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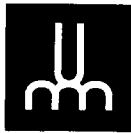
# periphyseon

(division of nature)

TRANSLATION  
BY JOHN O'MEARA



BELLARMIN • DUMBARTON OAKS



Université de Montréal

ERIUGENA

**PERIPHYSEON**  
**(The Division of Nature)**

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Revised by John J. O'Meara

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## ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

The first three books of this translation are a reproduction, with the minimum necessary adjustments, of that by Dr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams in the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies' edition of the *Periphyseon*, still in course of completion, for which due gratitude to the Institute is hereby expressed. To this has been added the publication of a draft translation of the remaining two books of the work, exactly as edited by H.J. Floss in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* 122, prepared by Sheldon-Williams and considerably revised by me — not however, for reasons of desirable continuity, to the extent of eliminating unusual elements of style and structure that indicate Sheldon-Williams' close and conscious affinity with Eriugena. The *marginalia* for books 4 and 5 are taken from MS Bamberg H.J.IV 6, as reproduced by M. Cappuyns in *Jean Scot Érigène* 207–13. The numbers and letters in the margins refer to the columns and sections of *P.L.* 122; the numbers (only) refer to the sequence of chapters there. The terms (N)utritor and (A)lumnus correspond to Master and Disciple. For all references, including Biblical, notes, and some help with the use of brackets (especially in the early books) the reader is referred, when it is available, to the Dublin Institute's edition. Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C., for a generous grant towards this publication; to the Royal Irish Academy which supports the study of Eriugena generously; to Miss Mary Brennan, Archivist of the Centre for Eriugenian Studies at University College, Dublin, for her practical help; and to Professor G.H. Allard, of the Institut d'Études Médiévales, Montréal, and President of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, to whose good offices this volume is particularly indebted.

John. J. O'MEARA





# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Eriugena, as he is now called, was a philosopher born in Ireland early in the ninth century. For a long time he was known as John Scotus Erigena, a name given to him by Archbishop Ussher of Dublin in 1632. This latter title, however, is pleonastic (for both “Scotus” in the ninth century and “Erigena” effectively mean “born in Ireland”), and has given rise to confusing him with John Duns Scotus, who, also a philosopher, was born in Scotland in the thirteenth century.

Ireland in the ninth century was a rural society where monasteries, sometimes with schools attached, were prominent settlements. These schools were famous for learning, although the level of that learning, and if it contained much of the secular literature of Greek and Rome, are still subjects of debate. What is clear is that Irish scholars from these schools were most conspicuous among those on the Continent in the ninth century who knew Greek.

From one of these schools probably, Eriugena made his way to Francia, the kingdom of Charles the Bald (823–877). That kingdom in 843 corresponded with the France of to-day to the exclusion, however, of Brittany and all territory east of a line going roughly from Ostend to Marseilles: hence it can be referred to in a general way as France. It is sometimes suggested that Eriugena fled from the Vikings, who by the middle of the ninth century had begun to intensify their raids on Ireland and had plundered several important monasteries. At the same time one must note that there had been a long tradition of peregrination from Ireland, and that Charles the Bald offered inducements to scholars who would work in his kingdom. At any rate Eriugena appears to have gone to France about 848.

Charles the Bald, grandson of Charlemagne, had become king in 840 and at the time of Eriugena's coming presided over what is sometimes called the Second Carolingian Renaissance. The great centres of culture were concentrated within his realm — Saint-Vaast, Saint-Riquier, Saint-Amand, Corbie, Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Germain-d'Auxerre: these were then more active than even Saint-Gall, Reichenau or Fulda. The king himself had had a good formation in letters, greatly admired the monastic life, loved and made an important collection of books, and was known as the "philosopher king" because of his interest in philosophy and efforts to promote its study, especially within a theological context. In particular, Charles had a positive interest in things Greek: he loved Greek pomp in the liturgy and was pleased to be addressed in Greek terms — *anax*, *archos*, *autokrator*, *kurios*, *monarchos*, *agathos*, *orthodoxos*, and so on. An interesting question arises as to whether Eriugena stimulated this interest in things Greek in him, or his interest in Eriugena arose because the latter was capable of translating Greek. It is clear in any case that when Eriugena gravitated in due course to Charles' court, he knew he would find there an atmosphere congenial to his intellectual interests. Nor was his interest in Art uncatered for: there is evidence of the existence at the court of a "Hofschule", an atelier for the production of richly — decorated books for Charles' personal use.

There may be traces of Eriugena's sojourn on the Continent before he joined Charles at what is known as the Palace School. It is thought that he may have been at Schuttern in the diocese of Strasbourg. There is stronger reason to suggest that he was associated with Reims.

Eriugena finally emerges clearly into history in 851 or so as a member of the Palace school of Charles. Since Charles' court was itinerant, there is considerable difficulty in associating it with one place; but most scholars are agreed that the school is to be associated with Laon, Quierzy or Compiègne, all to the north-east of Paris. This school had also relations with the Cathedral school of Laon where Irish scholars were prominent. At the Palace School, then, Eriugena took up his career, first as a teacher of the liberal arts. It is not to be assumed that he was then — or indeed at any time — a cleric.

The purpose of schooling in the liberal arts had been laid down by Charlemagne and Alcuin — the achievement of Christian wisdom and thereby the binding together of the whole Carolingian community. A number of works of a grammatical or literary character attributed to Eriugena, but as yet without acceptance, may reflect Eriugena's activities at this time. These activities, we do know, also included commentary on the Bible and an interest in medicine. The main evidence for his teaching, however, is available to us in his commentary on the *Wedding of Philology and Mercury* of the Carthaginian Martianus Capella, an extraordinary book written sometime between 410 and 439. The

work has been classified by C.S. Lewis as mythological allegory: he also declared that "this universe, which produced the bee-orchid and the giraffe, has produced nothing stranger than Martianus Capella." However that may be, it was the most popular schoolbook on the subject of the liberal arts, the *trivium* (Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric) and the *Quadrivium* (Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy and Harmony) for the best part of a thousand years. Eriugena, therefore, had knowledge of this wide spread of disciplines. But *The Wedding of Philology and Mercury*, much affected also the use of the Greek language and of Neoplatonic ideas: Eriugena's commentary shows an appreciable interest in these. Eriugena also insisted that the liberal arts are innate in everyone and constitute an independent way to salvation. He proclaims that "no one enters into heaven except through philosophy." His position was very like Augustine, one of his greatest sources, at the time of his conversion in 386: "authority (religion) could dispense altogether with reason; authority aided by reason was more desirable than authority alone; reason depended on some authority so that it might begin to operate; and reason could arrive at an understanding of what was taught by authority." This did not remain Augustine's position on this matter.

In Martianus Capella Eriugena also found — we do not know if for the first time — the Neoplatonic idea of reality as a progression outwards from the One followed by a return to the One. This idea is the basic one in Eriugena's own great work — the *Periphyseon*, the study of nature, sometimes called "*The Division of Nature*." Not surprisingly Eriugena got the reputation of being learned.

As a result of this reputation Eriugena was invited by Hincmar, bishop of Reims, to reply to the monk Gottschalk who was alleged to hold the doctrine that there was a double Predestination — to heaven and to hell, as distinct from the doctrine held by Hincmar, which was that there was predestination of the elect only. Eriugena's *de praedestinatione* was produced in late 850 or early 851. His approach, as he emphasized, was on the basis of reason. Strictly speaking, he contends, there is no predestination: there is only God. God is simple. There can be no change in him. Nothing is "fore" — known or "pre" — destined by him. It was in accordance with God's unchangeable law that some would be saved ("pre-destined") and others would bring punishment upon themselves through the evil motion of their own free will. Eriugena accepts that Augustine does use formulae to the effect that God predestines the reprobate to punishment, but he insists that Augustine also uses formulae excluding this. Moreover Augustine, he contends, by an antiphrasis actually means the opposite when he speaks of predestination to the death of the soul. Augustine himself frequently puts forward a similar argument in his own controversies, an argument ultimately based on the ancient assumption of there being one

doctrine to be preached to the mass of men (exoteric), and another, often contradictory, to be held by the intimates of a school (esoteric). Eriugena asserts that those who hold incorrect views on such topics as predestination, do so because of their ignorance of liberal studies.

Hincmar, at whose invitation Eriugena had written the *de praedestinatione*, was embarrassed by the work, and avoided any notice of it. Others, however, condemned it outright and accused Eriugena of vanity and reliance on mere dialectics. Nevertheless Eriugena appears to have won favour, or further favour, in the eyes of Charles the Bald, for he was now invited by him to translate from the Greek the works of one known as the Pseudo-Dionysius or Dionysius the Areopagite, said to have been the disciple of St. Paul, the first of the Fathers of the Church and the first bishop of Paris and protector of the royal abbey of St. Denis. The Pseudo-Dionysius was, in fact, an author dependent on the doctrine of Proclus (410–485), who wrote around the first quarter of the sixth century; he was probably a Syrian lightly touched by monophysitism. His works are *The Divine Names*, *Mystical Theology*, *The Heavenly Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and *Letters*. The doctrine of these works affected Eriugena profoundly. We can but mention two of the most important points here: apophatic theology, the superiority, when we speak of God, of negation over affirmation; and the Neoplatonic interpretation of things as being a descent from the One followed by an ascent to Him, a procession and a return — something he may already have imbibed from Martianus Capella. The translation of the Pseudo-Dionysius led Eriugena to translate in turn the *Ambigua ad Iohannem* and the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* of Maximus the Confessor, for Maximus explained many of the more obscure passages of the Pseudo-Dionysius. Maximus was born about 580 near Tiberias. The influence of Maximus on Eriugena was even more profound: one of the salient points is that we know indeed *that* God is, but not at all what He is. Maximus led Eriugena in due course to Gregory of Nyssa, born in Cappadocia about 331, whose *de hominis opificio* he also translated. From Gregory he received the doctrine, for example, that matter was a confluence of invisible realities, and the doctrine of man as an image of God. It would be fair to say that although he continued to regard Augustine as the main source of his doctrine, Eriugena from the time of his translating these three Greek authors, looked more to them for the congenial inspiration of his thought. In due course his own great original work, the *Periphyseon*, was deeply marked by them.

To the *Periphyseon* we now come. This work takes the form of a catechetical dialogue in which a “Nutritor” and “Alumnus,” effectively “Master” and “Disciple” (terms used in some later manuscripts and some modern editions), discuss the doctrine to be imparted: the Disciple is a mere foil to the Master who expounds almost everything. It is in five “books”,

contains about a quarter of a million words, is dedicated to a former colleague at the Court of Charles the Bald called Wulfadus, was composed between 862 and 866 and was published around 867.

The first book \* deals with God as Source, one who creates but is not created. The second deals with the first or primordial causes, things which are created and themselves create. The third book treats of the created universe which is created, but does not itself create. And the fourth and fifth books deal with God as End, one who does not create and is not created. In this way is expounded the exaltation or procession or descent of all that is from God, and its return or ascent to him. The return is a reversal of the outgoing process. This fourfold, logical, "division" of things is the source of an alternative title for the *Periphyseon*, *de diuisione naturae*, the division of nature or of all reality.

The primary division of nature, however, is into being and non-being. These are to be considered according to five different modes. The first mode is according to *perceptibility*: that which can be perceived by intellect or sense is said to be; that which is not so perceptible is said not to be. God, for example, is not so perceptible and so is said not to be. The second mode of being and non-being is according to *order* or place on the descending and ascending scale from the Creator to the lowliest creature and back again: if being is predicated of man, then an angel has not being, and *vice versa*. The third mode is according to *actualization*: a thing is, if it is actualized; it is not, if it remains merely possible. The fourth mode is according to the *faculty of perception*: that which the intellect perceives, is: that which is perceived by sense, is not. The fifth mode is according to the *realization of God's image* and is applicable to man only: if man is in sin, he is not; if he is restored to God's image through grace, he is.

The *first book* deals, then, with God as Source. God is incomprehensible to the creature who can know *that* God is, but not *what* He is. God, nevertheless, makes Himself known to the creature through *theophanies* or appearances: even the angels see only theophanies of God and no theophany must be mistaken for God Himself. Still a theophany, being for man a condescension of God's Wisdom to human nature through grace and an exaltation of that nature to Wisdom through love, is a "deification," a conformation to God's Wisdom. What the intellect knows, it becomes. As Maximus says: air is not light; yet it is so filled with light that it seems to be nothing but light; iron molten in fire, although it remains iron, is indistinguishable from the fire. So will the creature be with God.

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\* In the summary that follows I draw upon one published by me in *Eriugena*, Cork 1969, pp. 33-62.

Through these theophanies the incomprehensible God becomes somehow “comprehensible” to us. The term God (*Theos*) combines the notions of running (*theō*) and seeing (*theōrō*), movement and rest. Movement and rest are not reconcilable in the creature, but in God they are. These terms are applied only metaphorically to God. Insofar as God creates, He can be said to *be created* in what He creates — just as our mind *is*, even when it is not active ; but when it has thoughts, it can be said to *become*.

The order of the universe tells us that God is wise ; its motion that he lives. Hence we can conclude that God is a Trinity, essence (the Father), wisdom (the Son) and life (the Holy Spirit).

God transcends all the categories of Aristotle. We can know Him through *affirmative* Theology, but less imperfectly through *negative* Theology. We may say that God is “good ;” but since goodness implies the existence of badness, it is better to deny that God is “good” and state rather that God is “more-than-good.” One can more truly state what God is not, rather than what He is : “who is better known by not knowing ; ignorance of Whom is true wisdom ; who is more truly and trustworthily denied in all things than affirmed” (510 B).

A primary question is how an incorporeal Creator can create corporeal things. In fact the corporeal is a confluence of incorporealities.

In the *second book* of the *Periphyseon* Eriugena describes the procession of creatures from the Creator through the primordial causes to the diversity of things. Strictly speaking this is merely a logical procession : there is no true essence apart from the Creator. These causes or essences can also be called divine ideas, examples, definitions, volitions, predestinations. They are the unchangeable “reasons” of all things to be made, before they are made. The Father preformed these “reasons” in His Word.

Eriugena has recourse to Maximus the Confessor’s five-fold downward division of things : that between the uncreated nature and the created ; that between things intelligible and things sensible ; that between heaven and earth (angel and man) ; that between Paradise and the inhabited earth (man before the Fall and man after the Fall) ; and that between male and female. From these it is seen that man is the focus or harmony of all creation : all creatures, visible and invisible, are found in him.

When Genesis tells us “In the beginning (the Principle) God made heaven and earth” we understand that to mean that the Father made the primordial causes of things intelligible and things sensible in the Son. These causes are not real being which is God, but they are the nearest thing to real being, and are to be distinguished from formless matter (which also derives from the primordial causes), which is the nearest thing to non-being. They remain invisible in the Word, ever looking upon him who forms them. They form other things below

them through which they appear. They are co-eternal with the Word, but their co-eternity is modified by the fact that their being comes from him, not his from them.

Eriugena then proceeds to a discussion of the divine ignorance. God does not know evil. He does not know anything whose "reasons" he has not made. He does not know experimentally what he foreknows. Finally he does not know himself in any category. God does not know what he is, because he is not anything. His ignorance is ineffable intelligence.

The Trinity receives much discussion in this book. Eriugena adopts the Greek formula describing the Trinity as three substances in one essence as against the Latin one of three persons in one nature. The Father is the cause of the Son begotten of him; the Son is the cause of all the primordial causes established in him by the Father; the Father is also the cause of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him through the Son: the Holy Spirit is the cause of the division, multiplication and distribution of all causes into their effects, both in genus, species and individuals according to nature and grace.

But all these things, Eriugena tells us, are reasoned more profoundly and truly than told; are intellected more profoundly and truly than reasoned; and more profoundly and truly are than they are intellected. Man is not different from the Trinity except that it has deity by essence, he by grace.

In the *third book* Eriugena turns his attention more formally to the created universe. The things here have their being through participation, that is "the distribution of divine grants and gifts" from the top of the scale of creation to the bottom. All things on the scale participate in what is above them and are participated in by what is below them. Participation is the distribution of a divine grant by which a thing subsists; it is also the distribution of a divine gift, that is grace, by which a subsisting thing is adorned.

Creation is from nothing. "Nothing" is no "matter," or any cause, or any occasion, or anything co-essential or co-eternal with God. It is not a privation of relation or being. It describes the total absence of essence. All things in the Word are the Word itself, are eternal and are made. The Wisdom of the Father is the creating cause of all things, is created in all things that it creates, and contains all things in which it is created. One can illustrate from the monad: all possible numbers are causally and eternally in it — but not all numbers are actually in it. The very same numbers are eternal where they exist in potency, that is in the monad. But they are made where they exist in act.

Corporeal things come from incorporeal things and return to incorporeal things. Quantities and qualities (in themselves incorporeal) are joined together to become formless matter. When incorporeal forms and colour are added to this a corporeal thing ensues.

All things were always in God's Wisdom through the primordial causes, but they can be described as coming to be for us, only when they become corporeal. But how all things are eternal *and* made is known only to the Word. And so God is all in all: "we should not understand God and the creature as two things removed from one another, but as one and the same thing. For the creature subsists in God, and God is created in the creature in a wonderful and ineffable way, making himself manifest, invisible making himself visible" (678C).

"Nothing" is the ineffable, incomprehensible and inaccessible clarity of the divine goodness, which, because it is above being, is unknown to all intellects and, while contemplated by itself, is not, was not, and never will be. Hence it is called darkness. All creatures are theophanies or appearances of God, the further down the scale the clearer. The divine goodness, which is called "nothing," descends from itself to itself, as it were from nothing to something. Its first progression is to the primordial causes in which it comes to be, as it were a certain formless matter, the principle of all being, life and intelligence. Descending from these causes God comes to be in their effects and is revealed in his appearances. From the multiple forms of these effects he descends to bodies. And so he makes all, and becomes all things in all things, and returns to himself, calling all things back to himself. So from nothing he makes all things: from his super-essence all essence, from the negation of all things the affirmation of all.

The *fourth and fifth books* deal with God as End; since consideration has been given of *God* as source in the first book, here there is treatment especially of the end of things created, and particularly of man, who sums up all creation within himself: all creatures will be saved in man.

Man in his original state before the Fall was simple, spiritual, celestial and individual. He was not divided into male and female. Man's nature did not sin and was unaffected by sin: sin was done by the perverse will. Man's soul is the image of God: it fills all parts of him, but is contained by none; and one knows *only that* it is, not *what* it is. Man's first condition, that of spiritual form, which is spiritual body, is unchangeable. What is added from outside his nature — the material body — is superfluous and changeable. This material body dissolves into its elements and does not persist. The differences of bodies arise from the qualities of corruptible seeds — but one and the same form of man remains individually in all.

The good and the bad will persist forever, but the good only will be happy. The natural form of the body is incorruptible and unchangeable: only the material body is corrupted. Man's natural body and soul, therefore, return by stages to become intellect: firstly, the body resolves itself into its four physical



elements; secondly, each man in the resurrection will recover his own body from the elements; thirdly, that body will be changed into spirit; fourthly, that spirit, which is man's whole nature, will return to the primordial causes; finally, all nature itself and its causes will be moved towards God — there will be nothing but God alone. The return of all is the conversion of bodies to souls, of souls to causes, and of causes to God. While Eriugena is aware that Western theologians, notably Augustine, do not believe that a corporeal nature can become incorporeal, the Greeks — and Ambrose in the West — are confident of this. The change is a certain ineffable uniting of substances that is not intelligible to us.

One must bear in mind that the substance of the human body is intelligible. The body can, therefore, simply pass into soul, and soul to intellect, and intellect into God: there is no transmutation of properties or confusion or destruction of essences or substances.

Eriugena asks the question if the substances (essences or "reasons") of created things ever proceed from the primordial causes. He decides that they do not. This means that the universe is made up of accidents which, while proceeding from the substances, nevertheless adhere to them in a way known only to the Creator. Substances are like causes in being both incorporeal and intelligible; the causes, however, are the most general "reasons" of all things in the Word, while the substances are individual and special properties and "reasons" of individuals.

It is the property of an intellectual substance to be one with God through contemplation — but through grace it becomes God. Those intellects that are most purified are deified. Creation was not an accident to the Creator: he was always inseparable from it, even if in his perpetuity he rises above it; even if He precedes it in eternity: even if His being is its source. The primordial causes were created always.

And what about hell? It is against reason, Eriugena believes, to say that a part of human nature will be punished forever. Human nature is one, simple, without composition and free from dissimilitude or multiplicity of parts. It is altogether in itself and altogether in its individuals. God cannot punish anything that He made, that is a substance, such as man. God could, however, punish what He did not make — for example, the perverse movement of man's will which is not substantial. It can be punished by fantasies. But it is man's libidinous appetite rather than his bad will that is the cause of his punishment. It is inexplicable how the evil will of angels or men can be the efficacious cause of sin and its punishment.

Both good and evil will enjoy the spirituality and incorruptibility of body, the same glory of their nature, the same essence, the same eternity. They will

have different fantasies — the good, of divine contemplations through God's appearances according to their elevation; the evil, of mortal things, false and diverse according to the motions of their evil thoughts.

The deified will ascend through innumerable steps of divine contemplation so as to see God in the glass of divine fantasy. The reprobate will descend through the diverse descents of their vices into the depth of ignorance and exterior darkness. Human nature, however, in which both just and unjust participate, will be placed as a kind of medium which is affected neither by the happiness of the just nor the unhappiness of the unjust, maintaining its own natural good only, holding the substances of all, and giving itself to all who participate in it.

The return can be divided into seven steps: firstly, there is the change of the earthly body into vital motion; secondly, of vital motion into sense; thirdly, of sense into reason; fourthly, of reason into intellect. Here is fixed the end of the whole rational creation. Body, vital motion, sense, reason and intellect at this stage make, not five things, but one — since the lower is always taken in in the higher in such a way that, while not ceasing to be, it becomes one with it.

There follow three more steps of ascent: firstly, the intellect passes into the knowledge of all things after God; secondly, knowledge passes into wisdom, that is, the intimate contemplation of truth insofar as this is conceded to the creature; and thirdly, the highest, the setting, so to speak, through supernatural power of the most purified souls in God himself, as it were a darkness of incomprehensible and inaccessible light, a darkness in which the causes of all things are hidden. And then the night shall be brightened as the day. This will be the eighth day of blessedness. The first stages of the return are within the limits of nature. The other three are supernaturally and superessentially within God himself. When they are united, only God will appear in anything, just as in the most purified air nothing shines but light alone.

Among other works of Eriugena were *Expositions on the Celestial Hierarchy* of the Pseudo-Dionysius (865–70), a *Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John* (865–70), a *Commentary on St. John's Gospel*, and some thirty-six poems, one of which, the *Aulae Sidereae*, may have been the last thing he wrote, possibly in 877. His exegetical works contain the same doctrine as is found in the *Periphyseon* but are written in a more intimate style. The *Homily on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel* is particularly appealing.

The poems are written about half and half in Elegiac Couplets and Dactylic Hexameters. Nearly all praise Charles the Bald. Many of them treat of

the themes of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Descent of Christ into hell. Occasionally philosophical themes are touched upon. They are particularly distinguished by their extensive use of Greek : some poems are written entirely in Greek.

In reading Eriugena's prose one always has a sense not only of the obvious rhetoric, but also of the poetic vein that breaks forth from time to time in phrases and whole passages that are instinct with poetry. This is part of Eriugena's appeal.

We know nothing of Eriugena after, at latest, 877. William of Malmesbury has the story, which looks like legend, that he was invited to Oxford and later to teach in the Abbey of Malmesbury, where his students killed him with their *styles*. An inscription in the Great Church of Malmesbury is supposed to have described him as Saint John the Sophist.

Eriugena had followers in his time and later among the mystics — the School of St. Victor, Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroeck and the German mystics, Nicholas of Cusa and his professed disciple Giordano Bruno. On the whole, however, the West has not welcomed his ideas. Indeed the espousal of his doctrine by Berengar of Tours, Gilbert of Poitiers, Almaric of Bena and David of Dinant led to its condemnation by the Councils of Vercelli in 1050 and of Rome in 1059: it was finally condemned by a Bull of Honorius III in 1225. There was a revival of interest in him among German philosophers in the nineteenth century; this has become more general in recent times.

John J. O' MEARA



# 2

## TRANSLATION



# PERIPHYSEON

## BOOK I

NUTRITOR. As I frequently ponder and, so far as my talents allow, ever more carefully investigate the fact that the first and fundamental division of all things which either can be grasped by the mind or lie beyond its grasp is into those that are and those that are not, there comes to mind as a general term for them all what in Greek is called Φύσις and in Latin Natura. Or do you think otherwise? 441A  
Concerning the first division of all things into those which are and those which are not

ALUMNUS. No, I agree. For I too, when I enter upon the path of reasoning, find that this is so.

N. Nature, then, is the general name, as we said, for all things, for those that are and those that are not.

A. It is. For nothing at all can come into our thought that would not fall under this term.

N. Then since we agree to use this term for the genus, I should like you to suggest a method for its division by differentiations into species; or, if you wish, I shall first attempt a division, and your part will be to offer sound criticism. 441B

A. Pray begin. For I am impatient to hear from you a true account of this matter.

N. It is my opinion that the division of Nature by means of four differences results in four species, (being divided) first into that which creates and is not created, secondly into that which is created and also creates, thirdly into that which is created and does not create, while the fourth neither creates nor is created. But within 442A  
1  
On the division of Nature

these four there are two pairs of opposites. For the third is the opposite of the first, the fourth of the second; but the fourth is classed among the impossibles, for it is of its essence that it cannot be. Does such a division seem right to you or not?

A. Right, certainly. But please go over it again so as to elucidate more fully the opposition(s) within these four forms.

N. I am sure you see the opposition of the third species to the first — for the first creates and is not created; it therefore has as its contrary that [which is created and does not create — and of the second to the fourth, for the second both is created and creates; it therefore has as its contrary in all respects the fourth,] which neither creates nor is created.

A. I see (that) clearly. But I am much perplexed by the fourth species which you have introduced. For about the other three I should not presume to raise any question at all, because, as I think,  
442B the first is understood to be the Cause of all things that are and that are not, Who is God; the second to be the primordial causes; and the third those things that become manifest through coming into being in times and places. For this reason a more detailed discussion which shall take each species individually is required, as I think.

N. You are right to think so. But in what order we should pursue our path of reasoning, that is to say, which of the species of Nature we should take first, I leave it to you to decide.

A. It seems to me beyond question that before the others we should say of the first species whatever the light of minds has granted us to utter.

2 443A N. Let it be so. But first I think a few words should be said about the first and fundamental [division] — as we called it — of all things into the things that are and the things that are not.

A. It would be correct and wise to do so. For I see no other beginning from which reasoning ought to start, and this not only because this difference is the first of all, but because both in appearance and in fact it is more obscure than the others.

Of the five  
modes of the  
first division  
of all things

N. This basic difference, then, which separates all things requires for itself five modes of interpretation:

I. Of these modes the first seems to be that by means of which reason convinces us that all things which fall within the perception of bodily sense or (within the grasp of) intelligence are truly and reasonably said to be, but that those which because of the excellence



of their nature elude not only all sense but also all intellect and reason rightly seem not to be — which are correctly understood only of God and matter and of the reasons and essences of all the things that are created by Him. And rightly so: for as Dionysius the Areopagite says, He is the Essence of all things Who alone truly is. “For”, says he, “the being of all things is the Divinity Who is above Being.” Gregory the Theologian too proves by many arguments that no substance or essence of any creature, whether visible or invisible, can be comprehended by the intellect or by reason as to what it is. For just as God as He is in Himself beyond every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so is He equally incomprehensible when considered in the innermost depths of the creature which was made by Him and which exists in Him; while whatsoever in every creature is either perceived by the bodily sense or contemplated by the intellect is merely some accident to each creature’s essence which, as has been said, by itself is incomprehensible, but which, either by quality or by quantity or by form or by matter or by some difference or by place or by time, is known not as to what it is but as to that it is.

443B

That no  
essence or  
substance is  
intelligible in  
itself

443C

That, then, is the first and fundamental mode [of division] of those things of which it is said that they are and those (of which it is said) that they are not. For what somehow appears to be (a mode of division) based upon privations of substances and accidents should certainly not be admitted, in my opinion. For how can that which absolutely is not, and cannot be, and which does not surpass the intellect because of the pre-eminence of its existence, be included in the division of things? [— unless perhaps someone should say that the absences and privations of things that exist are themselves not altogether nothing, but are implied by some strange natural virtue of those things of which they are the privations and absences and oppositions, so as to have some kind of existence.]

443D

II. Let then the second mode of being and not being be that which is seen in the orders and *differences* of created natures, which, beginning from the intellectual power, which is the highest and is constituted nearest to God, descends to the furthestmost (degree) of the rational [and irrational] creature, or, to speak more plainly, from the most exalted angel to the furthestmost element of the rational [and irrational] soul [— I mean the nutritive and growth-giving life-principle, which is the least part of the soul in the general acceptance of the term because it nourishes the body and makes it grow]. Here, by a wonderful mode of understanding, each order,

4 444A

including the last at the lower end [which is that of bodies and in which the whole division comes to an end], can be said to be and not to be. For an affirmation concerning the lower (order) is a negation  
 444B concerning the higher, and so too a negation concerning the lower (order) is an affirmation concerning the higher [and similarly an affirmation concerning the higher (order) is a negation concerning the lower, while a negation concerning the higher (order) will be an affirmation concerning the lower]. Thus, the affirmation of “man” (I mean, man while still in his mortal state) is the negation of “angel”, while the negation of “man” is the affirmation of “angel” [and vice versa]. For if man is a rational, mortal, risible animal, then an angel is certainly neither a rational animal nor mortal nor risible: likewise, if an angel is an essential intellectual motion about God and the causes of things, then man is certainly not an essential intellectual motion about God and the causes of things. And the same rule is found to apply in all the celestial essences until one reaches the highest order of all. This, however, terminates [in] the highest negation [upward]; for its negation confirms the existence of  
 444C no higher creature. Now, there are three orders which they call “of equal rank”: the first of these are the Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones; the second, the Virtues, Powers, and Dominations; the third, the Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. Downwards, on the other hand, the last (order) merely [denies or confirms the one above it, because it has nothing below it which it might either take away or establish] since it is preceded by all the orders higher than itself but precedes none that is lower than itself.

*It is also on these grounds that every order of rational or intellectual creatures is said to be and not to be: it is in so far as it is known by the orders above it and by itself; but it is not in so far as it does not permit itself to be comprehended by the orders that are below it.*

5 III. The third mode can suitably be seen in those things of which the visible plenitude of this world is made up, and in their causes in the most secret folds of nature, which precede them. For whatsoever of these causes through generation is known as to  
 444D matter and form, as to times and places, is by a certain human convention said to be, while whatsoever is still held in those folds of nature and is not manifest as to form or matter, place or time, and  
 445A the other accidents, by the same convention referred to is said not to be. Clear examples of this mode are provided over a wide range (of experience), and especially in human nature. Thus, since God in that

first and one man whom He made in His image established all men at the same time, yet did not bring them all at the same time into this visible world, but brings the nature which He considers all at one time into visible essence at certain times and places according to a certain sequence which He Himself knows: those who already <are becoming, or> have become visibly manifest in the world are said to be, while those who are as yet hidden, though destined to be, are said not to be. Between the first and third (mode) there is this difference: the first (is found) generically in all things which at the same time and once for all have been made in (their) causes and effects; the *third* specifically in those which partly are still hidden in their causes, partly are manifest in (their) effects, of which in particular the fabric of this world is woven. To this mode belongs the reasoning which considers the potentiality of seeds, whether in animals or in trees or in plants. For during the time when the potentiality of the seeds is latent in the recesses of nature, because it is not yet manifest it is said not to be; but when it has become manifest in the birth and growth of animals or of flowers or of the fruits of trees and plants it is said to be. 445B

IV. The fourth mode is that which, not improbably according to the philosophers, declares that only those things which are contemplated by the intellect alone truly are, while those things which in generation, through the expansions or contractions of matter, and the intervals of places and motions of times are changed, brought together, or dissolved, are said not to be truly, as is the case with all bodies which can come into being and pass away. 445C

V. The fifth mode is that which reason observes only in human nature, which, when through sin it renounced the honour of the divine image in which it was properly substantiated, deservedly lost its being and therefore is said not to be; but when, restored by the grace of the only-begotten Son of God, it is brought back to the former condition of its substance in which it was made after the image of God, it begins to be, and in him who has been made in the image of God begins to live. It is to this mode, it seems, that the Apostle's saying refers: "and He calls the things that are not as the things that are"; that is to say, those who in the first man were lost and had fallen into a kind of non-subsistence God the Father calls through faith [in His Son] to be as those who are already reborn in Christ. But this too may also be understood of those whom God daily calls forth from the secret folds of nature, in which they are considered not to be, to become visibly manifest in form and matter 445D

and in the other (conditions) in which hidden things are able to become manifest.

446A Although keener reasoning can discover some modes besides these, yet I think at the present (stage) enough has been said about these things, unless you disagree.

A. Quite plainly so — except that I am rather perplexed by what St. Augustine appears to have said in his *Hexameron*, namely that the angelic nature was established before every other creature, not in time but in status, and on this account it contemplated the primordial causes, that is, those primary exemplars which the Greeks call *πρωτότυπα*, even of others besides its own, first in God; then the creatures themselves in their effects. For it cannot have known its own cause before it proceeded into its proper species.

446B N. Not even that should worry you: *but* consider more closely what has been said. For if we say that the angels knew the primary causes of things as they are constituted in God we shall seem to go against the Apostle, who affirms that God Himself and the causes of all things in Him, if they are not other than what He Himself is, are above all that is said and understood; and therefore we must steer a straight and middle course, avoiding the appearance of either going against the Apostle or of not holding the opinion of a teacher of weighty and sacred authority. Therefore, that each has spoken the truth must not be doubted, nay rather, must strongly be maintained. So reason permits us to say that the cause of all things, which surpasses all understanding, does not become known, according to the Apostle, to any created nature. “For who”, says he, “has known the intellect of the Lord?” And in another place: “the peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding.” But if the Cause of all things is inaccessible to all things that are created by it, then there can be no doubt but that the reasons of all things, which exist [in it] eternally and without change, are completely inaccessible to all things of which they are the reasons. And yet anyone who might say that in the intellects of the angels there are certain theophanies of those reasons, that is to say, certain [divine] manifestations which are comprehensible to the intellectual nature, but which are not the reasons, i.e. the primary exemplars, themselves, will not, I think, stray from the truth. And we believe that St. Augustine was not incorrect when he said that these theophanies were beheld in the angelic nature before the generation of all the natures that are below it. So let us *not* worry about having said that the angels behold the causes of the lower creature, and (that they do so) first in God, then

That the reasons of all things in God are said not to be, 446C but are said to be through certain theophanies, in so far as they can be comprehended by the angelic or the human intellect

in themselves. For it is not only the divine essence that is indicated by the word "God", but also that mode by which God reveals Himself in a certain way to the intellectual and rational creature, according to the capacity of each, is often called "God" in Holy Scripture. This mode the Greeks are accustomed to call theophany, that is, self-manifestation of God. An example of it is: "I saw the Lord sitting", and other similar expressions, since it is not His Essence that (the prophet) saw, but something created by Him. 446D

Therefore it is not to be wondered at that the angel should be understood to possess, in a certain sense, a threefold knowledge: one, that is, from above, which, (coming) from the eternal reasons of things, is reproduced first in him after the mode just mentioned; then that which he receives from what is above him he commits to himself as it were in a wondrous and ineffable memory, some sort of image, as it were, reproducing an image; and hence, if he can by this mode have knowledge of what is above him, who would dare say that he has not in him some knowledge of what is below? With truth therefore is it said that those things that can be comprehended by the reason and by the intellect are, and with equal truth that those things which surpass all reason and intellect are not. 447A

A. What then shall we say of that happiness to come which is promised to the saints, which we consider to be nothing else but the pure and unmediated contemplation of the Divine Essence itself? — as St. John the Evangelist says: "We know that we are the sons of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. But when that shall have appeared we shall be like unto Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In the same way the Apostle Paul: "Now we see in a mirror and obscurely, but then face to face." Also St. Augustine in his books "On the City of God" says, I think, of the contemplation that is to be of the Divine Essence: "Through the bodies that we shall put on, in every body we see wherever we turn the eyes of our body we shall contemplate with translucent clarity God Himself." For if the eminence of the Divine Essence surpasses the purest power of angelic contemplation — since it has been established by the foregoing arguments that the Divine Essence is comprehensible to no intellectual creature, which without doubt consists chiefly in the angels; and the happiness promised to us is no other than equality with the angelic nature — how will the happiness of human nature be able to contemplate the eminence of the Divine Essence? 8 447B 447C

N. Shrewdly and observantly (spoken). For your difficulty here is not without cause. Nevertheless, I should have thought you

were sufficiently answered by what we have already pointed out in general concerning every creature.

A. What was that? Please go over it again.

N. Did we not make the general assertion that the Divine Essence is in itself comprehensible to no bodily sense, to no reason, to no intellect, whether of man or of angel?

447D A. I remember, and I cannot deny that I accepted it. But, as it seems to me, that conclusion you refer to will be wholly invalidated by our allowing to the intellectual creature a contemplation of the Divine Essence in itself; or, if it cannot be invalidated since it has been confirmed by the surest arguments, you will have to show by sound reasons and probable examples the mode of divine contemplation that is promised to the saints in the time to come and in which the angels subsist at all times.

448A N. What mode it is you seek I know not, unless it be that which we have just now been briefly discussing.

A. What that is I should like you to tell me again, for I do not remember it.

N. Do you remember the agreement we reached when we were speaking about the Hexameron of the holy father Augustine?

A. I do remember, but I should like to hear you a second time [on this subject].

N. Your difficulty was, as I think, how this Father [said] that the angels contemplated the causes of the things that were to be created, which are eternally in God and which are God, first in God, then in themselves, then the proper species and (specific) differences of the creatures themselves, if the Divine Essence, together with the reasons which are in it, cannot be comprehensible essentially.

A. I remember it all.

N. Do you remember our answer to these points?

448B A. Yes, I recall, if my memory does not deceive me, you were saying that it is not the causes of things themselves, which subsist in the Divine Essence, that the angels beheld but certain divine manifestations which, so you say, the Greeks call theophanies, and which take their names from the eternal causes of which they are the images. You further added that not only the Divine Essence itself which exists in itself without change was called God, but that also

the theophanies which are reproduced out of it and by it in the intellectual nature *are* themselves *given* the name of God.

N. You remember clearly. For this is what we said.

A. But how does it concern the present task ?

N. Not a little, in my opinion. For that is the mode in which I think the angels behold God all the time, and the righteous in this life when they experience ecstasy and in the (world) to come (when they will) see (Him) as the angels do.

A. Then we shall not see God Himself in Himself, for not even 448C  
the angels do so — since this is impossible for every creature. For “He alone”, as the Apostle says, “possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible light —”; but we shall contemplate certain theophanies which are made in us by Him.

N. No. For from the one and the same Form which all things 9  
desire [I mean the Word of God] each shall receive a form according to the degree of his own sanctity and wisdom. *For* (the Form) itself says of itself in the Gospel: “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” calling itself the house of its Father because while it is one and the same (Form) and remains unchanging, it will be multiple to the sight of those to whom it shall be given to dwell in it. For each one, as we have said, shall possess in himself knowledge of the only begotten Word of God up to the measure that grace will bestow upon him. For as great as is the number of the elect, so great will be the number of the mansions; as much as shall be the 448D  
multiplication of holy souls, so much will be the possession of divine theophanies.

A. It seems likely.

N. Well do you say “likely.” For who on such matters [would say with assurance] that the case was thus and not otherwise when they would seem to exceed the strength of man’s grasp while (he is) still in this fragile flesh ?

A. But I should like you to expound to me briefly what you can 449A  
guess about this theophany, that is, what it is, whence it is, where it is, whether it is formed without us or within. Concerning theophany

N. It is a deep thing you ask, and I do not know what deeper thing there can be for human inquiry. However, I will say what I

have been able to discover about this subject in the books of the holy fathers who have been bold enough to speak of such things.

[A. Please do.

N.] So you ask what it is, and whence, and where?

[A. Yes.

N.] We find that Maximus [the monk, a godly philosopher,] has treated of this theophany most profoundly and subtly in his commentary on the Homilies of Gregory the Theologian. For he says that theophany is effected from no other (cause) but God, but that it happens as a result of the condescension of the Divine Word, that is, of the only begotten Son Who is the Wisdom of the Father, downwards, as it were, upon human nature which was created and  
 449B purified by Him, and of the exaltation upwards of human nature to the aforesaid Word by divine love. [By condescension I mean here not that which has already taken place through the Incarnation but that which is brought about by theosis, that is to say, the deification, of the creature.] So from this condescension of the Wisdom of God upon human nature through grace, and the exaltation of the same nature to that same Wisdom through choice, theophany is brought about. With this interpretation the holy father Augustine seems to agree in his exposition of that passage from the Apostle, "He Who is made unto us righteousness and wisdom"; for he expounds it as follows: "The Father's Wisdom, in which and through which all things were made, which is not created but creating, comes into  
 449C being in our souls by some ineffable condescension of compassion and attaches to itself our intellect so that in some ineffable manner a kind of composite wisdom, as it were, is formed out of its descending upon us and dwelling in us, and out of our understanding which through love is raised up by it to itself and is formed in it." In the same way, concerning righteousness and the other virtues he teaches that they derive from no other source than a certain wondrous and ineffable conformation of the Divine Wisdom and our own understanding. For, as Maximus says, as far as the human intellect ascends through charity, so far does the Divine Wisdom descend through compassion, and it is this that is the cause and the substance of all the virtues. Therefore every theophany, that is, every virtue, both in this life [in] which it is still only beginning to take shape [in those] who are worthy to be formed, and in the future life (in those who) shall receive the perfection of the divine beatitude, is effected not externally but internally out of God and  
 449D out of themselves.



[A.] It is from God, then, that the theophanies happen through grace in the angelic nature and in human nature when it has been illuminated, purified, and perfected, as a consequence of the descent of the Divine Wisdom and of the ascent of the human and angelic understanding.

[N. Clearly. For] consistent with this is [the statement] of the same Maximus that whatever the intellect shall have been able to comprehend, that it itself becomes. Therefore, to the extent that the mind comprehends virtue, to that extent it becomes virtue itself. 450A

But if you require examples of these things, they are plainly set forth by the same Maximus: “For just as air illuminated by the sun appears to be nothing else but light, not because it loses its own nature, but because the light prevails in it so that it is believed itself to be light, so human nature when it is united with God is said to be God through and through, not because it ceases to be (its own) nature but because it receives a share in Divinity so that only God appears to be in it. Also, when there is no light present the air is dark, while the light of the sun as it subsists by itself is comprehended by no bodily sense. But when the sunlight mingles with air, then it begins to appear: so that in itself it is incomprehensible to the senses, but when mixed with air it can be comprehended by the senses.” And from this you are to understand that the Divine Essence is incomprehensible in itself, but when it is joined to an intellectual creature it becomes after a wondrous fashion manifest: so that the former, I mean the Divine Essence, is seen alone in the latter, namely the intellectual creature. For the ineffable excellence of the former surpasses every nature which participates in it, so that in all things nothing else but itself is presented to those that have understanding, while in itself, as we have said, it is not manifest in any fashion. 10 450B

A. I quite see what you wish me to understand, but as to whether it can stand together with the words of the holy father Augustine I am not sufficiently clear.

N. Be more attentive then, and let us return to those words of his which we first cited. They are these, I think [in the twenty-second (book) “On the City of God”]: “Through the bodies that we shall (have) put on, in every body we see wherever we turn the eyes of our body, we shall contemplate with translucent clarity God Himself.” Note the sense of the words. For he did not say, “Through the bodies we shall (have) put on we shall contemplate God Himself” 450C

(for in Himself He cannot be seen); but he said: "Through the bodies we shall (have) put on, in every body we see, we shall contemplate God Himself." Therefore it is through bodies in bodies, not through Himself, that He shall be seen. Similarly, it is through intellect in intellects, through reason in reasons, not through itself, that the Divine Essence shall appear. For so strongly shall the excellence of the Divine Power be manifested in the life to come to all those who shall be worthy of its contemplation that

450D nothing but itself shall be apparent in either these bodies or these intellects. For "God shall be all in all" — as if the Scripture said plainly: God alone shall be manifest in all things. Hence the holy Job declares: "Even in my flesh I shall see God", which is as if he had said: In this flesh of mine, which is afflicted with many trials,

451A there shall come to be such glory that, in the same way as nothing is now manifest in it but death and corruption, so in the life to come nothing in it will be manifest to me but God alone, Who in very truth is life and immortality and incorruptibility. But if such was the glory to which he looked forward in respect of his body's felicity, what are we to think will be his spirit's status? — especially as, in the words of great Gregory the Theologian, "the bodies of the saints shall be changed into reason, their reason into intellect, their intellect into God"; and thus the whole of their nature shall be changed into Very God. Many most excellent examples of this have been adduced by the aforesaid Maximus in his exposition of Gregory, one of which we have already mentioned in speaking of the air. But now we shall introduce a second, which concerns iron

451B and fire. For when iron is melted in fire and reduced to a liquid, nothing of its nature appears to the senses to remain, but all is changed into the quality of fire, and it is by the reason alone that it is known to preserve its own nature, though reduced to a liquid state. So, just as the air appears wholly as light, and iron when melted appears to take on wholly the quality of fire, as we have said, and in fact to be fire, although their substances persist: so the sound intellect must hold that after the end of this world every nature, whether corporeal or incorporeal, will seem to be only God, while preserving the integrity of its nature, so that even God, Who in Himself is incomprehensible, is after a certain mode comprehended in the creature, while the creature itself by an ineffable miracle is changed into God. But let these words suffice, if their meaning is clear to you.

A. It is certainly as clear as such things are permitted to be to

451C our minds: for concerning what is ineffable who in this life can

speak with such clarity as to leave nothing more for inquirers to wish for — especially as we are promised no other glory than knowledge by direct experience in the life to come of those things which here (on earth) are believed by faith, and inquired into and, as far as may be, commended by reason?

N. Your opinion is cautious and sensible. And now, I think, we must return to the task we have set ourselves, namely to the division of Nature.

A. Certainly we must return to it: for in what is going to be said some sort of moderation must be observed if it is ever to come to a conclusion.

N. Well, then: of the aforesaid divisions of Nature the first difference, as has seemed to us, is that which creates and is not created. And rightly so: for such a species of Nature is correctly predicated only of God, Who, since He alone creates all things, is understood to be *ἀναρχος*, that is, without beginning, because He alone is the principal Cause of all things which are made from Him and through Him, and therefore He is also the End of all things that are from Him, for it is He towards Whom all things strive. Therefore He is the Beginning, the Middle and the End: the Beginning because from Him are all things that participate in essence; the Middle, because in Him and through Him they subsist and move; the End, because it is towards Him that they move in seeking rest from their movement and the stability of their perfection. 452A

11  
Concerning  
the nature  
which  
creates and  
451D  
is not  
created

A. I most firmly believe and, as far as I may, understand that only of the Divine Cause of all things is this rightly predicated; for it alone creates all things that are from it, and is not itself created by any cause which is superior (to itself) or precedes it. For it is the supreme and unique Cause of all things which take their existence from it and exist in it. But I would like [to know] your opinion about this. For I am not a little perplexed when I so often find in the books of the Holy Fathers who have attempted to treat of the Divine Nature that not only does it create all things that are, but itself also is created. *For*, according to them, it makes and is made, [and] creates and is created. If, then, this is the case, I do not find it easy to see how our reasoning may stand. For we say that it creates only, but is not created by anything. 452B

12

452B

N. You have every reason for being perplexed. For I too am greatly puzzled by this, and I should like [to be able] to learn [by]

your guidance how it can be that these (statements), which seem to contradict one another, are prevented from conflicting [with one another]; and how to approach this question according to right reason.

A. Please speak first yourself: for in such matters I look to you rather than to myself for an opinion, and for a lead in reasoning.

Concerning  
the name  
which is God

N. First, then, I think we must consider that name which is so commonly used in Holy Scripture, that is, (the Name of) God. For although there are many names by which the Divine Nature is called, such as Goodness, Essence, Truth, and others of this kind, yet that is the name which most frequently occurs in Scripture.

A. It is certainly seen to be so.

452C N. Of this name [then] an etymology has been taken over from the Greeks: for either it is derived from the verb  $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\tilde{\omega}$ , that is, “I see”; or from the verb  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ , that is, “I run”; or — which is more likely [since] the meaning of both *is* [one and] the same — it is correctly *held* to be derived from both. For when it is *derived* from the verb  $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\tilde{\omega}$ ,  $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  is interpreted to mean “He Who sees”, for He sees in Himself all things that are [while] He looks upon nothing that is outside Himself because outside Him there is nothing. But when  $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  is derived from the verb  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  it is correctly interpreted “He Who runs”, for He runs *throughout all things* and never stays but by His running fills out all things, as it is written: “His Word runneth swiftly.”

Concerning  
the motion  
and rest of  
God

452D [And yet He is not moved at all. For of God] it is most truly said that He is motion at rest and rest in motion. For He is at rest unchangingly in Himself, never departing from the stability of His Nature; yet He sets Himself in motion through all things in order that those things which essentially subsist by Him may be. For by His motion all things are made. And thus there is one and the same meaning in the two interpretations of the same name, which is God. For in God to run through all things is not something other *than* to see all things, but as by His seeing so too by His running all things are made.

453A A. What has been said of the etymology of the name is sufficient and convincing. But I do not satisfactorily see whether He may move Who is everywhere, without Whom nothing can be, and beyond Whom nothing extends. For He is the place and the circumference of all things.

N. I did not say that God moves beyond Himself, but from Himself in Himself towards Himself. For it ought not to be believed that there is any motion in Him except that of His Will, by which He wills all things to be made; just as His rest [is understood] not as though He *comes to rest* after motion but as the immoveable determination of His same Will, by which He limits all things so that they remain in the immutable stability of their reasons. *For* properly speaking there is in Him neither rest nor motion. For these two are seen to be opposites one of the other. But right reason forbids us to suppose or understand that there are opposites in Him — especially as rest is, properly speaking, the end of motion, whereas God does not begin to move in order that He may attain to some end. Therefore these names, like many similar ones also, are transferred 453B from the creature by a kind of divine metaphor to the Creator. Not without reason; for of all things that are at rest or in motion He is the Cause. For from Him they begin to run in order that they may be, since He is the Principle of them all; and [through Him] they are carried towards Him by their natural motion so that in Him they may rest immutably and eternally since He is the End and Rest of them all. For beyond Him there is nothing that they strive for since in Him they find the beginning and end of their motion. God, therefore, is called “He Who runs” not because He runs beyond Himself, Who is always immutably at rest in Himself, Who fills out all things; but because He makes all things run from a state of non-existence into one of existence.

A. Return to the subject. For these things seem to be not unreasonably spoken.

N. Please tell me which subject you mean. For in trying to say 453C something about intervening questions we commonly forget the main one.

A. Was not this the task we set ourselves: to try our best to find out on what grounds those who treat of the Divine Nature say that *the same* (Nature) creates and is created? For that it creates all things no one of sound intellect is in doubt; but how it is said to be created is not, we thought, a question to be cursorily passed over. Why God is said to create and to be created

N. Just so. But, as I think, in what has already been said considerable headway has been made towards the solution of this question. For we agreed that the motion of the Divine Nature is to be understood as nothing else but the purpose of the Divine Will to establish the things that are to be made. Therefore it is said that in

- 453D all things the Divine Nature is being made, which is nothing else than the Divine Will. For in that Nature being is not different from willing, but willing and being are one and the same in the establishment of all things that are to be made. For example, one might say: this is the end to which the motion of the Divine Will is directed: that the things that are may be. Therefore it creates all things which it leads forth out of nothing so that they may be, from not-being
- 454A into being; but it is (also) created because nothing except itself exists as an essence since itself is the essence of all things. For as there is nothing that is good by its nature, except (the divine nature) itself, but everything which is said to be good is so by participation in the One Supreme Good, so everything which is said to exist exists not in itself but by participation in the Nature which truly exists. Not only, therefore, as was mentioned earlier in our discussion, is the Divine Nature said to be made when in those who are reformed by faith and hope and charity and the other virtues the Word of God in a miraculous and ineffable manner is born — as the Apostle says, speaking of Christ, “Who from God is made in us wisdom and justification and sanctification and redemption”; but also, because
- 454B that which is invisible in itself becomes manifest in all things that are, it is not inappropriately said to be made. For our intellect also, before it enters upon thought and memory, is not unreasonably said <not> to be. For in itself it is invisible and known only to God and ourselves; but when it enters upon thoughts and takes shape in certain phantasies it is not inappropriately said to come into being. For it does so in the memory when it receives certain forms [of things and sounds and colours and <other> sensibles] — for it had no form before it entered into the memory —; then it receives, as it were, a second formation when it takes the form of certain signs of <forms and> sounds — I mean the letters which are the signs of sounds, and the figures which are the signs of mathematical forms — or other perceptible indicators by which it can be communicated to the senses of *sentient beings*. By this analogy, far removed
- 454C as it is from the Divine Nature, I think it can be shown all the same how that Nature, although it creates all things and cannot be created by anything, is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it; so that, as the intelligence of the mind or its purpose or its intention or however this first and innermost motion of ours may be called, having, as we said, entered upon thought and received the forms of certain phantasies, and having then proceeded into the symbols of sounds or the signs of sensible motions, is not inappropriately said to become — for, being in itself without any

sensible form, it becomes formed in fantasies —, so the Divine Essence which when it subsists by itself surpasses every intellect is correctly said to be created in those things which are made by itself and through itself and in itself [and for itself], so that in them either by the intellect, if they are only intelligible, or by the sense, if they are sensible, it comes to be known by those who investigate it in the right spirit. 454D

A. Enough has been said about this, I think.

N. Quite enough [unless I am mistaken. 13

A.] But it is still necessary for you to explain why the Divine Nature is only called creative and not created, if, as the aforesaid reasons have shown, it both creates and is created. [For there seems to be a contradiction here.] 455A

N. You are very attentive. For I see that this too merits investigation.

A. Certainly it merits it.

N. Listen then to what follows and apply the mind's eye to this brief answer of mine.

A. Go on. I will follow attentively.

N. That the Divine Nature is the Founder of the universe you do not doubt?

A. Proceed to what follows. For to hesitate over this would be impiety.

N. Similarly that it is created by nothing you perceive by faith and by intellect?

A. (I perceive) nothing more surely.

N. Then when you hear that it is created, you are not placed in doubt as to its being created not by another nature but by itself?

A. No.

N. Well, then : is it not in any case creating whether it creates itself or the essences that are created by it? For when it is said that it creates itself the true meaning is nothing else but that it is establishing the natures of things. For the creation of itself, that is, the manifestation of itself in something, is surely that by which all things subsist? 455B

A. What has been said up to now seems probable. But I should like to hear what theology teaches about this ineffable and incomprehensible Nature which is the Creator and Cause of all things, [that is, whether it exists, what it is, of what sort it is, and how it is defined.]

455C N. Does not this very theology which you have just mentioned, which is concerned entirely or for the most part with the Divine Nature, hold — plainly enough for those who can see the truth — that from what has been created by itself one can deduce merely that this Nature subsists as an essence, but not what that essence is? For, as we have often said, it exceeds not only the endeavours of human reasoning, but even the most pure intellects of the celestial essences. But the theologians have correctly deduced from the things that are that it is, and from their divisions into essences, genera, species, differences and individuals that it is wise, and from the stable motion and moving rest of all things that it lives. In this way they also discovered the great truth that the Cause of all things is of a threefold substance. For, as we said, from the essence of the things that are it is understood to be; from the marvellous order of things that it is wise; from their motion it is found to be life. Therefore the Cause and creative Nature of all things is, and is wise, and lives. And from this those who search out the truth have handed down that in its essence is understood the Father, in its wisdom the Son, in its life the Holy Spirit.

Of the One  
Cause of all  
things triply  
subsisting

455D A. These things have been made sufficiently clear to me and I see that they are very true. [It is, of course, quite impossible to define what or of what kind it is, since what quite refuses to be understood is quite impossible to be defined.] But I should like to hear for what reason the theologians have dared to predicate of the Cause of all things unity and trinity.

456A N. Over this last question of yours we need not expend much labour — especially as the theologian St. Dionysius the Areopagite expounds for us with the utmost truth and by the surest arguments the mysteries of the Divine Unity and Trinity. For he says: “There is no way of signifying by verb or noun or any other part of articulated speech how the supreme and causal Essence of all things can be signified.” For it is not unity or trinity of such a kind as can be conceived by any human intellect however pure, or by any angelic intellect however serene; but in order that the religious inclinations of pious minds may have something to think and something to say concerning that which is ineffable and incomprehensible, especially



for the benefit of those who demand from catholics a rational account of the Christian religion, either, if they are well-disposed, because they wish to learn the truth, or, if they are ill-disposed, as an opportunity for attacking and criticizing it, these religious expressions by which the Faith is symbolized have been both devised and handed down by the holy theologians so that we may believe in our hearts and confess with our lips that the Divine Goodness is constituted in Three Substances of One Essence. And even this (truth) was discovered only in the light of spiritual understanding and rational investigation: for in contemplating, as far as the enlightenment of the Spirit of God would take them, the one and ineffable Cause of all things and the one simple and indivisible Principle they affirmed the Unity; and then by observing that this Unity did not consist in any singularity or barrenness they gained an understanding of the Three Substances of the Unity, namely the Unbegotten and the Begotten and the Proceeding. Now, they called the condition, [that is, the relation,] of the Unbegotten Substance to the Begotten Substance Father, the condition of the Begotten to the Unbegotten Substance Son, and the condition of the Proceeding Substance to the Unbegotten and to the Begotten Substance Holy Spirit. But since the attention of the holy commentators of Holy Scripture is almost entirely concentrated upon this subject, enough, I think, has been said for the present. 456B

Concerning the condition, that is, the relation, of the Three Divine Substances 456C namely of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

A. Quite enough; but I should like to hear a plainer account of the condition of the Three Divine Substances; for it would be possible for someone to take these mystical names of the Holy Trinity, namely, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, as referring not to Their condition but to Their nature; for “father” seems to be the name of the substance of the Father, and similarly “son” the name of the substance of the Son, and the denomination “Holy Spirit” also seems to signify nothing other than His substance.

N. Perhaps we too should not deny that we believe and profess just this if the supreme *and* venerable authority of St. Gregory the Theologian and the assent of sound reason did not prohibit us from believing such things. For when he was questioned by the Eunomians, those most virulent adversaries of the Catholic Faith, concerning this name of “father”, whether it signified a nature or an operation, enlightened by divine grace he made a wonderful reply, saying that it was (the name) *neither* of a nature *nor* of an operation, but only of the relation to the Son. For were he to reply that “father” was the name of a nature, they would at once follow this up 457A

by saying that similarly “son” also was the name of a nature ; but if this were granted, it would necessarily follow that “father” was the name of one nature and “son” of another. For in one and the same nature there cannot be two names differing the one from the other ; and from this they would make their point that Father and Son were ἑτερουσίας, that is, of diverse essence or nature. Of like (wisdom) was his answer concerning operation: for if it were granted them that “father” was the name of an operation, they would *promptly* conclude that the Son was a creature since “father” was admitted to be [the name] of His operation, that is, of His creation.

A. Most certainly this was a praiseworthy reply, and one  
 457B inspired by truth. But we ought to look into it a little more closely. For, as it seems to me, they would not immediately be able to blame him even if he did say that “father” was the name of a nature. Why should they? Is it impossible for two names, differing from one another in sound but not in sense, to be understood in one and the same nature, when we see that both Abraham and Isaac, that is, a father and a son, signify one nature? For it is not that Abraham is the name of one nature and Isaac of another, but both are of one and the same nature.

N. You would be correct in what you say if you could equally  
 457C assert that, in this example of yours of Abraham and Isaac, what is meant by Abraham and Isaac is not different from what in their case is meant by father and son. For as well as Abraham being Abraham’s [own] name, “father” too is a name applying to the same Abraham. In like manner also, as well as Isaac being Isaac’s name, “son” too is a name applying to the same Isaac. But “Abraham” and “father”, or “Isaac” and “son” are not predicated of the same thing. For it is to the substance of Abraham, that is, to the special person that he is, that “Abraham” refers, whereas no one of sound understanding would doubt that when he is called “father” the reference is to his relationship to his son Isaac. The same must be understood of “Isaac”. For by this name “Isaac” is meant his own individual substance, whereas what is made known by “son” is his condition in respect of his father. For you cannot deny that such names, that is, father and son, denote relation and not substance. If, then, among us, that is, in (the case of) human nature, these names are predicated not substantively but relatively, what are we to say in the case of the Supreme and Holy Essence in which Holy Scripture has established such names, namely, Father, Son and

Holy Spirit, for the mutual relation, that is, condition, of the Substances? 457D

A. I now see the reply of the holy theologian to be completely supported by the truth. For, as has been shown, whether in the Divine Nature or the human, the name of a relation cannot be applied to a substance or essence. But I should like to hear from you, clearly and succinctly, whether all the categories — for they are ten in number — [can truly and properly be predicated] of the supreme *One* Essence in Three Substances of the Divine Goodness, and of the Three Substances in the same One Essence. 458A

N. On this subject I know of no one who could speak succinctly and clearly. For in such a matter as this either one should keep wholly silent and resign oneself to the simplicity of the Orthodox Faith, for it surpasses every intellect, as it is written: “Thou Who alone hast immortality and dwellest in inaccessible light”; or, if one has begun to discuss it, one will have to show in many ways and by many arguments what is likely to be the truth, making use of the two branches of theology, the affirmative, which by the Greeks is called καταφατική, and the negative, which is named ἀποφατική. The one, that is ἀποφατική, denies that the Divine Essence or Substance *is* any one of the things that are, that is, of the things which can be discussed or understood; but the other, καταφατική, predicates of it all the things that are, and for that reason is called affirmative — not that it affirms that it is any of the things that are, but (because) it teaches that all things which take their being from it can be predicated of it. For that which is the cause can reasonably be expressed in terms of the things that are caused. For it says that it is Truth, Goodness, Essence, Light, Justice, Sun, Star, Spirit, Water, Lion, Bear, Worm, and innumerable other things; and not only does it draw its lessons about it from those things which accord with nature, but from the things which are contrary to nature, since it describes it as being drunken [and] foolish [and] mad. But of these things it is not our present purpose to speak; for enough is said about such things by St. Dionysius the Areopagite in his “Symbolic Theology”, and therefore we may return to the question you have asked. For you had inquired whether [all] the Categories are [properly] to be predicated of God or (only) some of them. 458C

Concerning  
458B  
καταφατική  
and  
ἀποφατική

A. Yes, let us return to that. But first I think we must ponder why the names you have mentioned, I mean Essence, Goodness, Truth, Justice, Wisdom, and others of that sort, which seem to be

not merely divine but the divinest, and to signify nothing else but that Divine Substance or Essence, are said by the aforementioned holy father and theologian to be metaphorical, that is, to have been transferred from the creature to the Creator. For *I think* it must be considered that he had some mystical and hidden reason for saying so.

N. You observe well. Here too is something which I see should not be passed over without consideration, and therefore I should  
 458D like you to tell me whether you understand that anything opposed to God or conceived alongside of Him exists. By “opposed” I mean either deprived of Him or contrary to Him or related to Him or absent from Him; while by “conceived alongside of Him” I mean something that is understood to exist eternally with Him without being of the same essence with him.

A. I see clearly what you mean. And therefore I should not dare to say that there is either anything that is opposed to Him or anything understood in association with Him which is ἑτεροῦσιον, that is, which is of another essence than what He is. For opposites  
 459A by relation are always so opposed to one another that they both begin to be at the same time and cease to be at the same time, whether they are of the same nature, like single to double or 2/3 to 3/2, or of different natures, like light and darkness, or in respect of privation, like death and life, sound and silence. For these are correctly thought to belong to the things which are subject to coming into being and passing away. For those things which are in discord with one another cannot be eternal. For if they were eternal they would not be in discord with one another, since eternity is always like what it is and ever eternally subsists in itself as a single  
 459B and indivisible unity. For it is the one beginning of all things, and  
 14 their one end, in no way at discord with itself. For the same reason I do not know of anyone who would be so bold as to affirm that anything is co-eternal with God which is not co-essential with Him. For if such a thing can be conceived or discovered it necessarily follows that there is not one Principle of all things, but two [or more], widely differing from each other — which right reason invariably rejects without any hesitation: for from the One all things take their being; from two [or more], nothing.

N. You judge correctly, as I think. If therefore the aforesaid Divine Names are confronted by other names directly opposed to them, the things which are properly signified by them must also of necessity be understood to have contraries opposite to them; and

therefore they cannot properly be predicated of God, to Whom 459C  
nothing is opposed, and with Whom nothing is found to be co-  
eternal which differs from Him by nature. For right reason cannot  
find a single one of the names already mentioned or others like them  
to which *another* name, disagreeing *with it*, being opposed or  
differing from it within the same genus, is not found; and what we  
know to be the case with the names we must necessarily know to be  
so with the [things] which are signified by them. But since the  
expressions of divine significance which are predicated of God in  
Holy Scripture by transference from the creature to the Creator —  
if, indeed, it is right to say that anything can be predicated of Him,  
which must be considered in another place — are innumerable and  
cannot be found or gathered together within the small compass of  
our reasoning, only a few of the Divine Names can be set forth for  
the sake of example. Thus, [God] is called Essence, but strictly  
speaking He is not essence: for to being is opposed not-being.  
Therefore He is *ὑπερούσιος*, that is, superessential. Again, He is  
called Goodness, but strictly speaking He is not goodness: for to  
goodness wickedness is opposed. Therefore (He is) *ὑπεράγαθος*,  
that is, more-than-good, and *ὑπεραγαθότης*, that is, more-than-  
goodness. He is called God, but He is not strictly speaking God: for  
to vision is opposed blindness, and to him who sees he who does not  
see. Therefore He is *ὑπέρθεος* that is, more-than-God — for *θεός* is  
interpreted “He Who sees”. But if you have recourse to the  
alternative origin of this name, so that you understand *θεός*, that is,  
God, to be derived not from the verb *θεωρῶ*, that is, “I see”, but  
from the verb *θέω*, that is, “I run”, the same reason *confronts* you.  
For to him who runs he who does not run is opposed, as slowness to  
speed. Therefore He will be *ὑπέρθεος*, that is, more-than-running,  
as it is written: “His Word runneth swiftly”: for we understand this  
to refer to God the Word, Who in an ineffable way runs through all  
things that are, in order that they may be. We ought to think in the  
same way concerning Truth: for to truth is opposed falsehood, and  
therefore strictly speaking He is not truth. Therefore He is  
*ὑπεραλήθης* and *ὑπεραλήθεια*, that is, more-than-true and (more-  
than-)truth. The same reason must be observed in all the Divine  
Names. For He is not called Eternity properly, since to eternity is  
opposed temporality. Therefore He is *ὑπεραιώνιος* and *ὑπεραιωνία*,  
that is, more-than-eternal and (more-than-)eternity. Concerning  
Wisdom also no other reason applies, and therefore it must not be  
thought that it is predicated of God properly, since against wisdom  
and the wise are set the fool and folly. Hence rightly and truly He is

459D  
That any-  
thing which  
has an  
opposite  
cannot be  
properly  
460A  
predicated  
of God

460B

called ὑπέρσοφος, that is, more-than-wise, and ὑπερσοφία, that is, more-than-wisdom. Similarly, He is more-than-life because to life is opposed death. Concerning Light it must be understood in the same way: for against light is set darkness. For the present, as I think, enough has been said [concerning these (matters)].

460C A. It must indeed be admitted [that enough has been said]. For the subject of our present debate does not allow us to say all that is necessary concerning such matters because of what must be discussed with a view to the business in hand. Return, therefore, if you please, to the consideration of the decad of the categories.

N. I am surprised at the keenness of your attention which has been vigilant enough up to now.

A. On what grounds, pray, do you say that?

Concerning  
the names by  
which God is  
properly  
named, in so  
far as God  
can be  
named  
anything

460D N. Did we not say that, strictly speaking, the ineffable Nature can be signified by no verb, by no noun, and by no other audible sound, by no signified thing? And to this you agreed. For it is not properly but metaphorically that it is called Essence, Truth, Wisdom, and other names of this sort. Rather, it is called superessential, more-than-truth, more-than-wisdom. But do not even these (names) seem to be, in a way, proper names? For if it is not called Essence properly, yet it is properly called superessential; similarly, if it is not called Truth or Wisdom properly, yet it is properly called more-than-truth and more-than-wisdom. It does not, therefore, lack names referring properly to it. For although among the Latins these names are not usually pronounced under a single accent or by a unitary harmony of composition, except the name superessentialis, by the Greeks, on the other hand, each is expressed by a single compound. For never, or scarcely ever, will you find [such compounds used in speech as are] superbonus or superaeternus and others like (them).

461A

A. I too wonder what I was thinking of when I let this important inquiry go ignored, and therefore I earnestly ask you to enter into it. For in whatever way the Divine Substance is spoken of, whether by simple parts of speech or by compounds, whether in Greek or in Latin, provided only it be a proper way, it will be seen that it is not ineffable. For that is not ineffable which can be spoken of in any way.

N. Now you are on your guard, I see.

A. Yes indeed. But so far this incidental question is anything but clear to me.

N. Return, then, to the conclusion we reached a little earlier. For, unless I am mistaken, we said that there were two supreme branches of theology — and this we said not of ourselves but on the authority of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, who very clearly, as *has been said*, asserts that theology is divided into two parts, that is, into 461B καταφατική and ἀποφατική, which Cicero translates into “intentio” and “repulsio”, but we prefer to render by Affirmation and Negation with a view to expressing the meaning of the terms more accurately.

A. I see that I do remember something of the sort, as I think. But I do not yet see how it helps us in the matter we now wish to consider.

N. Do you not see that these two, namely Affirmation and Negation, are the opposites of one another?

A. I am sufficiently aware of that; and I think there can be no greater contrariety.

N. Attend, then, more carefully. For when you have reached the point of view of perfect reasoning you will see clearly enough that these two which seem to be the contraries of one another are in no way mutually opposed when they are applied to the Divine Nature, but in every way and at every point are in harmony with each other. *And that* this may become more evident we shall employ a few examples. For instance: καταφατική says: “It is Truth”; ἀποφατική contradicts: “It is not Truth”. Here there appears some kind of contradiction, but a closer investigation reveals that there is no conflict. For that which says: “It is Truth”, does not properly affirm that the Divine Substance is Truth, but that it can be called by such a name by a transference of meaning from the creature to the Creator; for, the Divine Essence being naked and stripped of every proper signification, it clothes it in such names as these. On the other hand, that which says: “It is not Truth”, clearly understanding, as is right, that the Divine Nature is incomprehensible and ineffable, does not deny that it is, but (denies) that it can properly be called Truth or properly be Truth. Of the harmony between καταφατική and ἀποφατική 461C For all the significations with which καταφατική clothes the Divinity are without fail stripped off it by ἀποφατική. 461D For the one, clothing it, says, for instance: “It is Wisdom”, while the other, unclothing it, says: “It is not Wisdom.” So the one says: “It can be called this”, but does not say: “It properly is this”; the other says: “It is not this although it can be called after this.”

A. Unless I am mistaken, I fully understand this, and things which hitherto seemed to me to be mutually contradictory are now  
462A seen as clear as day to agree with one another and in no way [to dissent] when they are applied to God. But how this may lead to a solution of the present problem I confess I do not yet see.

N. Pay closer attention, then, and tell me, as far as you are able, to which branch of theology belong those significations which we previously introduced, I mean superessential, more-than-truth, more-than-wisdom, and the others like them, that is to say, whether we should allocate them to the affirmative or to the negative theology.

A. I am not so bold as to decide for myself. For when I see that the aforesaid significations lack the negative particle [which means “not”], I fear to include them in the negative branch of theology; 462B yet if I include them in the affirmative branch I realize that I am not doing justice to their sense. For when it is said: “It is superessential”, this can be understood by me as nothing else but a negation of essence. For he who says: “It is superessential”, openly denies that it is essential, and therefore although the negative is not expressed in the words pronounced, yet the hidden meaning of it is not hidden from those who consider (them) well. Indeed, as I think, I am compelled to admit that these aforesaid significations which in appearance do not imply a negation belong, as far as they can be understood, rather to the negative than to the affirmative branch of theology.

How  
affirmation  
and negation  
are found to-  
462C  
gether in each  
of the names  
which have  
the prefix  
super or  
more than

N. I see that you have shown the greatest care and vigilance in your reply, and I strongly approve the way in which you have very subtly observed behind the outward expression of the affirmative branch the meaning of the negative. Let us then, if you agree, attempt a solution of the present problem as follows: that these names which are predicated of God by the addition of the particles super- or more-than-, such as superessential, more-than-truth, more-than-wisdom, and the like, comprehend within themselves in the fullest sense the two previously mentioned branches of theology, so that in outward expression they possess the form of the affirmative, but in meaning the force of the negative. And let us conclude with this brief example: it is Essence, affirmation: it is Non-essence, negation: it is superessential, affirmation and negation together — for superficially it lacks the negation, but is fully negative in meaning. For that which says: “It is superessential”, 462D says not what it is but what it is not; for it says that it is not essence



but more than essence, but what that is which is more than essence it does not reveal. For it says that God is not one of the things that are but that He is more than the things that are, but what that “is” is, it in no way defines.

A. We must not linger over this question any longer, I think. And now, if you agree, the nature of the categories must be considered.

N. Aristotle, the shrewdest among the Greeks, as they say, in 463A  
 discovering the way of distinguishing natural things, included the  
 innumerable variety of all things which come after God and are  
 created by Him in ten universal genera which he called the ten  
 categories, that is, predicables. For, as he holds, nothing can be  
 found in the multitude of created things and in the various motions  
 of minds which cannot be included in one of these genera. Now, the  
 Greeks call them οὐσία, ποσότης ποιότης, πρὸς τι, κεῖσθαι, ἕξις,  
 τόπος, χρόνος, πράττειν, παθεῖν, which are called in Latin *essentia*, 463B  
*quantitas*, *qualitas*, *ad aliquid*, *situs*, *habitus*, *locus*, *tempus*, *agere*,  
*pati*. And of these ten genera there are innumerable subdivisions  
 which our present task does not permit us to discuss lest we should  
 digress too far from our topic — especially as it is the function of  
 that branch of philosophy which is called dialectic to break down  
 these genera into their subdivisions from the most general to the  
 most specific, and to collect them together again from the most  
 specific to the most general. But, as the holy father Augustine says 15  
 in his books on the Trinity, when we come to theology, that is, to the  
 study of the Divine Essence, the relevance of the categories is wholly  
 extinguished. For if the force of any one of the Categories *whatsoever*  
*is* effective in those natures which are created by God and in their  
 motions, yet in that Nature which can neither be spoken of nor  
 understood it is throughout and in every respect ineffective; and yet,  
 as we have said before, in the same way as almost all that is properly  
 predicated of the nature of created things can be said metaphorically  
 of their Creator, so that some significant statement may be made  
 (concerning Him), so also what is signified by the categories, which 463C  
 strictly speaking can only be discerned in created things, can  
 without absurdity be pronounced about the Cause of all things  
 — not to signify properly what it is, but to show by analogy what  
 we, when in a certain manner inquiring about it, might, with  
 probability, think about it.

A. I clearly see that the categories can in no way be properly  
 predicated of the Ineffable Nature: for if any one of the categories

were to be properly predicated of God, it would necessarily follow that God is a genus. But God is neither genus nor species nor accident : therefore no category can properly signify God.

N. Your view is correct. Not in vain, I think, was the trouble we have been willing to take over the two branches of theology. For we should not have been able so easily, and with hardly any difficulty at all, to arrive at this treatment of the categories, namely, that they cannot properly be predicated of God, had we not first satisfied ourselves that, in the case of the primordial causes which were established before all else by the One Cause of all things, I mean Essence, Goodness, Virtue, Truth, Wisdom, and the others of this sort, it is only metaphorically that they signify God. For if the created causes of all things which come first in order after it and which can only be apprehended by the perceptions of sheer mind fall short of the One Ineffable Cause of all things as regards excellence of essence, so that it can by no means be properly signified by their names, what are we to say of these aforementioned ten genera, which are discerned not only in intelligible things but also in sensible things? Surely it is not to be believed that they are truly and properly predicated of the Divine and Ineffable Nature.

463D  
464A  
That no  
category is  
predicated of  
God prop-  
erly but meta-  
phorically

Concerning  
οὐσία  
Concerning  
quantity  
464B

A. I think so too : that it is [not to be believed]. So it is not οὐσία because it is more than οὐσία, and yet it is called οὐσία because it is the Creator of all οὐσία [that is, of all essences]. It is not quantity because it is more than quantity. For every quantity extends in three dimensions, length, breadth, and depth, and these three dimensions are again produced in six directions : for length goes up and down, breadth to the right and to the left, depth forwards and backwards. But there is no dimension in God ; therefore there is in Him no quantity. Moreover quantity (consists) in the number of parts, either naturally continuous as in the case of a line or of time, or naturally discontinuous, as in that of corporeal or intelligible numbers ; the Divine Substance is neither composed of continuous parts nor divisible into separate parts. Therefore it is not a quantity. And yet it may not inappropriately be called quantity in two ways : either because “quantity” is often used in the sense of abundance of power, or because it is the origin and cause of all quantity.

Concerning  
464C  
quality

Concerning quality also we must think in the same way : for God is no quality, no quality is an accident to Him, in no quality does He participate. And yet quality is very often predicated of Him, either because He is the Creator of all quality or because

quality is very frequently used in reference to the virtues. For goodness as well as justice and the other virtues are often called qualities. But God is Virtue and More-than-virtue. The principle of relation is not as patently obvious as are the definitions of the other categories. For it appears to be the only category which is, so to say, properly predicable of God: and for this reason I see that we must inquire with the utmost care whether in the Most High and Holy Trinity of the Three Supreme Substances “father” is properly said in relation to the Son, similarly “son” (in relation) to the Father, and “holy spirit” (in relation) to the Father and the Son because the Spirit is of both — for that these are the names of conditions St. Gregory the Theologian asserts in a manner not to be doubted —, or whether here again, as in the case of the other categories, this one also, which is called relation or condition, must be believed and understood to be predicated of God metaphorically.

16  
Concerning  
relation

464D

465A

N. Your method of inquiring into the mystery of truth is a reasonable one, as I think. For it does seem as if none of the categories except this one alone is properly predicated of God. But whether this is really so or not must be examined with the utmost reverence and care. For if it is properly predicated of God, almost all our previous reasoning will be undermined. For we asserted that nothing at all can properly be said or understood of God. Indeed, the category of relation will not be reckoned among the ten genera of the categories if it is properly predicated of God. But if this is found to be the case the number of the categories will not be ten but nine. Therefore there is no course left open to us but to understand that this category too, as well as the others, is predicated of God metaphorically; for to this we are prompted and urged by sound reasoning lest what has already been said should begin to appear uncertain. For why, is it contrary to sound reasoning if we say that “father” and “son” are names for that condition which is called “in relation to something” and for what is more than condition? For the same condition is not to be believed in the most exalted Substances of the Divine Essence and in those which were created after it and by it. For, if I am not mistaken, just as it surpasses every essence, wisdom, and virtue, so also in an ineffable manner it goes beyond every condition. For who would believe that there is the same kind of condition between the Father and His Word as there can be observed between Abraham and Isaac? For the latter condition, being of the flesh and resulting from the division of nature after the sin of the first man, is found, on inquiry, to consist

465B

465C in the multiplication by generation ; in the former case it is believed and (in so far as it is revealed by the radiance of the Divine Light) known to be an ineffable bond uniting the Unbegotten and the Begotten *Substances*. In the latter case what is under consideration did not proceed from nature but from transgression ; in the former, what is contemplated is known to proceed from the ineffable fertility of the Divine Goodness. But let us pass on to other categories.

Concerning  
situation

A. There are six left, unless I am mistaken : of which the first is κείσθαι, that is, “to lie”, which others call situation. Now situation means the posture of a creature, whether visible or invisible. For instance : it is said of some body either, “it lies”, or, “it stands” ; [similarly it is said of the mind if it is at rest, “it lies” ; if it is alert, “it stands”] — because standing is usually applied to this category ; for motion is related to time. — But because God neither stands nor lies 465D the aforesaid category can in no way be predicated of God. And yet, since He is the Cause of standing and of lying — for in Him all things both stand, that is, subsist immutably in their reasons, and lie, that is, find their rest, because He is the End of all things, beyond which there is nothing for them to strive for —, “to lie” or situation can be predicated of Him metaphorically. [For if God truly and properly lies or sits or stands He does not lack posture : if He does 466A not lack posture He occupies place. But He does not occupy place : therefore He is not contained within any situation.]

17  
Concerning  
condition  
  
That con-  
dition is  
found in all  
the categories

N. I clearly see what you mean, and therefore I see fit that we should pass on to the category of condition, which seems to be the most obscure of all the categories because of its excessive range. For there is scarcely any category in which some condition is not found. For even essences or substances stand in regard to one another in respect of some condition. For we state in what proportion, that is condition, rational and irrational essence stand to one another [for the irrational could not be so called but for its condition of absence of reason, as the rational is not so called save from its condition of the presence of reason]. For every proportion is a condition although not every condition is a proportion ; because properly speaking proportion can only be found where there are at least two 466B terms, while condition is found in single things also. For instance : the condition of the rational soul is virtue. So proportion is some species of condition. But if you wish it to be made clear by an example how the condition of proportion is found in essence, take the case of numbers. For numbers, as I think, are understood to be

present in all things as their essence. For it is in numbers that the essence of all things subsists. Do you see, then, what kind of proportion there is between two and three?

A. Yes, certainly. I think it is the proportion of two-thirds : and from this one example I can get to know the various kinds of proportion of all the other substantial numbers when they are brought into relation with each other.

N. Turn your attention, then, to the rest (of the categories), and learn that there are no species of quantity, or of quality, or of that which is called "in relation to something", or of situation, or of place, or of time, or of action, or of passion, in which some kind of condition is not found. 466C

A. I have often searched into such matters and have found it to be so. For, to make use of a few examples, in quantities when the great and the small and the medium-sized are compared, condition is plainly evident. [Also in the quantities of numbers, distances, durations of time, and other similar things, you will clearly find the condition of proportion.] Similarly in quality. For instance: in 18  
colours, white and black and whatever intermediate colour there may be [are related to each other by condition]. [For white and black, because they occupy extreme positions in the range of colours, stand in regard to one another in the condition of contrariety, while (the range of) colour stands in regard to its extremes, white, I mean, and black, in the condition of intermediacy.] Also, in that category which is called  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\iota$ , that is, "in relation to 466D  
something", (condition) is much in evidence, as the condition of father to son or son to father, of friend to friend, of double to single, and other instances of this sort. In the case of situation too it is 19  
easily seen how standing and lying possess a condition in respect of one another [for they are diametrically opposed to one another. For 467A  
you will certainly never form a notion of standing distinct from the notion of lying, but the two always occur to you together, although they do not appear together in any one thing.] What is to be said of 20  
place, when the higher and the lower and the intermediate are considered? Do they lack condition?

N. By no means : [for these names do not proceed out of the nature of things but from the point of view of one who observes them part by part. For there is no up and down in the universe, and therefore in the universe there is nothing either higher or lower or intermediate. These (notions) are rejected by a consideration of the

whole, but introduced by attention to the parts. The same thing applies to the greater and the less : for nothing in its own genus can be either small or great, but such concepts have been formed by the thought of those who compare differing quantities, and therefore the condition is brought about in them by the consideration of spaces or of parts. For no nature would be either greater or smaller than any other nature, just as none is either higher or lower, since the nature by which all subsist is one, being the creation of one God.]

467B

A. What of time? When times are compared with one another, does not condition come clearly into view in them? — for instance, days compared to hours, hours to minutes, minutes to the moment, moments to indivisible units? Much the same one will find in the higher units of time if one ascends there. [For in all these is seen the condition of the whole to the parts and of the parts to the whole.]

N. Assuredly it is not otherwise.

A. And how (is it) in the diverse motions of action and passion? Is not condition everywhere in evidence? For to love and to be loved are conditions of the lover and the beloved *since* they are reciprocal to one another whether they occur in a single person, which is called by the Greeks *αὐτοπάθεια*, that is, when action and passion are observed in one and the same person, as “I love myself”; or between two persons, which is called by the Greeks *ἕτεροπάθεια*, that is, when the lover is one person and the beloved is another, as “I love you”.

467C

N. This too I see to be true.

A. I ask you therefore why this category of condition, since it seems to be naturally inherent in all the other categories, has its own place as a species by itself in the decad of the categories, as though founded upon its own proper reasons.

That οὐσία  
and  
quantity and  
quality are  
467D  
found in all  
the categories

N. Is it perhaps for the very reason that it is found in all that it subsists in itself? For that which is of all belongs properly to none, but is in all in such a way as to subsist in itself. For the same may be observed also in the category of Essence. Consider: although there are ten categories, is not one of them called essence or substance, while nine are accidents subsisting in the substance? For they cannot subsist by themselves. Essence appears to be in all, for without it they are not able to be. And yet, it occupies a place of its own, for that which is of all is proper to none but common to all, and while it subsists in all it does not cease to be in itself, according

468A

to its proper reason. The same may be said of quantity. For we say: What quantity of essence? What quantity of quality? What quantity of relation? What quantity of situation? What quantity of condition? How great a place? How small or how great an extent of time? What quantity of action? What quantity of passion? Do you see how extensively quantity is applied to the other categories? And yet it does not cease to hold its own place. What of quality? Is it not usual for this to be frequently predicated of all the other categories? For we say: What quality of οὐσία? What quality of size? What quality of relation, situation, condition, place, time, action, passion? For we ask in respect of all these what is their quality. And yet quality does not abandon the reason of its proper genus. What, then, is strange if the category of condition, while it is observed in all, is said to possess its own reason?

