whom they regard] as able to grant their requests and as able to be summoned forth by these means. United in this way with a spirit to whom they will also cling while eternally separated from Christ and in torment, they sometimes do obtain, by faith, these transitory objects of desire.

Blessed is God, who by His own son has redeemed us from the darkness of such great ignorance<sup>130</sup> in order that we may discern to be false and deceptive all the things which are somehow done by a mediator other than Christ, who is truth, and by a faith other than [faith] in Jesus. For there is only one Lord—Jesus—who is powerful over all things, who fills us with every blessing, and who alone causes our every deprivation to be filled to overflowing.

**254**      *Chapter Twelve: The church.*

Although an understanding of the church of Christ can be obtained from what has already been said, I will add a word or two in order that nothing will be missing from my work.

Since it is necessary that the faith in different men be of unequal degree and therefore admit of greater and lesser degree,<sup>131</sup> no one can attain to maximum faith, than which there can be no greater power. (Similarly, no one [can attain] to maximum love either.) For if maximum faith, which could not be a greater power, were present in a pilgrim, he would also have to be an attainer [of his pilgrim's goal].<sup>132</sup> For just as the maximum in a genus is the supreme goal of the genus, so it is the beginning of a higher [genus]. Accordingly, unqualifiedly maximum faith cannot be present in anyone who is not also an attainer [of his pilgrim's goal]. Similarly, unqualifiedly maximum love cannot be present in a lover who is not also the beloved. Accordingly, neither unqualifiedly maximum faith nor unqualifiedly maximum love befit anyone other than Jesus Christ, who was both pilgrim and attainer, both loving man and beloved God. But all things are included in the maximum, since the maximum encompasses all things. Hence, all true faith is included in Christ Jesus's faith,<sup>133</sup> and all true love is included in Christ's love—though distinctions of degree always remain.

**255**      And since these distinct degrees are below the maximum and

above the minimum, no one—even if he actually has maximum faith in Christ [in the sense of having] as much as he can—can attain unto that [unqualifiedly] maximum faith in Christ through which he would understand Christ as God and man. And no one can love Christ so much that Christ could not be loved even more; for Christ *is* love (*amor et caritas*) and is therefore infinitely lovable. Hence, no one either in this life or the next can so love Christ that he would therefore be Christ and man. For all who are united with Christ (differences of degree remaining) either in this life through faith and love or in the next life through attainment and enjoyment are united in the following way: they could not be more greatly united and still have their respective difference of degree remain. Thus, none [of them] exist in themselves and apart from that union, and yet none [of them] lose their respective degree on account of the union.

**256** Therefore, this union is a church, or congregation, of many in one—just as many members are in one body. each member existing with its own role. (In the body, one member is not the other member; but each member is in the one body, and by the mediation of the body it is united with each other member.<sup>134</sup> No member of the body can have life and existence apart from the body, even though in the body one member is all the others only by the mediation of the body.) Therefore, as we journey here below, the truth of our faith can exist only in the spirit of Christ—the order of believers remaining, so that in one Jesus there is diversity in harmony. And once we are freed from this church militant: when we arise, we can arise only in Christ, so that in this way there will also be *one* church of those who are triumphant, each existing in his own order. And at that time the truth of our flesh will exist not in itself but in the truth of Christ's flesh; and the truth of our body will exist in the truth of Christ's body; and the truth of our spirit will exist in the truth of Christ Jesus's spirit—as branches exist in the vine.<sup>135</sup> Thus, Christ's one humanity will be in all men, and Christ's one spirit will be in all spirits—so that each [believing individual] will be in Christ, so that from all [members] there will be one Christ. And then whoever in this life receives any one of those who are Christ's receives Christ; and what is done to one of the least of these is done to Christ.<sup>136</sup> (By comparison, whoever injures Plato's hand injures Plato; and whoever harms the smallest toe harms the whole man.) And whoever rejoices in Heaven over the least one rejoices over Christ and sees in each one Jesus, through whom [he sees] Blessed God. Thus, through His son, our God will be all things in all

things;<sup>137</sup> and in His son and through Him each [believer] will be with God and with all things, so that [each's] joy will be full, free of all envy and deprivation.

**257** And since faith can be continually increased in us while we journey here below, so also [can] love. Although each [believer] can actually have such a degree [of faith and love] that of himself, as he then is, he cannot actually have a greater degree, nevertheless when he has one degree, he has a potency for another. Yet, no such progression can be made—through a common basis [of comparison]—unto infinity. Hence, we ought to endeavor to have our capability actualized by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that in this way we may, through Him who is Faith and Love, progress from virtue to virtue and from degree [of intensity] to degree [of intensity]. Without Him we can do nothing of ourselves qua of ourselves.<sup>138</sup> Rather, all that we can do we can do in Him who alone is able to supply what we lack in order that on the day of resurrection we may be found to be a whole and noble member of Him. And believing and loving with all our might, we can no doubt by constant prayer obtain this gracious increase of faith and love and ascend confidently to His throne. For He is most gracious and lets no one be deceived by his holy desire.

**258** If you will reflect upon these indeed deep [matters], you will be overwhelmed with an admirable sweetness of spirit. For with an inner relishing you will scent, as in the case of a very fragrant incense, God's inexpressible goodness. God, passing over to you, will supply you with this goodness; you will be filled with Him when His glory shall appear.<sup>139</sup> You will be filled, that is, without surfeit; for this immortal food is life itself. And just as the desire-for-living always increases, so the food of life is always consumed without being transformed into the nature of the consumer. For otherwise it would be loathsome food which would weigh down and which could not bestow immortal life because it would be deficient in itself and would be transformed into the one who is nourished. Now, our intellectual desire is [the desire] to live intellectually—i.e., to enter further and further into life and joy. And since that life is infinite: the blessed, still desirous, are brought further and further into it. And so, they are filled-being, so to speak, thirsty ones drinking from the Fount of life. And because this drinking does not pass away into a past (since it is within eternity), the blessed are ever drinking and ever filled; and yet, they have never drunk and have never been filled.

**259** Blessed is God, who has given us an intellect which cannot be filled in the course of time. Since the intellect's desire does not come to an end, the intellect—on the basis of its temporally insatiable desire—apprehends itself as beyond corruptible time and as immortal. And the intellect recognizes that it cannot be satisfied by the intellectual-life-it-desires except during the enjoyment of the maximum, most excellent, and never-failing good. This enjoyment does not pass away into a past, because the appetite does not fade away during the enjoyment. [The situation is] as if—to use an illustration from the body—someone hungry were seated at the table of a great king, where he was supplied with the food he desired, so that he did not seek any other food. The nature of this food would be [such] that in filling him up it would also whet his appetite. If this food were never depleted, it is obvious that the perpetual consumer would always be filled, would always desire this same food, and would always willingly be brought to the food. And so, he would always be able to eat; and, after having eaten, he would still be able to be led to the food with whetted appetite. Such, then, is the capability of the intellectual nature, so that in receiving into itself life, it is transformed into life in accordance with its own transformable nature—just as air, in receiving into itself the sun's ray, is transformed into light. Accordingly, since the intellect is of a nature which is turnable toward the intelligible, it understands only universal, incorruptible, abiding things.<sup>140</sup> For the incorruptible truth is the object of the intellect-onto which object the intellect is brought intellectually. Indeed, in quiet tranquility it apprehends this truth in eternity and in Christ Jesus.

**260** This is the church of the triumphant,<sup>141</sup> in which our God, who is blessed forever, is present. Here the true man Christ Jesus is united, in supreme union, with the Son of God—in so great a union that the humanity exists only in the divinity; it is present in the divinity by means of an ineffable hypostatic union—[present] in such way that it cannot be more highly and more simply united if the truth [i.e., the reality] of the nature of the humanity is to remain. Then every rational nature—provided that in this life it turn to Christ with supreme faith, hope, and love—is united with Christ the Lord (though the personal truth of each nature remains) to the following extent: (1) that all the angels and all the men (each [man] having the truth of his body absorbed and attracted through his spirit) exist only in Christ, through whom they exist in God, so that each of the blessed, having the truth-of-his-own-being preserved, exists in Christ Jesus as Christ and—

261 through Christ—in God as God; and (2) that God, while remaining the Absolute Maximum, exists in Christ Jesus as Jesus and, through Jesus, in all things as all things. The church cannot in some other way be more one. For “church” bespeaks a oneness of many [members]—each of whom has his personal truth preserved without confusion of natures or of degrees; but the more *one* the church is, the greater it is; hence, this church—[viz.] the church of the eternally triumphant—is maximal, since no greater union of the church is possible.