468B

A. It is not to be considered strange at all. For right reason convinces us that it cannot be otherwise.

N. Do you not then see that the Divine Essence does not participate in any condition, and that nevertheless condition can be not unsuitably predicated of it since (the Divine Essence) is its Cause? For if condition were predicated of it properly, (the Divine Essence) would not be of itself but of another. For every condition is understood to be in some subject and to be the accident of something, which it is impious to believe of God, to Whom nothing is an accident, and Who is not an accident to anything, and Who is not comprehended in anything, nor anything in Him.

A. Enough has been said of this category, as I think.

N. What then? For the remaining categories can we not briefly summarize from what has been said before? For God is neither place nor time, and yet metaphorically He is called the Place and Time of all things because He is the Cause of all places and all times. For the definitions of all things subsist in Him as places, as it were; and from Him as from a certain moment of time, through Him as through a certain period of time, [and] towards Him as towards the end, as it were, of times, the motion of all things both begins and moves and comes to an end, although He Himself neither moves Himself nor is moved by Himself or by another. Consider: if He were properly called place and time would it not appear that He would not be outside all things on account of the excellence of His Essence, but be included in the number of all the things that are? For place and time are counted among all the things that have been

21  
Concerning  
place and  
time  
468C

- created. For in these two the whole of the world that now exists is comprised and (they are that) without which it cannot exist, and therefore they are called by the Greeks  $\phi\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\upsilon\ \tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ , that is, “without which the universe” cannot exist. For everything that is in the world must move in time and be defined in place; even place itself is defined and time itself moves. But God neither moves nor is defined. [For (He is) the Place of places by which all places are defined, and, since He is not fixed in place by anything but gives place to all things within Him, He is not place but More-than-place.]
- 468D For He is defined by nothing, but defines all things: therefore He is the Cause of all things. In the same way, the Cause of times moves the times, but itself is not moved by any time in any time: for it is More-than-time and More-than-motion.] Therefore He is neither place nor time.
- 469A

A. Your words are so plain, clearer even than daylight, that enough *already* seems to have been said now on the nature of the categories and about their metaphorical use for denoting the Divine Essence, in view of the further demands of our present task.

- 22  
A review of  
the ten  
categories
- N. Of these ten genera four are at rest, that is, οὐσία, quantity, situation, place; [while] six are in motion, quality, relation, condition, time, action, passion: *and* I do not think you are unaware of this.

A. Yes, this is clear to me, and I have no more questions to ask about it. But what follows from this?

- 469B  
Concerning  
motion and  
rest and the  
whole, which  
comprise  
within them-  
selves the ten  
predicables
- N. That you should plainly understand that the ten genera already mentioned are comprised within two higher and more general genera, namely motion and rest, which again are gathered into that most general genus which is usually called by the Greeks τὸ πᾶν, but by our writers Vniuersitas.

A. This I much welcome because of those who think that there cannot be found in the nature of things any more general genus to precede the ten already mentioned genera which were discovered and named by Aristotle.

N. Does then this division of the categories (into those) in motion and (those) at rest, that is, four at rest, six in motion, seem to you correct?

- 23  
Concerning  
condition  
469C
- A. Yes, except that I am still not sufficiently clear about two: I mean, condition and relation. For these two categories seem to me to be rather at rest than in motion. For whatever has attained to its



proper condition remains immutable : for if it were to move in any way it would clearly be no longer a condition. [For] virtue in the soul is only then truly a condition of the mind when it abides in it immutably so that it cannot be separated from it. And that is the reason why no true condition is found in bodies : for the armed or the clothed man can be deprived of his armour or his clothing. In relation also rest is thought to prevail. For the relation of father to son or of double to single, and vice versa, is unalterable. For a father is always the father [of his son] just as a son [is always the son of his father] and so forth.

N. Perhaps you would not have hesitated much (over this) if you had been more careful to notice that everything which does not perfectly inhere in a creature so as to be of one nature with it but proceeds by certain increases to its perfection which cannot be separated from it and which cannot change must be in motion. But every condition is an ascending motion towards perfection in that of which it is the condition. But who would presume to be assured of perfection in this life? Therefore condition is in motion. Concerning relation also your hesitation is surprising to me, since you see that it cannot exist in one and the same subject, for it always appears in two. But that the mutual attraction of two subjects is the effect of some sort of motion who would doubt? There is also another way in which things in motion are very clearly distinguished from things at rest — to say no more for the moment of that most general principle by which all things created by God after God are shown to be in motion, for all things move through the process of generation from the state of non-existence into the state of existence, for the divine Goodness summons all things out of not-being into being so that they are (created) out of nothing, and each one of the things that are is moved by a natural desire towards its own essence and genus and species and individuality — : we properly say that those things are at rest which subsist by themselves and have no need of any [subject] in order that they may be, while those things which exist in something because they cannot exist by themselves we not inappropriately judge to be in motion. Thus, condition and relation are in some subject, and strive by a natural motion to be in it always, because without it they cannot exist. Therefore they are in motion.

A. Then what shall we say of place, of quantity, of situation, which you have set among the things that are at rest? For concerning οὐσία, that is, essence, no one doubts but that it does not require anything in order to subsist : for it is upon it that all the

469D

Concerning  
relation

470A

470B

24  
Concerning  
place and  
quantity and  
situation

rest are supported. But these, I mean place and quantity and situation, are counted among the accidents of essence, and therefore are moved by desire for the subject in which they are and without which they cannot be. And if this is the case, all are in motion save οὐσία, which alone is without movement — except for that by which all things strive towards being — since it alone subsists by itself.

- 470C N. Your question is not altogether ridiculous for you follow the common opinion. But if you look more closely you will find that place is not contained by anything but contains all things that are placed in it. For if place is nothing else but the limit and definition of every finite nature, then surely place does not strive to be in something, but all things which are in it are rightly always seeking it as their limit and their end, in which it is of their nature to be contained and without which it is understood that they would melt away into infinity. Therefore place is not in motion, since all that is in place moves towards it ; but it itself is at rest. Concerning quantity and situation reason teaches the same. For what does everything which partakes of quantity or position, whether sensible or intelligible, strive for if not that it may attain to its own perfect quantity and position, that there it may find its rest ? Therefore they do not
- 470D seek but are sought after; therefore they are not in motion; therefore they are at rest.

A. Are we then to say that these three, quantity, situation, place, are accidents of οὐσία, or that they are substances in their own right ?

- 25  
How the  
subject and  
what is  
predicated of  
471A  
the subject  
constitute  
the same  
thing
- N. I see that this too is worthy of inquiry. For according to the opinion of the dialecticians everything that is is either a subject, or what is predicated of a subject, or what is in a subject, [or what is predicated of and is in a subject]. But if right reason is consulted it replies that “subject” and “what is predicated of a subject” are one, and differ in no respect. For if, as they say, “Cicero” is a subject and first substance, while “man” is predicated of the subject and second substance, what difference in regard of nature is there except that the one is in the individual while the other is in the species, since species is nothing else but the unity of the individuals and number nothing else but the plurality of the species? If then the species is total and one and indivisible in the individuals and the individuals are an indivisible unity in the species, what difference there is in respect of nature between “subject” and “what is predicated of a subject” I do not see. [The same must be understood concerning the

accidents of the first substance: for what is in the subject is not other than what is at the same time in and predicated of the subject. Thus, art, to take an example, is one and the same thing in itself and in its species and in its individuals. Therefore the art of each particular thing, which is called by the dialecticians simply “that which is in the subject”, is not other than art in general, which is called by the same persons “that which is in the subject and predicated of the subject”, since, while it subsists in the subject, that is, in the first substance, it is predicated of the subject, that is, of the art that is proper of something, but in its whole and in its parts it is one and the same thing. And so there are left “subject” and “what is in a subject”.] But if you look more carefully, taking St. Gregory the Theologian and his [most wise] commentator Maximus as your guides, you will find that in all things that are, οὐσία is in itself wholly incomprehensible not only to the sense but also to the intellect, and therefore that it is known to exist (only) from these circumstances, as we may call them, by which I mean place, quantity, situation, to which is also added time. For within these, as within certain boundaries which have been placed about it, essence is known to be enclosed, so that they seem neither to be accidents to it as though subsisting in it — for they are outside it — nor to be able to exist without it, since it is the centre of the revolutions of time and dispositions of place, quantities, and situation. Therefore some of the Categories are predicated around οὐσία, which are said to be a kind of περιοχαί, that is, “circumstances”, because they are seen to be about it, while some, which are called by the Greeks συμβάματα, that is, “accidents”, are within it: quality, relation, condition, action and passion. And these are understood also outside it [in other categories], for example: quality in quantity, as colour in a body; also, quality in οὐσία, as invisibility *and* incomprehensibility in genera; also, relation outside οὐσία: father to son, son to father; for these are not of nature but of the transitory process of generation which is an accident of their bodies. [For the father is father not of the nature of the son nor is the son son of the father’s nature: for father and son are of one and the same nature. But no nature begets itself or is begotten of itself.] There is, however, relation even within οὐσία when genus is related to species and species to genus. For genus is the genus of species and species is the species of genus. Condition also is found both outside οὐσία and within, as, with regard to the body, we say that (a person) is armed or clothed. But the condition of οὐσία is the unchangeable virtue of genus and species by which the genus even when it is

How what is in the subject and what is  
471B  
at the same time in and predicated of the subject constitute the same thing

471C

How some accidents are outside οὐσία and some are within it and appear outside it by other accidents

471D

472A

divided into species still remains one and indivisible in itself and subsists as a whole in each species, and all its separate species form a single whole in it. The same virtue is also seen in the species, which, even when it is divided among individuals, preserves undiminished the force of its own indivisible unity, and all the individuals into which it appears to be infinitely divided are in it finite and an indivisible unity. But concerning action and passion no one is in doubt, for we see that bodies [although they belong to quantity] both act and suffer. Also the genera and species of οὐσία itself when they multiply into diverse species and individuals are seen to act. But if a man should by exercising his reason in accordance with that art which is called ἀναλυτικὴ unite, by gathering them together, the individuals into their species and the species into their genera and the genera into οὐσία, they are said to suffer [not that he himself gathers them, for they are gathered, as also divided, by nature ; but because he seems to gather them by an act of his reason : for when he divides them he is also said to act, while they are said to suffer.]

26 A. Although these things appear to be obscure they do not so completely elude my mind that nothing in them is revealed clearly and distinctly ; and since I see that almost all the Categories are so interrelated that they can scarcely be distinguished from one another in a definite way — for they all, as it seems to me, appear to be involved in one another — I urge you to show in what property each can be found.

472C N. How does it seem to you ? Is οὐσία wholly [and properly] contained within the most general genera and in the more general genera as well as in the genera themselves and in their species and again in those most special species which are called atoms, that is, individuals ?

Concerning  
the prop-  
erty of each  
category

A. I see that there is nothing else in which οὐσία can be naturally present except in the genera and species which extend from the highest down to the lowest, that is, from the most general to the most special, that is, the individuals, and up again from the individuals to the most general genera. For in these, as it were in its natural parts, it subsists as a whole.

472D N. Go on to the remainder then. Does the property of quantity seem to you to exist anywhere but in the number of the parts, or in their spaces, or in their measures, whether those parts be continuous as are the parts of lines or of times and of other things which are held together by continuous quantity, or are discontinuous, being

marked off by definite natural limits as are numbers and every multitude, [in] which it is clear that there is discontinuous quantity?

A. This too is clearly apparent.

[N.] And does that which is called quality properly reside 473A  
anywhere but in shapes and surfaces, either in natural bodies or in  
geometrical bodies such as plane figures like triangles, rectangles,  
polygons, and circles; and also in (those of) solid structure, such as  
cubes, cones, and spheres? For solid bodies, whether natural or  
geometrical, when they are inwardly investigated for the spaces  
which they occupy, I mean length, breadth, and depth, are allotted  
to quantity, but when their surface is considered, they belong to  
quality. Is it not also prominent in incorporeal things, seeing that all  
arts and virtues, whether they be rational or irrational, as long as  
they have not yet attained to the immutable stability of the mind,  
are referred to it?

A. Go on to the remainder. For this I clearly see, and agree 473B  
that it is so.

N. And does that which is called by the Greeks  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\iota$ , but by  
us “with regard to something” or relation, properly occupy any  
other place in nature than in the proportions of things or numbers,  
and in the indissoluble ties which exist between those things which  
stand in regard to one another so that when the one is spoken of the  
meaning is understood not from itself but from the other which is  
opposed to it? Of this indestructible affinity and inseparable bond  
examples are provided by the multiple numbers, which are linked to  
one another, the double, the triple, the quadruple, and others of the  
sort up to infinity; and also by fractions such as  $3/2$ ,  $4/3$ ,  $5/4$  and  
others of this kind, in all of which not only the integers exhibit  
various proportions when compared with one another, but also the  
parts of individual numbers, brought into conjunction with one 473C  
another, are inseparably linked by the ratios of their proportions;  
and this you will find not only in the terms of numbers themselves  
but also in the proportions of proportions which the arithmeticians  
call proportionalities.

A. I am not ignorant of this either: for these things are well  
known to those who are skilled in the arts.

N. What is to be said of situation? Does it not have its proper  
place in the natural or artificial distributions of corporeal things or  
in the dispositions of spiritual things? For when I say “first”,  
“second”, “third”, and “next”, whether in the case of wholes, or

parts, or genera, or species, is it not the situation of each that I have in mind? Again, if I say “to the right”, “to the left”, “upwards”, “downwards”, “forwards”, “backwards”, what else do I indicate but a position either of the whole world in general or of its parts? For he who says of a body, “it lies” or “it sits” or “it stands” means nothing else than that it is lying down or is standing up or is suspended in a kind of balance between up and down. Also, if someone says such things of the mind he will seem to mean nothing else than that it is still lying prone under the passions of sins, or is making some effort to get free from them, or has perfectly risen to the virtues.

473D

474A

A. This does not seem so difficult to understand either. Go on to the rest.

474B

N. Next, I think, comes condition, which is most clearly seen in the certain possession of virtues or of vices. For every art, that is, every motion of the rational or irrational mind, once it has attained to a fixed state so that it cannot in any way on any occasion be moved from it but always adheres to the mind so that it seems to be one with the mind itself is called a condition, and therefore every perfected virtue which is inseparably fixed in the mind is truly and properly called a condition. In the same way, in bodies in which nothing stable is to be seen, condition, strictly speaking, is hardly, if ever, to be found: for to call that a condition which is not possessed all the time though it appears to be possessed for some of the time will be a misuse of the term.

A. Go on to the rest: for no one denies that this is likely to be so.

27  
Similarly  
concerning  
place  
  
The defini-  
tion of body  
  
474C  
  
The defini-  
tion of spirit

N. Next comes place, which, as we just said, is constituted in the definitions of things that can be defined. For place is nothing else but the boundary by which each is enclosed within fixed terms. But of places there are many kinds: for there are as many places as there are things which can be bounded, whether these be corporeal or incorporeal. For instance: body is a compound welded together <of the qualities> of the four elements under a single species: for by this definition all bodies which consist of matter and form are included in one general description. Also: spirit is an incorporeal nature without form or matter in itself: for every spirit that is either rational or intellectual is by itself formless, but if it turns towards its Cause, that is, to the Word, by Whom all things are made, then it takes on form. Therefore the one Form of all rational and intellectual

spirits is the Word of God. But if the spirit is irrational it is equally formless in itself, but it takes form from the fantasies of sensible things. Therefore the form of all irrational spirits is the fantasy of corporeal things implanted in their memory by means of the corporeal senses. Among the liberal arts also very many definitions are found : for there is no art without its definitions, as there are the dialectical definitions from genus, from species, from name, a priori, 474D a posteriori, from contraries, and other definitions of this kind, which there is no time to discuss now. For the dialectical definitions extend over so wide a field that from wherever in the nature of things the dialectical mind finds an argument which establishes a doubtful matter it describes the *esse of the argument* [or the seat of the argument] as a place. You will find the same thing in the other 475A arts [which are bounded by their places, that is, by their proper definitions, of which the following are examples :

Grammar is the art which protects and controls articulate speech. Definitions of the arts

Rhetoric is the art which carries out a full and elaborate examination of a set topic under the headings of person, matter, occasion, quality, place, time, and opportunity, and can be briefly defined : rhetoric is the art which deals acutely and fully with a topic defined by its seven circumstances.

Dialectic is the art which diligently investigates the rational common concepts of the mind.

Arithmetic is the reasoned and pure art of the numbers which come under the contemplations of the mind.

Geometry is the art which considers by the mind's acute observation the intervals and surfaces of plane and solid figures. 475B

Music is the art which by the light of reason studies the harmony of all things that are in motion that is knowable by natural proportions.

Astronomy is the art which investigates the dimensions of the heavenly bodies and their motions and their returnings at fixed times.

These are the general definitions of the liberal arts, these the terms within which they are contained. But inside these definitions there are innumerable others.

A. By these arguments I am forced to confess that place exists 28 in the mind alone. For if every definition is in art and every art is in

mind, every place, since place is definition, will necessarily be nowhere else but in the mind.

29 N. You observe correctly.]

475C A. Then what must be said of those who declare that the habitations of men and the other animals are places; who similarly consider that this common air, and also the earth, are the places of all who dwell in them; who say that water is the place of the fishes; who think the ether is the place of the planets, the sphere of heaven that of the stars?

Questions  
about place

475D N. Nothing but to persuade them (of their error) if they are teachable [and wish to be taught]: or if they are stubborn, to disregard them entirely. For right reason laughs at people who say such things. For if body is a different thing from place it follows that place is not a body. But the air is the fourth part of this corporeal and visible world: therefore it is not a place. For it is agreed that this visible world is composed of the four elements as of four general  
476A parts, and is, as it were, a body built up of its parts, from which, namely from these universal parts, coming together in a wonderful and ineffable mingling, the proper and individual bodies of all animals, trees, and plants are composed, and at the time of their  
30 dissolution return to them once more. For as this sensible world as a whole rotates with unceasing motion about its pivot, I mean earth, about which, as about a kind of centre, the other three elements, namely, water, air, fire, spin in unceasing rotation; so by an invisible motion which is never interrupted the universal bodies, I mean the four elements, coming together compose the particular bodies of individual things, which at their dissolution return again from particular bodies to universal bodies — although there will always remain without change, like a centre, the natural essence which is proper to each individual, which can neither move nor increase nor diminish. For it is the accidents that are in motion, not  
476B the essence; nor is it even the accidents themselves that are in motion either by increase [or by decrease], but it is the participation of them by essence that undergoes such changes. For right reason does not allow it to be otherwise: for every nature, whether of the essences or of their accidents, is immutable: but, as we said, the participation of the essences by the accidents or of the accidents by the essences is perpetually in motion. For participation can have a beginning and increase and decrease, until this world attains its end in the stability in all things, after which neither essence nor accident nor their participation of one another will suffer any motion: for all



will be the immovable self-identical One when all things shall have returned to their immutable reasons. [But I think I must discuss this Return in another place.] But the reason why only the centre of the world, that is, earth, is always at rest, while the remainder of the elements revolve about it in eternal motion, demands a thorough inquiry. For we know the opinions both of the pagan philosophers and of the Catholic Fathers on this question. For Plato, the greatest of those who philosophized about the world, gives in his "Timaeus" many reasons for asserting that this visible world is composed of body and soul like some vast animal; and the body of this animal is compacted of the four well-known and general elements and of the various bodies which are made from them, while its soul is a universal life-principle which animates and sets in motion all things which are in motion or at rest. [Hence the Poet :

476C

31 476C  
The reason  
of the visible  
world

"To begin with, the spirit within nourishes the sky and the earth and the watery wastes, the shining globe of the moon and the Star of Titan."]

476D

But because the soul itself, as he says, is eternally in motion, for the purpose of giving life to its body, that is, to the whole world, and of ruling it, and of imparting movement to it by bringing together and separating again in various ways the diverse particular bodies, and yet keeps to its own natural and unchanging state; it is [therefore] ever in motion and ever at rest. And thus its body also, that is, the universe of visible things, is partially at rest in eternal stability, as is earth; and partially <moving> with eternal velocity, as is the ethereal region; partially neither at rest nor moving with velocity, as water; partially moving with velocity but not with maximum velocity, as is the case with air. And this theory of the excellent philosopher is not to be despised, as I think: for it seems to be ingenious and true to nature. But since Gregory, the great Bishop of Nyssa, reasons very subtly about the same matter [in his treatise "On the Image"] I think we had better follow his opinion. For he says that the Founder of the universe established this visible world between two extremes which are the contraries of one another, I mean between heaviness and lightness, which are absolutely opposed to each other; and therefore, since earth is established in heaviness it remains always without motion [for heaviness cannot move] and is set in the centre of the world, and occupies the extreme [and innermost] boundary; while the ethereal regions always revolve with indescribable speed about the centre for the reason that they are constituted in the nature of lightness [which cannot be at rest],

477A

477B

and occupy the extreme boundary of the visible world ; but the two elements which are constituted between, namely, *water* and air, have a ceaseless movement proportionately moderated between heaviness and lightness [so] that [each] follows more closely the limit which is nearest to it than that which is remote from it : for water moves more slowly than air because it adheres to the heaviness of earth, while air is in more rapid motion than water because it is adjacent to the lightness of ether. But although the extreme parts of the world seem to oppose one another on account of the diversity of their qualities, yet they are not in all things in disagreement : for although the ethereal regions perpetually revolve with the utmost velocity, nevertheless the chorus of the stars maintains its immutable station so that it both revolves with the ether and keeps its natural place *with a stability* that resembles *that of earth* : while, on the other hand, although earth is eternally at rest, all things that originate from it are in an eternal motion which resembles that of the lightness of the ether, in coming to birth through generation, increasing into the number of places and times, and then again decreasing and coming to the point where form and matter fall apart.

32 A. You seem to have been led rather too far away from the main question by an incidental one : for whereas it was our intention to speak about place, you have *abandoned* place and turned aside to treat of the world ; and where this is leading I do not know.

478A 33 N. To no other end but that we should distinguish by careful reasoning between the nature of bodies and the nature of places : for confusion between these is the principal, if not the sole, cause of error to many, if not all, of those who hold this visible world, and its parts both general and particular, to be places. For if, in the light of right reason, they were to distinguish the genera of all things accurately and correctly, they would never include body and place in the same genus. For none of those who rightly consider and distinguish the natures of things confuses places and bodies in a single genus, but separates them by a rational distinction. For bodies are included in the category of quantity, but the category of quantity differs widely by nature from the category of place. Therefore body is not place since a locality is not a quantity ; for, as we said before, quantity is nothing else but the definite measuring out of parts which are separated either by the reason alone or by natural differentiation, and the rational extension to definite limits of those things which extend in the dimensions of nature, I mean in

What the  
difference is  
between  
body and  
place

478B

length, in breadth, and in depth; while place is nothing else but the boundary and enclosure of things which are contained within a fixed limit. Therefore if this world is a body it necessarily follows that its parts are bodies too. But if they are bodies they belong to the genus of quantity, not to that of locality. But they are bodies: therefore they are not places. Do you then see how it is concluded from the foregoing arguments that this world with its parts is not a place but is contained within place, that is, within the fixed limit of its definition? For that which contains is one thing and that which is contained is another. Bodies are contained in their places: therefore body is one thing and place another, just as the quantity of parts is one thing, their definition another. Therefore those four well-known elements are not places but are enclosed in places, for they are the principal parts which between them make up the totality of the sensible world. 478C

A. What has been said by you concerning the difference between places and bodies seems most likely to be true, but I should like you to go over it again in more detail. For I do not [see] why this world is not a place when many things are placed in it. That the world is not a place

N. You are aware, I think, of the fact that none of the aforesaid ten categories which Aristotle defined, when thought of by itself, that is, in its own nature, in the light of reason, is accessible to the bodily senses. For οὐσία is incorporeal and the object of no sense, while the other nine categories are about it or within it. But if the former is incorporeal, surely it must be apparent to you that everything which is either attached to it or subsists in it and cannot exist apart from it is incorporeal? Therefore, all the Categories are incorporeal when considered in themselves. [Some] of them, however, by a certain marvellous commingling with one another, as Gregory says, produce visible matter, while some appear in nothing and remain for ever incorporeal. For οὐσία and relation, place, time, action, passion are not reached by any bodily sense, while quantity and quality, situation and condition, when they come together and constitute matter, as we said just now, are normally perceived by bodily sense. If, then, place is normally counted among those things which are by no means accessible to the bodily senses, while bodies, if not perceived by the senses, are not bodies, does that not prove that [place] is [not] a body? — I am speaking here of the bodies that are produced by the coming together of the four elements of the world. For the four elements of the world, although 478D 34 479A

479B they are discrete bodies in themselves, yet because of the indescribable fineness and purity of their nature, surpass all mortal sense —. Therefore place is one thing and body another. Or does it seem to you otherwise?

That corruptible bodies are produced by a concurrence of accidents

A. By no means. And this latest conclusion of our reasoning excludes all possibility of allowing that place and body are of a single genus. But that which I notice you have added incidentally, that visible matter combined with form — for whatever becomes manifest becomes manifest through form — is nothing else but a concurrence of certain accidents, troubles me not a little.

479C N. Let it not do so. For, as I have said, the great Gregory of Nyssa in his homily “On the Image” proves it to be so by reasons beyond doubt, saying that matter is nothing else but a certain composition of accidents which proceeds from invisible causes to visible matter. Not unreasonably: for if in this corporeal [and dissoluble] matter there should be any simple, immutable, and quite indissoluble essence, then it could not be wholly dissolved by any thought [or action]. But in fact it is dissolved: therefore there is nothing in it which is indissoluble. For genera and species and ἄτομα are eternal and endure for the very reason that there is in them something which is one and indivisible which can neither be dissolved nor destroyed. [Also, the accidents themselves remain without change

That substances and accidents in themselves remain without change

without change in their own nature(s) for the reason that underlying them all there is something indivisible in which they all naturally subsist as one.]

35 A. Nothing is more true, in my opinion: and therefore I am waiting for you to bring the present inquiry to a close.

He concludes that the world is not a place

479D

N. What remains but to say that when, for instance, we see that our bodies are placed on this earth or surrounded by this air, they are simply bodies within bodies? For the same reason the fish in the sea, the planets in the ether, the stars in the firmament, are bodies within bodies, lesser within greater ones, grosser within finer, light ones within lighter, pure within purer. For true reason teaches that

480A all these things, sensible as well as intelligible, are contained within their proper places, that is, in their natural definitions.

36 A. I do not dispute this conclusion either, for I perceive it to be true. But I wonder very much why the custom has come into common usage in everyday life of saying that all these bodies, whether of heaven or of air or of water or of earth, are the places of the lesser bodies within them, and similarly of holding that οὐσία is

nothing else but this visible and tangible body: and therefore I earnestly pray that it may not be tedious for you to prolong further the discussion of this present problem.

N. Why, then: we have, have we not, already agreed that all things that are known by bodily sense or reason *or* intellect can justly be predicated of God because He is the Creator of them all, although a pure contemplation of the truth establishes the fact that [He] is none of the things that are predicated of Him? 480B

A. Reason teaches that this is undeniable, and it is clearer than day.

N. If therefore it is just to predicate of God all things that are, not indeed properly, but by a kind of metaphor because they derive from Him, what is strange if all things which are in place [because everywhere they are seen to be enclosed in things greater than themselves] can be called places, although none of them is strictly speaking a place but is contained within the place [of its proper nature], and although we see that it is by μετονομία [that is, by a transference of name] that those things which are contained are called after the things which contain them [although they are not contained by them in such a way that without them they could not subsist within their natural limits? For the common usage of mortals usually calls the wife or the family a “house”, although by nature the two notions are distinct: for it is not the house which confers on wife or family their substantial being, but the place of their nature. But because it is in it that they possess (their substantial being) they are customarily called after it], and similarly the things that contain (are called) after the things that are contained by them? For example: air contains light, and therefore air filled with light is called light; the eye *is called* sight or vision although in respect of the property of its nature it is neither sight nor vision. For who does not know that the eye is a corporeal part of the head and that it is moist, and that it is that through which the sight pours forth from the brain like rays out of the meninx, that is, membrane. [The meninx, however, receives the nature of light from the heart, that is, from the seat of fire.] For sight is the emission of natural light in the sense of seeing of him who possesses it, bursting forth in the manner of rays, which, when it surrounds the colours and forms of sensible bodies without, with marvellous swiftness takes on the form [of those coloured visible shapes]. For vision is an image, formed in the rays of the eyes, of the shapes and colours of bodies, which with no intervening delay is seized by the sense and implanted in the 37 480C 480D

The definition of sight

The definition of vision

481A memory of the percipient. It is the same with the sense of the ears. For that part of the head which is properly called ear is also called after hearing because it is the instrument of hearing ; and so it is for a thousand (other examples) of this kind.

38 A. This too I plainly perceive.

That the parts of the world are not called places properly

N. Do you then see that it is by custom and for the necessity of having something significant to say about things that humanity, incapable of distinguishing the things that truly are, has devised these misleading names for them, calling the lowest and central part of the visible world, I mean earth, the place of animals that walk ? Similarly to this it calls the part that is adjacent to it and inseparable from it, and closest to it by the quality of coldness, I mean water, the place of all (animals) that swim ; and then it considers the part of the world that comes third in the natural order to be the place of the winged species, and in the same way it customarily names the immense spaces of the ether the places of the celestial bodies which revolve about it in circular motion : all of which, if studied according to the true reason of the distinction of natures, are seen to be not places but parts of the world enclosed within their places. But

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39 in order that you may clearly know that these aforesaid general parts of the world and the parts of those parts down to the smallest divisions are not places but are enclosed within places, the nature of place itself must be considered a little more carefully, if you agree.

A. Certainly I agree, and I am burning with zeal to hear this.

That place and time are inseparable

N. Take then, to start with, this kind of reasoning, which we have taken over from the Holy Fathers, namely from Gregory the Theologian and the excellent commentator of his homilies, Maximus : everything that is, except God Who alone properly subsists above being itself, is understood to be in place, with which [namely with place] time is always and in every way simultaneously understood. For it is impossible to conceive place if time *is withdrawn*, as it is impossible for time to be defined without *understanding it in connexion* with place. For these are included among the things which are always found inseparably together ; and without these no essence which has received being through generation can by any means *exist or be known*. Therefore the essence of all existing things is local and temporal, and thus it can in no way be known except in place and time and under place and time. For the universe of all things is not under itself or within itself : for it is irrational and impossible to make a statement to this effect, namely, that the

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universe itself is above the totality of itself, when, in fact, it is defined by the ultimate causative Power, which is beyond everything and defines everything [under itself in itself]. The place of the universe, then, is its outer limit, according to the definition some give to place, saying: Place is the boundary outside the universe, or its very position outside the universe, or the comprehensive limit in which that which is comprehended is comprehended. Again, all things will be shown to be under time by the fact that all things which possess being after God do not possess it simply but after some manner, and therefore are not without a beginning. For everything which receives the reason of essence after some manner, although it is, yet was not. Therefore to be after some manner, this is to be in place; and beginning after some manner to be, this is to be in time. And therefore since everything that is, except God, subsists after some manner and has begun to subsist through generation, it is necessarily enclosed within place and time. Hence, when we say that God *is*, we do not say that He is after some manner; [and] therefore we use the words “is” and “was” in Him simply and infinitely and absolutely. For the Divine is *incomprehensible* to all reason and all intellect, *and therefore* when we predicate being of Him we do not say that He is; for being is from Him but He is not Himself being. For above this being after some manner there is More-than-being, and absolute Being beyond language and understanding. If, however, the things that are possess being after some manner but not absolutely, how will their being under place not be manifested by their position and the limitation of the reasons in which they are established by nature, and their being wholly under time by their beginning? Do you see then that place and time are understood (to be) prior to all things that are? For the number of places and times, as St. Augustine says in chapter six of the “*De Musica*”, precedes all things that are in them: for the mode, that is, measure, of all things that are created is, in the nature (of things), logically prior to their creation; and this mode and measure of each is called its place, and so it is. Similarly, the origin and beginning of its birth is seen to be logically prior to everything which is born and has a beginning, and therefore everything which was not and is has begun to be from a beginning in time. Thus, only God is infinite, all else is limited by a “where?” and a “when?” [that is, by place and time] — not that place and time are not in the number of those things that are created by God, but that they are prior, not in extent of time but only in respect of creation, to all things that are in the universe. For that which contains is necessarily understood as prior to that which is

Definitions  
of place

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482B

482C

contained, as the cause precedes the effect, fire the conflagration, voice the word, and so on; and therefore we hold that no other beatitude is promised to those who are worthy, and [that there will be] no other end of this world, but the ascent beyond places and times of all those who shall receive the glory of theosis, that is, deification. For those who are bound by place and time are finite; but the eternal beatitude is infinite. Therefore those *who participate* in the eternal and infinite beatitude will be encompassed neither by place nor by time. For that which is written concerning Melchisedec alone, that he had no father or mother, nor a beginning of days to his attaining essence through generation, nor end of his time, must, I think, be understood generally of all who shall participate in the beatitude that is to come. For all who shall return into their eternal reasons which have neither a beginning of time [through generation in place and time] nor an end [through dissolution], and are not defined by any local position so that only (their eternal reasons), and nothing else, will be in them] will surely lack every local and temporal limit. For being infinite they will to infinity adhere in the Cause of all things, which lacks all definition because it is infinite; for only God will be manifest in them when they surpass the limits of their nature [— not that their nature perishes in them, but that in them He alone is manifest Who alone truly is. And to surpass nature is this: that nature is not manifest, just as air, as we have often said, when full of light, is not manifest because the light prevails alone.] Therefore, that which is understood generally of the place and time of the universal creature will necessarily be understood of the special and individual places and times of its parts from the highest downwards. But according to *the intelligence* place in general and time in general are prior to all that is in them: therefore the knowledge of special and individual places and times is prior to those things which are understood in them as species and individuals. And thus it is concluded that place is simply the natural definition and mode and position of each creature, whether a general creature or a species, just as time is simply the beginning of the movement of things through generation from not-being into being, and the fixed measurements of this motion of changeable things until there shall come the enduring end in which all things shall be immutably at rest.

482D

40  
 Concerning  
 Melchisedec

483A

483B

Conclusion  
 concerning  
 place and  
 time

483C

A. The purpose of this reasoning is beginning to become clear, I think: for, as far as I can understand, it seeks to accomplish nothing else than to prove that place is simply the natural definition of each creature, within which it is wholly contained and beyond



which it by no means extends: and from this it is given to understand that whether one call it place or limit or term or definition or circumscription, one and the same thing is denoted, namely, the confine of a finite creature. And although some think there are many kinds of definition, that alone and truly is to be named definition which is usually called by the Greeks οὐσιώδης, but by our writers essentialis: for others are either enumerations of the [intelligible] parts of the οὐσία, or corollaries drawn from outside by means of its accidents, or any kind of opinion about it whatsoever. But only the οὐσιώδης admits for purposes of definition that alone which fully completes the perfection of the nature it defines. For a definition, as Augustine says, admits nothing more and nothing less than that which it has undertaken to define; otherwise it is utterly faulty.

41  
What should  
be meant by  
a true  
definition  
483D

484A

N. You see it clearly. The foregoing argument seeks to show just what you have said.

A. But I wonder and do not clearly see how the definition of each essence is said to be not within it but outside it, that is, how it can be said to be neither the whole nor a part of it.

N. Be more attentive, then, so that you may learn this too.

A. As much as the inner light allows.

N. Tell me, pray: As all things are comprised in two genera — for everything which is said to be is either visible and perceived [or can be perceived] by the bodily senses, or is invisible and contemplated [or can be contemplated] by the eye of the intelligence [either in itself or through something that is associated with it] — in which of the aforesaid genera do you consider definitions to be?

Whether  
definitions  
are contained  
within the  
visibles or  
the invisibles  
484B

A. That is an absurd question. For who among the truly wise would put place, or limit, or definition, or any kind of circumscription within which each substance is confined, among the things which are accessible to the bodily senses, when he sees that the limits of the line or triangle or any plane or solid figure are incorporeal? [For the (geometrical) point, from which the line begins and in which it ends, is neither the line nor part of the line, but its limit, and therefore its place is not perceived by sense but thought of by the reason alone. The sensible point, on the other hand, is part of a line, but is not its beginning or its end. Similarly, the line itself also, rationally considered, is incorporeal, and is the beginning of a surface. The surface is incorporeal too, and is the end of the line but the beginning of a solid. But the solid also is incorporeal, and is the

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484C

end of the perfection of the whole. For whatever there is in these that bodily sense has managed to grasp, that is, any point or line or surface or solidity that is visible, surely consists of figures of incorporeal things, not their true substance, which is incorporeal.] And similarly in the case of natural bodies, whether they are sensible by the proper mixing of the elements of which they consist or elude mortal powers of perception by their fineness, the limits of their nature are perceived by the intellect alone. [For form, which contains all matter of bodies, is incorporeal. Matter itself, if one examines it carefully, is also built up of incorporeal qualities.]

484D N. So you think that it is to the genus of the invisibles that definitions, which we have called the places of circumscribed things, belong?

A. Indeed I think so, and there is nothing that I see more surely.

43 Concerning the species of the invisibles 485A N. You think rightly. But as the genus of the invisibles may in turn be divided into many species — for there are some of the invisibles which are understood and understand, some which are understood and do not understand, some which neither are understood nor understand — in which of these species do you think that definitions should be included?

[A.] Surely in that which understands and is understood. For the act of defining is the act of a reasoning and understanding nature.

N. There seems to be no alternative. For no nature that does not understand that it itself *exists* can define either a nature that is equal to itself or one that is its inferior. [For as to what is its superior, how can it get to know that when it cannot rise above the knowledge of itself?]

A. Therefore the intellectual nature alone, which is constituted in man and angel, possesses the skill of definition. [But whether angel or man can define himself, or man angel, or angel man, is no small question: concerning which I desire to know your opinion.

485B N. My opinion is that they can neither define themselves nor each other. For if man defines himself or the angel he is greater than himself or the angel. For that which defines is greater than that which is defined. The same argument applies to the angel. Therefore I think that these can only be defined by Him Who created them in His own image.

A. From this argument I conclude that no other natures are defined by the rational mind than those which are inferior to itself, whether they be visible or invisible.]

N. Whosoever says this does not stray [from the truth]; and therefore wherever are the definitions of things that are defined, there too, surely, will be the places of things that are circumscribed. For from the reasons given above it results that place is definition and definition is place.

A. It is evidently so.

N. But the definitions [of bodies and of things devoid of reason] are nowhere but in the rational soul. In it therefore will also be the places of all things that are comprehended in place. But if the rational soul is incorporeal, which no wise man doubts, it is plain that whatever is understood in it must be incorporeal; [and] place is understood in the soul, as has already been determined: therefore it is incorporeal.

485C  
That the places, that is, the definitions, of bodies are comprehended in the rational soul

A. I see that this too is rightly concluded. [For whether the angelic nature contains the definitions of the things that are inferior to it, as Augustine seems to hold, for the angels are also believed to minister to the things that are below them, or whether it eternally contemplates the things that are above it, that is, the eternal causes of things, this argument holds. For he is not severed from the truth, as I see, who believes that the human mind, though still burdened with earthly fantasies, can comprehend the created causes of natures inferior to itself if he lives a pure life; but that the angelic (mind) seeks the eternal reasons of all things, and, moved by love, is ever drawing human nature towards the same.

485D

N. You perceive rightly.] Do you then see that place is simply the act of him who understands and by virtue of his understanding comprehends those things which he can comprehend, whether they be sensible or accessible (only) to the intellect? [However, if this is so,] then that which is defined is one thing and its definition is another.

486A

A. I see that they are different. But an intellect which understands itself seems to be the place of itself because it defines itself.

N. It would not be unreasonable to say this either, if there is any intellect, after God, Who is called the Intellect of all things, that can understand itself. But if every intellect except God is defined not by itself but by that which is above it, no intellect will be the place of

itself but will be placed within that which is above it. [And did we not agree a little earlier on that this must be so?]

44 A. I think we must have a fuller discussion about this at another time. But now I should like to know whether the nature of the mind which defines, that is, which comprehends within the place of its knowledge everything which is understood by it, is different from the place itself, or definition of the thing placed or defined.

486B N. I see that this is not unworthy of investigation either, for many are in doubt about it. But since we see that the liberal arts which are constituted in the soul are different from the soul itself, which is a kind of subject of the arts, while the arts seem to be a kind of accidents which are inseparable from, and natural to, the soul, what hinders us from placing the method of defining among the arts, attaching it to the art of Dialectic, whose property is to divide and combine and distinguish the natures of all things which can be understood, and to allot each to its proper place, and therefore is usually called by the wise the true contemplation of things? For as in every rational and intellectual nature there are observed three things which are inseparable from one another and abide indestructibly for ever, I mean οὐσία and δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, that is, 486C Essence, Power, and Operation — for according to St. Dionysius, these are eternally associated with one another [and are, as it were, one], and can neither be increased nor diminished, since they are immortal and immutable — does it not seem likely to you and consistent with sound reason that all the liberal arts should be held to be in that part which is called the ἐνέργεια, that is, the operation, of the soul? For it has been rightly sought out and found by the philosophers that the arts are eternal and are immutably attached to the soul forever, in such a way that they seem to be not some kind of accidents of it, but natural powers [and actions] which do not and could not withdraw from it, and which do not come from anywhere but are innate in it as part of its nature, so that it is doubtful whether 486D it is the arts which confer eternity upon it because they are eternal and eternally associated with it so that it may be eternal, or whether it is by reason of the subject, which is the soul, that eternity is supplied to the arts (for the οὐσία and the Power and the Operation of the soul are eternal), or whether they coinhere in each other, all being eternal, in such a way that they cannot be separated from one another.

45 A. To this argument, since it is true, I know of no one who would dare to object. [For each of your alternatives could be

affirmed without coming into conflict with reason. But the one you put forward last is clearly more likely to be true than the others.] But to return to the same problem: it is not quite clear to me how οὐσία, whether in genera or species or individuals, can be defined, since in earlier arguments in this book it was agreed that it is incomprehensible to any bodily sense or to any intellect. 487A

N. Nobody can define οὐσία in itself or say what it is. But from the things which are inseparably associated with it and without which it cannot be, I mean from its place and time — for every οὐσία created out of nothing is local and temporal: local because it is after some manner since it is not infinite, temporal because it begins to be what it was not —, one can define only that it is. Therefore οὐσία is in no way defined as to what it is, but is defined that it is: for from place, as we have said, and from time and from other accidents which are understood to be either within it or outside, is given not what it is but only that it is; and this could aptly be said of all οὐσία universally, the most general, the most special, and the intermediate kinds. For even the Cause of all things, which is God, is only known to be from the things created by Him, but by no inference from creatures can we understand what He is, and therefore only this definition can be predicated of God: that He is He Who is More-than-being. 487B

A. To this argument also none of those who are of sound understanding will, in my opinion, object.

N. So now you see more clearly than daylight that those should be laughed at, or rather pitied, and therefore be recalled to a true discernment of things if they are willing, or should be left quite alone if they prefer to persist in their attitude, which is utterly inimical to truth, who hold the opinion that the parts of this visible world are the natural places of the other bodies which are constituted within them. For, to speak for example of my own body — because to suppose that the soul is contained within the corporeal spaces of this world would be quite outrageous —, if this air is its place, it follows that its place is the fourth part of it; for it is known to everyone that [every visible body] consists of four parts, namely, of fire, air, earth, and water. But nothing could be nearer to unreason than *to suppose* that the whole [of a body] is placed within a part of it. For the right view is that the whole comprehends all its parts but the part does not contain the whole. Also, if I should say that my body is in this air as in its place, it follows that it can have no fixed place [there]. For this air is constantly revolving about the earth, 46 487C The strongest arguments that no part of the world can be a place 487D

and therefore a body placed in it must have at one and the same time an innumerable number of places, which reason does not allow at all. For it has been proved by earlier arguments that place is at rest and is not varied by any motion. So just as whoever stands or sits or swims in a river cannot keep to that part of the river so as to be able to say that he occupies a fixed place in the river, since it is agreed that it is unceasingly flowing by, so no one ought to call this air the place of his body, for it is unceasingly mobile and at no moment of time is at rest. But if anyone should object to this argument that earth, because it is always at rest, is correctly called the place of bodies, let him likewise consider that earth is the matter of bodies, not their place. And who, if he uses his reason, would dare to say that the matter of bodies is the place of the same bodies? [— especially since matter in itself, if rationally considered, is neither in motion nor at rest. It is not in motion since it does not yet begin to be contained within a definite form — for it is through form that matter is moved; without form it is immobile, according to the Greeks — for how will that be moved which is not yet limited by any place or fixed time? And it is not at rest because it does not yet possess the end of its perfection. For rest is the end of motion. But how can that be at rest which has not yet begun to move? How therefore can the matter of a body be the place of the body which is made from it, when even matter itself is not, in itself, circumscribed by any certain place or mode or form, (and) is not defined in any definite way save by negation? For it is negatively defined as not being any one of the things that are, since it is from it that all the things that are created are believed to be made.] Again, if the parts of this visible world are the places of our bodies or of others, our places cannot be for ever. For when the body of an animal has decayed and its parts return in separation to their natural abodes from which each was taken, its place, air, for instance, or water or earth or fire, will no longer exist, but the individual parts of the one body become so mingled each with the element whose nature it shares that it is one <with> it [— though they are not in their elements as one thing in another]. For that which is restored to air will be air, and is not, as it were, established in some place in the air [— not that there is any confusion of bodies, but in nature's admirable way each will possess its own part in each of the elements as a whole throughout the whole, not as a part in a part, so that at the time of the resurrection no one will receive what is not his own; just as the light from many luminaries is joined together in such a way that there is in it no confusion and no separation. For while it

488A

Concerning  
matter

488B

488C

appears to be one and the same light, yet each luminary possesses its own light not confused with the light of another, and yet in a wonderful way they all become a whole and produce a single light.] 488D

*Therefore* air is one thing and its place another. In the same way, I think, must be understood the case of the other elements and of the restoration to them of the parts of bodies that have decayed. And if so, it will necessarily follow either that these general parts of the world are not the places of the bodies they pervade [and compose]; or that the bodies themselves have no definite place or have no place at all, which the nature of things and a true view of it do not allow us to concede. For no creature can be without its own definite and unchangeable place and its own fixed duration and limits of time, whether it be corporeal or incorporeal; and that is why, as we have often said, these two, namely, place and time, are called by the philosophers  $\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\upsilon$ , that is, "without which"; for without these no creature which has its beginning by generation and subsists after some manner can exist. And to take the first example that comes to hand, if everything which surrounds a body is its place, then colour will be the place of a body, for there is no visible body which is not surrounded by the light of a colour. But if colour is the place of a coloured body, it will necessarily follow that a quality is the place of the body: but who is burdened with such appalling stupidity as to maintain that the quality of a body is the body's place? But if the colour of a body is an incorporeal quality, and, being outside the body, surrounds it all about, that it is not its place will be evident to any wise man. On these grounds it is not allowed that this air or any other element of the world, although they surround the bodies that are placed within them, [can], for all that, *by any means* be their places.

489A

That no creature is without place and time

489B

A. Enough has been said about this. But I think [a few words] should be said against those who think that the body and the body's essence are one and the same, being so deceived that they have no doubt but that substance itself is corporeal and visible and tangible. For many, indeed almost all, labour under this error, not distinguishing the natural differences of things. 47

What the difference is between a body and its essence

N. Nothing is more tedious than battling against stupidity. For before no authority does it admit defeat, by no reason is it convinced. But since stupidity is not equal in (all) men, and their minds are not (all) clouded to the same extent, I see that a few arguments must be brought against them. 489C

A. Certainly they must. For if they profit from them there will be gain, but if not, we shall ourselves, from the exercise of our discussion, obtain a firmer grip on these distinctions of natures.

N. Let us then carefully consider these few of the many syllogisms of Dialectic: Every *body* which is composed of matter and form, since it can be dissolved, is corruptible; but mortal body is composed of matter and form; therefore it is corruptible. [Again] 489D every οὐσία is simple and admits no composition of matter and form, since it is an indivisible unity; therefore no οὐσία is reasonably allowed to be a mortal body. [Now this is said because every οὐσία, although it is understood to be composed of essence and essential difference — for this is a compositeness which no incorporeal essence can be without, for even the Divine Οὐσία itself which is held to be not only simple but more-than-simple admits essential

490A difference, because there is < in it > the Unbegotten, the Begotten, and the Proceeding < Substance > —, nevertheless this compositeness, which is recognizable by the reason alone and which demonstrably comes about by no act or operation, is reasonably considered a simplicity.] But for a firmer assurance that οὐσία, that is, essence, is incorruptible, read the book of St. Dionysius the Areopagite “On the Divine Names” at that place where he deals with the nature of demons and their wickedness [(saying) that it can corrupt no essence of either themselves or others] and you will find that he argues very subtly that nothing of the things that are, in so far as it is an essence and a nature, can by any means be corrupted.

48  
That  
essence and  
490B  
power and  
natural  
operation are  
in every  
creature  
inseparable

For there are these three things which in every creature, whether corporeal or incorporeal, as he himself demonstrates by the surest arguments, are incorruptible [and inseparable]: οὐσία, as we have often said, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, that is, Essence, Power, its natural Operation.

A. [I request an illustration of these three.

N. There is no nature, whether rational or intellectual, which does not know that it is, although it may not know what it is.

A. This I do not doubt.

N. Thus, when I say, “I understand that I am”, do I not imply in this single verb, “understand”, three (meanings) which cannot be separated from each other? For I show that I am, and that I can understand that I am, and that I do understand that I am. Do you not see that by the one verb are denoted my οὐσία and my power, and my act? For I would not understand if I were not, nor would I



understand if I lacked the power of understanding, nor does that power remain latent in me, but breaks forth in the operation of understanding.

A.] True and truthlike.

490C

N. Then must not those who say that the material body is an οὐσία either *confess* that their body is not composed of form and matter but is an incorruptible οὐσία; or be compelled by truth to admit that their body is corruptible and material, and therefore not an οὐσία?

A. Surely they must. But you seem to me to be denying not that every body in general is an οὐσία, but only every body which is composed of matter and form.

N. Listen carefully then, so that you may judge that I was not speaking of some species of bodies but generally of every body, although I mentioned the special case of the body which is composed of form and matter for the purpose of the present inquiry directed against those who <say> that their mortal and transient bodies are nothing else than their οὐσία, and that their οὐσία is nothing else but their body, which is material and composed of different (parts), namely, of form and matter [and the various accidents]. But that you may learn for certain that it is universally true that no body is an οὐσία, take the following kind of argument.

490D

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A. I will. But I see that first we must have some kind of regular form for this argument. For the foregoing reasoning was more like an argument from contraries than the model of a dialectical syllogism.

491A

N. Let this be the main theme: Whether οὐσία is a corruptible body. All οὐσία is incorruptible; nothing *incorruptible* is a material body: therefore no οὐσία is a material body. And conversely: therefore no material body is an οὐσία. Again: No body which is composed of form and matter is simple; but all οὐσία is simple: therefore no body composed of form and matter is an οὐσία. [Again: All men have one and the same οὐσία — for all participate in one essence, and therefore because it is common to all it is the property of none —; but body is not common to all men — for each possesses his own proper body —: therefore οὐσία is not common and at the same time a body; but it is common: therefore it is not a body. The same is evidently true with regard to the other animals and to inanimate creatures.]

Very acute arguments concerning the distinction between body and essence

491B

A. This formula answers the purpose. Return [pray] to the general type of argument which you promised [whereby it is concluded that no body is an οὐσία].

N. Everything which is comprehended within length, breadth, and depth, since it is enclosed in diverse kinds of dimension, is a body, while that which admits none of these dimensions because it is one and simple and cannot admit into its nature any motion through space is necessarily incorporeal; but οὐσία is not *extended* in length or breadth or depth, *and* because it remains indivisible in the simplicity of its nature is incorporeal; therefore no οὐσία, being without dimension, is corporeal, just as no body, being extended in space, is an οὐσία.

A. I should like this too to be put in the shape of a regular dialectical formula.

N. Let it be then the conditional form of syllogism, *thus*: Main theme: Whether οὐσία is a body. If οὐσία is a body it admits the dimensions of length, breadth, and depth; but οὐσία does not admit length, breadth, and depth: therefore it is not a body. But if you wish to hear the syllogism of ἐνθύμημα, that is, of the common concept of the mind, which holds the primacy of all conclusions because it is deduced from those things which cannot be at the same time, take a formula of this kind: (A thing) is not both οὐσία and not incorporeal; but it is οὐσία: therefore it is incorporeal: for it cannot be simultaneously (true) that it is οὐσία and that it is not incorporeal. Again: (A thing) is not both οὐσία and a body; but it is οὐσία: therefore it is not a body. Again: (It is) not (true that a thing) is not both οὐσία and incorporeal; but it is οὐσία: therefore it is incorporeal. There is therefore a very strong proof by which it is recognized that body is one thing and οὐσία is another: for οὐσία is divided into genera and species, while a body is *separated* as a whole into its parts. Again, a body is not a whole in (any of) its parts, for the whole body is not comprehended in the head or in the hands and feet, and it is greater in the sum of all its parts, but less in each of its parts when they are not taken together; while οὐσία, on the other hand, is whole in each of its forms and species, and is not greater in the sum of them when they are gathered together, nor smaller in each of them when they are separated from each other. For it is not more extensive in the most general genus than in the most specified species, nor less in the most specified species than in the most general genus; and, to take an example, οὐσία is not greater in all men than in one man, nor smaller in one man than in all men; it is not greater

in the genus in which all species of animals are one than in man [alone], or ox, or horse ; nor is it smaller in any one of these species than in all of them together. Again, a body can be cut up into parts so that its whole perishes : for instance, when it is resolved into those elements from which it is produced when they come together and form is added to them, it perishes as a whole. For when the parts are not together and are not contained within their proper form, by no act or operation can there be in anything a whole existing together, although they (i.e. the parts) can be conceived together in the thought of one who considers the natures of things. [But it is one thing to be together in the reason's contemplation of nature, which always gathers together all things in the intellect and comprehends them inseparably as a whole ; another thing, what is effected by the operation of the agent or the passivity of the patient in the way of separation or collection of sensible parts. For the reason of all numbers is in undistributed unity, and can neither be increased nor diminished, but corporeal or imaginary numbers can be both increased to infinity and reduced until they are almost nothing.] On the other hand, οὐσία, although, by the reason alone, it is divided into its genera and species and individuals, nevertheless remains indivisible by virtue of its nature and cannot be separated by any visible act or operation. For it subsists in its subdivisions eternally and immutably as a whole that is always together, and all its subdivisions are always together as an inseparable unity in it. And therefore although a body, which is nothing else but the quantity of οὐσία, or, to speak more accurately, not the quantity but a quantum, can be separated into parts by an act and operation or at least by suffering its own fragility, itself, that is, the οὐσία of which the body is a quantum, remains immortal and inseparable by virtue of its proper nature. Now the reason why I added that a body is more rightly called a quantum than quantity is that those accidents which are called natural, when regarded in themselves as they naturally are, are incorporeal and invisible and are beheld only by the eye of reason (as being) about οὐσία itself or within it and are, as it were, causes having their effects, as quantity itself and quality are [the cause of a quantum and a quale] and the other genera of accidents, of which I think we have said enough [(that is) that whereas they are invisible, they produce visible effects]. Therefore a body is not the quantity of οὐσία, but a quantum, just as the visible colour which is perceived about a body is not the quality of οὐσία, but a quale constituted in a quantum, and so forth. I thought we might also introduce into our little discussion a sentence of the holy

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492C

How *ysia*  
is divided  
although it is  
indivisible

Concerning  
the partition  
of the body  
while its  
492D  
*ousia* is  
inseparable

50  
Concerning  
the invisible  
accidents  
which pro-  
493A  
duce their  
visible effects

father Augustine from the book which he wrote on the "Categories"  
 51 of Aristotle: "After the description of οὐσία" [he says], "seeing that  
 493B a definition of it was impossible for the reasons I have recorded  
 above, the next thing inevitably required was a definition of its  
 accidents, of which the first is the quantum. Not without reason.  
 For when we see anything it is necessary to estimate how much of it  
 there is. But how much of it there is cannot be discovered unless it is  
 surveyed under the application of measurement. If, then, one wishes  
 to measure its length without regard to its breadth, length without  
 breadth subjected to measure is called γραμμή — not that there is  
 any such thing as length without breadth, but because anyone who  
 measures the length alone is said to measure a γραμμή . But when  
 breadth is measured together with length it is called an ἐπιφάνεια,  
 while if depth is brought into the measurement as well, altogether  
 they constitute a body — but we do not take this body in the sense  
 that we are used to take the natural (body) lest we should seem to be  
 reverting to οὐσία." This is said in order that we should know that  
 these norms (of measuring) have their several existence in geo-  
 493C metrical bodies, in which these three can be separately distinct ; but  
 they are inseparably associated in natural bodies, in which only by  
 the intellect can quantity be separated from οὐσία. For while one  
 seems to be speaking of quantity, he is thought to be confusing  
 things as though he were saying something about οὐσία. [[Do you  
 see what it is that this master of the highest authority is saying?  
 When, he says, someone seems to be discussing quantity, that is, the  
 dimensions upon which a body is constructed, he is thought by  
 those who believe that οὐσία is nothing else but the body which they  
 see to be saying something about οὐσία itself.] If, then, geometrical  
 493D bodies, which we contemplate only by the mind's eye, and which we  
 only manage to construct from the images in our memory, subsist in  
 some οὐσία, then surely they are natural, and there is no difference  
 between geometrical and natural bodies. But as it is, since we  
 contemplate geometrical bodies with the mind alone, and since they  
 do not subsist in any οὐσία and are therefore rightly called  
 imaginary, while natural bodies are natural for the very reason that  
 they subsist in their natural οὐσία, that is, their essences, and  
 cannot exist without them, and therefore are true bodies — otherwise  
 they would not be contemplated in natural things, but in the reason  
 494A alone —, we are straightway given to understand that body is one  
 thing and οὐσία another, since a body is sometimes without οὐσία  
 and sometimes, so as to be a real body, is associated with οὐσία,  
 without which it cannot become real but is merely a figure in the

What the  
 493D  
 difference is  
 between  
 geometrical  
 bodies and  
 natural  
 bodies,  
 which by  
 reason of  
 their οὐσία  
 are real

imagination ; while οὐσία by no means requires a body in order to be since it subsists by itself.] I think enough has been said about these things.

A. Quite enough. But, as I see, it remains for you briefly to discuss matter itself and form, of which you assert that material bodies are composed. For I think this must not be omitted, since it is not sufficiently clear to me whether it is the same form which underlies genus and which combines with matter to produce a body.

Concerning  
the  
differences  
of forms

N. Of the forms, some are understood in οὐσία, others in quality ; but those which are in οὐσία are the substantial species of the genus. For of them genus is predicated because it subsists in them. For the genus, as we have often said, is whole in each of its forms, just as also the several forms are one in their genus ; and all these, that is, genera and forms, flow from the single source of οὐσία and by a natural circulation return to it again. But the forms which are assigned to quality are properly called forms (only) in natural bodies, while in geometrical bodies they are called figures. For every geometrical body is comprised by spatial dimensions and figure alone, but by no substance. Every imaginary body is, of course, produced by the three general dimensions, namely, length, breadth, and depth, but not all geometrical bodies are circumscribed by one general figure. For some originate from the triangular figure, others from the quadrilateral, others from the pentagonal or from some other of the infinite number of polygons, others are developed from the circular surface ; and thus, as far as the number of lines can progress from three onwards, so far can the manifold arrangement both of figures and surfaces be varied. Therefore the number of dimensions and lines in geometrical bodies is assigned to quantity : but the arrangement and position of sides and angles and the conditions of the surfaces are a property of quality, and this is called the geometrical form or, properly, figure. But as in natural bodies the number and distinction of their members are considered, whether they are separated by natural divisions or are naturally joined, nobody denies that these are the property of quantity ; and that, on the other hand, the order and position of their natural parts or members are assigned to quality [and] are properly called form. For we say the form of man is standing upright and that of the other animals is stooping downwards. [Hence those are called deformed who do not possess a suitable harmony of their members or are deprived of the beauty of colour, which is produced in bodies from the fiery quality which is calor. For color stands for calor by the

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494C

What  
difference  
there is  
between  
quantity and  
quality in  
geometrical  
bodies

Again, what  
difference  
there is in  
natural  
494D  
bodies  
between  
quantity and  
quality

Why colour is also called form  
495A

change of a single letter, and forma is called after formum, that is, "hot", by changing the syllabe -mum into -ma. For the men of old called a hot thing formum, whence also "forceps" get their name, formum capientes. We are also accustomed to call enormous those who exceed the natural measure of their limbs, as it were without norm, that is, without measure.] Do you not see that this consists not in the number and size of the members but in the position of the parts of the body [and in the light of its colour]? Or does it seem to you otherwise?

A. Not (otherwise), in my opinion. But how this difference is pertinent to the question we have set ourselves I am waiting to know.

N. Was it not settled between us by the reasons given above that body is one thing and οὐσία is another?

A. Sufficiently and abundantly.

What 53  
495B  
difference  
there is  
between the  
form of οὐσία  
and that of  
quality

N. So if by a natural distinction the quantity of a body is separated from the concept of its οὐσία, although they are attached to each other in such a way that οὐσία is the subject of quantity and of a given quantum, while quantity itself or the given quantum are accidents of οὐσία, is it not clearer than day that the form which is beheld in οὐσία not as an accident to it but as it itself is different from that which from quality in combination with quantity produces the perfect body?

A. Now I see your drift.

N. Do you think that I mean that it is the essential form which, in combination with matter, produces the natural body?

A. Certainly not that. Rather I see that it is what *you* do not mean.

N. Pray tell me how.

495C

A. From the aforesaid distinction of forms, namely into *essential* forms and qualitative forms, you appear to me to suggest nothing else but that it is that form which is a species of quality that, when it is joined to matter, produces a body, of which the substance is οὐσία. [For these three are found in all natural bodies: οὐσία, quantity, quality; but οὐσία is always discerned by the intellect alone, for in nothing does it appear visibly. Quantity and quality, however, (inhere) invisibly in οὐσία in such a way that they break forth into visibility in a quantum and a quale when by uniting with one another they compose a body.] For if the geometrical body, in

which there is no ground of οὐσία, is reasonably shown to consist only of the quantity of its dimensions and lines and the quality of its form, which is called figure, what objection is there to our saying that the natural body, whose permanence, in so far as it can be permanent, is grounded on the virtue of its οὐσία, is produced by that form which is brought from quality into conjunction with the quantity which is taken from matter? For I think that you are suggesting nothing else than that we should recognize that it is from the concourse and commingling of the four elements of this world that the matter of bodies is made, by which, when whatever form from quality is added, the finished body is produced. [For what is a difficulty for many is none for me. For they think we are going against ourselves and making affirmations which are contradictory and which conflict with our own opinion when at one point we say that matter is produced by the concourse of the four elements, at another that the cause of matter is the joining of quantity and quality to οὐσία. Nor is this strange, for they do not know that the elements of this world are composed of nothing but the concourse of the aforesaid accidents of οὐσία. For fire is produced by the conjunction of heat and dryness, air by that of heat and moisture, water by that of moisture and cold, earth by that of cold and dryness. And since these qualities which come together cannot by themselves become manifest, quantity supplies them with a quantum in which they can make a sensible appearance. For quantity is, as it were, a second subject after οὐσία, and that is why it is placed first after it in the order of the categories, since without quantity quality cannot become manifest. Therefore, if the elements are made from quantity and quality, and the bodies are made from the elements, then bodies are (produced) from quantity and quality.]

From what  
kind of  
495D  
matter and  
form, on the  
ground of  
οὐσία, the  
body is  
produced

496A

496B

N. Since [,then,] I perceive that you have accurately foreseen the end which I am pursuing, tell me, pray, whether you think this division of forms into two species each of a different genus, namely, forms of οὐσία and forms of quality, to have been established or not.

A. I think it is established, and likely to be true, although it is not without some mental reservation that I allow it to be reasonable. For you would more easily persuade me that *it is the addition of* substantial, rather than of qualitative, form to matter that produces a natural body. For I would more readily believe that the cause which produces the body is οὐσία than that it is quality. [For it was established, I think, by reasons already given that quality is the

496C cause not only of matter but of form, only that it produces matter by being mingled with quantity, while it is by itself alone that it casts form upon matter — not that I do not know that a single cause produces out of itself many effects, for I see that from the single cause of fire breaks forth heat as well as light, and that light in turn is the cause of brightness and of shadows. Again: how many different bodies are made from one and the same matter! Into how many individuals is one form multiplied! And so forth — and therefore I should think that οὐσία itself, and not its accidents, becomes the form to matter.]

N. I very much wonder why what was clearly agreed between us just before has slipped from your memory. Consider, then, more carefully, and I will go over it again briefly.

A. I am ready. Go over it again.

N. Was it not definitely agreed between us that οὐσία is incorporeal?

A. Yes.

496D N. And I should certainly assume that you have not yet forgotten that quantities and qualities, in so far as they are contemplated in themselves, are incorporeal, and do not subsist in any subject save οὐσία, of which they are the accidents, and that they abide in it inseparably.

A. To this *too* I firmly hold.

497A N. Must we not, then, say that it is probable that whatever results from quantity and quality, that is, every quantum and every quale, receives the cause of its establishment from no other source than οὐσία itself, to which quantity and quality themselves are shown naturally to occur, as its first and greatest accidents, and without which they cannot be? For I see no reason why whatever proceeds from those things which are in the source should not be traced back to that very source — especially as οὐσία itself, in so far as it is οὐσία, can by no means possess a visible or tangible or spatially extended appearance, but it is the concourse of the accidents which are in it or which are understood about it which, by coming into being, is able to create something sensible and extended in space. For quantity and quality combine together to produce a quantum and quale, and these two, combining together and receiving generation in a certain mode and at a certain time, manifest the  
497B finished body; for the other accidents appear to be added to these.



For there are these four principal questions which we ask about our bodies and about those of others [whether animate or inanimate]: How much is there of it? Of what parts is it made up — is it extended in the dimensions of length and breadth and depth? Of what sort is it — of upright and human form, or of stooping and animal? At what time was it born, or after what mode is it defined and established in itself so that it may not be infinite but a unity confined within its own genus? These things, as we have said, are primordially observed in our bodies; but by inquiring further beyond these we contemplate, in a loftier consideration, its οὐσία, which is the source of substantial forms. For we say: of what οὐσιώδης, that is, substantial, form is this or that body? Is it of human form, or equine [or that of some other irrational animal included within οὐσία]? For by these names it is not the bodies of the animals that are denoted, but [their] substantial forms. For whether we are considering ourselves or other animals, there are three things which we ought to know distinctly: what we are; what is ours; what is about us. We are our substance, which is endowed with life and intellect [beyond our body and all its senses and its visible form]. Ours, [but] not our own self, is the body which is attached to us and composed of a quantum and a quale and the other accidents, and is sensible [mutable, dissoluble, corruptible; and the truest thing to say of it is that it is nothing else but the organs or seats of the senses, which are called by the Greeks αἰσθητήρια, that is, αἰσθήσεων τήρια, “keepers of the senses”. For as the soul is incorporeal and unable to reveal her operations by herself without the senses, and the senses themselves are ineffective unless they are kept in certain seats, the Creator of nature created for the use of the soul a body in which she might keep certain vehicles of hers, so to speak; that is, the senses]. About us are all the sensible things of which we make use, such as the four elements of this world and the bodies which are composed out of them. For our mortal bodies cannot survive without them. For they feed upon earth, they drink water, they breathe air, they are warmed by fire. Two bestow growth and nourishment: earth and water; two provide life: air and fire. Two are passive, in so far as they pass into the body: earth and water; two are active, in so far as they kindle the furnace of the body: air and fire. For the power of fire, whose seat is in the heart, distributes the subtle exhalation of food and drink by hidden channels to the different parts of the body, and separates off the excrement into the privy. But unless the fire itself is fanned by the breath of air and fed by food and drink, as though it

Four things ought to be considered in every body

Of every body it must be asked of what substantial form  
497C  
it is

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What we are

What is ours

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498A  
What is about us

were by kindling wood, it quickly goes out, and without delay the whole frame of the body crumbles and falls and grows numb since  
 498B the cold overcomes the strength of the heat. But the place for discussing these things is elsewhere.

55 A. I accept this as probable. But I do not cease to ask myself of  
 How visible what kind their meeting with one another can be, how things that  
 bodies are are incorporeal and invisible in themselves, by coming together with  
 made from one another, produce visible bodies, so that matter is nothing else,  
 invisible and has no other cause for its establishment, but the tempered  
 things mixture, among themselves in themselves and not in another, of things which are contemplated by the eye of wisdom alone — especially as the great Boethius, outstanding among the philosophers of either tongue, asserts in his books “On Arithmetic” as follows: “Wisdom is the comprehension of the truth of the things which are and possess their own immutable substance. Now we say that those  
 498C things are which neither increase by expansion nor diminish by contraction nor change by variation, but ever preserve themselves in their own vigour by relying upon the resources of their own nature. Now these are: qualities, quantities, forms, magnitudes, smallnesses, equalities, conditions, acts, dispositions, places, times, and whatever is found united in some manner to bodies, which, although they are themselves incorporeal by nature, and vigorous by reason of (their) immutable substance, yet are changed by the participation of body, and at the touch of a variable thing pass into mutable inconstancy. These, then, possessing by nature, as has been said, immutable substance and force, are truly and properly said to be.”

56 Does not this opinion give us clearly to understand that matter and  
 498D the body that is made out of it are something different from quantity and quality and the other things which are contemplated only by wisdom and which eternally preserve the immutable power of their nature, while the matter and body of which they are the accidents are diverse and unstable as a result of variable change?

For, why: does it not seem likely that if matter consisted of the coming together of quantity and quality and the other natural  
 499A accidents, it would of necessity also itself be immutable? For why is what is understood of the causes not also understood of their effects, so that, as the quantities and qualities and other like things are beheld by the eye of the mind alone, so too matter and body are subject not to the bodily senses but to the intellect? But as it is, we perceive the formed matter of which the body is made with the bodily sense [for the unformed (matter) is nothing but intelligible],

although we perceive quantity and quality only by the intellect. How then can quantity and quality produce matter, which is something very different from them?

N. You are seriously misled, or wish to mislead others, by a false argument. But whether you yourself are in doubt about these things or are assuming the role of others who are in doubt about them I am not yet sure.

A. I see that each is the case with me. For I was both concerned 499B to put this question on behalf of others who justifiably are either uncertain about such matters or are wholly ignorant of them, and I see that I too am not so clear about them that I have no further inquiry to make into the matter.

N. I think, then, that reason and authority must be brought to bear in order that you may be fully clear about these things. For on these two is based the whole ability of discovering the truth of things.

A. Indeed they must. For these questions have been asked by many, but few have found the answer.

N. Say then: what do you think about the matter itself from which, when it is formed, bodies are made? By itself, when it is unformed, is it contemplated by sense or by reason?

A. Surely by reason. For I dare not say by sense, since matter which lacks form cannot be grasped by any corporeal sense.

N. You have answered correctly. But see that you do not again 499C question us further about what you have now assumed. For we are wasting too much time over such matters when others more important await our consideration.

A. Concerning what has now been defined between us by pure 499D speculation I shall not, I think, trouble you further. But I keep wondering at your having said that more important matters await our consideration: for what should be more important, after God, for the reason to consider than unformed matter I do not see, when the questions it raises are: What is matter? What is form? What is made from matter and form? Whence (comes) matter? Is it to be included among the primordial causes which were created by God first of all, or even from the secondary causes which proceed from the primordials? Is it to be reckoned among the things which are subject to the senses or among those which are to be allotted to the intellect? And can it be defined when it is still infinite or is it Concerning matter

definable even when it is finite? — which seems to conflict with reason, since it has been clearly established by the holy fathers that there are two, and two only, that cannot be defined, God and matter. For God is without limit and without form since He is formed by none, being the Form of all things. Similarly matter is without form and without limit, for it needs to be formed and limited from elsewhere, while in itself it is not form but something that can receive form. And this similarity between the Cause of all things, from which and in which and through which and for which all things exist, and this unformed cause — I mean matter — which was created to the end that those things which in themselves cannot be grasped by the senses might by some means have a sensible appearance in it, is understood in contrary sense. For the supreme Cause of all things is without form and limit because of its eminence above all forms and limits. For it is not only the principal Form of all things, but More-than-form, surpassing every form and forming everything that can receive form [and everything that cannot]. [For it is both the Form of the things that can be formed, because they either desire it or turn to it, and the Formlessness of those things which, because of the excellence of their nature and their close similarity to itself, namely their Cause, cannot be formed. For this Formlessness of the things that cannot be formed is not called formlessness as if it lacked form, but because it is above every sensible and intelligible form: and that is why this Cause of all things is usually predicated both affirmatively and negatively: it is Form; it is not Form: it is Formlessness; it is not Formlessness. For whatever is predicated of it can be both affirmed and denied, because it is above everything that can be said and that can be understood and that cannot be understood.] Matter, on the other hand, is called formless by reason of its being deprived of all forms. For by it nothing is formed, but it receives different forms.

500C N. You are not far from the truth. Does it not therefore necessarily follow that since formless matter is beheld only by the eye of the mind, I mean by the reason, it is incorporeal?

A. Not even this would I dare to deny.

N. It is incorporeal, then?

A. It is indeed. I see that I am caught in my own judgement.

N. Do you wish this to be confirmed by authority?

A. Very much, and I pray that this be done.

N. We find that many of those proficient in both profane and sacred wisdom have treated of matter, but it is enough to rely on the testimony of a few. St. Augustine in his book of "Confessions" asserts that formless matter is the mutability of mutable things which is receptive of all forms: and with this Plato agrees in the "Timaeus", saying in similar language that formless matter is the receptivity of forms. From the unanimity of these two it can be defined in these words: Formless matter is the mutability of mutable things, receptive of all forms. St. Dionysius the Areopagite in his book "On the Divine Names" says that matter is participation in adornment and form and species, for without these [matter] is formless and cannot be understood in anything. And from what Dionysius says can be gathered the following: if matter is participation in adornment and form and species, that which lacks participation in adornment and form and species is not matter but a certain formlessness. Therefore, whether formless matter is a mutability receptive of forms, as Augustine and Plato say, or a formlessness which lacks participation in species and form and adornment, as Dionysius says, you will not deny, I think, that if it can be understood at all, it is perceived only by the intellect.

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Concerning  
formless  
matter

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A. I have long agreed that this is undeniable.

N. Again, do you think that the species and form and adornments themselves, by participation in which that formlessness or mutability we mentioned is changed into matter, is considered by any other means than by the eye of the mind?

A. By no means. For as to form and species, without which there can be no adornment, it has been sufficiently demonstrated by the reasons given above that they are wholly incorporeal.

501B

N. So now you see that from incorporeal things, namely mutable formlessness which yet is receptive of forms, and form itself, something corporeal, namely matter and body, is created.

A. I see it clearly.

N. You admit, then, that bodies can be made from the concurrence of incorporeal things?

A. I admit it, since I am compelled by reason.

N. Surely you must confess, since this is so, that bodies can be resolved into incorporeal things so as *not to be* bodies (any more) but wholly dissolved; while incorporeal things by their natural concurrence and marvellous harmony produce bodies in such a way

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that they do not by any means lose their natural state and unchanging vigour, just as, to employ a simile, shadow is produced from light and body, and yet neither the light nor the body is changed into shadow ; shadow, on the other hand, when it vanishes, is understood to return into its causes, namely into body and light. For the right view is that the cause of shadows is body and light, in which their nature is latent because they have no place in which they can appear on account of the brightness of the light which surrounds the bodies on all sides. For they are wrong who think that shadow perishes when it is not apparent to the senses. For shadow is not nothing, it is something. If it were not so Scripture would not say, "And God called the light day and the darkness night", for God does not give a name to anything that is not from Himself. Nor in that passage does the loftiness of the theory obscure the truth of the history. [For if the actual events are there considered, we hold that darkness and night are nothing else but the earth's shadow cast by the rays of the sun that are poured around it, shaped like a cone, and always pointing away from the globe of light. And the same is true of lesser shadows by whatsoever kind of light and bodies they are projected, whether (the shadows) are finite or infinite and of whatever shape they are.] Do not then be surprised that bodies are created from incorporeal causes and are resolved into them again, while the causes themselves are created by, and proceed from, one and the same Cause that is creative of all things. For from the Form of all things, namely, the only-begotten Word of the Father, every form is created, whether it be substantial or the kind which derives from quality and in union with matter generates body. From the same source also comes every formlessness. Nor is it surprising that from the Form which is formless because of its eminence should come to be created the formlessness which is due to the privation of all forms, when not only homogeneous but also heterogeneous things, that is, not only things of a single genus but also things of differing genus, and not only those that are said to be or not to be because of their eminence, but also those of which this is said on account of privation, flow from the same Source of all things. For, why : is it not now quite clear to you that it was not without reason that we said, on the authority of St. Gregory of Nyssa, that bodies are made from the concurrence of accidents, when you see that other authors, both Greek and Latin, assert that bodies are made from incorporeal things? And that was why I decided to introduce into our discussion the assumption of the aforesaid father Gregory. For, disputing with those who say that matter is co-eternal with God, he

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Concerning shadow

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He confirms what he said before, that bodies are produced from the 502B concurrence of accidents

says in the book “On the Image”: “Nor does that opinion concerning matter which teaches that it has its subsistence from the intellectual and the immaterial seem to be inconsistent with what is deduced from what follows. For we find that all matter is produced from certain qualities, and that if it is divested of these it will by no means be comprehended by itself. Nevertheless, each species of quality is separated from its subject by reason. But reason is an intellectual and incorporeal speculation. Thus, when some animal or piece of wood or anything else of the things which have the constitution of material things is submitted to our speculation, we get to know many things about the subject by way of division by the intelligence, each of which is related unconfusedly to what is being considered. For to take into account its colour is one thing, its weight another; another again its quantity, and another, the particular way it feels to the touch. For softness, and two-cubit length, and the other things that have been mentioned are not, from the point of view of reason, confused with one another or with the body. For in each of these is understood its special cause with regard to which it is interpretative, and none” [of these (causes)] “which are considered about the subject is confused with any other quality. If, then, colour is (solely) intelligible, and if solidity is (solely) intelligible, and quantity, and the other peculiarities of this kind, and if when any of these is withdrawn from the subject the whole concept of the body shall disappear as well, it will follow (for us) to assume that, of those things whose absence we find to be the cause of the dissolution of the body, the coming together creates its material nature. For as there is no body in which ‘thing’,” [that is], οὐσία, “and shape and solidity and extension and weight and the rest of the peculiarities are not present — yet none of these is a body but something else which is found to be apart beside the body — so, on the other hand, when the aforesaid things come together, they produce the corporeal substance. But if the understanding of peculiarities is intelligible, and if God also is an intelligible nature, it is not at all inconsistent that these intellectual causes are supplied to the coming into being of the bodies from the incorporeal Nature, the intellectual Nature supplying the intelligible powers, and the coming together of these with one another producing the generation of the material nature.” Do you not then see that this Doctor’s excellent and very powerful argument [clinches the matter]? [For] if the body were something else besides the concurrence of the accidents of οὐσία, when *these* were withdrawn it would subsist in itself by itself. For no subject which subsists by itself requires accidents in order that it

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A very clear argument concerning the concurrence of the accidents

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503B may be. Such a subject is οὐσία itself: for whether it has accidents or does not have them, whether there are in it things which cannot exist without it or whether *things which, either by thought alone or by act and operation, can be separated from it* withdraw from it, it always subsists without change by its own natural resources. But body, when the accidents are withdrawn, can by no means subsist by itself since it is not supported by any substance of its own. For if you withdraw quantity from body it will not be a body; for it is held together by the dimensions and number of its members. Similarly if you take quality away from it, what is left will be shapeless and nothing. The same view must be taken of the other accidents by which the body is seen to be held together. So that which cannot subsist by itself without accidents must be understood to be nothing else but the concurrence of those same accidents. [So what is strange or contrary to reason in taking the excellent Boethius likewise to have understood by “the variable thing” nothing else but the material body which is constituted, as he says, from the concurrence of things which really are; and (that) as long as they are considered in it they must necessarily suffer a certain mutability? Nor is it strange that things which by themselves are immutable will be observed otherwise in their simplicity by the pure gaze of the mind than they will be seen by the bodily sense in their composition in some matter made from their own commingling, since we see that those things which are simple and incorruptible by themselves produce, when they come together with one another, something composite and corruptible. For who does not know that this mass of the earthly globe is made up of four simple elements, and that while it is corruptible and dissoluble, those elements from which it is produced all the same remain in their indissoluble simplicity? And this relation can be generally applied to almost all bodies.] And I think enough has been said about these matters.

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That body  
cannot sub-  
sist by itself  
without its  
accidents

A. Enough, surely. And I see that we must now return to a consideration of the rest of the categories. For there is no doubt that to hesitate longer over these matters is the mark of those who understand too little of the natures of things; and therefore I feel shame and regret for my slowness on many occasions.

504A N. Do not feel shame or regret. For although the subjects we are discussing are so clear to the wise that none of them would feel uncertain about them, I have no doubt that (such discussions) are useful to the uninstructed and to those who are taking the path of reason from lower to higher planes.



A. By no means is it to be doubted, and I see that this is the case with me. Go on to the rest.

N. Two categories remain for examination unless I am mistaken, namely, those of acting and suffering. For in discussing place we said something of time as well — as much as was required for the purpose of the present inquiry. 62

A. I am not now asking anything further about time or place, for what has been said about these is sufficient. For if one says concerning each (subject) everything that reason seeks to be considered, the discussion will scarcely, if ever, come to an end.

N. Consider, then : are action and passion predicated of God, or is it to be held that, as in the case of the other categories, they are employed metaphorically? Concerning acting and suffering

A. Metaphorically, surely. For is it to be thought that these two override the rules that bind the others when they are seen to be of slighter power? 504B

N. Tell me, pray, how does it seem to you? Are not moving and being moved an acting and suffering?

A. I see that it is not otherwise.

N. Similarly, I think, loving and being loved?

A. They come under the same rule : that these verbs and their like are actives and passives no one instructed in the liberal arts is ignorant.

N. If then these verbs, whether they are active or passive in meaning, are no longer properly predicated of God, but metaphorically, and if nothing that is predicated metaphorically is said of Him in very truth but after a certain manner, then in very truth God neither acts nor is acted upon, neither moves nor is moved, neither loves nor is loved.

A. This last inference requires not a little looking into. For against it, as I think, there seems to be ranged the authority of the whole of Holy Scripture and of the Holy Fathers. For how often, as you know, does Holy Scripture explicitly affirm that God acts and suffers, loves and is loved, desires and is desired, sees and is seen, moves and is moved, and all else of this sort. The instances of these (expressions) I have decided to omit lest they should lead to prolixity, seeing that they are innumerable and occur everywhere to anyone who seeks them ; and the use of this single example from the 504C

Gospel is sufficient : “Whoso loveth Me shall be loved by My Father and I shall love him and shall reveal Myself to him.” Again, St. Augustine in his *Hexameron*, discussing the divine motion, has uttered these words: “Now the Spirit that creates moves itself without time and place ; it moves the spirit that is created through  
 504D time without place ; it moves the body through time and place.” If, then, acting and suffering are predicated of God not in very truth, that is, not properly, as we said above, it follows that neither are moving or being moved. For to move is to act, while to be moved is to suffer. Further, if He neither acts nor suffers how is He said to love all things and to be loved by all things which were made by Him ? For loving is a motion of the agent, while being loved is the cause and the end of the motion of the patient. [But here I am  
 505A speaking after the common usage. For if one looks into the nature of things more closely one will find that many verbs which have a merely superficial appearance of being active because of their sound, yet in their meaning have a passive sense ; and on the other hand what is superficially passive has an active sense. For he who loves or desires suffers himself, while he who is loved or desired acts.] But if God loves what He makes He is surely seen to be moved ; for He is moved by His love. And if He is loved by those who can love whether they know what they love or do not know it, is it not certain that He moves (them) ? For it is the love of His beauty that moves them. Therefore how it is said that He neither moves nor is moved lest it should appear that He acts and suffers is something I cannot find out by myself, and therefore the more insistently demand that you untie the knot of this question.

505B       N. Do you think that, in those who act, the agent is one thing, the ability to act is another, and the acting another, or that they are one and the same ?

A. My opinion is that they are not one, but three, differing from each other. For the lover, that is, he who loves, is a substance of a certain definite person, who has an accident of a certain potency by which this substance can act whether he does so or not ; while if this substance moves itself by means of this potency so as to perform some act he is said to act. And thus there are seen to be three things, namely, a substance, and the potency to act that is in it, and the acting out of this potency upon some object, as the effect of some cause, whether this action be reflexive, that is, whether it turns back upon the same person, or whether it passes on to another.