Therefore, consider now how great is the following union: [viz.] where there is found (1) the divine, absolute maximum Union, (2) the union, in Jesus, of the deity and the humanity, and (3) the union of the church of the triumphant, [i.e., the union] of Jesus's deity and the blessed. The Absolute Union is neither a greater nor a lesser [union] than the union of the natures in Jesus or [the union] of the blessed in Heaven. For it is the maximum Union which is (a) the Union of all unions and (b) that which is complete union. It does not admit of degrees of more or less, and it proceeds from Oneness and Equality—as is indicated in Book One. And the union of the natures in Christ is neither a greater nor a lesser [union] than the oneness of the church of the triumphant; for since it is the maximum union of the natures, 262 it therefore does not admit of degrees of more and less; hence, all the different things which are united receive their oneness from the maximum union of the natures of Christ,<sup>142</sup> through which union the union of the church is that which it is. But the union of the church is the maximum ecclesiastical union. Therefore, since it is maximal, it coincides on high with the hypostatic union of the natures in Christ. And since the union of the natures of Jesus is maximal, it coincides with the Absolute Union, which is God. And so, the union of the church, which is [a union] of individuals, [coincides] with the [Absolute Union].<sup>143</sup> Although the union of the church does not seem to be as *one* as is the hypostatic [union], which is [a union] only of the natures, or as is the first, divine, most simple [Union], in which there can be no otherness or diversity, nevertheless, it is, through Jesus, resolved into the Divine Union, from which it also has its origin. And, assuredly, this [point] is seen quite clearly if attention is paid to what is repeatedly found earlier on. For the Absolute Union is the Holy Spirit. Now, the maximum hypostatic union coincides with the Absolute Union. Hence, necessarily, the union of the natures in Christ exists through and in the Absolute Union, which is the Holy Spirit. But the ecclesiastical union coincides with the hypostatic union, as was said.

Hence, the union of the triumphant is in the spirit of Jesus, which spirit is in the Holy Spirit. Truth itself makes such a statement in John: “I have given them the glory which You have given me, in order that they may be one, as we also are one, I in them and You in me, so that they may be perfected in oneness”<sup>144</sup>—so that the church may be so perfect in eternal rest that it could not be more perfect and may exist in so inexpressible a transformation of the light of glory that in all [the triumphant] only God appears.

With very great affection we triumphantly aspire to this [glory]. And with humble heart we entreat God the Father that because of His immense graciousness He will to give—through His son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him through the Holy Spirit—this [glory] to us in order that we may eternally enjoy Him who is blessed forever.



**263           The Author's Letter to Lord Cardinal Julian.**

Receive now, Reverend Father,<sup>145</sup> the things which I have long desired to attain by various doctrinal-approaches but could not—until, while I was at sea en route back from Greece,<sup>146</sup> I was led (by, as I believe, a heavenly gift from the Father of lights, from whom comes every excellent gift)<sup>147</sup> to embrace—in learned ignorance and through a transcending of the incorruptible truths which are humanly knowable—incomprehensible things incomprehensibly.<sup>148</sup> Thanks to Him who is Truth, I have now expounded this [learned ignorance] in these books, which, [since they proceed] from [one and] the same principle, can be condensed or expanded.

**264**           But the whole effort of our human intelligence ought to center on those lofty [matters], so that the intellect<sup>149</sup> may raise itself to that Simplicity where contradictories coincide. The conception of Book One labors with this [task]. From this [conception] Book Two elicits a few [teachings] about the universe—[teachings which go] beyond the usual approach of the philosophers and [which will seem] unusual to many. Always proceeding from [one and] the same foundation, I have now at last completed Book Three, which deals with Superblessed Jesus. And through the increase of my faith the Lord Jesus is continually magnified in my understanding and affection. For no one who has faith in Christ can deny that on this [pilgrim's] pathway he would like to be more highly inflamed with desire, so that after long meditations and ascensions he would see most sweet Jesus as alone to be loved and, abandoning all, would joyously embrace Him as his true life and eternal joy. All things work favorably for one who enters into Jesus in such a way. And neither this world nor any writings can cause [him] any difficulty; for he is transformed into Jesus on account of the spirit of Christ which dwells in him. Christ is the end of intellectual desires. May you, Most Devout Father, humbly and continually entreat Him for me, a most wretched sinner, so that we may both deserve to enjoy Him eternally.<sup>150</sup>

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Ap.* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*  
*DI* *De Docta Ignorantia*  
*DP* *De Possess* (reprinted in *PNC*)  
*IL* *De Ignota Litteratura*  
*MFCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*  
(ed. Rudolf Haubst)  
*NA* *De Li Non Aliud* (reprinted in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud*.  
Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1983 (2nd ed.)  
*NC* *Nicolò da Cusa*. Florence: Sansoni, 1962. (Pubblicazioni della Fa-  
coltà di Magisterio dell'Università di Padova)  
*NK* *Nikolaus von Kues. Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken*.  
Ed. Klaus Jacobi. Munich: K. Alber, 1979  
*PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne  
*PNC* J. Hopkins. *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas  
of Cusa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980 (2nd  
ed.)  
*SHAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*.  
*Philosophisch-historische Klasse*. Heidelberg: C. Winter

## PRAENOTANDA

1. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):

- A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia: De Concordantia Catholica; Sermones; De Coniecturis; De Deo Abscondito; De Quaerendo Deum; De Filiatione Dei; De Dato Patris Luminum; Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus; De Genesi; Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae; Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis; De Pace Fidei; De Li Non Aliud* (Banning reprint); *De Venatione Sapientiae; Compendium; De Apice Theoriae*.
- B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Melner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia, De Beryllo, De Possess* (Minnesota reprint).
- C. Paris edition (1514) of the *Opera Cusana: Complementum Theologicum, De Aequalitate, De Principio* (=Paris edition, Vol. II, Part 1, fol. 7<sup>r</sup> - 11<sup>v</sup>).
- D. Strasburg edition (1488) of the *Opera Cusana* as edited by Paul Wilpert and republished by W. de Gruyter (Berlin, 1967, 2 vols.): *Cribratio Alkoran, De Ludo Globi*.
- E. Banning Press edition (1985) of *De Visione Dei*.

The references given for some of these treatises indicate book and chapter, for others margin number and line, and for still others page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. E.g., "DI II, 6 (125:19-20)" indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chap. 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20. And "Ap. 8:14-16" indicates *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, p. 8, lines 14-16.

- 2. A number of references in the Notes have been adapted from Vol. I of the Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*.
- 3. To reduce publication costs, extensive references to the writings of Anicius Boethius, Meister Eckhart, and Thierry of Chartres have not been incorporated into the Notes. Readers are advised to consult the works of Joseph E. Hofmann, Hans G. Senger, Herbert Wackerzapp, and Pierre Duhern as listed in *PNC*.
- 4. The margin numbers in the English translation of *DI* correspond to those found in the Latin-German editions, cited in n. 1 above.
- 5. Any Latin words inserted into the English translation for purposes of clarification are placed in parentheses—except that nouns whose respective cases have been changed to the nominative are bracketed. All expansions of the translations are bracketed.
- 6. References to the Psalms are to the Douay version (and, in parentheses, to the King James's version).
- 7. References to *IL* are given in terms of the new critical edition published in *Nicholas*

of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck: A Translation and an Appraisal of *De Ignota Litteratura and Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1981; 2nd edition, 1984).