N. You draw a correct distinction. How does it seem to you? Must not the same distinction be observed in him who suffers, so that the patient is one thing, the potency to suffering another, and the suffering itself another, whether he suffers at his own hands or at another's? 505C

A. The same, surely.

N. So these three are not of the same nature either in those who love or in those who are loved?

A. *They are not, in my opinion.* For substances have one nature, accidents another. For he who acts or suffers is a substance, but the potency of acting or suffering and the acting and suffering themselves are accidents.

N. I wonder how you have forgotten the questions which arose and were answered, I think, and finally settled in our earlier discussions.

A. Please prompt me, and call back to my memory what they were; for I do not deny that I am heedless and forgetful through a defect of the memory which is forgetfulness.

N. Do you remember that it has been deduced and concluded by us that οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, that is, essence (as we have often said), power and operation, form an inseparable and incorruptible trinity in our nature which by the wonderful harmony of nature is so integrated with itself that the three are a unity and the unity is three, and that they are not as it were of diverse nature but of one and the same, not as a substance and its accidents but as an essential unity and substantial differentiation of three in one? 505D

A. I remember it and will never again commit it to oblivion. For to commit to oblivion the most apparent image of the Creator is a most foolish and unfortunate thing to do. But I do not yet see where this is to lead, unless perhaps that when I was asked by you I replied that there were three things distinct from one another, one being in the nature of a subject while two are in the nature of accidents; and these three seem to be very different from the previous three, and thus either only those three which we said were of one and the same substance truly exist, that is, essence, power, operation; while those which I have now introduced, that is, substance and its accidents, namely, the possibility of acting and the effect of this possibility, which is acting, *must be supposed to be superfluous and not to be deduced by reason*; or the reverse; or again 506A

(which I think must be the more correct opinion), both the latter and the former exist in the nature of things and are distinguished by their own natural differences. But whether this is to be conceded or not, this I leave to your judgement to decide.

Concerning  
the three-  
fold and  
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essence and  
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especially of  
rational and  
intelligible  
natures; and  
the trinity  
which can be  
considered in  
individuals  
506C

N. What you proposed last seems to agree with right reason: for whoever says that the essential trinity, namely, essence, power, operation, *is* constantly and incorruptibly present in all natures and especially in rational and intellectual natures does not, I think, depart from the truth; and this trinity cannot be increased or diminished in anything in which it is present. But the trinity that comes after it is understood to be as it were an effect of the preceding trinity. For it does not conflict with the truth, I think, if we say that from essence itself, which is created one and universal in all things and common to all things and therefore, because it belongs to all that participate in it, is said [to be] the property of none of the individuals that participate in it, there emanates by a natural progression a certain proper substance which belongs to no one else but to him only whose it is; and furthermore this substance has its own possibility which derives from nowhere else but from the universal power itself of the aforesaid universal essence and virtue. Similarly with regard to the proper operation of the most particular substance and the most particular potency it must be said that it descends from nowhere else but from the universal operation itself of the [same] universal essence and universal power. Nor is it strange if these three which are considered in individuals are said to be a kind of accidents of the aforesaid universal trinity, [and] its first manifestations, since it itself is by itself one and immutably abides in all things which have their existence from it and in it, and cannot either increase or diminish or be destroyed or perish: while these which are most particularly considered in individuals can increase and diminish and vary in many ways. For not everyone participates in the universal essence and power and operation in the same way: some do so more, some less, but no one is totally deprived of participation in it. *Furthermore*, it itself remains one and the same *in* all that participate in it, and to no one does it make itself more or less available for participating in it, any more than light to the eyes. For it is whole in each of them and in itself. But to be increased or diminished is a falling short of or a perfecting of participation, *and* *therefore* is not unreasonably judged to be an accident. For that which is always what it is is rightly called the true substance, while that which is variable proceeds either from the mutability of an

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unstable substance or from participating in accidents, whether natural or not natural. And do not be surprised that some accidents are called substances because they act as the substances of other accidents, when you see that to quantity, which is undoubtedly an accident of substance, other accidents occur, such as colour which makes its appearance about quantity, and periods of time which are discerned in the limited movements of things. [For time is the exact and rational measurement of the stopping and going of mutable things.]

Concerning  
the acci-  
dents of  
accidents

The  
507B  
definition  
of time

A. This, I think, is exactly what I was driving at. But I should like you to give a brief and clear outline of this last way of considering things.

N. Let us, if you agree, assume that the triple understanding of things, that is, of essence, of power, of operation, is established by the Creator of all as the immutable subsistence and firm basis [of things].

A. It must be assumed, I think.

N. Then that trinity which can be contemplated in individuals and which proceeds from the first essential trinity must be regarded, as I see it, as the effect, as it were, of a preceding cause, and its primordial motions *and* a kind of primordial accidents.

A. This too must be admitted.

N. But whatever occurs to those three which come after, whether from within or from without, whether naturally or from some chance events, is seen to come about, as it were, as an accident of accidents.

507C

A. Again, I do not object to this conclusion. For since, according to Aristotle, there are ten genera of things, which are called categories, that is, predicaments — and we find that none of the Greeks or the Latins oppose this division of things into genera — we see that all first essences, which the Greeks call οὐσίαι — rightly, because they are by themselves, and do not require anything in order that they may be; for so they have been established by the Creator, like a kind of immutable foundations — are included under a single genus, and they subsist in their wonderful and unchanging trinity in the likeness of the principal Cause of all things, that is, as has often been said before, in essence, power, operation, while the other nine genera are said to be accidents — and not without reason; for they subsist not by themselves but in the aforesaid

507D

essential trinity. For the name which the Greeks give to place and time, ὦν ἄνευ, that is, without which the other things cannot exist, is not to be understood as meaning that the substantial trinity we have mentioned is to be counted among the things which cannot subsist without place and time; for it does not require the aid of place and time to subsist since it exists by itself by the excellence of its own creation before and above place and time. But the nine genera which are allotted to accidents alone are so divided by our authorities that these accidents which are originally seen in essences soon change into substances because they act as substance towards other accidents. *For* the first division of all things is into substances and accidents, the second is of accidents into substances, and this division *can be carried* almost to infinity because that which is at the moment an accident of what is prior to it is soon made into the substance of what follows it. But of this we must speak elsewhere, while for the present, if you agree, let us continue with the subject we set ourselves.

508A

Concerning  
the acci-  
dents of  
accidents  
again

N. Well, then : is it your opinion that there are [no] accidents  
508B but of some essence or of some accident ?

A. Nobody skilled in the arts would say *otherwise*. For accident was rightly so called for no other reason than that it occurs to an essence or substance or to some accident.

A repetition  
concerning  
acting and  
suffering

N. Are acting and suffering included in the number of the accidents ?

A. Certainly.

N. Then they belong to some substance. [For they are the accidents of particular substances, since to general essences no accident occurs.]

A. I would not deny this either.

N. Tell me, pray : does any accident occur to the supreme and simple [and] divine Nature ?

A. Far be it (from me to say such a thing).

N. Is it an accident of anything ?

A. I would not say this either ; for if so it would appear to be passible and mutable and receptive of another nature.

N. So it does not admit any accident and it is not an accident to anything ?

A. None surely, and to nothing.

N. Acting and suffering are accidents ?

A. This too has been granted.

508C

N. Then the supreme Cause of all things and supreme Principle, which is God, does not admit acting or suffering ?

A. The force of this reasoning allows me too little space to manoeuvre. For if I say it is false, *reason itself* might easily make a laughing-stock of me [and forbid me to be unfaithful to all that I have so far admitted]: if I say that it is true, it will necessarily follow that what I have granted in the case of acting and suffering I should also similarly grant in the case of the other active and passive verbs [of whatever class of verbs they may be], that is, that God neither loves nor is loved, neither moves nor is moved, and a thousand similar things [and, what is more, that He neither is nor subsists]. But if I do so, do you see under how many and how great and how frequent missiles of Holy Scripture I shall succumb? [For their din is all about me, proclaiming that this is false.] You are also well aware, I think, how troublesome and difficult it is to put such an opinion to simple souls when the ears of those who are seen to be wise are horrified when they hear it.

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N. Do not be afraid. For now we must follow reason, which investigates the truth of things and is not overborne by any authority, and is by no means prevented from revealing publicly [and proclaiming] to all men the things which it [both] zealously searches out by circuitous reasoning and discovers with much toil. For the authority of Holy Scripture must in all things be followed because the truth dwells there as though in a retreat of its own, but it is not to be believed as a book which always uses verbs and nouns in their proper sense when it teaches us about the Divine Nature, but it employs certain allegories and transfers in various ways the meanings of the verbs or nouns out of condescension towards our weakness and to encourage by uncomplicated doctrine our senses which are still untrained and childish. Hear the Apostle when he says: "I gave you milk to drink, not food." For the purpose of the Divine Oracles is to convey to us and suggest concerning what is ineffable and incomprehensible and invisible something to think about for the nourishment of our faith. For concerning God nothing must be said or thought by those who live pure and pious lives and are serious seekers after the truth except what is found in Holy Scripture, and no meanings or allegorical interpretations but its own are to be used by those who either believe in or discourse about God. For who

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509B

would presume to pronounce about the Ineffable Nature anything invented by himself, except such measures as it has played itself concerning itself upon its sacred instruments, I mean, the theologians? But in order that you may be more firmly convinced, I think the testimony of the theologian St. Dionysius must be introduced at this point, if you agree.

A. I certainly agree, and I welcome nothing more gladly than to have reason confirmed by the soundest authority.

509C N. In the first chapter of the book "On the Divine Names" this theologian has much to say in praise of the authority of Holy Scripture. But because in his usual way he expresses himself in an involved and distorted language, and therefore many find him extremely obscure and difficult to understand, I have decided to present his opinion on this subject by arranging his words in an order easier to understand than that in which they are written in their own place. "We must by no means", he says, "risk saying anything or forming any notion of the superessential... Divinity except what is divinely revealed to us by the Holy Oracles. For the superessential knowledge of the Superessentiality which is above reason and intellect and essence must be applied... to the higher radiancies which are girt about by prudence and sanctity concerning divine things, fixing their gaze on high in so far as the illumination of the Divine Oracles inspires them." Do you see how he absolutely prohibits anyone from daring to say anything concerning the hidden Divinity except what is said in the Holy Oracles? To which, namely the Oracles, he gives a most glorious and most true name: "higher radiancies which are girt about by prudence and sanctity concerning divine things." The same (theologian) in the same chapter a little later (writes): "For just as the invisible things cannot be comprehended or contemplated by sensible things, nor simple things and things lacking likeness by those which are (moulded) into shape and likeness, nor the untouched and the unfigured formlessness of incorporeal things by things formed in the shapes of bodies; by the same principle of truth the superessential Grandeur surpasses the essences and the Unity above mind surpasses the minds, and the suprasensible (One) is impossible to all virtues, and hidden from all reason is the suprarational Good, the Unity which unifies all unity and the Essence which is beyond all essence and the Intellect which is invisible and the Word which is hidden; Irrationality and Invisibility and Namelessness, existing after such a manner as do none of the things that exist, and, while causing the being of all

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509D

510A



things, is yet itself not an ov, for it is the summit of all being — and in whatever (other) way it reveals itself properly and knowably. Therefore, as has been said, concerning this superessential and hidden Divinity one must not dare to say or even to understand anything except the things which have been divinely expressed to us: for this is the way in which it has transmitted the most excellent revelation of itself in the Oracles. For such knowledge and contemplation of it as there is, is inaccessible to all things that exist, being superessentially remote from them all.” These words suffice on the necessity of following the authority of Holy Scripture alone, especially in discussions about the Divine; while reason is wholly concerned with suggesting, and proving by the most accurate investigations into the truth, that nothing can be said properly about God, since He surpasses every intellect and all sensible and intelligible meanings Who is better known by not knowing, of Whom ignorance is the true knowledge, Who is more truly and faithfully denied in all things than He is affirmed. For whatever negation you make about Him will be a true negation, but not every affirmation you make will be a true affirmation: for if you show that He is this or that you will be proved wrong, for He is none of the existing things that can be spoken of or understood. But if you declare: “He is not this nor that nor anything”, you will be seen to speak the truth, for He is none of the things that are or of those that are not, and no one may draw near Him who does not first, by persevering in the way of thought, abandon all the senses and the operations of the intellect, together with the sensibles and everything that is and that is not, and, having achieved a state of not-knowing, is restored to the unity — as far as is possible — of Him Who is above every essence and understanding, of Whom there is neither reason nor understanding, Who is neither spoken nor understood, for Whom there is neither name nor word. But not unreasonably, as we have often said, all things that are, from the highest to the lowest, can be spoken of Him by a kind of similitude or dissimilitude or by contrariety or by opposition, since He is the Source of all things which can be predicated of Him. For He created not only things similar to Himself but also things dissimilar, since He Himself is the Like and the Unlike, and the Cause of contraries. For right reason shows that by virtue of the things that are truly created by Him [even] those which seem to be their contraries and which through privation of essence do not exist are contained (in Him). For no vice is found which is not the shadow of some virtue, either by deception or by open contrariety — by deception, as pride wears the shadow

510B

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510C

ἘΑποφατικῆ

510D

That God is  
the Cause  
and the  
511A  
Arranger of  
likenesses  
and  
unlikenesses  
and con-  
traries and  
privations

- of [true] might, luxuriousness of tranquillity, rage of fortitude, anger of chastisement [and justice], and so forth ; by contrariety, as wickedness of goodness : for as goodness conducts existing things out of non-existence in order that they may be, so wickedness strives to corrupt all things that are and to dissolve them utterly so that they may not be ; and if this were so [that is, if all things were to perish], it also would perish at the same time : for if nature were
- 511B done away, so also would vice be done away. But by the virtue of goodness all nature is sustained so that it may not perish, *though* up to now wickedness has been tolerated in her [namely, in nature] so that goodness may be honoured by contrast with its contrary, and the virtues exercised by a rational activity, and nature itself be purged when death shall be swallowed up in victory and goodness alone will both be manifest in all things and reign over all things, *and* wickedness will be totally done away. But *there is a fuller discussion* of these things *in the Fifth Book*. So do not let any authority frighten you away from the things which the rational deduction from right contemplation teaches you. For true authority does not conflict with right reason, nor right reason with true authority, since there is no doubt but that both flow from the same
- 67 source, the Wisdom of God. The one has conceded and conferred to
- 511C pious inquirers the ability to think and say many things about the incomprehensible and ineffable Nature, so that the study of true religion should not be silent on all matters, but nourish those who are as yet ignorant in the simplicity of the teaching of their faith, and that, instructed [and armed<and> fortified by divine defences], it may have an answer for those who challenge the Catholic Faith ; while the purpose of the other is to correct, by the instillation of religion and piety, those simple people who thus far have been nourished in the nursery of the Church, lest they should *either* believe *or* think anything unworthy of God, or should suppose that everything that Holy Scripture predicates of the Cause of all things is predicated properly, whether it is a question of the most glorious and exalted names such as Life or Virtue or the names of the other virtues ; or intermediate names such as Sun, Light, Star, or anything from the higher regions of this visible world which is predicated of
- 511D God ; or those (taken) from the lower motions of the visible creature, such as Breath, Cloud, Brightness, Sunrise, Thunder, Dew, Shower, Rainfall ; also Water, River, Earth, Stone, Log, Vine, Olive, Cedar, Hyssop, Lily, Man, Lion, Ox, Horse, Bear, Panther, Worm ;
- 512A also Eagle, Dove, Fish, Monster, and the numberless other names which are taken from the created nature and applied to the Creative

Nature by a kind of metaphor and figurative manner of expression ; and, what is more strange, not only from the created nature did Scripture in its ingenuity make these transpositions to the Creator, but even from things which are contrary to nature, namely, Frenzy, Drunkenness, Intoxication, Forgetfulness, Anger, Rage, Hatred, Concupiscence, and other similar terms, by which the minds of the uninstructed are less seriously deceived than by the aforementioned metaphors which are taken from nature. For the soul, rational, to be sure, but somewhat simple, may be deceived into thinking, when it hears the names of natural things predicated of God, that they are applied to him properly ; it is not, however, entirely gullible, so that when it hears the names of those things that are contrary to nature predicated of the Creator it either judges that they are altogether false and rejects them, or acknowledge and believes that they are said figuratively.

That the soul is more easily deceived by hearing like things predicated of God than 512B unlike

A. I am not so much in awe of authority or so fearful of offending less capable minds as to be ashamed of announcing frankly the clear deductions and unassailable definitions of right reason, especially as discourse about such matters is held only among the wise, to whom nothing is more pleasing to the ear than true reason, nothing more delightful to investigate when it is being sought after, nothing more beautiful to contemplate when it is found. But I am waiting to hear what you intend by this reasoning.

N. What do you think I intend by these arguments except that you should understand that as the nouns which denote the things (of created nature), whether substances or accidents [or essences], can be predicated of the Creative Nature metaphorically but not properly, so also the verbs that denote the motions of created nature, whether natural or not natural, can be predicated of it metaphorically but not properly? For if [the names] of essences or substances or accidents are applied to God not in a real sense but from the need to express somehow His inexpressible Nature, does it not necessarily follow that the verbs also which denote the motions of the essences, substances, and accidents cannot be applied properly to God, Who by the incomprehensible and ineffable excellence of His Nature rises above every essence, every substance, and every accident ; every motion and every activity and passivity ; and everything which is said and understood concerning such things, and everything which is neither said nor understood and yet which is within them ? For, why : if God is called Love by metaphor although He is More-than-love and surpasses all love, why should He not in

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512C  
512D

the same way be said to love although He surpasses every motion of loving? [For He seeks nothing apart from Himself since He alone is  
 513A all in all things.] Similarly, if He is named He Who acts and Actor, He Who makes and Maker, not indeed properly but by a kind of verbal transposition, why should not [also] acting and making, or being acted upon or suffering, be predicated of Him in the same manner of speaking? And I think the same must be understood in the case of the other verbs which denote all the motions of the mutable creature, whether natural or not natural, whether intellectual or rational or irrational, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether local or temporal, whether straight or oblique or angular or circular or spherical.

A. You strongly press me to admit that this is reasonable. But I should like you to bring in some supporting evidence from the authority of the Holy Fathers to confirm it.

69 N. You are not unaware, I think, that what is prior by nature is  
 513B of greater excellence than what is prior in time.

What  
 difference  
 there is  
 between  
 reason and  
 authority

A. This is known to almost everybody.

N. We have learnt that reason is prior by nature, authority in time. For although nature was created together with time, authority did not come into being at the beginning of nature and time, whereas reason arose with nature and time out of the Principle of things.

A. Even reason herself teaches this. For authority proceeds from true reason, but reason certainly does not proceed from authority. For every authority which is not upheld by true reason is seen to be weak, whereas true reason is kept firm and immutable by her own powers and does not require to be confirmed by the assent of any authority. For it seems to me that true authority is nothing  
 513C else but the truth that has been discovered by the power of reason and set down in writing by the Holy Fathers for the use of posterity. But perhaps it seems otherwise to you?

N. By no means. And that is why reason must be employed first in our present business, and authority afterwards.

70 A. Proceed in what order you like: for I am your follower.

N. Do you think there can be any making or suffering without some motion of the maker or the sufferer?

A. About the maker I have no doubt, for I do not see that it is possible for the maker to make (something) without some motion

on his part. But how that which suffers experiences motion in itself I do not yet clearly discern.

N. Do you not see that everything that makes (something) moves itself or is moved to the end that it may move that which it seeks to make from that which was not into that which is? For nothing can pass from that which was not into that which is without some motion of its own and of another, whether it is conscious of those motions or not. [I am not now speaking of that general motion that is common to all creatures, by which all things are moved from nothing into being, but of the usual motion in time by which every day mutable matter, moved either by nature or by art, receives qualitative forms.] 513D

A. I see now, and reproach myself for being so slow-witted [in not perceiving that everything that suffers suffers either its own motions or another's or both]. 514A

N. Therefore the maker and the thing made suffer motions of their own. For that which makes suffers its motion towards making, while that which is made sustains its own motion and another's: its own by passing from that which was not into that which is; another's because it is not by itself the cause of its own motion, but (this is) either the natural motion or the free will or some necessity of him who makes it. Therefore that which is made, as we have said, suffers its own motion and another's, while that which makes suffers its own alone [although it may often happen that he who makes is moved to make by some other cause, so that maker and sufferer are seen to be one and the same]. But this motion of the maker, although it may arise from various causes, either natural or voluntary or involuntary, is called his own for this reason, that it is understood (to be) not external to him but within him. 514B

A. I do not deny that you have convinced me of this [and therefore I look forward to the rest of your exposition].

N. I think no motion can lack a beginning and an end. For reason insists that every motion starts from some beginning and tends towards some end in which once it has arrived it comes to rest. And this [the venerable] Maximus asserts most explicitly in the third chapter of the "Ambigua", where he says: "If God is immutable, as being the fullness of all things, but everything which receives being [from] the things that are not is moved, then certainly it is wholly borne towards some cause." For, as the same Maximus teaches elsewhere, "the Cause of all things is the same [as] the End of all 514C

Concerning  
motion

things. For God is the Beginning, that is, the Cause, of all creatures and their End since from Him they receive their being and begin to be, and towards Him they are moved in order that they may attain in Him their rest.” The same (author says) in the same chapter a little later: “He is the motion of the things that have come into being, whether the intellectual motion of intellectual things or the sensible motion of sensible things : for there is nothing of the things that have come into being that is wholly... immovable.” And a little later: “Now, this motion” our holy instructors in the sacred science of the Divine Mysteries “call natural power, which hastens towards its own end ; or passion, that is, a motion which passes from one to another, of which the end is impassibility ; or active operation, of which the end is self-perfection. But none of the things that have

514D come into being is its own end, for it is not its own cause either : otherwise it would be unbegotten and without beginning and immutable, as having nothing to which it could by any means move, for it would surpass the nature of the things that are, as having nothing for the sake of which to exist — for that is a true definition of it, although it is another’s, which says : An end is that for the sake of which all things (are), while it itself is for the sake of nothing. Nor

515A is it perfection in itself ; otherwise it would not (have to) be made, as being complete ; similarly it would not receive its being from anything either. For it would be perfect in itself, as also non-causal. Nor is it impassibility ; otherwise it would be permanent as well as infinite and uncircumscribed. For suffering is not by nature present in that which is wholly impassible, which is neither loved by another nor moved towards something else by love...” “For to be an end and perfection and impassibility belongs only to God, since He is unchanging and fulfilled and impassible ; while to the things that have been made it belongs to be moved towards the End that has no beginning... For all things that have been made suffer being moved, just as those things that are not are motion in itself and power in itself. If then the things that come into being are rational things, then they are also certainly in motion, since they are moved in accordance with their nature from their beginning by being, in accordance with their knowledge towards their end by well-being.

515B For the end of the motion of things that are moved is the well-being in that which is eternally, just as the beginning also is Being itself, which indeed is God, Who gives both being (as a natural gift) and well-being (as a grace), since He is the Beginning and the End. For our general motion is from Him as from a beginning, and our particular motion is towards Him as towards an end. But if the

intellectual nature is moved intellectually as is rationally consistent with itself, it certainly also understands; but if it understands it certainly loves that which it understands; if it loves then it certainly suffers its outgoing towards it as something lovable; but if it suffers (this passion for it), it surely hastens (towards it) also; if it hastens, it is certainly embarked upon a powerful motion; but if it is embarked upon a powerful motion, it does not rest until it becomes a whole in the whole beloved and is comprehended in that whole, freely accepting the whole in accordance with its choice as a salutary limitation, in order that it may become whole in that limiting whole, so that from itself it no longer wishes anything at all, being able to understand that it is a limited whole, but from that which limits it; as air is wholly illuminated by light, and the whole lump of iron is liquefied by the whole of the fire.” Do you see how this venerable master teaches that no motion is to be found except in those things which begin from an origin and proceed by their natural motion to their end; and how he defines this natural motion in three ways, thus: “Motion is a natural power hastening towards its end”; or thus: “Motion is a passion coming from one to another, of which the end is impassibility”; or thus: “Motion is an active operation, of which the end is self-perfection”? But as to his saying: “Motion is a passion coming from one to another”, while this is understood of natural motion, it must not be understood as meaning that the origin from which the passible motion, that is, that which suffers its own motion, arises is other than the end it seeks, for of all things which are naturally moved the beginning and the end are (but) one — for it is God from Whom and through Whom and towards Whom all things are moved. But what is thought of as a beginning is different from what is thought of as an end, and therefore these two meanings are spoken of, as it were, as two different things although they refer to the One Beginning and End of all things; as for instance if someone were to say: “From what is understood as the beginning to what is understood as the end in God.” Then consider that everything which lacks a beginning and an end necessarily lacks all motion also. But God is anarchos, that is, without beginning, because nothing precedes Him or makes *Him* to be; nor does He have an end because He is infinite: for it is understood that there is nothing after Him since He is the Limit of all things beyond which nothing proceeds. Therefore He does not admit any motion. For He has nowhere to move Himself, since He is the Fullness and the Place and the Perfection and the Station and the Whole of all things, or rather, He is More-than-fullness-and-perfection, More-than-place-

515C

Concerning  
the triple  
definition of  
motion

515D

516A

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516B and-station, More-than-whole-of-all-things. For He is more than that which is said or understood of Him, in whatever way anything is either said of Him or understood.

A. These things are quite clear to me, I think.

N. If then you attribute all motion to the creature while you make God free from all motion, are you so slow-witted as to attribute making and suffering to Him from Whom you exclude all motion, when you have unhesitatingly admitted, I think, in your earlier and reasonable deductions, that these two cannot occur save in those things in which there is motion?

516C A. About suffering I would have no doubt at all. For that God is impassible I wholly believe and understand. By suffering I mean that which is opposed to making, that is, being made. For who would say or believe, still less understand, that God suffers being made when He is the Creator, not a creature? For when, as we have long agreed, God is said to be made, this is said obviously by a figure of speech. For He is held to be made in His creatures generally because in them He, without Whom they cannot be, is not only understood to be, but also is their Essence. "For the Being of all things is the Divinity that is beyond being", as St. Dionysius says. He is also said to be made in the souls of the faithful when He is either conceived in them by faith and virtue or begins somehow to be understood through *faith*. For faith is nothing else, in my opinion, but a certain principle from which knowledge of the Creator begins to emerge in the rational nature. But about making I do not yet have a clear view, for I hear all Holy Scripture and the Catholic Faith declare that God is the Maker of all things.

How being  
made is  
predicated  
of God

The  
definition  
of Faith

516D N. You have already admitted that there cannot be making without a motion of the maker.

A. I have.

72 N. You must either, then, allow motion to God, without which making is inconceivable, or you must deny Him both motion and making. For these two are counted among the things which go together and which arise and pass away together.

517A A. I cannot allow motion to God, Who alone is immutable and has nowhere and nothing towards which to move Himself, since in Him are all things, indeed, since He himself is all things; on the other hand I cannot deny Him making since He is the Maker of all things.

N. Then you will separate motion from making?



[A.] I cannot do that either, since I see that they are inseparable from one another.

N. What will you do then?

A. I do not know: and therefore I earnestly beg you to open some way for me and to free me from this extreme difficulty.

N. Adopt this method of reasoning then: what is your opinion? Did God exist before He made all things?

A. It seems to me that He did.

N. Then making was an accident to Him. For that which is not co-eternal and co-essential with Him is either some other thing outside Him or an accident to Him.

A. I would not believe that there was another thing apart from Him and outside Him. For in Him are all things and outside Him is nothing. And I would not be so bold as to allow any accident to Him: otherwise, He is not simple but a composite of essence and accidents. For if another thing which is not Himself is understood (to be) with Him, or if there is something accidental to Him, then surely He is neither infinite nor simple — a thing which the Catholic Faith and true reason most firmly deny. For they confess that God is infinite and more than infinite — for He is the Infinity of Infinities — and simple and more than simple — for He is the Simplicity of all simple things — and they believe and understand that there is nothing with Him, since He is the periphery of all things that are and that are not and that can be and that cannot be and that appear to be either contrary or opposite *to Him*, not to say like and unlike: for He is the Likeness of like things and the Unlikeness of unlike things, the Oppositeness of opposites, the Contrariness of contraries. For He gathers and puts all these things together by a beautiful and ineffable harmony into a single concord: for those things which in the parts of the universe seem to be opposed and contrary to one another and to be discordant with one another are in accord and in tune [when] they are viewed in the most general harmony of the universe itself.

N. You understand rightly; see now that you do not in what follows regret having admitted any of the things you now admit.

A. Proceed in what order you please. I shall follow you, and shall not take back anything that I have conceded.

N. God, then, did not exist before He made all things?

517D A. No: for if He did, the making of all things would be an accident to Him; and if the making of all things were an accident to Him, it would be understood that motion and time were in Him, for He would move Himself to make the things which He had not yet made, and He would precede in point of time His own action, which was neither co-essential with Him nor co-eternal.

Concerning 518A making N. Then His action of making is co-eternal with God and co-essential?

A. So I believe and understand.

N. Are God and His making, that is, His action, two things, or one simple and indivisible thing?

[A.] I see that they are one: for God does not admit number in Himself, since He alone is innumerable and Number without number and the Cause of all numbers which surpasses every number.

N. Therefore it is not one thing for God to be and another to make, but for Him being is the same as making?

A. I dare not resist this conclusion.

518B N. So when we hear that God makes all things we ought to understand nothing else than that God is in all things, that is, that He is the Essence of all things. For only He truly exists by Himself, and He alone is everything which in the things that are is truly said to be. For none of the things that are truly exists by itself, but whatever is understood truly (to be) in it receives <its true being> by participation of Him, the One, Who alone by Himself truly is.

A. Nor would I wish to deny this.

N. Do you see, then, how true reason completely excludes the category of making from the Divine Nature and attributes it to the things which are mutable and temporal and cannot be without a beginning and an end?

A. I see this clearly too: and now at last I understand without any doubt that no category applies to God.

73 518C N. What then? Should we not examine in the same way the force of all the verbs which Holy Scripture predicates of the Divine Nature, so as to conclude that nothing else is signified by them but the Divine Essence and More-than-essence, itself, which is simple and immutable and cannot be grasped by any intellect or signification? For instance: when we hear that God wills and loves or

desires, sees, hears, and the other verbs which can be predicated of Him, we should simply understand that we are being told of His ineffable Essence and Power in terms which are adapted to our nature, lest the true and holy Christian religion should be so silent about the Creator of all things that it dare not say anything for the instruction of simple minds and in refutation of the subtleties of the heretics who are always lying in wait to attack the truth and labouring to overthrow it and seeking to lead into error those who are less well instructed in it. Therefore to be and to will and to make and to love and to desire and to see and the other things of this sort which, as we said, can be predicated of Him, are not different things 518D for God, but all these are to be accepted as one and the same in Him, and indicate His ineffable Essence in the way in which it allows itself to be signified.

A. Indeed (they are) not different. For where there is true and eternal and indissoluble simplicity by itself, there cannot be anything which is either this and that or which is much and various. But I 74 519A should like you to tell me more explicitly, so that I may clearly see, how, when I hear that God loves or is loved, I shall understand nothing but His Nature without any motion of lover or beloved. For when I have been shown this I shall have no misgiving at all in reading anywhere or hearing that He wills or desires or is desired, loves or is loved, sees or is seen, seeks or is sought, and likewise that He moves or is moved. For all these must be accepted in one and the same sense. For as will and desire and vision and longing too and motion, when predicated of God, indicate to us one and the same thing, so the verbs, whether they be active or passive or neutral and 519B in whatever sense they are uttered, are understood not to disagree (with one another) by any difference of meaning, in my opinion.

N. [I think you] are not deceived in this *either*, for it is as you think. First, then, take this definition of love: Love is a bond and chain by which the totality of all things is bound together in ineffable friendship and indissoluble unity. It can be defined in this way too: Love is the end and quiet resting place of the natural motion of all things that are in motion, beyond which no motion of the creature extends. These definitions St. Dionysius openly supports in the "Amatory Hymns", saying: "Let us think of love, whether we are speaking of divine or angelic or intellectual or psychic or natural love, as a certain unitive and continuative power which moves the higher things to provide for the lower, and again those of equal form 519C to exercise a close influence upon one another, and those things

The definition of Love

which are placed lowest to turn to those that are better and are placed above them.” The same (author says) in the same (Hymns): “Since we have given in order the many kinds of love which derive from the One... let us now... involve them all together again into the one and all-embracing Love and Father of them all and collect them together from (being) many, first comprehending in two general (virtues) all (their) amatory virtues, over which absolutely commands and rules, from the summit of all things, the immeasurable Cause of all love, towards which also is directed all the love from all things that exist in conformity with the nature of each existent.” The same (author says) in the same (Hymns): “Come now, and gathering these”, that is, the virtues of love, “again into one, let us say that there is one simple virtue which moves itself to a unitive mingling (of

519D all things) from the Best to the lowest of beings and back from that through all things in order to the Best again, spinning itself out from itself through itself towards itself and ever winding itself up again into itself in the same way.” Rightly therefore is God called Love since He is the Cause of all love and is diffused through all things and gathers all things together into one and involves them in

520A Himself in an ineffable Return, and brings to an end in Himself the motions of love of the whole creature. Moreover this diffusion of the Divine Nature into all things which are in it and from it is said to be the love [of all things], not that what lacks all motion and fills all things at once is diffused in any way, but because it diffuses through all things the rational mind’s way of regarding (them) [and moves it, for it is the Cause of the diffusion and motion of the mind] to seek Him and to find Him and to understand Him, as far as it is possible to understand one who fills all things in order that they may be, and in the pacific embrace of universal love gathers all things together into the indivisible Unity which is what He Himself is, and holds

Concerning suffering them inseparably together. Again, He is said to be loved by all things that were made by Him not because He suffers anything from them — for He alone is impassible — but because all things seek Him and because His beauty draws all things to Himself. For He alone is truly lovable because He alone is the supreme and real

520B Goodness and Beauty. For He Himself is whatever in creatures is understood (to be) really good and really beautiful and lovable. For as there is no essential good so there is nothing essential(ly) beautiful and nothing essential(ly) lovable apart from Himself alone. Therefore, as that stone which is called the magnet, although

75  
A simile from the magnet by a natural power of its own it attracts to itself the iron which approaches it, does not move itself in any way in order to do this nor

suffers anything from the iron which it attracts to itself; so the Cause of all things leads back to itself all things that derive from it without any motion of its own but solely by the power of its beauty. Hence again St. Dionysius says among other things: "But... why do the theologians call God sometimes Love but at other times Desire, at other times Lovable and Desirable?" He concludes his homily by saying: "Because... under the one aspect He is moved, under the other He moves." This conclusion the venerable Maximus expounds more fully by saying: "As being Love and Desire God is moved, while as Lovable and Desired He moves to Himself all things which are receptive of love and desire." And this must be explained more clearly still: He is moved as bringing an inseparable bond of love and desire to those who are receptive of them, but moves as attracting through nature the desire of those who are moved towards Him. And again: He moves and is moved as thirsting to be thirsted for and loving to be loved and desiring to be desired. For even this sensible light which fills the whole visible world, while it remains ever immutable although its vehicle, which we call the solar body, revolves in an eternal motion through the intermediate spaces of ether about the earth, nevertheless the light itself, flowing forth from this vehicle as from an inexhaustible source, so pervades the whole world by the immeasurable diffusion of its rays that it leaves no place into which it may move itself, and remains ever immutable. For everywhere in the world it is always full and whole, and it does not depart from any place nor does it seek any place save a certain small part of this lower air about the earth, which it leaves free for the purpose of admitting the earth's shadow which is called night; and yet it moves the gaze of all animals which are sensitive to light and draws them to itself that by it they may see in so far as they can see what they can see; and therefore it is thought to be moved, because it moves the rays of the eyes so that they are moved towards it [that is, it is the cause of the motion of the eyes towards seeing]. [And do not be surprised to hear that the nature of light, which is fire, fills the whole sensible world and is everywhere without change. For St. Dionysius also teaches this in his book on the "Celestial Hierarchy", and St. Basil too affirms the same in the "Hexæmeron", (saying) that the substance of light is everywhere, but breaks forth by some natural operation in the luminaries of the world whether they be great or small, not only in order to provide illumination but that it may mark off the whole of time into portions by the motions of the celestial bodies.] What shall I say of the skills which the wise call the Liberal Arts, which, while they remain in themselves by

520C

How God is called Love and Lovable

A simile  
520D  
from corporeal light

521A

521B

A simile  
from the  
Arts

themselves complete, whole, and immutable, yet are said to be moved when they move the rational mind's way of regarding (them) to seek them, to find them, and attract it to consider them, so that they too, although, as we said, they are immutable in themselves, yet seem to be moved in the minds of the wise because they move them? And there are many other things in which an obscure likeness of the Divine Power is seen. For it itself is above every likeness and surpasses every example, and while by itself and in itself it is

521C immutably and eternally at rest, yet it is said to move all things since all things through it and in it subsist and have been brought from not-being into being, for by its being, all things proceed out of nothing, and it draws all things to itself. And it is said to be moved because it moves itself to itself, and therefore it moves itself and, as

καταφατική  
 and  
 ἀποφατική

521D it were, is moved by itself. Therefore God by Himself is Love, by Himself is Vision, by Himself is Motion; and yet He is neither motion nor vision nor love, but More-than-love, More-than-vision, More-than-motion. And He is by Himself Loving, Seeing, Moving; and yet He is not by Himself moving, seeing, loving, because He is More-than-loving, More-than-seeing, More-than-moving. Also, by Himself He is Being-loved and Being-seen and Being-moved; yet He is not by Himself being-moved nor being-seen nor being-loved, because He is More-than-being-loved and More-than-being-seen and More-than-being-moved. Therefore He loves Himself

522A and is loved by Himself in us and in Himself; and yet He does not love Himself nor is loved by Himself in us or in Himself, but more than loves and is loved in us and in Himself. He sees Himself and is seen by Himself in Himself and in us; and yet He does not see Himself nor is seen by Himself in Himself or in us, but more than sees and is seen in Himself and in us. He moves Himself and is moved by Himself in Himself and in us; yet He does not move Himself nor is moved by Himself in Himself or in us, because He

76 more than moves and is moved in Himself and in us. And this is the prudent and catholic and salutary profession that is to be predicated of God: that first by the Cataphatic, that is, by affirmation, we predicate all things of Him, whether by nouns or by verbs, though not properly but in a metaphorical sense; then we deny by the

522B Apophatic, that is, by negation, that He is any of the things which by the Cataphatic are predicated of Him, only (this time) not metaphorically but properly — for there is more truth in saying that God is not any of the things that are predicated of Him than in saying that He is; then, above everything that is predicated of Him, His supersessional Nature which creates all things and is not created

must be superessentially More-than-praised. Therefore that which the Word made Flesh says to His disciples, "It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you", true reason compels us to believe, and say, and understand in the same way with reference to other like things : it is not you who love, who see, who move, but the Spirit of the Father, Who speaks in you the truth about Me and My Father and Himself, He it is Who loves Me and sees Me and My Father and Himself in you, and moves Himself in you that you may desire Me and My Father. If then the Holy Trinity loves and sees and moves Itself in us and in Itself, surely It is loved and seen and moved by Itself after a most excellent mode known to no creature, by which It both loves and sees and moves Itself, and is loved, seen, and moved by Itself in Itself and in Its creatures [although It surpasses all that is said about It. For who and what can speak about the Unspeakable, for Whom no proper noun or verb or any proper word is found or exists or can come into existence, and "Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible light"? "For who knows the intellect of the Lord?"] But before we end the present discussion I thought I should insert at this point the opinion of St. Dionysius on the *Divine Rest* and Motion, if you agree. 522C 522D

A. Certainly I agree. And by this last piece of reasoning I see that I am purged of every doubt. 77

N. In the book "On the Divine Names" [he says]: "But let us say what remains (to be said) concerning the Divine Station or Seat. But what else is it but God's remaining Himself in Himself and being, after a unique mode, established in unchanging natural immutability, and His... being enthroned above all things, and His (always) working in the same respect about the same thing in the same way, and His subsisting wholly from Himself in His utter stability, and (His being) unchangeable and wholly immutable in relation to Himself, and being all these things after a superessential mode? For He is causal of the station and structure of all things, Who is above every structure and station, and Who establishes in Himself all things, immutable and preserved by the stability of their proper goods. Again: even when the theologians say that the Immutable goes forth into all things and is mutable, must not this also be divinely understood? For that motion of His is to be piously understood not as a carrying away, or as an alienation from oneself, or as an exchanging, or as a turning round, or as a motion in place, not in a straight line, not in a circle, not in a combination of the two, 523A 523B

not intelligible, not psychic, not physical ; but as God's bringing into essence and containing all things, and providing in every way for all things, and being present to all things by His immeasurable circumambience of them, and by His providential outgoings and operations towards all existing things. But it must also be permitted us to celebrate the motion of God the Immutable in a manner befitting to God by the reason, and while motion in a straight line must be understood as the undeviating and irrevocable procession of His operations and the generation of all things from Himself, helicoidal", that is, oblique, "motion must be understood as His steady procession and fruitful rest, and motion in a circle as His self-identity holding together the middle and the extreme parts, the container and the contained, and as the return of those things which have come forth from Him into Himself."

524A

Conclusion  
concerning  
acting and  
suffering

A. Our method requires, I think, that you should gather up into a brief conclusion what has been said about the impossibility of anyone properly predicating of God acting and suffering, or making and being made ; and so bring this book to its end.

N. You have long conceded, if I am not mistaken, that for God to be is not other than to act or make, but that for Him it is one and the same thing (both) to be as well as to act and to make. For a simple nature does not admit the notion of substance and accidents.

78

A. Yes, I conceded it with conviction.

N. Therefore, just as being is predicated of Him although He is not in the strict sense being because He is more than being and is the Cause of all being and essence and substances, so also He is said to act and to make although He is more than acting and making and is the Cause of all for making and acting without any motion that could be attributed to accident, being beyond all motion. For of all motions and of all accidents, as indeed of all essences, He is the Cause and Principle.

524B

A. To this too I would unhesitatingly agree.

N. What is left, then, but that you should understand that it is altogether necessary that, just as strictly speaking being as well as acting and making are removed from Him, so suffering and being made are removed ? For how that which is not liable to acting and making can be liable to suffering and being made I do not see.

A. Set an end to the book : for there is enough contained [in it].



# PERIPHYSEON

## BOOK II

N. Since in the earlier book we spoke briefly of the universal I 523D  
division of universal nature — not as (a division) of a genus into its  
species nor of a whole into its parts [for God is not a genus of the  
creature nor the creature a species of God any more than the  
creature is the genus of God nor God a species of creature. The  
same can be said of the whole and its parts, for God is not the whole  
of the creature nor the creature a part of God any more than the  
creature is the whole of God or God a part of the creature, although  
[in the loftier contemplation of Gregory the Theologian we who  
participate in human nature are a part of God because “in Him we  
live and move and have our being”, and] in a metaphorical sense  
God is said to be both genus and whole and species and part since 524D  
everything which is in Him and (comes) from Him can honestly and  
reasonably be predicated of Him], but by a kind of intellectual  
contemplation of the universe, under which term I include both God  
and creature — let us now, if you agree, re-examine the same  
division of nature more broadly.

A. I agree, and (it seems) very necessary. For unless (this  
subject) is opened up by a broader inquiry of the reason it will  
appear that we have only touched upon it, not discussed it.

N. This then, as I think, was the fourfold division of universal  
nature as we gave it above : (first) into that form or species — if one  
may rightly call form or species the First Cause of all things which 525A  
surpasses every form and species since it is the formless Principle of  
all forms and species — which creates and is not created. [Now we  
call God the formless Principle so that no one may suppose that He

is to be reckoned in the number of the forms while (in fact) He is the Cause of all forms. For every formed thing seeks Him while in Himself He is infinite and more than infinite, for He is the Infinity of all infinities. Therefore, not being constricted or defined by any form, since He is unknowable to every intellect, He is more reasonably called formless than form; for, as has often been said, we can speak more truly about God by negation than by affirmation]; secondly into that which is both created and creates; third comes  
 525B that which is created and does not create; then fourth that which neither creates nor is created.

A. So indeed was the division made.

N. Therefore, since in our earlier discourse we have already spoken briefly of the oppositions of these forms of nature — for we considered how the third conflicts with the first, for they confront each other as it were from diametrically opposed positions; for, as we said, (the species) which is created but does not create is the opposite of that which creates and is not created. Similarly the second form is opposed to the fourth; for (the species) which is created and creates is the opposite of that which neither is created nor creates. [Now, the reason why we say that the universal nature possesses forms is that it is from her that our intelligence is in a manner formed when it attempts to treat of her; for in herself the universal nature does not everywhere admit forms. It certainly is not improper for us to say that she comprises God and creature, and therefore in so far as she is creative she admits no form in herself, but gives multiformity to the nature formed by her] — I think we should now consider in what respects they resemble one another, and in what they differ.

525C  
 That the universe considered in God is formless while in the creature it is multiform

A. The natural order demands (that we should proceed) in no other way.

N. The second form is similar to the first in that it creates, but dissimilar in that it is created. For the first creates and is not created, while the second both creates and is created. The third takes on a likeness of the second in that it is created, but differs from it in that it creates nothing. For the second both is created and creates, while  
 525D the third is created and does not create. The third is similar to the fourth in that it does not create, but is dissimilar in that it is created. For the third is created and does not create, while the fourth neither is created nor creates. Furthermore the fourth is similar to the first because it is not created, but *appears to be* remote from it because it

does not create. For the first creates and is not created, while the fourth neither creates nor is created. And now that the oppositions and similarities and differences have been stated, I see that we must say a few words about their return and collection by that science which the philosophers call ἀναλυτική. 526A

A. This too is required by the (natural) order. For there is no rational division, whether it be of essence into genera or of genus into species and individuals or of the whole into its parts — for which the proper name is partition — or of the universe into those divisions which right reason contemplates therein, that cannot be brought back again by the same stages through which the division had previously ramified into multiplicity, until it arrive at that One which remains inseparably in itself (and) from which that division took its origin. [But I see that it is necessary that first you tell me a little about the etymology of the word ἀναλυτική, for it is not clear to me.

N. Ἀναλυτική come from the verb ἀναλύω which means “I resolve” or “I return”; for ἀνα- stands for “re-”, λύω for “solve”. Thence comes also the noun ἀνάλυσις, which is similarly rendered “resolution” or “return”. But ἀνάλυσις is properly used in connection with the solution of set problems, while ἀναλυτική is used in connection with the return of the division of the forms to the origin of that division. For every division, which is called by the Greeks μερισμός, seems (to be) a kind of descent from some finite unity down into an infinite number of individuals, that is to say, from the most general to the most specific, while every recollection, which is like a return back, starting from the most specific and ascending to the most general, <is called> ἀναλυτική. Thus it is the return and resolution of individuals into forms, of forms into genera, of genera into οὐσίαι, of οὐσίαι into the Wisdom and Providence with which every division begins and in which every division ends. 526B  
526C  
Concerning  
ἀναλυτική

A. You have said enough about <the etymology> of ἀναλυτική. Pass on to other matters.]

N. Let us then make an “analytical” or regressive collection of 2 each of the two pairs of the four forms we have mentioned so as to bring them into a unity. The first, then, [and] fourth are one since they are understood of God [alone]. For He is the Principle of all things which have been created by Him, and the end of all things which seek Him so that in Him they may find their eternal and immutable rest. For the reason why the Cause of all things is said to

Concerning the Principle of all things 526D create is that it is from it that the universe of those things which have been created after it (and) [by it] proceeds by a wonderful and divine multiplication into genera and species and individuals, and into differentiations and all those other features which are observed in created nature ; but because it is to the same Cause that all things that proceed from it shall return when they reach their end, it is therefore called the end of all things and is said neither to create nor to be created. For once all things have returned to it nothing further will proceed from it by generation in place and time (and) genera and forms since in it all things will be at rest and will remain an indivisible and immutable One. For those things *which in* the processions of natures appear to be divided and partitioned into many are in the primordial causes unified and one, and to this unity they will return and in it they will eternally and immutably remain.

527A

Concerning the End of all things

But this fourth aspect of the universe, which, like the first also, is understood to exist in God alone, will receive a more detailed treatment in its proper place, as far as the Light of Minds shall grant (us).

Now what is said of the first and fourth, that is to say, that neither the one nor the other is created since both the one and the other are One — for both are predicated of God — will not be obscure, I think, to any who use their intelligence aright. For that which has no cause either superior to or equal with itself is created by nothing. For the First Cause of all things is God, whom nothing precedes (nor) is anything understood (to be) in conjunction with Him which is not coessential with Him. Do you see, then, that the first and fourth forms of nature have been reduced to a unity?

527B

A. I see it sufficiently and I understand it clearly. [In God, therefore, the first form is not distinct from the fourth. For in Him they are not two things but one ; in our contemplation, however, since we form one concept of God from consideration of Him as Beginning and another concept when contemplating Him as End, they appear to be as it were two forms, formed from one and the same simplicity of the Divine Nature as a consequence of the double direction of our contemplation.]

527C N. [You see it correctly.] Well, then, ought we not also, in the same way, to reduce the second and the third to a unity? For I think you will not have failed to notice that as the first and the fourth are with reason recognized in the Creator, so are the second and the third in the creature. For the second, as has been said, both is

created and creates and is understood (to be) in the primordial causes of created things, while the third form is created and does not create, and is found in the effects of the primordial causes. Thus the second and third are contained within one and the same genus, namely, created nature, and in it are one. [For forms are a unity in their genus.] Do you not then see that of these four forms two, namely, the first and the fourth, have been resumed into the Creator; and two, I mean the second and the third, into the creature?

A. I see it clearly [and I am filled with wonder at the subtlety of nature. For these two forms are discerned not in God but in our contemplation (of Him), and are not forms of God but of our reason, resulting from our double consideration of (Him as) Beginning and End, nor is it in God that they are reduced to one form but in our contemplation which, in considering the beginning and the end, creates in itself, as it were, two forms of contemplation, and these again, it would seem, it reduces into a single form of contemplation when it begins to consider the simple unity of the Divine Nature. For Beginning and End are not proper names of the Divine Nature but of its relation to the things which are created. For they begin from it and that is why it is called Beginning; and since they end in it so that in it they cease, it is rightly called by the name of End. On the other hand, the other two forms, I mean the second and the third, not only come into being in our contemplation but are also found in the very nature of created things, in which the causes are separated from the effects and the effects are united to the causes because they make one with them in a single genus, I mean, in the creature].

N. So the four become two.

A. I do not deny it.

N. But suppose you join the creature to the Creator so as to understand that there is nothing in the former save Him who alone truly is — for nothing apart from Him is truly called essential since all things that are are nothing else, in so far as they are, but the participation in Him who alone subsists from and through Himself —, will you deny that Creator and creature are one?

A. It would not be easy for me to deny it. For it seems to me ridiculous to resist this reduction.

N. So the universe, comprising God and creature, which was first divided as it were into four forms, is reduced again to an indivisible One, being Principle as well as Cause and End.

A. Concerning the universal division and unification of universal nature I see that enough has been said for the time being. For the subdivisions of each of the forms we shall consider in their  
 528C proper places [— of the second and third, that is; for I should not care to say that the first and fourth admit subdivision —]; and therefore I think we should pass on to the other matters that have still to be discussed.

N. What is your opinion : is there any other line of investigation of the problems we have set ourselves than to inquire now into the second form of nature, seeing that we have considered the first to the best of our ability in the first book, in which the discussion turned rather on the ten genera of all things (and) the fact that they cannot be predicated literally of the creative Cause of all things, than on the Cause of all things itself? For we have decided that what must be said about that (Cause) should be postponed until we come to consider the fourth form [though we do not promise even there to say anything of the Divine Nature in a proper sense or a worthy  
 528D manner, but to speak, in so far as it itself gives us power (to do so), of the return of all things to itself through the primordial causes, just as in this second inquiry the task particularly commended to our attention, if God will aid us, is [to say something] concerning the procession of the creatures from the one First Cause of all things through the primordial essences, which before all things were  
 529A created by itself in itself through itself, into the various genera of nature and the various forms and individuals (extending) to infinity. And do not be surprised if you find something said in this book about the return of the creatures to their Beginning and End. For the procession of the creatures and the return of the same are so intimately associated in the reason which considers them that they appear to be inseparable the one from the other, and it is impossible for anyone to give any worthy and valid account of either by itself without introducing the other, that is to say, of the procession without the return and collection and vice versa].

A. The order of discussion demands nothing else than that after considering the first [question] we should turn to the second.

N. Of the universal nature [then], as has already been said, the second form to be distinguished is that which is created and creates *and* which is to be understood, I think, only of the primordial causes of things. Now these primordial causes of things are what the  
 529B Greeks call *πρωτότυπα*, that is, primordial exemplars, or *προορίσματα*, that is, predestinations, or predefinitions. They are also called

by the same θεῖα θελήματα that is, divine volitions. They are commonly called ἰδέαι also, that is, species or forms in which the immutable reasons of things that were to be made were created before (the things themselves) existed [concerning which we shall speak more fully in the course of the (present) work, and support (our reasons) by the testimonies of the Holy Fathers. And] not inappropriately [are they called so], for the Father, that is to say, the Principle of all things, pre-formed in His Word, that is, His only-begotten Son, the reasons of all things that He wished to be made before (they came into being) in their genera and species and individuals and differences and the other things which either can be and are considered in the created creature, or cannot be and are not considered in it because of their exalted nature — and yet they are. 529C

But before we pass on to the contemplation of the primordial 3 causes, I thought we should introduce into this discussion of ours, if you agree, the opinion of the venerable Maximus concerning the division of all things that have been created. For if the manifold division of all things and their reunification is given a manifold demonstration the way will be more easily opened towards a knowledge of the primordial causes which were created by God first of all [especially as his division does not seem to disagree with our own aforementioned division at any point except that he subdivides the sensible creature, which we placed as the third form of nature < because in it for the most part appear the effects of the causes, into 529D three species, and does not distinguish our fourth form from our first> , as the sequel will show ; and that subdivision of the sensible creature we will, with the help of God, reserve for the subject of our third inquiry].

In the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Ambigua he writes : “The saints who receive many of the Divine Mysteries which are handed down from those who were the followers and ministers of the Word, and thence, directly instructed in the knowledge of the things that are, by transmission to themselves through those who preceded them, say that the substance of all things that have been made is separated into five divisions.” Concerning 530A the division of substances

[Do you notice with what a weight of authority he commends the source of his division? For it is from the Word itself, that is, from the Son of God who is the fount of all perfect doctrine — naturally, since He is the Wisdom in which all the wise participate —, through His followers, that is, through the disciples who both beheld Him living in the flesh and heard Him teach, that he declares

(that division) to take its origin ; and that through the successors of the Apostles in doctrine and wisdom by direct communication, that is, without any other intervening authority, it was handed down to his own times.]

“Of these the first” [he says] “they declare to be that which divides from the uncreated nature created nature in general, which  
 530B receives being through generation. For they say that God by His goodness made the clear disposition of all existing things” at one and the same time. [And a little later :] “But the second (is that) by which the universal” and simultaneously (created) “nature which receives its being from God through creation is divided into intelligibles and sensibles.” Then “the third, by which the sensible nature is divided into heaven and earth, and again the fourth by which the earth is divided into paradise and the inhabited globe, and the fifth by which man himself, who, well and beautifully through generation superadded to the (sum of) things that are as a most effective agent of the continuity of all, in everything naturally  
 530C establishing in himself a mediation between all extremes effected by every difference, is divided into male and female ; possessing naturally by the mediations of all the extremes, through the property of proper parts which exerts a copulative force over the extremes of the individual parts, the potentiality of the unification of them.” For part of himself, as the same Master says in another place, he possesses (in common) with the sensibles inasmuch as he is a body, part with the intelligibles inasmuch as (he is) a soul ; and thus he contains within himself all creation.

And a little later : “This is why man is introduced last among the things that are, to be a kind of natural link everywhere mediating between the extremes through their proper parts, and reducing to a unity in himself things which in nature are widely disparate” [— by the extremes he here means the invisible creature and the sensible creature, which by natural difference differ from one another as though by a very wide space. For they are opposed to one another as the two extreme terms of created natures ; but human  
 530D nature supplies a middle term between them, for in it they are joined  
 4 to one another, and from being many become one. For there is no creature, from the highest to the lowest, which is not found in man, and that is why he is rightly called “agent (of continuity)” of all things. For into it flow together all things which have been created by God, producing a single harmony from diverse natures as from  
 531A different sounds —], “so that, by the unification which brings all



things to God as Cause, he, starting from what before was his proper division” and “proceeding thence through the intermediaries, by successively combining with them, to God, should reach the end of his ascent into the heights, which passes from all things through union (in Him) in whom there is no division”.

Thus far we have quoted, not continuously but with some words omitted, the passage of the venerable Master in which he begins with the division of the substance of all things that have been made from the supreme Cause of all, and ends with the differences of universal substance in man, who was made in the image and likeness of God. For man [as we have said and shall < very often > say again] was created with a nature of so high a status that there is no creature, whether visible or intelligible, that cannot be found in him. For he is composed of the two universal parts of created nature by way of a wonderful union. For he is the conjunction of the sensible and the intelligible, that is, the extremities of all creation. For in nature there is nothing lower than body and nothing more exalted than intellect, as St. Augustine testifies in his book, “*De uera religione*”, where he says the following: “Between our mind by which we have an understanding of the Father Himself, and the Truth through which we understand Him, no creature intervenes.” [In these words of the most holy Father we are given to understand that human nature, even after the Fall, did not wholly lose its status, but still retains it. For the Master did not say “no creature intervened” but “no (creature) intervenes”. So not even now in our feeble condition have we wholly abandoned God nor have been abandoned by Him, for still between our mind and Him no nature intervenes. For the leprosy of the soul or of the body does not deprive us of the mental vision by which we have an understanding of Him and in which the image of our Creator is preeminently established.] Do you see, then, how the division of all substances reaches its term in human nature?

A. I see it clearly, and am filled with admiration at the status of our nature among all the things that have been made, for, convinced by the reasons you have given, I see that in it there is a wonderful kind of composition of all created substances.

N. Since, then, you have a clear perception of the natural division of all, beginning from (the division of) Creator and creature and ending in man, whose creation crowns the divine operation, perfecting as it were the six days’ work, let us now look at the gathering together into the One which begins from man and ascends

through man to God Himself, who is the beginning of all division  
 532A and the end of all unification, in the light of what is said by the  
 6 above-mentioned Father Maximus. [For, as we said before, correct  
 reason does not allow us to treat division by itself to the exclusion of  
 ἀναλυτική, but demands that we should consult the truth about  
 both together.] He says, then : “Starting from his proper division —”  
 by which he means : Since the division of substances, which took its  
 beginning from God, and, descending by degrees, reached its end in  
 Concerning the unifica-  
 tion of  
 substances  
 532B so the unification of natures will begin from man, through the grace  
 of the Saviour, in whom, as the Apostle says, there is neither male  
 nor female when human nature shall be restored to its pristine state.  
 For if the first man had not sinned he would not be suffering the  
 division of his nature into the two sexes, but would be remaining  
 without change in his primordial reasons in which he was created in  
 the image of God, as the aforesaid Master explains in these words ;  
 for he says :

“This is why man is introduced last among the things that are, ...  
 532C everywhere about to extend that property in respect of (being) male  
 and female which certainly does not depend — being contrary to the  
 primordial reason contained in the divine plan for the generation of  
 man — upon the most impassible linking up of his nature (which is  
 in accordance with) Divine Virtue, so as to show that, according to  
 the divine intention, there would be simply man, not to be divided  
 by the names of male and female, (in accordance with) the reason  
 through which he was first also made, not divided into those  
 sections which now exist in him, through the perfect unification with  
 the proper... reason through which he subsists.”

[In these words he shows very clearly the intention of the divine  
 532D plan for the creation of man had He not foreknown that he would  
 sin. For he would be “simply man” created in the simplicity of his  
 nature, multiplied in intelligible numbers, as the holy angels are  
 533A multiplied, but, oppressed by the guilt of his disobedience, he  
 suffered the division of his nature into male and female, and since he  
 was unwilling to keep to the divine mode of multiplying himself he  
 was degraded by a just decree to the bestial, and to the corruptible  
 proliferation out of male and female ; and this division has taken the  
 beginning of its unification in Christ Jesus, who truly showed in  
 Concerning  
 the abolition

Himself an example of the restoration of human nature, and exhibited a likeness of the resurrection that is to come.

“Not divided”, he says, “into those sections which now (exist) in him.” By the sections (that exist) in man after sin he means not only the division into male and female but also the division of one form into the manifold varieties of qualities and quantities and differences. For the diversity of men among themselves by which the form of each is distinguished from the others and the measure of stature is varied does not proceed from nature but from the defect and diversity of places and times, of lands, of waters, of airs, of diets, and of the other circumstances of this sort of their birth and breeding. Of the diversity of manners and opinions it is superfluous to speak for it is obvious to all that these took their origin from the division of nature after sin.

of sex and the unification of all natures first in Christ and then in the whole of human nature at the end of the 5331B world 7

“Through the perfect unification”, he says, “with the proper reason through which he subsists.” (This is) as if he said: Man would not suffer the division of his nature if he were not in a state of sin for the reason that he would inseparably adhere to his perfect reasons in which he was created in the image of God, that is to say, in the primordial causes in which he subsists if he were not of his own will tearing <himself> away from them. For man does not subsist in these (circumstances) in which he now appears to be, but in so far as he exists he is contained within the hidden causes of nature after which he was first created and to which he is destined to return.]

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And since after the unification of man, that is, of his two sexes, into the original unity of nature in which there was neither male nor female but simply man there will immediately follow the unification of the inhabited globe with paradise, he says: “Then, by bringing together, by the holiness of his own way of life, paradise and the inhabited globe, he would make the earth one, not divided in him by difference of its parts, but rather so gathered together that none of its parts suffers loss.” This statement sounds very obscure. For it is not easy to see what he is trying to say: whether (that) the inhabited globe, when all substances are unified, will be joined with paradise in such a way that there will be no diversity of parts in them but all will be paradise — for in the reason of unification this must always be observed, that what appears to be inferior moves towards what is superior, that is, better, but true reason does not allow that what is better passes into the worse [that is to say, returns in the renewal of natures; otherwise it will not be a unification but a division], just as

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- the unification of human nature recalls the division of the two sexes into the simplicity of man because man is better than sex, for male and female are not names of his nature, but of its partition through disobedience, whereas “man” is the special name of his nature ; —or (that) the inhabited globe and paradise will be brought together into that one earth which is the second species of the sensible creature divided into heaven and earth in such a way that even the earth will
- 534B [not only] be without variety of parts but [also] will be recalled into a simplicity of nature so as to be *believed* to be a spiritual rather than a corporeal nature <such as it would be if man were not in a state of sin> , *and* (so as to) let us understand the words “not divided in him”, that is in man [for in man all things are unified] “by the difference of its” [the earth’s, that is] “parts” [in the sense that] as there will be no diversity of parts in man because no (element of) composition will remain in him, so also the earth’s nature will be so united with him as to seem one with him and in him. For he says : “but rather so gathered together that none of its parts suffers annihilation”, that is, separation. For where there is true simplicity there is not found the variety of any annihilation, that is, of
- 534C segregation. This interpretation appears to be fully borne out in what follows ; for he continues : “Then, by uniting heaven and earth through the perfect similarity of his life in respect of virtue to that of the angels in so far as that is possible for men, he would make the sensible creature one (and) everywhere inseparable from itself in him” [that is, in man] “not at all separated spatially by distances, (man) having become a weightless spirit and not held down by any gravity of the body... nor hindered from ascending to the heavens through the perfect ἀρασία” — that is, sightlessness or blindness — “towards those things of his mind which purely attains to God by approaching Him in wisdom.” Here we are given to understand that when man is recalled into the original grace of his nature which he abandoned by transgression, he will gather again to himself every sensible creature below him through the wonderful might exercised
- 534D by the Divine Power in restoring man. For when, as he says, “the human mind purely attains to God”, it will experience the divine
- 535A ἀρασία, that is, the not-knowing of all the creatures which he shall wholly surpass now that he has attained to God Himself and contemplates Him in all things. For the whole man, as he says, will become “weightless spirit” and will not be “held down to the earth by any weight of the body nor hindered from ascending to the heavens”.

“Then,” he says, “by joining the intelligibles and the sensibles in addition to these” — that is, to the unifications of natures that have been mentioned — “through the equality of his knowledge with (that of) the angels, he *will* make all creatures one single creature, not separated in him in respect of knowledge and ignorance, for he will have a gnostic science of reasons in the things that are, equal to that of the angels without any difference, by means of which the infinite outpouring from above of the gifts of the true sophia, as much as is meet, supplies henceforth purely and directly to those who are worthy the unknown and inexplicable knowledge of God.” The profundity of this sentence appears to me unfathomable [and especially where he says “in respect of knowledge and ignorance, for he will have a gnostic science equal to that of the angels”], and not without reason. For in what went before he seemed to teach nothing else than a certain unification into unity of all the sensibles and intelligibles so that nothing would remain in them that was separable, nothing that was corporeal, nothing that was variable, but that by a wonderful return the lower natures would always pass into the higher; *but now* he seems to say that the unification of natural substances is in the intellect alone, but not in the things themselves, that is to say, that it is not those things which through generation into divers genera and divers forms and infinite individuals received from the Creator’s Providence their intelligible or sensible diversity [for not otherwise do we understand that there is a unification of created substances in the angels than by their gnostic science alone, but not by the gathering together of the things themselves into one. For they know the reasons of all created natures in themselves by a single apprehension of the intellect as there is in the wisest human soul a single and inseparable knowledge of the various arts, so that ignorance, whether in angels — for even among them we read of some who are not purged of all ignorance — or in rational souls, brings about no segregation of natures, whereas gnostic science is the cause of their unification. For the understanding of things is what things really are, in the words of St. Dionysius: “The knowledge of the things that are is the things that are”], but their primordial causes and reasons, that are gathered into a certain unification, and that by an act of the intelligence, not in the thing itself.

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But before we come to the contemplation of this question, if there is anything to be said about it, I think the rest of Maximus’ theory of the aforesaid unification of things must be given.

536A “And the end,” he says, “uniting in all these through love the created to the non-created nature — O the wonder of the divine clemency towards us ! — would manifest it as one and the same in the state of grace : the whole man wholly encompassed by the whole of Divinity and made everything that God is excepting similitude of essence and receiving the whole of Him from Himself”, *namely from God*, “about to possess *God* as the most singular prize of his ascent, God, that is, as the end of the motion of the things that move, and the secure and immutable stability of the things which are borne towards Him, and the infinitely and illimitably existing end and limit of every limit and statute and law and reason and intellect and nature.”

9 Therefore it was to this end, as far as we are given to understand from the discourse of the aforesaid master, that man  
536B was made among the primordial causes in the image of God ; that in him every creature, both intelligible and sensible, of which he is composed, as of various extremes, should become an inseparable unity, and that he should be the mediating term and unification of all creatures. For there is no creature than cannot be understood (to be) in man, whence also in the Holy Scriptures he is wont to be called “every creature”. For in the Gospel it is written “Preach the gospel to every creature”, and in the Apostle, “Every creature groaneth and travaileth until now.” And if he were not in a state of sin there would not be in him the division of the sexes, but there would be only man ; the inhabited globe would not in him be separated from paradise, but the whole of earthly nature would in him be paradise, that is to say, a spiritual earth and way of life ;  
536C heaven and earth would not in him be segregated — for he would be wholly heavenly, and nothing earthly, nothing heavy, nothing corporeal would appear in him ; for he would be and would multiply to the number pre-determined by his Creator, as the angels both are and multiply — ; the sensible nature would not in him be distinct from the intelligible, for he would be all intellect, ever and immutably attached to his Creator and in no way inferior to his primordial causes in which he was created ; and no creature which is created in him would in him suffer any division. But because the first man had refused to remain in such a happy state, and fell from it through pride, and the unity of human nature was dissipated into infinite  
536D divisions and variations, the divine clemency ordained that there should be born a new Man in the world, [of the world, that is, a man born of men for the sake of men], in whom that nature which in the old man was divided should be called to its pristine unity.

So the same Maximus (says): “Seeing then that by nature, as created in his proper principle — I mean God —, man is not moved but among those things that are beneath him, over which he himself is the divinely appointed principle, not by nature but by will he was moved to folly (and) used the natural power for the unification of separated things with which he was endowed through generation rather for the separation of things that should be unified..., ‘The natures are made anew and God becomes man’ so that He may save man from destruction, and by re-uniting through Himself universally in everything the fissures of nature which are contrary to nature, and by showing forth universally the foreshown reasons of the things that are divided, by which the unification of the separated things is wont to be brought about, He might fulfil the great plan of the God and Father, summing up”, that is, gathering together, “into Himself all things which are in heaven and which (are) on earth; in whom also they were created. So, by the unification of all things universally to Himself, beginning from our division, He is made perfect man from us and in us and for us, possessing all our characteristics completely... not as a consequence of the marriage-bed... thereby showing, as I think, how there was also another manner of man’s propagation into multiplicity foreknown to God if the first man should keep the commandment and should not cast himself down into bestiality by turning his own powers to evil uses and be thrust into the difference and division of his nature into male and female, which, as I have said, he certainly did not require in order to become man. But those things without which it is perhaps possible for him to exist need not endure for ever. For in Christ Jesus, says the divine Apostle, there is neither male nor female.”

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[Do you see how much he insists that the cause of the division of human nature must be attributed to the sin of the first man? For, “those things”, he says, “without which it is perhaps possible to exist need not endure for ever”, as though he were to say explicitly: Seeing that if man had not fallen into sin it was possible for him to endure without the division of his nature — for this is not a part of his nature but happened to him as a consequence of sin —, what need, then, requires that after the unification of nature into its primitive status that division should endure? For as before sin it was possible to be without it, so it will be possible after his reintegration to abide eternally.]

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But so as not to go in detail through his discourses in which he most clearly teaches that the unification of the whole creature which

- would be effected in man if he were not in a state of sin is achieved through all things in Christ [whose resurrection precedes that of all], I shall select from many passages a few which are relevant to the present discussion. First, then, [he shows] that the Lord Jesus united in himself the division of (our) nature, that is, male and female. For
- 537D it was not in the bodily sex but simply in man that He rose from the dead. For in Him there is neither male nor female, although it was in that masculine sex in which He was born of a Virgin and in which He suffered that *he appeared* to His disciples after His resurrection so that their faith in the resurrection might be confirmed. For otherwise they would not recognize Him if they did not see the shape that was known to them. For they had not yet fully received the Holy Spirit which taught them all things.
- 538A That it was in the male sex that the Lord appeared to His disciples after the resurrection although He arose without sex
- Then, after the resurrection, He united in Himself the inhabited world to paradise. For on His return from the dead into paradise He conversed in this world with His disciples, clearly showing them that paradise is not other than the glory of the resurrection which first appeared in Him and which He would bestow upon all the faithful ; and teaching (them) that our habitable globe has not any difference in paradise in respect of the reason [of its nature ; for it is not by nature that they are separated but by the qualities and quantities and other variations, things that were added subsequently to this habitable earth as the consequence of the general sin of human nature in general for its punishment, and, what is more, also for its correction and education]; and, “that the earth, being one, [is] indivisible with itself, preserving the reason [of its nature in] which it is free from division by difference”. For it is not by matter or spatial intervals that paradise is distinguished from this inhabited globe but by diversity of conduct and difference in (degree of) blessedness. For the first man also, had he not become a sinner, could live happily in the inhabited globe since there is one and the same reason in the principal causes of the inhabited globe and of paradise, as our Lord most clearly showed in Himself after the resurrection. For at once
- 538B Concerning the difference between paradise and the inhabited globe
- 538C 11 He was both in paradise and abode with His disciples. For it is not to be believed that in a local sense He came from some other place [that] He might appear before His disciples and departed into another place when He was not appearing [— He who after resurrection had passed beyond the nature of places and times not only by His Divinity but also by His Humanity ; for I should find it hard to believe that spiritual bodies were confined within place or time, as (I should) not (believe) that they are diversified by qualities or quantities or any describable forms. For they are natures of the



utmost simplicity, as can be particularly well deduced from the evidence of pure fire which, while pervading all bodies of the sensible world, is of such subtlety that it is not retained in any place and yet is seen to reveal its action in all things —], but at one and the same time in one and the same place appeared to them for a season in that shape in which He had suffered so as to nourish their faith until [they should be illuminated] by the power of true knowledge with which afterwards they were transfused, and then, when the interval of His momentary appearance was over, He would at once return to the intelligible and invisible ἀορασία of the spiritual body, that is, (its) invisibility, which surpasses all time [as we said before] and all place; or, what appears to be more likely. He in no way departed from the glory of the resurrection *in place or time or quantity or quality* [for there is no one who doubts but that spiritual bodies are without all these] when, in that form in which He appeared to the world when He was living in the world for the world's salvation, He revealed Himself to His disciples after the resurrection. For human reason yields where the Divine Power alone prevails. [For that saying of His, "Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", sufficiently and clearly indicates that not only as the Word by which all things are fulfilled and which is above all things, but also according to the flesh which He received into the unity of His Substance or Person and which He raised from the dead and which He changed into God, He exists always and everywhere, though not circumscribed by place or time or any (other) means. For in some wonderful and ineffable way He is both above all the heavenly essences and is with the Father in that Humanity which is unified with the Word of the Father and is God and reigns throughout the world; and appears to those who love Him either invisibly or visibly. He does not leave heaven and yet He rules the earth. He sits at the right hand of the Father in the height, governing all things; He ministers salvation to human nature in the depth. Do not therefore imagine that the Humanity of Christ which after the resurrection was transformed into his Divinity (is) in place. The Divinity of Christ is not in place: so neither is His Humanity. Be sure that it is the same with time, with quality, with quantity, with circumscribed form. For it is most piously believed and most clearly understood that all these are absent from the whole Humanity of Christ, that is, from His body, His soul, and His intellect, after the triumph of the resurrection; and to that same glory He shall, after the general resurrection, bring His chosen, <who> shall be one in Him and with Him.] So Christ was both in paradise and

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That the  
Humanity of  
Christ after  
His resur-  
rection is not  
confined in  
place any  
more than  
His Divinity

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539D at the same time in the world, showing that in both world and paradise there is one [natural] reason, (and) uniting the world and paradise in Himself. For in the world it is not the corporeal and spatially extended masses and the manifold varieties of its divers parts that right reason contemplates and venerates, but its natural primordial causes, united in themselves and most beautiful, to which, when [its] end comes, it shall return and abide for ever [in them].

540A [Now we hold that the end of this sensible world will be nothing else but its return into God and into its primordial causes in which it naturally subsists.] For, as our reason teaches us, this world would  
12 [not] have burst forth into a variety of [both] sensible species and the divers multiplicities of their parts if God had not foreseen the fall and ruin of the first man when he abandoned the unity of his nature; so that at least, after his fall from spiritual to corporeal things, from eternal to temporal, from incorruptible to perishable, from the heights to the depths, from the spiritual man to the psychical man, from a simple nature to the division of the sexes, from the status and multiplication of the angels to the bestial [and] contemptible and corruptible generation according to the body, he should, admonished by such a punishment, understand the wretchedness of his plight and [by penitence and laying aside of his pride and by observance of the divine laws which he had transgressed]

540B plead his return to the first state of his honour. For it is not to be believed that the most divine clemency of the Creator thrust forth sinning man into this world as though actuated by anger or desirous of revenge — for sound reason shows that these accidents are absent from the Divine Goodness —, but as a kind of ineffable teaching and incomprehensible clemency, so that man, who, by the judgement of his free will, had refused to maintain himself in the status of his nature, might, having learnt from his punishments, seek the grace of his Creator, and by becoming through it obedient to the Divine Laws which he had previously in his pride neglected, with care and

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540C prudence [humble and mindful of his former neglectfulness and of his fall through pride] might return to his first state, from which, protected by grace and the free judgement [of his will] he would not fall again or wish to fall or be able to fall.

But let us return to the unification of natures in Christ. “Then”, says the aforesaid Master, “by His ascension into heaven, He straightway united heaven and earth, and returning with this earthly body which is of the same nature as we” — changed, that is, into a

spiritual substance — “to heaven, He revealed the whole of sensible nature to be one... Then, ... passing with soul and body, that is, with our human nature in its totality, through all the heavenly and divine intelligible orders in succession He united the sensibles and intelligibles, revealing that the convergence... of the whole creature in its very first reason (is) in Him perfectly inseparable and immutable. 540D  
 And finally, in (addition to) all these, in respect of the understanding of Humanity” [that is to say, in respect of humanity itself], “He comes into the presence of God Himself, appearing for us, as it is written, before the face of His God and Father as Man, who as the Word can by no means ever depart from the Father... and first He in Himself united us with ourselves in Himself by taking away the difference between male and female and instead of men and women, 541A  
 in whom the mode of division is most apparent, exhibited men as such properly and truly... bearing immaculate their image which marks of corruption do not touch at all.”

[Do you see how openly he declares that man created in the image and likeness of God was entirely without difference of sex, and is still without it to the extent that the image and likeness of the Creator persists in him, and that that division was an accident affecting only his body, as a consequence of sin? For although spiritual sexes are understood to exist in the soul — for νοῦς, that is, intellect, is a kind of male in the soul, while αἴσθησις, that is, sense, is a kind of female —, yet we do not recognize there any deviation from nature, but the mystery of Christ and the Church, and the concept of a single understanding of Creator and creature.] 541B

Concerning  
the spiritual  
sexes of the  
soul

“And with us”, [he says], “and for us, comprehending the whole creature by means of the intermediaries (which are) as it were the extremes of their proper parts, He also joined together in Himself indissolubly paradise and the inhabited globe, heaven and earth, the sensibles and the intelligibles, since like us He has body and sense and soul and intellect, to which parts, as it were, associating in each case the extreme which in every respect is cognate to each, He recapitulated in the way already described all things divinely into Himself.” [Consider carefully the force of the words; for they are not without power. “Since”, he says, “like us He”, that is, Christ, “has body and sense and soul and intellect.” 13  
 For human nature is constituted of these as of four parts, and Christ, as true Man, took them upon Himself and unified them in Himself. For He was made perfect Man. For He left nothing of man, except sin, that He would not receive into the unity of His 541C

Substance and would not unify, that is, would not make one, in Himself. For in Him after His resurrection body and sense, soul and intellect are not four but one, and not a composite one, but simply one, “to which parts”, he says, “as it were, associating in each case the extreme which in every respect is cognate to each”, as though he were to say explicitly : Since Christ received the four parts of human nature and unified (them) in Himself, it is clear that He took upon  
 541D Himself and unified in Himself the universal creature, that is, the intelligible and the sensible. For in man, which He received whole, the universal creature is created ; for to each part, as he says, “associating the extreme which is cognate”, calling bodies and all visible things cognate extremes. For these occupy the lowest  
 542A extremity of the universal creature, and are cognate to one another, while the other (and) highest extreme is occupied by the intellectual essences, which are similarly cognate to one another.

Therefore, for each part of human nature the cognate extremes, that is, natures of the same nature, are associated with Christ. For in receiving the body (which is), as it were, the fourth part of man, He attached to Himself the whole corporeal creature, while in assuming sense He combined with Himself the whole sensible and sense-employing creature. What is to be said of soul ? Did He not in (the soul) which He received associate in Himself not only the rational soul but also all nutritive and auctive life ? Concerning intellect none of the wise is in doubt. For to the human intellect which Christ  
 542B assumed all the intellectual essences adhere. Do you not clearly see that the whole creation, I mean the intelligible and the sensible and the intermediate natures, is unified in Christ ? And this is briefly stated by the Master in his conclusion :] “Showing that the whole creature together exists as a unity, like a man, fulfilled by the coming together of its parts to one another and looking towards itself through the totality of its subsistence in consequence of the knowledge, one and simple and without specification or differentiation, of the descent from that which is not, through which *the whole creature is able to receive one and the same cause wholly undivided.*”

Up to this point we have been speaking about the divisions and unifications of substances, following the venerable Master — I mean Maximus — as far as is relevant to the present question, and now we  
 542C must, if you agree, return to the subject proposed, that is, to the discussion of that form of universal nature which both is created

and creates, and which is constituted in the primordial causes ; for it was about this that we proposed to speak in this book.

A. I should certainly agree if you would explain more clearly certain things that were said in the foregoing exposition, for they trouble me considerably.

N. Tell me what those things are which, among the things which I have said, particularly trouble you, and of which you seem to require a clearer explanation.

A. In the divisions of created substances according to Maximus 14  
nothing troubles me or seems to me particularly obscure or doubtful  
except the division of men into male and female, and (his opinion)  
that this did not proceed from the first creation of man in the image 542D  
of God but from the punishment of his sin, and that again after the  
general resurrection of all bodies which is to come at the end of the  
world the division will no longer remain but will return into the  
unity of the primordial creation of nature. For who is there who,  
hearing such things, would not be horrified and at once break out in 543A  
these words: "Then after the resurrection there will be no sexual  
division of male [and] female if each is to be totally removed from  
human nature? Or what form will appear in man if no one has either  
the male or the female form? Or what sort of recognition will there  
be if there is to be an extermination of both sexes and an amalgam  
of all men, whether spiritual and incorporeal or visible and corporeal  
(and) circumscribed by place and time, into a simple unification, not  
divided *by difference of forms*?" — And this is something that has  
been left undetermined by you [and not discussed] although you  
appear to mean that in the bodies of the resurrection qualities and  
quantities will be rather spiritual than corporeal —, to say nothing 543B  
of how much this doctrine conflicts with the authority of all or  
almost all the holy masters of the Latin tongue, who unanimously  
declare that after the resurrection of all things each sex will have its  
integrity, so that man returns into the form of a man, woman into  
the form of a woman, with all the marks of their bodily parts by  
which each sex is particularly distinguished; and so eternally  
remains, whether in glory or in punishment [— if, that is, the  
punishment will be <corporeally> eternal as the glory is eternal, *a  
question which we will discuss in the fifth book*. For many think it  
unseemly to believe that suffering should be co-eternal with blessed-  
ness, although the words of the Gospel which says, "Depart, ye  
accursed, into everlasting fire", seem to be against them].

These things especially, as I have said, among the aforesaid  
 543C divisions of the substances made by God, bring doubt upon me. But  
 I confess that concerning the return and unifications whatever has  
 been said by you is in all respects difficult and obscure for me. For I  
 do not clearly see how the unification of both sexes of human nature  
 came about in Christ when He first rose from the dead, or how it  
 will come about in all men at the end of the world [— for we believe  
 that Christ rose again in the same sex in which He lived in the flesh,  
 and that He remains in it eternally and will so remain ; for who will  
 deny that He was of the male *sex* before He suffered and rose again ?  
 Similarly we also believe that all men will rise again in the same sex  
 in which they fall — ] ; how the habitable globe will be united with  
 543D paradise ; [and] earth with heaven ; the whole sensible creature with  
 the intelligible ; and all these will be joined together with God so  
 that they [may be] one [and no diversity appear in them] ; and  
 especially that which you promised would be explained by you, that  
 544A is, how the return of all the aforesaid substances into the One and  
 (their) unification are to come to pass, whether in the thing itself,  
 that is to say, by the passage of all sensible things into intelligible  
 things, so that when this sensible world has run its course all things  
 may be of a spiritual nature and nothing corporeal or sensible  
 remain ; or whether it is only in the concept of the mind which  
 contemplates the natural unity of all things in their reasons and  
 primordial causes. For things which from the outside appear to the  
 corporeal sense to be various and manifold in places, times,  
 qualities, quantities and the other differences of sensible nature, in  
 their reasons, according to which they were created by the Creator  
 of all things and eternally subsist in the immutable condition of their  
 nature and by certain rules of the Divine Providence, are seen by the  
 pure intellect which inquires into the truth of all things, which finds  
 544B out (all things) and which considers (all things) to be an indivisible  
 unity, and are so. For to the extent that exterior natures, I mean  
 sensible and corporeal, tend to be varied by times and places and the  
 other accidents — because it is in these that their beauty is chiefly  
 displayed and therefore by carnal minds [far removed from truth  
 and unity and dissipated in the multiplicity of temporal things] they  
 are intemperately and lustfully loved —, to the same extent interior  
 natures, that is, the intelligible essences, inseparably show their  
 simple and indivisible unity within themselves and among them-  
 selves, and therefore delight the minds of the wise which contemplate  
 the beauty of their harmony and fellowship [and to these when they  
 return from the unstable and diverse variability of places and times

the contemplation of the sole unified and unchangeable truth is promised as a reward].

544C

For I do not think it is to be believed that the celestial powers, which Holy Scripture calls by various names, look upon this world from without or with corporeal senses. Nor, however, is it to be supposed that they are altogether ignorant of it, for the sacred history teaches that [all these visible things] are governed and administered through them [for through the angels the divine laws are executed, the behaviour of good men is corrected, ordered, brought back from wicked ways, trained in the manifold doctrines of Divine Providence, and called back to the original mode of their nature —]; but they behold this world which they rule < in so far as is permitted them > in the eternal causes which they themselves eternally contemplate, not divided by intervals of places, not distinguished by different motions of times, not dispersed in the multiplicity of its parts, not (as) dissimilar by (reason of) the manifold differences of qualities and quantities, not (as) swollen by the size of its bulk, not extended by differing spaces of length and depth and breadth, but (as) immutably subsisting all together and not compositely in its reasons.

544D

545A

Therefore I would consider that these difficult questions, which by myself I cannot clearly discern, should be more clearly discussed by you. But I think it best to leave to your judgement in what order they should be broached, provided that broached they are, whether now or later.

N. The (natural) order of things demands that all these matters which you say are not clearly apparent to you should be discussed elsewhere < although a few words may be said here in anticipation, for all these (questions) which seem difficult to you can be summed up by a single argument. For if Christ Who understands all things, (Who) indeed is the understanding of all things, really unified all that He assumed, who doubts but that what first took place in the Head and principal Exemplar of the whole of human nature will eventually happen in the whole, as we shall consider in the fifth book? > . For the text of this present book makes no further demand than that to the best of our ability we discuss whatever the Light of Minds shall have granted (us) concerning the primordial causes.

545B

A. Proceed in what order you wish. For I think it is not inappropriate that the present questions about the quadripartite

15

division of universal nature should be expounded in the same order in which they were set out.

N. I consider that we should take the beginning of our reasoning from the Divine Oracles.

A. Nothing (would be) more proper. For it is necessary that from them every inquiry into truth should take its beginning.

N. The most divine prophet, I mean Moses, at the very  
 545C beginning of the book of Genesis says: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." On this passage all the commentators of Holy Scripture have exercised the keenness of their genius and have given various meanings to what the prophet, or rather the Holy Spirit through the prophet, wished to be signified by the name "heaven", and what by "earth". Some consider a compendious expression comprehending the whole [perfected] creature to be meant by these words (and) think that by the name of heaven the creation [and formation] of the whole spiritual and intelligible creature is intended, and (by the name) of earth the constitution of the whole corporeal and sensible creature by its most perfect definitions. Others try to teach (that what is signified is) the formlessness of each creature, the inception of the spiritual by the name of heaven, and that of this corporeal world by the appellation of earth. Others affirm that by  
 545D these words is indicated the creation of the whole sensible creature, which is made up, as it were, of two principal parts, I mean heaven and earth, so that nothing about the creation of the spiritual creature is signified in this passage, but the prophet wished to describe the plenitude of the corporeal creature only. For by sure  
 546A reasons they teach that between these two parts, heaven I mean and earth, as though between certain extreme limits distinct from one another (but) linked by their intermediaries, the universe of this sensible world by a certain natural harmony is composed and made into one.

But it would be tedious and irrelevant to the subject of the present work to prolong the discourse with the many and diverse opinions of divers (authorities) [and it will seem superfluous to introduce the views of others on this kind of problem except where the utmost necessity requires (it)]. But as for myself, when I consider the interpretations of the many commentators, I think none is more acceptable, nothing more likely to be true, than that in the aforementioned words of Holy Scripture, that is, by the choice of the terms "heaven" and "earth", we should understand the primordial



causes of the whole creature, which the Father had created in His only begotten Son, Who is given the name of “Beginning”, before all things which have been created, *and* that we should accept that under the name of heaven the principal causes of the intelligible and celestial essences have been signified, and under the appellation of earth those of the sensible things by which the universe of this corporeal world is made up. 546B

A. I too would prefer this interpretation to the others if I were not slightly troubled by that uncertainty which seems to arise in the aforesaid differences of interpretation. For, as it seems to me, there is little or no difference between the interpretation of those who consider that these words of Scripture describe the formlessness of both natures, I mean the intelligible and the sensible, and those who consider that they describe the primordial causes of the intelligibles and the sensibles. [For we say that formless matter and its formlessness are a [kind of] cause of things. For in it they have their beginning, although formlessly, that is to say, imperfectly as yet, and are understood to be almost nothing, yet not to be entirely nothing, but to be in some fashion a beginning and to seek form and perfection.] 546C

N. Be more attentive then, and examine acutely the differences of things, and dispel the clouds of ambiguity wholly by the keenness of your attention. For you cannot, as I think, be unaware that the formlessness of things is not the same as the causes [and perfect principles] of things. For if being and not-being are the direct opposites of each other, and nothing is closer to true being than the created causes of created things and nothing closer to true not-being than formless matter — for, as Augustine says, the formless is next to nothing —, does it seem to you that the difference is slight between that which is close to true essence and that which approximates to the privation of true essence which is called nothing [at all]? [And we did not say that the formlessness of things is the cause of the essence and form and perfection of things but rather that it is the privation of the essence, form, and perfection of things. For the cause, if it be truly cause, most perfectly pre-encompasses in itself all things of which it is the cause, and perfects in itself its effects before they become manifest in anything, and when they break forth through generation into genera and visible species they do not abandon their perfection in it but fully and immutably abide (in it), and need no other perfection than it <alone> in which they subsist all at once and eternally.] 546D  
Concerning the difference between cause and formless matter 547A

A. Such a difference does not seem to me slight at all. For the primordial causes which have been most perfectly created in their immutable reasons by the One and Supreme Principle of all things which itself derives from nothing are far removed from the formlessness of all things which not only do not yet arrive at the perfection of their form but are scarcely yet beginning to be and hardly yet emerging from not-being. For although the formlessnesses of things seem to occupy an intermediate position between being and not-being, beginning out of not-being to be — for they set out upon a kind of progress out of not-being towards being, but are understood not yet to have attained the perfection of their form and their essence —, they are considered to be nearer to not-being than to being. For the formlessness of things is nothing else but a certain motion which is departing from absolute not-being and seeking its rest in that which truly is; the primordial causes, on the other hand, are so created in “the Beginning”, that is, in the Word of God which is truly said to be and is, that they do not by any motion seek their perfection in anything but that in which they immutably are, and (in which they) are perfectly formed. For in being ever turned towards the one Form of all things, which all things seek, I mean the Word of the Father, they are formed, and never anywhere depart from their formation, for the causes of places and times are in them; but the things which are below them are so created by them in the lower orders of things that (the causes) may draw them to themselves and (that they) may seek the one Principle of all things, *but they themselves* by no means look towards the things that are below them, but eternally contemplate their Form which is above them, so that they do not cease to be eternally formed by it. For in themselves they are formless, and know that they themselves are perfectly created in their universal Form, I mean the Word.

But which of those who have a right understanding will dare to say of the formlessness of things what can thus be said of the primordial causes? — especially as the unformed matter of things also is believed to flow from no other source than the primordial causes. For if the primordial causes are called primordial precisely because they are first created by the one creative Cause of all things, and (themselves) create the things that are below them — for we have already said that the primordial causes both are created and create —, what wonder if, as we believe and confirm with sure reasons that unformed matter is in the number of those things which are created after and through the primordial causes, we admit that this too is created by the primordial causes?

N. So primordial causes mean one thing, and unformed matters 16  
another ?

A. This we are compelled to concede for the reasons already  
given. [Proceed to the consideration of what follows.]

N. Similarly they also translate in various ways what follows:  
“But the earth was waste and void”, — or, according to the  
Septuagint : “invisible and non-composite,” — “and darkness (was) Various  
opinions  
548B  
about the  
void earth  
and the dark  
abyss  
548C  
For some think that by the phrase  
“earth waste and void” or “invisible and non-composite” is figura-  
tively signified the formlessness of the visible creature, and by the  
word(s) “dark abyss” that of the invisible essence. For every  
corporeal and sensible creature is composed of matter and form,  
and therefore matter, lacking form, is called formless, which means  
lacking form, and invisible and non-composite, or waste and void,  
but when it receives form it is said (to be) visible and composite and  
solid and perfect, being circumscribed within the certain limits of its  
proper nature ; but the invisible creature, that is, the intelligible and  
rational, is called formless before it turns towards its proper Form,  
that is to say, towards its Creator. For to achieve perfection it is not  
enough for it to have subsistence [from] essence and essential  
difference — for every intellectual creature is composed of these  
two —, without the perfection of being turned towards the only  
begotten Word, I mean the Son of God, Who is the Form of all  
intelligible life. For otherwise it remains imperfect and without  
form.

Others think that the earth that is waste and void or invisible  
and without composition refers to this hulk of the earthly body (as it  
was) first created, waste and void, as they think, because it was not  
yet decked out with the divers genera and species of buds, fruits, and  
animals, invisible either because it was everywhere covered with an  
abundance of the moist nature or because man who would have the  
ability of beholding it had not yet emerged through generation from  
the primordial causes [but they say that there was darkness over the  
abyss because the air which enveloped the abyss on all sides was not  
yet infused with light and therefore was not able to illuminate the  
abyss (which was) established within it]. And although St. Augustine 548D  
seems to oppose this interpretation, it is not altogether rejected by  
us since it is that of St. Basil. For it is not for us to adjudicate  
between the interpretations of the Holy Fathers, but to acknowledge  
them with piety and veneration. However, it is not forbidden us to  
select that which seems after rational consideration to accord the 549A

Concerning  
the creation  
of the prim-  
ordial causes  
of sensible  
things

better with the Divine Oracles. But if one should say that these words of the prophet refer to nothing other than the primordial causes he will not appear to deviate from the truth. For is it so incredible that the *πρωτότυπον*, that is, the principal exemplar, of corporeal nature which is what is meant *by the name* of “earth” and which God in the Beginning, that is, the Father in the Son, had eternally and most perfectly created before this sensible world should be called void and waste? — void because it was void of every sensible thing in its effects until it issued forth into the genera and species of sensible nature in places and times; waste because the understanding of the prophet who was initiated into the Divine Mysteries had as yet beheld no quality, no quantity, nothing filled out by corporeal matter, nothing extended in place, nothing moving through time. 549B For these words, I mean “waste and void”, signify rather the most complete and immutable perfection of the primordial nature (that was) created before all things in the Word than the mutable and imperfect and as yet formless procession of this sensible world, extended in places and times, and coming into being through generation, and seeking to be formed in the divers individuals of the sensible creature.

For waste and void are often used even in praise of corporeal things. For the whole space which is set in the midst between the terrestrial globe and the choirs of the stars and extreme circumference of the world is divided by those who are learned in (the nature of) the world and in divine Scripture into two parts. The 549C lower part, from the earth to the moon, is called air, that is, spirit, the upper [from the moon to the stars of the outermost sphere] (is called) ether, that is, pure *spirit*; <but both> *are called* by the Greeks *κοῦφος*, “void” or “waste” by the Latins. *But* it is agreed that that <upper region> is ever the purest and brightest. [For it is] the most serene [and rests in an eternal silence save for the harmonious symphonies of the planets and surpasses every mortal and earthly sense by the high pitch of its tones and semitones and gliding with the motions of the subtlest fire], flooded with everlasting light except for the little portion occupied by the earth’s shadow [which is called night]; and this is why it is said to be void. And not unreasonably, for it is void of all earthly and gross mass and is filled 549D by no corporeal heaviness. For the globes of the planets are of the utmost lightness and are spiritual; are weighed down by no earthly quality (and) cast no shadow. For the moisture of the moon and the grime which appears on her are not the product of the purity of her

nature but of [the vapours of the earthly mass [which the Greeks call 550A  
 ἀμίδεις] and of the proximity of the moist abyss. Also the cloudiness  
 and obscurity of this more corporeal air come not from itself but  
 from the propinquity of waters and earths. [For where the humidity  
 of the moon is born, there also (is born) the cloudiness of the air.]  
 Again, thunders and lightnings, showers, rains, snow, ice (and) the  
 various blasts of the winds take their origins from no other source  
 but the vapours of earth and water.

What wonder, then, if the primordial causes of visible things 17  
 are figuratively signified by the term “waste and void earth” on  
 account of their excessive subtlety and the ineffable simplicity of  
 their intelligible nature before they *flowed forth* through generation  
 into the genera and species and sensible individuals [in which, as  
 though in corporeal clouds, they appear to the senses], *when the* 550B  
*aforementioned* regions of the visible world, because of their subtlety  
 and all but incorporeality, are not inappropriately called waste and  
 void, as one of the poets says: “Thou shalt hurl thy body with a leap  
 through the void air,” and Virgil in (his) twelfth (book): “Then the  
 man’s stone itself hurtling through the waste void”? The same  
 reasoning (underlies) the other interpretation which says that the  
 earth was invisible and incomposite. For what else could that  
 invisibility of the mystical earth more reasonably signify than the  
*obscurity* of the primordial causes of the corporeal creature not yet  
 manifest by any light of colour (or) distinction of forms (and)  
 moreover surpassing even the purest intellects? Rightly also are the 550C  
 primordial causes called incomposite. For they are simple and  
 entirely lacking in any composition. For there is in them the  
 inexpressible unity and the indivisible and incomposite harmony  
 which go beyond every combination of parts whatever, whether  
 (these be) dissimilar or similar. What shall I say of the primordial  
 causes of the intelligible essence? Is it not most appropriate that  
 they should be called by the Holy Spirit by the name of a dark  
 abyss? For they are called “abyss” on account of their unfathomable  
 depth and their infinite diffusion through all things, which is  
 perceived by no sense (and) comprehended by no intellect; and they  
 have earned the name of “darkness” because of the ineffable  
 excellence of their purity. For even this sensible sun often brings 550D  
 darkness upon those who look into it, since they are unable to face  
 its excessive brilliance. Thus there was darkness over the abyss of  
 the primordial causes. For before they entered into the plurality of  
 the *spiritual* essences no created intellect could know of them what  
 they were, and darkness is still over this abyss because it is perceived 551A

Concerning  
 the prim-  
 ordial causes  
 of the  
 intelligibles

by no intellect except that which formed it in the beginning. But from its effects, that is, from its processions into intelligible forms it is known only that it is, but not understood (as to) what it is.

18  
An inquiry  
concerning  
the causes

But whether that mystical invisible earth and the dark intelligible abyss of the first causes itself will be for ever an invisible earth and the abyss will remain eternally dark, or whether at a certain time [namely after the end of the visible world] they will come into the knowledge of intelligible and rational essences, (is a question which) requires no little investigation.

A. Rather the greatest. And I earnestly beg you not to pass it by without examination.

551B N. Tell me, please, what you think: Do the primordial causes of things, which we think to be signified by the words "earth" and "abyss", and to be called invisible and dark on account of their incomprehensible and excessive depth, cease to be invisible and incomprehensible once they proceed through generation into the genera and species, individuals and differences of things (which are) comprehensible either to sense or to intellect, or do they remain for ever in the excellence of their proper nature in which they were created in the beginning before all things, and do not become subject to any sense or intellect, so that at the same time as they are manifest to senses (and) to intellects after a certain mode in the things of which they are the causes, they do not abandon the excellence of their incomprehensibility but ever abide, as it were, in a kind of darkness, I mean in the most secret recesses of the Divine Wisdom?

551C A. I should believe that they are always invisible and dark. For if the Wisdom of God the Father itself, in which all things were made and truly subsist and without which it is understood that there is nothing, remains in itself incomprehensible and invisible — for it is the inaccessible light which passes all understanding —, what wonder if the causes of all things, which are created in it and through it and for it, should be believed to be eternally invisible and incomprehensible and to remain for ever without change? And we can make [that] conjecture from the example of our own nature. For that which our intellect once rationally conceives in itself [and brings to the condition of pure and perfect understanding] it always retains in itself at the same time as it expresses it outwardly by  
551D certain signs. For instance, if the wise mind has grasped the true knowledge of some sensible or intelligible thing, that knowledge

remains fixed in it at the same time as it does not hesitate to express it first by means of phantasies to the thought, then to the senses, [then in verbal signs and other indications by which the mind is wont to reveal its secret undertakings so that step by step they descend into] the knowledge of other minds by natural and artificial progressions. 552A

N. The principal causes, then, both proceed into *the things of which* they are the causes and at the same time do not depart from their Principle, that is, the Wisdom of the Father, in which they are created, and, if I may so express it, just as [remaining] in themselves invisibly by being eternally concealed in the darkness of their excellence, do not cease to appear by being brought forth into the light, as it were, of knowledge in their effects.

A. *These things can* be reasonably argued. [But I should like to know whether or not the principles of things which are called by the names of the primordial causes understand themselves before they flow forth into those things of which they are the causes. Another inquiry concerning the causes

N. This can be answered in a few words. For if God made in His Wisdom everything that He made, as the Scripture witnesses which says, “Thou hast made all things in Thy Wisdom”, who may doubt but that all things that were made in Wisdom, as Wisdom knows herself and the things that are made in her, (so) not only know themselves but also do not lack knowledge of the things of which they are the principles? For it is not to be believed that anything was created in the Divine Wisdom which is not wise and does not know itself. But these things we must consider more diligently elsewhere. 552B

A. So let it be. [For it requires an explanation (that is) neither brief nor perfunctory. If the primordial causes have wisdom of themselves because they are created in Wisdom and subsist eternally in that which admits nothing unwise [in itself], how is it that from the wise causes many unwise things proceed? For not all things that flow forth from them are wise. For we hold that two natures participate in wisdom, the intellectual in angels and the rational in men. But the other things which can be comprehended by the senses or by the intellect we consider (to be) devoid of wisdom <although one might reply briefly that it is not strange that the causes of unwise things subsist in wise exemplars when we see that the origins of darkness naturally inhere in the rays of the sun and that while these allow no darkness to be in themselves, yet they produce it as an opposite of themselves, as it were, from the causes that inhere in them> ].] 552C

19 N. What, then, is the meaning of what follows: “And the Spirit of God was borne above the waters”? Was this perhaps added lest it should be thought that the primordial causes, by the excellence of their nature, surpass not only the power of the intellectual and the rational creature but also any cognition by intellect on the part of their Creator? “And the Spirit of God”, he says, “was borne above the waters”, as though he was saying: The abyss of the primordial causes, (which is) infinite and incomprehensible and therefore justly called invisible and dark, does not so far elude by the depth of *its* obscurity every intellect and reason that it cannot even be comprehended or surpassed by the Spirit of God. For God made them in the beginning as a kind of foundations and principles of all the natures which are from Him, and He comprehends them in His supereminent (and) infinite gnostic power, and His Spirit is borne above them [not by movement through space but by the eminence of its knowledge].

Concerning the super-eminence of 552D the Divine Spirit

553A

This also can *be said*: “The Spirit of God was borne above the waters.” For we ought not to believe that the primordial causes of all (things) are of such excellence that no higher cause precedes them so as to surpass them. For there is one and the same cause of all (things) out of which and through which (and) in which and for which the causes and preceding [origins] of all things were first created, and therefore not inappropriately Scripture [testifies] that it is borne above all things [because it precedes the order of the universal creature which takes the beginning of its being from it and in it finds its end] — not that in it one thing is created sooner or later than another in a temporal sense, for all things are eternally in it and were created by it at one and the same time — but because the Divine Providence brought forth from non-existence [into] existence the universe of created nature in an order (which is) ineffable and incomprehensible to every intellect; and (because) some things are preferred to others by reason of a kind of dignity of their essence, so that those things which are believed and understood to be in the immediate and proximate presence of the Universal Cause of all, I mean God himself, without, that is, the interposition of any higher creature, are rightly called the first principles of the created universe; after which the rest descend one after another, from the highest to the lowest [that is, from the beginning of the intelligible creature to the lowest of all, which is body].

553B

553C

So the Spirit of God is borne above the dark abyss of the primordially created causes of all (things) because only the Creator



Spirit is supereminent over created causes in the excellence of His knowledge and is the one and only cause which precedes and excels over all the causes which He had created, and the first Source of all things which flow forth from Him into infinity and return to Him again; and if we have a right understanding of the Holy Spirit, Himself flows forth from none other than the Father. For from Him through an ineffable generation is the Son in Whom, as in the Beginning, He made all things; from Him in procession is the Holy Spirit Who is borne above all things. For the Father wills, the Son makes, the Holy Spirit perfects. 553D

[Nor does this appear to conflict with the divine word which says that the Father made all things in the Son. For it is not one thing for the Father to will all (things) and another for the Father to make all (things) in the Son, but it is one and the same thing for the Father to will and for the Father to make. For His will is His act. And the same must be understood both in the case of the Son and in that of the Holy Spirit. For their act is not other than their will, nor is there one will of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit, but one and the same will, one love of the three Substances of the one essential Goodness by which the Father moves Himself to make all things in the Son (and) to perfect all things in the Holy Spirit; and the whole of that which the Son makes and the Holy Spirit perfects is referred to the Father as maker and perfecter because from Him are all things. For from Him through generation is the Son Who makes all things, from Him through procession is the Holy Spirit Who perfects all things: the supreme Trinity Whose being is understood from the things that are, and Whose Wisdom is known from the things that are wise, and Whose Life is most clearly demonstrated from the things that move. Therefore it is, and is wise, and is living.] 554A 554B

But if it be read as it is reported to have been translated by a certain Syrian who, as St. Basil says, “was as far from worldly wisdom as he was near to the doctrine of the things that are true”, “And the Spirit of God fermented the waters”, it becomes easier to understand. For the Holy Spirit fermented, that is, nourished in the fermentation of the Divine Love, the primordial causes which the Father had made in the Beginning, that is, in His Son, so that they might proceed into those things of which they are the causes. For to this end are eggs fermented by birds, from whom this metaphor is drawn, that the inward invisible power of the seeds which is latent in them may break forth through the individuation of places and times

into visible forms and corporeal beauties by the operation of fire  
554C and air upon the humours and the earthly matter of the seeds.

20 A. Nor is this repugnant to a sound intellect. But I should like you to make a concise and clear ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, that is, recapitulation, so that I may the more plainly and distinctly understand which words of the passage of Holy Scripture specifically signify the first causes of nature, (and) which the Cause of all causes.

N. Be ready, then, to attend more carefully to these (words).

A. I am ready.

N. Understand that the first causes, which St. Dionysius calls the beginnings of all things, are signified by these words both in a general and in a special sense: “In the beginning God made heaven and earth”, that is: In His Word God created all at once the causes  
554D of the intelligible and of the sensible essences. But what the prophet pronounced generically he then wished to divide specifically. Therefore understand that the causes of the sensible things of which this world is made and which because of the excessive subtlety of their nature cannot be contemplated by the mind’s eye, and because of  
555A their extreme purity are free from all bodily grossness, are signified by the words, “Now the earth was invisible and incomposite” — for so the Seventy translated it — or according to the Hebrew original, “Now the earth was waste and void.”

Next, understand that the first beginnings of the celestial and intelligible essences, which because of the excessive profundity and subtlety and obscurity of their condition surpass all understanding, are signified by these words, which accord with both interpretations: “And darkness was over the abyss.” But seeing that the Cause of all causes and the Beginning of all beginnings and the unique Source from which all (things) which are in heaven and earth flow forth by  
555B the inaccessible and incomprehensible excellence of its light, more than surpasses and more than knows all (things) which it created in the primordial causes, understand that its superessentiality and superexcellence are signified by these words: “And the Spirit of God was borne above the waters.” For that which Theology has revealed specifically of the Holy Spirit sound faith both believes and understands generally of the Most High and Holy Trinity. For the holy and indivisible Trinity, by the excellence of its essence and wisdom, is borne above the infinite abyss which it created.

But should you wish to follow that Syrian whom St. Basil praises so highly in his Hexameron, who, in place of what other

translators put down, namely, “And the Spirit of God was borne above the waters,” translated in the Syrian tongue which is akin to the Hebrew, “And the Spirit of God fermented the waters”, or, 555C  
 “And the Spirit of God fertilized the waters”, you will find that the divine goodness, surpassing by the height of its clemency the dark abyss of the primordial causes and fermenting and fertilizing it so that from the hidden and unknown recesses of their nature they might issue forth into the faculty of knowledge through generation, and through the multiple procession into genera and forms and proper species of sensible and intelligible substances into their various and innumerable effects, is intended by these words: “And the Spirit of God fermented the waters.”

And from this understand that the most high and unique Cause of all (things), I mean the Holy Trinity, is openly revealed by these words: “In the Beginning God made heaven and earth,” that is to say, the Father under the name of God, and His Word under the name of Beginning, and the Holy Spirit a little later where (the Scripture) says: “The Holy Spirit was borne above”; for Holy 555D  
 Scripture did not here mean any other spirit. Thus you have, if I am not mistaken, both the primordial causes and the Cause of causes openly and distinctly declared in these pages from the divine word. 556A

A. I have certainly, and I readily agree [that by the name of God is indicated the Father, (by the name) of Beginning the Son, (by the name) of Spirit of God the Holy Spirit; while by the word “earth” are indicated the causes of visible (things), by the word “abyss” those of intelligible (things), and the [super] eminence of the Divine [Nature], that is, the transcendence of the Cause of causes, is intimated by the symbol of superlatation or fermentation or fertilization].

N. Before, then, we come to consider the sixfold quantity of the primordial causes distinguished by the divine word into the six intelligible first days, we should, I think, if you agree, say a few (words) about the first and supreme Cause of all, I mean, about the Holy Trinity.

A. There is nothing I should more eagerly ask for, nothing I would more willingly hear, nothing I would more wholesomely believe, nothing more profound that I could understand, than what, after true and credible investigations, is said of the universal (and) ineffable Source of all (things). For there is no other health for faithful souls than to believe in what is truly said of the One Principle of all (things), and to understand what is truly believed. Concerning the Supreme 556B Cause of All

N. Tell (me), then, please: What do you understand when you hear it said by the divine word: "In the Beginning God made"?

A. Nothing else than what we have agreed upon, that the Father made all things in His Word. For when I hear "God" I think of God the Father, (and) when (I hear) "Beginning" I understand God the Word.

556C N. What is it [that the theologian says], "In the Beginning God made"? Do you understand that the Father first brought forth His Word and then made heaven and earth in Him? Or perhaps that He brought forth His Word in eternity and in eternity made all things in Him, so that the procession of the Word from the Father through generation in no way precedes the procession of all (things) from nothing in the Word through creation? [And to put it more clearly: Were the primordial causes not always [in] the Word of God in Whom they are made, and was there the Word when the causes were not? Or are they co-eternal with Him and was the Word never without the causes created in Him, and does (the fact that) the Word precedes the causes created [in Him] mean nothing else than that the Word creates the causes, while the causes are created by the Word and in the Word?]

That the  
Word pre-  
cedes all  
(things) not  
temporally  
but causally  
556D

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A. I should hesitate to agree with the former alternative, for I do not see how the generation of the Word from the Father can in a temporal sense precede the creation of all (things) by the Father in the Word and through the Word; but I think these to be co-eternal with each other, I mean the generation of the Word and the creation of all (things) in the Word. For one rightly understands that there is no accident or temporal motion or temporal process in God. But I see nothing inconvenient in granting the second proposition, that is, that the generation of the Word by the Father does not in any <temporal> sense precede the creation of all things in the Word by the Father, but is co-eternal with it. For the prophet also says, addressing the Father, "Thou hast made all things in Thy Wisdom." For in one act the Father brought forth His Wisdom and made all things in it. And in another place the same prophet says, (speaking) in the person of the Father: "My heart brought forth the good Word, I speak my works unto the King," as though he were to say openly: When my Word is born out of the recesses of My Essence I make in Him My works which I give to Him as King. Again the same prophet (says, addressing) the Father: "With Thee is the Beginning [in the day of Thy power], as though he had said: With Thee and in Thee is eternally the Beginning of all (things), that

is, Thy Word. If, then, the Beginning is eternally in the Father and 557B  
with the Father there was never (a time when) it was without being a  
Beginning; but it always was the Beginning; and because it is not an  
accident of it to be the Beginning, it was never without those things  
of which it is the Beginning.

“In the day of Thy power.” <“In the day”,> that is, in the  
knowledge of the generation by Thee of the intellectual and rational  
creature; “of Thy power”, that is, of Thy Wisdom. For the day of  
the Power of the Father is here not inappropriately understood (as)  
the knowledge of the ineffable birth of God the Word from God the  
Father [in so far as it is given to the creature to understand that  
which passes all understanding, and access is permitted to the  
inaccessible Light by means of theophanies [ <that is> divine  
manifestations] which the divine word instils into, and, in a manner  
ineffable and known to none, implants in pure intellects so that they  
possess in themselves some condition of true knowledge of that  
which in itself is altogether unknowable]. For the Power of the  
Father is the Wisdom of the Father in which He made all (things). 557C

But that knowledge [of the divine generation] is in me <at  
present> by faith, in the angel by vision, or rather, neither in me  
nor in the angel is it by vision. For “who shall relate His gener-  
ation?” For no man, nor any of the celestial powers, can know of  
the generation of the Word from the Father how it is or of what  
kind it is, just as no man or angel knows what [or who] it is who  
begat or [who it is or] what it is that was begotten, but [only] He  
Who begat knows what He begat and how was begotten that which  
was begotten, *and* (only) He Who begat knows of Himself what He  
is and the manner and the character of that which He begat from  
Himself. Similarly that which is begotten knows of itself what it is  
and the manner and the character of its begetting, and of Him who  
begat it knows who and what He is [for if no one knows the Father  
save the Son and him to whom the Son is willing to reveal (Him),  
does it not follow that no one knows the Son save the Father and  
him to whom the Father is willing to reveal (Him)? — provided we  
understand by that, revelation through theophanies? For it is  
impossible for the Essence of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, and (their)  
Substance(s) to be revealed to the creature directly as they are. The  
same must be understood concerning the manner and quality of the  
divine generation], — that is, if it is proper to apply the terms  
“who” and “what” to the Divine Nature, which is more than person  
and more than substance; (and) if, similarly, manner and quality

Concerning  
the Begetter  
and the  
557D  
begotten

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may be predicated of that Nature which surpasses every manner and every quality and the other things that are spoken of as accidents, on which we reached agreement in the first book.

<(The passage) continues:> “In the splendours of the saints out of the womb before the daystar I have begotten Thee.” The order of the words (should be): Out of the womb I have begotten Thee in the splendours of the saints before the daystar. Understand “womb” here to be the secret recesses of the Father’s *substance* out of which the only begotten Son, Who is the Word of the Father, was born, and from which He is always being born, and in which, while He is always being born, He always remains; of which it is said in the Gospel: “No man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son Who is in the recesses of the Father shall Himself tell of Him.” For He *Who* is eternally and immutably in the Father is not separated from the Father, as He Himself says: “I (am) in the Father and the Father in me.”

Concerning the splendours of the saints  
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So the Father out of His womb has begotten His Son in the splendours of the saints. For with the birth of the Son from the Father come into being the splendours of the saints, that is, the cognitions of the elect and their [substantial] predestinations [in the Word of God], Who, as the Apostle witnesses, predestined us for His Kingdom before the secular ages (began). He did not say “before the eternal ages” [for the eternal ages are the co-essential eternity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in which the substantial splendours of the saints and the primordial causes of all things are eternally created, and the effects of those same causes were foreseen and fore-ordained], but “before the secular ages” [in which the causes, made at one and the same time and eternally in the Beginning, in a certain order of secular ages, similarly predefined and foreknown, proceed under the administration of Divine Providence into their effects, whether visible or invisible]. For we believe that the predestinations and precognitions of the saints which the Psalmist calls brightnesses and the reasons of all (things) visible and invisible are co-eternal with the Father and the Son. For, says Augustine, “in the dispensation of the Word of God they are not made but eternal”. By “not made” he means (not) yet made at times and in places through generation, but made eternally in the Word with the creation of the primordial causes. For “in the Beginning God made heaven and earth.” And elsewhere he says: “The Word of God, through which all (things) are made, in which all (things) immutably live, not only (the things) that have been but also (the

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things) that shall be — in Him, however, they neither have been nor shall be, but only are, and all are one, or rather, is one.” Also [John the Theologian] in the Gospel: “That which was made in Him was the life.”

So in the splendours of the saints the Father from His womb has begotten His Son, that is, in His only begotten Son He has begotten the knowledge of the saints that were to be, and indeed created <them> . For the knowledge of the saints in the Wisdom of the Father is their creation. For the understanding of all things <in God> is the essence of all things [because with God it is one and the same thing to know before they are made (the things) which He makes, and to make the things which He knows. God’s knowing and God’s making are therefore one. For by knowing He makes and by making He knows. The knowledge does not precede the thing made nor does the thing made precede the knowledge, since all are once and for all co-eternal save for the status of creator and created]. For God did not get to know all (things) after they were made, but before they had been made he knew all (things) that were to be made, and — what is more wonderful — all things are precisely because they were foreknown. For the essence of all (things) is nothing but the knowledge of all things in the Divine Wisdom. For in Him we live and move and have our being. For, as St. Dionysius says, the knowledge of the things that are is the things that are.

So the splendours of the saints are their substantiations, *clear and known to God*, in the Divine Wisdom and in the primordial causes ; and all this precedes the daystar, that is, both the Nativity of the Word from the Father, and the splendour of the knowledge of the saints, and indeed of all natures, in their principal causes [precedes the daystar]. But (the question) what is the daystar whose rising all these things are understood to precede is treated in many different ways by the wise, and it would be tedious even to mention their opinions. [For that which is said through (the mouth of) the prophet Isaiah, “How did he fall from heaven, the early arising lightbringer” is clearly understood of the devil, and of his body which is known to consist chiefly <in> the impious and apostates and heretics. But the daystar of the Psalmist, while it seems to some to signify the devil, to others (seems) to signify that very bright star which is wont to precede the rising of the Sun, the star before whose appearance above the horizon tradition relates that Christ was born of a virgin according to the flesh, as the holy Father Augustine

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the Daystar

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writes in his “Decades”. But as the Scriptures can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways, tell me, I pray, and explain that which is most convenient to the present discussion, *for I (myself) do not see (clearly) enough (which is best)*.

21 N.] But for me the simplicity (of the text) is sufficient [for the occasion] [for the ingenuity of others is not relevant (here)].

[It seems likely that] this mysterious and prophetic daystar, before whose rising the splendours of the saints in the only begotten Word of God are understood to be, [signifies] this visible world, by that figure of speech which in Greek is called *συνεκδοχή* and is interpreted *conceptio*. By this [figure] the part is signified by the whole and the whole by the part. So before this visible world  
 560B proceeded through generation into the genera and species and all the sensible individuals, God the Father, before the secular ages (began), brought forth His Word, in Whom and through Whom He created in their full perfection the primordial causes of all natures, which, under the administration of Divine Providence, in a wonderful harmony, in their natural course bring to perfection, by their processions through generation at certain places and times and in the multiple differences of genera and species, this visible world from the start at which it begins to be to the finish at which it ceases to be [not by the destruction of its essence but by mutation of its qualities and quantities]. And do not be surprised that this whole world is mystically signified by that part of it which is the daystar, since it is through the sun to which the daystar always clings — for it  
 560C never moves far from it but either rises a [short] while before its rising or sets [a little after its setting] —, that one sees this same sensible world, as Solomon says: “What is it that was? The same as that that shall be. What is it that shall be? The same as that which is to be made. There is nothing new under the sun.”

[For] here we [reasonably] understand the sun (to mean) the whole visible creation. For not only is it that part of this world that is encompassed within the sun’s orbit, I mean the earth and the nature of the waters and the air with the lower part of the aether where the globe of the moon revolves, that is meant by these words of the theologian, but also the upper regions of the world (that extend) from the path of the sun to the extreme circumference of the celestial sphere. For in all these things “under the sun”, that is,  
 560D under heaven, there is nothing new, whether (by this) one understands that there is nothing new in the course of (our) present life  
 561A which has not appeared before in the natural order of things — for



nothing else is perceived and understood at any given time by either sense or intellect save the recurrence of the same things — or, *as Maximus understands this passage of Scripture, that which was before this world the same shall be after the world, that is, only those things that are eternal existed before this world and will exist < after it >* , and there is nothing new under the sun, that is : Whatever new thing there is under this heaven is nothing.

For this whole world is called new because it is not eternal <and arose in time> and therefore is nothing. For it will perish with all that is in it [as the Psalmist witnesses when he says: “The heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish.” — Now, if the greatest and most beautiful part of the world, which heaven is recognized to be, and of which we are not ignorant that it circumscribes the other parts, is to perish, do you suppose that anything in the other parts which are within (it) and inferior (to it) will be able to endure? For in every compact body when the things which contain perish those that are contained cannot remain. — But because it cannot be totally reduced to nothing since it is made by God and everything that is made by God abides for ever, what in it will perish and what will not perish must be inquired into by a careful investigation and must be left for another time. For the time being follow the subject that is in hand]. 561B

A. You argue cautiously and observantly.

N. So the principal causes of all things are co-eternal with God and with the Beginning in which they were made. For if God does not in any way precede the Beginning, that is, the Word begotten by Himself and from Himself, and the Word itself does not in any way precede the causes of things that are created in it, it follows that all these, I mean, God the Father and the Word and the causes created in it, are co-eternal. 561C

A. They are not in all respects co-eternal. For while we believe that the Son is in all respects co-eternal with the Father, those things which the Father makes in the Son we call co-eternal with the Son, but not in all respects co-eternal. They are co-eternal in the sense that the Son was never without the primordial causes of natures created in Him, and yet these causes are not in all respects co-eternal with Him in Whom they are created. For (things) made cannot be co-eternal with their maker because the maker precedes the (things) which he makes. For those (things) which are in all respects co-eternal are so united to one another that neither can endure without

That all things are co-eternal but not in all respects co-eternal with the Word

the other because they are co-essential. But since the maker and the (thing) made are not co-essential, they are not necessarily co-eternal.

- 561D They are, however, necessarily correlative and simultaneous, for a maker without a (thing) made is not a maker, and a (thing) made without a maker is not a (thing) made. Hence it follows that our reason for saying that the primordial causes of things are co-eternal
- 562A with God is that they always subsist in God without any beginning in time, (and our reason for saying) that they are not in all respects co-eternal with God is that they receive the beginning of their being not from themselves but from their Creator. But the Creator Himself receives the beginning of His being from no one because He alone is true eternity, without any beginning and any end since He Himself is the Beginning of all things and their End. [For that is not true eternity which receives the beginning of its being from something else, but is a participation of true eternity which is ἀναρχος, that is, without any beginning. But every creature begins to be, because there was (a time) when it was not. It was in its causes when it was not in its effects. Therefore it is not in all respects co-eternal with true eternity.]

- But if within the very Cause of all causes, I mean in the Trinity, there is understood (to be) some kind of precedence — for the Deity which begets and which sends forth is prior to the Deity which is begotten and the Deity which proceeds from the begetter and the begotten, although it is one indivisible Deity —, is it surprising or incredible that the Cause of all causes should precede all things of which it is the Cause, and (yet) that they have been in it immutably and eternally without any beginning in time? If, then, the Father precedes the origins of the things which He made in the Son in the way in which a maker precedes (the things) which he has made, and the Word precedes (the things) which the Father has made in it in the way in which the art of the artist precedes those reasons which are created in it by the artist, why should not the Holy Spirit Who is borne above the abyss of the primordial causes which the Father has created in the Word be understood to precede [those (things) above which it is borne]? Therefore the Holy Spirit, by virtue of His eternity, surpasses and precedes the mystical waters which He eternally ferments and fertilizes in Himself.

- 562C 22 But if these are reasonable answers to the question concerning the creation of the beginnings, I beg you to explain clearly what is the special role, so to say, which seems to be attributable to the Father, what to the Word, what to the Holy Spirit. For although the

operation of the three Substances of the Divine Goodness is believed and understood to be one and the same and common (to all), yet it must be said that it is not without any difference (in each) or property (of each). For there are things which are attributed by God's holy word to each of the Persons as though by proper right, examples of which are doubtless known to you [but, to make use of a few examples, let us hear from the mouth of God the property of the Father: "When the fulness of time had come God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law;" the property of the Son: "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal to God and yet emptied Himself, receiving the form of a servant", and so forth; the property of the Holy Spirit in administering the Incarnation of the Word is shown in the Gospel when the angel says of the Holy Mother of God, "That which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit"].

Concerning  
the prop-  
erties of the  
three Persons

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N. Your thought seems to me to be pursuing its investigation along right lines. For it does not, in my opinion, deviate from the truth, and therefore I shall attempt an inquiry into that which you ask of me, under the guidance of Him Who enlightens and encourages us to inquire of Him. It seems to me, then, that the divine word attributes to God the Father the property of creating natures in their causes. For it says: "In the Beginning God made heaven and earth," (and) again in another place: "Thou madest all (things) in (Thy) Wisdom," (and) again: "Thou Who madest the world out of unformed matter," and in another place: "All things whatsoever the Lord willed He made in heaven and earth, in the sea and in all the depths," and (there are) a thousand other (instances). But it (also) asserts that it is in the Word that the substantive reasons of things are created, as these [same] passages which have been quoted witness: "In the Beginning God made heaven and earth," and, "Thou madest all things in (Thy) Wisdom." For Beginning is not one thing and Wisdom another and the Word another, but by all these names the only begotten Son of God in Whom and through Whom all things are made by the Father is properly signified. *The Apostle also says*: "In Whom we live and move and have our being" [(and) again: "He is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature, in Whom all (things) are created in the heavenly (regions) and on earth, whether visible or invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities and Powers. All were created through Him and in Him"]. Finally, the distribution of all the causes which the Father created in His Word

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generically and essentially we find allotted by the [same] divine word to the Holy Spirit. For if to Him, as the Apostle witnesses, is given the sharing-out and distribution of divine gifts, why should He not also be given the division of the primordial causes (which are) substantially created in the Word of God? For he says: "To one is given through the Spirit the speaking of wisdom, [to another the speaking of knowledge] according to the same Spirit, to another faith in the same Spirit, but to another the gifts of healings in the same Spirit, but to another the working of miracles, to another prophecies, to another the discerning of spirits, to another (divers) kinds of language, to another interpretations of discourses. But all these are operated by one and the same Spirit, Who dispenses to each as He wills that which is proper (for each)." This we can also demonstrate from the Book of Genesis where it is written: "And the Spirit of God fermented the waters." For what is to be understood by the Spirit of God fermenting, fertilizing (and) nourishing the waters of the primordial causes except the distribution and ordering of those things which in the Word are made simply, as of one form and one (substance), into the differences of all the genera (and) species and wholes [and] parts and individuals? [And if no one of sound faith and right understanding hesitates to affirm that the spiritual gifts which the prophet Isaiah prophesied would rest upon the Head of the Church, which is Christ, are distributed by no other than the Holy Spirit upon God the Incarnate Word, what wonder if upon the Church, which is His Body, the same Spirit should divide and bestow not only the gifts of grace through Christ, but also the gifts of nature through the same Christ?]

Moreover upon every creature visible and invisible He bestows the gift of essence so that those things which possess only being should be, to living things the gift of life by which they live, to sentient things the gift of sense by which they perceive sensibly, to rational beings the gift of reason by which through the act of reasoning they inquire into and find out the natures of things truly and diligently, to intellectual beings the gift of intellect by which they revolve in an ineffable motion and marvellous return about their God, about the Cause, that is, of all gifts, in a manner beyond knowledge and surpassing every creature.] For the symbolic candlestick of the prophet Zechariah, to say nothing of that of Moses [which symbolizes the same thing], signifies the Church. But its lamp which is placed above it is the Light of the Father and of truth "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", our Lord Jesus Christ Who, because He was conceived and born and

manifested in the world for us and out of us in the nature of our flesh, is called the lamp above the candlestick of the Church ; for by nature it is the substantial Wisdom and Word of God the Father, upon Whom rest first (of all), humanly speaking, because He is the Head of the universal body of the Church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are usually signified by the number seven. 564C

For the divine gifts which are distributed through the Holy Spirit to the Church, since their distribution by the one Spirit starts from the Church's Head, I mean Christ, are usually signified by the name of the Spirit Himself. For by nature He cannot be called a gift but the Distributor of gifts, and He is called sevenfold for the reason that He divides among the Church universally and particularly the plenitude of the divine gifts to which the number seven refers. And rightly so ; for the Spirit Himself is co-essential with [the Father and] the Son in respect of His Divinity, upon Whom [I mean, upon the Son] in His Humanity He causes the divine gifts which He distributes to rest. "And," says [the prophet], "the Spirit of God shall rest upon Him," as though he said openly : And there shall rest upon Him the gifts which the Spirit of God divides : "the spirit of wisdom and understanding ; the spirit of counsel and strength ; the spirit of knowledge and piety ; and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord", and all these spirits, that is to say, all these gifts of the Spirit, the Head of the Church, which is Christ, first receives in His Humanity and then shares through His Spirit with [His Body] (, that is,) the Church. But the Holy Spirit Himself, as He essentially subsists [in] the nature of God the Father, so also essentially is [in] the nature of the Son since *as substance* He proceeds from the Father through the Son ineffably born, and therefore the gifts which He distributes are not only His but the Father's from Whom He proceeds and the Son's from Whom and through Whom He proceeds. 564D 565A

And do not suppose that the manifold gifts of the Spirit by which the manifold seeds of sin are expelled from the Church and utterly destroyed are the only ones distributed through the Spirit. For wisdom takes away un wisdom, understanding removes stupidity, counsel destroys indiscretion, strength dissolves weakness, science abolishes ignorance, piety drives out impiety and the wickedness of the works (that are wrought) in it, fear banishes the blindness of contempt ; *but* also in addition to these gifts of grace by which the Church is purified and edified as well as illuminated and perfected, [the donations] of all good (things) which are both of (the Church's) 565B

essence and its natural accidents come, *as none of the faithful doubts*, from no other source than the Cause of all good (things), I mean, from the Father, from Whom are all things, through the Son, in Whom are all things; and [their] distribution *is* [through none other] but the Holy Spirit, Who divides all [among all as He wills].

- 565C “Every good gift and every perfect boon”, says the theologian, “cometh down from the Father of Lights.” What is more explicit, what more obvious? From no other source, he says, than the Father of Lights, that is, from the Father of all good (things), those which are of nature as well as those which are of grace. For well does he call lights all the gifts which come down from the unbegotten Light through the begotten Light, and [through] the proceeding Light to the limits of the capacity [of nature and of the bountifulness of grace] are divided in the substance of every essence, whether general or specific or individual. For that which the Apostle appears to say as though to man alone, “O, man, what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”, can be universally addressed to every creature whether visible or invisible. For there is no created nature which has <anything> but that which it has received from the creative
- 565D <nature> . For [as we said before] if it is, it receives from that its being; if it lives, from that its life; if it is sentient, from that its sensible perception; if it enjoys reason, from that its reason; if it possesses intellect, from that its intellect; and a thousand other things of that kind. If, then, nothing is known to be in the nature of created things except what is given by the Creator, it follows that the creature, whether in essence or accident, is nothing else but the
- 566A <gifts and> boons of the Creator. But the divine word reserves the distribution of boons, as a kind of property, to the Holy Spirit. Therefore all things which the Father makes in the Son the Holy Spirit distributes and divides as the property of each as He wills.

- Do you then see how the divine word is understood to give to each of the Substances or Persons of the Divine Goodness as it were its (special) property? For to the Father it gives the making of all things, to the Word it gives the coming into being eternally in Him of the primordial causes of things universally, essentially (and) simply, to the [Holy] Spirit it gives the distribution of the primordial causes made in the Son and the fertilization into their effects, that is to say, [into] the genera and species, the individuals and differences, whether of the celestial <and spiritual> essences which (either) are wholly without body or adhere to the very pure and spiritual bodies
- 566B (which are) made from the simplicity of [the general] elements, or of

the sensible (beings) of this visible world, (whether) of the universals or of the particulars which occupy separate places and move through times and are differentiated by quality and quantity. [For one would not unreasonably agree that the primordial causes are without body at all, whether visible or invisible, and without quality or quantity in themselves. But we call an invisible body the simple subsistence of each of the elements of this world, considered in itself, while the celestial essences, that is to say, the angelic powers, although they are not unreasonably regarded as being outside this sensible world by reason of the excellence of their intelligible nature, yet, to go by the opinions of the holy fathers, must not be thought entirely lacking in bodies of a spiritual kind. For they must be believed to be subject to the human senses, to which they often become manifest, in spiritual bodies (which are) not foreign (to themselves) but which are their own and with which they are always associated.] 566C

(It is) not that the operation of the indivisible unity of the divine Substances is divided — for that which the Father does so does the Son and [so] does the Holy Spirit —, but that the divine word appears to distribute to each of Them certain (special) properties [and it is right to understand that they possess them. For in the Holy Trinity while the unity of a common operation is recognized, the property of distinct operations is not excluded. For if there is in (the Trinity) unity of Essence and difference of Substances, I do not see why a common operation and different (operations) should not also be believed and understood (to exist) in it, so that the common operation be attributed to the common Essence without denying threefold action to the Trinity of Substances]. 566D

Concerning  
the operation  
of the  
Trinity,  
common and  
particular

A. I see (this) clearly, and it seems to me probable and to accord with the Divine Oracles. But would you please confirm what has been said about the properties of the divine administration by some similitude taken from our own nature, since it is said to be in the likeness of God. 23

N. I would not easily believe that you are unaware of the trinity in our own nature. 567A

A. Please tell me what it is.

N. Do you remember the conclusion we reached in our discussion in the preceding book? Did we not decide that there is no nature which is not understood to fall under these three terms which

by the Greeks, as we have often said, are called οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, [that is] essence, power, operation?

A. I certainly remember and most firmly have (it in mind).

N. Therefore our nature, which is called human because all men participate in it, consists of essence, power, and operation?

A. I should think that no one of those skilled in theology would have any doubt about that.

N. How does it seem to you? Is not our nature, according to Holy Scripture, created in the image and likeness of God?

A. You must be mocking me. He who doubts this is not a man.

567B N. Do you think that the God Who created our nature in His image is a body or a spirit?

A. Concerning this too it would be ridiculous to hesitate, for “God is a spirit, and those who worship Him worship in spirit and in truth”.

N. Therefore it is not in the body but in the soul that the image of God is stamped on our nature?

A. This also is very true.

On faith  
567C N. God is Trinity and Unity, that is, three Substances in one Essence and one Essence in three Substances or Persons. For as the Greeks say μίαν οὐσίαν τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις or τρία πρόσωπα, that is, One Essence three Substances or three Persons, so the Romans (say) unam essentiam tres substantias or tres personas; but [they appear] *to differ* in that we do not find the Greeks saying μίαν ὑπόστασιν, that is, one Substance, whereas the Latins most frequently say unam substantiam tres personas. <The Greeks say> ὁμοούσιον ὁμογάθον ὁμόθεον, that is, of one essence, of one goodness, of one *deity* [or one essence, one goodness, one deity. *But* these terms which among the Greeks signify the indivisibility of the Divine Nature do not go easily into Roman speech, and never do so exactly, I think; and therefore their meaning is only translated in separate words by περίφρασις, so that their sense only is understood while the translation is not word for word].

A. All this the catholic faith of the universal Church professes and as far as possible understands, but where does *this* lead us?

567D N. Nowhere else but that we may *inquire* as best we may how the trinity of our nature expresses [in itself] the image and likeness of the creative Trinity, that is, what [in it] more appropriately



applies to the Father, and what to the Son, (and) what to the Holy Spirit. [I say more appropriately because although the whole trinity of our nature is an appropriate image of the whole Divine Trinity, the whole (of it) bearing the image of the Father, the whole (of it) the image of the Son, the whole (of it) the image of the Holy Spirit, yet there is in it (something) that as it were in a more special sense seems, I think, capable of being connected with each Person severally. For even (considered) in itself our trinity is present as a whole in each (of its members). For its essence is both power and operation, its power both essence and operation, its operation both essence and power, in the same way as the Father is both in the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Son both in the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit both in the Father and the Son.]

568A  
Concerning  
the image

A. Nothing seems to me more likely than that the essence of our nature is accommodated to the image of the Father, its power (to that) of the Son, its operation (to that) of the Holy Spirit. For the paternal Substance which brought forth from itself the filiated Substance and the proceeding Substance is not unreasonably called the principal Substance — not that the one Essence of the Holy Trinity is [separable] — for it is one and indivisible —, but being one it is yet not without difference of substance. For it is the Deity which begets and the Deity which is begotten and the Deity which proceeds, though He be one indivisible Deity, even though it is not indistinguishable in differences of substance.

568B

Concerning  
the Deity  
which is  
Three and  
One

Also, the power (of our nature) not inappropriately appertains to God the Son, for He is often called by the divine word the Power of the Father; but to take a single instance out of many, hear the Apostle: “For the invisible things of Him are seen to be understood by means of the things that are made, and so are His everlasting Power and His Eternity;” for in this passage we understand the Power of the Father (to be) the Father’s Wisdom [I mean, the Son], while the Eternity (we understand to be) the Holy Spirit, according to the venerable master Maximus. [For that the Holy Spirit is customarily called by the name of Power in the Scriptures the Gospel testifies when the Lord says, as He is healing the woman (who is) ἀίμορροοῦσα, that is, afflicted with an issue of blood: “I perceived power go out of Me,” that is, the Holy Spirit which dispenses the gifts of healing].

568C

What should I say of the essential operation of our nature? Does it not most aptly appertain to the Holy Spirit, to Whom is attributed, as His (special) property so to speak, the operation of the

powers and the distribution of the divine gifts both universally (to all) and particularly to each?

Thus, in the essence of our nature is recognized the property of the paternal Substance; in its power (that of) the Substance of the Son; in its operation (that of) the Substance of the Holy Spirit.

N. I think your reply does not disagree with the truth; but consider: What is your opinion of that very much spoken-of trinity of our nature which is understood (to consist) of intellect and reason and sense? *Is it something different* from the one we have just mentioned or are this and that one and the same, and not two (trinities) in our nature (which is) one and the same? Now by sense I mean not the exterior but the interior. For it is the interior which is co-essential with reason and intellect, while the exterior, although it seems to belong more to the soul [than to the body], yet does not *constitute* the essence of the soul but, as the Greeks say, is a kind of conjunction of soul and body. For when the body perishes and life departs it disappears entirely. For if it remained in the soul and belonged to its substance, then (the soul) would make use of it even without the body, but since in fact without the body it neither does nor can do so, one is left with the conclusion that it neither remains in the body when it perishes nor does it continue with the soul when she ceases to control the body. [For even that definition by which St. Augustine wished to define exterior sense clearly does not (make it) belong to the substantial parts of the soul. "Sense", he says, "is a passion of the body of which the soul as such is not unaware." Also another (definition) according to which "sense is the φαντασία of sensible things assumed through the instruments of the body" similarly does not seem to attach it to the nature of the soul, but makes it a kind of messenger between body and soul.]

The  
definition of  
exterior  
sensation

And if one examines more carefully the semasiology of the Greek language one will find that the word has two senses. For in that language intellect is called νοῦς, reason λόγος, and sense διάνοια; (but) this (does) not (mean) exterior but interior (sense), and it is of these three that the essential trinity of the soul constituted in the image of God subsists. For (the trinity of the soul) is intellect and reason and the sense that is called interior and essential, while the exterior which we have described as a link between body and soul [is called] αἴσθησις, and the instruments in which it resides (are called) αἰσθητήρια for αἰσθήσεως τήρια, that is, the guardians of sensation, for in them sense is guarded and functions; and they are five in number: sight, hearing, smell, taste,

touch. And it ought not to worry you that the fivefold instrument is named after the fivefold sense. For a very frequent usage both in common speech and in Holy Scripture calls the seat of the senses by the names of the senses themselves. For the eye is called sight and the ear hearing and the other senses also have their instruments named after them. But sense is called fivefold not because it is in itself divided into five parts — for it is simple and uniform and resides in the heart as its principal seat — but because it is through the fivefold instrument of the body, as though through the five gates of a city, that it receives within *likenesses* of sensible (things) originating *from the qualities and quantities* of the outside world [and from the other things by which the exterior sensation is formed] and like a gate-keeper and messenger announces to the presiding interior sense whatever it lets in from outside.

569D

570A

A. It does not worry me [that the names of the senses are given to their instruments] nor am I unaware, as I think, of the difference between the two (kinds of) sense which you have clearly distinguished; and with such power of comprehension as my feeble intellect possesses I shall say what I perceive about the aforesaid trinity of our nature.

There seem to be two trinities in which our nature is shown to subsist in so far as it is made in the image of God, but if the truth be consulted they are found to differ from each other not in reality but only in name. For νοῦς and οὐσία, that is, intellect and essence, denote the highest part of our nature [or rather, its highest motion. For, as you yourself understand, it is not one thing for our nature to be and another thing for it to move. For its essence is its motion-in-rest and rest-in-motion about God [and the creature]. But when it moves about God, Who surpasses all things, this is called its *highest* motion; while when it turns about the primordial causes which are closest to God and come next after Him, it is understood, as it were, to moderate its motion somewhat; but when it attempts to perceive the effects of the primordial causes, whether visible or invisible, it is recognized to be going through its lowest motion — not because what is the same substantial motion can itself become greater or less, but because it is thought of as being least or moderate or greatest according to the status of the objects about which it turns]. *Therefore* the essence of our soul is the intellect which presides over the totality of human nature [because it is carried about God above every nature (and) beyond knowledge].

570B

Concerning  
the three  
motions of  
the divine  
image

570C But λόγος or δύναμις, that is, reason or power, signifies, as it were, the second part [not unreasonably, since they are carried about the principles of things, which are first after God]. The third part, however, is denoted by the names of διάνοια and ἐνέργεια, that is, sensation and operation, [and occupies, as it were, the lowest place in the human soul; not unreasonably, for it revolves about the effects of the primordial causes, whether they *be* visible or invisible]. So, we should understand that there are not two substantial trinities, but one and the same, created in the likeness of the Creator.

570D But I wonder why I do not see that life-principle which is called by the Greeks θρεπτική and ἀξητική and by our (writers) nutritive and auctive — for it nourishes the body and gives it increase — included by you either as a fourth substantial part of our nature or within the substantial trinity, but as it were wholly omitted as though it did not belong to the constitution of our nature at all.

571A N. Do not wonder, for it is not without reason that we have done this, since our discourse is not at the moment concerned with the whole of human nature, which is seen to consist, as it were, of five parts, that is, body [and] vital motion, sense and reason, and intellect; but only with that part in which the image and likeness of the Creator is seen, that is, with intellect, reason, and interior sense, or, so to say, with essence, power, (and) operation. For it is in this triad that the image of the most high and holy Trinity is known to be expressed.

571B For concerning the vital motion [by which the soul] nourishes and unifies and quickens and administers the body as well as giving it increase [and concerning the body itself which occupies the lowest position in the whole creation] there will be a place for discussion elsewhere when <in the fourth book> the discourse will be, under God's guidance, of the sensible natures. For since it is recognized that this part lies outside the property of our intelligible essence in which we are created in the image of God, it has for this reason been ignored by us for the present since it is a certain motion [outside our nature (as it was) primordially created] [subjoined to, and as a penalty for sin added to] our substantial operation which is called, as we have said, interior sense; by which, that is, (by which) motion, it administers those things which have been added to human nature after sin, I mean this body, corruptible and mortal and variable in places and times, divisible into the number of its parts, extended in spaces, susceptible to increases and decreases, subject to diverse qualities and quantities, prone to every irrational motion, the shelter

of the soul while it is still carnal (and) involved in all kinds of disasters as punishment for its disobedience and pride, and all the other things which are spoken of and known by experience concerning the unhappiness of human nature thrust from the happiness of paradise into this life. 571C

So the motion by which human nature administers those things which are joined to it in retribution for violation of the divine command — but by retribution I do not mean the vengeance of an angry God but the chastening of a merciful one — is not unreasonably left outside the bounds of our essential trinity. [And do not suppose that we wish by these words to teach that the aforesaid trinity of human nature created in paradise in the image of God was, before it sinned, without any body at all. Far, far be it from us to believe this or in any way think it! For the Creator made our souls and bodies all at once in paradise — by bodies I mean celestial (and) spiritual bodies such as they will be after the resurrection. For it must not be doubted that the puffed up, mortal, and corruptible bodies with which we are now encumbered take their origin not from nature but from sin.] 571D

Therefore, that which has grown on to our nature in consequence of sin, once (our nature) is renewed in Christ [and restored to its former state, it will be without — for that cannot be co-eternal with nature which is attached to it on account of sin —]; and it is not unreasonable, I think, that it should not be counted among the constituent parts of its substance < — not that even that which has been superadded will perish, but it will pass into that which was created in the beginning, and will become one with that, not as two (entities) but an incorruptible and spiritual One, through the grace of God the Word Who had descended not only into that which is of our nature but also into that which was superadded so that He might restore in Himself all that is ours, and so that He Who made both might make the things which are naturally part of us one with those that were, in addition, attached to them from above > . 572A

A. Certainly it is not unreasonable, but in strictest accord with what a rational nature would find by a valid and subtle investigation. But as yet I do not see where this (leads).

N. Be patient. For it is no trivial inquiry that we are embarked upon nor one which can be investigated or brought to a conclusion except by many devious approaches of a most precise reasoning if, indeed, it can ever be wholly concluded. For no mortal sense, 572B

however shrewd its inquiry may seem, can give assurance of this without incurring the charge of rashness [because he who undertakes to find the solution by himself surpasses his own powers. For if it is found it is not he who searches but He Who is sought and Who is the Light of our minds Who finds it]. For, unless I am mistaken, we are inquiring how we can argue from the substantial trinity of our nature created in the image of God to that most high Trinity [which is God], and *the distribution to each of the Persons* of their proper operations, so to speak, in created nature.

A. This it is which we are now seeking and nothing else; and the proper procedure requires that we should seek the truth in this way [for it is by arguing from the image that the very truth of which  
572C it is the image must be sought], which the more diligently and painstakingly it is sought, the more ardently it is preferred and the more clearly it is revealed. For of what avail is speed if the pure contemplation of truth eludes it, and what harm is there in slowness if it lead to the Divine Countenance?

N. Let us then begin our reasoning from the words of the venerable Maximus, not making use of continuous extracts from the discourses but availing ourselves of their sense.

A. Proceed upon the path of reasoning by whatever means you wish.

N. There are three universal motions of the soul, of which the first is of the mind, the second of the reason, the third of sense. And  
Concerning the three motions of the soul  
572D the first is simple and surpasses the nature of the soul herself and cannot be interpreted [that is, it cannot have knowledge of that about which it moves]; “by this motion the soul moves about the unknown God, but, because of His excellence, she has no kind of knowledge of Him from the things that are” as to what He is [that is to say, she cannot find Him in any essence or substance or in anything which can be uttered or understood; for He surpasses everything that is and that is not, and there is no way in which He can be defined as to what he is].

The second motion is that by which she “defines the unknown”  
573A God “as Cause” of all. For she defines God as being Cause of all things; and this motion is within the nature of the soul, “and by it she moves naturally and takes upon herself by the operation of her science all the natural reasons (which are) formative of all things, which subsist as having been eternally made in Him Who is known only as Cause” [for He is known because He is Cause], that is, she

expresses (them) in herself through her knowledge of them, and the knowledge itself is *begotten* by the first motion *in the second*.

The third motion is “composite, (and is that) by which” the soul “comes into contact with that which is outside her as though by certain signs and re-forms within herself the reasons of visible things”. It is called composite not because it is not simple in itself as the first and second are simple, but because its first knowledge of the reasons of sensible things does not come from (the things) themselves. *For first* (the soul) receives the phantasies of the things themselves through the exterior sense, (which is) fivefold because of the number of the corporeal instruments in which and through which it operates, and by gathering them to itself (and) sorting them out it sets them in order; then, getting through them to the reasons of the things of which they are the phantasies, she moulds them [I mean the reasons] and shapes them into conformity with herself. 573B

[And let it not trouble you that a little earlier we defined exterior sense as the phantasy of sensible things while now we teach that it is the means by which the phantasies of those same sensible things reach the interior sense. *For this third motion* begins to move as a consequence of being informed of the phantasies of exterior things by means of the exterior sense. 573C

Concerning  
the differ-  
ence of the  
senses

For there are two kinds of phantasies, of which the first is that which is born at first of sensible nature in the instruments of the senses and is properly called the image expressed in the senses; while the second is that which is formed next out of this image, and it is this phantasy which properly bears the customary name of exterior sense. And that (which comes) first is always attached to the body, that (which comes) after to the soul. And the first, although it is in the sense, is not sensible of itself, but the second is both sensible of itself and receives the first.]

But when *this third motion* abandons the phantasies of sensible things and clearly understands the reasons stripped bare of all corporeal imagery and in their own simplicity, it transmits the reasons of visible things freed from every phantasy back to the first motion through the intermediate motion as the simple operation of something which is also (itself) simple, that is to say (it transmits them as) universal reasons by a universal operation. But the first motion itself carries back whatever it perceives from the third through the intermediate, and from that intermediate immediately in the modified forms of created things, to that which, unknown immediately in itself [as to what it is], is yet known by the fact that it 573D

574A

is the cause of all things, and to the principles of all things, that is, to the principal causes which are created by it and in it and distributed by it. [That is, he understands that they proceed from God through them into all things that are after them and through them return to Him again.]

- Therefore the motion of the soul which is purged by action, illumined by knowledge, perfected by the divine word, (the motion) by which she eternally revolves about the unknown God, and understands that God Himself is beyond both her own nature and that of all things, absolutely distinct from everything which can either be said or understood and everything which cannot be said or understood — and yet which somehow exists —, and denies that He is anything of the things that are or of the things that are not [and] affirms that all things that are predicated of Him are predicated of Him not literally but metaphorically, is called *νοῦς* by the Greeks but by our writers *intellectus* or *animus* or *mens*; and it exists substantially, and is understood to be the principal part of the soul. For the essential being of the soul is not other than her substantial motion. *For* the soul subsists in her motions and her motions subsist in her. For she is by nature simple and indivisible, and is differentiated only by the substantial differences of her motions. For if, according to the tradition handed down by the holy fathers, the celestial essences, which the Divine Oracles also call the celestial and angelic powers, are substantially nothing else but intelligible, eternal [and] unceasing motions about the Beginning of all things, from
- 574B Whom and through Whom and in Whom and towards Whom they move and subsist [for the motion of the celestial powers about their Beginning is circular, that is to say, <it starts> from Him as their Beginning, it passes through Him *by means of the created causes*, (it moves) in Him as in the natural laws which are in Him and beyond which it neither wills (to stray) nor can (stray) nor can will to stray, (and) returns to Him as its end, and such a motion exists in the understanding alone; for they understand that they are from Him and that their intellect *moves* through Him and in Him, and they know for certain that they have no other end than Him], what is to prevent us from understanding in a similar way that human intellects unceasingly revolve about God, seeing that they are from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him [for they revolve in the same intelligible circle], especially as the Divine Oracles declare that man is made in the image of God, which we do not find explicitly said of the angels? <However, we are left to infer this
- 574C
- 574D
- Concerning  
the first  
motion



from their intellectual nature.> Also we read that the celestial powers stand in the presence of God and minister to Him, but the Catholic Faith witnesses that human nature became God in the Word of God and sitteth at the right hand of God and reigneth. 575A

*But* that which the Lord promises to all men generally after the resurrection of all, “They shall be as angels of God in heaven,” is to be understood, I think, as a sharing in the same status of nature *and as* an equality of immortality and (as meaning) that they shall lack all corporeal sexuality and every corruptible mode of generation. For it is not unreasonable to believe that man’s first state before sin in paradise, that is, in heavenly bliss, was equal and, as it were, of the same nature with (that of) the angels. [For the divine word refers to both these natures, I mean the angelic and the human, when it says: “Who made the heavens in intellect,” that is, in order that they might be intelligences in essence and substance.] But since man when he was in honour abandoned his intellect and became equal to the beasts who lack wisdom and was made like them, he withdrew far from his angelic status and fell into the misfortune of this mortal life. But after the Word was made flesh, that is, (after) God was made man, there is fulfilled what is written in the psalm: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?” [marvelling, that is, at the exaltation of the first state of human nature] “Thou madest him” <it says> “a little less than the angels” [that is, Thou hast permitted him to be made less because of his pride, and Thou hast left him of his own proper will to fall into the disgrace of an irrational life. For by a figure of speech God is said to do what He allows to be done]; “Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour and hast set him above the works of Thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet.” 575B 575C

Do you see how deeply human nature has been humiliated in the first man after sin, and how highly, through grace, it has been exalted in the second man, I mean, in Christ? For man is not only restored to the first state of his nature from which he fell, but is even lifted up <in his Head, which is Christ> above all the celestial powers. For where sin was abundant grace was more abundant.

If therefore human nature, renewed in Christ, not only attains the angelic status but is even carried up beyond every creature into God, and if it would be impious to deny that that which was done in the Head will be (done) in the members, what wonder if human intellects are nothing else but the ineffable and unceasing motions — in those [I mean] who are worthy — about God, in Whom they 575D

live and move and have their being? [For they have their being through the reasons by which they exist, they move through the reasons of the powers by which they are able to exist well, they live through the reasons by which they exist eternally. Thus they have being and well being and eternal being in God.]

576A A. Not only do I admit but I also understand that the most excellent motion of the soul about the unknown God beyond every creature is most rightly called, and is, intellect. But how or in what sense the intellect, while confined to the limits of human nature, can ascend above itself and above every creature so as to be able to perform its substantial motions about the unknown God Who is far removed from every created nature <should, I think, be investigated> .

Concerning  
the failure of  
reason in (the  
contempla-  
576B  
tion of)  
deified souls

N. In this part of (our) contemplation which concerns the intellectual and rational substances, when it comes to the question how created nature can ascend beyond itself so as to be able to adhere to the creative Nature, every inquiry of those who study the potentiality of nature fails. For there we see not a reason of nature but the ineffable and incomprehensible excellence of Divine Grace. For in no created substance does there naturally exist the power to surpass the limits of its own nature and directly attain to Very God in Himself. For this is of grace alone, not of any power of nature.

[This is why the Apostle confesses that he does not know how he was rapt into paradise, saying: "I know the man (was) rapt but I do not know how, whether in the body or out of the body." For it is not in the natural motions of the soul that I see in the body or out of the body any power by which I can be rapt into the Third Heaven. <But> only God knows, and it is only by His grace that I know for certain I was rapt. For no nature can of itself ascend into that place of which the Lord says: "Where I am, there (is) my servant also." <Therefore, just as it passes all intellect how the Word of God descends into man, so it passes all reason how man ascends into God.> ]

576C

A. Although your reply is brief it is sufficient <and> clear; so turn your attention to what comes next, the consideration of the second motion of the soul.

Concerning  
the second  
motion

N. The second motion of the soul, as we have said, is that which is contained within the bounds of its nature and defines the Very God as Cause, that is, it knows only this about the God Who is unknown as to what He is, (namely), that He is the Cause of all

things that are, and that the primordial causes of all (things) are eternally created by Him and in Him ; and it impresses the knowledge of those causes, when it has understood them, upon the soul herself, whose motion it is, as far as her capacity allows. [For as from what is below her the soul receives the images of sensible things, which the Greeks call φαντασίαι, so from what is above her, that is, from the primordial causes, she implants within herself the cognitions which are usually called by the Greeks θεοφάνειαι and by the Latins diuinae apparitiones, and through them, through the first causes, I mean, she receives some motion of God] — not that it understands what they are substantially — for this is beyond every motion of the soul — but it has the general knowledge that they are and that they flow forth by an ineffable process into their effects ; and this is the motion which is called by the Greeks λόγος or δύναμις, but by our (writers) ratio or uirtus, and it is born of the first motion, which is intellect.

576D

577A

For *just as* a wise artist produces his art from himself in himself and foresees in it the things he is to make, and in a general and causal sense potentially creates their causes before they actually appear, so the intellect *brought forth* from itself and in itself its reason, in which it foreknows and causally pre-creates all things which it desires to make. For we say that a plan is nothing else but a concept in the mind of the artist.

577B

The second motion of the soul, then, is the reason, which is understood as a kind of substantial seeing in the mind and a kind of art begotten of it and in it, in which it *foreknows* and *pre-creates* the things which it wishes to make ; and therefore it is not unreasonably named its form, for (the intellect) in itself is unknown but begins to become manifest both to itself and to others in its form, which is reason. [For just as the Cause of all things cannot in itself be discovered as to what it is either by itself or by anyone else, but somehow comes to be known in its theophanies, so the intellect, which ever revolves about it and is created wholly in its image, cannot be understood as to what it is either by itself or by anyone else, but in the reason which is born of it begins to become manifest. But as to my saying that the Cause of all and the intellect are not understood by themselves [as to what they are], the reason for that will be considered a little later.] Concerning the second motion, what it is and whence it takes its origin, enough has been said, I think.

Concerning the difference between intellect and reason

577C

A. Enough, certainly.

Concerning  
the third  
motion

N. There remains, then, the third motion, which functions in the particular reasons of particular things, which are created simply, that is, as a whole, in the primordial causes; and which, although it takes the beginning of its substantial motion from the phantasies of sensible things which are communicated to it through exterior sense, attains, by the most precise discrimination of all things through their proper reasons, to the most general essences and to the less general genera, then to the species and to the most specific species, that is, the individuals, countless and unlimited, but limited by the immutable proportions of their nature; and this is the motion which in Greek is called διάνοια or ἐνέργεια, but in Latin *sensus* or *operatio* — by *sensus I mean that which is substantial and interior* —, which similarly proceeds from the intellect through the reason. For everything which the intellect by its gnostic view of the primordial causes impresses upon its art, that is, its reason, it distributes through the sense which proceeds from it and is called after its operation, into the particular reasons of individual *things*, which were created in the causes primordially and as a whole.

577D

578A

All essences are one in the reason; in sense they are divided into different essences. Therefore reason receives the most unified knowledge of all the essences from the most unified unity of their principles through the <descending> intellect; but sense separates that unity by means of differences. Similarly, reason knows through intellect the genera of things after a uniform and simple mode in their universal causes and in themselves; but that most universal simplicity *which in itself is indivisible and is liable to no differences and is subject to no accidents and is not extended by spatial intervals and is not composed of any parts and is not varied by any motion*

578B *through place or time*, sense breaks up into the diverse genera and differences *and a thousand other things*. Those things which from the point of view of reason are one in their genera are the same in different forms as those which, on the other hand, by the operation of sense are differentiated from one another by natural distinctions. [That is to say, the intellect itself <through the medium of reason> (and) through the sense which is consubstantial with itself, infallibly investigates and discovers and comprehends by sure rules the manner in which they are divided by their natural motions under the rule and ordinance and administration of Divine Providence into the manifold differences of nature.]

What shall I say of the unlimited number of individuals which, as much as they become multiple by the operation of sense, whether

it is in sense itself or in nature (that they are multiple), so much are they one when by the reason they are considered in their forms 578C under a universal and simple mode?

And to sum up: whatever the soul through her first motion, which is the intellect, knows under one form [and as a whole] concerning God and the primordial causes she implants, still [under one form and] as a whole, in her second motion, which is reason; but whatever she receives from the natures that are above her, through the intellect, after it has been formed in the reason, this whole she distributes through sense into the separated genera, into the diverse species, into the multiple individuals, in the effects below, and, to speak more plainly, whatever the human soul, through her intellect in her reason, knows of God and the principles of things as a unity *she always retains as a unity; but whatever, through the reason, she perceives to subsist in the causes as one and under a uniform mode, this whole, through sense, she understands as multiple and under a multiform mode* <in> *the effects of the causes.* 578D But she most clearly knows through her intellect that from the one Cause of all things all things start upon their movement towards multiplicity without abandoning the simplicity of the unity by which they subsist in it eternally and immutably, and (move) towards it as the end of their whole movement, and end in it.

The three motions of the soul, that is, intellect which is also called (her) essence, and reason which (is called her) power, and sense which (is called her) operation, have been sufficiently discussed, as I think. 579A

A. Most clearly and abundantly.

N. Contemplate, then, and, dispelling all mist of ambiguity, 24 understand with the sharpness of your mind how clearly, how explicitly the substantial Trinity of the Divine Goodness is revealed in the motions of the human soul to those who study them carefully, and manifests itself to those who seek it piously as though in a most limpid mirror of their own made in its image, and although it is removed from every creature and is unknown to every intellect descends through its image and likeness (to become), as it were, known and comprehensible and in some measure present to [the eyes of] the intellect [and of its own accord cleanses the mirror which reflects it so that it may shine forth from it most brilliantly] 579B (as) one essential Goodness in three Substances; for this Unity and Trinity, because it eludes every intellect on account of the infinity of

Concerning  
the likeness  
of the Most  
High Trinity  
579C  
in the  
human trinity

its exceeding brightness, would not appear in itself (and) by itself unless it impressed the traces of knowledge of itself upon its image]. For the likeness of the Father shines forth most clearly in the intellect, that of the Son in the reason, that of the Holy Spirit in the sense. For as we call the Son the art of the almighty Artist, and not unreasonably, since in Him, as in [His] Wisdom, the almighty Artist, the Father Himself, has made all things whatsoever He desired and preserves (them) eternally and immutably in Him, so also the human intellect, through the act of knowing, creates, by a wonderful operation of its science, whatsoever it most clearly and unambiguously receives from God, and from the principles of all things in its art, as it were, I mean, in its reason, and by means of the memory stores (it) in its most secret recesses. But as whatever the Father, the omnipotent Maker of all things, created at one and the same time primordially, causally, uniformly, universally in His art which is His Wisdom and His Power, in His Word, in His only begotten Son, He divides through the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from Him and from the Son into the innumerable effects of the primordial causes, whether they have flowed forth into intelligible essences and differences which surpass every corporeal sense or into the various and multiple display of this sensible world diversified by the divisions of places and times; so everything which the intellect, that is the principal motion of the soul formed by her gnostic contemplation of intelligible things, creates and stores in the art of its reason, it divides through the interior sense of the soul into the discrete and unconfused knowledge of individual things, whether intelligible or sensible. For everything which the intellect considers in the reason universally it divides into the discrete cognitions and definitions of things through the sense particularly.

579D

580A

So you see that the Father in His Son created universally, and through His Holy Spirit has distributed and distributes and will distribute particularly, whatsoever He wished; and learn that in the likeness of the three Persons of the Divinity everything that our intellect can understand [concerning God and the causes of things], after a universal mode it creates [that is, it forms] by an act of science through knowledge in the reason; and after a particular mode, through the sense which is consubstantial with it, divides unconfusedly [that is, accommodates its knowledge to each (particular) by the most careful observation of distinction(s)] by the power of its contemplation into the individual definitions of the things which in the reason it gathers together.

A. These things are becoming clear to me in some measures, but I do not yet see what difference there is between the operation of the creative and uncreated Trinity and the act of the trinity (which is) created and creates. [I say creates] because we do not doubt but that the trinity of our nature, which is not the image of God but is made in the image of God — for the only true image of the invisible God, and in nothing dissimilar (from Him), is the only begotten Word of God (which is) co-essential with the Father and the Spirit —, *is* not only created out of nothing *but also* creates the senses which are subjoined to it, and the instruments of the senses, and the whole of its body — I mean this mortal (body). For (the created trinity) is made from God in the image of God *out of* nothing, but its body it creates [itself], though not out of nothing but out of something. For, by the action of the soul, which cements together the incorporeal qualities [and] takes [from quantity] as it were a kind of substrate [for these qualities] and places it under (them), it creates for itself a body in which she may openly display her hidden actions (which) in themselves (are) invisible, and bring (them) forth into sensible knowledge, as has already been discussed in the first book and will be examined yet more closely when we have come to consider the activity of the primordial causes.

580B

That the human soul creates this mortal body

But now I ask you to embark upon the question before us.

580C

N. The solution to this problem seems to me very simple, and to require hardly any effort. For the most high Trinity, creative of all things and by nothing created, made from nothing all that it made. For it is the prerogative of the Divine Goodness to call forth from non-existence into existence what it wishes to be made. For the name *bonitas* takes its origin from the Greek verb *βοῶ* [that is] “I cry out.” But *βοῶ* and *καλῶ* [that is] “I cry out” and “I call” have the same meaning. For he who calls very often breaks out into a cry. So it is not unreasonable that God should be called *Bonus* and *Bonitas*, because with an intelligible cry He cries out that all things should come from nothing into essence, and therefore God is called in Greek, *καλός*, that is, good, *διὰ τὸ “πάντα καλεῖ εἰς οὐσίαν”* [that is] “for the reason that He calls all things into essence.” For all things which subsist naturally have been called by the Creator from nothing into essence through the fivefold motion of universal creation. For some are called merely to subsist essentially, some to subsist and live, in some sense is added to their substantial life, in some reason is piled upon sentient life, in some intellect is superimposed for (the sake of) perfection of the abovementioned natural

Concerning the difference between the operation of the divine and of the human trinity

Why God is called Good

580D

581A

motions. [And the first motion is (found) in [natural] bodies, the second in that life by which trees and plants both live and grow, the third [in] the irrational animate beings, the fourth in human (nature) as its property, the fifth is < at present > seen (only) in the angelic nature.] And by these five stages in the creation of things out of nothing the Goodness of the most high and holy Trinity is seen and its ineffable operation manifested.

Concerning  
the twofold  
operation of  
the soul

581B

But the trinity which is created in our nature in the image of the Creator creates nothing out of nothing, for that belongs to God alone and to no creature. But its action is seen to be twofold. For either it explores by its rational and intellectual motions those things which its Creator created out of nothing, and deposits in the innermost recesses of its reason the things which by the clear observation of its intellect it gets to know in nature, and it either gathers together into a unity its cognitions of all the things which it can know [for instance, by the operation of its science it unifies genera in essence, species in genus, individuals in species]; or divides them into many, distributing each cognition to the particular thing of which it is the cognition [*that is to say*, to take the same example, dividing by a gnostic operation essence into genera, genus into species, species into individuals]. And this is the principal and highest activity of the rational nature.

581C

But the second is that which, as we have said, is known in its creation of its body, and is revealed in its careful control of it. For first it takes its matter from the qualities of sensible things and, with no temporal interval intervening, applies to it < form and > vital motion by which it both quickens and nourishes that matter and carries it forward through place and time to the increased dimensions of its perfect stature. Also it provides it with the exterior sense through which it receives the phantasies of all things which reach it from without, and the other things which can be thought and understood with reference to the ceaseless care and uninterrupted activity of the soul for her body and for bodily matters, either when in waking she is present in the senses or when she is withdrawn from them in sleep, and by discussing with herself the images of things which she had absorbed through the senses or by fashioning images of the images or by distributing through the hidden channels of the veins and nerves which the Greeks call πόροι or ἀρτερίαι bodily nourishments which she receives from outside for the building up of her body. For as the most high Trinity moves (and) controls (and) orders by the rules of its Providence the totality of everything



created which it created out of nothing, and allows nothing of the things that it has created to perish, *that is*, to return entirely to nothing; so the trinity of our nature exerts providence over the totality of its body and the [safety] of all its senses, and quickens [and] moves [and] preserves it *as much as* [its] mortal fragility allows.

But see that you do not begin to conjecture from these reasons that the creation of the soul preceded by any temporal interval the creation of the body < which was a spiritual creature before man sinned > . For only by the status and excellence of her nature does the soul precede the body, not in place or time. For at one and the same time in that one man who was made in the image of God were created reasons of all men in respect both of body and of soul.

For by no means does the essence of the soul precede the essence of the body by intervals of times, as neither does the essence of the body (precede) the essence of the soul. And do not think that I mean that that first essential body created in paradise [— but as yet it was only in its reason that it was created, as also the soul. For in that general and universal man made in the image of God all men, in respect of body and soul, not only have, in potency only, been created once and together, but all in him also have sinned before they proceeded <spiritually like the angels> into their proper substances, that is, before each appeared in his distinct form in a rational soul and spiritual body — which, that is, the body], (as) incorruptible, would have adhered eternally *and* coeternally to the soul had it not sinned, (the body) in which all men will rise again, is created by the soul. For that body was substantially created by the one Creator of all things immediately at the same time as the rational soul in heavenly bliss [or rather for heavenly bliss]. [Now, I say “substantially” because the true substance of every creature is its reason, fore-known and pre-created in the primordial [causes], by which God defines it (saying), “It shall be thus [and] not otherwise.” And I also said “for <heavenly> bliss” because I do not see how man [should surrender] (that) bliss had he ever fully and perfectly savoured it as it really is. For, as I think, he turned to himself before he turned to God, and that was why he fell.] But I do not hesitate to say that this corruptible and material body which was taken from the mud of the earth <as we said above> after sin and as a punishment for sin, so that in it the negligent soul might be trained to keep the commandments <and to manifest her operations> , was created and is daily being created as though by some

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582B

Concerning  
the co-  
eternity of  
the first body  
582C  
and the soul

proper *action* of the soul. For it ought not to surprise you that Holy  
 582D Scripture declares that God took clay of the earth and from it  
 formed a body for man, because it is not unreasonable that the  
 action of the creature should be referred to Him from Whom every  
 natural action originates, *since* even among the celestial essences,  
 descending step by step from the first order which begins imme-  
 583A diately after God to the last, whatever (ministration) the higher  
 order performs and completes upon the order below it by some  
 action of its own is wholly referred to Him from Whom every  
 natural motion springs and every natural action descends from the  
 highest to the lowest. For although the Cause of all things, being  
 immutable, does not through itself but through the creature which is  
 subordinate to it create (or) move (or) govern the totality of  
 universal nature which it has established, yet the whole dispensation  
 of the Divine Providence is referred to it because it is the Cause of  
 all things.

What shall I say of the orders of the Church (as it is)  
 constituted in this present mortal life, (and of) which the order of  
 583B bishops is at the head? Is not everything which the other orders who  
 come after (the bishop) may have performed in the offices to which  
 they are appointed referred to him because it is from him that the  
 subordinate orders receive the functions that they must carry out?  
 For by him is allotted to each his symbolic ministry, and the  
 spiritual operation of the whole Church is referred through him to  
 that Cause of all good and mystical acts, I mean God.

What wonder, then, if the first man, (who was) made in the  
 image of God and (who) transgressed the divine commandment and  
 for that reason (was) driven from the bliss of paradise, should create  
 for himself from the clay of the earth a fragile and mortal habitation  
 on the advice of the Divine Providence, so that, since he had in his  
 pride refused to occupy and preserve the heavenly and spiritual  
 body created by God Himself, he should in his degradation make  
 583C for himself, as a punishment for disobedience, a mortal mansion  
 taken from earthly matter, and by this punishment be brought to  
 repentance and seek in chastened mood, by getting to know himself  
 again and by mortifying himself, to return to the first state of his  
 nature?