### NOTES TO *LEARNED IGNORANCE*, BOOK THREE

1. Cardinal Julian Cesarini. See n. 1 of the notes to Book One.
2. John 14:6.
3. Wisd. 11:21. Nicholas, like Leibniz after him teaches that no two things differ in number alone. *DI* I, 3 (9:13-15); I, 4 (11:9-12); I, 11 (30:16-17); II, 1 (91:12-13; 96:4-8).
4. *DI* I, 6 (15:6-9).
5. *DI* I, 5 (13:7-9). Since the infinite cannot be compared to anything finite, it cannot be named by words which have a meaning imposed in relation to finite things. Hence, the infinite could not be said to be *degree*, could not rightly be thought to exist as *degree*. Cf. I, 5 (13:13-16).
6. *DI* II, 8 (136:9-10); II, 9 (148:8; 150:9-10); III, 1 (182:5-6).
7. *DI* II, 3 (109:12-15); II, 6 (124:16-19).
8. See n. 4 of the notes to Book One.
9. *DI* II, 13 (179:7-10); II, 12 (174:1-9).
10. *De Coniecturis* II, 10 and 13. See notes 73 and 92 of the notes to Book Two above.
11. *DI* I, 5 (13:11-16).
12. Cf. *DI* I, 5 (13).
13. See n. 3 above.
14. *De Coniecturis* 11, 3.
15. *DI* II, 12 (170:1-171:2).
16. *DI* II, 12 (169:8-13).
17. *DI* II, 2 (104:13-20); 11, 5 (121:1-3).
18. Phil. 4:7.
19. *DI* II, 11 (156:11-18). *DP* 10-11. Cf. *DI* III, 6 (220:14-18). With one exception Nicholas does not believe that there is an actually existing contracted maximum which reaches the limit of contraction [*DI* III, 1 (184:1-3)]. The one exception is Jesus's humanity, which is so maximum that it is in some sense also minimum [III, 2-4 (especially 190:15 - 191:14)]. Encompassed in the exception are also Jesus's faith, love, and humiliation [III, 11 (249:1-2); III, 12 (254: 16-17); III, 6 (220:14-16)]. See n. 23 of the notes to Book One. N. B. *The title of DI* III, 1 *alludes to a maximum contracted to a species; it does not allude to the universe.*
20. *DI* I, 16 (42:4-5; 45:13-18); I, 21 (64:6- 10).
21. In the corresponding passage of the Latin text (191:9-10) the words "*contractionis illius*" should be taken with "*omnem naturam.*" Cf. 190:14-15. By "individual" Nicholas means *particular* (in contrast to *universal*, *genus*, or *species*). In the species *human being*, a particular will be a human nature, a man. Cf. n. 36 below.
22. *DI* I, 16 (45:13-15).
23. See n. 6 above.