26 Nor is Scripture silent about this. For concerning the fact that,  
 immediately after the transgression, human nature, which before its  
 sin had been simple, was after its fall divided into two sexes it says:  
 "And they sewed fig-leaves together and made for themselves

περιζώματα,” clearly intending by the symbol of the leaves the fragile and corruptible state of this mortal body, which man wove for himself after his fall. For our mortal bodies are very like the broad leaves of the fig. For as those leaves cast a shadow (and) shut out the rays of the sun, so our bodies both cast upon our souls the darkness of ignorance and keep out the knowledge of truth.

What is  
meant by the  
fig-leaves

But these leaves, I mean our earthly bodies, have a way of encircling us on all sides and of overshadowing us with the sweetness of earthly and deadly delights like a kind of fruit and of causing us to be deceived in them. 583D

And in order that you may learn that the creation of our mortal body is most explicitly referred to Him by Whose design is done whatever is read concerning our training and renewal and salvation, hear the words of the same Scripture: “The Lord God also made for Adam and his wife tunics of skins and clothed them with them,” where it is not unreasonable that we should understand that by the tunics of skins is signified nothing else but what the περιζώματα (signify), namely our mortal bodies, which, in accordance with the righteous judgement of the Creator, the first human beings made for themselves after their transgression. And surely it must seem to you more reasonable to say that mortal man made mortal flesh for himself than that God Himself by His own action created it rather than permitting it and advising it? For God is immortal and whatever is made through Him is immortal. For everything mortal that is seen to be in this sensible world, being both fragile and transitory, is either made by ourselves when we are led astray by our irrational motions or is permitted to be made on account of our sin, for use and example in our mortal life, whether by the good powers who minister to us <and lead us to perfection> or by the evil powers who hinder our natural course from reaching its proper end which is appointed after certain times. For no philosopher among those who practise philosophy correctly doubts but that the vital motion works in the seeds to the end that they may through generation develop into visible forms; but the vital motion itself does not always show its potentiality for action equally in each genus, either because of certain accidents which are not congenial to the seeds and are born of contrary qualities, or because of hostile powers which operate, as we have said, against their natural motion; *to discuss which now would be a lengthy (task) and an unnecessary (one) since it has been discussed by many.* 584A  
584B

584C [But perhaps someone will ask : “That first incorruptible body which would have remained attached to the soul if she had not sinned, where is it now? For what is incorruptible cannot perish.” To this there is a short answer : Until now it lies hidden in the secret recesses of human nature, but in the age to come it will appear when this mortal (body) will be changed into it, and “this corruption will put on incorruption”. Hear then the Apostle : “It is sown a psychic body, it will rise a spiritual body. It is sown in weakness, it will rise in power. It is sown in ignominy, it will rise in glory,” (the glory,) that is, of immortality and incorruptibility, whether in the good or in the evil. For I take this statement to have a general application to every human body. For in all, the glory of eternal immortality will be equal, though not (the glory) of bliss. For the whole < primordial> nature < together with what has been added to it> will be restored < into unity> ].

27 A. Enough, I think, has been said about this incidental question, and we must return to the consideration of that trinity in which we have been created in the image and likeness of God, and carefully consider whether that image copies throughout all things the likeness of that of which it is the image or whether it is dissimilar in anything, and does not in every respect attain to a perfect image. For so far as it imitates, thus far it is rightly called image ; but if it deviates at any point it falls short of the reason of a perfect image.

585A N. We believe that man was most perfectly created in the image and likeness of God and that in paradise before his sin he fell short (of that) in nothing except in respect of subject. For God, subsisting through Himself and receiving subsistence from nothing that precedes Him, brought Man in His image and likeness out of nothing into essence. *Therefore, once it has been noted* that God, being ἀναρχος, that is, without beginning, possesses His Essence through Himself, while man, created out of nothing, has a beginning of his creation, not only in the primordial causes in which all things were created at once, but also in the processions into the diverse essences and species, whether intelligible or sensible, all other things which are said and understood of God through the excellence of His Essence are wholly seen in His image through < nature> and grace. For the Creator (Who is) invisible and incomprehensible and passes all understanding created His image similar to Himself in all these things. For even our intellect is not known as to what it is in its essence either by itself or by any other save God < Who alone knows what He has made> ; but as concerning its Creator it knows

only that He is but does not perceive what He is, so concerning itself it only determines that it is created, but how or in what substance it is constituted it cannot understand. For if in any way it could understand what it is it would necessarily deviate from the likeness of its Creator. [For] the *πρωτότυπον*, that is, the Principal Exemplar, is God through nature, while the image is God through grace. The *πρωτότυπον* is diffused through all things, distributing to all things their essence; the image, purified [illuminated (and) perfected] by the light of grace, pervades all things, forming a knowledge of them in itself. The *πρωτότυπον* penetrates all things [that it has made], dividing its gifts to each in the proportion proper for each; the image surveys all things, giving glory to the Bestower of good things for His innumerable gifts [He has bestowed upon all — for some gifts, < which are properly called data, > are substantial, others are added to substance; and as the *πρωτότυπον* created His image so that in it He might reveal some knowledge of Himself, so the image made for itself an image in which it might manifest its motions (which) in themselves (are) hidden. For the soul is the image of God, the body the image of the soul].

ness to God  
and the  
mind's  
585C  
ignorance as  
to what it is

585D

And concerning the other things which are to be understood and declared concerning the similitude of the image anyone who desires fuller knowledge may read the book of St. Gregory *Νυσσεύς* "On the Image".

A. These (things) I readily accept. But I see another difference besides that of substance which appears to divide the image from its Principal Exemplar.

586A

N. Please tell me what it is.

A. Does the difference seem to you slight between the nature which knows of itself both that it is and what it is, and that which knows of itself only that it is but does not understand what it is? For you will not deny, as I think, that God himself understands of Himself what He is, whereas we do not deny that the other essences and substances, (which are) created, cannot understand of themselves < what they are > lest we should appear impudently to oppose Gregory Nazianzen *the Theologian*, who declares *without hesitation* (and) with sound reasons that no created essence can be defined by itself or by another, even though endowed with reason and intellect, as to what it is. Do you see, then, that the dissimilarity between the image and its Principal Exemplar, that is, between the human intellect and God the Creator is not only in respect of subject but

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also for the reason that the Principal Exemplar itself knows what it is, while the image does not understand how to define substantially either itself as to what it is or its Exemplar which it copies?

28 N. I see that you have been misled by an appearance of true reasoning, and it is not surprising. For unless one has keenly and carefully examined from all sides the things in which you seem to be mistaken, they will be considered as not only likely but true.

A. Please explain where I am mistaken.

That God  
does not  
know of  
Himself  
What He is  
586C

N. Do you believe that the Divine Essence is infinite or finite?

A. To hesitate over that would be impious and very foolish, especially as it ought to be believed and understood that it is not Essence but More than Essence and the infinite Cause of all essences, and not only infinite but the Infinity of all infinite essence, and More than Infinity.

N. You speak correctly and in accordance with catholic doctrine. It is, then, in every respect infinite?

A. I have granted this and do not regret having granted it but most firmly declare that it is not otherwise.

N. See that you do not retract.

A. You need have no fear of that.

N. So when we ask of this or that, "What is it?", does it not appear to you that *we* are seeking for nothing else but a substance which either has been defined or is capable of being defined?

A. Nothing else (but that). For this word, "What", when it is interrogative, seeks nothing else but that the substance which it seeks be somehow defined.

586D N. If, then, no wise man asks of all essence in general what it is, since it cannot be defined except in terms of the circumstances which circumscribe it, so to speak, within limits, I mean place and time [quantity and quality, connection, rest, motion, condition] and the other accidents by which the substance [itself], by reason of (being) subject, unknown and undefinable through itself, is shown only as subsisting, but not as to what it is, what man learned in the

587A discipline of the divine word would presume to inquire of the Divine Substance what it is when he understands very well concerning it that it cannot be defined, and is not any of the things that are, and surpasses all things that can be defined?

[ [Hear the Nazianzen :] “If... the accumulation of the things which are both understood and said by us about that” which is being sought “is nothing whatever of the things that exist according to being itself as it is and is spoken of, but if that to which these relate — since it contains them while it is in no way contained by them — is something other than they, (then) let every soul refrain from rashly rushing into any speech of the matters that concern God” to define Him (thereby), “... but let her reverence in silence only the truth of the Divine Essence (which is) ineffable and beyond understanding and the summit of all science.” If, then, there is no one (even) among the wisest who can know the reasons of the substance of existing things as those (reasons) were (first) established, who would dare to find in anything a definition of God ?]

587B

A. I would not presume to question this either. For I know that (His Substance) is altogether infinite.

N. If, then, God knows [of Himself] what He is, does He not define Himself — for everything which is understood by itself or by another as to what it is can be defined [by itself < or by another > ] — and therefore is not altogether infinite [but partially (so) if by the creature only He cannot be defined whereas by Himself He can be, or, if I may say so, subsists (as) finite to Himself, infinite to the creature]? And if this be admitted, it will necessarily follow that either God is not universally infinite, if it is only by the creature that He does not admit definition and not by Himself; or that, in order to be universally infinite, He does not admit definition at all, either from the creature or from Himself.

That God cannot be defined either by Himself or by another  
587C

A. I think that the obscurity of this reasoning is impenetrable and were it not that He Who is being sought Himself extends His aid to those who seek Him I could easily believe that there is no way of entering upon it. For if God does not define Himself, or if He could not define [Himself], who would deny that ignorance and impotence are admitted into His Nature — ignorance if He does not understand < of Himself > what He is, impotence if He is unable to define His Substance? [For He will be seen to be impotent when He can find nothing in which to define Himself.]

On the other hand, if He both understands and defines what He Himself is, this will show that He is not altogether infinite since only by the creature can He not be defined, because by no means is He understood by it, but by Himself He is both defined and known as to what He is.

587D N. Do not be troubled but rather be of good heart. For this discussion is drawing us towards an understanding of ourselves, and teaching us the things which it is right to think and understand and declare about our God, He being our Guide. [For the more obscure [and wearisome] it will be thought at the beginning of the inquiry, the more lucid and fruitful it will turn out to be. "For", says St. Augustine, "by some divine providence it cannot be that religious

588A minds who devoutly and seriously seek themselves and their God, that is, the Truth, should lack the ability to find it."]

A. I am not troubled but rather, and with justification, concerned about the obscurity of the problem that confronts us; and I do not think that its solution will be an easy one.

N. Let us go back, then, to (the problems) which were debated between us in the first book, and, unless I am mistaken, were completely solved.

A. Please tell me what they are.

N. Do you remember that it was settled between us to a certainty that none of the categories which are included in the decad can by any means be literally predicated of the Divine Nature?

A. That was conceded and established beyond question.

N. We shall not, then, have to work as hard as you think to resolve the difficulty of this problem, if we look keenly at the valid

588B conclusions of the first book. For their subtle and penetrating usefulness will now be shown to bear most fair [and useful] fruit.

A. If this turns out to be the case, it is certainly necessary (that we should do so).

N. [It will certainly be so.] The train of our reasoning seems to require that we should briefly recall to our memory the categories themselves.

A. No other way of inquiry suggests itself. But I should like you to recapitulate them in interrogative form.

N. Consider carefully, then, this order of interrogation: What? How great? Of what kind? In relation to what? In what position? With what possession? Is it in place? Is it in time? Does it act; or is it acted upon? Or, if you prefer the Greek terms: τί; πόσον; ποῖον; πρὸς τί; κείσθαι ἄρα; [ἔχουσθαι ἄρα]; ποῦ; πότε; πράττει ἄρα ἢ πάσχει; Of these (interrogatives), then, there is none that can properly be asked of God because none of them is understood in



Him either by Himself or by any other. [For these can properly be considered only in things which are shown to fall within the scope of intellect or sense.] For if you ask of God what He is will you not be seeking a proper defined substance? And if one should reply (that He is) this or that, will he not seem to be defining a certain and circumscribed [substance]? But if anyone were to assert this of Him as a truth, or if He Himself understands this of Himself, He will rightly occupy the first place of the categories [which is allotted to certain and defined subjects in which and about which all accidents are associated and contained] and thus the first category will be predicated of Him not figuratively but literally. For if the Divine Nature, whether by the intelligible creature or by itself, is understood (to be) in some defined essence, it is not altogether infinite and uncircumscribed [and free from all accident], *and therefore* is not believed to be truly removed from everything which is said and understood, since it is understood (to be) within certain limits of a defined nature. For nothing of which it can be predicated or understood as to what it is can overstep the limit of the things that are, but will rightly be considered *to be* as though a part in a whole, or a whole in its parts, or a species in a genus, or a genus in its species, or individuals in a species, or a species in its individuals, or some collection of all these things out of many into one; and this is far from the simple and infinite truth of the Divine Nature, which is nothing of the things that are. For it is neither whole nor part, although it is called whole and part because by it every whole and every part, and all wholes and all parts, are created. Similarly it is neither genus nor form nor species nor individual nor οὐσία, whether the most general or the most specific; and yet all these are predicated of it because from it they receive their ability to subsist. Moreover it is called the totality of all these although by the infinity of its excellence it surpasses the totality of all creation, because by it the total totality is created.

How, therefore, can the Divine Nature understand of itself what it is, seeing that it is nothing? For it surpasses everything that is, since it is not even being but all being derives from it, and by virtue of its excellence it is supereminent over every essence and every substance. Or how can the infinite be defined by itself in anything or be understood in anything when it knows itself (to be) above every finite (thing) and every infinite (thing) and beyond finitude and infinity? So God does not know of Himself what He is because He is not a “what”, being in everything incomprehensible

both to Himself and to every intellect; *and since* Truth Itself in intelligible language proclaims in pure intellects that this is most truly said of God, no one of the men of pious learning or of the adepts in the Divine Mysteries, hearing of God that He cannot understand of Himself what He is, ought to think anything else than that God Himself, Who is not a “what”, does not know at all in  
 589C Himself that which He Himself is not. But He does not recognize himself as being something. Therefore He does not know what He Himself is, that is, He does not know that He is a “what”, because He recognizes that He is none at all of the things which are known in something and about which it can be said or understood what they are. For if He were to recognize Himself in something He would show that He is not in every respect infinite and incomprehensible [and unnameable]. Thus He says: [“Why do you ask My Name? For it is wonderful.” Or is not this Name indeed wonderful, which is above every name, which is unnameable, which is set above every name (that is) named whether in (this) world or in the world to come? If, then, He disapproves the asking of His Name because it is  
 589D unnameable above every name, what if one were to inquire of His Substance, which, were it in any finite thing, would not be without a finite name? But as He subsists in nothing because (He is) infinite, He lacks all naming because He is unnameable].

For nothing that is understood to be substantially in anything in such a way that it can be literally predicated of it what it exceeds its proportion and measure. For it is enclosed within some proportion by which it is limited (and) is circumscribed by some  
 590A measure which it cannot overstep. For if it occupies the lowest place in the nature of things, in which all bodies are contained, it cannot descend further below the measure of its nature because below (it) there is nothing; and it cannot ascend above (it) because it is limited to that vital motion from which it receives nourishment and growth, and therefore it is not carried beyond itself. On the other hand, if it subsists at the highest level of all creation, it is necessary that it should be confined within its limits so that it may be recognized as intellectual. For it cannot ascend to any creature above itself because there is seen to be nothing among created things that is higher than itself; likewise it cannot be *thrust* further down because of the substances that come after it. Finally, if it should occupy a place posed in the midst, it would neither be permitted to fall to the (regions) below it nor to extend to the (regions) above, but would hold to its natural position at the centre. [And therefore there is no

creature, whether visible or invisible, which is not confined in something within the limits of its proper nature by measure and number and weight.] 590B

But God understands that He is in none of those things but recognizes that He [is] above all the orders of nature by reason of the excellence of His Wisdom, and below all things by reason of the depth of His Power, and within all things by the inscrutable dispensation of His Providence, and encompasses all things because all things are within Him, and without Him there is nothing. [For He alone is the measure without measure, the number without number, and the weight without weight. And rightly so; for He is not measured or numbered or ordered by anything or by Himself, and He understands that He is not confined by any measure or number or order since in none of these things is He substantially contained, for He alone truly exists in all things, being infinite above all things.] That God is above and below and within and without all things

And do not oppose my [statement] that the order of bodies cannot be extended into the natures that are above it [on the ground that] we believe that all bodies shall pass into incorporeal qualities and substances. For when this happens they will cease to be bodies. But at present, as long as they are bodies, they cannot overstep either the upper or the lower limits of their nature. *But this part* of philosophy will be more carefully treated when we come to consider the return of things [into their causes]. Now [however] let us [attend to] the topic before us, that is, the proposition that God does not understand what He is; [and] do not be afraid to say openly how it seems to you, whether what we are trying to teach [about this] seems plausible to you. 590C

A. I confess that what you have said of this wonderful Divine Ignorance by which God does not understand what He is, although obscure, yet does not seem to me false, but true and likely. For you do not teach that God does not know Himself but only that He does not know what He is; and rightly so, because He is not a "what". For He is infinite both to Himself and to all things that are from Him [and therefore there is most clearly and beautifully revealed in this form of ignorance the supreme and ineffable Wisdom. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men.] 590D

N. What then? If one asks of God how great He is or of what kind, will "so great" or "such" seem to you the right reply? *For I do not mean that quantity* [and quality] *of which the Prophet says:* 591A

*“Great (is) the Lord and exceeding worthy to be praised, and there is no end of His greatness.” See how profoundly the theologian speaks: “Great”, he says, (is) “the Lord,” — but lest anyone [should suppose] that He is limited by finite quality he at once adds: “and there is no end of His greatness.” Also, lest anyone should hold that there is in Him finite quality, he does not simply say, “and worthy to be praised”, but adds, “exceeding”. But “exceeding” is said of what exceeds every proportion. So, as I say, I am not referring to that infinite quantity nor to that quality which is “exceeding” — for it is not inappropriate that these be thought of God — but to the quantity and quality which are said (to be) in the subject as accidents.*

A. Not right at all. For where defined substance or, as I might say, a defined subject is not found, there it seems to me very foolish and ridiculous to seek for or assert quantity and quality; and therefore since in God neither He Himself nor any other mind is able to discover any defined substance or, so to say, defined subject with reference to which it can be said or understood what He is, is it not abundantly clear that no finite or infinite quantity (and) no finite or infinite quality can be recognized in Him by Himself or by another? For if He transcends every finite and infinite substance by the infinite and more than infinite excellence of His proper Power, who will not at once and without any hesitation break out with an open acknowledgement and exclamation that no finite or infinite quantity or quality is attributable to Him or that He is a “what” of any kind whatsoever? [For where a “what” is found, there at once is

That no category can be predicated of God literally

591C

That in the genera of things there is found neither “what?” nor “how much?” nor “of what kind?”

a “how much” and an “of what sort”; but where there is no “what”, there “how much” and “of what sort” cannot be found. If, then, in the genera of things neither a “what” nor “how much” nor “of what kind” nor any accident is understood (to be), because they are simple, but these are sought for only in individuals, who but a fool would dare to seek for a “what” or “how much” or “of what kind” in God?]

N. What then? Do you think there is in Him relation, which is called by the Greeks πρὸς τι?

A. I would not say that either. For I have no doubt but that where defined substance cannot be understood, there there can be no relation. [For it does not exist by nature but by a kind of link and possession of two or more subjects. For that in the Trinity of the Divine Goodness the Father is said to be (the father) of the Son and the Son (the son) of the Father under the form of relation seems to

591D

me to signify rather a permanent possession than a chance relationship. For it is not an accident in the Father to possess the Son or in the Son to possess the Father.]

N. It seems superfluous, as I think, to speak severally of the other categories. For if God Himself understands Himself (to be) in no defined substance or quantity or quality or relation, to whom will it not be clearer than day that no position or possession, [no] 592A place or time, [no] action or passion at all is an accident in Him; and that therefore none of these things can be understood (to be) in Himself either by Himself or by another? For if defined substance is not found or understood (to be) in Him, it is foolish to doubt but that none of the accidents of defined substance are in Him as accidents. For where a defined subject is lacking, there no accident is understood to be associated or separated [or in any way distinct from the nature of the subject]. But, to speak in short of each (of the categories) which we treated at length in the first book, who would attribute position to the Divine Nature when even (that Nature) itself recognizes no position in itself? For position is either of parts in the whole, for example, the position of the human body is the 592B order of the members *by which every* member is confined within its own order; or the attitude of the whole body is called position, for example, it stands, it sits, it lies. But none of those who practise philosophy aright is ignorant that the Power of the Divine Essence is quite without any of these (positions). For it is not a whole nor a part [nor] is it sitting down as though weary nor lying down as though prostrated nor does it come to a stand after any motion.

[The Son is said to sit at the right hand of the Father. The Son in His totality, Word and flesh, is the Right Hand of the Father, the Power of the Father, the Strength of the Father. Therefore the Son is Himself the Right Hand of the Father. Therefore in sitting He sits in Himself, remaining consubstantial with the Father, judging all things, at rest. For Stephen He stands battling with His hosts, endowing them with power that they may conquer on earth. The Right Hand of the Lord made power, bestowing upon them the reward of sitting with Him in heaven. See how He sits, how He stands. This position is mystical, not corporeal, not local, but spiritual. Learn that such is the position of the Divine Nature.] 592C

Concerning  
the right  
hand of the  
Father  
which is the  
Son

Who would attach possession to it when it perceives no possession in itself? For itself is sufficient possession to itself, and no virtue is in it as an accident since in itself, as being most simple, subsist virtue and more-than-virtue and the source of all virtues, and

whatever substance possesses virtue that possession comes to it from no other source than the participation in the general virtues which the causal Virtue of all virtues has created in their primordial principles.

592D The Divine Nature is without any place, although it provides place within itself for all things which are from it, and for that reason is called the Place of all things; but it is [not] unable to provide place for itself because it is infinite and uncircumscribed and does not allow itself to be located, that is, defined and circumscribed, by any intellect nor by itself. For from it, being infinite and more than infinite, all finites and infinites proceed, and to it, being infinite and more than infinite, they return.

593A There is no time for that Nature which knows that it has no beginning nor end nor any motion by which everything moves that moves from a beginning towards an end and into its end. It knows in itself no increases which occur at particular places and times, nor any decreases, for in itself it is full and perfect.

593B What is to be said of acting and being acted upon? Would it not be inappropriate and incongruous were one to think that acting and being acted upon were accidents to that Nature which in itself perceives no motion towards acting, and nothing capable of being acted upon? For not as with us substance is one thing (and) the accident, that is, acting and being acted upon, of substance is another, (not) so does it recognize in itself a sort of composition of substance and accidents. For it is without the latter and knows that they are not in it. For it is most simple, and foreign to all composition. For its Will, which is Itself substantially [and more than substantially and more than Will], is its activity and its passivity. For it is said to act because it wills all things to be made and they are, but it is said to be acted upon because it wills to be loved by all [and it loves itself in all, for it is substantial and true Love and more than substantial Love], and whoever love it love it whether they know they love or do not know, that is, whether by an intelligible and rational motion they love it under the guidance of grace, or by the simple appetite of nature. For there is nothing that has been created by it that does not have desire for it.

Conclusion  
that God  
recognizes  
no category  
in His nature

Do you then see that it is not without reason that God is said to know that nothing which is embraced within the terms of the ten Categories subsists in His Nature, seeing that it is shown wholly to surpass them all by the depth of its Power and by its infinity? For

that which is infinite is infinite in every respect and in every manner, in essence, in power, in operation, at both extremes, I mean the upper and the lower, that is, in respect of its beginning and its end. For it is *incomprehensible* in essence and unintelligible in power and uncircumscribed in operation; and it is infinite without beginning above and without end below, and to speak plainly and more truly, it is infinite throughout all things. 593C

A. I see (it) clearly, and I see that it is true as well as supported by the conclusions of sound reasoning. But I very much wonder why ignorance is attributed to God, from Whom nothing is hidden either in Himself or in the things which are from Him.

N. Pay attention, then, and examine carefully what has been said. For if you have considered with an open mind the force of things and words, you will most surely find, unclouded by any doubt, that no ignorance is attributed to God. For His ignorance is an ineffable understanding; and in order that we may attempt to prove this from what has been said, mark carefully the force of the words. On the ignorance of God which 593D is true wisdom

Do you think that when we say that God [does not know] of Himself [what He is] we mean anything else [than] that He understands that [He] is not in any of the things that are? For how can He recognize in Himself that which cannot be in Himself? [For if the reasons of nature which He Himself in Himself, that is, the Father in the Son, created are in Him an indivisible unity and admit no definition of proper substance by proper differences or by accidents — for these they suffer in their effects, not in themselves —, what must we think of His ineffable *and incomprehensible* Nature itself? Who would suppose that there was in it anything that was defined by a limit, extended in space, separated into parts, or composed of substances and accidents ?] Therefore this ignorance is the highest and truest wisdom. 594A

What we are saying is like what one of us might say of himself: “I do not understand at all that I am an insensible stone deprived of all vital motion,” that is, I fully understand that I am not an insensible stone deprived of all vital motion. Again: “I do [not] understand that any man [living in the flesh] is deprived of sense and reason” [because I know that no man living in the flesh is deprived of sense and reason]. Again: “I do [not] understand that irrational motion subsists naturally in my soul” [that is, I most certainly know that no irrational motion subsists naturally in my soul]. And this we Analogies which demonstrate knowledge under the form of ignorance 594B

can demonstrate from Holy Scripture. For also in the Gospel we read that the Lord will, at the Judgement that is to come, reply to the reprobate, "I know you not," that is, I know you not in the reasons of all things which the Father created in Me [because I understand that you are not in them], not in so far as I substantiated you naturally, but in as much as you have fallen away from the laws of your true nature. For it is not that which I made in you that I do not know, but that which I did not make, and therefore I do not punish or command to depart from Me that which I know in Me, but that which I do not know in Me is what I punish and command to depart from Me. [So God does not know, in the wicked [and in] 594C sinners, that which He did not make, namely their evil and irrational motions.]

There is also another kind of ignorance in God, wherein He is said not to know the things which He has foreknown and predestined before they have been revealed to experience in the evolution of created things. Thus He himself says in the Gospel: "But concerning that day and that hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son of Man but only the Father." What is surprising in these words is not that knowledge of the future Judgement is concealed from human minds which are still encumbered with mortal flesh, nor even is it to be altogether denied that the angels are said to be still capable of ignorance, since Holy Scripture declares that they are still learning, according to St. Dionysius the Areopagite in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of the "Celestial Hierarchy" where he says: "The 594D theologians explicitly declare that the inferior orders of the celestial essences are fittingly instructed by those that are above them in the theurgic sciences, while those that are higher than all are illuminated in the doctrines by the Divinity itself in so far as that may be... and that Jesus Himself gives them direct instruction, revealing to them first of all His humane goodness. For He says: 'I preach justice and the judgement of salvation.'" *Again* (St. Dionysius) says: "I marvel that even the first of the celestial essences and those that at the same time excel them all reverently seek the divine illuminations, as do the 595A intermediary orders. Thus, do they not ask: 'Wherefore are Thy garments red?' But they first deliberate among themselves before asking, showing indeed that they are learning and seeking the theurgic science." If, then, as this father says, the celestial powers are learning, they are not free from all ignorance, and if so, we should not be surprised that at present [they] can be ignorant of the future Judgement. But that the Lord should say of Himself: "Nor the Son of Man but the Father only" raises a very difficult problem.



For how can the Son not know what the Father knows, particularly about the Day of Judgement, for judgement belongs specifically to the Son? For the Father, as He Himself says, does not judge any man but has given all judgement to the Son. However, the obscurity of this problem has been most eloquently and ingeniously dissipated by St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, in the book which he wrote "On Faith", where he says that the Father alone knows the future Judgement not only by foreknowledge but by experience, for the Father knows the Judgement by experience since it was already a reality when He gave all judgement to the Son [for the Father completely effected the Judgement when He gave all (judgement) to the Son]. The Son, on the other hand, both knows and does not know the Judgement. For He knows it by foreknowledge but not yet by experience; and the reason why He does not know it by experience is that judgement, that is, the segregation of the reprobate from the elect, is not yet an accomplished fact, for the harvest of the Church is still a mixture of wheat and tares. < <But> we are not unaware that St. Augustine interprets this text in the figurative sense that the Son of Man is said not to know the day of Judgement because He does not allow us to know it.>

ignorance of  
the Day of  
Judgement

595B

Hear also the ignorance of the Apostle which is described in the "Acts of the Apostles", where Paul reviles the high priest Annanias and says: "Brethren, I did not know that he is the chief of the priests. For it is written, 'Thou shalt not revile the chief of thy people.'" Do you suppose that the Apostle, most wise and most learned in the Law, did not know as well as the other Jews that Annanias was the chief priest? That is quite unthinkable. But the reason why he said that he did not know (it) was that he did not see that he had been ordained *by God*. "Brethren," he says, "I did not know that he is the chief of the priests" because I know that he has not been established either by God or in accordance with the Law, but by the superstition of the Jews, and so I do not know that he is the chief of the priests because I truly know that he is not so. For did I know that he was the true and legitimate chief of the people, then certainly I would not revile him. But since I do not know that he is in truth the chief, therefore I do not repent of reviling him.

595C

Concerning  
the ignorance  
of Paul

595D

Take another example of the ignorance of the same (apostle). "I know", he says, "a man rapt into the Third Heaven; I do not know (that it was) in the body and I do not know (that it was) out of the body; God knows." "I do not know," he says, "(that it was) in the body" because I know (that it was) not in the body, "and I do

Concerning the rapture of Paul  
596A

not know (that it was) out of the body” because I know that I was [not] rapt out of the body. For I was not rapt into the Third Heaven by the soul’s operations through the bodily senses nor by her operations outside the body, but I most clearly know that (it was) by the operation of Divine Grace without the help of any creature that I was rapt above every creature. Therefore I do not know (that it was) in the body or (that it was) out of the body, because I know that it was neither in the body nor out of the body that I was rapt.

Concerning the three modes of God’s Ignorance  
I  
596B

And, lest we should linger too long over the same topic — for time itself will run out before the examples of the Divine Ignorance whether in Holy Scripture or in the nature of things (are exhausted) —, it is, I think, sufficient to know only this : that there are three principal forms of the Divine Ignorance. The first (is that) by which God does not know evil because His knowledge is simple and formed only by the substantial good, that is, by Himself. For He alone is through Himself the substantial Good, whereas other goods are good by participation in Him. Therefore God does not know evil. For if He knew evil, evil would necessarily be in the nature of things, because God’s knowledge is the cause of all things that are. For God does not know the things that are [because] they subsist [but they therefore subsist] because God knows them. For the cause of their being is the divine knowledge, and therefore if God knew evil, evil would be understood (to exist) substantially in something and would be a participant in the Good, and vice and wickedness would proceed from virtue and goodness ; which right reason shows to be impossible.

II

The second form is (that) by which God is said not to know [other things] besides those of which he both has created and knows the reasons eternally in himself. For the things of which He naturally has the power, of those things he essentially possesses the knowledge.

596C III

The third is (that) by which it is said that God does not know, as we said above, the things that are not yet manifestly apparent [in their effects] by experience of their actuality and operation, although He possesses in Himself, created by Himself and known to Himself, their invisible reasons.

IIII

To these I add a fourth form which the order of our discourse required us to discuss at this point : (that) by which God is said not to know that He is in the number of the things which have been made by Him, which the philosophers try to include within the

decad of the Categories ; and therefore we must say generally that in none of the things which are comprehended by the philosophers within the ten genera of things, nor in any of those things which a closer inquiry discovers outside them, whether they exist as substance or as accident, nor in any of those that cannot be discovered in any substance or accident, whether they exist in the hidden reasons or in possibilities or in impossibilities, does God understand that He subsists ; for He knows that He is none of them, but understands that He excels (them) all by His ineffable essential Power and More-than-Power, and by His incomprehensible Infinity. 596D

Now, the reason why I said that a closer inquiry could discover certain things in nature in addition to those which are comprehended within the Ten Categories — for those too have been discovered by the philosophers — was that no one of the less able should suppose that a thorough investigation of things could [not] get further than the above-mentioned quantity of Categories. For their reason comprehends more general genera. For they are in motion and at rest, and rest and motion are brought together under universal essence, which allows division of itself to infinity. For that substance which has the first place among the Categories is finite and subject to accidents, but that universal essence admits in itself no accident. For while it is receptive of accidents in its subdivisions which extend as far as the individuals, in itself it is simple and subject to none of the accidents <and in it there is a division into that most general motion which is subject to no Category, by which all things proceed from nothing into being, and the rest in which all things shall establish the end of their motions, which is likewise subject to no category> . 29 597A

Of the more general genera within which the Ten Categories are contained

But as to what I further said, that there are in the nature of things certain things which are known neither in substance nor in accidents, understand that this was said with reference to the reasons which at present are not manifest in anything either to sense or to intellect, whether as substance or as accident. 597B

Again, that possibles and impossibles are reckoned in the number of things none of those who practise philosophy aright will dispute ; and these are said to be for no other reason than that the possibles can come into being in something even if they are not, while the impossibles are contained within the virtue of their impossibility alone. For their being consists in the impossibility of their appearing in any intelligible or sensible thing. <And let this be an example of the possibles : A certain man has the possibility of 597C

begetting offspring but, restrained by love of virginity, scorns the getting of offspring; and this of the impossibles: It is impossible for a rational animal to be irrational, and vice versa. > But if anyone wishes to make a full study of these, let him read Aristotle περὶ ἑρμηνείας [that is, “De Interpretatione”], in which the philosopher has devoted his discussion exclusively or mainly to them, that is, to the possibles and impossibles.

So let us now turn to what is left to be considered, if you think that the forms [of the Divine Ignorance] by which God is said not to know have been sufficiently discussed.

597D A. Sufficiently and more (than sufficiently); and I see that it is not necessary to dwell upon them further. For it is plainer than daylight that the Divine Ignorance is to be understood as nothing else than the incomprehensible and infinite Divine Knowledge. For what the Holy Fathers, I mean Augustine and Dionysius, most truly say about God — Augustine [says] that He is better known by not knowing, Dionysius that His ignorance is true wisdom — should, in my opinion, be understood not only of the intellects which reverently and seriously seek Him, but also of Himself. For as those who pursue their investigations along the right path of reasoning are able to understand that He is within none of the things which are contained within nature, but know that He transcends them all, and therefore their ignorance is true wisdom, and by not knowing Him in the things that are they know Him the better above all things that are and are not: so also it is not unreasonably said of (God) Himself that to the extent that He does not understand Himself to subsist in the things which He has made, to that extent does He understand that He transcends them all, and therefore His ignorance is true understanding; and to the extent that He does not know Himself to be comprehended in the things that are, to that extent does He know Himself to be exalted above them all, and so by not knowing Himself He is the better known by Himself. For it is better that He should know that He is apart from all things than that He should know that He is set in the number of all things.

Conclusion  
of the inquiry  
into God's  
Ignorance  
598A

598B N. You understand correctly, and I perceive that you have a clear and unwavering view of what reason teaches about these matters; and you no longer see, I think, any *difference* between the image and its principal Exemplar except in respect of subject. For the most high Trinity subsists substantially through itself and is created out of no cause, while the trinity of our nature is made by it,

Which through Itself is eternal, out of nothing, in Its image and likeness.

And if any dissimilarity but this is found between the image and the principal Exemplar it has not come from Nature but is an accident produced by sin; and not from the envy of the creative Trinity but from the fault of its created image. For everything which <is said> or understood of God with regard to the power of His essence can be said and understood of His image in those in whom it is purified, illuminated, and perfected with regard to the grace of creation, with the above-mentioned exception that the Divine Nature is God by the excellence of its Essence, while human nature is God by the munificence of Divine Grace; and that the former is creative and created by nothing while the latter is created by it and creates those things which being below it adhere to its nature. I mean this mortal body attached to the soul after it had sinned, which is called also an image of an image <as we have often said> . For as God created the soul in His image, so the soul makes the body as a kind of instrument somehow similar to herself. 598C

But we must return to the consideration of the Divine Trinity which is the Cause of all things, if you are satisfied with what has been said on these matters.

A. I am quite satisfied.

N. So in (the matter of) the most high and unique Cause of all things, from which and in which the beginnings of the whole creation, that is, the primordial causes, both are and have been created, I think it must be asked whether, being Unity and Trinity — for the Divine Goodness is One Essence in Three Substances and Three Substances in One Essence, or according to the usage of the Roman tongue we must say, One Substance in Three Persons and Three Persons in One Substance —, it has within itself the causes differentiated <as are the Substances> from one another, that is, whether, as there is predicated of it One Essence in Three Substances, so also it is to be believed and understood that there is one essential Cause in three subsistent Causes and three subsistent Causes in one essential Cause; and I think it would not be incongruous with the orthodox faith to expound in our contemplations what, without straying from the Faith, can be thought and taught of such a theory. 599A

An inquiry  
into the  
598D  
Cause of all  
things

A. On the contrary, most congruous, and necessary for the salvation of faithful souls.

N. What then? Ought we to believe, as well as, to the best of our ability, understand and teach, this of the Cause of all things, that it is both one essential Cause in three substantial Causes and three substantial Causes in one essential Cause?

599B A. I see nothing against believing and teaching this. For if God is the Cause of all things, does it not follow that the Cause of all things should be recognized as God? But if God is the Cause and the Cause is God, does it not follow that whatever we ought to believe of God we should also similarly, without any discrepancy, have no hesitation in understanding of the Cause? For if the Catholic Faith professes one God existing through Himself in three Substances subsisting through themselves, what stops us from saying in the same way that there is one Cause existing through itself in three Causes subsisting through themselves?

N. A pious and orthodox (opinion). Therefore there is one Cause in three Causes and three Causes in one.

A. This has now been conceded and granted.

30 N. Let us *then* now return to theology, which is the first and highest part of wisdom; and rightly so, for it is concerned wholly or for the most part with speculation about the Divine Nature. And it is divided into two parts, I mean into affirmation and negation, 599C which are called in Greek ἀποφατική and καταφατική, one of which we employed in the first book, where by sound arguments we denied that the ten categories and all the genera and species and individuals and accidents of things can be literally predicated of God; and again in the present book we were brought back to the same (part) again, I mean ἀποφατική, by the course of our inquiry when we said that God Himself understands that in His Essence (there is) none of the things which are and are not, because He surpasses all essence, and that He does not know of Himself at all what He Himself is because He is in no way defined; nor how great He is nor of what sort He is because nothing in Him is accident, and in nothing is He understood; and thus He absolutely denies that He is comprehended in the things that are or in the things that are not. [And ignorance of such sort surpasses all knowledge and all understanding.]

599D But now we are attempting to examine the other, I mean καταφατική, under the guidance of Him Who is being sought and Who seeks to be sought and comes to meet those who seek Him and desires to be found. And this is the part which contemplates what is

to be said as though literally of the Divine Nature, and cautiously and reasonably understood.

A. I am sufficiently convinced about the negative part by what has gone before ; but now I await eagerly your explanation of the affirmative. Concerning  
καταφατική

N. It has already been clearly concluded between us, not without caution as I think, that everything that we are given to understand of God on the authority of the Catholic Faith those who practise philosophy piously ought in like manner to profess of the Cause of all things. 600A

A. This has been unshakeably established.

N. Do we believe, then, of the Unbegotten and Begetting Divinity and the Begotten Deity and the Proceeding Deity that even although it is one and indivisible Divinity it yet admits substantial differences? For we accept and religiously believe and use the authority of St. Dionysius the Areopagite and other Fathers to prove that in the Father the Deity (is) unbegotten, in the Son the Deity (is) begotten, in the Holy Spirit the Deity proceeds.

A. Anyone who hesitates here is far from the truth.

N. There is, then, a substantial Cause (which is) unbegotten and begets; and *there is* a substantial Cause (which is) begotten <and does not beget> ; (and) also [there is] a substantial Cause which proceeds <and is not unbegotten nor begotten nor begetting> ; and the three <substantial> Causes are one, and one essential Cause. 600B

A. This is the necessary conclusion of the foregoing arguments.

N. *Therefore* in the Universal Cause there is a predicating Cause and there are subsequent Causes. For the Father precedes the Son and the Spirit, since from Him the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds; and therefore the Father is not inappropriately believed (to be) the Cause of Causes. For He is the Cause of the Cause that is born and of the Cause which proceeds. For fatherhood precedes sonship, and none of the truly wise would say that sonship precedes fatherhood. Hence even the Son Himself says of Himself, "The Father is greater than I." For the Father, not in nature but as cause, is greater than the Son. For the Father is the Cause of the Son but the Son is not the cause of the Father. [And here we are not considering the mutual relationship of the names, but the power of the substances. For we look at the possession of relations in the 600C

Substance or Persons from one point of view, at the generation or procession <from the Unbegotten> from another. In the former (we see) how they are named in relation to each other, in the latter how they differ from each other.] So the Son is from the Father, but not the Father from the Son. For in God it is not the relations of human generations that are considered, but the substantial possessions of ineffable Substances.

The Father is *indeed* greater than the Son as Cause. For the holy word of God considers first the possession of fatherhood with regard to the Son, and then that of sonship with regard to the Father; and so that you may more certainly both believe and understand this, have recourse to the authority of Gregory the  
 600D Theologian, who in his First Discourse on the Son, where he is disputing with the Arians, wisely teaches that the Father is greater than the Son as Cause “making the distinction that the Son exists from the Father but the Father does not subsist from the Son”. But in saying this we do not reject the interpretation of those who assert that it was with reference to His Humanity that Our Lord said of Himself, “The Father is greater than I”, for either interpretation may be accepted without straying from the Faith.

601A A. Yes. For although they are not of equal subtlety and profundity, yet neither conflicts with the Catholic Faith.

N. Therefore the Father’s natural subsistence and His being the Cause of His Son are not the same thing; for it is not the Father’s Nature that is the Cause of the Son. The Nature of the Father and of the Son is, of course, one and the same because both have one and the same Essence, and therefore it is the same thing for the Father to be the Father and to be the Cause of the Son; for it is not in respect of His Nature, which is one and the same [in the Father and in the Son] [for it is not in respect of nature], that these names are predicated of the Father and the Son, but in respect of the possession of the Begetter with regard to the Begotten, and of the preceding Cause with regard to the Cause that follows, just as it is not in respect of His Nature that it is said of the Son that He is the Son or the Begotten Cause, but in respect of the possession of  
 601B Cause with regard to the Begetting Cause.

A. This was already argued in the first book, and is not unreasonably repeated again now.



N. Therefore the Father is the Cause of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, while the Son is the Cause of the creation of the causes in the Beginning whereas the Holy Spirit is the Cause of the distribution of the same [causes].

A. I also see that to admit this does not conflict with the truth, 31  
but even as I consider and believe these arguments concerning the  
threefold Cause of all things, another difficulty occurs to me. For I  
am not sure whether the Father alone is the Cause of the Holy Spirit  
or the Father and the Son, in which case, as the Catholic Faith  
professes that He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, so also  
we should believe that He has two Causes of His [procession]. For if  
the Holy Spirit proceeds from two Persons or, as the Greeks say, 601C  
from two Substances, what would be strange or contrary to the  
Faith in professing that He proceeds from two Causes? And I beg  
you to solve this difficulty for me.

Another  
inquiry into  
the Cause of  
all things

N. Truly, truly [[it is]] a most obscure problem [and] one in  
which I am involved as well as you; and unless the Light of Minds  
reveals it to us, the [zeal] of our reasoning will achieve nothing  
towards revealing it. The difficulty is [, moreover,] brought to a  
peak by the fact that the Symbol of the Catholic Faith according to  
the Greeks [handed down from the Council of Nicaea] professes  
that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only [according to the  
evidence of Epiphanius the Bishop of Cyprus in his book “De  
Fide”]; but according to the Latins, from the Father and the Son —  
although in some commentaries of the Greeks we find that the same  
Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son; so, recoiling from  
the difficulty of the present inquiry I am dashed against the waves of 601D  
contrary opinions. For I ask myself what I must do about it:  
whether we should respect it in silence [as being beyond the power  
of our thought] or attempt by some means, so far as the divine  
illumination [in] our mind is alight, cautiously to formulate between  
us a definition, and then examine it.

A. Have no fear. For He Who is sought does not abandon 602A  
those who seek Him, nor refuse to those who pursue their investi-  
gation in a spirit of piety and humility the possibility of finding  
Him. For He Himself says: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek,  
and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For  
everyone who asketh receiveth and everyone who seeketh findeth  
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

N. First, then, I think we must speak of the factors in this problem which seem to contradict each other.

A. There is no other way of inquiry. [For no one will bring together the points that agree until he has separated the points that conflict.]

602B N. Do you think that it is in accordance with the true faith that we should believe that the Son is born from one Cause, namely the Father, but that the Holy Spirit proceeds from two, namely the Father and the Son? For reason does not easily accept that one  
 That it is a  
 common  
 thing for  
 many causes  
 to be born  
 of a single  
 cause  
 602C cause should flow from two — especially in a Nature which is simple and more than simple and, to speak more truly, is Simplicity itself, which is without any division or plurality —, but it can be proved from many examples that many causes break forth from a single cause. For it is perfectly clear to all those who practise philosophy aright that many species are born of a single genus, many numbers from the monad, many radii from the centre. The different species in their turn which are born of one genus become the causes of the individuals [from which and in which are born multiplicities and quantities and qualities and differences]; the numbers which proceed from the monad are the causes of diverse proportions [and the proportions of proportionalities, the proportionalities of harmonies]; the radii which proceed from one centre are recognized (as)  
 602C the causes of angles and sides, of breadths and depths [which in their turn are the causes of the geometrical bodies].

What shall I say of the fiery element which, although considered in itself and through itself is one and simple, is the cause of heat as well as of light? Moreover, heat is the cause of burning in burning (objects) while light is the cause [of shining] in objects that shine. [The shine gives birth to the diverse colours.] The element of air is the origin of diverse voices; the diverse voices become the origins of diverse *tones*. The element of water, although in itself it is simple and one, is the cause of diverse humours, which in their turn emit from themselves diverse qualities [of odours, tastes, (and) freshness]. From the one earth are born the diverse quantities of diverse bodies — by quantity I here mean not the incorporeal quantity,  
 602D material bulk which, as no one disputes, is a composition of diverse parts —; and it is very easy by the same reasoning to find other examples of this kind in the nature of things visible or invisible.

A. That the Son is born from one Cause, that is, from His Father, no one of the faithful doubts; but whether the Holy Spirit

proceeds from one Cause, namely the Father, or from two, that is, 603A  
 from the Father and the Son, I would not dare hastily either to  
 affirm or deny; and therefore it is not sufficiently clear to me that it  
 is in conflict with the professions of the True Faith as I have very  
 often found the Holy Spirit called the Spirit of the Father and of the  
 Son. For He is the Spirit of both because He proceeds from the  
 Father through the Son, and He is the Gift of each because He is  
 given from the Father through the Son, and He is the Love of each  
 because He unites the Father and the Son, as St. Augustine teaches  
 in the books which he produced concerning the most high and true  
 Trinity, where he searches by a wonderful investigation into its  
 image in human nature and most ingeniously demonstrates it,  
 proving that the trinity of our inner nature, that is, of the rational  
 soul, created in the image of God, consists of the mind, which is the  
 chief part of the soul; and its knowledge of itself by which it knows  
 itself; and the love by which it unites itself and its knowledge of  
 itself. For the human mind begets from itself as a kind of offspring  
 of itself the knowledge of itself by which it knows itself, and the  
 knowledge of itself is equal to itself because it knows itself as a  
 whole, in the likeness of God the Father Who begets from Himself  
 His Son Who is His Wisdom by which He knows Himself, and (His  
 Son) is equal to Him because He understands Him as a whole, and is  
 co-essential with (the Father) because Whom (the Father) begets He  
 begets from Himself.

Concerning  
 the trinity of  
 the inner  
 man accord-  
 603B  
 ing to  
 Augustine

From the human mind proceeds an appetite by which it seeks  
 itself so that it may bring forth knowledge of itself; and when this  
 appetite or search attains to the perfect discovery of knowledge it is  
 made into the love which unites the mind and its knowledge of itself,  
 and is equal to the mind and the mind's knowledge because it loves  
 itself as a whole and its knowledge of itself as a whole, and is 603C  
 co-essential with the mind and with the knowledge because the love  
 which unites the mind and its knowledge proceeds from nothing else  
 but the mind itself; after the image of the Holy Spirit Who,  
 proceeding from the Father, unites the Father and the Son in a bond  
 of ineffable charity.

But why you should say: "The reason does not easily accept  
 that one cause should flow or proceed from two causes", I do not  
 yet see clearly, though, unless I am mistaken, I fully understand why  
 you put the word "flow" in place of the word "proceed". For the  
 Holy Spirit is called both river and water in Holy Scripture. Hence  
 the Lord Himself *also* says: "He who believes in Me, as the

Scripture says, there shall flow out from his belly streams of living water” which “if anyone shall drink he shall never thirst again,” as was said to the woman of Samaria. Moreover, none of the wise  
 603D denies that that source in paradise which is divided into the four cardinal rivers, interpreted typologically, signifies the Holy Spirit, from Whom, as from their principal and unique and inexhaustible source flow the four cardinal virtues in the paradise of the rational soul, I mean prudence, temperance, courage, and justice, and from these in their turn flow forth all the streams of all the virtues, which, when they have irrigated and fertilized the surface of human nature,  
 604A flow back into them again. Rightly then is the Holy Spirit said to flow, whether from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son, because He is the Source and Origin of all the virtues, and by an ineffable course through the hidden channels of our nature they return to Him.

N. You have a correct understanding of the spiritual rivers. But please tell me what prevents you from understanding clearly what was said by us, namely, “Reason does not easily accept that one cause should flow from two”.

A. I see many examples that prevent me. For even *the examples* which you have introduced from the four elements of the world adequately teach, as I think, that one cause can be made from two causes. For although fire is the source of heat and light, it is seen to  
 604B be born of two causes. For the fiery element is made from warmth and dryness, and these two qualities are as two causes which beget out of themselves one. The same must be said of the other elements as well. For although they are the causes of their effects, yet the natural philosophers have said that they are born of double causes prior to themselves. For as fire is composed of the warm and the dry, as we said just now, so air is composed of the warm and the moist, water of the moist and the cold, and earth of the cold and the dry. What then? Is it to be denied that one cause may flow from two causes, when these examples, to say nothing of the others, are sufficient to prove this?

N. I rather wonder, and it is something worthy to be wondered at, why, while you have a clear and reasonable view of everything else, you are misled by these examples.

A. Tell me, pray, in what and how I am deceived.

604C N. Have you not been convinced by the philosophers that this visible world consists of four universal and simple elements, namely,

fire, air, water, and earth, each one of which possesses its proper and unique quality? For fire has warmth, air moisture, water coldness, earth dryness.

A. These things have been very well known to me [almost] from my infancy.

N. Say, then: What is that fire, to take one example, which appears to be one cause flowing from two causes, according to you? Is it that which, simple and invisible and incomprehensible through itself, penetrates and moves all visible things, or that (which is) visible and corporeal and tangible and fed on material things?

A. I would not say that it is that (which is) simple and incomprehensible and which fills and makes all bodies, *for it [is]* 604D *both* the primordial cause [of sensible things] and one of the four causes of all bodies; but it seems to me that it is the sensible and material fire that proceeds from warmth and dryness as though from two causes.

N. Did you not admit earlier that warmth is the proper quality of no other element but fire alone, and dryness of none other but earth alone? For each is given its own, that is to say, each one of the [substantial] elements is given its own proper quality.

A. I have already admitted (this). *For* the philosophers do not 605A allow me to understand otherwise.

N. Say, therefore: Is fire one thing and warmth another, or are they one and the same?

A. They seem to me to be two things. For fire is a substance, whereas warmth is the quality of that substance, and its proper quality.

N. What then? Is the substance the cause of its quality or the quality the cause of the substance or is neither the quality the cause of the substance nor the substance of the quality, seeing that they are not of the same genus?

A. I agree with your last suggestion. For although the quality is contained within the substance — for no quality subsists through itself —, yet I would not say that the substance is the cause of the quality because every species follows its own genus since it is born of its genus and is immutably preserved within it; and therefore every substance flows down from general being, but every quality from general quality.

Concerning  
605B  
substances  
and accidents

N. So fire, because it is a substance, descends from no other cause but the most general being. Similarly warmth, because it is a quality, proceeds from no other cause but the most general quality.

A. Who ever disputes this conclusion would seem to reject the reasons of philosophy.

N. Why, then, did you dare to assert that fire, whether simple or material, flows as one cause from two causes, that is, from warmth and dryness, when you see that not only can its substance not be born of the foreign quality which is dryness and is proper to the earthy substance, but cannot even be born from its own, which is warmth?

A. I see now that I was mistaken in saying that warmth and  
 605C dryness subsist as two causes of one cause, that is, fire. And yet I know that many have been led into the same error through not sufficiently discerning the differences [and natures] of qualities and substances. And now I see no way of escape. For if I say that fire and warmth are one and the same, you will at once refute me by asking: Why in that case do you think that (what is) the same thing is the cause of itself? For I said that fire was composed of warmth and dryness. If I say that this visible world consists not of the four substantial elements but only of four simple qualities, namely, warmth, moisture, cold, and dryness — this too is what many believe —, you may perhaps ask me: If then this whole world with  
 605D its bodies, from the highest to the lowest, consists of four qualities, in what substances are those qualities contained? For true reason teaches us that if they are qualities they cannot subsist through themselves. And I shall not be able to find the answer, that is, by what substances these primordial and general qualities by which the world is constituted are supported; and I shall be compelled by the force of true reasons to admit four substantial elements of the world  
 606A in which subsist the four principal qualities by combination of which all composite bodies are made. But there still remains one reason why it seems possible for me to abide by my opinion wherein I said that one cause may flow from many.

N. I should like you to reveal what that one is.

A. Do not all philosophers who treat of this world unanimously teach and seem clearly to demonstrate that all composite bodies are made up of the four simple elements and their four proper qualities? And if that is the case the composition of every body is effected not by two causes only, but by many.

N. This might have been a way of escape for you if you were to assert with good reason, that these bulks of bodies, composite and corruptible and susceptible to dissolution, are the causes of other effects below them. But as it is, since there is nothing lower than the composite body it cannot be the cause of any nature coming after it or of any nature equal to it; and we are now dealing with causes, whether primary or secondary [and interrelated]: and no cause can truly or correctly be called a cause — since it is not truly a cause — which *cannot* break out into its effects. [For it altogether lacks effects of its own by virtue of which it could be called a cause.] But corruptible bodies are not the cause of any effect since they do not beget any nature out of themselves because they occupy the place (which is) the last and lowest of all natures and next to nothing. But spiritual bodies are < still > simple and therefore indissoluble [and permanent] until this whole world with its parts, having attained its end, is done away. And these incorruptible and indissoluble bodies are said and understood (to be) nowhere but in the four principal and general elements (which) in themselves are most pure and simple. But the other *bodies*, which are seen to be composed of *the qualities of these*, since they can be composed and decomposed, are not reckoned by the wise among the causes but among the last effects, which make nothing out of themselves.

Moreover, the four elements of the world, most simple and most pure and eluding the bodily sense, are traced back to one cause, simple and indivisible *and* known only to the understanding of the most perfectly wise, that is, to the most general being of all substances proceeding into visible effects, which always abides in itself. And it is not inappropriate to understand the same thing of their four primordial and proper qualities. For although these seem to be contrary to one another — for warmth is opposed to cold, to moisture dryness — yet they return to one cause, most secret and accessible to the reason alone, I mean to the most general quality of all qualities, from which by a wonderful operation of nature they proceed into the making of these bodies which are corruptible and susceptible to dissolution; and in which, by the ineffable pacific concord of universal nature, they agree together, with all contrariety removed.

A. By this last conclusion I see that I am wholly fenced around, and that no way of escape remains; and so I am compelled to agree with the first opinion which you set forth, so that I too say: “Reason does not easily accept that one cause may flow from two.”

N. What, then, shall we say? Ought we to profess that the Holy Spirit, Whom as Catholics we shall confess to be the infinite and inexhaustible and most munificent and more than munificent Cause of the distribution of the gifts of the Divine Goodness, whether of those which are of substance or of those which are of grace, proceeds from one Cause, that is, the Father, or from two Causes, the Father and the Son?

607B A. Those examples which we took from the nature of things altogether prohibit (us) from saying the latter [that is, (they require us to say) that He proceeds not from two causes but from one], unless perhaps one could say that the reason of the most high and [at once] ineffable Divine Trinity surpasses the examples of created nature.

N. If anyone says this he will at once have to be asked: By what means then can we inquire into and investigate the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity of the Divine Goodness so as to have some likely belief of it by which we may adore it, and such understanding of it as we are capable of, unless under its guidance and precept, "seek and ye shall find", we begin our ascent to it by employing as steps examples from the nature which has been created by it? — especially as the divine Paul testifies: "For" [he says] "the invisible things of Him," that is, of the Father, "are seen by the creature of the world through understanding the things that are made. Also his everlasting Power," that is, the Son, (is seen or understood by the creature in this way), "and His Eternity," that is, 607C the Holy Spirit. For that is how the blessed Maximus explains this passage from Holy Scripture.

A. How if one should say that the Father and the Son are not two causes but the one indivisible Cause, since the Son Himself says: "I and the Father are one"?

N. To this too must be given the answer: "The three Causes in the Divine Goodness which we are now discussing are sought not in the Essence, which is one and the same, but in the Trinity of Substances or Persons of that Essence." For He is not confusing the duality of the Persons when He says: "I and the Father are one." For He does not say: "I and the Father am," but "are one," showing the unity of the Essence as well as the difference of the Substances. And if He were to say: "I and the Father and the Spirit are one," we should understand this not otherwise than as the 607D Trinity of the three Substances subsisting in the Unity of the same



Essence, and although we do not find this said, yet we understand that it is very true. For Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one, and the one (is) three. For from the Father the Son is begotten, and from <the same Father> the Spirit is proceeding; and therefore when I hear from the preaching and teaching of Holy Scripture that (God is) begetting and begotten and proceeding, I understand, as much as it is granted me (to do so), three Substances or Persons of one Essence. For it is impossible that Begetter, Begotten, and Proceeding should be one, but natural reason suggests that they are three as substances while they are one in essence. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also are one in their natural essentiality but three in their substantial difference; and the seeker after truth will very easily find this example in all genera and species and individuals.

608A

Concerning  
the one  
Essence and  
the three  
substances

A. Please reveal what you have conceived in your mind concerning this present very difficult inquiry, lest we linger so long over the same topics when we ought to be hurrying on to expound the others that remain.

N. Tell (me), pray: Does it seem to you that the ray is born from fire, and that brightness proceeds from the ray?

32 608B

Concerning  
fire and ray  
and bright-  
ness

A. Anyone who says this is not deviating from a careful consideration of the nature of things, as I think. For fire, although through itself it is invisible, begets from itself a visible ray, which again would be through itself invisible (while) subsisting in the simplicity of its nature, if it did not mingle with corporeal and gross natures.

For the philosophers say that the sun's ray is incomprehensible to the senses of animals, which cannot perceive the subtlety of its nature; but as it gradually descends from the body of the sun to the lower elements it begins little by little to manifest itself: first in the ether, which is the purest, it (only) just begins to shine because the ether's nature is very similar to itself; but as it proceeds further into the parts of this upper air, little by little it becomes clear; and after that, the grosser the natures it penetrates in its downward path the more brightly does it shine and present itself to the comprehension of the bodily senses. But from the ray itself is emitted a brightness of the utmost splendour which fills the whole world and which is reflected from the surface of all bodies and reveals the diverse species of the colours. This too, on account of its natural tenuousness, would elude the corporeal senses did it not mingle itself with more corporeal elements.

608C

N. So it is, and an inquiry into natures teaches thoroughly that it cannot be otherwise. Must we then say that that brightness which proceeds from the fire through the nascent ray has two causes? For although it proceeds from the fire through the ray, yet the fire only is its cause, not the ray. For as the ray itself would not subsist  
 608D through itself if it were not born of its cause, which is fire, so there would be no brightness through the ray if it did not first proceed from the cause of the ray. You see, then, that no reason requires that the brightness proceed from two causes, although it is understood to flow from the fire through the ray; but nature, our teacher, herself declares that from one and the same cause both the ray is born and the brightness proceeds, and that therefore the brightness proceeds from the fire as well as from the ray.

609A And consider carefully the force of the same example yet further. The ray itself, born of fire, does not by being born depart from, or in any way abandon, the fire that begets it, but is begotten in such a way that the fiery force which begets it always and everywhere inseparably and immutably remains in it, whole in the whole (ray) and the whole (ray) in the whole (of it), and (they are) a one (that is) two and two (that are) one. And although the brightness seems to come out of the ray, yet it proceeds not from the ray itself as ray, but from that force out of which the ray is born and which wholly penetrates and fills both the whole of the ray and the whole of the brightness.

609B And by means of this natural example we can ascend to the Cause of all things which is trinal and one because it is believed and understood to be Trinity in Unity, so that we know that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are three Causes and one Cause —  
 Concerning the Trinal and One Cause  
 609C for the Three are One — ; the Father (is) the begetting Cause of His only begotten Son born of Him, Who is the Cause of all the primordial causes which have been created in Him [by the Father]; but the Father (is) also the Cause of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from Him <through the Son> ; and the Spirit is the Cause of the division and multiplication and distribution of all the causes which have been made in the Son by the Father into their general and specific and individual effects by nature and by grace. And although we believe and understand that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, we ought not to accept that the same Spirit has two causes, but one and the same Cause, namely the Father, both of the Son Who is born of Him and of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from Him <through the Son> . For as we say that the

brightness proceeds from the fire through the ray because the whole of the fire itself subsists in the whole of the ray and from it through the ray the brightness is emitted, so too the Catholic Faith teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son because the Father Himself Who is the principal and sole Cause of the procession of the Holy Spirit is wholly in the whole of the Son just as the Son also is wholly in the whole of the Father, and from the Father through the Son the Holy Spirit proceeds; and as the whole of the fiery force remains in the whole of the ray which is begotten of it, and the whole of the ray itself and the whole of the fiery force of which it is begotten exist in the whole of the brightness, and the whole of the brightness, proceeding from the fiery force through the ray, exists in the whole of the ray itself [and] the whole of the force itself from which it proceeds, so the whole of the Father Who begets (is) in the whole of the Begotten Son, and the whole of the begotten Son is in the whole of the Father Who begets, and the whole of the Father Who begets and the whole of the begotten Son are in the whole of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father through the Son, and the whole of the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from the Father through the Son (is) in the Father from Whom He proceeds and (in) the Son through Whom He proceeds, and the Three are One through the Trinity understood in Unity. 609D

And all this the Son himself made man and incarnate most clearly shows when He says: “I (am) in the Father and the Father in Me,” where He leaves it to be understood, as though He were explicitly saying: And as I (am) in the Father and the Father in Me, so [both] I and the Father are in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is in Us because He is co-essential and co-eternal with Us, and We Three (are) One — that is, three substantially, essentially one. And see how the Son Himself refers the Holy Spirit to the Father alone as His unique Cause, where He says: “But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father sends in My Name.” [For He did not say: “Whom I send in My Name” but “Whom the Father sends in My Name”, although in another place He also says that He Himself sends the Spirit when He says: “If I go away I shall send Him to you.”] The sending of Him is His procession. But His procession from the Father <through the Son> is substantial only, not local, not temporal, but in the Name of the Son because he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. 610A 610B

Again, in another place He says to His disciples: “It is not you who speak but the Spirit of the Father Who speaketh in you.” The

Psalmist also requests the Holy Spirit from the Father when he says :  
 “And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” Holy Scripture is full of  
 these and similar evidences.

A. All these things I clearly and fully perceive and faithfully  
 accept because they altogether agree with the truth, and I am really  
 astonished to see how that problem which at first seemed to us  
 almost insoluble has in the end been most evidently solved by  
 arguments taken from examples and evidences, and so has been  
 made clear, which we hardly hoped for. And, as it seems to me, we  
 can prove the same thing from the analogy of the trinity within our  
 610C nature. For the mind begets the knowledge of itself and from it  
 proceeds the love of itself and of the knowledge of itself, by which  
 itself and its knowledge of itself are united. And although the love  
 itself proceeds from the mind through (the mind’s) knowledge of  
 itself, yet (it is) not the knowledge itself (which is) the cause of the  
 love, but the mind itself, from which the love begins to be even  
 before the mind itself arrives at perfect knowledge of itself. For the  
 mind already loves to know itself before it brings forth from itself  
 like an offspring the knowledge of itself — not that the human mind  
 at any time did not know itself or love itself, for these three are one  
 in nature or essence, and the one three as contemplated by reason —  
 for the reason considers being, knowing, and loving as three in the  
 one and simple nature of the soul ; for mind is, and knows itself, and  
 610D loves itself and its knowledge of itself —, but because as a penalty  
 for the transgression of human nature in the first man it happens  
 that the mind does not know that it knows itself although naturally  
 it knows itself, and does not know that it loves itself although  
 naturally it loves both itself and its knowledge of itself ; and  
 therefore it seeks by the powers of reason nothing else but to learn in  
 what way and how much it knows itself and loves itself and its  
 knowledge of itself, and when this whole is converted to the  
 knowledge and love of its Creator, (then) the most perfect image of  
 611A Him is achieved. And this is the greatest and perhaps the only step  
 towards knowledge of the truth, namely, that human nature should  
 first know and love itself and then refer the whole of its knowledge  
 of itself and the whole of its love of itself to the glory and knowledge  
 and love of its Creator. For if it does not know what is at work in  
 itself, how can it desire to know the things that are above it ? But  
 33 while we have been debating this question, another has overtaken it  
 in my mind, which I think I must not dismiss.

The question  
 whether, as

N. What is that ?

A. Whether, as we believe, following the Creed in the Roman version, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, so we could profess that the Son is born of the Father through the Spirit, although we do *not* find this written in the Creed itself either according to the Greeks or according to the Latins, nor openly taught in Divine Scripture, as I think.

the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father 611B through the Son, so the Son is born of the Father through the Holy Spirit

N. The Catholic Faith instructs us to confess that in the ineffable and supernatural profusion of the Divine Goodness, by which the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the heart, that is, from the secret recesses, of God the Father, the same Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, or from the Father through the Son. But that the Son is born of the Father through the Spirit I have found neither in that Creed in either language nor in any other scripture; and why this (is so) I have never [until now] asked myself, nor read anyone who asked or answered it. But when Holy Scripture and the Creed (which was) delivered by the Holy *Synod* of Nicaea, the city of Bithynia, and safeguarded against all heresies, are consulted concerning the taking of human nature by God the Son, that is, concerning the Incarnation of the Word, it is most openly revealed to us and taught without any ambiguity that the Word was conceived from the Holy Spirit. Also the angel says to Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." And to Joseph the same (angel) says: "Joseph, son of David, do not put away thy wife. For that which is born in her is from the Holy Spirit." From these and similar evidences are we not given to believe and understand that the Son was conceived and born in the flesh from the Holy Spirit? Therefore we do not doubt that in the divine profusion the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, but in the taking on of flesh the Son was conceived and born from the Holy Spirit.

611C

But you will find that according to another theory too the Son is conceived and born from the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit. For when each of the faithful submits to the sacrament of baptism, what else is there performed but the conception and birth of the Word of God in their hearts from the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit? Daily then is Christ conceived, born, and nourished in the womb of Faith as in the womb of a most chaste mother.

611D

Concerning baptism

And perhaps the reason why it is declared by the Nicene Synod that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone is to prevent public discussion of such a subject. For if a careful student of the holy word of God hears that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the

612A

Father through the Son his studies in divinity will soon prompt him to ask: "If, then, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, why is it not equally true that the Son is born of the Father through the Spirit? But if the Son is not born of the Father through the Spirit, why should it be said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son? For why should that which as Catholics we believe of the Holy Spirit not be <believed likewise> of the Son?" <— unless, perhaps, bearing in mind the force of the analogies from nature which were mentioned above, one should say: "We see that the brightness proceeds from the fire through the ray, but not that the ray is born of the fire through the brightness. Similarly the natural order of contemplation teaches that the interior sense is sent forth from the mind through the reason, but not that the reason is begotten by the mind through that sense." But it may be that examples from nature do not supply adequate doctrine and affirmation concerning the generation and procession of the Divine Substances —> . And for this reason that which is recited in the Creed according to the Greeks is entirely unaffected by this problem and unconnected with it. For it says that the Son is ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα, that is, "begotten of the Father", but that the Spirit is ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς πορευόμενον, that is, "proceeding from the Father".

612B

Concerning  
the proces-  
sion of the  
Holy Spirit  
from the Son

612C

But should one consult the Holy Fathers who in the Latin Creed have added concerning the Spirit: "Qui ex patre filioque procedit", they would give a reasonable reply, as I believe, and would not be silent concerning the cause of that addition. And perhaps they have been consulted and have given their reply, but their opinion on the matter has not yet come into our hands, and therefore we make no rash definition about this kind of question, unless perhaps someone should say: "Not without reason was this addition made, for it is supported by many passages of Holy Scripture. For the Lord Himself says: 'Whom the Father sends in My Name.' For it is apparent that whom the Father sends in the Son's Name the Son sends. And the Son Himself also calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth. The Truth, however, is the Son, as He Himself testifies: 'I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.' If then the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, it follows that He is the Spirit of the Son. [Also when He is healing the αἰμοῤῥοοῦσα, that is, the woman afflicted with an issue of blood, He says: 'I perceived power go out of Me;'] and that which we quoted a little earlier: 'If I go away I shall send Him to you.'] Also the Apostle (says): 'God sent

the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, in Whom we cry Abba Father.’ Also the Psalmist (says): ‘By the Word of God the heavens were established, and all the virtue of them by the Spirit of His mouth.’ Who among Catholics would not be able to prove from these and similar evidences that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son?”

A. I am not too preoccupied with this question. For in whichever way one recites the Church’s Creed I accept it without endangering sound faith: that is, whether one should say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son, provided that we both believe and understand that the same Spirit proceeds substantially from one Cause, that is, from the Father. For the Father is the Cause of the Son Who is born of Him and of the Spirit Who proceeds from Him. But I should still like to ask you whether it is from the Essence or from the Substance of the Father that the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds.

N. You will easily be released from doubt about this once you clearly know the difference between the Essence and the Substances of the Divine Goodness.

A. Concerning the difference between the Divine Essence and the Substances the divine word handed down from the Holy Fathers of both tongues, that is, the Greek and the Latin, has instructed me. St. Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory the Theologian and their most subtle commentator Maximus say that there is a difference between οὐσία, that is, essence, and ὑπόστασις, that is, substance; understanding by οὐσία that one and simple Nature of the Divine Goodness, and by ὑπόστασις the proper and individual Substance of each of the Persons. For they say: μίαν οὐσίαν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσιν, that is, One Essence in Three Substances. Also St. Augustine and the other Holy Fathers who write in Latin expound their belief in the Holy Trinity by saying: One Substance in Three Persons, indicating the Unity of the Divine Nature by the name of Substance, and the threefold property of the Substances by the names of three Persons; and this is accepted by the modern writers among the Greeks too; for they say: μίαν ὑπόστασιν, that is, One Substance, and three πρόσωπα, that is, Three Persons. For all believe the same thing even if they express it in different terms. So, following the Greeks we say: The οὐσία of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one and the same, but the ὑπόστασις is not one and the same. For the Father has His own proper ὑπόστασις which belongs neither to the Son nor to the Holy Spirit

but to the Father alone. Likewise the Son (has) His own ὑπόστασις which belongs neither to the Father nor to the Holy Spirit but to the Son alone. And of the Holy Spirit in the same way it must be said that He has His proper ὑπόστασις which belongs neither to the Father nor to the Son but to the Holy Spirit alone. And the teaching of the Latin version is no different from this when it declares that there are Three Persons in One Substance. Therefore the Father subsists through Himself and the Son subsists (through Himself) and the Holy Spirit subsists (through Himself); and the Three Substances subsist in One Essence, because the Three are One.

613D  
Whether it  
is from the  
Essence or  
the Sub-  
stance of the  
Father that  
the Son is  
born and the  
Holy Spirit  
proceeds  
614A

N. I think that this is to be counted among the beliefs of those who share the orthodox Faith. So now you can plainly see the answer to the question you have asked. For you said that you were uncertain whether it was from the Essence or the Substance of the Father that the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds, as though you had openly asked whether it is from the one and common Essence or Nature of the Three Substances or Persons that the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds, or from the proper Substance or Person of the Father. For the Essence of the Divine Goodness is neither the proper Substance of the Father nor of the Son nor of the Holy Spirit, but is the one and common Nature of the Three Substances; while the Father has His own proper Substance, as likewise the Son also and likewise the Holy Spirit possess their proper Substances.

If then the Divine Essence, which is one and the same, is neither the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit, but is the Nature which They have in common, it follows that it is not from that (Nature) that the Son is born or the Holy Spirit proceeds. For if the Son is born of that (Nature), He is not born of the Father; for, as we have said, it is not the Father. Similarly, if the Holy Spirit proceeds from that same (Nature), He does not proceed from the Father. But if the Catholic Faith most firmly and most wholesomely both believes and teaches that the Son is born of the Father while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the same Father, does it not follow that we should believe and understand that it is from the Substance of the Father that both the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds? Therefore it is not from the Essence but from the Substance of the Father that both the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds. For even in the case of human beings we do not say that sons are born from their common nature but each from his proper nature. Now, by the proper nature of each I mean the individual substance of each



person. For if men were born of their common nature no father would have his own son and no son would have his own father.

But these are things which are contemplated at a deeper and 35  
 truer level than they are expressed in speech, and understood more  
 deeply and more truly than they are contemplated, and are deeper 614C  
 and truer than they are understood to be; for they pass all  
 understanding. For whatever things are said or contemplated or  
 understood of the Holy Trinity of the most simple Goodness are but  
 traces and theophanies of the Truth, not the Truth itself, which  
 surpasses all contemplation not only of the rational but also of the  
 intellectual creature. For it is not that kind of unity or trinity which  
 can be thought of or understood from any creature, or be shaped by  
 any phantasy however clear and close to the truth it may be — for all  
 these things deceive as long as this is made the end of our  
 contemplation —, because it is more than unity and more than  
 trinity. But we are charged to say something of it and to contemplate  
 it and to understand it as far as, under the guidance and tutelage of  
 the holy word of God, our intellect may approach it, so that we may  
 somehow have matter for our praise and benediction of it. 614D

For the holy word of God affirms that even the highest angels  
 and the powers that are nearest to it veil, as it were, with their wings  
 their feet and their faces, thereby telling us that the heavenly powers  
 which are eternally and immutably in the presence of the most high  
 Trinity and Unity fear the things that are above them and contem-  
 plate them with reverence. For their wings are the contemplations  
 by which they are represented (?) to veil their feet and their faces, 615A  
 fearing to behold the manner in which the Holy Trinity and  
 Indivisible Unity is poured down through all things from the highest  
 to the lowest, and how it passes all understanding, and is removed  
 from every creature, whether visible or invisible, into the infinite  
 heights of its Nature. And yet purified human beings as well as  
 angels are always and incessantly seeking to behold it, a thing which  
 in itself they cannot contemplate, and it is this which is signified by  
 the flight of the medial wings. This is why Scripture says: “Upon  
 Whom the angels desire to gaze.”

For that which they seek to know is infinite, and that which  
 they seek to grasp is incomprehensible, and that which they desire  
 passes all understanding and transcends every creature. But to this  
 end the most high and divine Unity moves in intellects whether  
 angelic or human: that they may find matter for praise of it and 615B  
 such understanding of it as is permitted to the creature, beholding

the Trinity in Unity, as St. Gregory the Theologian says in his first discourse *On the Son*. “Wherefore,” he says, “the Monad, after moving from the beginning into the Dyad, comes to rest in the Triad;” a passage which the blessed Maximus expounds as follows: “For He moves in the mind, whether angelic or human, which receives Him and, through Him and in Him, makes inquiries about Him, and, to put it more clearly, He teaches it as undivided at the first encounter, the monadic principle that no difference should be admitted into the First Cause, He then leads” the reason “on to receive in addition the divine and ineffable fertility of that Cause, saying in a mystic and hidden way that it” (i.e.,) the intellect, “must never suppose that the Good is infertile of the Word and Wisdom or of the sanctifying Power, and of co-essences in substances — but not so as to understand that the Divine is a composite of these, as if they were its accidents, and to believe that it did not subsist in them. The Divinity is therefore said to move *as* being the Cause of the inquiry into the mode of its existence. For without illumination sight of the Divinity is one of the impossible things. Again, it is said also to move through the partial revelation of the more perfect understanding of it in Holy Scripture, beginning from the confession of the Father, and moving on to the recognition of the Son with the Father, and to the acceptance of the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son, and compelling the instructed to the joint adoration of perfect Trinity in perfect Unity, that is to say, One Essence and Divinity and Power and Operation in Three Substances.”

615D        Having therefore, as far as the feebleness of our thought will allow, in a measure investigated, though not rashly defined, the most high Cause of all causes, we must return to the primordial causes with which our discourse is concerned.

A. Certainly we must. For we have dealt sufficiently with these matters.

36        N. The primordial causes, then [— as I had also said in what went before —] are what the Greeks call ἰδέαι, that is, the eternal species or forms and immutable reasons after which and in which the visible and invisible world is formed and governed; and therefore they were appropriately named by the wise men of the Greeks πρωτότυπα, that is, the principal exemplars which the Father made in the Son and divides and multiplies into their effects through the Holy Spirit.

A recapitulation of the 616A primordial causes

They are also called προορίσματα, that is, predestinations. For in them whatever is being and has been and shall be made by Divine Providence is at one and the same time and immutably predestined. For nothing naturally arises in the visible and invisible creation except what is predefined and pre-ordained in them before all times and places. *They are also customarily called by the philosophers θελήματα*, that is, divine volitions, because everything that God wished to make He made in them primordially and causally; and the things that are to be have been made in them before the ages, 616B and therefore they are said to be the principles of all things because all things whatsoever that are perceived or understood whether in the visible or in the invisible creation subsist by participation in them, while they themselves *are participations* of the one Cause of all things, namely, the most high and holy Trinity; and they are said to be through themselves for the reason that no creature is interposed between them and the one Cause of all things; and while they subsist immutably in it they [are] the primordial causes of other causes which come after them, to the uttermost bounds of the whole of nature, even multiplied to infinity — to infinity, I mean, not in relation to the Creator, but to the creature; for the limit of the multiplication of creatures is known only to their Creator < because He Himself and none other is > .

Therefore the primordial causes which the divine sages call the principles of all things are Goodness-through-itself, Being-through-itself, Life-through-itself, Wisdom-through-itself, Truth-through-itself, Intellect-through-itself, Reason-through-itself, Power-through-itself, Justice-through-itself, Health-through-itself, Magnitude-through-itself, Omnipotence-through-itself, Eternity-through-itself, Peace-through-itself, and all the powers and reasons which once and for all the Father made in the Son and after which the order of all things is woven from top to bottom, that is, from the intellectual creature which is next to God after God to the lowest order of all things in which bodies are contained. For whatever things are good are good by participation in the Good-through-itself, and whatever things subsist as beings and substances subsist by participation in Being-through-itself, whatever things are alive possess life by participation in Life-through-itself, similarly whatever things are wise and understanding and rational are wise and understanding and practise reason by participation in Wisdom-through-itself and Understanding-through-itself and Reason-through-itself. And the same applies to the rest. For there is not found in the nature of 616C 616D

617A things any power, whether general or specific, which does not proceed by an ineffable participation from the primordial causes. But lest anyone should suppose that what we have said of the primordial causes rests on the support of no authority, we have thought it not inappropriate to insert into this work some (passages) from the book of the Holy Father Dionysius On the Divine Names.

A. There is no more apt insertion that you could make, nor any that goes better with sound reason than the unshakeable and tried authority of the Holy Fathers.

N. He says, then, in the eleventh chapter of the aforesaid book of his: “But what, you ask, (is it) at all which is called Being-through-itself, or Life-through-itself, or whatever we have expounded (to be) absolute and primary being...? We say this: It is not a tortuous (problem) but a straightforward one, and has a simple  
617B explanation. For we do not say that Being-through-itself, (which is) the cause that (all things) are, is some divine or angelic essence —for it alone is the superessential principle and” <subsistence> “of all things that are and the causative (principle) of their essence —nor that there is any other lifegiving divinity save the superdivine Life which is the Cause of all things which live and of the life which proceeds (from it)... but by Being-through-itself and Life-through-itself and Deity-through-itself we mean, (speaking of them) indeed as principles” and “as Godlike things and causes, the one Principle beyond principle and being, and the (one) Cause of all things; but (speaking of them) as participable, providential Powers proceeding from the unparticipating God..., Deification-through-itself, things that have their proper existence in themselves participate, and are and are called existent and living and divine, and other things of this sort. Therefore He is said to be the Good Substantiator even of the first (orders) of them, ... then of their parts, then of the things which  
617C participate in them as wholes, then of those which participate in them partially. And what is to be said of these? When indeed certain of our holy masters say that He that is more than Good and more than God is the Substantiator of Goodness-through-itself and of Divinity, calling the gift of making the Good and of making God, which proceeds from God, Goodness-through-itself and Divinity; and the outpouring of the making-of-beauty-through-itself Beauty-through-itself and Beauty in its totality and partial beauty, and the things which are wholly good..., and whatever other things are spoken of or shall be spoken of in this manner and show that the Providence and Goodness in which beings participate proceed and

overflow in an abundant outpouring from the God Who is unparticipating, so that the loving Cause of all things transcends all things, and the Superessential and Supernatural... is in every respect 617D beyond the things which exist after whatever mode of existence or of nature?"

And from chapter five of the same book: "All principles of existing things, since they participate in being, both are, and are principles; and first they are, and then they are principles. And if one likes to say that the principle of living things as living is Life-through-itself, and of like things as like Likeness-through-itself, and of unified things as unified Unification-through-itself, and of ordered 618A things as ordered Order-through-itself, and of any other things which by participation in this or that or both <or> many, are this or that or both or many, you will find that the participants-through-themselves are first participants in Being and first take their existence [from] that Being, then are principles of this or that, and that it is by their participation in Being that they both are and are participated in. But if it is by their participation in Being that they are, much more (is this the case with) the things which participate in them."

And a little later: "For in the Monad every number... is presubstantiated, and the Monad possesses in itself every number under a unitary mode, and every number is one in the Monad, but the further it issues from the Monad the more it falls into division and multiplicity. And all the lines of a circle co-subsist at the centre 618B in their first unification, and the point holds in itself all simple lines unified in the mode of unity with one another and with the one principle from which they proceed; and while at the centre they are wholly unified, when they are distant a little from it they are a little divided, and when they recede further from it (they are) more (so); and, (to put it) plainly, the closer they are to the centre the closer they are to unification both with it and with one another, and the further (they are) from it, the further they are from one another also. But as in the whole nature of all things all the reasons of nature as individuals are brought together in one unconfused unification, so also in the soul under a unitary mode are the powers of the whole body which provide for all things separately. It is not unreasonable therefore that, ascending from imprecise images to the causal (principle) of all things, we should with a vision that penetrates 618C beyond earthly things contemplate all things in the causal (principle) of all things, and the things which are opposed to one another as

under one form and as unified. For it is the Principle of existing things, from which proceed both Being itself and everything whatsoever that exists, every beginning, every end," <and> "all life, all immortality, all wisdom, all order, all harmony, all virtue, all protection, all gathering together, all distribution, all understanding, all reason, all sense, all condition, all rest, all motion, all unification, all judgement, all friendship, all agreement, all division, all determination, and all other" <several> "things which, deriving their existence from Being, impress it upon everything that exists."

And a little later: "For if the sun of our world, although the essences and qualities of sensible objects are many and diverse while itself is one and shines upon them all with a uniform light, yet renews and nourishes and protects and perfects and distinguishes  
 618D and unites and cherishes and makes fertile and augments and changes and gathers together and establishes and moves and quickens all things, and if each of them partakes of the same sun in the manner appropriate to itself, and if the one sun predefines as a unity in itself the causes of the many things that participate in itself, then we should be all the more ready to allow that the Cause of the earth and of it and of all things, preformed on high in itself the exemplars of all existents in one superessential unity, and it then  
 619A brings forth the essences by an emanation from Essence. Now by the exemplars we mean the reasons in God which substantiate existing things and were preformed after a unitary mode, (and) which the divine word calls predestinations and divine and good volitions which determine and make the existents, (and) after the pattern of  
 620A which the Superessential has both predestined and brought forth all existent things."

And now I think we should bring this book to an end.

A. Let it be so.

# PERIPHYSEON

## BOOK III

N. In the Second Book almost the entire purport of our reasoning was directed towards setting down in writing what seemed to us likely to be true, and what we had, I think, brought to a clear explanation and fortified with the irrefutable conclusions of true reason, concerning the second aspect or, if I may so call it, form or species of universal Nature.

1 619A  
Recapitulation of the  
Second Book

Now the second aspect of universal Nature consists in that part of it which both is created and creates, in which we are taught both by the authority of the Holy Fathers and by the Truth itself, when reason is applied to it, to consider the principles of all things, that is to say, the primordial causes or, as they have often been called, the predestinations of things that are to be created or the divine volitions; and *in which also* the trend of the discourse required that we should include something about incidental problems in order to elucidate the main one. For there is no main problem, I think, which does not involve incidental problems when it is being investigated by a diligent mind [— for it would be impossible to solve it otherwise —], especially as it became necessary and inevitable in the course of discussing the principles of things, that is, the primordial causes, to introduce what it came into our mind (to say) about the one principle of all things also, that is, about God, Who only is the one and first Cause of all causes and the Cause beyond causality and the Goodness beyond being, by participation in Whom all principles and all causes of all things subsist, while He Himself participates in none because He has no principle at all whether superior to Him or co-existent with Him that it not coessential with Him. For who shall

619B

619C

rightly say anything about the created causes unless he first has a clear view of the unique Cause of all things which subsists by Itself and is created by nothing prior to Itself? — in so far as it is given (us) to utter the unutterable or comprehend the incomprehensible (or) understand that which passes all understanding.

Also, in addition to these matters we made some preliminary remarks about the Return of mutable and dispersed things through the various divisions and parts of nature which make up [this] world  
 619D back into their principles from which they proceed and in which they immutably subsist when the end of all things shall come, and rest shall come to all things in motion, after which nothing will move.

Of these, then, and other matters the composition of the second discourse is made up. The questions that follow upon them require, unless I am mistaken, that the Third Book shall consist, under  
 620A God's guidance, of whatever the Divine Light shall reveal to our minds concerning the third aspect of universal Nature, that is, concerning that part of creation which is created and does not create.

A. In no other way should we embark upon the discussion, as I think. For if the First Book deals with *that* nature which creates all things *and* is created *by nothing* and which is recognized in God alone, and the second, in logical succession, with that which both is  
 620B created and creates and is recognized in the origins of things, does it not follow that the third also should take the subject of its composition from the third (nature), which is created and does not create?

But before we pass on to the elucidation of this part of Nature I should like to know for what reason you decided to represent *that* nature which is separated from the universe of all natures because of its excellence and infinity as though (it were) the first part of that universe. For the universe is completed by the numbers of its species and parts, and therefore does not extend to infinity. For above and below it is bounded by limits; for, starting from the intelligible creature [which is established in the angels] *and*, to go higher, from  
 620C the primordial causes than which right reason has discovered nothing higher save God alone, it descends through the natural [orders] of the intelligible and celestial essences and of the visible essences which compose this world as far as the lowest of the whole creation, which [is occupied] by bodies and the growth <and>



decline of bodies and [is brought about] by departures and replacements through the coming together of the universal elements into particulars and their dissolution into universals once again.

But the nature which creates the whole universe, being infinite, is not enclosed by any bound above or below, for it bounds all things and is bounded by nothing. And no wonder, since it *may not* be bounded even by itself because it knows no boundary at all. Since, being beyond nature, it escapes all comprehension by itself, how much more (will it elude) any defined or definable intellect? — 620D  
 unless perhaps someone should say: “There is this one way in which it bounds itself: by its knowledge that it cannot be bounded. There is this way in which it comprehends itself: by its knowledge that it cannot be comprehended. There is this way in which it understands itself: by its knowledge that it is *impossible* for it to be understood in anything.” For it transcends everything that is or can be. And since this is the case, and none of those who correctly practise philosophy would be so rash as to dispute these arguments, why it is included by you among the divisions of the universe I am at a loss to see. 621A

N. Among the divisions of the created universe I certainly would not place it, but for placing it among the divisions of that universe which is comprehended by the term universal Nature I have not one but many reasons. For by that name, “Nature”, is usually signified not only the created universe but also that which creates it. For the first and greatest division of universal Nature is into that which creates the established universe and that which is created in that established universe. No wonder, for this division of nature persists uniformly throughout all the universes to infinity. For the first division of the universal Good is into that one and supreme Good (which is) immutable in itself and substantial, from which every good flows, and that good which is good by participation in the supreme and immutable Good. The same principal division is similarly (found) in the universal Essence, the Universal Life, the universal Wisdom, and the universal Power. For in these and in others like them is the first discrimination of that Nature which through itself by itself in itself truly and immutably is Essence and Life and Wisdom and Power from that nature which by participation in the supreme Good either has being only, or has both being and life, or *has being and life and sense*, or *has both being and life and sense and reason* or *has both being and life and sense and reason and wisdom*. 621B

Do you see how the Creator of the whole universe takes the first place [in the divisions]? — not without reason, for He is the Beginning of all things and is inseparable from every universe that He has created and (is that) without which it cannot subsist. For in  
 621C Him are all things immutably and essentially; and He is the Division and Collection of the universal creature, and Genus and Species and Whole and Part although He is neither genus nor species nor whole nor part of anything, but all these are from Him and in Him and (return) to Him. For the monad also is the beginning of numbers and the leader of their progression, and from it the *plurality* of all the numbers begins and in it is consummated the return and collection of the same. For all numbers subsist as a whole and immutably in the monad, and in all of them it is the whole and the part, and of the whole division it is the beginning [although it is itself in itself neither number nor a part of it]. It is the  
 621D same with the centre of a circle [or of a sphere], with the sign for a figure, with the point on a line. Since then the division of the whole universe starts from its Cause and Creator, we ought to regard Him not as the first part or species but as that from which every division and partition originates, since of every universe He is the Beginning and Middle and End; and although those things are predicated and understood of Him, that is, although He occupies the first place in the divisions of universes, yet there is no one of those who devoutly  
 622A believe and understand the truth who would not persistently and without any hesitation declare that the creative Cause of the whole universe is beyond nature and beyond being and beyond all life and wisdom and power and beyond all things which are said and understood and perceived by any sense, since He is the causal Beginning of all those things, and the essential Middle which fulfils (them), and the End in which they are consummated and which brings to rest every motion and imposes tranquillity, and the boundary which bounds all things that are and all things that are not.

A. To these conclusions of lofty and cautious reasoning I gladly give way and acknowledge that they are likely to be true. But before you come to consider the effects of the primordial causes from which especially the first and unique creative Cause of all things is wont to be named, it would be convenient to know the natural order (of the causes). For up to now I think that they have been mentioned in a confused and indiscriminate sequence. For, if I  
 622B am not mistaken, it will help inquirers not a little towards a perfect

knowledge of them and of their effects if we start by making clear the natural order in which they were established by their Creator.

Concerning  
the Order of  
the Primordial  
Causes

N. The order of the primordial causes has been very clearly set out by that industrious investigator of the Divine Providence St. Dionysius the Areopagite in his Book on the Divine Names. For he asserts that the first gift and participation of the Supreme Goodness, which participates in nothing since it is Goodness-through-Itself, is that goodness-through-itself by participation in which whatsoever things are good are good, and that is why it is called goodness-through-itself, because it participates in the Supreme Goodness-through-Itself. For the other goods do not through themselves participate in the supreme and substantial Good but through that which is through-itself the first participation of the Supreme Good. And this rule is uniformly observed in the case of all the primordial causes, that is, that they are in themselves the principal participations of the One Cause of all things Who is God.

But since the first aspect of the supreme and true nature is that by which it is understood as the supreme and true Goodness while the second is that by which it is understood as the supreme and true Essence, the second place among the primordial causes is not inappropriately occupied by essence-through-itself, and since this is the first participation of the supreme and true Essence, all things after it that have essence receive their essence by participation in it, and therefore are not only goods but existents.

The third aspect of the Divine Nature is that by which it is understood as the supreme and true Life, and therefore life-through-itself is reckoned third among the primordial causes, and this, the first subsisting participation-through-itself of the supreme and true Life, was created in order that all things after it that have life have it by participation in it. Hence it is that goods and existents and living things are of the same nature.

The fourth aspect is that by which it is known as the supreme and true Reason. Therefore reason-through-itself is seen to have the fourth seat among the primordials and the first participation of the supreme and true Reason, and the origins of all reasonable beings after it, that is, of all things that participate in reason.

The fifth aspect of the Divine Nature concerns the supreme and true Intellect. For intellect is that which has intellectual knowledge of all things before they are made, and therefore fifth in the order of the primordials is known intellect-through-itself, by participation in

which all things that have intellectual knowledge have intellectual knowledge and are intellects, whereas it itself is established as the first participation of the supreme and true Intellect.

- VI        The sixth aspect of the Divine Nature is constituted in the true and supreme Wisdom. Hence wisdom-through-itself is not inappropriately set in the sixth place among the primordial causes, for it is the first participation in the supreme and true Wisdom, but *is created* to be the cause of the possession of wisdom for all those who by participation in it possess wisdom after it.
- VII        The seventh aspect of the true and supreme Nature is that  
623B which regards its supreme and true Power, and therefore power-through-itself occupies the seventh seat among the primordials and is the first participation of the supreme and true Power, whereas the other kinds of powers after it are participations of it.
- VIII       The eighth degree of contemplation is that in which the pure mind beholds the supreme and true Blessedness of the Divine Nature, of which the first participation is blessedness-through-itself, in which all blessed beings that are blessed after it participate as in the eighth of the primordials.
- VIII       Ninth in order (is) the aspect of divine and supreme Truth, of which the first participation is truth-through-itself, after which and through which, as the ninth of the primordials, all truths are true.
- X         The tenth place is occupied by eternity-through-itself, which is  
623C the first participation in the supreme and true Eternity, and after which and through which all eternal things are eternal.

The same can be said of Magnitude, of Love and Peace, of Unity and Perfection. For through these primordial causes there descend from the supreme Cause of all things whatever partakes of magnitude, love, peace, unity, perfection.

- This is enough, I think, to explain what we mean. For all the principles of all things, extending to infinity, divinely reveal themselves everywhere to the contemplations of the mind under aspects uniform with those that have been mentioned, whether in things which can be understood and receive a name, or in those which can be perceived by the intellect alone but cannot be signified, or in  
623D those which are neither comprehended by the intellect nor expressed by names because they elude every sense and every mental concept, for they are hidden by the excessive brightness of their transcendence.

For they abide in Him of whom the Apostle said, “Who alone hath immortality and dwelleth in inaccessible light”.

Nor is it strange that the primordial causes should extend to infinity. For as the First Cause of all things, from which and in which and through which and for which they are created, is infinite, so neither do they know any end to limit them but the will of their Creator. 624A

And be it noted that this sequence of the primordial causes which you ask me to set out distinctly in a definite order of precedence is constituted not in themselves but in the aspects, that is, in the concept of the mind which investigates them and which conceives in itself such knowledge of them as is permitted and arranges that knowledge methodically so that it should be possible to say something about them which should be sure and defined by a pure understanding. For in themselves these first causes are one and simple and none knows the order in which they are placed or are distinguished one from another. For this is something that happens to them in their effects, and as in the monad although in the sphere of reason alone all the numbers subsist in it, yet no number is distinguished from another number — for they are one and a simple one and not a one that is a composite of many, for it is from the monad that every multiplication of numbers proceeds to infinity whereas the monad is not composed from the multiples that issue in progression from it as though it were made up of the collection of them into one —, similarly the primordial causes when seen by the intellect to be substantially existing in the Beginning of all things, that is, in the only begotten Word of God, are a simple and indivisible One, but when they proceed into their effects that are multiplied to infinity they acquire their numerable and ordered plurality — not that the Cause of all things is not Order or Ordering, or that order-through-itself is not included among the principles of things, for every ordered thing is ordered by participation in it ; but because all order in the supreme Cause of all things and in the first participation in it [is] one and simple and is distinguished by no differences, and in it no order clashes with any other since they are an inseparable one from which the multiple order of things descends. Therefore the order of the primordial causes is constituted in the judgement of the mind which contemplates them in so far as knowledge of them is granted to those who discourse on the divine causes. For a devout and pure-minded philosopher may start from any one of them at will and let his mind’s eye, which is true reason, 624B

An example concerning the Primordial Causes

624C

[embrace] the others in any order of contemplation, observing all of them that he can, and conclude his contemplation at any one of them whatever, just as in the present case the humble capacity of our contemplation began the enumeration of the primordial causes from Goodness, as though they were constituted in a definite order, and ended the example in that which is called perfection-through-itself as though it were constituted in the fifteenth place — for it was by way of example that to the best of its contemplative power it selected these principal causes and set them in the order that seemed good to it, not because they are so constituted by their own nature, for there all things are one and simple and simultaneous, but because to those who inquire into them and wish to have something to say about them for the sake of example, they are wont to appear by the illumination of the divine radiance in theophanies of themselves as this or that and as many and infinite — and, to make things clearer by this example from sensible nature, consider carefully the centre and the circle circumscribed about it and the straight lines that are begun from the centre, produced to the circumference, and made to end there.

625A  
Another  
example

A. I have often regarded it either inwardly in the mind by imagination or outwardly in a visible and corporeal figure subject to the senses.

N. Have you not noticed how all the lines are united at the centre so that none of them can be distinguished from the others? No wonder, for all are one in it and are in no way distinct from one another so that the centre is reasonably defined not as the place where the lines come together in one but as the source and simple and indivisible principle from which either by nature or by art the multiplicity of the lines proceeds. For the centre is the common starting-point of the lines in which they are all one.

625B

A. I am fully persuaded of this also on geometrical grounds. But all these things are perceived more by the mind than by the sense whether one wishes to argue about such matters inwardly by imagination or outwardly by sense.

N. You say well. For these and like matters are judged by the sheer sharpness of the mind. You see, if I am not mistaken, at the beginning of the progression of the lines from that unity which lies at the centre how the lines are so closely linked to one another that they can scarcely be distinguished from one another; but as they extend further from the centre the spaces between them begin

gradually to widen until they reach the circle which bounds them, where their “diastemata”, that is, the spaces that are formed between the lines, attain their greatest width ; and these are equal to one another so that none of them is found to be wider or narrower than another, as also in the lines there is found one and the same length so that none of them is longer or shorter than another, a natural and reasonable equality being preserved in both, I mean, in the width of the intervals and in the length of the lines. 625C

A. So it is and so I plainly understand.

N. Suppose you want to discover the number of the intervals and lines and reduce them to some order? Are you able in any specific way to discover some specific interval or line from which, be it interval or line, the natural or proper beginning may be made?

A. When I look for one I find none. For such equality prevails among them that no interval or line can be distinguished [by] any difference or property from any other. For even that circle which gathers them all into its circumference is so self-identical that no part of it is distinguishable from another either by nature or by art. For it displays a continuous quantity and therefore starts from no definite beginning and ends in no constituted term, but the whole of it wholly is both beginning and end. Therefore circular motion is rightly called by the Greeks *ἀναρχος*, that is, without beginning; and over the other motions, that is, the straight and the oblique, it holds the primacy. 625D

N. In none of this are you mistaken, in my opinion. For right reason does not teach otherwise. Do you then see that there is no law relating to figures to restrain or prevent you from starting to order and number the whole figure from any interval or line? *For* so does reason demand, and therefore as many beginnings and endings of numbering and ordering can be made as there are intervals and lines. 626A

A. Here again is a conclusion that I do not resist; but I am waiting to know where it leads.

N. To no other end than that we should see more clearly than light that the greatest theologians and their successors can, without reasonable objection, both make a start of their contemplation of the primordial causes from any one of them at all and set the term of their contemplation in any one of them as each may wish so that as many as there are of the primordial causes, or rather, to speak more cautiously, as many as they are formed in whatever way they are or 626B

can be formed in the intellects of those who contemplate them, so many are the ways of ordering and numbering them that offer themselves of their own accord by a wonderful dispensation of the Divine Providence to those who practise philosophy rightly in accordance with their capacity for contemplation and in accordance with the inclination of each ; and although they operate in various and marvellous modes of divine science and divine theophanies in the minds of those that contemplate (them), in themselves the primordial reasons of all things that are subsist eternally as an immutable unity in the Word of God in which they are made all one and the same beyond all ways of ordering and numbering.

626C A. Now I see clearly the end you intended in your reasoning. For, as I think, you intend to say nothing else than that in the principles of nature themselves there is no order to look for [that is special to their nature]. And rightly so: for who would reasonably look for order or number in those things which are created by the Creator of all things because of the loftiness of their nature beyond every order and every number, seeing that the beginnings of all number and all order are in themselves united with one another and cannot be seen apart in the eyes of any lower nature? For it is not inappropriate to believe that only the gnostic power of their Creator can number, distinguish, multiply, set in order, (and) divide them. But because by some means unknown and supernaturally discovered they take shape in their theophanies in the minds of those who contemplate them, in them too <they are seen> to be able to be multiplied and divided and numbered, I mean in [the intellects] of those who contemplate them in so far as they are able; and the result of this is that in themselves they, that is, the primordial causes, admit no order [that is known] to any intellect or sense, while in the mind that theorizes, that is, contemplates them, many different ways of ordering them are, as it were, conceived by the intellect in the reason and born as certain images that resemble them. But although this is so I would not believe that it is without some special reason that you began your enumeration of the principal causes from goodness-through-itself. For it is not the way of those who dispute in an orderly manner to waste time in saying anything without reason.

626D

627A

N. You would perhaps not be so rash as to say this if you knew that I am of the number of those who dispute devoutly and perfectly and in no way deviate from the path of true reasoning, but since I find that I scarcely have a place among the least of the followers of



the great philosophers, I must not make any rash promise concerning my advances along the highest ascents of contemplation. For it often happens that those who begin to enter upon those ascents without the help of a better and purer mind either stray and lose their way or, when they can go no higher, fall back to the lower levels or, honouring these ascents in silence, too cautious to suppose it reasonable that they should reach the higher levels, they have remained silent. For it is for those who are most perfect and who are enlightened by the splendours of the divine radiance, and are thus brought to the most sacred shrines of the celestial mysteries, to scale the highest "bimata", that is, steps, of divine contemplation and behold without any error the form of truth fully revealed without any cloud obscuring it. But since these (shrines) are set beyond our powers of penetration and since, weighed down by the weight of the corporeal senses, we are not yet able to attain them, lest we should seem to be indolent in our God's affairs and to be burying the Lord's talent in the earth and neglecting to make the Lord's money yield profit and deserving the sentence of the wicked servant, we shall, to the extent that the inward light bestows itself upon the capacity of those that seek it, say whatever seems to us to be most like the truth concerning the subject of our discussion, at every point observing the rule of humility and not esteeming ourselves to be what we are not. For it is written: "do not become proud, but stand in awe."

627B

627C

This was the reason, then, that brought me to start the principles of things from goodness-through-itself particularly — for it was not without the authority of the Holy Fathers and especially of Dionysius the Areopagite that I saw goodness-through-itself to be the most general of the divine gifts and in some manner to precede the others. For the Cause of all things, the creative Goodness which is God, created that cause which is called goodness-through-itself first of all for this purpose: that through it all things that are should be brought from non-existents to essences. For it is a property of the Divine Goodness to call the things that were not into existence. For the Divine Goodness and More-than-Goodness is both the essential and superessential cause of the universe that it has established and brought to essence. Therefore if the Creator through His goodness brought all things out of nothing so that they might be (essences), the aspect of goodness-in-itself must necessarily precede the aspect of being-through-itself. For goodness does not come through essence but essence comes through goodness; for this too is

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627D

What the  
difference is

628A  
between  
goodness and  
essence

very clearly stated by Scripture, which says: "And God saw all things and behold, (they were) indeed good." For it does not say: And God saw all things and behold they were indeed (essences); for of what value would being alone be if well-being were taken away? For all things that are, are in so far as they are good, but in so far as they are not good, or rather, in so far as they are less good, to that extent they are not, and so, if goodness is wholly removed, no essence remains. For simply being or eternally being, if well being and eternally well being are altogether removed, are wrongly named [on the one hand] being, [on the other] eternally being. Therefore, if goodness is withdrawn we cannot properly speak of essence or eternal essence. And lest perchance you should say to this: Can we not in the same way declare that if being is altogether removed no goodness will remain, (for) when that which exists passes away no good will remain; here is a stronger argument: Not only are the things that are good, but the things that are not are also called good, and furthermore the things that are not are said to be better than the things that are. For the further they transcend essence by reason of their excellence, the nearer they approach the Superessential Good, namely God, whereas the more they participate in essence the further they are separated from the Superessential Good. Now, as I think, those things are said not to be which by virtue of their excessive excellence and indivisible unity and simplicity can be apprehended neither by sense nor by intellect, while those things are thought to be which submit to intellects or senses and are confined by differences and properties within some fixed and definite substance, and being subject to accidents and to variation and to dispersal in places and times, cannot exist at once and all together.

628B

628C

Do you then see how much more general is the goodness of good things than is their essence? For there is one species <of goodness> in the things that are, another in the things that are not; and that is why, beginning from the more general gifts of the Divine Beneficence and proceeding through the more special gifts, I have, with Theology as my guide, established a certain order in the primordial causes.

3

A. Now I understand that (the point from which) you have begun your consideration of the principles was not unreasonably (chosen). For everyone who employs the method of division correctly ought to begin from the most general and proceed through the more general, and so, as far as his contemplative power enables him, arrive at the most specific; and this I see for myself, and, unless I am

mistaken, understand in those principles of nature which you gave first, regarding them from within. For as goodness is, as it were, a kind of genus of essence while essence is believed to be a kind of species of goodness, so essence is the genus of life. For all things that are, are divided into those things which live <through themselves> and those which do not live through themselves — for not every essence lives <through itself> or is life —, and therefore of the things that are there is one species in those which live <through themselves> or are life, the other of those which neither partake of life <through themselves> nor are life. And the same can be seen in the succeeding (causes). For life is a kind of genus of reason. For all things that live are either rational or irrational, and therefore the rational is one species of life, the irrational the other. Of reason also the two species are well known, wisdom the one, science the other. For the proper definition of wisdom is that power by which the contemplative mind, whether human or angelic, contemplates the eternal and immutable things of God, whether it concerns itself about the First Cause of all things or about the primordial causes of nature which the Father created at once and all together in His Word; and this species of reason is called by the wise theology. But science is the power by which the contemplative mind, whether human or angelic, discourses on the nature of the things which proceed from the primordial causes through generation and which are divided into genera and species by means of differences and properties, whether it is susceptible to accidents or free from them, whether joined to bodies or altogether free from them, whether it is distributed over places and times or, outside place and time, is unified and indivisible by reason of [its] simplicity; and this species of reason is called physics. For physics is the natural science of natures which are susceptible to senses and intellects; and the discipline of morals always follows it.

628D  
Concerning  
the divisions  
of the prim-  
ordial  
causes

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And if one observes carefully one will find that the same rule applies either to all or to many of the primordial causes, not, as I think, because among the primordial causes some are more general while others are more special — for such inequality where the utmost unity and the utmost equality prevail would be, as I think, impossible —, but because in their effects the mind of him who contemplates, and the divisions that are inherent in nature, find that of some there are more, of others fewer, participations. For of goodness-through-itself there are more participations than of essence-through-itself; the one is participated by the things that are

629C

and the things that are not, the other only by the things that are. It would not be untrue to think of the other principles in the same way. For essence is participated by things that live and things that do not live, but life only by things that live. Life is participated by rational and irrational beings, but reason by rational beings only. Reason is  
 629D participated by wisdom and science, but wisdom only by those intellects which revolve about God, beyond every nature of things visible and invisible, and beyond themselves in an eternal and ineffable motion, and about the principles of nature.

And therefore it is not in the principles of nature themselves that genera or species, multiplicity or paucity are to be observed, but in the participations of them, that is, not in the causes themselves, which as they are made in the Word of God are (all) one and immutable and equal, *but* in their effects, by which the world, visible  
 630A and invisible, is filled. In those there is absolute equality and no diversity; but in these there is a manifold and unlimited *variety of* differences. But what participation is I do not yet understand, and without understanding this nobody can have a clear knowledge of what has been said above, as I think.

Concerning  
 Participation

N. Everything that is is either participant, or participated or participation, or <both> participated *and* participant at once. That which is only participated is that which participates in nothing above itself, which is understood to be true of the Supreme Principle of all things alone, that is, of God. For He is participated by all things which come from Him, some immediately through themselves, others through interposed mediations.

But that which is only participant is that which participates in  
 630B what is naturally established above it but is not participated by anything situated below it because below it no order of nature is found; such are bodies, for no nature subsists by participation in them — for we do not count their shadows among things that subsist. By bodies I here mean not those simple, invisible, and universal ones but those that are composed of them and are subject to the senses and to corruption, that is, to dissolution.

But all the rest that are established between them, below the One Principle of all things descending through the natural gradations ordained by the Divine Wisdom as far as the extremity of universal nature which the bodies occupy, are both participant and participated, and are so named. For the most excellent things, between which and the Supreme Good above them no creature is interposed,

participate in God immediately, and are the principles of all things, that is, the primordial causes that are constituted in and after the One <Universal> Principle; and the essences that follow after them subsist by participation in them. Do you see how the first order of the created universe is both participant in the One Principle of all things and participated by the creatures that come after it? The same must be understood of the other orders. For every order that is established between (that which is only participated and that which is only participant) from the highest downwards, that is, from God to the visible bodies, both participates in an order above it and is participated in one below it, and therefore is both participant and participated. 630C

But participation is understood of all. For as between the terms of numbers, that is, among the numbers when they are constituted under one principle, the proportions are similar, so between all the natural orders from the highest to the lowest the participations by which they are related are similar; and as between the numerical proportions there are the proportionalities, that is to say, similar principles of proportion, in the same way the Wisdom that is the Creator of all things has constituted between the participations of the natural orders marvellous and ineffable harmonies by which all things come together into one concord or amity or peace or love or whatever other name can signify the unification of all things. For just as the concord of numbers has been given the name of proportion but the bringing together of the proportions is called proportionality, so the distribution of the natural orders has been given the name of participation but the bringing together of the distributions is called universal Love, which in a kind of ineffable amity gathers all things into one. Participation, therefore, is not the taking of some part, but the distribution of the divine gifts and graces from the highest to the lowest through the higher orders to the lower. For first there is given both a gift and a grace to the first order immediately after the Supreme Good of all things, for example [the gift] of being, the grace of well-being. But this first order distributes being and well-being to that which follows it, and thus the distribution of being and well-being flows down by degrees from the Supreme Source of all good gifts and graces through the higher orders to the lower as far as the lowest of all. [And here it must be noted that well-being is to be understood in two ways: one by which all the things that are, are said to be good because they are made by the Supreme Good, and are only to the extent that they 631A 631B

participate in goodness, the other by which all things that are naturally good are adorned by the gifts of the virtues so that their natural goodness may be apparent. For although it is chiefly and primarily to the rational and intellectual creature that the gifts of grace which are usually designated by the word “virtues” are distributed, yet none of the natures, not even the lowest, must be thought to be denied participation in a divine grace proportionate to itself. For as all things participate in goodness so they also participate in grace, in goodness that they may be, in grace that they may be both good and beautiful.]

- 631C The same must be accepted in regard to life, to sense, to reason, to wisdom, and to the rest of the divine gifts and graces. For in the same way they are distributed through the higher to the lower, so far as they reach ; for not all gifts descend to the lowest, for while being and well-being are naturally distributed as far as the lowest (level) of the created universe, life does not extend to the lowest order. For bodies neither live through themselves nor are life, but they receive the (gift of) living [through] the order that is above them, the order which is constituted in the nutritive and augmentative life and which flourishes in the seeds. What shall I say of sense and reason and intellect? Is it not clear to all that sense descends as far as the irrational animals, while reason and intellect do not go beyond the rational and the intellectual?
- 631D Now between “dationes” and “donationes” the difference is this: “dationes” are and are said to be the distributions by which every nature subsists, while “donationes” are the distributions of grace by which every subsisting nature is adorned. Therefore nature is a “datio”, grace is a “donatio”. For every perfect creature consists of nature and grace. Hence it comes about that every essence is called a “datum”, every virtue a “donum”. Therefore
- 632A Theology says, “Every good ‘datum’ and every perfect ‘donum’ comes down from above, descending from the Father of Lights.” But Holy Scripture often puts “datum” for “donum” and “donum” for “datum”. [Know also that virtue (or power) is to be understood in three ways: for there is substantial power, since everything that subsists subsists by a certain natural trinity, essence, power, and operation, which we discussed sufficiently in the first book; the second kind of power is that which contends with the corruption of nature, as health contends against sickness, science and wisdom against ignorance and folly; the third is that which is opposed to vice, as humility to pride, chastity to lust, and this kind is evident

wherever the irrational motion of the free will of the intellectual nature obtrudes. For to the extent that evil multiplies the species of the vices, to the same extent goodness brings up to resist them the defences of the virtues.] 632B

And notice that participation is given a more significant and expressive and more easily understandable name by the Greeks, in whose language μετοχή and μετουσία signify participation, μετοχή as if μετα- εχουσα, that is, “having after” or “having second”, μετουσία also as μετα- ουσια, that is, “after-essence” or “second essence”. From this it is very easy to understand that participation is nothing else but the derivation from a superior essence of the essence that follows [after it] and the distribution from that which first possesses being to that which follows it in order that it may be; and this we can demonstrate from examples drawn from nature.

For the whole river first flows forth from its source, and through its channel the water which first wells up in the source continues to flow always without any break to whatever distance it extends. So the Divine Goodness and Essence and Life and Wisdom and everything which is in the source of all things first flow down into the primordial causes and make them to be, then through the primordial causes they descend in an ineffable way through the orders of the universe that accommodate them, flowing forth continuously through the higher to the lower; and return back again to their source through the most secret channels of nature by a most hidden course. For thence is all good, all essence, all life, all sense, all reason, all wisdom, all genus, all species, all beauty, all order, all unity, all equality, all difference, all place, all time, and everything that is and everything that is not and everything that is understood and everything that is sensed and everything that surpasses sense and understanding. 4 632C 632D

[For the motion of the supreme and threefold and only true Goodness, which in Itself is immutable, and the multiplication of its simplicity, and Its unexhausted diffusion from Itself in Itself back to Itself, is the cause of all things, indeed *is* all things. For if the understanding of all things is all things and It alone understands all things, then It alone is all things; for that alone is the gnostic power which knows all things before they are, and does not know all things outside Itself because outside It there is nothing, but It possesses all things within Itself. For It encircles all things and there is nothing within It but what, in so far as it is, is not Itself, for It alone truly is; for the other things that are said to be are Its theophanies, which 633A

likewise have their true subsistence in It.] Therefore God *is* everything that truly is because He Himself makes all things and is made in all things, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite says.

Concerning  
Theophanies

*For everything that is understood and sensed is nothing else but the apparition of what is not apparent, the manifestation of the hidden, the affirmation of the negated, the comprehension of the incomprehensible, [the utterance of the unutterable, the access to the inaccessible,] the understanding of the unintelligible, the body of the bodiless, the essence of the superessential, the form of the formless, the measure of the measureless, the number of the unnumbered, the weight of the weightless, the materialization of the spiritual, the visibility of the invisible, the place of that which is in no place, the time of the timeless, the definition of the infinite, the circumscription of the uncircumscribed, and the other things which are both considered and perceived by the intellect alone and cannot be retained within the recesses of the memory and which escape the sharpness of the mind. And we can acquire a hint of this from examples from our own nature. For our own intellect too, although in itself it is invisible and incomprehensible, yet becomes [both] manifest and comprehensible by certain [signs] when it is materialized in sounds and letters and also indications as though in sorts of bodies; and while it becomes externally apparent in this way it still remains internally invisible, *and* while it breaks out into various figures comprehensible to the senses it never abandons the incomprehensible state of its nature; and before it becomes outwardly apparent it moves itself within itself; and thus it is both silent and cries out, and while it is silent it cries out and while it is crying out it is silent; and invisible it is seen, and while it is being seen it is invisible; and uncircumscribed it is circumscribed, and while it is being circumscribed it continues to be uncircumscribed; and it becomes embodied at will in sounds and letters, and while it is being embodied it subsists bodiless in itself; and when it makes for itself out of airy matter or out of sensible figures certain vehicles, as it were, by means of which it can convey itself to the senses of others so that it may quickly reach *their* external senses, it then abandons these vehicles and penetrates by itself absolutely alone into the heart's core and mingles itself with other intellects and becomes one with those to whom it is joined; and when it acts abroad it ever remains within itself, and when it moves it is at rest, and when it is at rest it moves — for it is moving rest and resting movement — and while it is being joined to others it does not relinquish its own*



simplicity. And (there are) many other examples that in a marvellous and ineffable way can be evoked from the nature that was made in the image of God. But these are enough to illustrate by example the diffusion of the Divine Goodness through all things from the highest downwards, that is, throughout the universe that was established by It; and this ineffable diffusion both makes all things and is made in all things and is all things. 634A

A. Certainly they are enough and are in generous measure, in so far as it is possible to express by similitudes what is inexpressible and remote from all similitude. For this similitude that you have taken as an example from our intellect falls short in this respect, as I think, [from that of which it is a similitude]: that the intellect, as you say, [both makes and] takes [those] vehicles in which it is conveyed to the senses of others from matter that was created outside itself, whereas the Divine Goodness, outside of which there is nothing, does not take the matter for its manifestation from something, but from nothing.

But when I hear or say that the Divine Goodness created all things out of nothing I do not understand what is signified by that name, “Nothing”, whether the privation of all essence or substance or accident, or the excellence of the divine superessentiality.

5  
Of what sort  
634B  
of nothing  
God made  
all things

N. I would not easily concede that the divine superessentiality was nothing [or could be called by so privative a name]. For although it is said by the theologians not to be, they do not mean that it is nothing but that it is more than being. For how could the Cause of all things that are be understood to be no essence when all things that are show that it truly is — although by no demonstration of the things that are is it understood what it is? Therefore, if it is on account of its ineffable excellence and incomprehensible infinity that the Divine Nature is said not to be, does it follow that it is nothing at all, when not-being is predicated *of the superessential* for no other reason than that *true reason does not allow* it to be numbered among the things that are because it is understood to be beyond all things that are and that are not? 634C

A. What then [pray] am I to understand when I hear that God made all things that are from nothing?

N. Understand that the things that exist have been made from the things that do not exist by the power of the Divine Goodness; for the things that were not received being. For they were made from nothing because they were not before they came into being.

- [For that word “Nothing” is taken to mean not some matter, not a certain cause of existing things, not anything that went before or occurred of which the establishment of things was a consequence, not something coessential or coeternal with God, nor something apart from God subsisting on its own or on another from which
- 634D God took as it were a kind of material from which to construct the world; but it is the name for the total privation of the whole of essence and, to speak more accurately, it is the word for the absence of the whole of essence; for privation means the removal of possession. But how <perhaps someone may ask> could there be privation before there was possession? *For* there was no possession before all things that are received the possession of subsistence.]
- 635A A. By the name, “Nothing”, then, is meant the negation and *absence* of all essence or substance, indeed, of all things which are created in nature?
- N. Such is the case, *as* I think. For *almost* all the commentators of Holy Scripture agree in this, that the Creator of the universal creature made whatever he willed to be made not out of something but out of nothing at all.
- A. I feel myself to be surrounded on all sides by the dark clouds of my thoughts. In such matters at least nothing is left for me but faith alone which the authority of the Holy Fathers transmits. But when I try to achieve a clear intellectual perception concerning the things which I retain by faith alone I am repulsed, my attention being daunted by the excessive obscurity, or rather, the excessive brightness, of the very subtle reasons that elude me.
- 635B N. Please tell me where you are now in doubt and what disturbs you so much that you cannot, as you say, arrive at any clear intellectual perception, or where our reasoning falters since it cannot bring you to any sure definition or knowledge of things.
- A. I beg of you to be indulgent and patiently bear with the delays my slowness causes. For I would believe that these very subtle inquiries into things would not easily so appear to the inward eyes of even better men than me that they would be able to attach themselves to a firm conviction at once, especially as the things that are at the moment dark to me seem to derive from those which have already *long ago* been, as it were, brought out into the light. For concerning the primordial causes of all things it was agreed between
- 635C us *that they were made* by the Father in His only-begotten Word, that is, in His Wisdom, all together and once for all and eternally, so

that as that Wisdom of the Father is eternal, and coeternal with the Father, *so* also all things which are made in it are eternal, except that they are all made in that *which* is not made *but* is begotten and is their maker; for in the establishing of the universal creature, as the will of the Father and the Son is one and the same, so is the operation one and the same. Therefore in their primordial causes all things are eternal in the Wisdom of the Father but not coeternal with it; for the cause precedes the effects. For as the concept of the artificer precedes the concept of his art, while the concept of the art precedes the concept of the things that are made in it and through it, so the concept of the Father Artificer precedes the concept of His Art, that is, of His Wisdom in which He created all things, then the concept of that Art is followed by the knowledge of all things that are made in it and through it. For everything that true reason finds to precede by whatever kind of precedence must precede in accordance with the natural sequence, and therefore the Artificer of all things God the Father precedes His Art as Cause. For the artificer is the cause of his art but the art is not the cause of its artificer, but the art precedes all things that subsist in it and through it and from it; for it is their cause. Hence it is concluded that in the Wisdom of the Father all things are eternal, but are not coeternal with it.

635D

636A

N. These things have already been discussed [between us] and <have been> brought to an unshakeable mental conviction that agrees with true reason and the testimonies of the Holy Fathers.

A. Do you not see, then, that it is not without reason that I am disturbed, and tossed about on the conflicting waves of thoughts which are inconsistent with one another? For how can these things be reconciled with one another? For if all things that are, are eternal in the creative Wisdom, how are they made out of nothing? For how can that be eternal which before it was made was not, or how can that which begins to be in time [and with time] be in eternity? For nothing that participates in eternity either begins to be or desists from being, whereas that which was not and begins to be will of necessity desist from being what it is. For nothing that is not without a beginning can be without an end. Therefore I cannot discover how these opinions do not contradict each other.

636B

How can it be (true) both that all things are eternal in the Wisdom of God, and that they are made out of nothing, that is, that before they were made they were not? — Unless perhaps someone were to say that the primordial causes of things are always eternal in the Wisdom of the Father, but that the unformed matter in which

and through which they proceed through generation into their effects, into the genera and species with which the world is filled, is not eternal. But whoever should say this will be forced to admit that matter which is made from nothing is not to be reckoned as a cause among the eternal causes of nature, and if he concedes this he will  
 636C have to grant the necessary conclusion that not all but some things are eternal in the Wisdom of the Father. But none of those who practise philosophy correctly will deny that unformed matter is to be reckoned in the number of all things that were made by God in [His] Wisdom ; for how anyone can say that the causes of all things are eternally created in the Word of God, but that unformed matter does not have its own cause I do not see. Then, if matter is included in the number of the established universe it necessarily follows that its own cause will not be excluded from the number of the causes which are eternally created in the Wisdom of God.

Concerning  
 Unformed  
 Matter  
 636D

N. Concerning unformed matter, which the Greeks call ὕλη, none of those who are learned in Holy Scripture, if with right reason he considers the establishment of natures, doubts that it is established by him who established all both as a cause among causals and among the effects of the causes according to their proportions. For He Who made the world from unformed matter also made unformed matter out of nothing at all. For there is not one author of the world that is made out of unformed matter and another of that matter previously created out of nothing at all, but one and the same Creator of both, since all things that are, whether unformed or  
 637A formed, proceed from the same Beginning. For the universe is created from the One [just as all numbers burst forth from the monad and all radii from the centre]. For in this especially the error of the pagan philosophers who have dared to treat of the making of this world is principally condemned: that they said that unformed matter is coeternal with God, and that from it, as though it subsisted apart from Himself and coeternal with Him, God took the raw material for His works. For it seemed to them unworthy that unformed matter should be created by God. For how, they ask, could the unformed come from the Form of all, the variable and mutable from Him Who is immutable and invariable in anything in Himself, that which is subject to various accidents from Him to Whom no accident occurs, that which admits intervals of places and times and quantities from Him Who is not extended by intervals of  
 637B places and times, similarly that which is receptive of divers qualities and figures from Him Who is subject to no quality, the corruptible

from the Incorruptible, the composite from the Simple, and other objections of that sort, blinded by the mists of their false reasoning? But we, studying the truth of Holy Scripture and following in the steps of its divine interpreters, both believe by faith and, as far as it is permitted us, apprehend by our understanding that both the formlessness of all things and the forms and everything that is in them either as essence or as accident are established by the one Cause of all things.

For the Creator of the universe, omnipotent and in nothing 6  
deficient and reaching out to infinity, could and did create not only 637C  
the things that are similar to Himself but also things dissimilar. For if He were to have established only His likeness, that is, the things that truly exist as eternal, immutable, simple, inseparably unified, incorruptible, immortal, rational, intellectual — knowledge, wisdom — and the other powers, he would seem to have failed in the creation of things dissimilar [and opposite], and would not be judged the Maker of absolutely everything that reason *teaches* that it is possible to make.

Now the things that are dissimilar [and opposite] to Him are said to be and are all things which are opposed to the aforesaid powers, not as being their negatives but from the unlikeness [and opposition] of their nature. For to perfect essence [in like manner ordered through differences and properties into genera and species, and uniformly ordered through each species without confusion] is opposed the imperfection and mobility of matter as yet unformed; to eternal things temporal things; to immutable, mutable; to simple 637D  
things composites; and all other things that stand to one another as diametrically opposed. All these, then, I mean the similars and the dissimilars, have one and the same Artificer, Whose omnipotence does not fail in the operation of any nature.

Furthermore, the beauty of the whole established universe consists of a marvellous harmony of like and unlike in which the diverse genera and various species and the different orders of substances and accidents are composed into an ineffable unity. For 638A  
as instrumental melody is made up of a variety of qualities and quantities of sounds which when they are heard individually and separately are distinguished from one another by widely differing proportions of tension or relaxation, but when they are attuned to each other in accordance with the fixed and rational rules of the art of music give forth through each piece of music a natural sweetness, so the harmony of the universe is established in accordance with the

uniform will of its Creator out of the divers subdivisions of its one nature which when regarded individually clash with one another.

638B So now that these facts have been established it is not surprising that, as you say, you are tossed about on the conflicting waves of thought which contend with one another. For it is agreed and incontrovertibly established that all things that are and that are not flow together from the one Principle of all things whether in the Primordial Causes which were eternally made once and for all in the only begotten Word of God; or in the unformed matter from which the primordial causes of the visible creation received the occasions for their appearance through generation; or in their effects by which, under the ministration of the Divine Providence, this world is running out its course in the material order from its beginning to its end, as the Lord says: "My Father works until now, and I work." But how these things which appear to contend with each other are reconciled in the unifying embrace of the understanding, that is, how all things are at one and the same time both eternal and made, 638C seems not only to you but also to me to merit a most careful investigation by the reason.

7 A. Certainly it merits it. For I think there is no more profound question than this that seekers after the truth should investigate. For, as we said above, things made are opposed to things eternal, and therefore if made they are not eternal, if eternal <they are> not made. For how it can be argued that the same things are both eternal and made does not occur to me. Hence there is nothing left, as I think, but [either] to respect [it] in complete silence in deference to its excessive profundity or for you to begin your investigation if it seems to you that there is anything about it to be investigated.

How the established universe is at once eternal and made

638D N. I think we should do both, so that on the one hand we should not shirk it so long as our attention, enlightened by God, is not repulsed by the excessive brightness of its subtlety lest we incur the blame of idleness or apathy; but on the other hand where it is beyond our reach and does not suffer itself to be observed and elucidated by minds that are still weighed down by their earthly habitation it should be respected in the silence of our hearts and our lips lest we should give some rash explanation of it.

A. So let it be; and embark upon this inquiry without delay.

8 639A N. I consider that we should begin by speaking of the proposition that all things are eternal in the only begotten Word of God.

A. I do not wish otherwise. For our reasoning must begin from what goes before. Eternity goes before making. Therefore we must begin from that.

N. Pay attention, then, and see that you do not concede anything incautiously lest you repent again of what you have conceded.

A. Proceed. I am paying attention so as not to concede anything rashly.

N. How does it seem to you? Is God receptive of accidents?

A. Far be it from those who have a wholesome perception of the truth to say or think such a thing. For His Nature is simple and more than simple, and free and more than free from all accidents.

N. Then nothing in God is an accident?

A. Nothing at all.

N. Then it was not an accident in Him to establish the universe, and yet Holy Scripture is not silent about His having established it [and openly exclaims [saying]: “In the beginning God made heaven and earth”, and the other things that are read of the works of the first six days.] 639B

A. God both established the universe of creatures, and it was not an accident in Him to have established it.

N. Then He was not [subsisting] before He created the universe. For if He were, the establishment of *things* would be an accident in Him.

A. We believe that God is prior to the universe not in time but solely for the reason that the cause of all things is understood (to be) Himself. For if He were prior in time, it would be an accident in Him *to make* the universe [in time]. But since He is prior to the universe which He created solely for the reason that He is its Cause, it follows that the creation of the universe is not in God as accident but is in accordance with a certain mysterious reason on account of which caused things subsist always in [their] cause. 639C

N. If, then, God is prior to the universe which He established for no other reason than the sole fact that He is the Cause while it is the caused, and every caused thing always subsists in its cause — for otherwise neither is the cause cause nor the caused caused — *and* it is not an accident in God to be causal — for always He is Cause [and was and will be], always therefore do the caused things subsist

in their Cause [and had subsisted and will subsist] —, then the universe, since it is caused, that is, participates in its cause, is eternal in its cause. Therefore it is evident that the universe of the whole creation *is eternal in the Word of God.*

639D A. This conclusion I cannot contradict since without any uncertainty I see that all numbers eternally and uniformly subsist in the monad and all radii in their centre, and although in the actual process of counting the numbers and drawing the radii they take the forms of different kinds of numbers and figures, yet they still abide as one form in their principles, I mean in the monad and in the centre, and it is understood that neither were the principles ever without them nor was there a beginning to their being made in the principles, and while they flow forth from them as many, yet they do not cease to be in them under the form of one because of their  
640A eternity and immutability.

N. You have used an example that is most apt and most true. Moreover the testimonies both of Holy Scripture [and] of the Holy Fathers allow that all things are eternal in God, “in Whom”, says the Apostle, “we live and move and have our being”. [For we have our being in God because the reason of our being is excelling and pre-exists in Him; we move in God because the reason of our well-being pre-exists in Him through the powers of our good deeds; finally we live in God because the reason of our eternal life and existence pre-exists in Him. And lest anyone should suppose that we are one thing and our reasons are another, he did not say, In Whom our reasons live and move and have their being, but He said: “In Whom we live and move and have our being.” For in so far as we are, we are nothing else but those reasons of ours which subsist  
640B eternally in God.]

St. Augustine [also], expounding in his minor works the fourfold principle of the divine operation, affirms that in the dispensation of the Word of God the ages are not made but are eternal, and here he wishes it to be understood that not the ages merely, but all things by which the ages are brought about and fulfilled. [“The divine operation”, he says, “which created and governs the ages, is distinguished by a fourfold principle: first (there is the fact) that in the dispensation of the Word of God the ages are not made but are eternal; for, according to the Apostle, before the beginning of secular time He predestined us for His kingdom.”] Again, in another place [writing on the Trinity] he says: “The Word of God through Whom all things are made, wherein all things live



immutably, not only the things that have been but also the things that shall be; and yet in Him they neither have been nor shall be but only are, and all are one, or rather all is one.” Again in the Hexameron he says of God the Word: “In one way the things that were made through Him are under Him, in another way the things that He is are in Him”, [as though he were saying openly: In one way they are under Him when, made through generation, they appear in genera and species, in places also and times, visibly through matter; in another way they are in Him when they are understood eternally in the primordial causes of nature which are not only in God but also are God. And that is why he says, “the things that he is”; not that the things which are in God and are said to be God on account of the unity of their nature are other than those which come into the world through generation, but because one and the same nature is considered in one way in the eternity of the Word of God, in another way in the temporality of the world He has constituted.]

640C

640D

St. Dionysius the Areopagite also in his chapter on the Perfect and the One says, speaking of God: “He is called the One because He is universally all things... for there is not one of the things that exist that is not a participant of the One”; and a little later: “Therefore this too must be understood: that in the One the species of each is preconceived; the One is said to unify the things that are unified and is the exemplar of all things, and if you remove the One, there will be neither a universe... nor anything else of the things that exist. For the One precedes and embraces all things in its uniformity.”

641A

If we take together these and similar examples and testimonies, we are given to understand most clearly that all things are not only eternal in the Word of God but also *are* [the Word] *Itself*. But it is stated in plainest terms by the testimonies of Holy Scripture that all things are made at once as well as being eternal in the Word of God, for John the Evangelist says, “All things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing.” See how he says quite openly that all things were made in the Word; but lest any one should suppose that they were only made and not eternal he continues: “That which was made was life in Him” — as though he had said: That which was made, whether in the primordial causes or in their effects, was life in that Word in Whom the reasons of all things are eternal. Also the Apostle: “In Whom are created all things that are in heaven and in earth, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones

641B

or dominations or principalities or powers; all are created from Him and through Him and to Him.” “For”, as the Blessed Maximus says, “having the reasons of the things that have been made presubstantiated in His good will, he substantiated in accordance with them, out of that which is not, the visible and invisible creation; and at their appropriate times made and is making in His Word and Wisdom... both universal and particular beings. For we believe that He prescribed the reason for the creation of the angels, the reason for each of the essences and powers that fill the world above us, the reason for the creation of men, the reason for each of the things that takes its being from God... recapitulating”, that is, summing up, “all things in Himself, in Whom is being and permanence and from Whom and to Whom is the becoming of things that become: things at rest and things in motion participate in God. For all things, because of their coming into being from God, participate in God according to their proper capacity, whether through intellect or through reason or through sense or through vital motion or through their opportunity for being and possessing, as is the opinion of Dionysius the Areopagite, the great and divine revealer.”

Therefore none of the faithful or of those who devoutly investigate Holy Scripture ought to doubt that all things are at once both eternal and made in the Word — for both right reason and the authority of Holy Scripture agree unanimously in this — and that the things that are eternal are not other than the things that are made but the same things are at once both eternal and made. But you do well to demand from me an explanation as to how we can understand eternal things to be made and made things to be eternal, since it does not seem to you to accord with right reason that the same thing should be eternal and made, and perhaps I myself have not yet made it quite clear how it does accord.

A. Begin, then, with the investigation and explanation of what can be said on this question.

9 N. My opinion is that the reasons of all things, so long as they are understood in the very nature of the Word, which is super-essential, are eternal. For whatsoever is substantially in God the Word, since nothing but the Word Itself is eternal, must (themselves) be eternal, and therefore we conclude that the Word Itself and the multiple and most primary reason of the whole created universe are one and the same thing. We can also say this: The most primary reason of all things, which is simple and multiple, is God the Word.

For it is called by the Greeks Logos, that is, Word or Reason or Cause. Therefore that which is written in the Greek gospel, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, can be interpreted “In the beginning was the Word”, or: “In the beginning was the Reason”, or: “In the beginning was the Cause”. For nobody who makes any one of these statements will be deviating from the truth. For the only-begotten Son of God is both Word and Reason and Cause, Word because through Him God uttered the making of all things — in fact He is the Utterance of the Father and His Saying and His Speech, as He Himself says in the gospel, “And the speech which I have addressed to you is not Mine but His that sent Me” — as though He were saying openly: I Who am the Speech of the Father, I Who have addressed you, am not of Myself but of the Father Who speaks Me and begets Me out of the secret recesses of His Substance, and Who, through Me, that is, in begetting Me, makes all things —; Reason because He is the principal Exemplar of all things visible and invisible, and therefore is called by the Greeks ἰδέα, that is, species or form — for in Him the Father beholds the making of all things He willed to be made before they were made —; and Cause because the origins of all things subsist eternally and immutably in Him.

Since, then, the Son of God is both Word and Reason and Cause it is not inappropriate to say: the creative Reason and Cause of the established universe, simple and in itself infinitely multiple, is the Word of God, and to put it the other way: The Word of God is the creative Reason and Cause of the established universe, simple and in itself infinitely multiple; simple, because the universe of all things is in Him an indivisible and inseparable One, or rather the indivisible and inseparable unity of all things is the Word of God since He is all things; and not unreasonably understood to be multiple because He is diffused through all things to infinity, and that diffusion is the subsistence of all things. For He spreads mightily from end to end and sweetly disposes all things. Also in the Psalm: “His speech runneth swiftly.”

By “speech” the prophet meant the Word of the Father which runs swiftly through all things in order that all things may be. For its multiple and infinite course through all things is the subsistence of all things. Hence St. Dionysius in the chapter on the Perfect and the One says: “It is perfect not only as perfect-through-itself (and) separated in the form of unity in itself by itself and all through all most perfect, but also (as) more-than-perfect by reason of its transcendence over all things and because it sets a limit to every

multitude and yet extends beyond every limit and is not confined or comprehended by anyone, but is extended (both) in all things at once, and beyond all things by virtue of its unfailing gifts and infinite operations. Again, it is called perfect both because it is incapable of being increased and is ever perfect, and because it is incapable of being diminished as transcending and overflowing all things in a single and incessant generosity that is through itself overfull and undiminished.”

Therefore in itself it remains universal and simple, since in it all  
 643B things are one; and yet it reaches from end to end and runneth  
 swiftly through all things, that is, without expenditure of time it  
 makes all things and is made in all things, and while in itself it  
 subsists as One, Perfect and More-than-perfect and separate from  
 all things, it extends itself into all things, and that very extension is  
 all things. Moreover, it seems to be what is signified by the name of  
 that celestial essence “Cherubim”, for Cherubim is interpreted  
 “Effusion of Wisdom”, as we are told by those who are learned in  
 Hebrew lore, of which the most subtle interpretation is: the  
 Wisdom’s fusion, or extension or running or whatever other name is  
 used for the infinite multiplication of the Word, is not as if it were  
 into things which existed before the Word and Wisdom of the  
 Father was diffused or was extended or ran, but that that very  
 effusion or extension or running precedes all things and is the cause  
 of the existence of all things and is all things. For who, taking  
 643C thought for the truth, would believe or think that God had prepared  
 for Himself places through which He might diffuse Himself, He  
 Who is contained in no place since He is the common place of all  
 things and therefore, as Place of places, is held by no place; or that  
 He had prepared for Himself intervals of place or time through  
 which He might extend Himself or run His course, He in Whom  
 there is no interval and Whose eternity transcends all times? Or who  
 would say something which would be still harder to believe, I mean  
 that spatial and temporal or any other sort of quantitative intervals  
 had been prepared for God Himself as though by another principle  
 so that He might fill them by the diffusion of Himself or traverse  
 them in His running or give them solidity by the extension of  
 Himself? For not only to say such things of the ineffable and  
 643D superessential nature but even to think them or depict them in false  
 imaginings [is] most ridiculous and most harmful. For there is no  
 worse nor more disgraceful death for the rational soul than to  
 conceive of the Creator of all things in terms of such monsters and

abominable idols, when the Truth Itself [in] the intellects of those who devoutly seek and love their Creator declares with intelligible voice generally concerning all things that are and that are not, that is, things that can be comprehended by sense or intellect and things that surpass sense *or* intellect of which the essence is that they are without any comprehensible essence, that they have no other subsistence than as participation in the one only Cause of all. 644A

But everything which is participated is prior both to the participation in itself and to the things that participate in it. Therefore God is prior to whatever things participate in Him and the participation in Him that is their essence. Hence the great Dionysius the Areopagite in the Book of the Celestial Hierarchy, that is, of the (Celestial) Episcopate, in the fourth chapter, says: “First of all, that is a true saying that by universal goodness the superessential divinity has brought forth into being the essences of the things that are by substantiating them. For this is the property of the Cause of all things and of the Goodness beyond all things: to call beings into communion with Himself to the limit of the capacity of each of the things that are. All things, therefore, participate in the Providence which flows forth from the Divinity that is superessential and cause of all things. For perhaps they would not exist except by taking upon themselves the being and principle of all things that are. Therefore all things that exist participate in its being — for the being of all things is the divinity that is beyond being —, while the things that live (participate) in the same life-giving power that is beyond life, and rational and intellectual things in the same Wisdom, perfect-through-itself and more-than-perfect, that is beyond all reason and intellect.” 644B

You have heard from the highest theologian, Dionysius the Areopagite, most famous Bishop of Athens, on the participation of the Divine Essence [an opinion in which he most clearly shows that all things that are and that are not [are to be understood as] nothing else but participation in the Divine Essence, and that that participation is nothing else but the taking upon themselves of the same Divine Essence. “For”, he says, “perhaps they would not exist except by taking upon themselves the being and principle of the things that are.” So their participation in the Divine Essence is their taking of it upon themselves, and the taking is the effusion of Divine Wisdom which is of all things the substance and essence and whatever is understood to be in them naturally]. Hear him also on the procession of God through all things and His permanence in 644C

Himself in the letter which he wrote in reply to the pontiff Titus who was asking him what was the House of Wisdom, what her Bowl, and what her Food and Drink. “The Divine Wisdom”, he says, “sets forth two sorts of food, the one solid and edible, the other moist and flowing forth ; and offers in a bowl her providential goods. Now the bowl, being rotund and having out-curving lips is a symbol of the Providence of all these things which is at once diffused through all things and encompasses all things, without beginning and without  
 644D end. But since while proceeding into all things it remains in itself and rests established in the similitude of its nature which is immutable and most perfect, irreversibly the same and unchanged, so stands the bowl. But Wisdom is (also) said to be building a house for herself, and to be setting forth therein both the solid foods and the beverages and the bowl, from which it is clear to those who interpret the divine symbols in a godly manner that a perfect providence is the cause of being and of the well-being of all and  
 645A proceeds into all things and comes into being in all things and contains all things, and yet because of its pre-eminent self-identity it is not anything in anything through anything, but transcends all things, being and staying and remaining both identically and eternally itself in itself, and always self-identical and keeping itself so and in no way becoming separate from itself or separated from its proper base and immutable abode and goodness ; but working well in itself its entire and most perfect providential acts, both proceeding upon all things and abiding in itself and ever at rest (and ever) in motion.”

[Notice what he says : “proceeds into all things and comes into being in all things”, and he declares this in another place too, saying : “We must also be bold to say this in the interest of truth that He Himself Who is the Cause of all things by His noble love of all things, throughout the transcendence of His loving-kindness, passes beyond Himself by His providential acts towards all things that are,  
 645B and as it were cherishes (them) by His goodness and affection and love, and transcends them all (and), separated from all things, yet condescends to be in all things in accordance with His mind-surpassing superessential, and irreversible power.”

These passages are also supported by the opinion of the same Dionysius which he took from the Theological Commentaries of the most Holy Hierotheus : “The Cause of all things and the perfective divinity of Jesus which maintains the parts in harmony with the whole and which is neither part nor whole, and (yet) is whole and

part as it unites in itself every part and whole and transcends and excels them, is perfect in what is imperfect, for it is the Principle of Perfection, but is imperfect in the perfect, for it is beyond perfection and before perfection; it is the Form that produces forms in the formless, for it is the Principle of Form; formless in the forms for it is More-than-Form. (It is) the Essence that surpasses all the essences without being contaminated by them; and it is superessential for it is separated from all essence. It appoints all beginnings and all orders, and it is set above every beginning and every order. And it is the measure of all the things that are, and of duration, (yet is) beyond duration and before duration. It is complete in all things that are incomplete, more than complete in multitudes. It is secret, ineffable, beyond intellect, beyond life, beyond essence. In a mode transcending nature it contains the supernatural, in a mode transcending essence it contains the superessential.”] 645C

These (passages) are sufficient, as I think, for those of a good understanding to learn that the permanence of the Divine Goodness <in itself> is the immutable Cause of all things, while its procession and ineffable motion bring about the effects of all things, and furthermore that participation in it [and the assumption (of it)] is nothing else but the essence of all things. And observe carefully how he says, “That a perfect providence is the cause of being and the well-being of all.” This Providence over all things, then, is not one thing and the Cause of all things another, but one and the same God is both the most perfect Providence over all things and the Cause of the being and of the well-being of all things. But that which follows, “and proceeds into all things and comes into being in all things”, that is, in the totality which it makes, “and contains all things”, so fully succeeds in solving the knottiness of the present question that reason, when consulted, can find no other manner of solving it, as I think. For if He Who is the Cause of the being and of the well-being of all things both proceeds into all things and is made in every creature and contains all things, what else is there for it but that we should understand that the Wisdom of God the Father of which such things are predicated is both the creative Cause of all things and is created and made in all that it creates, and contains all the things in which it is created and made? For in all things whatever is rightly understood to be is nothing else but the manifold power of the creative Wisdom which subsists in all things. For if in your mind you take away the creative Wisdom from all things which it creates they will be reduced to nothing [at all] and there will remain no 646A

646B essence, no life, no sense, no reason, no intellect, and no good at all — which is what St. Augustine also in the books of his Confessions seems to mean when he addresses his speech to the Truth itself, that is, to the Divine Wisdom: “And I examined”, he says, “the other things within Thee and I saw that they were not altogether being and not altogether not being: not altogether *being* because they are not what Thou art, nor altogether not being because they take their being from Thee.” By these words he maintains that every creature whatsoever considered through itself is nothing, but that whatever in it is understood to subsist subsists by participation in the creative Truth. For if every truth is true by reason of the Truth and only the Truth is permanent while all else moves, [then] in all truths only the Truth subsists. [Now I said “moves” because (all else) does not subsist through itself but tends towards nothingness; however, by  
646C virtue of the provident Truth which subsists in it it is prevented from falling into nothingness but stands fast.]

If then the Word of God itself both makes all things and is made in all things — and this can be proved from the words of the aforesaid Dionysius and others —, what wonder [if] all things which are understood to subsist in the Word itself are believed and known to be at the same time eternal and made? I find no reason why that which is predicated of the Cause should not also be predicated of the caused. Therefore all things that are are not inappropriately said to be both all eternal together and made, if there is made in them that very Wisdom [which makes them, and the Cause in which and through which they are both eternal and made is (itself) in them eternal and made].

A. I am indeed bewildered and struck dumb as a dead man with stupefaction. For although I am attracted to these arguments  
646D because they seem true and are corroborated by the evidences of the Holy Fathers and of Holy Scripture, nevertheless I draw back in hesitation and am rapidly overwhelmed by the thick clouds of my thoughts. My mind is not keen enough to consider and rightly investigate the profundity of the present problem. For when I heard that “Who madest the world out of formless matter”, I used to  
647A think nothing else but that the world, (both) visible and invisible, having been made out of the formless matter which God created out of nothing at all as a kind of augury of His action *is being described*, and that there was (a time) when the totality of the whold world was not, and therefore in the beginnings of its creation it proceeded out of nothing at all into formless matter, and thereafter, through the



genera and species and the individuals as well, it arrived at a certain perfection known to its Creator alone ; and that this (process) was not distributed over periods of time is shown by the Holy Father Augustine in his *Hexameron*. For it is not in time that formlessness precedes form but in the natural order in which the cause *comes before* the effect. For sound and speech *issue* together from the mouth of the speaker, and yet sound [comes] before speech, [though] not by time but by cause. For speech is made of sound and certainly not sound of speech. Thus the formlessness and the formation of all things and their perfection, *distinguished* by a kind of natural precedence and sequence but not by temporal *intervals*, were once for all and at the same time brought forth by the Creator's will out of nothing into essence. And this was my belief and my understanding, such as it was. 647B

But now I hear differently from you things which disturb me greatly and turn me reluctantly from what I hitherto firmly held (to be true) as I thought. For the present line of reasoning, as I think, seeks to teach nothing else but that those things which I used to think were made from nothing and were certainly not eternal — for *there was* (a time) when they were not, as I think, and thus they had received what they had not (previously) possessed — are at the same time eternal and made, which I think to be surely a contradiction, and reasonably so ; for [these] seem to be opposed to each other : eternal things to things that are made, and things that are made to eternal things. For things that are eternal never begin to be, never cease to subsist, and there was not a time when they were not, because they always were ; but things which are made have received a beginning of their making — for they began to be — because there was a time when they were not, and they will lose the being which they began to possess. *For*, if right reason be consulted, nothing which begins [in time] to be is permitted to endure for ever, *but it is* necessary that it *should tend* towards the end *in which that which has a beginning* of its being *in time is compelled* to perish. [And let no one suppose that I mean to teach the return [to nothing] of the things which in time come into being in the world from matter through generation — for this would be the utmost evil — but I mean their dissolution into those things out of which they were composed and in which they subsist. For even the bodies of men and of the other animals when they suffer dissolution are said to perish, although they are not reduced to nothing but return to the universal elements from which all things are made.] And this is understood generally of 647C 647D

the totality of this visible world, and not unreasonably. For since it received a beginning of its being, so it will *inevitably* receive an *end* of its essence. For as there was (a time) when it was not, so there will  
 648A be (a time) when it will not be, as the Psalmist testifies when he cries to the eternal Creator of things, "The heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish but Thou shalt endure. And they shall all grow old as a garment and Thou shalt change them as a covering and they shall be changed, but Thou Thyself art the same and Thy years shall not fail." Also the Creator of all things Himself says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away." But if that part of the world which is greatest *in extent* [and] most beautiful [by reason of the sublimity of the stars, most pure by reason of the subtlety of its nature, sown with the fixed stars, harmonious by reason of the course < of the planets > , ever filled with light] were to perish, according to Scripture, is it to be supposed that the parts that are within it and that are much inferior to it will remain? For when the better things pass away it is impossible that the inferior things should not pass away, and when  
 648B that which contains is removed right reason does not allow that that which is contained should endure.

But these things we say with reference to the difference of the things that are eternal from the things that are made. For there is no small difference between those things which neither begin nor cease to be and those which begin to be and cannot endure for ever. Therefore it is not without reason that the perspicacity of those whose (capacity for) understanding such things is limited is repelled when they are told that eternal things are made and made things eternal. For I should not find it easy to believe that you would agree with those who try to convince themselves that many of the things that are made, nay, almost all of them, will endure for ever and thus are destined to be eternal. For instance, this universe which consists of heaven and earth, assembled out of the four elements into the form of a perfect sphere and called by the name of "world" is both  
 648C made out of nothing, as they say, and shall endure eternally, with the exception of some of its lesser parts, namely, the corruptible bodies, which are subject to (the process of) coming into being and passing away, which they cannot deny will perish, whereas the heaven with its stars shall be for ever, whether it continues to revolve or ceases from movement. [For] in this their opinion varies, some affirming that there will be a coming to rest of the things that are in motion, others that the natural motion of the elements will

not ever cease ; the former abide by the text, “All things shall be in quietness”, which they apply to the coming to rest of mutable things, the latter, “Who shall cause the concert of heaven to sleep?” which they take to refer to the eternal motion of mutable things. For how can there be celestial harmony without motion of the ethereal sphere and all the stars, when music is ever in motion as geometry is ever at rest? Moreover, they unhesitatingly declare that the earthly mass will always possess its proper quantity, following the text, “A generation comes, a generation goes, but earth remains for ever”, with the exception that its outward appearance is everywhere in flux so that it may become more beautiful than it now is, and it is renewed as though by a new equalization of its parts, not so that that which now is shall perish but so that its quality and equality remains, changed into something better; and this they think should be applied to the heaven also, that is, that its beauty, which is now apparent to the bodily senses, shall at the end of the world be concentrated without any loss of its global shape or ornament of stars, since it is written, according to them, “There shall be a new heaven and a new earth. [For they consider the passing away of the heavens to refer not to the upper parts of the world but to the expanses of this air (which lie) beneath the moon, so that, as in the Flood they were whelmed in water, so in the end of the world they will be changed into flame.] But that the generation of animals and fruits and herbs, and the increase and decrease of all things that are contained within the orbit of the moon, shall abandon their variableness they not only do not deny, but even affirm. Moreover, they think that the expanses of air and of ether are destined to be allotted, (those) of the ether to the eternal possession of the blessed angels and men who resemble them, (those) of the lower air, which is diffused all about the earth, to the eternal prison-house and the eternal flames whose burning is the local and visible torment of the devil and his members, that is, the apostate angels, and the impious men who resemble them, and thus, since they hold that every creature in place and time both is and shall be, they do not doubt but that places and times, that is, the expanses of the world and its motion which is marked by intervals and delays, shall endure for ever.

By these and similar false opinions they attempt to establish that the things that were not [and began to be] can [be said] to be at the same time both made and eternal, because they shall always abide in the same state in which they were created in time ; and they

649C think that those things that are not without a beginning are without an end, so that they are both made, because they began to be, and eternal, because they shall not cease to subsist. But neither would I suppose that you assent to such opinions, which right reason ridicules, nor that such was the eternity, or, to speak more truly, semi-eternity, which you intended by the arguments you have just put forward nor that it is thus that you thought that (things) are both made and eternal, but I perceive that it was from a more profound observation of natures that you penetrate beyond human opinions by some means unknown to us to the depths of the Divine Mysteries [by following in the footsteps of the Fathers who have examined these things more profoundly.

10 For they say that the nature of this world shall remain for ever because it is incorporeal and incorruptible, whereas the other things of which it consists shall pass away, that is, everything in it which is composite; and because there is in it no <sensible> body which is  
649D not composite, and every composite shall be resolved into those things from which it is composed, therefore the whole of this visible, corporeal, composite world shall be resolved, and only its simple nature remain].

N. I cannot deny that I was at one time deceived by the false reasonings of human opinions that are far from the truth, for deceived I was. For whilst still uninstructed I gave assent to all these, or almost all, seduced by some likeness of the truth, and by the carnal senses, as happens to many. But now, following in the footsteps of the Holy Fathers, and recalled from my errors and  
650A those of others by the ray of the Divine Light, and brought into the right way, I retract a little. For the Divine Clemency does not permit those who seek the truth in devotion and humility to stray or to fall into the pits of false opinions and therein perish. For there is no worse death than ignorance of the truth, no deeper pitfall than taking the false for the true, which is the property of error. For from these the basest and foulest monsters are wont to be fabricated in human thoughts, and when the carnal soul loves and pursues these as though they were real, turning its back upon the true Light and desiring but unable to embrace fleeting shadows, it is wont to plunge into the depth of misery. Therefore this should be our constant prayer:

650B O God, our salvation and redemption, Who bestowed nature,  
A Prayer grant also graces: Send forth Thy light upon those who grope in the shadows of ignorance in search of Thee; Recall us from our errors;

Stretch forth Thy right hand to us feeble ones who without Thee cannot reach Thee ; Show Thyself to those who seek for nothing but Thee ; Shatter the clouds of empty phantasies which prevent the glance of the mind from beholding Thee in the way in which Thou grantest Thine invisible self to be seen by those who desire to look upon Thy face, their resting place, their end beyond which they seek for nothing for there is nothing beyond, their superessential Supreme Good.

But go on to the rest of your opinion.

A. What is left but to declare what particularly worries me, namely, how all things are eternal and made, how those things which are without beginning and end are limited by beginning and end. For these are in mutual conflict, and how they should be reconciled I do not know if you do not tell me ; for I thought that only God is ἀναρχος, that is, without beginning — for He is the Beginning and the End which arises out of no beginning and concludes in no end — whereas all other things begin and tend each to its proper end, and therefore are not eternal *but* made. And incomparably more profound and wonderful than all this seems to me the assertion you made on the authority of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, namely, that God Himself is both the Maker of all things and is made in all things ; for this was never heard or known before either by me or by many, or by nearly all. For if this is the case, who will not at once break out and exclaim in these words : God is all things and all things God ? But this will be considered monstrous even by those who are regarded as wise when the manifold variety of things visible and invisible is considered — for God is one —, and unless you support these arguments by illustrations from things which the mind can comprehend there is no alternative but either *to pass over* subjects which have been merely raised without being discussed — which could not be done without my mind regretting it ; for those who, being plunged in thickest darkness, hope for the rising of the light to come are not completely overwhelmed by sorrow ; but if the light they hope for is taken away from them they will sit not only in darkness but in great torment, for the good which they had hoped for is taken away from them —, or everything that you have said about these things is to be judged by those of limited understanding to be altogether false, and for them to relapse into their former opinions, which they were already abandoning only with reluctance, as being true, and rejecting these.

Therefore the path of reasoning must start from illustrations drawn from nature, which no one [unless] blinded by excessive folly rejects.

11 N. Are you versed in the art of arithmetic?

A. Unless I deceive myself I am. For I have learnt it from my infancy.

N. Define [it], then, clearly and briefly.

Definition of arithmetic A. Arithmetic is the science of numbers not of those which we count, but of those by which we count.

651B N. Cautiously and observantly have you defined arithmetic. For if you simply defined arithmetic as the science of numbers you would include all numbers in general, and so the definition would not stand. For that art does not treat of every sort of numbers but only takes into account those numbers which it knows to be by science alone and by intellect, and by which the other sorts of numbers are counted. *For* the wise say that it is *not* the numbers of animals, fruits, crops, and other bodies or things that belong to the science of arithmetic, but they assign to arithmetic only the intellectual, invisible, incorporeal (numbers) which are constituted in the science alone but reside in no subject [substantially <except themselves> ].

651C [For they are not perceived in the science or by the intellect or by the reason or by the memory or by the senses or by diagrams so as themselves to be one with those things in association with which they are seen. For they possess their proper substance (namely) themselves. For if they were of the same substance, the science and the intellect and the reason would not be judging by them but about them. But the art and the model cannot be the same thing. This can only be said of God the Word, Who is both the model and the art of His Father.

651D Observantly, then, as I said, did you add: “Not of those which we count but of those by which we count.” For in no corporeal or incorporeal subject do we see them, but beyond every subject by the intellect alone in wisdom and science are they discerned, separated by the excellence of their divine nature from all the things which are counted by them.

A. This I have often thought about, and have come to see it clearly, as I think.

N. Is that art natural [then]?

A. Yes, [and] nothing could be more natural. For not only does it subsist as the immutable basis and primordial cause and principle of the other three branches of mathematics, namely, geometry, music, astronomy, but also the infinite multitude of all things visible and invisible assumes its substance according to the rules of numbers which arithmetic contemplates, as the supreme philosopher Pythagoras, the first inventor of this art, testifies when he gives good reason for asserting that the intellectual numbers are the substances of all things visible and invisible. Nor does Holy Scripture deny this, for it says that all things have been made in measure and number and weight. 652A

N. If then you seek for natural examples of the aforementioned art, and indeed of the numbers which it contains, look carefully at its nature and its rules so that under the guidance of God you may arrive at the knowledge of those things which seem to you to be in conflict among themselves and to be irreconcilable with one another.

A. I freely accept the examples of arithmetic. For it neither deceives nor is deceived. For although the less intelligent are often deceived in it, that is to be judged not as a fault in the art but as the disposition of those who treat it incautiously. 652B

N. You are not, then, in doubt, as I think, that of the numbers of which arithmetic is the science the Monad is the beginning?

A. No one who doubts that is an arithmetician. For the Monad, [that is] unity, is the beginning and the middle and the end of all numbers, and the whole and the part and every quantity of all terms.

N. Tell me, then: Are all numbers, which the reason can multiply at will, causally and eternally in the Monad?

A. True reason does not teach otherwise. For they are in it causally because it subsists as the beginning of all numbers, and in it all are one and simply indivisible, that is, in a universal and multiple mode, in the reason only, but not in act and operation; nor is the one an aggregate of many, but one deriving from its singularity (which is) both simple and multiple, so that both all numbers are in it all at once and simple, as in their cause, and it itself is understood (to be) in them all multiplied by an ineffable distribution, as their substance. For it is the cause and the substance of all numbers, and while it does not relinquish the stability of its own nature it pours itself out as multiplicity into all; and they subsist in it eternally because their beginning in it is not in time. For there was not (ever) 652C

unity without the manifold reasons of all the numbers. For who among men of clear intelligence would say that the Monad had had a beginning when he knows that it extends into infinity? For how can an infinite progression arise out of a finite beginning? For the  
 652D infinite proceeds from the infinite [but nothing infinite from the finite].

[And if anyone should say, How can this hold good when even among the numbers themselves we see many infinities beginning from finites, for from the dyad, which is a finite number, all doubles derive and extend to infinity; similarly from the finite triad all triples take their origin and know no end to their multiplication, and, to speak briefly, there is no number, limited by its factors or  
 653A merely by its units, from which some multiple does not flow forth to infinity; he must be answered as follows: All these numbers, finite in their parts, from which the multiples proceed into infinity are infinite in that Monad where all are one. Therefore he will either be denying that all numbers are in the Monad and will be affirming that they are finite in their multiplication from it, or if in the teeth of true reason he will not be able to affirm this he will be forced to profess that all numbers finite in their parts subsist as infinite  
 <and> uniformly eternal in the Monad. For it is not where the source appears that the water begins to be, but it flows from somewhere much further afield through channels that are hidden and indefinable to the senses before it appears at the source, and  
 653B therefore the place where it first rises to view is wrongly called the source, since for a long time previously it existed in hidden places of earth or ocean where it concealed itself from sight, for it is called "latex" from the fact that it is latent in the veins of the earth. In the same way too the numbers, whose multiplication or other proportions flow into infinity, take their origin not from these finite numbers which are the first to appear to the mind which contemplates them, but from those eternal and infinite reasons in which they causally subsist. But they are in the Monad; in the Monad, therefore, they are infinite, and from it every infinite progression of numbers proceeds and in it ends.]

That the  
 Μονάς is not  
 only the be-  
 ginning but  
 the middle  
 and end of  
 653C  
 all numbers

And to use a stronger argument, consider carefully those who affirm that unity never had a beginning. If unity, which the Greeks call the Monad, is the beginning and middle and end of all numbers — for from it they proceed, through it they move, towards it they tend, in it they come to an end, and none of the wise doubt that this is so —, it will not be one unity from which the numbers proceed



and through which they move and another towards which they tend and in which they come to an end, but one and the same *that* is both beginning and middle and end. Therefore, numbers which proceed from their beginning proceed from nowhere else than their end — for their beginning is not one thing and their end another, but they are one and the same unity —, and therefore it must be concluded that if they extend to an infinite end their extension must begin from an infinite beginning. But the infinite end of all numbers is unity; therefore the infinite beginning of all numbers is the same, and if all numbers eternally and immutably subsist in their beginning, they must necessarily subsist eternally and immutably in their end, and as there will be no end without things coming to an end in it, so there was no beginning without things beginning to proceed from it by act and operation of the intelligence. Therefore all numbers subsist eternally in the Monad and while they flow forth from it they do not cease to be in it since they cannot abandon their natural state. For whether by multiplication or by division, they proceed from it and return to it in accordance with the rules of the art which considers their reasons. But if this is so, no one who is not shameless will deny that the numbers eternal in unity subsist in their reasons, and anyone who considers carefully will not doubt but that the reasons themselves are eternal.

N. I see that you are not ignorant of the art of arithmetic. For what has been said by you so far true reason proclaims and confirms that it is thus and not otherwise. But in order to establish on a firmer basis your doctrine of the eternity of the numbers in the Monad, give a brief and clear account of their reasons, which you assert to be eternal and immutable.

A. The first progression of the numbers is from the Monad; and the first multiplication is Δύς, that is, the number two, the second Τρίς, the number three, the third thereafter the number four, then all the terms, each established in its own place. And the number two is the source of all parity which falls within (the view of) the intellect, but the number three is the source of all disparity. And from these, I mean from parity and disparity, all kinds of numbers are generated whether simple or composite. [The simple are the even and the odd, the composite those that are made up of both these, the evenly even, the evenly odd, the oddly even.]

Do you see how impossible it is that this order of the progression of the numbers could be otherwise, or could be changed into a different mode? For no other number constituted in the

- natural order occupies the place of the first procession from unity except the number two, nor the second place except the number three, nor the third except the number four, and every number occupies its natural place which no number save that whose place it is is permitted to take. But in unity itself all numbers are at once together and no number precedes or follows another since all are one. And yet they would not immutably possess their natural order by means of which they are contained in their multiplications if their own eternally immutable cause in unity did not precede. Similarly in the case of doubles, which have the number two at their head, and of triples which the number three precedes, and of quadruples which start from the number four, and of all kinds of multiples, it must be understood that each of those starts from its proper beginning and tends towards infinity. But the double or the triple or the quadruple proportion or any other such proportion is not discerned specifically and distinctly in the unity, for in it all multiples are at once and are one, and are one multiple and simple: simple by nature, multiple by the reasons by which they receive their immutable order in their multiplications. What shall I say of the marvellous and divine constitution and proportion of the superparticulars and the superpartients and of the multiple superparticulars and multiple superpartients, which the species receive individually from the unity?
- 654C
- 654D
- 655A
- What of the proportionalities which we contemplate in the proportions and differences of the terms, in which the ineffable and divine power is so constant that no one who penetrates the secrets of wisdom contends that they are not eternal? For if that is a right definition of the true which says, the true is that which abides for ever, and if what abides for ever is eternal, the reasons of the numbers are true because they abide for ever and immutably, and therefore they are eternal; and if anyone diligently wishes to know of these things let him carefully read the books of the great Boethius on Mathematics.

- Again, on the subject of the eternity of the numbers in their beginning, that is, the Monad, here is a very brief argument: If unity is a unity of numbers, there never was unity without the numbers of which it is the unity. Also, if the numbers flow forth from the Monad as from some inexhaustible source and, however much they are multiplied, come to an end in it, they would surely not be flowing forth from it if before their flowing forth they had not subsisted in it as in their cause; nor would they seek their end in it if they did not know by their natural motion that there were not
- 655B

eternally abiding in it their causes towards which they never desist from returning through the same stages by which they had flowed forth from it by the rules of analysis by which every inequality is recalled to equality. Now the rules of analysis will be found at the beginning of the second treatise on *Mathematics* of the great Boethius by any student who pursues the marvellous investigation of such natures. But if someone should say that both the unity of the numbers and the numbers themselves are inseparably one, since they are suitably reckoned among the things that are inseparably one, this should not be denied, indeed, it should be admitted. But it should not therefore be believed or understood that they are eternal and without beginning. For there are many things which begin simultaneously to be and yet are not for that reason bound to subsist for ever <simultaneously> . For both matter and form, and voice and word begin simultaneously (and) end simultaneously, and yet they are not eternal. For if they were eternal they would neither begin nor cease to be, and much else of that sort. 655C

Let our reply be: The number six is not excluded from the unity and multiplication of the other numbers, especially as, alone among the cardinals, that is, among the first series of numbers from one to ten, it is perfect. For it is perfected by its parts, namely, the sixth and the third and the half. For the sixth is one, the third is two, the half is three, and these added together perfect the quantity of six. For one and two and three make six. Concerning the eternity of numbers 655D

There is another reason which in a wonderful way demonstrates the perfection of the number six according to which it perfects by its parts, when set in order, the first series of numbers. Its sixth part, one, occupies the first place of the numbers, its third, two, the second, its half, three, the third, its half and its sixth, which are three and one, the fourth, its half and its third, which are three and two, the fifth, all its parts added together, which are one two three, complete the sixth, itself that is, its whole and its sixth, that is six and one, the seventh, its whole with its third, that is six and two, the eighth, its whole with its half the ninth, six and three, to which if one be added, in which the end of all numbers is constituted, the quantity of ten will be perfected. If, therefore, that perfect number, namely the number six, is constituted in the unity of the numbers, let him take care who says that it is not eternal, for in it the Creator of all things perfected His works. But here it must be noted that the number six is not perfect because in it God concluded all things which He wished to create, but He created His works in it because 656A

656B by the perfection of the number the perfection of His works should be revealed. Is it, then, credible or likely that this most mighty and divine exemplar in which God made His works had a temporal beginning, when in it not only the things which are in times but also the times themselves and the things which subsist beyond the times were constituted by the Creator of all things? Therefore no man of sound wisdom would have any doubt about the eternity of the numbers if he made use of the argument concerning the number six only, for what is understood about its eternity must similarly be understood of the perennality of the others. For not of the number six alone but generally of the totality of all the numbers was it said, God made “all things in measure and number and weight”. But if places and times are counted among all the things which God made,

656C the intellectual numbers subsisting in their science alone necessarily precede the places and times in the perpetuity of their nature and are reckoned among the things which are at the same time eternal and made; they are eternal in the Monad, but made in their multiplications.

N. Of the eternity of the numbers in the Monad enough has been said. But it is necessary to investigate how they are made and where and from what. For by arguing from them we are trying to establish that all things that are from God are at the same time eternal and made.

A. The eternity of the Monad and of all numbers in it I have expounded to the best of my ability. But how the intellectual numbers after which all things that can be numbered are numbered are made and where and from what is for you to explain. But I say

656D this in the knowledge that it is easier for their eternity than for their being made to be able to be sought and found and demonstrated.

N. You have a high opinion of me, as I see, since you assign to me the things that are harder to seek and find and demonstrate. However, it is my part to seek, but to find is His alone Who illumines the hidden places of darkness. His also is the demonstration because He [alone] can open the sense of those who seek and the intellect. For of what use is a demonstration from without if there is

656A not illumination within? Therefore what was said by you just now, “eternal in the Monad but made in their multiplications”, provides, I think, a foretaste of this question, and if you understood what you said it is superfluous for you to seek what you understand, but if not, it must be sought for.

A. I fully see that the numbers cannot be made save in their 12  
multiplications. For in the Monad they are eternal. But how or  
where or from what they become I do not yet see, and it is for that  
reason that I ask you to reveal the knowledge of these things.

N. That all numbers are for ever in the Monad causally, that is,  
potentially, we do not doubt.

A. To doubt of this [is] the mark of the less intelligent.

N. But you understand, as I think, that the Monad subsists  
eternally in wisdom and knowledge.

A. If I think otherwise I am a stranger to true knowledge of the 657B  
Monad itself.

N. You think, as I believe, that the numbers that are constituted  
potentially in the Monad are not other than those that flow forth  
actually into the genera and species of the intelligible numbers, but  
the same.

A. They are not other but the same, though in a different  
mode.

N. Tell me, pray, how in a different mode?

A. They are in the Monad potentially, but in the genera and  
forms actually.

N. You have answered correctly. Do you then see that the  
same numbers are eternal there where they are potentially in their  
cause, that is, in the Monad, but where they are understood to be  
actually, there they are made?