24. I.e., able to exist as contracted maximum only if . . . .
25. See n. 78 of the notes to Book One.
26. Nicholas does not believe that there is actually an infinite line. See *Ap.* 32: 10-11; *DI* II, 1 (97:15-17), and I, 5. He sometimes, as here, uses the future tense to express a counterfactual sense.
27. Heb. 2:7-8. Ps. 8:6-8 (8:5-6).
28. See 197:9-10 above. Also see n. 36 and n. 77 below. Some of Nicholas's statements—e.g., the one above—sound Nestorian. However, they must all be interpreted in the light of his clear rejection of Nestorianism in III, 7 (223:1-12). The following additional texts are noteworthy: III, 4 (204:1-4); III, 7 (225:11-21); III, 12 (260:1-4). Jesus is not *first* a human nature which *subsequently* ascends (i.e., is subsequently united to) the Divine Word. See III, 5 (211:10-18), cited in n. 41 below.
29. Rev. 21:17.
30. Col. 1: 16.
31. *DI* I, 24 (80: 11).
32. *DI* III, 4.
33. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (201:6) I agree with the reading “*non possent*” in spite of Klibansky's later having opted to delete “*non*.” See the list of *corrigenda* (on p. 159 above) for Klibansky's text as found in Book III of *De docta ignorantia. Die belehrte Unwissenheit* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1977).
34. *DI* II, 5 (121:1-2); III, 12 (166:9-12).
35. *DI* II, 1 (96:19-2 1). See also I, 5 (13: 10); II, 2 (104:5-9); II, 5 (120:13-14); II, 10 (154:7-9); III, 1 (184: 12-15; 188:1-4); III, 3 (202:16-17). Infinite Power cannot create a thing to be better than it is (i.e., better than it has already been created); but Infinite Power can create something still better than that thing.
36. Cf. 198:5-6 with 199:2-3. Nicholas speaks both of human nature's being elevated to union with Maximality and of *one man's* being so elevated (viz., Jesus). In both cases he uses the word “*homo*”. In the above passage “*homo*” may be translated either as “a human nature” or as “a man”. But the sense of the passage is to be understood in accordance with the considerations and references presented in n. 28 above and n. 41 below.
- Cf. the various nuances of *DI* III, 3 (202:12); III, 4 (204:2-3, 9, 21-22). Note that the phrase “*maximus homo*” has a different connotation in 204:22 from its connotation in 208: 10-11. Other medieval writers use “*homo*” in the same fluctuating way. E. g., see Anselm of Canterbury, *De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato*, opening paragraph of chapter I (Schmitt, ed., Vol. 2, p. 140, lines 3-7). Anselm, unlike Nicholas, attempts some clarification in *De Incarnatione Verbi* 11.
37. “*Operatio*,” as used by Nicholas, sometimes means activity and sometimes the *product of an activity*. Here (202:4) “*operatio*” is best translated by “work,” even though at III, 5 (211:16) and elsewhere it is better translated by “operation” or “activity.” Nicholas uses “*opus*” and “*operatio*” interchangeably at III, 3 (201:910).
38. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (202:9) I am reading “*ut sunt, ab ipso*” in place of “*ut sunt ab ipso*”.
39. I.e., is personally united with the Son of God, who is Equality of Being. Cf. I, 8 (22: 10) with I, 9 (26:13).
40. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (202:14) I follow *p* in reading “*ut sic*” instead of “*ut sit*”.

41. Col. 1: 15 refers to the Son of God as “the Firstborn of all creation.” Nicholas, as the next sentence testifies, uses this epithet with regard to Jesus, who is God and man. (See also the opening sentences of III, 4.) Though the Son of God preceded ontologically His own created and assumed humanity, He did not precede it temporally—any more than He preceded the world temporally. Jesus enters into time through the virgin birth, Nicholas teaches (III, 5); but He existed “with God above time and prior to all [other] things”—prior in the order of perfection. By way of further explication Nicholas writes, in III, 5 (211:10-18): “As a sound [is formed] from inbreathed air, so, as it were, this Spirit [viz., the Holy Spirit], through an outbreathing, formed from the fertile purity of the virginal blood the animal body. He added reason so that it would be a human nature. [To it] He so inwardly united the Word of God the Father that the Word would be human nature's center of existence. And all these things were done not serially (as a concept is temporally expressed by us) but by an instantaneous operation—*beyond all time* and in accordance with a willing that befits Infinite Power.” Nicholas is motivated by Col. 1: 17, which states that the Firstborn of all creation is prior to all things. (See the lengthy citation, in III, 4, of Col. 1: 14-20.) He apparently believes that a created, maximal humanity exists in God the Son in such way that (1) it takes precedence over all other created things and that (2) they may be said to go forth into contracted being by its mediation. In III, 7 he teaches that Jesus's humanity “was corruptible according to temporality, to which it was contracted; but in accordance with the fact that it was free from time, beyond time, and united with the divinity, it was incorruptible” (225:18-21).

42. Gal. 4:4.

43. Eph. 4: 10.

44. Rom. 3:31; 7:22.

45. 11 Cor. 12:2-4.

46. Col. 1: 14-20. This is not an exact quotation. N. B. In Col. 1: 20 the phrase “*per eum*” (cf. 203:33 above) suggests a switch of reference. The Douay version has: “Because in him, it hath well pleased *the Father* that all fullness should dwell: And through him to reconcile all things unto himself.” (italics added). The Douay version also prefers, for Col. 1: 17, the translation “... by him all things consist.”

47. *DI* III, 12 (260:2-4).