A. You go too quickly. The path of reasoning must be trodden  
step by step lest we arrive at conclusions that are hasty and rash.  
Thus it must first be asked what is the “force” and what is the  
“power” of the numbers in the Monad and what is their “act” and  
what their “operation” in the genera and forms. 657C

N. “Force” is, as I think, the substantial virtue by which they  
subsist eternally and immutably in the Monad, while “power” is the  
possibility, innate in them, by which they are able to be multiplied  
and *become* manifest to intellects by certain terminological distinc-  
tions, quantitative diversities, differential intervals, (and) the  
wonderful equality and indissoluble harmony of proportion and  
proportionalities. “Act” is the motion of the mind in contemplating in  
itself and in them the multiplication of the numbers as they proceed  
from the Monad into the diverse genera and different species before

Concerning  
the force and  
power of  
numbers

Concerning  
the act and  
operation of  
numbers

- 657D they reach the phantasies of cogitation, that is, in considering with the eye of the intellect beyond all quantity and quality and places and times the numbers themselves <in> the simplicity of their incorporeal nature which lacks all imagery; and, to give a brief definition: Act is the motion of the mind in regarding without any imagery the numbers under the most pure aspect of their nature. “Operation”, on the other hand, is the motion of the same mind when
- 658A the pure numbers which it considers in itself it consigns to the memory, embodied as it were by certain corporeal phantasies, and sets them in order there and deals with their reasons more easily; and conveys them, made significant to the corporeal senses, to the knowledge of others. [And do not think that I mean that the numbers themselves are multiplied [and created] by the intellect or reason and not by the Creator and Multiplier and Ordainer of all things Himself. For if the numbers suffered their first multiplication at the hands of any created intellect there would not be in them the immutability and harmony of their reasons. Therefore, it is not to be thought that the intellect creates the intellectual numbers because it contemplates them in itself — it is, however, to be believed that by the one Creator of all things they were made in the intellects whether human or angelic, and it is by Him also that they are eternally established in the Monad — but they descend through the intellects
- 658B into knowledge.] For just as, to give an illustration, some project or some art in nature, while it is contained within the most hidden recesses of the intellectual nature, is all together and a simple unity without parts or divisions, without quantity or quality, without place or time, and altogether free from all accidents and barely known to the intellect alone — for the intellect is not the maker but the discoverer of the arts of nature, [though] it does not discover them outside itself but within itself — but when that art begins to descend by an intelligible progress into the reason from its secret places in which it is all one in the mind in which it is, soon it gradually begins to reveal by evident divisions and differences its hidden structure, though as yet in a most pure form free from all
- 658C imagery — and this initial process of the art out of that science in which it originally subsists is directed by the act of the intellect itself through the intellect to the reason: for everything which comes forth from the hidden places of nature into the reason comes through the action of the intellect —, but then again, by a second descent, as it were, the same art, descending from the reason into the memory, gradually declares itself more openly in phantasies (and), as it were, more distinct in certain forms; but in a third descent it is

poured down upon the corporeal senses, where by sensible signs it exhibits its powers by means of genera and species and all its divisions and subdivisions and particulars — so the intellectual numbers stream down from the Monad so that they somehow may shine forth in the mind, then by flowing forth from the mind into the reason they reveal themselves more openly; next, descending from the reason into the memory they receive from the nature of the memory itself phantasmal appearances in which they clearly reveal the powers of their multiple forms to those that inquire into them, [then into the senses, lastly into figures]. 658D

Do you then see the three things which you had searched for, the How, and the Where, and the Whence? From the Monad. Where? In the intellect. How? By different stages: first they descend from themselves into the intellect; from the intellect into the reason; from the reason into the memory; from the memory into the corporeal senses; and, if it is required for the benefit of students, by a final stage from the senses into visible figures. Concerning the divers degrees of 659A the descent of the numbers

A. Plainly and most clearly do I see.

N. So you are not unaware, as I think, that the numbers are both eternal and made: eternal in the Monad, but made in the multiplicity [in their descents], first, that is, they are made in the intellect of those who contemplate them in themselves, a mode of making which is far *removed from the senses*. For they are said to be made in the knowledge of those who understand them. For as long as they are in the Monad they surpass by their ineffable unity all understanding, *except for* that alone [namely the Divine Understanding] *from which nothing is anywhere hid* [for He is the understanding of all things, indeed is all things]. For I am not now concerned with that Monad which is the sole Cause and Creator of all things visible and invisible but with that created Monad in which all the numbers subsist causally, uniformly, reasonably, and for ever, and from which they break forth into multiplicity. But secondly they are made in the reason, in which they are said to be made because in it they manifest themselves more clearly, though still through themselves [without any colour of phantasy]. Thereafter they are made in the memory and senses in certain phantasies. 659B

Now these phantasies are acquired either from the nature of the memory [that is, from that part of the soul which is given over to the forming of images] or extrinsically from the surface of bodies by means of the external senses. But those which come extrinsically are Concerning phantasy and phantasm

phantasies properly so called, while those from the memory (are)  
 659C phantasms. For instance, the image which through my sense of sight I take from a certain body [or colour or space] *seen by me* and implanted in my memory is a phantasy, while that image which I fashion from something never seen by me is a phantasm, and this is not unjustly called a false image because that which I regard either altogether does not exist or, if it does, is not as I imagine it.

And here it must be noted, if we follow Saint Augustine's teaching, that the phantasm comes from no other source but from the phantasy. For it is, as he says, an image of an image, that is, an image which is born of another image. [For instance, I have a phantasy of the sun which rises every day, which I have received from its discshaped appearance and I am repeatedly fashioning in my memory thousands of solar images in the likeness of that phantasy, greater or smaller according to the decision of my  
 659D thought. And therefore they are false for they imitate nothing that is true.] For the Greeks have a different understanding of what a phantasm is. For they say that the phantasm is the knowledge which the mind has of sensible natures which it has acquired through the phantasies of them.

A. You say, then, unless I am mistaken, that the numbers that are eternally established in the Monad are made in two ways. For either they are made simply by the intellect alone in the mind and in  
 660A the reason, where they appear purely through themselves without any imagery; or in the memory and corporeal sense, where they are embodied in certain images and made, as it were, out of and in a kind of matter.

N. Thus it is. But in adding, "out of and in a kind of matter", you have not seen clearly enough. For the phantasies which they receive from the memory in the memory or from the sensible in the sense so as to be able to appear in them are not made from some matter but, incorporeal, are born of incorporeals. For they are not made from the matter of corporeal things but from the appearance which without doubt is incorporeal and from colours which are understood to be not bodies but about bodies; and therefore nothing is more suitable or natural than that the intellectual  
 660B numbers should reveal their virtue in things that are incorporeal and derive from what is incorporeal and by some ineffable means should be made and proceed into sensible generation. And taking into account the reasons of things, one could safely say that those phantasies in which the numbers reveal themselves to the inner eyes



of those who number issue from no other source but from the intelligible numbers themselves. For if the numerousness of the sensible forms in which matter is contained so as to be perceptible to the senses — for through itself it is invisible and formless — takes its origin from the intellectual numbers, and from it, that is, from the numerousness of the forms, through the corporeal senses, the memory takes on form from the phantasies, there is nothing for it but that we should understand that there are two ways in which the intellectual numbers flow forth from the Monad and after being made in the memory are multiplied, divided, compared, brought together, united by the keenness of the mind. For either, as we said above, they descend through the intellect into the reason and from the reason into the memory; or they flow together through the forms of visible things into the corporeal senses and again from them into the same memory, in which they are made by receiving shapes of phantasy and become accessible to the inner senses, and therefore by whichever way the numbers become perceptible, they perceive the occasion for their appearance nowhere but in themselves. So they are both eternal in the Monad and made by themselves in whatsoever part of nature they have appeared, that is, whether in the intellect or in the reason without any imagery, or are, as it were, made by making out of themselves certain phantasies in which they can appear in the memory formed from the forms of sensible things. 660C

A. Concerning numbers enough has been said. For by these arguments it is established and *clearly* understood wherein they are eternal and wherein and how they become made, so that not without reason we see that they are both eternal and made. But I am eager to learn where this is leading. For this has been introduced not for its own sake but for the sake of teaching something else. 660D

N. I am surprised that you have so quickly forgotten your own words. Did you not just now ask me for some examples from nature to bring you to an understanding of the things we were discussing, that is, how all things which are from God are at the same time both eternal and made, and especially how God Himself is both the Maker of all things and is made in all things? For this is the main point of all our present reasoning. 661A

A. Now I recall them. For baffled by the difficulty of the preceding discussion and by a theory of things that was hitherto unknown to me, I fell into an abstraction, as happens to many people. For who among the uninstructed and those who are not set upon the path to the highest peak of wisdom, in pondering such

things does not suffer an eclipse of his mental faculties when he hears of the eternal creation of the numbers by the Creator of all things in the Monad; and of their procession into the genera and species in which they are said to be made because in them they become understood by intellects; then of their second birth, so to

661B speak, in the rational nature, for in it they show forth their powers more clearly; then, by taking to themselves phantasies, nay, rather, theophanies [for it is not to be doubted that everything that is formed from nature in the memory takes its occasions from God], they are somehow made in the memory and the senses, made not from any matter but from themselves? [But now as a sleeper awakened I recall my words, and looking with a clearer eye upon the ray of the inner light I begin to understand what you have said. For you are trying, as I think, to teach that all numbers, issuing from the Monad as from a source, flow forth like two rivers rising from a single spring and separated into two channels, of which one

661C descends through the inner channels of nature, that is, through the intellect and the reason, but the other through the outward forms of visible things and the senses, until they flow together into the memory in which they are formed as many.]

13 But how things that are incorporeal and remote by reason of the excessive excellence of their nature not only from the senses but even from the memory and from all imagery can become manifest in the memory or the senses, that is, in images and in visible figures as if they were kinds of bodies I do not sufficiently see.

N. [From this one example I think that you can understand the whole. For it is just as you have said: the numbers flow from the Monad and come together in the memory. But as to your not seeing sufficiently, here is my opinion:] The nature of spiritual things does not fall within the contemplations of the mind in such a way that

661D may render an itemized account of the things which are done from it or in it or through it. For many things are wont to appear in it which occur in a marvellous and ineffable way not according to its known [or unknown] laws but beyond all law by the Divine Will which is limited by no law; for it is the Law of laws and the Reason of reasons. For who can give an account, if he were asked, of how the

662A soul of Moses was visibly manifest when the Transfiguration of the Lord took place? For no attention must be paid to those who think that he was resurrected in the body for the occasion so that with Elias he made his visible appearance on the mountain not through himself but in his body, and then went back again to the sepulchre.

Who, then, is going to say how an incorporeal and invisible soul was visibly and, as it were, corporeally seen when it did not appear in its body or in any sensible matter [or by being transported from somewhere else]? But by some ineffable power known only to God invisible spirit is made through itself as though visible. What are you going to say of the soul of the prophet Samuel? How did it speak visibly to Saul? For he too, like the Apostles, saw such things when he was caught up in the Spirit. For no credence must be given to those who say that it was not himself, but some figment in his similitude, that appeared, deeming it unworthy that a holy soul should be summoned from the lower regions by the spells of a pythoness, not perceiving that the Divine Providence administers things through impure no less than through pure spirits. But it is agreed that the soul of Samuel through itself as though visibly, not in the body nor under some sort of similitude, prophesied to the king who consulted it. And if perchance this should seem incredible or doubtful to anyone, let him read St. Augustine in the Book on the Care of the Dead. 662B

But let us return to the most obvious examples from nature, about which none of those who practise philosophy rightly is in disagreement.

A. Tell me, pray, what those are. 662C

N. The wise say that the shapes of things are incorporeal. And they give the same opinion about the colours. For after consulting true reason they declare that they are incorporeal. 14

A. Whoever is in doubt here has no place among the philosophers.

N. If, then, shapes and colours are counted among the number of incorporeal things, tell me if you can how they are subject to the corporeal senses. For everything that is perceived through the eyes cannot otherwise be perceived save in coloured shape.

A. I think that shapes and colours cannot appear through themselves, but appear in some matter which has been subjected to them.

N. I am considerably surprised that you come so far short of philosophy.

A. I do not know in what.

N. Do you not see that you were wrong to say that shapes and colours cannot be subject to the senses through themselves but in 662D

some matter, when matter itself if it lacks shape and colour is entirely invisible and incorporeal? And therefore it is necessary for you to give an explanation how shapes and colours, although they are invisible natures, can be subject to the senses when they are considered in matter through itself, that is, without shape and incorporeal colour. Therefore it would be more reasonable for you to say that formless matter becomes manifest in colours and shapes than that shapes and colours become sensibly manifest in matter.

663A

A. I do not deny now that I was wrong, deceived by a habit of false reasoning; and what I am to do now I simply do not know.

How bodies  
are made  
from incorporeal things

N. Do you remember what we agreed about matter itself in the first book when we discussed its being made from the coming together of intelligible things? For quantities and qualities, although through themselves they are incorporeal, [yet] when they come together they produce formless matter, which by the addition of incorporeal shapes and colours moves into various bodies.

A. Certainly I remember.

N. So bodies are born from bodiless things?

663B

A. I cannot say no, for it was deduced from reasons stated before.

N. Bodies, then, are made not from nothing but from something? For one would not say that the above-mentioned occasions of them were nothing, namely the quantities and qualities, shapes or species, the colours, the dimensions of length, breadth, height, and together with these the places and times, which if you withdraw, there will be no bodies; if you combine, bodies are at once made either universal as are the four greatest bodies of the world, or particular and distributed among the individuals, all of which you will not, I think, deny are composed from the four simple elements, since into them they are resolved again.

A. I will not deny it. But I would say that these elements which are simple in themselves and by their composition make all bodies are made from nothing.

Concerning  
nothing  
663C

N. What then are you going to say of the primordial causes of which we have spoken much? For it must be asked why they are called causes if they do not proceed into their effects. For if all bodies (come) from the elements but the elements from nothing, their cause will seem to be nothing and not those primordial causes which God the Father made in His Word: and if so, nothing will not

be nothing, but it will be a cause. But if it is a cause it will be better than the things of which it is the cause, and it will necessarily follow either that the Word of God, in which the Father made all things, is nothing — which, in the sense of privation, will seem an impious thing to say [for negation of the Word in the sense of transcendence of nature, though not in the sense of privation, is found in Scripture] —, or that some cause other than the Word be supposed which is called “Nothing”, from which God made all things and in which He established all things before they were made. For otherwise it is not a cause. And if this is so, I do not see why it is called “Nothing”. For I would sooner say that [it] is all things than nothing. For in the cause all things of which it is the cause causally and primordially subsist. 663D

A. I am forced to admit that the four elements of this world subsist in the primordial causes. For they are the causes not of some but universally of all things visible and invisible, and nothing in the order of all the natures is perceived by the sense or reason or intellect that does not proceed from them and causally subsist in them. 664A

N. You understand clearly. Therefore, unless I am mistaken, you will not deny that all composite and corruptible bodies, which occupy the lowest place in all the natures, are from something, not from nothing.

A. I will not deny it. For they are made from the qualities and quantities of the simple, invisible, and insensible bodies which are called elements for the reason that from their concurrence the investigators of nature say that all bodies are composed, and into them are resolved, and in them are preserved. They are also commonly called catholic, that is, universal. For from them *are made* the proper bodies of the individuals. Again, I admit that the elements are not made from nothing but come from the primordial causes, and none of the faithful doubts but that these primordial causes are made at once and all together in the Word of God, when he hears the Prophet saying to God, “Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom”, and when he looks at the beginning of Holy Scripture where it is written, “In the Beginning God made [heaven and] earth.” 664B

N. It remains for us, then, to inquire about the primordial causes themselves, whether they are made out of nothing in the Word of God, or were always in it. And if they were always in it

- there was not (a time) when they were not, just as there was not (a time) when the Word in which they were was not. And if they were always in that Word, how were they made in it out of nothing? For it does not accord with reason that those things which always were began to be made out of nothing. And if one should say that that nothing out of which they were made always was and that they were always made from it, it will be asked of him where [that] nothing
- 664C always was out of which they were made: whether in the Word of God in which all things subsist, or in itself, apart from the Word. If he answers, "It was always in the Word", it will be objected to him: Then it was not nothing but very much something — for all things which subsist in the Word of God subsist truly and naturally — and there will be included in the order of the primordial causes that which was thought nothing, and from which all things are believed to be made. But if he thinks that the "Nothing" is in itself other than the Word, he will be understood to be fabricating, like one of the Manichaeans, two mutually adverse principles. For many of the pagan philosophers have thought that formless matter is co-eternal with God, and that out of it He made all His works, and this matter they called nothing because before it received from God forms and species it was manifested in no thing, and was as it were nothing.
- 664D For whatever entirely lacks form and species can not unreasonably be called nothing. But the light of truth has banished all these delusions, asserting that all things come from one principle, and that nothing is found in the nature of things visible and invisible, by whatever kind of generation it breaks out into its proper form, which is not generally agreed to subsist eternally in the only begotten Word of God, in Whom all things are one, and proclaiming that God did not receive from any external source any matter or cause for the creation of the universe in His wisdom, for external to
- 665A Himself there is nothing; nor find internal to Himself anything not coessential with Himself from which to make in His wisdom the things that He wished to be made.

- 15 Therefore no place is provided for nothing either external or internal to God; and yet the belief that He made all things out of nothing is not vain. And therefore there is nothing else to be understood, when we hear that all things are created out of nothing, but that there was (a time) when they were not, and therefore we are not unreasonable in saying: "They were always; they were not always", and "there was not (a time) when they were not, and there was (a time) when they were not". For they were always as causes in

the Word of God potentially, beyond all places and times, beyond all generation <made> in place and time, beyond all form and species known to sense and intellect, beyond all quality and quantity 665B  
 and the other accidents by means of which it is understood of the substance of any creature that it is, though not what it is; and they were not always, because before they flowed forth through generation into forms and species, places and times, and into all the accidents that accrue to their eternal substance which is immutably substantiated in the Word of God, they were not in generation, they were not in place or time nor in their proper forms and species to which accidents occur. And therefore it is not unreasonably predicated of them, “There was not (a time) when they were not”, because they subsist always in the Word of God, in Whom they do not have a beginning of their being — for eternity is infinite — ; and “there was (a time) when they were not” because in time they began through generation to be that which they were not, that is, to 665C  
 become manifest in forms and species.

Therefore anyone who looks carefully at the nature of things will find no creature susceptible to senses or intellects about which it cannot be truly said: “It always was and is and shall be, and it was not always nor is nor shall be.” For that first establishment in the Wisdom of God through the primordial causes immutably was and is and shall be; but because that establishment is known only to God and surpasses every sense and intellect of the universal creature, and by no intellect hitherto created can it yet be known what it is, it begins through generation in time to receive quantities and qualities in which, in a kind of garments, it can show openly 665D  
 that it is [though] not what it is. So it somehow begins to be, not in respect of its subsistence in the primordial causes, but in respect of receiving [manifestation] from temporal causes — now, by temporal causes I mean qualities and quantities and the other things which in time through generation attach themselves to substances as accidents —, and therefore it is said of them, “There was (a time) when they were not”. For they were not always manifesting themselves in accidents. For the same reason they are said now to be and they are 666A  
 and truly and always shall be [in respect of their subsistence in their causes], while in respect of the accidents which come to them from an external source *they are said to be* [but] neither truly nor always are; for they will be resolved into the things from which they were taken, and in these they shall *truly and* always be, when every substance shall be purged of its corruptible accidents and freed from

all things which do not pertain to the state of its proper nature, its indissoluble simplicity decked solely with its natural powers and, in the case of those who are good men, adorned with the gifts of grace, glorified beyond every nature and their own by contemplations of eternal blessedness, and changed into God Himself, and made God not by nature but by grace.

666B 16 So, after considering these reasonings, who but the excessively stupid or excessively contentious would not grant that all things which are from God are both eternal at once and made?

A. You have explained these things to me most clearly. But every doubt is not yet expelled from me. For what you said about all things that are from God being both eternal and made for the reason that in the Word of God they are eternal and, as St. Augustine says, not made (but) substantially existing, but in time through generation in forms and species and accidents (they are) made I see without any doubt; but since it is written, "In the Beginning God made heaven and earth", and, "Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom", I am forced to declare that in the Word of God all things  
666C are both eternal and made — [By all things I mean the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the eternal, all the primordial causes with all their effects by which the succession of the centuries is accomplished in place and time and this visible world is fulfilled.] But how this accords with reason I cannot clearly see.

N. Do you then suppose that I wished to teach that all things in so far as they are eternal are eternal in the only begotten Word of God, but in so far as they are made are made apart from the Word? For you do not think it accords with the reasons of truth that the universe of created nature should be in the Word of God both eternal and made.

A. I did not suppose that that was what you taught. For I do not think that anyone of those who practise true philosophy thinks that of the whole universe part subsists eternally in the Word of God, part is made in time outside the Word. For neither are we permitted to think in this way by Holy Scripture, which says in the psalm, "Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom", in Genesis, "In  
666D the Beginning God made heaven and earth", — the Apostle says, "In Whom are created all things which are in heaven and which are on earth, whether visible or invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers, all things were created from Him and through Him and to Him", — in the Gospel, "All things were



made through Him and without Him was made nothing"; nor can 667A  
 reason find a "nothing" outside the Word either as substance or as  
 accident. For she cries: All things that are and that are not — I do  
 not mean by privation but by transcendence — are comprehended  
 in the Word, and in it they are and are not: what things are grasped  
 by the intellect or sense are; what transcend all sense and intellect  
 are not. But that all things are in the Word of God at the same time  
 both eternal and made John the Theologian, who drew from the  
 breast of Wisdom the eternal and veracious waters of understanding,  
 testifies when he says, "That which is made in Him was Life",  
 whether the division is made according to Augustine thus: What is  
 made in place and time was Life in Him — for it is not to be believed  
 or in any way supposed of this most subtle inquirer into truth that  
 his reason for wanting to divide the passage in this way was to assert 667B  
 that what was made in place and time was not in the Word but, as it  
 were, apart from the Word, when he himself, that is, Augustine,  
 most clearly teaches that both places and times together with the  
 things that are made in them are eternally made in the Word of  
 God, having a true understanding of the Apostle when he says of the  
 Word, "In Whom are created all things that are in the heavens and  
 that are in the earth, whether visible or invisible"; and therefore if  
 places and times with all the things that are contained in them are in  
 the number of visible, that is, sensible things, and all visible things  
 are, on the Apostle's testimony, created in the Word, then places  
 and times and all things that are in them are created in the Word — ;  
 or one interprets the said sentence of the evangelist simply, as others  
 do, and say: "That which was made in Him", and thus divide as 667C  
 though beginning a fresh phrase, "was Life" [for we find that the  
 Greek codices make the division so], so that we understand: "What  
 was made in Him in time and place through generation was life in  
 eternity through its reason, that is, through its creation in the  
 primordial causes of all things."

N. You do not doubt, then, that all the causes of all things, and  
 all the effects of the causes, are in the Word eternal and made, and  
 you do not think that I was teaching anything else?

A. Concerning the eternity of all things and their creation in  
 the Word I neither doubt nor think that you were teaching anything  
 else. I only inquire how all things are at the same time eternal and  
 made in the Word Who is eternal with the Father. For it does not, as  
 I think, accord with reason that made things shall be eternal or  
 eternal things made. For there will seem to be no difference between 667D

the eternity of the Universe in the Word and its creation [if eternity is created and creation eternal].

668A N. I am surprised and very much disturbed that you should seek for reason where all reason fails, or understanding where all understanding is surpassed. Do you suppose that the purpose of the Divine Wisdom can be made manifest to the understanding either of men or of angels when you read that those mystical living creatures veiled with their wings both their faces and their feet, fearing, that is, to look upon what is above every created nature, the height of the Divine Power and [its] depth in those things which are made through it and in it and from it? [Yet they do not cease to fly aloft; for lifted up by divine grace and by the subtlety of their nature they ever look, in so far as they are able, for the things which are above them, pursuing their search to infinity. But at the point where they fail they reverently shield their faces, that is to say, the thrust of their  
668B contemplation, beaten back by the divine radiance, and withdraw their scriptural feet, that is, their intellectual advances, from entering upon the incomprehensible mysteries, lest they should incautiously or rashly commit some act of presumption against what is ineffable and passes all understanding.]

If, then, the purest intelligences whose symbols Scripture has placed before us in these living creatures, between whom and the Word there is no intermediary save the primordial causes of all things, fear to look upon the height of the divine brightness above all things and of the Power which pervades all things and of the Wisdom which reaches from the highest to the lowest from end to end, that is, from where the intellectual creature begins as far as the worm, since they know that the capacity of their nature is not adequate to contemplate these things, how should we, still weighed  
668C down by the flesh, try to explain the Divine Providence and Act, where only the Divine Will is to be contemplated, which activates all things as it wills because it is omnipotent and implants in all things the natural reasons which are hidden and inscrutable because its reason surpasses all natures, and nothing is more hidden than it, nothing more present, difficult as to where it is, more difficult as to where it is not, an ineffable light ever present to the intellectual eyes of all and known to no intellect as to what it is, diffused through all things to infinity, is made both all things in all things and nothing in nothing?

[Now, as to my saying, “between whom and the Word there is no intermediary” the reason why I added “save the causes of all

things”, was lest anyone should suppose that the celestial essences are immediate, that is, that they have no intermediary between themselves and the Cause of all things. For although they are called “angels” as being “eggigi”, that is, constituted next after God — for 668D ἐγγύς means “next after” in Greek —, it is not to be believed that they were made in such a way that their causes are not created in the Word. For there is no creature whose cause, made in the Word, does not precede it, and which is not substantiated by it so that it may be, nor ordered by it so that it may be beautiful, nor preserved by it so that it may be eternal, nor manifested either to the senses or intellects so that it may provide matter for praise of that one Cause 669A from which and in which and through which and for which it was established.]

Let us, then, believe and, so far as it is given us, contemplate with the keenness of our mind how all things visible and invisible, eternal and temporal, and the eternal itself and time itself, and places and extensions and all things which are spoken of as substance and accident, and, to speak generally, whatever the totality of the whole creature contains, are at the same time eternal and made in the only begotten Word of God, and that in them neither does their eternity precede their making nor their making precede their eternity. For in the dispensation of the Word their 669B eternity is made and their making is eternal. For even all things which are seen to arise through generation at times and places in the order of the centuries were made all together and at once eternally in the Word of God. For it is not to be believed that the moment of their beginning to be made is when they are perceived to arise in the world. For they were always in the Word substantially, and the [reason] of their rising and setting in the order of times and places through generation, that is, through the assumption of accidents, was always in the Word of God, in Whom the things that are to come are already made. For the Divine Wisdom circumscribes times, and all things that arise temporally in the nature of things have a prior existence in it and subsist in it eternally. For it is of all things the measure without measure and number without number and weight, that is order, without weight. And it is time and age, it is the past and the present and the future. And it is called by the 669C Greeks ἐπέκειννα, because it creates in itself and circumscribes all times, while in its eternity it is above all times, preceding, surrounding, enclosing all intervals.

For even of those things we see being made each year in their natural course in the order of times none can give an account. For

who, contemplating the force of the seeds, how according to the numbers of places and times they burst forth into the various species of animals, fruits, and crops, presumes to say how or why, or succeeds in giving a clear account of their occasions, and does not at once exclaim : All these things are to be attributed to the divine laws which surpass all sense and intellect, and it is not to be explored by  
 669D any conjectures of the mind why it is thus or thus and how it is thus or thus and not otherwise that they fulfil the order of times and out of the invisible causes that are constituted all together in the force of the seeds proceed not all together but at intervals of times and places into the sensible forms, as though they could not be made otherwise if their being made otherwise seemed good to the Divine Will, which  
 670A is constrained by no law? For indeed it often happens that many things are done contrary to the customary course of nature so that we may be shown that the Divine Providence can administer all things not in one way but in infinitely many.

If, then, the administration of the universe in the divine laws is known to no intellect, to which of the rational or intellectual beings can it happen to perceive the eternal establishment of the same universe in the Word of God, in Whom none of the faithful ought to be unaware that all things are at once both eternal and made, even if he does not understand how eternal things are made and made things eternal? For this is known only to the Word, in Whom they are both made and eternal.

A. I do not ask for the reason of the establishment of the universe in the Word and of its eternity, for no one can say how  
 670B things that are eternal are also made. [For no rational or intellectual creature can know the manner of the creation of things in the Word since it is revealed to the Gnostic Power alone.] But I do ask for the reason why we are compelled to profess that eternal things are made in the Word of God, if it can be found. For it is not now a question of the multiple effects of the primordial causes in visible and invisible things, for none of the wise doubts that all things are made in these. For in that way the present question would seem to be soluble provided one could give sound reasons for teaching that in so far as all things subsist in their principles in the Word of God they must on that account be understood to be eternal ; but in so far as they proceed through generation into their effects, whether intelligible or sensible, in the order of times they are on that account  
 670C made, so that their eternity in the Word would precede their

establishment in the order of the ages, fulfilling the invisible world above us and the visible world about us.

But now, since true reason does not permit us to profess such things — for it declares, and most truly declares, that not only the primordial causes but also their effects and places and times and essences and substances, that is, the most generic genera and the general forms and the most specific species in the individuals, with all their natural accidents, and, to speak simply, everything in the totality of created things which is comprehended either by sense or by intellect whether human or angelic, or which surpasses all sense and all the mind's keenness and yet is created, is in the Word of God once and all together both eternal and made, and was never eternal without being made nor made without being eternal —, nothing is left but to ask, not how they are eternal and made, but why they are said to be both made and eternal.

That every creature is at the same time eternal and made

670D

N. They are said to be made on the authority of Holy Scripture which declares, to use the same examples, “In the beginning God made heaven and earth”; “Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom”; “All things were made through Him”; “In Whom are created all things which are in the heavens and which are in the earth whether visible or invisible”, and many similar passages. But of the manner and reason of the establishment of all things in the Word let him speak who can; myself, I confess I do not know. But I am not ashamed not to know when I hear the Apostle saying to God, “Who alone possesseth immortality, and dwellest in inaccessible light”, especially when from afar I look to the end of our present business. For the purpose of our present reasoning, and indeed of reason itself, is to bring us to the understanding that not only are all things both eternal and made in the Word of God but also, by a single thrust of the mind, that He makes all things and is made in all things, as St. Maximus says: “Carrying the intellect through the reasons that are in the things that exist to their Causal Principle”, that is to say, the Word, “and binding it to Him alone as to the One Who gathers together all things that are from Himself and draws them to Him, making orderly use of the reasons through the individuals of the things that exist, no longer confusedly, but clearly believing that only God is left as true being after the diligent inquiry which is (directed) towards the things that are, and (that He is) the Being of the things that exist and their Motion and the Distinction of things that differ, and the indissoluble Continuity of things that are mingled, and the immutable Base of things that are set in

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position, and, in a word, the Causal Principle of all intellectual being whatsoever and of motion and of difference and of mingling and of position.”

671C And therefore if only the Word of God is left as the Being of the things that exist and their Motion and the Distinction of things that differ, and the indissoluble Continuity of things that are mingled, that is, of things that are composite, and the immutable Base of things that are set in position, that is, of things that attain to immutable habit; and the Cause of all intellectual being whatsoever and of motion and of difference and of composition and of habit, what else is to be understood than that He is made all things in all things? But how or why the Word of God is made in all things which are made in Him eludes the sharpness of our mind — no wonder, for (even) in sensible things no one can say how the incorporeal seminal force, breaking out into visible species *and forms*, into various colours, into the different sweetnesses of odours, becomes manifest to the senses and is made in things, and while it becomes manifest it does not cease to be hidden, and whether it be  
671D manifest or hidden it is never abandoned by its natural powers, whole in the whole of them, whole in itself, nor does it become greater when it seems to be multiplied, nor less when it is thought to contract into a small number, but immutably remains in the same state of its nature. [For it is not *less* in one grain of wheat, for  
That the seminal force is made a body  
672A although it is incorporeal  
672B example, than in many harvests multiplied under the same genus and, what is more remarkable, neither is it greater in the whole of that one grain than in a particle of that grain. For it is multiple in the one and one in the multiple.]

But if one should say that the seminal force is revealed not through itself but in some matter, that is, in fluid <and so it is made that which is manifest, but acts upon the one which is manifest so that it becomes manifest not by performing its operations upon itself but upon some matter>, the reply must be: If it becomes manifest and is made in a form, is the form matter, when reason clearly proclaims that whatever is permanent in matter is permanent through its form, *whereas* (matter) through itself is unstable and without form and almost nothing? If in colours, *is* the colour matter, when it is agreed that they are understood in relation to matter, and even, in relation to species? If [in] the sweetnesses of  
672B odours, *is* odour matter, when it is said by those who concern themselves in such things to be a quality that affects the sense of smell — but quality is incorporeal? The same must be said of the

other qualities in which the seminal force is wont to become manifest. But if all the aforesaid are incorporeal things adhering to bodies, and in themselves understood to be external to bodies, who but a fool would say that the incorporeal seminal force requires corporeal matter in order to become manifest? For if form and every quality and quantity be removed the seminal power can by no means be either made or perceived in naked matter. < What if the matter itself, in which it is thought to become manifest and active, is shown to derive its origin from incorporeal qualities? Would it not follow that the seminal force receives the things in which it operates from nowhere else but from itself, that is, in its natural powers, so that in a wonderful way matter, operation, and operator is made and makes? >

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So the unshakable authority of Holy Scripture compels us to believe that the universe of the whole creature is established in the Word of God, *and* that the reason for its establishment surpasses all intellects and is known only to the Word in Whom <all things> are established. But if you wish to hear what I think about the eternity of the universe in the Word of God, be attentive to what follows.

17

Concerning  
the eternity  
of the uni-  
verse in the  
Word of God

A. I am ready.

N. Do you think that the Word of God, in Whom all things are made, saw all things that are made in Him?

A. Certainly I think so. For although the Divine Operation [in] which all things were established is considered by the theologians under a triple mode, as Scripture allows — for the Father makes, in the Son they are made, by the Holy Spirit they are distributed — yet it is one and the same operation of the Most High and Holy Trinity. For that which the Father makes both the Son makes and the Holy Spirit makes, and that which is made in the Son is made in the Father and in the Holy Spirit. For if the Son is in the Father it is [necessary] that everything which is made in the Son [be] in the Father. For it does not accord with reason that we should understand that only the Son Himself is in the Father, but that the things which the Father makes in the Son are not in the Father. Similarly that which the Holy Spirit nurtures and distributes is nurtured and distributed by the Father and the Son. If, then, the Son makes the things that are made in Him, is it to be believed that He made what He did not see? Therefore I think that He saw the things that He made and that were made in Him.

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N. You think rightly. Tell me, then: how did He see? By corporeal sense or by intellect?

How God sees the things that He has made  
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A. I would not say that it was by sense or by intellect that God saw the things that He made. For He Who is incorporeal is without corporeal sense, and He Who passes all intellect cannot be called intellect — although He is called Intellect, as also Mind, by metaphor, namely, from the creature to the Creator because He is the Cause and Creator of the whole of intellect and mind —; therefore He does not see by means of the creature whether corporeal [or incorporeal], for He does not need any creature as an instrument to see what He wishes to make. “For”, as Maximus says, “it cannot be” — as reason shows — “that He Who is above all things that are apprehends the things that are by means of the things that are, but we say that it is as His volitions that He knows the things that are, adding also the reason from the cause. For if He made all things by His Will — and no reason contradicts this — and it is right and proper to say that God ever knows His own Will, while every one of the things that are made He willingly made; then it is as His volitions that God knows the things that are because it is also by His volition that He made the things that are.”

N. Therefore, as God sees His volitions, so He also sees the things that He made?

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A. So it is and not otherwise. But He does not [as the foolish assert] see the sensibles by means of sense nor the intelligibles by means of intellect, but as (He sees) His volitions, so He sees the sensibles and the intelligibles.

Concerning the Divine Volitions

N. You understand plainly and clearly. But I beg you to say whether the divine volitions which God sees are one thing and the made things which He sees are another.

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A. I am not equipped to answer this question adequately *and correctly*. For I am hampered on all sides. For if I say, “another”, you will quickly reply: Then it is not as His volitions that God sees what He has made, for there cannot be one simple vision of things which are diverse and different in nature, and you will conclude: But the Divine Vision is simple and one and uniform. Therefore, if the Will of God is one thing and what He had made another, it is not as His volition that He sees what He has made.

If, on the other hand, I say, “not other”, the conclusion will necessarily be: The Will of God is something that He has made, and He has made His volitions and what He has made are His volitions.



For the one and the same and simple Divine Vision requires that everything that He sees is one and the same. But He sees as His volitions the things that He has made. Therefore the divine volitions and the things which God has made are one and the same. For the simple Divine Vision which sees all things as one and one as all things unifies them. And if this be granted I fear that you may 674A  
 compel me to profess one of two things, namely, either that the Will of God is separate from God and attached to the creature, so that God is one thing and His Will another, that is to say, that God is the Maker while His Will is the made; or, if true reason forbids (me) to say this, I shall have to profess that God and His volitions and all the things that He has made are one and the same, and without delay the conclusion, forced on by the power of reason, will be: Then God made Himself, if His volitions are not external to Himself and He does not see His volitions in one way and the things that He has made in another, but sees the things that He has made as His volitions. And if that is the case, who will have any doubt about the 674B  
 eternity of the things that are made in God, when they are understood to be not only made and eternal, but God Himself?

N. Most cautiously and circumspectly do you proceed along the road of reason, and therefore if you clearly understand without any doubt that what you have said is so and not otherwise, I see that there is no need to toil any more in urging the eternity of all things which are made in the Word of God.

A. You are teasing me, as I think, in treating me lightly, that is, in allowing the freedom of my will to choose what it wishes and hold to what it wishes without asking me to show by sound reasons what, with all error removed, is to be believed and understood about such things. For if by myself I had a clear understanding of what I have said, perhaps I should not fear to offer a frank opinion concerning the Divine Volitions and concerning the things that are made, as to whether they are one and the same or not. But I was afraid because I 674C  
 knew that I was not sufficiently equipped to enter upon this discussion.

N. Go carefully, then, lest you err at any point, so that whatever you agree to you retain as a habit firmly established in your mind.

A. Proceed. I will follow.

N. Although, as I think, you have doubts about the Will of God, whether about His volitions or about the ineffable multiplicity

of the Divine Unity — for God is a multiple unity in Himself —, as to whether they belong to the simple nature of the Most High Goodness so as not to be anything but it, or whether they do not, yet you do not doubt but that God was not at any time without His volitions.

674D A. To doubt this would be very foolish. For everything that He has He has always and immutably, for nothing is an accident to Him, and therefore either He never had His volitions or, if He has them, there must be no doubt at all but that He has always had them.

N. God, then, has always had His volitions and always beheld them. For what He had could not be concealed from Him.

A. He both had and beheld. For it would be madness to suppose that God was without His volitions, or that He has not always had them and beheld them.

N. The Divine Volitions, then, are eternal, since He Whose volitions they are is eternal.

675A A. I grant this unreservedly.

N. Well, then ; the things that He has willed, did He not always have them and always behold them ? Indeed, you clearly understand, I believe, that for God nothing is future since He includes within Himself all times and all *that is in them*. For of all things He is the Beginning and the Middle and the End, and their limit and their circuit and their going forth and their return.

A. That nothing for God is future I do not doubt.

N. Therefore all things which He has willed [to make] He always had in His volitions. For in Him the will does not precede [that] which He wills [to be made]. [For] it is coeternal with His Will. For He does not wait for the making of that which He wills as though it were future to Him, to Whom all things are present, Whose will is the Cause of all things, and Whose beholding is their effect and their perfection. For without any intervening delay is made that of which He beholds the making.

675B  
That all  
things that  
are made in  
God are God

But if His Will is His beholding and His beholding His Will, everything that He wills is made, without any interval ; but if of everything He wills to be made He also beholds the making, and if what He wills and beholds is not external to Himself but within Himself, and there is nothing within Him which is not Himself, it follows that everything that He beholds and wills should be

understood as coeternal with Him, if His Will and His beholding and His Essence are one.

A. Now you compel us to declare that all things that are called eternal and made are God. For if the Divine Will and the divine beholding is essential [and] eternal, [and] in Him to be is not one thing, to will another, to behold another, but one and the same superessential, and reason allows that whatever He comprehends within His Will and His beholding is understood as nothing other than Himself — for a simple nature does not allow within itself that which is not itself —, the declaration that the One God is all things in all things abides without any dispute. And if this is so, no one who practises philosophy devoutly ought to be ignorant of the eternity of all things which are in God, indeed are God. But as yet I do not satisfactorily see how the Divine Nature, outside of which there is nothing and within which all things subsist, does not admit within itself a being that is not coessential with itself. 675C

N. That no nature subsists but God and the creature I should believe that you do not doubt — indeed, I see that you see it satisfactorily. For what you said of the Divine Nature, that outside it there is nothing, so you understand, as I think, that [while] the Creative Nature permits nothing outside itself because outside it nothing can [be], yet everything which it has created and creates it contains within itself, but in such a way that it itself is other, because it is superessential, than what it creates within itself. For that it should create itself does not seem to you likely to be probable. 675D

How all things that are within God are coessential to Him

A. You have perfectly understood what my thought has conceived about God and the creature. For I firmly and unshakeably hold that no nature, whether created or not created, subsists or is in any way external to God, but that everything that subsists, whether created or not created, is contained within Him. And that therefore the fullness of the whole universe is included within *these*, as in two parts, namely, God and the creature, was what I held hitherto. But now again my faith seems to waver, weakened by the foregoing reasonings. 676A

N. I see that your faith stands firm and is fortified by true reason at least in this: my belief that outside God there is nothing.

A. It is as you say. That I see very clearly.

N. Bring then the keenness of your mind more diligently and perceptively to bear upon the things that you believe to be within God.

A. I see that within God there is nothing but Himself and the nature created by Him.

N. Then you see in God that which is not God?

A. I do; but it is created from God.

N. How, then, does it seem to you? Did God see all things that He has made before they were made?

676B A. I should think that He saw all things that He willed to make before they were made.

N. So He saw the things which He willed to make, and He did not see other than the things which He has made, and the things which He has made He saw before He made them?

A. So I believe.

N. Say, please, what are those things which God saw before they were made? *For how* did He see a creature which [was] not made? [And] if He did not see other than a creature — for everything that is is either God or creature —, what did He see? Therefore, either He saw Himself before He made everything that He made, or He saw a creature which was not yet created. [But how did He see what as yet was not? Or if [it was], and was therefore seen because it was, then before the creature there was that which was not a creature. But if only God <and what is coessential with Him> is allowed to exist before every creature, nothing else that  
676C God saw before He made the creature preceded the creature except either Himself or a nature which is eternal in Him and coeternal with Him.] But it has been agreed between us that God saw the things that were to be made. For it was not in ignorance or without providence that He made [that which He willed to make].

A. I see that I am hedged about on all sides and that there is left <for me> no way of escape. For if I say that God saw in Himself the things that were to be made I shall be forced to declare that He saw Himself, for there was not yet a creature for Him to see, nor was there, before every creature, anything else but Himself that He could see; and therefore if He saw in Himself all things that were to be made before they were made, true reason will necessarily teach that He saw Himself, and He will be all the things that He made if He made the things which He saw in Himself, and He will be the  
676D Maker and the things that will be made. If, on the other hand, I say, “He saw the nature that was to be made before it was made”, you will say, “Then there was a creature before it was made.” For if God

saw it before it was made, that was a true substance which God saw in it before it was made. For God does not see the things that are false since the Truth is immutable and everything that is in it is true and immutable, and if God saw the creature in Himself before it was made He has always seen what He saw; for it is not an accident in Him to see what He sees, since it is not one thing for Him to be and another to see; for His is a simple nature. But if He has always seen what He saw, what He has seen always was, and therefore [what He has seen] must be eternal, and if He saw the creature which as yet was not, and what He saw was — for everything that God sees is true and eternal — there is nothing else left for us to understand but that the creature was in God before it was made in Him, and that “creature” can be understood in two ways, the one relating it to its eternity in the Divine Knowledge, in which all things truly and substantially abide, the other to its *temporal* establishment which was, as it were, subsequent in itself. And if this is so, the logical consequence will compel the choice of one of two alternatives [so that] either we say that the same creature is better than itself and inferior: better in so far as it has eternally subsisted in God, but inferior in so far as it is created in itself and its creation will be thought to be not in God but as though external to God *in itself*, and it will contradict Scripture which says, “Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom”; or that it is not the same nature that was eternally in the knowledge of God, and that was established so to speak subsequently, as it were, in itself, and therefore it was not those things that were made that He saw before they were made but only the things that are eternal that He saw in Himself; and anyone who has admitted that will be seen to be resisting the catholic profession of the faithful; for Holy Wisdom declares that the things which God saw in Himself before they were made are not other than the things that He subsequently made in themselves, but that the same things are eternally seen and eternally made, and all this in God and nothing external to God. But if the nature of the Divine Goodness is one thing and what it sees to be made and did make, and saw and made in itself, is another, the simplicity of the Divine Nature will be broken when there is understood to be in it that which it is not, which is altogether impossible. If on the other hand the Divine Nature is not other than that of which it sees the making in itself, but they are one and the same nature whose simplicity is inviolable and whose unity is indivisible, it will at once be admitted that God is all things everywhere, and wholly in the whole, and the Maker and the made and the Seer and the seen, and the place and

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677D the essence of all things and their substance and their accident and, to speak simply, everything that truly is and is not, superessential in essences, supersubstantial in substances, the Creator above every creature, created within all creation and subsisting below all creations taking the beginning of being from Himself and moving Himself through Himself, and moved towards Himself, and in Himself taking His rest, multiplied in Himself through genera and species to infinity, not abandoning the simplicity of His nature but calling back the infinity of His multiplicity into Himself, for in Him all things are one.

678A Concerning the eternal establishment of all things in God  
N. Now I see that you have a thoroughly clear view of the things of which you seemed to be in doubt, and you will no longer waver, as I think, in your assertion that all things are both made [and] eternal, and that everything that is understood truly to subsist in them is nothing else but the ineffable nature of the Divine Goodness. [For He is the substantial Good, and no one is good save God alone.]

It remains, then, to treat of the eternal creation of all things in God, in so far as the ray of the Divine Power shall permit the keenness of our minds to ascend into the Divine Mysteries.

Recapitulation  
A. It does indeed remain, and the order of our discourse now requires it. But first I should like you briefly to recapitulate the whole of what has so far been agreed between us on the present question.

N. We have clearly deduced, as I think, that the Divine Goodness saw and always has seen those things that were to be made.

A. This was concluded.

678B N. And the things that He saw were not other than the things that He made, but the things He saw were to be made were the things that He made.

A. This was granted likewise.

N. And all the things which He has always seen He has always made. For in Him the sight does not precede His act, since the act is co-eternal with the sight — especially as [for Him] it is not one thing to see and another to act, but His sight is His act. For He sees by acting and by seeing He acts.

A. This also was accepted.

N. Concerning the simplicity of the Divine Nature we said that that is not to be truly and properly understood in it which is alien from it as not co-essential with it; and since all things are truly and properly understood to be within it — for nothing subsists outside it — it was concluded that it alone is truly and properly in all things, and that nothing truly and properly is what it itself is not.

A. It was.

N. It follows that we ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For both the creature, by subsisting, is in God; and God, by manifesting Himself, in a marvellous and ineffable manner creates Himself in the creature, the invisible making Himself visible and the incomprehensible comprehensible and the hidden revealed and the unknown known and being without form and species formed and specific and the superessential essential and the supernatural natural and the simple composite and the accident-free subject to accident [and accident] and the infinite finite and the uncircumscribed circumscribed and the supratemporal temporal and the Creator of all things created in all things and the Maker of all things made in all things, and eternal He begins to be, and immobile He moves into all things and becomes in all things all things. And I am not here speaking of the Incarnation of the Word and His taking of manhood on Himself, but of the ineffable descent of the Supreme Goodness, which is Unity and Trinity, into the things that are so as to make them be, indeed, so as itself to be, in all things from the highest to the lowest, ever eternal, ever made, by itself in itself eternal, by itself in itself made. And while it is eternal it does not cease to be made, and made it does not cease to be eternal, and out of itself it makes itself, for it does not require some other matter which is not itself in which to make itself. Otherwise it would seem to be impotent and imperfect in itself if it were to receive from some other source an aid to its manifestation and perfection. So it is from Himself that God takes the occasions of His theophanies, that is, of the divine apparitions, since all things are from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him. And therefore even that matter from which it is read that He made the world is from Him and in Him, and He is in it in so far as it is understood to have being.

Nor is this remarkable, since the Scriptures show us examples of such things. For if the souls of Moses and Samuel, although they are by nature invisible and incorporeal, appeared for the purpose of penetrating mysteries, not in imagination but in truth to the minds

How Moses and Samuel appeared visibly without assuming bodies

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of others, I mean of the Apostles and of Saul, visible and as it were corporeal, not by means of some matter that had been taken from without but by themselves without any intermediary, what prevents us, encouraged by such a miracle, from ascending to higher levels of the Divine Power so as to understand that it is both above all things and is made in all things, not, as we have said, by taking from elsewhere or making out of nothing the matter in which it is made and in which it makes itself manifest ?

We have already said enough about the seminal power, which, while by itself it is invisible and incomprehensible, multiplies itself into infinite forms and species, and though it eludes all the keenness of the mind when it is sought becomes subject to the bodily senses. Therefore there is no place for that nothing, that is the privation of all habit and essence, from which all things are thought by those of  
 679C limited understanding who do not know what Holy Theology means by that name, to have been made.

18 A. I am amazed how, although the things which have now been said by you are stumbling-blocks to many and are far removed from those who seem to philosophize, yet true reason declares them to be very true, and the authority of Holy Scripture when it is more carefully considered teaches and preaches the same. For it says, "In the Beginning God made heaven and earth", that is, In God the Son God the Father established the universe of the whole creature visible and invisible. And what would the Father establish in the Beginning *that was begotten of Him*, in His Word, His Wisdom, that was not the Son Himself? Otherwise He would be establishing, not in Him but outside Him, something that He received from elsewhere or made out of nothing. Or how would the Word suffer to be made  
 679D within Himself something that was not consubstantial with Himself? For light does not permit within itself darkness <that it has received from elsewhere> *nor truth* receive within itself anything *but what is true*. But that cannot be true which was not always eternal, nor that eternal which is made from the privation of all eternity and essence. Or what else would the Father make in His Wisdom but that Wisdom itself? For the Prophet says, "Thou  
 680A madest all things in Wisdom." Note the force of the words. Was it as though in some place or space that God built a kind of house in His Wisdom not in order that it should be made all things substantially, but merely that it should contain all things and that all things were made in Wisdom as one thing in another? Not so does reason teach, but as follows: "Thou madest all things in Wisdom", that is, Thou



maiest Thy Wisdom all things. For even this visible sun, although in itself it is simple fire and receives no composition from things which are not consubstantial with itself, yet contains within itself and comprehends the nature of all sensible things, not that it contains within itself anything other than itself, but itself is substantially everything that it contains in itself. For the substance of all visible things is created in it. For it would not consume as its sustenance all bodies in which it burns if it did not first furnish the occasions of their subsistence. 680B

By the sun I here mean that incomprehensible power which is diffused through the whole of this visible world, which is called fire for that reason that it acts within in all things, of which the principal source is that ethereal body which is called by the name of "sun", in which and through which it manifests the most evident powers of its operation, I mean light and heat. But it administers all the other bodies which are born and nourished in the world by its most hidden operations and is made in its totality everywhere, and from itself in itself it is made in all things, breaking out into all things visibly, consuming all things into itself invisibly. Hence it is not unwarrantably that Scripture says, "Gyrating in a gyre the spirit goes forth and returns into its own place." For the fiery spirit because of the exceeding subtlety of its nature traverses all things and is made all things in all things, and returns into itself, since it is the substantial source and origin of all visible things and for that reason is called by the Greeks *φοιτῶν*, that is to say, "The Returning One". For, after traversing all the bodies of the world both visibly and invisibly it returns into itself and calls back into itself all things which receive the beginning of their generation from it. Hence also the holy theologians often represent the superessential divine and formless essence, as St. Dionysius says, by fire, for it images the divine property, if one may say so, visibly in many ways. 680C

But I beg you to explain what Holy Theology means by that name of "Nothing". 19

N. I should believe that by that name is signified the ineffable and incomprehensible and inaccessible brilliance of the Divine Goodness which is unknown to all intellects whether human or angelic — for it is superessential and supernatural —, which while it is contemplated in itself neither is nor was nor shall be, for it is understood to be in none of the things that exist because it surpasses all things, but when, by a certain ineffable descent into the things that are, it is beheld by the mind's eye, it alone is found to be in all 680D  
Concerning  
"Nothing"  
through  
transcendence  
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things, and it is and was and shall be. Therefore so long as it is understood to be incomprehensible by reason of its transcendence it is not unreasonably called “Nothing”, but when it begins to appear in its theophanies it is said to proceed, as it were, out of nothing into something, and that which is properly thought of as beyond all essence is also properly known in all essence, and therefore every visible and invisible creature can be called a theophany, that is, a divine apparition. For every order of natures from the highest to the lowest, that is, from the celestial essences to the last bodies of this visible world, the more secretly it is understood, the closer it is seen to approach the divine brilliance.

681B

Hence the inaccessible brilliance of the celestial powers is often called by theology darkness. Nor is this surprising when even the most high Wisdom itself, which is what they approach, is very often signified by the word “Darkness”. Hear the Psalmist: “As His darkness so also is His light”, as though he were saying openly; so great is the splendour of the Divine Goodness that, not unreasonably for those who desire to contemplate it and cannot, it shall be turned into darkness. For He alone, as the Apostle says “possesseth the inaccessible light”.

681C

Concerning  
the  
progressions  
of the Most  
High Good  
into all  
things

But the further the order of things descends downwards, the more manifestly does it reveal itself to the eyes of those who contemplate it, and therefore the forms and species of sensible things receive the name of “manifest theophanies”. Therefore the Divine Goodness which is called “Nothing” for the reason that, beyond all things that are and that are not, it is found in no essence, descends from the negation of all essences into the affirmation of the essence of the whole universe; from itself into itself, as though from nothing into something, from non-essentiality into essentiality, from formlessness into innumerable forms and species. For its first progression *into the primordial causes* in which it is made is spoken of by Scripture as formless matter: matter because it is the beginning of the essence of things; formless because it comes nearest to the formlessness of the Divine Wisdom.

681D

Now the Divine Wisdom is rightly called formless because it does not turn to any form above itself for its formation. For it is of all forms the undefined exemplar, and while it descends into the various forms of things visible and invisible it looks back to itself as to its formation. Therefore the Divine Goodness, regarded as above all things, is said not to be, and to be absolutely nothing, but in all things it both is and is said to be, because it is the Essence of the

whole universe and its substance and its genus and its species and its quantity and its quality and the bond between all things and its position and habit and place and time and action and passion and everything whatsoever that can be understood by whatever sort of intellect in every creature and about every creature. And whosoever shall look carefully into the words of St. Dionysius will find that this is their meaning; and it does not seem inappropriate to introduce a few of them here, and we consider that it is necessary to repeat again the teaching we took from him in the earlier stages of our discourse. 682A

“Come”, he says, “let us praise the Good as Him Who truly (exists), and the Maker of the substance of all things that exist: ὄν” — for so Dionysius himself calls God — “is by virtue of His superessential power the substantiating Cause and Creator of all that exists, of existence, of subsistence, of substance, of essence, of nature, the principle and the measure of ages, and the essentiality of times and the eternity of things that exist, the time of things that are made, the being of whatever is made. From that which is (derive) eternity and essence and ὄν and time and becoming and that which is made, the essentiality in that which exists and whatever it has of subsistence and substance. For God is not yet ὄν, but He Who simply and Himself uncircumscribed embraces the whole in Himself. Therefore He is also called the King of Ages as substantiator of the whole of being and of what exists in Himself and about Himself; and He neither was nor shall be nor has become nor becomes nor shall become, nor indeed is; but He Himself is the being for the things that exist, and (he is) not only the things that exist but the very being of things that exist from Him Who exists before all ages. 682B

For He is the age of ages, subsisting before the ages.” “... For the being for the existents and the ages” [is] “from Him Who foresees, and while every age and time (is) from Him, He Who is the Pre-ὄν (is) of all age and time and every existent whatsoever the Beginning and the Cause; and all things participate in Him, and from nothing of the things that exist does He withdraw Himself. And He is before all things, and has constituted all things in Himself. And in short, whatever is in any way, both is and is understood and is preserved in the Pre-Existent.” 682C

And a little later, after an explanation of the primordial causes, he adds the words: “But being itself is never bereft of all things that exist. Being itself, indeed, is from the Pre-Existent; and from it is

being ; and ὄν (is) the beginning and measure before essence and is not itself being ; and being possesses it and ὄν is the substantiating beginning and middle and end both of that which exists and of age and of all things ; and therefore by the Oracles He Who is in truth Pre-ὄν is multiplied in every notion of the things that exist, and in Him is properly celebrated what was and what is and what shall be and what has become and what becomes and what shall become.

682D For all these things signify to those who have a knowledge of the divine that it is superessentially in every notion, and the Cause of existent things everywhere. For neither is He this but not that ; nor here but not there ; but He is all things as the Cause of all things, embracing and holding beforehand all beginnings, all endings, all existent things, and He is above all things as the Super-ὄν which is superessentially before all things.”

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Whoever looks into the meaning of these words will find that they teach, indeed proclaim, nothing else but that God is the Maker of all things and is made in all things ; and when He is looked for above all things He is found in no essence — for as yet there is no essence —, but when He is understood in all things nothing in them subsists but Himself alone ; and “neither is He this”, as he says, “but

I not that”, but He is all. Therefore, descending first from the superessentiality of His Nature, in which He is said not to be, He is created by Himself in the primordial causes and becomes the beginning of all essence, of all life, of all intelligence, and of all things which the gnostic contemplation considers in the primordial causes ; then, descending from the primordial causes which occupy a

II kind of intermediate position between God and the creature, that is,  
683B between that ineffable superessentiality which surpasses all understanding and the substantially manifest nature which is visible to pure minds, He is made in their effects and is openly revealed in His

III theophanies ; then He proceeds through the manifold forms of the effects to the lowest order of the whole of nature, in which bodies are contained ; and thus going forth into all things in order He makes all things and is made all in all things, and returns into Himself, calling all things back into Himself, and while He is made in all things. He does not cease to be above all things and thus makes all things from nothing, that is, He produces from His Superessentiality essences, from His Supervitality lives, from His Superintellectuality intellects, from the negation of all things which are and which are not the affirmations of all things which are and which are not.

And this is very clearly shown by the return of all things into the Cause from which they proceeded, when all things shall be converted into God as the air into light, when God shall be all in all. Not that even now God is not all in all, but after the sin of human nature and its expulsion from the abode of paradise, when, that is, it was thrust down from the height of the spiritual life and knowledge of the most clear wisdom into the deepest darkness of ignorance, no one unless illuminated by Divine Grace and rapt with Paul into the height of the Divine Mysteries can see with the sight of true understanding how God is all in all, for there intervenes the cloud of fleshly thoughts and the darkness of variegated phantasies, and the keenness of the mind is weakened by the irrational passions, and is turned back from the splendours of clear truth and is held in the grasp of the bodily shadows to which it has become accustomed. For it is not to be believed of the celestial essences which have never abandoned the condition of eternal bliss that they know any other thing in the universal creature except God Himself. For in God and in the primordial causes they behold all things beyond every sense and intellect, since they do not require all the works of nature in order to see the truth, but use only the ineffable grace of the eternal light, and it was to bring human nature back to this vision that the Incarnate Word of God descended, taking it upon Himself after it had fallen in order that He might recall it to its former state, healing the wounds of transgressions, sweeping away the shadows of false phantasies, opening the eyes of the mind, showing Himself in all things to those who are worthy of such a vision.

That the  
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Superessen-  
tial Goodness  
is made the  
negation and  
affirmation  
of all things

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A. These matters are difficult indeed, and far removed from the senses of those who ponder corporeal and visible things. However, for those who ascend in the spirit above visible and temporal things into the knowledge of the truth they become manifest as very clear and very true. For which of those who live a carnal life and are unwilling to look upon the clear light of wisdom hearing such things would not at once break out and exclaim: "They are mad who say such things. For how can the invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible God above all things descend from Himself and create Himself in all things so as to be all things in all things, and proceed as far as the lowest infamies and corruptions and the basest forms and species of this visible world so as to be Himself even in them, if He is all in all?" not knowing — he who says these things — that there can be no infamy in the universe of the whole creature, that no evil can harm it, that by no error can it

684B

be deceived or led astray — for that which affects it in part God does not permit to happen in the whole, for of its totality neither is the infamy infamous nor the evil harmful nor the error erroneous (true, to those who live an infamous or wicked life and who stray from the truth the honourable seems infamous, the good evil, the straight ways crooked, the righteous wicked ; but when their infamy and evil and error are removed, they remain to those of pious understanding all that is pure, perfect, untarnished, truly good, free from all error) — and not thinking of what Holy Scripture declares : “Every good gift and every perfect grace comes down from the Father of Lights”, declaring by the word “gift” the substantial constitutions of all things, and by “grace” the virtues with which the universal nature is adorned ; and this whole, namely substance and virtue, descends from the Father of Lights, that is, from the spring of all good things, God, Who flowing forth into all things that are and that are not, is made in all things, without Whom there can be nothing. But, as I think, enough has been said concerning the Nothing from which God has made all things.

684D N. Enough surely but we must make a rapid recapitulation. By saying these things we are not refuting the interpretation of those who think that it was from the nothing by which is meant that privation of all possession that God made all things, and not from the Nothing by which is meant by the theologians the Super-essentiality and Supernaturality of the Divine Goodness. For according to the rules of theology the power of negation is stronger than that of affirmation for investigating the sublimity and incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature ; and anyone who looks into it closely will not be surprised that often in the Scriptures God Himself is called by that name of Nothing.

A recapitulation of the same things

[A. Nor am I surprised, knowing on the authority of St. Dionysius that negations are more apt for divine knowledge than affirmations.

N. You will not deny, as I think, that all things that Scripture avers to have been made from nothing possess a single nature common to all, by participation in which they subsist each in its due proportion ?

A. To deny this would be ridiculous. For we believe and understand that God has created all together and at once the common nature of all things by participation in which (nature) all things are made.

685A

N. Do you think that that nature was made out of nothing?

A. I not only think but firmly maintain that it was produced from nowhere else but from nothing.

N. Define what that nature is.

A. I cannot. For I do not see how a thing which is as yet 685B infinite and common to all and not yet distinguished by any sure form or species can be defined.

N. How if someone of most high and holy authority were to 21 persuade you that that nature was nothing else than the Word of God? Would you have said that it was made from nothing? — I mean from that nothing that means the privation of the whole of essence and substance and quality?

A. Certainly not. For who would say that the Word of God was made from nothing seeing that it is that which makes all things from nothing? But who is he who was not afraid to say that the Word of God is the nature of all things?

N. Listen to St. Basil in the Eighth Homily on Genesis: “For neither”, he says, “when the earth heard, Let it bring forth the growing grass and the fruit-bearing tree, did it produce grass which 685C it held hidden, nor did it bring out to the surface palm or oak or cypress which, before (coming into) sight, were hidden in its womb. But the Divine Word is the nature of the things that are made. Let it bring forth: not, Let it bring out what it holds, but, What it does not hold let it create; God granting the power for the operation.”

Notice how faithfully he has declared that the nature of all things that have been made is the Word of God and let no suggestion steal upon you of thinking that the Word of God is one thing and His command another. For in Him both being and commanding all things to be are the same thing. For by being all things become it since it is all things. And that you may the better know that the Word of God is both the nature of all things and consubstantial with the Father before all things and is created in all things that are made in it, listen to Ecclesiastes: “Who”, he asks, 685D “has investigated the Wisdom of God which precedes all things?” — and goes straight on to say: “Wisdom was created first of all things” — there you have it made among the creatures. Listen to the Gospel: “That which was made in Him was Life.” For what is read elsewhere in Solomon, “The Lord created me in the beginning of 686A His ways”, some accept as a reference to the Incarnation of the

Word, others, whose interpretation seems to me the more credible, to His begetting by the Father.]

22        But concerning those who think that the world was made from that nothing which means the privation or absence of the whole of essence I do not know what to say. For I do not see why they do not bethink them of the nature of opposites. *For* it is impossible that there should be privation where there is not possession of essence. For privation is the privation of possession, and therefore where possession does not precede privation does not follow. How, then, do they say that the world was made from privation? *For if* this were true it would be agreed that the world had some possession before it was made. *But if so*, how would it come to suffer the privation of its possession at a time when it was not or, if it was, did not derive its being from the privation of itself? But if it was not at all before it was made, none of the wise doubts but that it lacked all possession. But if it lacked all possession, how could it be made [from] the privation of a possession which it never possessed?

686B

It is the same case with absence. For absence is the removal from the senses of some thing which was present or could become present. If, therefore, the world was made from absence, there was before it some nature such that from the privation of the possession of it or the absence of its essence there arose the occasion for the establishment of the world; and that nature was either God or creature; and if God, they will be forced to admit that the world was made from the privation of possessing the Divine Nature or the absence of its essence; but if creature, it was necessarily either visible or invisible; if visible, we ought to believe that another visible world preceded; if invisible, what reason compels us to admit that this world has been made from the absence of an invisible nature, or even that any world preceded it at all? But if true reason teaches that the universe of the whole visible and invisible nature was made from nothing, and that no nature but God Himself preceded it, how the world was made from the absence or deprivation of things that never were I do not understand.

686C

But if one should say that neither deprivation of possession nor the absence of some presence is meant by the name "Nothing", but the total negation of possession and essence or of substance or of accident or, in a word, of all things that can be said or understood, the conclusion will be this: So that is the name by which it is necessary to call God, Who alone is what is properly meant by the negation of all things that are, because He is exalted above

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everything that is said or understood, Who is none of the things that are and are not, Who by not knowing is the better known. And so 687A  
agreement will be reached between us, who seemed to disagree.

But if he should answer: Nor do I say that by “Nothing” is meant that negation by which God is said not to be anything of the things that are, but that which negates God and creature, he will of necessity be admitting what he was trying to deny, namely, that it is from the privative negation of God and creature that the world has been made. For the world is made from formless matter, formless matter from nothing at all, and therefore the world also from nothing at all. For he will not, as I think, dare to say that everything that is is either God or creature or neither God nor creature. For if he does, he will be counted among those who say that matter, from which they think God made the world, is coeternal with God. But 687B  
if everything that is is either God or creature — for no one who is truly wise would reckon that the world is made from the negation of God and the creature — there is left for the cause of the making of the world only that negation which by discarding the whole creature and exalting God above everything that is said or understood declares Him to be nothing of those things which are and which are not.

There is also a very good argument in support of this reasoning: If God and the creature are two, either they derive from one principle and are therefore of the same nature — for from one principle there are not born things that are contrary by nature, for they draw upon the nature of their principle —; or they are of themselves two principles opposed to one another — for if con-substantial they are not two but one, but if they are God and creature they are not two but one and one — or they are equal and not one from the other. For if they are two they must 687C  
necessarily be born of one. But if God (is) from nothing, but the creature from God, one will come from the other and they are not equal. For a one is not born of a one that is equal to itself. But if the creature (is) from God, God will be the Cause, but the creature the effect. But if an effect is nothing else but a made cause, it follows that God the Cause is made in His effects. For nothing proceeds from a cause into its effects that is foreign to its nature. For what breaks out into heat and light is nothing else but the fiery force itself.

But if someone should say that the One begets a one equal to itself — for even God the Father, while being one, begets a One

687D equal to Himself, God the Son —, let him know that he has fallen into gross error. For the most high Holy Trinity is not one and one and one but a simple and indivisible One in three inseparable Substances, and that One is multiple in power, not in number, and not any one, but universally and infinitely One, and above every one that can be said or understood. Therefore the Son (is) from the Father (as) “uno” from “uno”, not as “unum” from “uno”. But our present discourse is not an attack on the dogmatizers. This alone is what we set ourselves to investigate, in so far as our resources allowed us: What is meant by the name “Nothing” from which we  
688A believe that God made the world?

A. Let whoever wishes to give an account of the establishment of the world propound to his followers whatever teaching he likes; for our part, let us keep to the track of our reasoning, and since it is more or less agreed between us that all things are from God and that God is in all things and that they were made from nowhere but from Him — since from Him and through Him and in Him all things are made — I beg you to give a clear and brief summary of the way in which the fourfold division of nature is applicable to God.

23 For in disputations, and especially when they deal with obscure  
Ἐνακεφαλαίωσις matters, an ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, that is, a recapitulation, is of great value. For it recalls to the memory all that has been said before in brevity and clarity, and displays to the mind’s eye in a single view all that has been done.

688B N. Concerning God we had agreed, as I think, that of the whole established universe He is the Beginning and the Middle and the End — not that His being the Beginning is one thing, His being the Middle another, and His being the End another, for these three in Him are one — but because in theological contemplation there is a triple movement. For the intellect, whether human or angelic, is moved in one way when it considers that God is the Beginning of all things, in another way when it recognizes that all things are in Him and through Him as in a kind of medium, in another it contemplates the fact that the end of all things is in God and is God, for all things seek Him and find in Him their rest and their life. This interpretation is favoured by St. Augustine in the third chapter of the eighth book of the City of God, where he is discussing the philosopher Socrates. “He was unwilling”, he says, “that minds tarnished by earthly desires should attempt to reach up to divine things, when he saw that they were inquiring into the causes of things, which he believed

Concerning  
688C  
Socrates

to be first and highest and nowhere but in the will of the One and supreme God. Wherefore he thought that they could be comprehended by none but a purified mind, and therefore he urged that the good demeanour of a purified life should be insisted upon so that the mind, relieved of the burden of oppressive lusts, might raise itself by its natural strength to eternal things and with purity and understanding behold the nature of the incorporeal and immutable light in which the causes of all created natures live in stability.”

A. Most surely we agreed, for reason approved it.

N. So when we have a clear perception of the Divine Nature as the Beginning and Cause of all things — for He is ἀναρχος and ἀνάιτιος, that is, without beginning and without cause, for before Him there is nothing to stand in relation to Him as beginning or cause, but He Himself creates the nature of all things of which He is the Cause and Beginning — we not inappropriately call that Nature creative and not created; for it creates and suffers itself to be created by none. But when we recognize the same Nature, namely the Divine, to be the End of all things beyond which nothing and in which all things eternally subsist and are universally God, we rightly call it neither created nor creative: not created because it is created by none, nor creative because here it no longer creates, for all things have been converted into their eternal reasons in which they shall and do remain eternally, and cease also to be called by the name of creature. For God shall be all in all, and every creature shall be overshadowed, that is, converted to God, as the stars when the sun arises. Do you then see how we are able to call one and the same nature, namely the Divine, not created but creative when we consider it as the Beginning, but neither created nor creative when we regard it as the end?

That the fourfold consideration of nature is understood 688D in God

689A

A. I see what you mean well enough. Say what remains.

N. I think there remains only the relation of Middle, which appears to its observers under a double mode, first when the Divine Nature is seen to be created and to create — for it is created by itself in the primordial causes, and therefore creates itself, that is, allows itself to appear in its theophanies, willing to emerge from the most hidden recesses of its nature in which it is unknown even to itself, that is, it knows itself in nothing because it is infinite and supernatural and superessential and beyond everything that can and cannot be understood; but, descending into the principles of things

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and, as it were, creating itself, it begins to know itself in something—; secondly when it is seen in the lowest effects of the primordial causes, in which it is correctly said of it that it is created only, but does not create. For it is created by descending into the lowest effects, beyond which it creates nothing, and is therefore said only to be created, and not to create. For it does not descend beyond the lowest effects by which it would be seen both to be created and to create.

- 689C So it is created and creates in the primordial causes, but in their effects it is created and does not create, and not unreasonably, seeing that in these it has set the end of its descent, that is, of its appearing, and therefore every creature, corporeal and visible and subject to the senses, is wont to be called in Scripture not inappropriately the last trace of the Divine Nature, and this every contemplative mind, like a Moses ascending to the peak of contemplation, is permitted to penetrate, and as yet it can scarcely be fully discerned by wise minds owing to the distraction of the vapours of earthly phantasies and the thunderings and lightnings of mutable things which are suddenly born and suddenly pass away. For it is for  
689D very few, wholly detached from earthly thoughts and purged by virtue and knowledge, to know God in these visible creatures as the patriarch Abraham knew Him from the revolution of the stars, with the natural law for his guide, and as the other holy fathers before the Law was written down, and under the Law, as Moses in the Bush and on the summit of the Mount, then the Apostles after the Law were brought under Grace with Christ through visible symbols to the Divine Mysteries. For “His vestures white as snow” signified the  
690A visible creature, in which and through which the Word of God, Who subsists in all things, is understood. Listen to the Apostle when he says: “His invisible (attributes) have been visible from the creation of the world through the understanding of the things that have been made. Also his power and eternity are everlasting.”

- A. The fourfold division of universal nature I now most clearly see, and I recognize that it must be understood as both from God and in God. Therefore, now that we have dealt with the question of “Nothing” and, as I think, reached a firm conclusion, I consider that we should return to the discussion of the third part of universal nature, of which it is said that it is created only and does not create. For this is what we expect from the matter proposed. Indeed, although other questions have been introduced, this was to have  
690B been the chief topic of the third book. For it was for the sake of

investigating it more thoroughly that the incidental contemplation of other questions was inserted.

N. You consider rightly, and the time has come for it. But first 24  
we ought to speak about the sixfold quantity of intelligible days in  
which it is read that God made His works, if we are to carry out our  
promise fully, partly by following the interpretation of the Holy  
Fathers, partly by not concealing what comes into our minds from  
Him Who lightens our darkness and seeks to be sought and found in  
His Scriptures. For the Holy Spirit Who is the infinite founder of  
Holy Scripture established therein infinite meanings, and therefore 690C  
no commentator's interpretation displaces another's, provided only  
that what each says is plainly consistent with the Faith and with the  
Catholic Creed, whether he receives it from another, or finds it in  
himself, albeit enlightened by God.

A. Proceed in what order you wish and take me along with  
you. For I shall follow you to learn in these matters the interpretation  
of others or of yourself, and shall choose what true reason, which in  
all things both seeks the truth and finds it, may instruct — not that I  
am yet qualified to distinguish true interpretations from false, but it  
would not be rash in me to dare to prefer, after consulting the truth,  
the likelier to the less likely.

N. I would not approve anything rash or ill-considered. So the  
divine prophet Moses, in briefly writing of the establishment all  
together and the same time of the primordial causes of things visible  
and invisible by the words, "In the Beginning God made heaven and  
earth", and in signifying by the words "empty and void" or 690D  
"invisible and incomposite earth" and "darkness over the abyss"  
their grandeur hidden in the Divine Will and incomprehensible  
before they flowed forth into forms and species, also indicating the  
beginning of the propagation of the pre-established causes into their  
effects by the name of the Spirit which fomented the waters or was  
borne above the waters, comes down to the interpretation of the 691A  
mystical power of the number six, saying, "And God said, Let there  
be light, and light was made." Now in these words is found a great  
variety of interpretations by the Holy Fathers, some of whom see  
the creation of the angelic and intellectual celestial essence to be  
signified in this text of Holy Scripture, but others the creation of the  
nature of the visible light, that is, fire, as yet incomprehensible and  
invisible, which later, as though emerging from its sources, shone  
forth in the ethereal bodies and, its course being hidden, as it were,

Concerning  
the Works of  
the Six Days

for the space of three days, by traversing the abyss of the surface of the earth, made it, as they say, steeped in light throughout.

Now, that by the word "light" is named the fiery nature as yet  
 691B invisible and hidden ought to surprise no one who knows that Holy  
 Scripture is wont to call effects by the names of their causes, and  
 causes (by the names) of their effects. Now the effect of the fiery  
 nature is light ; so it is not inappropriate that the fiery nature which  
 was created in the beginning of things should be called by the name  
 of the light which was later to proceed from it but till then was  
 concealed within it, although some think that the primitive light  
 began to shine at once, — but against these sufficient action has  
 been taken by St. Augustine. But what follows, "And God saw the  
 light that it was good, and He divided the light from the darkness  
 and called the light day and the darkness night, and it was made  
 evening and morning, one day", they take to have been said with  
 691C reference simply to the corporeal light and the intervals of time in  
 which light and shade alternate about the earth, and they think that  
 the nature of the corporeal light was established when it was said,  
 "And God said, Let there be light, and light was made." For  
 because it is believed that the world was first established at the  
 Spring Equinox, in which the Sun remains for an equal length of  
 time above the earth as below, namely for twelve equinoctial hours,  
 they think it was for that reason that it was said, "God divided the  
 light from the darkness", as though it were explicitly said: He  
 divided the whole duration of the one day, which is completed in  
 twenty-four hours, by an equal partition between day and night.

But those who, following St. Augustine, more correctly think  
 that the establishment of the angelic nature is signified by the  
 creation of light, understand the division of the light from the  
 darkness either as the distinction between formless matter and the  
 formed creature, so that the name of light is taken for the perfection  
 691D of form, but that of darkness for the confusion of formlessness ; or  
 as a twofold contemplation of the celestial essences. For in one way  
 the creature is considered in its eternal reasons in God in accordance  
 with which it is established, and in another way in itself under God  
 inasmuch as it is a creature ; and the first consideration is signified  
 by the word "Light", but the second by "Darkness". For as light  
 goes before darkness in rank, so the brightness of the eternal reasons  
 692A in accordance with which every creature is made is preferred to the  
 obscurity of the creature considered in itself ; and therefore God  
 called the light day, that is, the splendour of the divine reasons, but

the darkness night, that is, the obscurer form of the nature created in itself.

But what follows, “And there was made evening and morning, one day”, they interpret as signifying the end of the created work and the beginning of the work to follow. For the morning, that is, the beginning of the work to follow is the end of the preceding and the end of the preceding is the beginning of the following. And therefore the one or first day is ended by the evening, whose morning, that is, beginning, had gone before in the creation of light.

This, in brief, is what we have received from others. But we, 25  
 who consider that the establishment of the primordial causes of  
 things whether visible or invisible is to be understood in the making  
 of heaven and earth, and their processions into their effects in those 692B  
 words of Holy Scripture, “Let there be light”, etc., say that by the  
 creation of light is signified the procession of the primordial causes  
 into their effects.

For if Scripture, in saying, “And there was darkness over the 26  
 abyss”, allows that the primordial causes themselves because of the  
 incomprehensibility of their nature and their profundity that no  
 understanding can know are overcast with a cloud of darkness, that  
 is, with the density of profound ignorance, what wonder if the  
 clarification of them in their effects through forms and species be  
 given the name of light in these words, “And God said, Let there be  
 light, and light was made”, as though one were to say, God  
 commanded the primordial causes, which are in themselves invisible  
 and which darken all understanding, to go forth into clear forms 692C  
 and the intelligible and sensible species of things visible and  
 invisible. For not only God but the principles of all things as well  
 are, according to St. Dionysius, wont to be called in the Oracles by  
 the name of darkness on account of their incomprehensible infinity.

But His procession through the principles into the creatures  
 visible and invisible, I mean His theophanies, is appropriately  
 signified by the name of brightness. For in them He Who passes all  
 understanding suffers Himself to be in a kind of way understood. So  
 “Let there be light”, says God, that is: Let the primordial causes  
 proceed from the incomprehensible hiding-places of their nature  
 into forms and species comprehensible and manifest to the under-  
 standings of those who contemplate them, “and light was made”,  
 that is, by the will and utterance of God the obscurity of the  
 primordial causes proceeded into revealed forms and species. 692D

“And God divided the light from the darkness”, that is: He separated the knowledge of the effects from the obscurity of their principal causes. For the dividing of the light from the darkness is the distinguishing of things which appear through forms and species from their principles in which they pass all understanding, and that was why he said earlier, “And God saw the light because it was good”, that is: It pleased God that the original causes established before every creature beyond every intellect should be overspread with a light of intelligence and manifested to the intellects whether human or angelic; “and He called the light day and the darkness night”, that is: He preferred to name the manifestation through forms and species of things visible and invisible to the minds which contemplate them day, but to call the transcendence in their principles, incomprehensible and unknown to every created intellect, night. “And there was made evening and morning, one day.” For although between the obscurity of the causes and the brightness of the effects a division and a difference is understood, yet it is one and the same day, that is, they have one meaning. For it is not understood that one creature is made in the causes, another established in the effects of the causes, but one and the same is made, in the eternal reasons as though in a darkness of the wisdom most secret and removed from every intellect, and subject to intellects in the processions of the reasons into their effects, as though revealed in a day of perfect knowledge.

Now I have added these words concerning the works of the first intelligible day, tempered, as I think, to the capacity of intelligences, not in order to set my interpretation, as though it were something I had discovered from myself, over the interpretations of others — far be that (from me)! — but out of the consideration that they do not much conflict with true contemplations, and that they are appropriate to the outpourings of the primordial causes into their effects, which we are now discussing.

A. Since many have given many explanations both in Greek and in Latin of the works of the first six days, our present discourse must be brief and succinct, and what has been said by you concerning the first light seems to me sufficient. For whether, as St. Basil thought, it signifies the creation of this corporeal light substantially in fire, or, as St. Augustine thought, the formation of the heavenly powers, or the general procession of the primordial causes into their effects, which ever of these opinions one chooses, one will not be far from the truth.



N. Let us pass, then, to the consideration of the Second Day. 26  
 And first it must be said that we have at the moment no intention concerning the allegorical sense of moral interpretations, but are attempting, under God's guidance, to say a few things about only the creation of made things according to the historical sense.

A. Nor do I want that. For enough has been said by the Holy Fathers about the allegorical sense of such things.

N. "God said also, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the 693D  
 waters and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament." Concerning the firmament all are unanimously agreed that nothing else is meant by that name but this visible heaven. But some affirm that only that outermost revolving sphere which encompasses the whole world about and is adorned with the harmonious motions of the stars is included under the one word "firmament", others the whole space beyond the moon where the 694A  
 bodies and the orbits of the planets are believed to be, together with the outermost circle of the stars; others the whole void that revolves about the earth, that is, the air and the ether and the most sublime sphere; for they say that the establishment of the air and the ether is not mentioned anywhere else.

But as to why it is called by such a name, each has explained as he saw fit; some that it is because it sustains the upper waters, as though above it there were corporeal waters; others, because it sustains the harmonious motions of the stars, as though those were bodies possessing weight; others, because it contains within itself and holds firm the whole visible world; nor are there lacking those who believe that the space of this heavier air is properly called by that name because it sustains as far as it can by some firm corporeity 694B  
 of its nature clouds, rains, showers, snows, hail, and everything that is born in it from earthly vapours, and that the other regions of the lighter and higher parts of visible nature are named after it, as a whole named after a part. But as to which of these has the more correct understanding I leave it to the judgement of those who read them; but to me, bearing in mind the meaning of the Greek name στερέωμα, such a word seems to have been appropriate for the reason that in it the place for the whole corporeal nature is situated and bounded. For beyond the firmament there is understood to be nothing sensible, or corporeal, or spatial, or temporal. For the limit of all visible things stands firm in it. For στερέωμα is for στερή ἄμα, that is, "solid things together", for in it all solid, that is corporeal, things have their common boundary and stability. 694C

Now, concerning the waters in the midst of which God said that the firmament should be made, I do not find anything satisfactory to say — not that I am ignorant of what many of the Fathers have thought of them. Thus St. Basil seems to imply in his *Hexameron* that what is meant here are those waters called by the name of “abyss” and diffused around about the world, most rarefied and refined, above which there was at first darkness and then the Spirit of God was borne above them, and in which the first light, revolving as it were for the space of three days, shone upon this earthly mass when it was still without form, and which on the third day were condensed and gathered together in one place so that the dry land might appear ; and that it was in the midst of these waters that God

694D said that the firmament should be made. But with this interpretation St. Augustine wholly disagrees, though without giving a satisfactory account of those waters between which God made the firmament. For in mentioning the opinions of others he did not reveal his own ; why, I do not know. But he prefers to the rest those who argue that it is the regions of this air, which are between the waters and seas and rivers situated below them and those which are suspended in the clouds above them, which are called by the name of firmament. So,

695A without refuting the interpretation of any, I shall give you a briefly reasoned exposition, if you wish, of my own opinion about the waters.

A. Certainly I wish it, and it is most necessary. For on this question no opinion has so far been given by anyone which has seemed satisfactory to me.

Concerning  
the Firma-  
ment in the  
midst of the  
Waters

N. I think, then, that the whole of created nature is divided into three parts. For everything that is created is either wholly body or wholly spirit or something intermediate which is neither wholly body nor wholly spirit, but which by a kind of relationship between the middle and the extremes receives into itself an equal share from the nature that is wholly spiritual, as from an upper extreme, and from the other, that is, from the nature that is wholly corporeal, from which it takes its proper subsistence which is connatural with those of the extremes. Therefore, if one looks carefully he will understand that this world is constituted upon this triple proportionality. For in so far as it is regarded in its reasons in which it is both eternally constituted and essentially subsists it is recognized not only as spiritual but also as altogether spirit — for none of those who practise philosophy correctly would deny that the reasons of corporeal nature are spiritual and indeed spirit —, but when its

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lowest parts from the top down are regarded, that is, all those bodies composed of the universal elements, especially the earthly and the watery, which are susceptible both to coming into being and passing away, nothing is found in them but what is altogether body and bodily. But anyone who should observe the nature of the simple elements will discover, clearer than light, a certain proportionate mediation whereby they are neither altogether body — although it is by their breaking up and coming together that natural bodies subsist — nor altogether without corporeal nature since from them all bodies flow forth and are resolved into them again ; and again, in relation to the other, upper, extreme, they are not altogether spirit since they are not altogether detached from the corporeal extreme, and not altogether not spirit since they receive the occasions of their existence from reasons which are altogether spiritual. Not without reason, then, did we say that this world possesses certain extremes which are totally distinct from each other, and intermediaries in which the concordant harmony of this universe is knit together. Let us then take the lower waters for the lower parts of this world — not inappropriately, for everything which is born into this world obtains its growth and nourishment from water. For when the moist quality is removed from bodies they wither at once and decline and are reduced almost to nothing. For the natural philosophers affirm that even the celestial bodies which are the most enflamed and fiery are nourished by the moist nature of water, and the commentators of Holy Scripture do not deny this either —, whereas reason teaches that it is the spiritual reasons of all visible things that are called by the name of the upper waters. For it is from them that all the elements whether simple or in composition flow forth as from certain mighty springs, and moistened by a certain intelligible virtue reach their disposition. Nor is Scripture silent, but declares : “And the waters that are above the heavens praise the Name of the Lord.” For although someone understands this to refer to the Heavenly Powers, this should not conflict with the interpretation given above, for the ways of interpreting the Divine Oracles are manifold.