48. *DI* II, 5 (118:8-10). Cf. II, 5 (121:9-13).

49. *DI* II, 5 (118:3-8). See *PNC*, pp. 169-170, n. 153.

50. I.e., since the maximum human nature is present in God without degree and God is present in it without degree, there is a maximal union—in the person of God the Son—of the human nature and the divine nature.

51. *DI* III, 1 (183:3-6; 186:1-2; 188:1-9).

52. Cf. *DI* I, 3 (10:9-13).

53. Col. 2:3.

54. *DI* II, 7 (130:1-9).

55. Literally, an inbreathing, i.e., a breathing into (*inspiratio*).

56. “Reason” here means rational soul. In Sermon 17, “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*,” (Heidelberg Academy *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 16, fascicle 3) section 4 Nicholas indicates explicitly that Jesus was made from a rational soul and human flesh. He thus follows the *Symbolum Quicumque*.

57. In maintaining that Jesus's rational soul was formed even from the moment

of conception, Nicholas distinguishes the birth of Jesus from the birth of all other infants, who were usually thought to receive their souls at some unspecified point between conception and birth. For example, Anselm of Canterbury states in *De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato* 7: “But no human intellect accepts the view that an infant has a rational soul from the moment of his conception. For [from this view] it would follow that whenever—even at the very moment of reception—the human seed which was received perished before attaining a human form, the [alleged] human soul in this seed would be condemned, since it would not be reconciled through Christ—a consequence which is utterly absurd.”

58. Wisd. 18:14-15.

59. See n. 24 of the notes to Book One.

60. I Cor. 2:14.

61. According to John 4:24 God is spirit. But Nicholas here adheres to the *via supereminentiae*, as propounded by Pseudo-Dionysius (and by John Scotus Erigena). See *DI* I, 18 (54:6-13).

62. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (216:9) I follow *p* in reading “*passionum*” instead of “*passionibus*”.

63. Nicholas here formulates this rule negatively rather than positively. He thereby tacitly implies that the New Testament formulation surpasses the natural law.

64. Ps. 50:7 (51:5).

65. Formed faith is faith formed by love. See *DI* III, 6 (219:13-14), III, 11 (250:13-14), and Gal. 5:6.

66. John 1: 13.

67. This is one of the passages which most upsets John Wenck. He cites it at *IL* 38:28-31.

68. Matt. 25:40.

69. Col. 2:11-12. Rom. 8:30.

70. *DI* III, 11.

71. I Cor. 15:53-54.

72. Luke 24:25.

73. *DI* III, 6 (218:13-15).

74. John 12:24-25.

75. John 12:32.

76. “Corruptible,” used throughout as the translation for “*corruptibilis*,” has the sense of *destructible*.

77. Though Nicholas's language sometimes sounds Nestorian [e.g., *DI* III, 3 (199:2-3); III, 12 (260:2-3)], he here clearly rejects Nestorianism.

78. See n. 74 above.

79. Luke 24:46.

80. I Cor. 15:20, 23.

81. Col. 1: 18. The phrase “the Firstborn from the dead” has a different meaning from the phrase “the Firstborn of all creation”; but it has the same referent, viz., Jesus. See n. 41 above.

82. John 10:18.

83. I Cor. 15:20, 23.

84. *DI* III, 6 (219:5-8): “For the maximality of human nature brings it about that in the case of each man who cleaves to Christ through formed faith Christ is this very

man by means of a most perfect union—each's numerical distinctness being preserved.” See also III, 12 (260). Such passages disturb John Wenck.

85. See n. 84 above.

86. I Tim. 2:5. Luke 2: 11. John 1: 1 and 14. John 14:6.

87. Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkoran* II, 18 (149). [Strasburg edition, reprinted Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1967, Vol. II].

88. Cf. *DI* III, 1 (185:1-3); II, 11 (157:23-26).

89. Eph. 4: 10.

90. Ps. 35:10 (36:9).

91. Luke 17:2 1.

92. *DI* III, 6 (215:4-11). See n. 24 of the notes to Book One.

93. I John 1: 5.

94. Heb. 12:29.

95. I Cor. 3:13.

96. I Cor. 15:28.

97. Col. 3:3.

98. Col. 3:4.

99. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (238:11) “*satiantur*” takes the “*de*” construction, as also at III, 12 (258:4-5). The verse of Scripture alluded to above is John 1:16.

100. *DI* III, 12.

101. Col. 1: 16. Cf. *DI* III, 4 (203:29).

102. Ps. 32:9 (33:9).

103. *DI* III, 6 (215:7-8).

104. *DI* I, 11 (32:9-11). *DP* 62:10-63:15. *Idiota de Mente*, last chapter.

105. I Cor. 13:12.

106. *DI* III, 7-8.

107. Nicholas, following Pseudo-Dionysius, often speaks paradoxically. Regarding the statement that God is comprehensible above all understanding, see *DI* 1, 4; III, 11 (245:13-23); *NA* 8 (30:5-7); and *PNC*, p. 24.

108. *DI* I, 1 (2:16-17); I, 11 (31:3-4).

109. Isa. 7:9 in the Old Latin Bible.

110. Just as Jesus is called Truth, so Nicholas calls Him Faith and Love. *DI* III, 12 (257:9-10).

111. Eph. 2:8.

112. John 1: 12.

113. John 20:3 1.

114. Matt 11:25.

115. Col. 2:3.

116. John 15:5.

117. Nicholas also teaches that God is not cognitively apprehensible by us even in the life to come. The redeemed will be acquainted with Him by “seeing,” not by conceiving and comprehending; and it will be primarily the seeing of God in Christ. Note *DI* I, 26 (88:16-20). *DP* 15 and 75.

118. II Cor. 12:2-4. In the present chapter Nicholas is discussing the ascent-by-faith of the pilgrim in *this* life and the possibility, in this life, of a mystical vision.

119. Heb. 12:18-22.



120. Rom. 9:5.  
 121. Rom 15:4.  
 122. Ps. 32:6 (33:6).  
 123. *DP* 38:11-12.  
 124. John 1:14.  
 125. Not only is Jesus faith (244:15-16) but He *has* maximum faith, which is knowledge (254:16-21; 248:19-20).  
 126. *DI* III, 12 (254:5-6).  
 127. Matt. 17:19.  
 128. Rom. 8:18.  
 129. “*Potestatem*” and “*supra*” are to be taken together here (252:9-10). Cf. 218:1; 253:24.  
 130. This kind of foolish ignorance stands in contrast to learned ignorance.  
 131. *DI* III, 11 (249:3-4).  
 132. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (254:9) I am following *p* in reading “*quae*” instead of “*qua*”.  
 133. See n. 125 and n. 110 above.  
 134. *DI* II, 5.  
 135. John 15:1-5.  
 136. Matt. 25:40.  
 137. *DI* III, 12 (260:14-16).  
 138. John 15:5.  
 139. Ps. 16:15 (17:15). The Douay and the King James versions here differ considerably.  
 140. *DI* III, 6 (215:4-6). See n. 24 of the notes to Book One.  
 141. The church of the triumphant [“a congregation of many in one” (256:1-2)] is the assembly of unfallen angels and of resurrected believers, united in and through the deity of Christ (261:8-9). In the present passage Nicholas mentions the union of the two natures in Christ as propaedeutic to considering, *deinde*, the union of the blessed with Christ, i.e., the union of the church of the triumphant.  
 142. *DI* III, 11 (25 2: 10-11).  
 143. In the corresponding line of the Latin text (262:8) I am reading “*illa. Quae*” in place of “*illa quae*”.  
 144. John 17:22-23.  
 145. See n. 1 of the notes to Book One.  
 146. Nicholas had been sent to Constantinople to propose a future council which would discuss the possibility of reuniting the Greek and the Roman churches. His voyage began during August, 1437; he was en route back from Nov. 27, 1437 to Feb. 8, 1438.  
 147. James 1: 17.  
 148. *DI* I, 12 (33:7-18).  
 149. See note 24 of the notes to Book One.  
 150. The *explicit* reads: I finished [this work] in Kues on February 12, 1440.