So God said that in the midst of these waters was made the firmament, that is, the nature of the simple elements which transcends the visible bodies by as much as it is surpassed by [their] reasons, and as much as it receives from the natures that are above it, so much it distributes to those that are below, while as much as it takes back from those that are below, so much it restores to those that are above, returning to them everything that flowed down from

them ; and it is this that the Lawgiver, at the prompting of the Spirit of prophecy, called the firmament.

For by its firm and indivisible simplicity it supports the abyss of the intelligible reasons, but draws back into itself the flux of mutable bodies, and especially those that are composed of the dry and the moist qualities when with the passage of time they are dissolved, and within its universal solidity keeps them from perishing. And this is a fact of which those who, by steeping themselves in philosophical studies, have gained an understanding of the transfusion of natures into one another are not unaware. [For the causes descend into the elements, the elements into bodies. When bodies are dissolved they rebound again through the elements into their causes. Bodies themselves also pass into one another. In a flood air is turned into water and water returns again into air.]

696C        So God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters”, that is: Let there be the solidity of the simple elements between the profundity of their reasons and the mutability of the bodies that are composed by the coming together of the same ; “and let it divide the waters from the waters”, that is: let it distinguish the composite bodies, extended in places, mutable in times, disposed for coming into being and passing away, from the simple reasons, without variation of times and places, free from coming into being and passing away, fixed by an immutable law. [Now, between the simplicity of the causes and that of the elements there is this difference: that that of the causes is understood apart from the nature of places and times, while this cannot be without places and times since it is contained within them ; and that that is always free from all accidents, this sometimes receives accidents, sometimes  
696D avoids them : it avoids them in the universals, it receives them in the particulars.]

27        But generally in all the works of the first six days it is to be understood that wherever Scripture relates, “God said, Let there be light, let there be firmament”, and so on for the remaining days, there is signified the [special] establishment of the primordial causes  
697A [of which the general creation was previously set forth under the name of heaven and earth] ; but wherever “And there was light, and God made the firmament, and it was made so”, the procession of the same primordial causes into their effects through the genera and species.

“And God called the firmament heaven.” According to the ἔτυμολογία of the Roman tongue, *caelum* is so called from the

picture of the stars like an engraving as Pliny holds, but according to the proper meaning of the Greek word οὐρανός as though ὀρος ἄνω, that is, “the sight from above”. Rightly then is the firmament of the universal elements called οὐρανός, that is, “heaven”, since it excels by the loftiness of its nature every composite and corporeal creature.

There are those who think that there are extremely rarefied waters above the firmament, that is, above the company of the stars. But they are refuted both by consideration of the weights and by the order of the elements. Others on the other hand argue from the paleness of the stars that there are vaporized and almost incorporeal waters above the heavens. For they say that the stars are cold, and that is why they are pale. For, as they affirm, there is no coldness where the substance of waters is absent, not considering carefully enough what they are saying. For even where fire is present in substance, there also (is) coldness. For although crystal is of a cold nature, yet no wise man would say that it lacks the fiery power, which penetrates into all bodies. So where the fiery force burns it is heat, where it does not burn it is cold; and it does not burn unless there is matter in which it may burn and which it may consume. [And] that is why the rays of the sun when they are diffused through the ethereal regions do not burn. For in the most subtle and spiritual nature they find no matter to burn. When, however, they descend into the regions of the corporeal air, they find a kind of matter on which to work, and begin to blaze, and the more they go forth into denser bodies, the more they exercise their force of burning in those things which are or can be destroyed by the power of heat. But when they rise upwards into the uppermost regions of the world which are closest to the most rarefied and spiritual nature, not finding any matter for kindling, they produce no heat, and display only the operation of illumination, and therefore the ethereal and pure and spiritual heavenly bodies which are established in those regions are always shining, but are without heat. And hence they are believed to be both cold and pale.

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Why the  
Stars are  
pale and cold

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Therefore that planet which is called by the name of Saturn, since it is in the neighbourhood of the harmonious motions of the stars, is said to be cold and pale, whereas the body of the Sun, since it possesses the middle [region] of the world — for, as the philosophers affirm, the distance from the earth to the Sun is the same as that from the Sun to the stars — is understood to occupy a kind of midway position. For it receives for its subsistence a

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the Sun

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kind of corporeality from the natures that are below it, but a spiritual subtlety from those that are above it, and draws together  
 698A into itself as it were contrary qualities from each part of the world, namely the upper and the lower, whose tension, like some balanced pair of scales, does not allow it to abandon its natural situation, permitting it neither to rise upwards because of the weight of the lower part, nor to sink downwards because of the lightness of the upper. Therefore it is seen to be of shining heat and this colour is intermediate between pale and ruddy since it receives into the even temper of its own brightness a part of the paleness of the cold stars above and a part of the ruddiness of the hot bodies below. But the planets which revolve about it change their colours in accordance with the qualities of the regions they are traversing, I mean Jupiter and Mars, Venus and Mercury, which always pursue their orbits around the Sun, as Plato teaches in the *Timaeus*; and therefore when they are above the sun they show a bright face, but when below a ruddy face.

698B So the paleness of the stars does not compel us to understand that the element of water is in any way above the heaven, since that paleness comes from absence of heat. But since it would take a long time to expound everything which reason deduces from nature concerning these matters, let us return to our purpose.

“And there was made evening and morning, one day.” The interpretation is the same as we gave above for the conclusion of the first day — for although the contemplation of the spiritual reasons of the world is other in the primordial causes than in the simple and universal elements, and other again in composite and particularized bodies, there is one and the same understanding of the universe of the whole world, and this explanation is to be accepted in the case of the remaining days wherever “And there was made evening and morning, one day” is introduced. Enough has been said, considering the brevity that is required, concerning the second day.

698C A. Enough surely, and likely to be true, although to many, and indeed to almost all, unknown.

N. It follows, then, that we should speak briefly about the third day. “But God said, Let the waters that are under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear, and so it was done.” Concerning the gathering together of the waters into one place the opinion which *most* commentators of this *passage of Scripture* adopt, and which they have taken *from* St. Basil the

prelate of Caesarea in Cappadocia, is known to all, for it seems to all who think [upon it] the easiest: *that which* affirms that on the third day a very rarefied and almost vaporous quantity of waters, which without limit were diffused all about the as yet formless and invisible mass of the earth, which up to now filled the spaces of the air and the ether, and which glowed in the embrace of the primitive light, was gathered together into one place. He believes that the firmament had been made in its midst on the second day, and thinks that above it the upper part of the waters was suspended, but the lower diffusions of the above-mentioned abyss were collected into one, that is, were gathered *within* the bounds of the ocean which encloses them by its shores, so that the dry land might appear and a place might be provided for the air and the ether. But this opinion, if the truth be consulted, appears shaky and inconsistent for many reasons and to be based on altogether false fancies. For we follow St. Augustine in not believing or judging that it is in accordance with the truth that that earthly mass was created before everything else, or that that abyss was diffused all about it and that then the firmament was made in the midst of the waters, then the waters that remained below the heaven were collected into one place, or that any of these things came before any other in place or in time. For all these things and the nature of the rest of the visible things were established all together and at once [ordained and constituted] for their own times and places, and in no case did the generation of any one of them into forms and species, quantities and qualities, precede by temporal intervals the generation of any other, but that they proceeded simultaneously, each according to its genus and species and indivisible particulars, from their eternal reasons in which they subsist as essences in the Word of God. For the sixfold quantity of the six first days and their intelligible division is understood to refer to the causes of established things and of their first downrush simultaneously into the initial constitution of this world; and that which was made at once and all together by the Creator is distinguished, in the perfection of the number six, [not by a temporal but by an intelligible division] by the Holy Spirit through the Prophet so that through the power of that number the perfection of the divine work might be indicated. [For this number is completed by its parts, nor does its whole exceed the parts nor the parts the whole.] For as the voice precedes the word not temporally but causally — for the word is made from the voice as a formed body is made from formless matter — so from causes as yet unknown and, so to speak, lacking visible shape, the establishment of all visible

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things, without the intervention of intervals of times or places, is simultaneously brought forth into the forms and numbers of places and times, and as He Who made the world from formless matter did not take the matter from which He made it from elsewhere, but from Himself and in Himself [both took it and made it], so He neither sought for places outside Himself in which to make nor looked for times within the intervals of which He might carry out His work, but in Himself He made all things, and He is the Place of all things and the Time of times and the Age of ages, Whose operations are simultaneous. For all things were made in the twinkling of an eye. For even those things which have received and  
 699D do receive and shall receive their generation at distinct intervals along the paths of times are made at once and all together in Him in Whom both past and present and future are at once and all together and one.

Having, then, rejected the aforesaid opinion, we ask of what kind were the waters under heaven which were gathered together into one place, and what is that one place. For the sensible waters which are commonly called by the name of sea or abyss or ocean, as soon as they had gushed forth from their hidden causes, made their  
 700A appearance in their proper form and quantity and quality in their place, that is, between earth and this air which adjoins the earth, bound within their shores, some flowing secretly in different directions in the bowels of the earth as in the veins of some great body, some covering openly its surface, and in the places where they had been dispersed when they did not have one place proper to themselves, to which having later become attached, they do not overstep the defined limits. For the four principal bodies of the world composed from the four simple elements, I mean earth *and* water, air and ether, with all the things that are made in them and from them at once and all together received their forms and places and individualities and times and extensions and differences and  
 700B properties, their measures also and their weights and everything which in them is perceived or surpasses the sense and is understood or eludes the understanding. But if anyone offers physical reasons for these things, because they cannot be comprehended by the corporeal sense by those who only consider sensible things, he will [either] be treated with contempt as though he were talking nonsense or will be thought to be speaking allegorically because they do not know how to distinguish nature from [its] motions. For physics considers the substantial reasons of nature, but ethics her motions whether they be rational or irrational.



A. Pray expound whatever seems to you likely to be true concerning the question to be solved without fear of anyone, whatever his attitude may be, whether dazzled by the light of truth he does not understand what you say, or consumed with the poison of envy he treats you with contempt, or is disposed to quarrel with you out of zeal for his former opinions.

N. After the account of the constitution of the world, that is, of its two extreme parts which are dissimilar from each other, I mean of the incorporeal and simple reasons after which it was established, and the composite bodies which are subject to coming into being and passing away and to places and to times — extremities which for reasons already given are called by the name of waters — and of the mediation of the four elements which have received the name of firmament or heaven, the attention of the Prophet seems to descend to the consideration of the same lowest part of all things, namely, of perishable bodies, as though to a third contemplation of established nature. For first he gave a general description of the procession of the primordial causes into their effects from the unknown and hidden recesses of nature as though from a kind of darkness into the light of the manifold forms, clear and manifest to the intellects or senses of those who contemplate them, then, considering in a second observation the threefold establishment of the world, namely, in its reasons, in the universal elements, and in the particular and composite bodies, he arrived at the contemplation of the soluble and perishable bodies themselves which occupy the lowest place of the whole creature.

Since, then, all bodies which are composed from the coming together of the four simple elements, extending from the greatest to the smallest, are considered in three ways — for the matter in them is regarded in one way, the form and species which by being attached to matter produces every solid and sensible body in another — for matter by itself without form produces no body because by itself it is formless, though with the addition of form it becomes a perfect body —, [in another the essence and substantial form which, like an immovable foundation, supports and contains the formed matter], it was necessary to distinguish logically *substantial form* from the [formed] matter. Now, by the greatest bodies I meant earth, water, air, and ether, and heaven, in which there is multiplied an innumerable quantity of smaller and medium-sized and minute bodies; but all of them, *that* is, the greatest and medium-sized and the smallest, are constituted out of the four most

pure and most simple elements, which are invisible in themselves, because they are dissolved into them. For no element by itself is reached by the corporeal sense. If, then, as has been demonstrated by the reasons given above, those four pure elements were worthy to be called by Scripture by the name of firmament or heaven [on account of] the simple power of their nature, it is not surprising that all bodies which are constituted from them and below them by their coming together should be signified by the name of the waters that are placed under the heaven. Not inappropriately; for they are not only mutable but are subject to coming into being and passing away.

701C For even those [bodies] which are called celestial or ethereal, although they seem to be spiritual and imperishable, yet shall necessarily come to their end in dissolution and decay because they came into being through generation and composition. But if the celestial bodies await a necessary dissolution, since Truth says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away”, and the Psalmist, “The heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall pass away”, and like [testimonies] in Holy Scripture, what must we think of the lowest bodies of the world, which are born and perish every day?

So if in every body whether heavenly or earthly or watery is also observed the inconstant *flux* of formless matter — for it is *defined thus*: *Matter* is the mutability of mutable things capacious of

701D all forms, the instability of the mutable form by which the matter itself is specified and formed — for it is the qualitative form which, when combining with matter, produces body — now, by qualitative form I mean that which by the quality and quantity it assumes becomes apparent to the corporeal senses and which, clinging to the instability of matter, is always in flux along with matter and undergoes coming into being and passing away, and through its qualities and quantities receives increases and decreases and succumbs to the many and various vicissitudes which come upon it from without from the quality of places, airs, waters, victuals, and similar chances — does it not seem likely and to accord with right reason that that mutability of matter with that qualitative form which, cleaving to it, endures the same storm of incessant *and turbulent* inconstancy, should be signified by the figurative name of the waters that lie beneath the heaven of the simple elements; while the substantial form or species which immutably subsists in its genus and never experiences the mutability of the body which is composed of matter and qualitative form — for the substantial form does not *begin* with the body [although it is born in the body], *without* which

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it abides as an essence by itself in its genus, nor does it perish with the body, since no essence and power and operation can undergo either the destruction or change of destructible and changeable things <being consolidated> by the proper supports of its nature — is not inappropriately called by the word “dry”, that is, earth? 702B

So “let the waters which are under the earth be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear”; for unless the contemplating mind first assembles the fluctuating inconstancy of matter and the form attached to it, like turbulent waves, into one place in the intelligence — for matter and the form attached to it can be combined under a single meaning since they produce a single body — that substantial form which is always stable by reason of the natural firmness of its nature will not become apparent to the mind’s eye. For as the diffusion of the waters covers the earth so that it is not apparent to the corporeal senses, so the mutability and innumerable multiplicity of perishable bodies conceals the stability of the form which underlies them from the intellectual observation which contemplates the nature of things so that it is not considered by itself, clearly distinct from the bodies; and as when the waters recede and are collected from all sides into their beds the shores begin to appear far and wide, bare and dry and solid, so when the inconstancy of perishable things is separated by the mind’s observation from the imperishable natures in uninterrupted contemplation, soon the immutable and most beautiful firmness of the [substantial] forms and species will become manifest in their genera to the mind’s gaze. 702C

Now, by dry land is meant the stability of the substantial forms; not inappropriately, since it is bare and free from the covering of all the accidents. For every form and species considered in the simplicity of the genus in which it subsists is altogether free from the encountering of accidents, while the bodies which they underlie are capable of receiving all accidents. 702D

But concerning the substantial and ever-abiding form and concerning that which is mutable because of its association with the quality and quantity of matter, enough has been said in the First Book, as I think, and now a brief review of them must be made so that no doubt may remain in the readers. The substantial form is that by participation in which every indivisible species is formed, and it is one in all and they are all in the one, and neither is it multiplied in things that are multiplied nor diminished in their reduction. For that form, for example, which is called “man” is no 703A  
Concerning  
the Substan-  
tial Form

greater in the infinite multiplication of human nature into its indivisible species than in that unique and first man who became the first to partake of it, nor was it less in him than in all whose bodies are multiplied out of him, but in all it is one and the same and in all it is equally [whole], and in none does it admit any variation or dissimilarity. The case is the same with all substantial forms; in horse, in ox, in lion, and in the other animals, in trees also and in crops a like rule is established.

Concerning  
the Material  
Form

But that form which is joined to matter so as to constitute body (is) always varying and changeable and dispersed among diverse differences by accident. For it is not from natural causes that the manifold differences of visible forms proceed in one and the same substantial form, but they come from without. For the dissimilarity of men one from another in feature, size, and quality of their several bodies, and the variety of custom and conduct result not from human nature, which is one and the same in all in whom it exists, and is always most like itself and admits no variety, but from the things which are understood about it, namely from places and times, from generation, from the quantity and quality of their diets, their habitats, the conditions under which each is born, and, to speak generally, from all things which are understood about the substance and are not the substance itself. For that is simple and uniform and is susceptible to no variations or compositions.

28 Whosoever therefore by the operation of reason can separate all external things whatsoever that are understood or perceived about the proper substance of the individual forms [that is, about the indivisible and most specific species of each form, for instance, of man, of horse, of ox, of fish, of bird, of crops, of trees], which are changeable and always in flux as though by some flood of many waters, from that inward substance itself about which they revolve while itself is firmly fixed in the unchangeable tenor of its nature, and gathers them together into one place, that is, includes them within the bounds of one and the same definition, saying, "Everything which is either understood or perceived about its proper substance is varying and changing and covers it over with its waves so that it can scarcely be distinguished what it is"; is being commanded by divine admonitions to gather the waters which are under the heaven together into one place so that the dry land may appear, that is, so that the hidden substantial form about which the waves of the accidents are in turmoil may clearly appear before the gaze of the intellects which discern the nature of things. But on the

subject that for all things that can be defined there is a common place or proper definition there has been enough discussion, as I think, in the First Book.

“And God called the dry land earth and the gatherings of the waters He named seas.” By the duplication of words in the works of the three primordial days, as on the first He called the light day and the darkness night, on the Second God called the firmament heaven, on the third God called the dry land earth and the gathering together of the waters seas, is signified, I think, the twofold way of regarding the whole creature. For one and the same thing is made known by the investigations of contemplation in one way in its causes, in another way in its effects. 704B

“And God saw that it was good.” God’s seeing is the creation of the whole universe. For for Him it is not one thing to see and another to do, but His seeing is His Will and His Will is His operation. But it is right that everything that God sees is good. For the Divine Goodness is the cause of all good things, nay indeed, is itself all good things. For nothing is good in itself, but in so far as it is good it is good by participation in that Good which alone is substantial good in itself. For “no one is good save God alone”. So “God saw that it was good”, that is: He saw Himself (as) the Good in all things. For God sees nothing but Himself [because outside Himself there is nothing and everything that is within Him is Himself] and *His seeing is simple, and it is formed from nothing else than from Himself.* Concerning God’s Vision 704C

“And He said, Let the earth bring forth the flourishing and seed-bearing vegetation and the fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, and let the seed in it be over the earth.” In these words the Prophet records the creation of the power of the crops and the trees in their primordial causes, and this power is usually named by the Holy Fathers the force of the seeds, in which that species of soul which is called the nutritive and auctive exerts its operation, namely by administering the generation of the seeds and by nourishing the things that are generated and by bestowing upon them growth through the numbers of places and times. And, because everything that makes a visible appearance in the nature of things receives the original causes of its generation from nowhere else but from the hidden recesses of the natural and substantial form which we said above was signified by the word “dry land” or “earth”, it is therefore written: “Let the earth bring forth flourishing vegetation”, etc., as though it were openly said: Let the seminal force of crops and trees, which is causally created in the inward reasons of 704D

705A substances, proceed through generation into sensible forms and species; and this procession of the primordial causes into their effects is set forth in the words of Scripture which follow: "And so it was done, and the earth brought forth the flourishing and seed-bearing vegetation after its kind and the fruit-bearing tree and each thing that possesses seed after its species." You see how the divine Scripture reveals most clearly the genera and the species in which there subsist causally and invisibly whatever things break forth through generation in quantities and qualities into the knowledge of the corporeal senses?

But if it seems to anyone that this account which we have given to the best of our ability of the three first days is not in accordance with history but with the laws of allegory, let him carefully consider the fourfold division of wisdom.

29           And first is *πρακτική*, practical; second *φυσική*, natural; third *θεολογία*, which discusses God; fourth *λογική*, rational, which shows by what laws each of the other three parts of wisdom should be discussed. One investigates the virtues by means of which the vices are replaced and are entirely eradicated; the second the reasons of natures whether in their causes or their effects; the third what should piously be thought of the Cause of all things, Who is God; but how to conduct a rational inquiry into virtue and nature and God is, as we have said, what the fourth teaches and carefully considers. To this (division) of the four aforesaid parts of wisdom he ought to apply the historical account of the establishment of things, and if he is not entirely ignorant of philosophy, he will attach it to none but the physical. And if this is so, let him look for anything that has been said by us by way of allegory and, as I think, he will not find it. For in the case of the first day we said that the procession, comprehensible to senses and intellects, of the primordial causes into their effects is signified in general by the creation of light. [Now, that the primordial causes of all things are substances established in Divine Wisdom St. Ambrose is witness when he says in his *Hexameron*, "The man who is full of knowledge", Moses, that is, "observes that the substance of things visible and invisible and the causes of things are contained in the Mind of God alone".] In the case of the second we decided, not inappropriately as *I think*, that the triple constitution of this world, made up, that is, of its reasons, and of the incomposite elements, and of the composite bodies, is described by the word "waters", and the firmament that was made in the midst of them; but we judged that the third

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consideration of this world, consisting in the separation of the things that are mutable in it from those which, protected by the support of their own nature, remain immutably in the same [state], that is, in the distinction which a logical observation draws between all the mutable accidents and the immutable solidity of the substantial forms, was what the divine Scripture intended by the gathering together of the waters and the appearing of the earth. 706A

Not unreasonably; for it is a very common practice of the Holy Oracles to signify by words which signify visible things the natural existences and reasons of invisible things, to exercise devout philosophers. Nor is this surprising; for very often they are in the habit of denoting corporeal and sensible things by the names of the spiritual and invisible. But to load the present discussion with examples of this reciprocity of metaphor, since they are many and innumerable and very well known to those who are practised in Holy Scripture, would be a long and superfluous task.

Nevertheless, let us use a few examples: "That which is born of flesh is flesh" — here the whole man born in original sin is called by the name of flesh — "and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" — the whole man reborn by regeneration in Christ is expressed by the word "spirit". And if anyone shall say, Not the whole man is born of flesh but only the flesh of man, I shall reply: Then not the whole man is born of the spirit but only the soul, and if so it follows that the grace of baptism is of no benefit to bodies. But if the whole man, namely, soul and body, is reborn in Christ and is made spirit, the whole man necessarily is born in Adam of the flesh and is flesh, and so it is concluded both that flesh is called spirit and spirit flesh. The Word of God is called flesh, and flesh the Word, and (there are) similar cases in which there is understood both *συνεκδοχή* and *μεταφορά*. 706B  
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So we did not use allegory when we said that Holy Scripture meant by the name of light the visible and intelligible forms of things, but by the expression "darkness" the substantial causes which surpass all sense and intellect and are eternally substantiated in the Divine Mind; and by the symbolic names of the waters and the firmament in their midst the triple establishment of this visible world, that is, in its causes, which St. Ambrose calls the substances of visible things precreated in the Divine Mind, and in the general elements which the Greeks call the universal *στοιχεῖα* because they fit and chime with one another [for *στοιχείωσις* is *διατύπωσις*, that is, conformation; for by their coming together all visible bodies are *Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*]

- 706D made, and therefore the Athenians call letters στοιχεῖα because by their coming together the articulated word is perfected]. Not unreasonably; for although they are considered severally in their purity and distinct from one another they appear to be contraries [for cold is the contradiction of heat, moisture of dryness], but when they mingle with one another they bring about by a kind of marvellous and inexplicable harmony the compositions of all visible
- 707A things [for actually it is not the substances of the elements that are in discord but their qualities], and these, namely the compositions, because they can be dissolved and reduced to those things by whose coming together they were brought about, are most appropriately typified by the Prophet in the phrase, “the waters that are under the heaven”. But since there are two ways of regarding these visible beings which are subject to the corporeal senses — for in one way we consider in them their sustaining and immutable substances in which they have their proper being, in another the accidents which are susceptible to increase and decrease and continuously undergo the incessant change of their restless motion —, it was necessary by intellectual discrimination to draw a distinction between the mutable and the immutable, that is, between the accidents and the substances, and to typify the mutable as waters which are, as it were, never resting and always in flux, the immutable as the solid and dry land which subsists by virtue of the stability of its nature. Therefore in all
- 707B these instances we are not treating of allegory but only of the bare physical consideration, adapting the names of sensible things to signify invisible things in accordance with a very well-established usage of Divine Scripture.

But that we should not once again seem to be holding in contempt the most venerable interpretations of the Holy Father Basil, I will briefly report what his opinion was in so far as it is given me to understand it. In his fourth Homily on Genesis he says: “Let the waters be gathered together in one gathering. Lest the water should flow in and submerge the regions that receive it and, continuously rising, flood one region after another and overwhelm the whole of the adjoining continent, it is commanded to gather itself into one gathering; and this is why, when the sea is often swollen by the winds and raises its waves to their highest pitch, just as it reaches

707C the shore, its force is broken and it falls back in spray. Wilt thou not fear Me, said the Lord, Who have set the sand as a boundary to the sea? — for it is by the weakest of all things, namely sand, that the violent invasions” of the sea “are restrained. What otherwise would



prevent the Red Sea from overrunning the whole of Egypt which is at a lower level, and from joining the sea which borders on Egypt if it were not restrained by the Creator's decree? For since Egypt is at a lower level than the Red Sea some who wished to make an artificial link between the Egyptian Sea and the Indian, in which the Red Sea is situated, were prevented from their efforts by this, both Sesostris the Egyptian who made a start with it, and later Darius the Mede when he attempted to complete it.

“I have said this in order that we may understand the power of the decree, Let the waters be gathered together in one gathering, that is: Let no (gathering) go back upon itself, but let it remain gathered together in the first gathering. Then He who said, “Let the waters be gathered together in one gathering”, has shown you that there were many waters separated in many ways. For the peaks of the mountains with their deep well-watered gullies had their gathering of water, and moreover many plains and level spaces (in no way smaller than the greatest oceans) and many hollows and valleys of one shape or another, all of them then receptacles filled with water, — all (their waters) were brought together by the divine command into one gathering of water collected from everywhere.”

By these and similar words of this author it is clearly shown that the masses of water everywhere diffused in hollow places and in the lowlands of the earth were gathered together in one gathering by the divine decree for this reason, that they should not by the piling up of their inundations cover the whole surface of the earth, but that the dry land adorned with plants and trees and rich in the different kinds of animals and girt with the most wide shores of ocean and the different seas and protected from the force of the flood tide by the sandy barriers made strong by the power of the divine ordinance should appear for the purpose of human habitation. For by the might of the divine decree the most forceful fury of the waves is bridled and repulsed from overflowing the lowlands of the earth and the places that are at a lower level than themselves. But as I said, I wished to add this to prevent anyone from saying: Why have we dared to ignore totally a famous commentator of Holy Scripture?

A. It was a wise precaution. For on no account ought we to neglect or reject the interpretations of the Holy Fathers, especially as we are not unaware that very often they put their arguments in simple terms to suit the understanding of their hearers when it is not capable of grasping the profundities of the natural reasons upon which the spiritual meaning is based; and therefore I think I should

not be speaking rashly when I say that the divine Basil was illuminated by grace from on high when he adopted a simpler explanation of the operations of the six first intelligible days than that by which he himself understood them, for he was accommodating his discourse to the simplicity of his audience. For he spoke as a preacher before his congregation, and for the sake of those whose understanding could not penetrate beyond conceiving events as disposed in space and time, he expounded, what in a profounder sense he knew to have been performed by God as a single and instantaneous act, as though it were spread over a succession of temporal intervals; as Moses, the greatest of the prophets, is himself understood to have done. For he could not narrate instantaneously what God did instantaneously. Neither can we when, groping in the darkness of our ignorance, we attempt to behold the light of truth, express in words instantaneously everything which in our minds we perceive instantaneously. For every science which in the mind of the wise man is formed as a whole can be communicated to the ears of his hearers only by being divided into parts and ordered in words and syllables and sentences which follow one another in temporal succession. Therefore we ought not to believe that the simplicity of the language which the father used in his exposition reflects a simplicity in his understanding. For who will be so bold as to rebuke one of the luminaries of theology when he does not know how much of the light he retained within himself and how much he wished to mete out to the less proficient? Nor would I find it easy to believe that this great teacher, so full of the power of wisdom, would have understood or considered that the enormous mass of the earth remained shrouded on all sides by the infinite floods of the abyss for any interval of time after its first creation and then, after the space of two temporal days had passed, was at the beginning of the third day stripped, as it were, of the abyss which was covering it, being collected together into a gathering. For the most blessed Basil would have clearly seen, as I think, that all these things, and everything else which the divine Scripture relates concerning the operations of the six primordial days are distinguished by the reasons in accordance with which they were established and accomplished simultaneously, without any temporal interval, by the divine decree, and brought forth into their species.

[Should we understand any differently his teaching in the Ninth Homily of his Hexameron? "Understand", he says, "the Word of God running through creation, setting forth at that moment and

operating until now and reaching to the end, when the world will be consummated, and as a ball when it is propelled by someone, if it is received by a downward slope, and by suitable conformation and convenience of the ground, rolls downhill and does not come to rest until the levelness of the plains receives it, so the nature of existing things, moved by one decree, runs through the creation that consists in generation and decay, preserving the sequences of kinds by means of likeness until it reaches the limit of its descent. For it makes horse the successor of horse, lion of lion, eagle of eagle, and sends forth each of the animals protected by continuity of succession until the end of the universe.” [Consider the force of the simile. The Word of God, he says, ever in act and in motion, runs through all things from the beginning of creation to the end of the universe. For by one decree He makes together and at once one nature of things and moves it into genera and species like a ball which rolls down a slope and does not stop until it comes, as it were, to rest at the end of the universe. So the Word of God is one; by one decree it ordains the coming into being of the one nature of existing things which it both established and simultaneously led forth into its proper forms. For as it was by one decree, albeit repeated six times by the Theologian, that He created simultaneously the nature of all things, so that nature simultaneously begins to flow into all creatures, and no creature is prior to any other by any spatial or temporal number or interval.]]

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N. Justly and rightly do you call him a great man, and we must not think of him as anything else. So, when the mutability of the accidents is beautifully distinguished from the stability of substance, the multiple power of the latter when it breaks out visibly into the diverse species is typified by the crops and trees. For it is in accordance with nature that every species is contained within its genus, and every genus within substance. Moreover, every substance disseminates its power through the genera into their proper forms and species. And the whole of this is administered, in accordance with the divine decree, by the life which operates in the seeds. [And] so it is not unreasonable that the natural philosophers should call plants and trees animals fixed in place. For they are animate bodies which increase through the intervals of places and times but remain fixed in the places in which they grow.

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And be it noted that as the gathering together of the waters cannot stand by itself unless it is sustained by the mass of the earth, whether it flows within through hidden channels or without through

That accidents cannot remain static

710B exposed floods, or remains stagnant in ponds and lakes, so the flood  
 without of accidents cannot be held except when it is sustained by substance,  
 substance whether they remain concealed in the recesses of the subject as in the  
 case of qualities and quantities in their causal relations or break  
 forth so as to become manifest in some matter as in the case of  
 corporeal masses which are decked in various colours, or remain  
 stable like the forms and shapes which when attached to the  
 mutability of matter produce visible bodies appropriate to their  
 particular conditions, and gather together so as not to be suddenly  
 dissolved and, abandoning the form which contains them, fall away  
 and flow back into their mutability. But let us not linger more over  
 such matters, but turn to the fourth consideration of the constitution  
 of the world.

710C 32 A. So the order of our discussion requires. For if anyone  
 wishes to investigate every single problem that such matters suggest  
 for inquiry and solution, his time will run out before he can reach  
 the end of all the things that would need to be discussed and  
 thoroughly examined.

N. After the account, then, of the formation of the two inferior  
 parts of the visible world, namely earth and water, and the  
 consideration of their instantaneous formation without any temporal  
 interval by the divine decree in their genera and species, and of their  
 restriction to fixed places and within fixed boundaries, had been set  
 forth, the divine Cosmographer at once turns the attention of his  
 mind to the constitution of the superior parts, I mean air and fire, of  
 which he says: "And God said, Let there be luminaries in the  
 710D firmament of heaven and let them divide the day and the night and  
 let them be for signs and times and days and years and let them  
 shine in the firmament of heaven and illuminate the earth, and it  
 was done." You have heard the general establishment of all the  
 luminaries of the firmament of heaven in the primordial causes  
 before every day and time and place; hear the procession of the  
 same into their effects, multiplied into their proper forms, dispersed  
 at spatial intervals, revolving in their temporal courses, linked  
 711A together by their stable motion and mobile stability. "And God  
 made two great luminaries, the greater luminary to preside over the  
 day and the lesser luminary to preside over the night, and the stars",  
 and the other things which *Scripture records* about the operations of  
 the fourth day. *About the firmament* we gave what seemed to us a  
 likely account *when we were speaking of the second day*. For the  
 firmament which was created in the midst of the waters was not

other, as I think, than that in which the series of celestial luminaries was created on the fourth day. For if it were another, Scripture would not perhaps have refrained from mentioning it but would have said: Let there be luminaries and a firmament of heaven, as it said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters". Since, however, it did not say, Let there be a firmament, but "Let there be luminaries in the firmament", it is plain to see that the firmament which on the second day was created in the midst of the waters and that in which the stellar luminaries were subsequently, not in time but in the disposition of the prophetic vision established, is one and the same. 711B

Since, then, according to the philosophers, there are three very great bodies in the world, of which one, the lowest and middle part of the whole world, like the centre of a circle or sphere, is called by the divine authority "dry land" or "earth", specified by its separation from the waters which cover it and adorned with the most fair variety of plants and trees, whether one shall understand the words "earth" and "waters" in their simpler sense as signifying this visible mass which is situated in the world surrounded by the girdle of ocean, or in their profounder meaning which distinguishes substance from accidents, and the terms "plants" and "trees" as these sensible adornments in which in summer time the surface of the earth is clad, which by the force of their seeds burst forth on to the earth to which they are attached by their roots, nourished and fattened by moisture, or see them for the intelligible forms which proceed from the inner and natural recesses of substance as plants and trees grow out of the earth — for in every sensible body we have one way of regarding with the corporeal senses the mass of its quantity which forms the base of its qualities, another of understanding with the keen mind its invisible substance and the proper species which subsist in it — in accordance with which the numbers of all visible [and invisible] things are multiplied, their universality brought together, their individuality preserved — the Prophet turns his attention to the consideration of the other two very great bodies of the world. 711C

"Let there be luminaries", he says, "in the firmament of heaven." You remember, as I think, what we took this expression "firmament established in the midst of the waters" to mean when we were discussing it? 711D

A. I remember it clearly, unless my powers of recollection fail me. For we agreed that nothing was more likely than that this expression signified the universality of the four simple elements, 712A

which in themselves are most pure and incomprehensible to every bodily sense and are universally diffused throughout all things ; but when by their invisible motion they join together in the right proportions make all the sensible bodies, both celestial and aerial and watery and earthly, both the very great and the very small and those of intermediate size and, to speak in general terms, the whole sphere of heaven, and all things that are contained in it and within it from the highest to the lowest are made from their concourse, and whatever comes into being in the succession of the ages by the changes of corruptible things proceeds from them and is resolved into them. Now these are called by the Greeks πῦρ, ἀήρ, ὕδωρ, γῆ, that is, Fire, Air, Water, Earth, after the names of the very great bodies which are composed from them.

That compo-  
site bodies  
712B  
are formed  
from the  
qualities of  
simple bodies

And here it must be noted that sensible bodies are not formed from the coming together of the substances of the elements, for these are indestructible and indissoluble, but from their qualities when these are mixed in due proportion. Now, it is very well known that the qualities of the elements are four: heat, moisture, cold, dryness; and it is from these that natural philosophy declares that all material bodies, with the addition of forms, are composed. And the philosophers say that two of these, heat and cold, are active, and two, moisture and dryness, passive. For when by a certain natural coming together heat mingles with moisture and cold with dryness there takes place the procreation of all things that are born on land or in the sea, as also the Poet meant when he said, “The Ether the almighty father descended into the lap of his consort in widespread fertilizing showers”; for he gave the name of “father” to the fiery quality which is heat, and “fertilizing showers” to the watery quality, which is coldness, and “the lap of the consort” to the fertilizing property of moisture which is the quality proper to air, and by calling dryness, which is the quality proper to earth, by the name of his one wife he signified the earth with the grosser part of the air which is contiguous to it. From this it follows that the two active qualities, heat I mean and coldness, which are contrary to one another, when they are joined with the two passive qualities, that is, moisture and dryness, which are opposite to one another, bring about the birth and growth of all things that are born in land and on water. And if anyone finds it strange that coldness, although it is the property of water, descends from the higher parts of this air into the lap of the dryness of earth, let him understand that the waters that are suspended in the clouds are colder than those of the seas and the

712C

712D

running rivers. But if anyone should dispute this and ask, Why then do many philosophers, as St. Augustine testifies, assert that fire and air are active but water and earth passive, if water, being cold, when mingled with the dryness of earth, is the active and not the passive element in the seeds, he can be given the sufficient answer that water is cold and moist, but it derives the moisture from the air while the coldness it derives from itself; and it is the quality which it takes from its neighbouring element that is subject to the action of the hot, whereas that quality which is its own is always in act in the seeds. [For which of those who are well versed in the reasons of nature does not know that neither pure heat alone, without any admixture of coldness, nor pure coldness alone, without some mingling of heat, effects the generation of any body; or that no body can be brought to birth by natural passion either from moisture alone or from dryness alone unless each is tempered with the other?] *But* it is clearly not necessary to delay longer over these matters, which are the province of mundane philosophy. Therefore having made these few introductory remarks concerning the four qualities of the four universal elements which, since they occupy a position intermediate between the primordial causes and composite bodies, were given the name of firmament, I see that we must now hasten on to the explanation of the luminaries that are constituted in it.

N. You see correctly. If, then, the four most simple and most universal elements of the world are called by the name of firmament, what do you think? Are those four, in their diffusion everywhere throughout all bodies, whether etherial or aerial or watery or earthly, so connected with one another that it is impossible to find any sensible body in which the confluence of all of them is absent, or do some flow together from some but not all from all?

A. This question is very easily answered, for it has been raised by the natural philosophers and has been reasonably solved. For they say that within the circuit of the sensible world there can be no body extended in the dimensions of length, breadth, (and) height in which the nature of the four elements cannot be understood even if it is not visibly manifest. For as everything in them which is perceptible to the bodily sense receives the matter for its constitution from no other source than the mutual concourse of the qualities of the four elements, so a rational investigation finds that everything in them, in so far as they are bodies, is nothing else but the coming together in a single form of the same simple and indivisible

elements. Now, I inserted the words, “in so far as they are bodies”,  
 713D lest anyone should suppose that we were here touching upon or  
 treating of the substances of things or their genera or species or that  
 vital principle which is said to animate and nourish all bodies in  
 which vital motion is recognized. For these things are, and are  
 understood to be, outside the whole sphere of corporeal nature, and  
 are the things without which there can be no corporeal nature either  
 of those things which are incomprehensible to the corporeal senses,  
 such as those four elements we are now discussing, or those which  
 are comprehensible, as are the concourses of the various qualities  
 714A which effect the visible constitution of material things.

Thus, although some of the qualities are more evident in certain  
 bodies than others, yet there is one and the same assemblage of the  
 universal elements, measurable together as a single form, in all. For  
 the Divine Mind held an impartial balance between two diametrically  
 opposed extremes when he weighed the body of the whole world — I  
 mean between heaviness and lightness, between which all the visible  
 bodies of moderate weight are suspended. Therefore all bodies, to  
 the extent that they participate in heaviness, are receptive of the  
 earthly qualities, namely solidity and stability, but to the extent that  
 they draw upon lightness, participate in the celestial qualities, I  
 mean emptiness and mutability; while the intermediate bodies  
 which hold the balance between the two extremes possess these  
 qualities in equal proportion. Now, in all of the four universal  
 elements there is one and the same motion and stability and  
 receptivity and possessiveness.

That the  
 714B diversity of  
 bodies de-  
 pends on the  
 diversity of  
 their partici-  
 pation in  
 qualities

That the  
 simple ele-  
 ments are  
 distributed  
 in equal  
 measure in  
 the sensible  
 world

N. Well answered. For all the physicists agree in this. Therefore  
 the four very pure elements which are called by the divine authority  
 by the name of “firmament” are everywhere throughout the whole  
 sensible world in equal measure and concourse.

A. It has already been granted, and proved by reason. To this  
 too the meaning of the Greek names is witness. For πῦρ, fire, is so  
 called, as I think, because it penetrates all things through their  
 pores, that is, their hidden channels. For there is no body from  
 which fire cannot be struck when drawn forth from some kind of  
 collision. For even the friction of the waves emits sparks, nor would  
 they run at all if they were without heat. What shall I say of colours,  
 which without doubt proceed from the nature of light? Do we not  
 see that they cover the surfaces of all bodies? Air, that is, breath, is  
 (so) called because it breathes through all things. For there is no  
 sensible nature which the very subtle air cannot penetrate; which we  
 714C



can prove from smells and sounds. For you will not find a body which does not give back some smell to those that smell it or some sound to those that strike it. "Υδωρ, that is, water, is (so) called as it were εἶδος ὁρώμενον, that is "seen form". For there is no corporeal thing from whose surface when polished by some friction some image cannot be reflected. Earth is called ἄχθος from its weight. For there is not a body which does not seek its natural place by the measure of its weight, whether it verges towards the centre of the world or towards the extremes. Nor is this interpretation contradicted by that other name [for earth] which is γῆ, for literally this [means "valley"]. For the valley of every creature is the place to which it is confined by its proper definition. So when you look at any body, if you perceive in it the light of colour, understand the presence of fire ; if sound, whether natural or artificial, the presence of air ; if some image reflected whether naturally or artificially from a flat surface, the presence of the watery element — for when it is not reflected from it, the fault lies with effort, not with its nature — ; where (you see) any tendency towards stability, whether erect or prone, the presence of the earthly element ; and there are many other proofs in nature by which the inseparable concourse of the four elements in all composite bodies always and everywhere is recognized without any doubt.

N. What you have said seems to me to be reasonable and likely. Therefore that which is written, But "God said, Let there be luminaries in the firmament of heaven", we ought to understand in such a way as though it were openly said, Let there be stellar bodies, clear and bright, in the four elements that are diffused everywhere, (and let them be) composed from their qualities. For the subject bodies in them, occupying their allotted places, mean one thing, the brightness that shines from them everywhere throughout all the zones of the world means another. For the white object is one thing, the whiteness another nor are the bright and brightness the same ; the one is the subject, the other accident. Therefore, by the divine decree by which it was commanded, "Let there be luminaries in the firmament of heaven", the vehicles of light, as St. Basil calls them, by which it might be carried about the circuit of the world at given intervals of time, were made.

And see how providentially Scripture speaks. It did not say, Let there be a greater luminary and a lesser luminary, but, "Let there be luminaries." For it had a general expression for the establishment of all the celestial bodies that shine down upon the earth, of which

715C while some are set at no great distance from the earth, like the moon which, according to Pythagoras, is 126,000 stades above the mass of the earth, and is therefore said to be in the earth's vicinity and often by entering its shadow (and) being bereft of the light of the sun, suffers a loss of brilliance (and that interval which separates the moon from the earth the philosophers call a tone, that is, interval with proportionate quantity; for those who are learned in the harmony of sounds speak of tones in two ways: for they call tones both the "diastemata", that is, the intervals of sound, and the "analogiae", that is, their proportional relations) — others (are set) in the midst of the universe, such as the sun and all the planets that revolve about him; others at the outermost parts of the universe, as are the choirs of the fixed stars.

715D 33 A. Concerning the orbits and intervals between the celestial and very brilliant bodies the opinions of the natural philosophers are many and varied and have never been surely reconciled as far as I can see; and therefore if you have any view about such things which is likely and conformable to reason, do not delay in explaining it to me.

N. You are leading us on a long journey when you know that we should rather hurry on to what remains to be said of the operations of the six days, and when the time has come to put an end to this long book — furthermore, you are inquiring into matters concerning which there exists hardly any opinion based on reason or fully enunciated by any of the philosophers — not, as I think, because they did not understand (it) — in that case it would not be right to call them physicists [or philosophers] — but because none of those whom we have read up to now seems to give, clearly and without uncertainty, a satisfactory account of the reasons of these matters. But I shall not refuse to reveal to you something which is likely from what they have written [(though) sparingly] and demonstrated by sound arguments (and) practical experiment concerning the distance between the earth and the moon.

716A

For it has been calculated from (observation of) the moon's eclipse without any error <as they say> that the moon is distant 126,000 stades from the earth. For the earth's shadow, which they call night, nature herself extends far enough to reach the moon. *For* her orb would not suffer the loss of its light if it did not pass within the area of the shadow which thus deprives her of the sun's radiance, and so it is deduced without any ambiguity that the distance of the moon from the earth is equal to what reason teaches us is the

716B

length of the shadow of night. Now the shadow of the night extends as far as the circle of the moon ; therefore plain *reason teaches* that the night is projected 126,000 stades upward. But a more careful investigation is required to place beyond doubt the grounds on which it is argued that the moon is distant 126,000 stades from the earth.

A. Just so ; for as yet no satisfactory reason has shed any light on this question for me.

N. Observe carefully, then, [the findings of the philosophers] which seem likely to me to be true concerning these matters. [For] from readings taken from the gnomon, that is, sundial, they both inquired after this distance with subtlety and discovered it with certainty ; of whom the most learned in every geometrical and astronomical calculation is said to have been Eratosthenes. *Now*, scaphia are circular vessels of bronze which indicate the passage of hours from the height of a rod that is set up in the midst of their base. This rod is called a gnomon, and from it as centre lines are drawn to the rims of the vessels, and these lines divide the whole circle of the sundial into twenty-four segments, that is to say, into the twenty-four intervals of hourly duration through which the circumference of the whole celestial sphere revolves about the earth until it returns to the position of the natural horizon which it held on the previous day. Therefore the aforesaid Eratosthenes by careful observation of the movement of the rod's shadow through the segments of the sundial came to a clear understanding that the movement of the shadow through the hourly intervals about the rod of the sundial was proportionate [to the circuit of the night through the same hourly intervals about the earth's circumference], so that whatever is observed in the vessels of the sundial [which represents the sky] by analogous contemplation may be understood of the motion of the heavenly bodies. Thus, at the Vernal Equinox the length of the rod's shadow is equal to half the length of the gnomon on Meroe, which is an island in the Nile, and at Syene, a city of Egypt. But the diameter of the whole circle of the sundial is also equal to half (the length of) the rod, and therefore both the shadow [of the rod at the Equinox] is (equal in length to) the diameter of the sundial ; and, because every diameter is doubled by [the very] sphere or circle of which it is the diameter, the shadow of the rod must describe a circle that is double (its own length). For it is doubled by the very circle or sphere of which it constitutes the centre. For of the number ten also the number five is, as it were, a kind of diameter of a circle.

So, having clearly understood the principle of the sundial, Eratosthenes, a man of cunning ingenuity, calculated by subtle investigation the circumference of the whole earth. And first he recognized that the circumference of the equinoctial circle, which divides the whole of the globe of the earth and the whole sphere of heaven into two equal parts, is made up of 360 sections, of which *he satisfied himself* beyond doubt that a twelfth part, that is every 30 sections, takes two hours to rise or to set [or to vacate the region through which it moves]. Thus, what the shadow indicates to the sense on the sundial reason shows to be the effect of the unceasing motion of the celestial bodies; for the shadow of the rod would not pass through the intervals of the sundial *if* the ethereal body with its stars did not revolve about the earth. So that which the earth's mass accomplishes in the midst of the universe the rod accomplishes in the midst of the sundial, and as the rod's shadow is carried about itself around the circuit of the scaphium, so night, which is earth's shadow, is borne about the earth itself around through the aerial spaces which separate the moon from the earth. Now, it is the same sun which casts the shadow from the body of the earth and from the body of the rod; as at midday at the time of the equinox in those parts of the habitable globe which are close to the equator, I mean on Meroe and at Syene, it throws from the gnomon a shadow of such length as to attain to its diameter, that is, to half (its length), or a little further, so it subtends everywhere from the whole earth's mass a shadow of such length as to reach the orbit of the moon or a little beyond, a fact which is proved by the eclipse of the moon herself. For if the earth's shadow did not sometimes extend beyond the lunar orbit, the moon herself *would* not perhaps *suffer* the loss of the sun's light. For the centre of the moon's orbit is the earth, so the philosophers say, although it is sometimes thought to increase its distance from the earth in the sign Taurus, where the zenith of its ἀψίς, that is, its altitude, is thought to be [and therefore it should not be thought that eclipses are caused by irregularities in its orbit around the earth, but by the length of the shadow].

Therefore, Eratosthenes, after investigating the altitude of the earth's shadow by comparing the gnomon to its shadow and finding that it does not exceed the earth's diameter — for the depth of the night is equal to the girth of the earth when this is measured on the equator — first sought out the earth's circumference so that from it he could calculate its diameter — for once you know the circumference of a circle or a sphere it is easy to calculate accurately the

line which divides it into equal parts —, then having learnt from King Ptolemy's geometricians the size of the portion of the earth's surface between Meroe and Syene, he deduced, from the fact that at the time of the equinox the shadow at noon was similar (at both places), that a single segment measured 700 stades. Multiplying this by 360, that is, by the length of the equator, he calculated without any mistake that the circumference of the whole earth is 252,000 stades. For 700 stades multiplied by 360 gives 252,000 stades; and by dividing this number into two equal parts he found the half of it, that is, 126,000 stades in the diameter of the earth and in the distance from the earth to the moon. The circumference of the earth  
718B

And note the prevalence in all these calculations of the perfect numbers, *namely* 6 and 7 and 8, which by nature constitute the chief symphonic proportion of music which is called the diapason. For this has eight notes, seven intervals, and six tones. For the number six multiplied by itself, that is six times six, makes, 36, which if you multiply it by 7 thousand gives you the circumference of the whole earth. For 36 times 7 thousand or 7 (thousand) times 36 makes 252,000 stades, the number which comprises the girth of the whole earth. But if you multiply 6 by the length of its diameter, which is 3, you will get the sum of the number 18, and if that is multiplied by 7 thousand it gives the earth's diameter. For 18 times 7 thousand or 7 (thousand) times 18 makes a hundred (and) *twenty* six thousand, the number [of stades] which *gives* both the diameter of the earth and the interval between the moon and the earth. 718C

Moreover it is not unreasonably declared by the philosophers that the interval between the moon and the earth and the girth of the whole earth [are contained] in the proportion of a tone. For 18 times 14,000 stades makes 252,000, *namely*, the circumference of the earth, while 7,000 stades multiplied by 18 gives the earth's diameter and its distance from the moon. But the ratio of  $10 + 8$  to  $10 + 6$ , which is twice 8, gives one tone, for the greater number contains the lesser plus the eighth of it, which is 2. For according to the theory of harmony  $10 + 8$  stands in the same ratio to  $10 + 6$  as 9 to 8, *namely* the epogdoos. For every greater number *which contains* a lesser [plus] the eighth part of the lesser is called *in arithmetic* an epogdoos, in music a tone. 718D

So within these ratios are contained the circumference of the globe, its diameter, and the distance from the earth to the moon and the depth of the night. But if you ask why both Pliny Secundus and Ptolemy in his geographical (work), as Martianus writes, assign no 719A

more than 500 stades to each degree, a number which if multiplied by 360 will not be able to contain the circumference of the earth as calculated by Eratosthenes, I do not find it easy to answer your question. For should I admit that Eratosthenes gave a greater measurement of the size of the earth, but Pliny and Ptolemy a smaller, it will not seem probable that there should be so serious a disagreement among the highest authorities [in natural philosophy] that some should maintain that the girth of the earth is contained  
 719B within 252 thousand stades, others within 180 — for 360 times 500 stades gives 180,000 stades — figures which differ from one another by 72,000 stades; especially as those wise and most careful inquirers into nature are in agreement as to the number of degrees in the equinoctial or zodiacal circle; for all say unanimously 360.

Should I say that he, I mean Eratosthenes, used a shorter stade for his measure and thus allowed a greater number of stades for each degree, while they (used) a longer (stade), and therefore (allowed) a smaller number, how shall we reasonably account for this? For both sides confirm that a stade measures 125 paces. Therefore my own view is that the cause of this disagreement resides in the difference in the length of the pace. For it could happen that  
 719C two surveyors, one of taller, the other of shorter stature, would pace out a stade by longer or shorter paces respectively, so that the one would calculate the measure of a single degree by a greater number of stades, the other by a less. For who would not believe that Hercules, who is traditionally said to have been the first to have paced out the stade on Mount Olympus, gave it a measure based on paces and feet which were incomparably greater than those of others who measured the stade after him? For the length of the stade which he was the first to have measured would depend on the length of his paces and steps and feet, and the size of his feet would depend on the height of his whole stature.

Why then should it be strange if one and the same interval consisting of one and the same degree should at the same time receive a measure of 500 stades and of 700 stades, and that while in  
 719D each case the stade is measured by the same number of paces and steps and feet, the paces and steps and feet are not themselves of the same length, but are longer in some, shorter in others, so that when the stades are measured by the longer 500 will complete the space of one degree, when by the shorter, one and the same pace of one degree will contain 700?

Now, on the Greek reckoning the stade has 6 acres, 100 cubits, 125 paces, 240 steps, 400 ells, 600 feet. But when the girth of the earth's mass and the depth of the night, which has the same measurement as the earth's diameter, have been found by reasonable argument, the circumference of the moon's orbit can be quickly discovered by those who seek it; for the depth of the night multiplied by 3 gives the diameter of the lunar orbit. For 3 times 126,000 stades makes 378,000. Therefore the diameter of the lunar orbit is 378,000 stades. Now, if you multiply (by two) the diameter you will get the circumference of the whole circle as 756,000 stades.

720A

The circum-  
ference of  
the circle of  
the Moon

Now, concerning the measurement of the moon's body there is a wide variety of opinion. Thus, many say that the globe of the moon is equal in size to that of the earth, and this they seek to prove from the eclipse of the Sun, because they think that the moon can obscure the Sun's rays from the whole earth. But those who are positioned near the equator, as Martianus writes, give a more likely account and a rational proof of it from the eclipse of the Sun. For they say that at the moment of the solar eclipse the moon's shadow covers an eighteenth part of the earth, and because every body is greater than the triple cone-shaped shadow that it casts, they calculate that the body of the moon contains within its amplitude a sixth part of the earth, and therefore, since the eighteenth part of the earth is 14,000 stades, it follows that that eighteenth part multiplied by 3 gives the amplitude of the lunar globe. Now 14 multiplied by 3 makes 42; therefore 42,000 stades comprise the amplitude of the moon. For that amount of thousands of stades gives a sixth part of the earth. For 6 times 42,000 or 42 times 6,000 amounts to 252,000 stades.

720B

720C

And you will remark how the amplitudes of the moon and of the earth are contained within the reciprocal values of the numbers 6 and 7. For 6 times 7 or 7 times 6 encompasses 42, that is, the globe of the moon; and again 6 times 42 (encompasses) 252, that is, the extent of the earth, and reason has shown that all these numbers, counted in thousands of stades, clearly reveal the sum of the most perfect constitution of the natural bodies of the world. For the conformation of the number thousand as a solid cube is the symbol of all perfection. Therefore the stability of nature is signified by the number 6, its mobility by the number 7, and the constant ratio between the two by the thousand. For the mobile stability and stable mobility of all things is most perfectly established by eternal ratios.

720D

Nor is it without reason that the philosophers measured all these things in stades. For the number 5 is ἀνακαταστικὸς, that is, returning upon itself. For whenever you multiply 5 by itself it must return upon itself. Therefore the first cubic motion of 5, 5 times 5  
 721A times 5, completes the stade as 125 paces, and therefore it is not unreasonable to gather both the mobility and stability of mundane bodies from that number, which is at the same time cubic, rotatory, and returning upon itself.

In what we have said about the distances of the lower parts of the world we have been following the reasonings of the great philosophers without unhesitatingly affirming that things are as they say, but setting forth those which seem most likely to be so and more in accordance with known factors in an endeavour to satisfy your inquiries.

A. What you set forth about them does satisfy me. Let him who thinks it not sufficiently reasoned or expounded seek from others other interpretations. For the proportional principle on which the world is constituted has been discussed by various authorities in many different ways. But now that we have examined what is reasonably seen to be truth concerning the sizes and  
 721B distances of the lower bodies, I mean of the moon and the earth, I should like to hear a brief account of the ethereal regions. For no one doubts that these are the sole or principal subjects for contemplation in the divine operation on the fourth intelligible day.

N. We linger too long over the Fourth Day.

A. It will not seem too long, I think, to those who are less instructed and who are anxious to learn and who are studying natural science, should they perchance read our discussion — especially as it is not reasonable to give a rational account of the lower parts of the world while completely ignoring the higher.

N. Concerning the globe of the Sun (which holds) the balance between the heaviest and the lightest nature we have already agreed that it is eternally carried in a circular motion around the lower  
 721C regions of the world along the celestial equator.

A. We have indeed, and gave sound reasons for it, and the disposition of nature does not allow it to be otherwise.

N. Concerning its size neither the masters of profane letters nor the commentators of the divine Scriptures allow a certain answer to be given. For both Pliny Secundus in his Natural History



and St. Basil in his *Hexameron* absolutely forbid the size of the Sun to be given. For it has no shadow from which its size can be found by argument — for we should not have been able to find out the size either of the earth or of the moon if they spread no shadows which could be actually measured — and thereby the Sun's body, since it *permits* no shadow to extend to infinity but limits (them) to fixed dimensions proportionate to the bodies of which they are the shadows, shows very plainly that its (own) size is infinite. 721D

A. I do not question this either, and I do not think that anyone should question it. For a conjecture based on ocular observation does not serve where reason does not have a basis for argument. But I would ask you to expound what the philosophers think about its distance from the earth.

N. The first of all philosophers, as they say, Pythagoras gave as 722A the interval between the earth and the moon 126,000 stades; and this was later surely demonstrated from the earth's shadow and the lunar eclipse by Eratosthenes, as we have said. The same Pythagoras is said to have taught that the distance from the Sun to the moon is equal to twice this interval, but as to why he thought that, opinion is divided among many.

However, since he attempted to affirm by sure proofs that the 34 structure of the whole world both rotates and is measured in accordance with musical proportions, which the divine scripture does not deny either, for it says, “[And] who will put to sleep the concert of heaven?”, we can speculate that he said it for no other reason than to demonstrate in the intervals between the stars the 722B rational proportions of the diastemata of music. Thus, finding that the solar orbit is at the centre of the whole space that extends from the earth to the highest sphere by which all the sensibles are circumscribed, he not unreasonably thought that from earth to Sun was one diapason and from the Sun to the uttermost bound of the world was another.

Now, the modulation of the diapason is in the proportion of 2 to 1. As therefore in the diatonic scale, for example in the harmony of sounds, the double diapason is attuned to the product of twice (the proportion of) 2 to 1, [the first <diapason> ] from the principal of principals to the μέση, that is, the middle, the second from the μέση to the νήτη ὑπερβολαίων, that is, the highest note of the tetrachord, so also the whole space from the earth to the Sun is *attuned to the proportion of the diapason — for the Sun occupies the*

*central position —, and from the Sun to the twelve constellations, that*  
 722C *is, to the outermost revolution of the stars, is joined by another*  
*diapason, and therefore following calculations of what they call*  
*harmony he thought that the distance from the earth to the sphere*  
*constitutes a double diapason, and thus it was concluded that three*  
*times the diameter of the earth is equal to the interval between the*  
*earth and the sun, as it is to the diameter of the lunar orbit. Thus the*  
*diameter of the lunar orbit measures the same as the interval*  
*between the earth and the Sun. For in both cases it is 378,000 stades.*  
*Therefore by multiplying this number by 2 you will get 756,000*  
*stades for the interval between the earth and the outermost sphere,*  
*and you will remark the harmony of nature. For as many thousands*  
 722D *of stades as are in the length of the lunar orbit so many are there in*  
*the depth of the space between the earth and the Signs. For in both*  
*there are 756,000 stades.*

But if you wish to know the diameter of the solar orbit, you  
 will, by multiplying the diameter of the earth, 126,000 stades, by 7,  
 get 882,000 stades as the diameter of the circle of the Sun, and if you  
 double this number, the circumference of the same circle will  
 amount in thousands of stades to 1,764,000 stades. [But if you  
 723A require] the diameter of the whole sphere of heaven you will find it  
 by this calculation : Double the circumference of the lunar circle, i.e.  
 756,000 stades, and add the diameter of the earth, 126,000 stades,  
 and you will get the diameter of the sphere to be, in thousands of  
 stades, 1,638 [thousands], and by multiplying this number *by* 2 the  
 circumference of the whole universe is reckoned to be contained, [in  
 thousands of stades, 3,276,000 stades, so that the whole world is  
 contained in the perfection of the number six].

35 So much for the philosophical arguments that investigate the  
 cosmic distances. But if these seem to anyone superfluous since they  
 are not ratified or transmitted by the testimonies of Holy Scripture,  
 let him not rebuke us. For neither can he prove that these things are  
 not so, just as we cannot confirm that they are.

723B And although nothing definite is found in the divine Scriptures  
 concerning such measurements of the sizes and distances of the  
 bodies of the world [“For who”, asks Ecclesiastes, “has measured  
 the height of heaven and the breadth of the earth and the depth of  
 the abyss?” which I think we should understand in an allegorical  
 rather than an historical sense, for I would not say that the  
 constitution of this world lies outside the understanding of the  
 rational nature when it was for (that nature’s) sake that it was

created], yet the Divine Authority not only does not prohibit the investigation of the reasons of things visible and invisible, but even encourages it. For, *says* the Apostle, “from the creation of the world His invisible things are seen, being understood from the things that have been made”. Therefore it is no small step but a great and indeed profitable one from the knowledge of the sensibles to the understanding of the intelligibles. For as through sense we arrive at understanding, so through the creature we return to God. *For* we ought *not* like irrational animals look only on the surface of visible things but also give a rational account of the things which we perceive by the corporeal sense. The eagle sees more clearly the form of the Sun; the wise man sees more clearly its position and motion through places and times. 723C

[Suppose man had not sinned or been degraded to the likeness of the beasts; would he then be ignorant of the boundaries of this world (that is) his possession which he would most righteously govern according to the laws of nature? For he who even after his fall did not entirely lose the dignity of his nature should have been another angel to praise God in His sensible creatures. For there remains in him an impulse of the reason to seek the knowledge of things and to be unwilling to fall into error, although he does so in many things, yet not in all.] 723D

And if Christ at the time of His Transfiguration wore two vestures white as snow, namely the letter of the Divine Oracles and the sensible appearance of visible things, why we should be encouraged diligently to touch the one in order to be worthy to find Him Whose vesture it is, and forbidden to inquire about the other, namely the visible creature, how and by what reasons it *is* woven, I do not clearly see. For even Abraham knew God not through the letters of Scripture, which had not yet been composed, but by the revolutions of the stars. Was he simply regarding the appearances only of the stars as other animals do, without being able to understand their reasons? I should not have the temerity to say this of the great and wise theologian. Concerning the Lord's Vestures 724A

And if any should blame us for using philosophical arguments, let him consider God's people when they were fleeing from Egypt and [following] the divine counsel took spoils with them and were not reprehended for using those spoils — especially as those who are skilled in natural science are reprehended not because their reasoning about the visible creature is at fault, but because they have not

724B sufficiently penetrated beyond it to its Author [for they ought to have discovered the Creator from the creature, which only Plato did].

But if anyone finds it impossible to accept the measurements we have given for the bodies of the world and their distances from one another because those [bodies] are thought by many to be of a larger size than can be contained within the above-mentioned numbers of stades, let him read attentively the measurements of Noah's Ark — its length was 300 cubits, its breadth was 50 cubits, its height 30 cubits — and see how in so small a space of cubits could *be contained* seven pairs of each of the clean animals and two pairs of each of the unclean with their provender, and in addition Noah with his sons and their wives — especially *if*, as St. Augustine says, that  
724C cubit by which both the Ark of Noah and the Ark of the Testament and the Tabernacle [and the other mystical objects of the Old Testament] are measured did not exceed  $2\frac{1}{2}$  palms [and the palm was the measure from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger]. So the power of God and the basic principles of nature are more capacious than what human thought contrives.

And lest we should seem to be taking refuge in the miracles of the divine power from our inability to support our statements on reasons (drawn) from nature, I suppose you think of the earth as poised at the centre of the sphere of the world not otherwise than you see the centre at the base of some circle or globe. For the earth holds both the lowest and the middle place amongst creatures.

A. Not otherwise, but in the same way.

N. Nor the degrees of the celestial equator drawn to the earth  
724D otherwise than as lines drawn from the circumference to the centre.

A. The principle (is) the same (in both cases).

N. And although they are not of the same size on the earth as on the celestial equator, yet the direction [of the notional lines] is the same, and (the number of) the degrees is the same from end to end?

A. Absolutely.

N. You do not deny that what is understood by the degrees must equally apply to the stades?

A. On the contrary, I affirm it.

N. Then the nearer the degrees or the stades approach the centre of the earth the narrower they become, while on the other

hand the further they move away from the earth the greater do the intervals (between them) become.

A. The figure of the circle does not permit otherwise. 725A

N. What, then, do you think of those who measure the earth in degrees and stades and other intervals, those whom the Greeks call geometricians? Do you think they measured the earth foot by foot or pace by pace or by the cubit or [si]milar [measures]?

A. I should not believe that that could be easily done because of such great irregularities of mountains and valleys. [For] even the flatness of the plains is not so even that it can be measured by taking strides of equal length. [For it is because of the irregularity of its parts as well as the heaviness of its weight that the earth occupies the lowest place in nature; for the order of the elements depends on the similarity of their parts; the more like they are in their parts the higher they are in their stations.]

N. Then perhaps by the bodily eye?

A. Not even that. For sense is prone to error, and nothing should be entrusted to its judgement. For although the exterior sense does not conflict with reason except that it is affected from without, the judgement of the interior (sense), on the other hand, is very often deceived concerning the things which it receives through the body, thinking that the oar in the water is broken, (or that the single) moon or lamp or some other (source of light) is two because a deviation of the sense, that is, a splitting of the rays that are scattered from the pupil of the eye, (makes them see) double. 725B

N. How used they to measure, then?

A. [First], they say, by the geometrical rod which the Greeks call a spoke; this, by giving the cube of five paces, that is, by multiplying five by five by five, measured one stade. Now, once they had found one stade it was easy to find many stades on the plains of Egypt, which is said to be the motherland of such measurements. Concerning the geometrical rod

N. How did they manage elsewhere than in Egypt, where measurement would be difficult because of the unevenness of the ground? 725C

A. Not, they say, by foot-rules or measuring-rods but by logical argument alone, that is, by means of sundials, infallibly calculating the interval of each degree from the similarity of the shadows. For one degree, that is, one day's journey of the Sun along

the zodiacal circle, takes up as much space on the earth as the similarity of shadows on the sundial takes.

N. So they deduced the width of the degrees and stades by measuring them where they reach the earth?

A. No, that is not what they thought either, but first they measured by how many thousands of stades the highest mountains rise above the surface of the earth, for instance Olympus, whose peak they reckon to be 10 stades high, Pindus, Rhodope, Acroceraunia, Atlas; then they conceived as it were a line drawn by the  
725D reason beginning from the summits of the mountains, that extend into the regions of the air, and carried it round like the most perfect of circles, everywhere equidistant from the earth, until they had brought it back to the point from which it began, and thus from regarding the mountains obtained a clear knowledge of the circumference of the earth as level everywhere.

N. That the geometrical measurements were first discovered by such reasoning I would not deny, and it was from these that they came to see that those stades which are close to the earth are, as it  
726A were, narrow, but that as they are removed further and further away from the earth's surface towards the mountain tops they are no longer confined and no longer inadequate for encompassing the earth's mass. But as they are the same whether close to the earth or removed further from it by the aforesaid distance they suffice <for measuring the earth> if the false imaginings of irrational thought are excluded. Hence also Pliny's view that the amplitude of the earth can be measured by a rational line (drawn) by geographical theory through the peaks of the highest mountains. For there is no other way of obtaining the circular dimension of the earth.

A. Enough has been said about these matters.

N. Let us return, then, to Scripture.

A. It is high time.

N. "Let there be", he says, "luminaries in the firmament of heaven and let them divide the day from the night", as though it were said in plain language, Let the luminaries which were made in  
726B the firmament of heaven divide day and night between them, as the Psalmist makes clear when he says, "Who made great luminaries, the Sun to rule over the day, the moon and the stars to rule over the night" — not that day and night do not always exist about the circuit of the earth, but the Sun wherever it is present always has the

power of giving light, but where it is absent the brightness of the moon and stars makes the darkness of the shadows thin and lightgiving lest it should be wholly impenetrable to the eyes of the animals.

“And let them be for signs and seasons and days and years.” Here we understand “signs” not in the sense of constellations but as certain presages of good or bad weather to come which are wont to derive their value as tests from the colours of the heavenly luminaries, while by “seasons” he means the courses of the constellations in general, and their returns at certain fixed intervals of time to (take up) the same journey again at the same place, recalled by the Divine Providence in the natural revolution of days and years. 726C

“And let them shine in the firmament of heaven”; for no star suffers the eclipse of its light but all shine continuously in the ethereal regions without any overshadowing, except the globe of the moon which, when it descends into the region of the shadow, is abandoned by the Sun’s rays and seems to be obscured. Therefore he says, “And let them shine in the firmament of heaven and let them shed light on the earth, and it was made so”, that is to say, (Let them shine) in their original causes from which they have proceeded into their proper species and quantities and intervals and motions and brightnesses. So now there follows the procession of the causes into the species.

“And God made two great luminaries, a greater luminary to preside over the day”, that is, the Sun whose presence produces the day, “and a lesser luminary” — he means the moon whose size and light are incomparably less than those of the Sun — “to preside over the night”. For from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> day the moon shines all night at the time of the full moon at the equinox and for part of the night at other times. But since, when it is in the Sun’s embrace or near him on one side or the other, it is prevented from penetrating with its light the darkness, it gains help from the stars whose brightness attenuates the thickness of the shadows, he therefore said, “and a lesser luminary to preside over the night, and the stars; and he placed them”, the stars, that is, “in the firmament of heaven”, as though he had said, He fixed them in the firmament of heaven. For we understand this to refer to the choirs of the constellations, which although they revolve with the world yet ever remain fixed in the same (relative) positions; and if the world is at rest and only the choirs of the constellations revolve, as some of the philosophers 727A

contend, yet the order and range of the stars and their stable relative position remain unchanged. "That they might shed light on the earth." It is a beautiful description that Scripture gives of nature. For although men think that the heavenly luminaries shine beneath the earth, yet the reason of nature surely teaches that no nature can be lower than the earth ; for it occupies the central and lowest place  
 727B in the whole constitution of the world, and hence it is understood that there is no corporeal creature below it. Therefore all regions and bodies of the world which encompass the earth on every side, whether in motion or at rest, are naturally created above it, and that is why he said, "That they might shed light on the earth". For wherever they should shine, whether below the horizon in the lower hemisphere, as men customarily think, or above the horizon in the upper hemisphere, which is called "upper" because in it the stars are visible to men, in the natural order of things they shine over the earth.

"And might preside over day and night." This was explained above.

"And might divide the light from the darkness", that is, that they might separate night and day so that when the Sun appears it should be day, but when the moon and stars, night. And it is to be noted that that division of light and dark is not in the luminaries themselves but is for those who inhabit the earth. For (the lumi-  
 727C naries) are always shining and for them it is always day and they suffer no night ; for their abodes are incessantly illumined by their own light and that of the Sun, and no less by day than by night do they shed the grace of their brightness upon the world. Therefore it is for the inhabitants of the earth whom day and night alternately visit that the heavenly luminaries divide the light from the dark. For by their incessant revolution about the circle of the earth in one place they bestow light, in another take it away. For just as day is nothing else but the presence of light, so night is nothing else but its absence, and therefore a very bright night does not lose the name of night either since it does not altogether banish darkness.

But now, as much has been said of the Fourth Day as the need  
 727D for brevity allows, and something must be said of the Fifth Intelligible Light.

A. This is what the logical order of things requires.

36 N. "God also said, Let the waters produce the creeping thing of living soul and the thing that flies above the earth under the



firmament of heaven.” Throughout the four days of the creation of natures that have already been discussed we read of no mention of the soul either simply and absolutely or with the qualification “living”, and it is not inappropriate to ask why. Indeed, concerning this contemplation of nature there is a wide variety of opinion. For there are those who say that the elements of this world, I mean the heaven with its stars, and the ether with its planets, the air with its clouds and breaths of wind and lightnings and other disturbances, the water also and its flowing motion, likewise the earth with all its plants and trees, are not only without soul but also without any kind of life at all, and that, so they say, is the reason why nothing is introduced in the operations of the first Four Days to represent soul or life. But Plato, the greatest of philosophers, and his sectaries not only affirm a general life of the world, but also declare that there is no form attached to bodies nor any body that is deprived of life; and that life, whether general or special, they confidently dare to call soul; and the great commentators of the divine Scripture support their opinion, affirming that plants and trees and all things that grow out of the earth are alive. Nor does the nature of things permit it to be otherwise. For if there is no matter which without form produces body, and no form subsists without its proper substance, and no substance can be without the vital motion which contains it and causes its subsistence — for everything which is naturally moved receives the source of its motion from some life —, it necessarily follows that every creature is either Life-through-itself or participates in life and is somehow alive, whether the vital motion is clearly apparent in it or is not apparent but the sensible species itself shows that it is hiddenly governed [through] life. [Hear what St. Augustine says in his book *On True Religion*: “If”, he says, “we wish to know who has instituted the body, let us look for him who is most endowed with form. For every form derives from him. And who is this but the One God, the One Truth, the One Salvation of all, and the first and highest Essence from which comes everything that is in so far as it is? For in so far as it is, whatever is is good, and therefore death is not of God. For God did not create death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living since, as Highest Essence, He made to be everything that is, and that is why He is also called Essence. But death compels everything that dies not to be. For if the things that die were to die absolutely, they would undoubtedly come to nothing. But they die only to the extent that they participate less in being.” This can be said more briefly as

728A

That no body  
can be with-  
out life

728B

728C

728D follows : They die the more the less they are. Now, the body is less than any life since in so far as it remains in its form it is through life that it does so, whether that by which each individual animal (is governed) or that by which the whole nature of the world is governed.]

729A For as there is no body which is not contained within its proper species, so there is no species which is not controlled by the power of some life. Therefore, if all bodies which are naturally constituted are governed by some species of life, and every species seeks its own genus while every genus takes its origin from universal substance, it must be that every species of life which contains the numerousness of the various bodies returns to an universal life, by participation in which it is a species.

729B Now, this universal life is called by the natural philosophers the Universal Soul which through its species controls the totality which is contained within the orbit of the heavenly sphere, while those who contemplate the Divine Sophia call it the common life, which, while it participates in that one Life which is substantial in itself and is the fountain and creator of all life, by its division into things visible and invisible distributes lives in accordance with the Divine Ordinance, as this Sun which is known to the senses pours forth its rays on all around. But the way in which life reaches all things is not the same as that in which the rays of the Sun do ; for these do not penetrate all things, since there are many bodies into the interiors of which they do not enter. But no creature, whether sensible or intelligible, can be without life. For even the bodies which appear to our senses as dead are not entirely abandoned by life. For just as their composition and formation were accomplished by the administration of their proper life, so also is their dissolution and unforming and return into the things from which they originated subject to the obedience of the same. Seeds which are committed to the earth will not put on life again unless they first die ; and their death *is* the separation of *matter and form* ; and that life which quickens *the seminal force and through the seminal force* does not abandon them until they are resolved into dissolution, but ever cleaves to them, is indeed that life which dissolves them ; and at once, without any delay, begins to quicken them, that is, to call them back again to the same form. For where would that life be at the time of the body's dissolution but in the body that is undergoing dissolution ? For as it formed no part of the composition, so it is not dissolved with the dissolution, nor reborn with that which is reborn, nor does it flourish more in the whole

729C

when it is joined together than when it is divided into parts, nor greater, that is, mightier, in the whole than in the part, nor less, that is, weaker, in the part than in the whole. For [it exerts] the same control over all things.

Again, that dissolution which is called the death of the body is a dissolution for our senses [and for matter], not for our very nature, which is indivisible in itself and is always everywhere the same nor is ever separated from itself by intervals of place and time. For man does not cease to be [man].

Now, man is body and soul; but if he is always man, then he is always soul and body, and although the parts of man may be separated from one another — for soul abandons the control of the body which it had assumed after its generation, and the body, deserted by it, is dissolved and its parts return each to its proper place among the elements — yet by the reason of nature neither do the parts cease to be always inseparably related to the whole nor the whole to the parts. For the reason of their relation can never cease to be. Thus, what to the corporeal sense seems to be separated, must on a higher view of things always subsist as it was inseparably. For indeed the human body, whether alive or dead, is the body of a man. Similarly the human soul, whether it is controlling its body as gathered together in an unity or ceases to control it — as it appears to the senses — as dissolved into its parts, yet does not cease to be the soul of a man, and therefore, in this deeper insight into things, we are given to understand that it continues to govern a body distributed among the elements no less than one which is bound together in the structural unity of its members, as right reason undeniably teaches. For if the soul is a spirit which in itself is free of all corporeal grossness, and the elements also into which the body is resolved are, in so far as they subsist simply in themselves, closely akin to the spiritual nature, why should it surprise us if the incorporeal soul should control the parts of its body preserved in natures akin to itself? For it can attain to the things that are more like itself more easily than to those that are unlike. Now, the things that are unlike itself are the gross and corruptible bodies, while the things that are like it are those which are most subtle and by no means susceptible to corruption. For it is not to be believed that when the corporeal parts which composed the solid body are dissolved into those elements in which they are preserved, they do not shed their grossness and do not pass into the lightest and most spiritual qualities of the elements themselves — not that they cease

That if man  
is always  
man he is  
always soul  
729D  
and body

730A

That the soul  
is more able  
to control  
what is like it  
than what is  
unlike it

730B

altogether to be bodies, but they become as spiritual bodies as are the elements themselves. And this you can very readily prove from the example of the body when it is still alive. For some of its parts are heavy and thick with grossness, like bones, flesh, the sinews also  
 730C and the veins; also the humours which irrigate the whole bulk and nourish it and build it up — for all these are taken into the constitution of the body from the watery and earthly qualities —; but some are most light and are hampered by no weight of gravity or grossness, and whithersoever they are directed by the soul are immediately there without a moment's delay, like vision and hearing, which none of those who are sound philosophers would deny to be parts of the body deriving from fire and air. For, as St. Augustine says, there is a luminous quality in the eyes, an aerial, mobile, sonorous quality in the ears.

Concerning  
 sight and  
 hearing  
 730D For sight is a kind of light which first rises out of the fire in the heart and then ascends to the highest part of the head (namely to that part which is called by the Greeks  $\mu\eta\nu\iota\gamma\zeta$  but by the Latins “membranula”, by which the brain is surrounded and protected), having passed through certain channels to the eyebrows and the pupils of the eyes, whence in a very swift rush it leaps forth like the rays of the Sun and reaches with such speed the places and bodies that are near or stand very far off before the eyelids and the brows.

731A Again, hearing is a certain very subtle ringing which first issues forth from the *breathing* of the lungs and rises upwards to the same part of the head through its own hidden paths and, poured into the spirals of the ears, bursts forth and, mingling with the parts of the air which are close to it or further away, hastens to receive without any delay whatever resounds in it.

These parts of the body, then, which are most subtle and akin to spiritual natures, although they take their origin from the inner recesses of the thick bulk, extend so far beyond it that they are thought to lie far outside it. For sight reaches out to grasp the coloured forms of visible things, and hearing to reproduce in itself the accents of voices or other sounds which erupt from the impact with the air and which we call the forms and colours of voices. For the other three senses are seen to be contained within the limits of the body, although the sense of smell is considered to extend beyond them, not unreasonably as I think.

731B Now, all this is accomplished by the soul, which in itself is simple and is without corporeal quantity or spatial extension, in the body which it controls by its presence, and while it is itself contained

in no locality it brings to life and controls the localized parts of its body wherever they may be. For it is not in a local sense that it is contained in the mass of the fleshly members, nor in a local sense that it is projected outside them with the projected senses. But in a potential sense it is present to receive the phantasies which are everywhere formed in the instruments of its senses; and by this reasoning we come to know how great is its natural power and placelessness. For at one and the same moment of time it perceives the phantasies, that is, the images, of the stars in the light from the eyes which is radiated through the ether, and of voices by the sense of hearing which is diffused through the air, and of odours by the sense of smell whether within or without the body, and of flavours by the sense of taste, and of all things which can be felt by the sense of touch; having perceived these phantasies, first formed with marvellous rapidity without any temporal *interval* from the corporeal numbers in the sensible, it receives them through the numbers that meet, introduces them through the numbers that advance, commends them to the memory through the recordable numbers, orders them through the rational numbers, and, according to the rules of the divine numbers which are above it, acknowledges or rejects them through the intellectual numbers. Contemplating their exemplars it forms judgements both about the numbers which are constituted within itself and about the corporeal and sensible numbers both of which are outside it.

731C

For reason has discovered eight orders of numbers, of which the first and highest is above the understanding among the eternal causes, and is that by which the rational soul discerns all things, as the Apostle says: "Spiritual man judges all things; but he himself is judged by no man." Two others are entirely without and beneath the soul, of which one, the most remote, is in the bodies from which are formed the corporeal senses in which the phantasies come into being, while the other is formed in the corporeal senses themselves, and this is the first order of phantasies to be constituted in the instruments of the senses, I mean in the eyes and ears and other seats of the senses. But within the soul itself five numbers are reckoned to be naturally established: the number that meet, which are the first to encounter the phantasies and receive them; after these the numbers that advance, which are like guides to the city of the memory, to which the phantasies, when they have arrived there, are introduced by the recordable numbers; then the rational numbers distribute them about the city as the intellectual numbers have

Concerning  
731D  
the eight  
orders of  
numbers dis-  
tinguished  
by reason

732A

ordained. For the phantasies which come as a crowd through sight especially have a place in the memory. In like manner those that enter by way of hearing and the other senses are received into their places of residence in the same city. But whoever wishes for further knowledge of all these things should read the great Augustine in the sixth book of his "De musica", and in the books of his Confessions and the great Gregory of Nyssa in his "Discourse on the Image".

732B Why, then, should we be surprised if the rational soul after the dissolution of its body into its parts diffused among the elements should continue its activity by a natural control concealed and removed from every bodily sense, seeing that even when the body is still alive and gathered into an unity, in so far as is perceptible to the senses, it exerts the power of its authority over it not only in the mass of its members but also in the senses that extend far beyond it?

37 Concerning Universal Life But let us return to the consideration of Universal Life, of which the demonstration of the power over bodies prompted us to introduce these remarks about the rational life, though not about every life that controls the body — now, this I say bearing in mind the souls of the irrational animals, concerning which there is a [wide] variety of opinion. For some say that they survive the death of the body, others that they die with the body *and do not remain after it*, a question about which we shall have a little to say later. So of Universal Life the first and main division is by that differentiation which separates the rational life from the irrational; and the rational life is distributed between angels and men, but whereas in angels it is called intellectual as though for a *special* meaning, in men it is called rational — although in actual fact the truth is that in both angels and men it is both intellectual and rational; and therefore intellectual and rational life is predicated of both as a common form. The statement that life itself is called intellect in angels, soul in men, is retained so as to distinguish between them. For I can think of no other reason why the angelic life should not be called rational soul or the rational soul of man intellect, especially as angels possess heavenly bodies of their own in which they often manifest themselves; and thus, if it is recognized that they have bodies, why their life should not be called soul I do not know, unless it be merely, as we said above, in order to draw a verbal distinction — for that angels also are made in the Image of God we do not doubt; and where there are reason and intellect I should not believe that the Image of God is absent, although Scripture clearly says only of man that he is made in the Image of God. I say nothing of Plato lest I

732C

Concerning the Intellectual and the Rational Life

732D

That angels are made in the Image of God

should be thought to be one of his sectaries, but he defines the angels as rational immortal animals. And thus we are left with these terms by which this human nature is differentiated from the angelic substance, [namely] rational soul and image of God. 733A

Now, the irrational life is divided into that which participates in sense and that which is without sense; and the one is distributed among all animals which possess the power of perceiving, the other among [matters] which lack all sense, the kind of life which is held to rule plants and trees, and below which reason finds no kind of life at all. Concerning the irrational life

Thus by four differentiations created life is brought together into four species: the intellectual in angels, [the rational in men, the sensitive in beasts, the insensitive] in plants and in the other bodies, in which only the form shows a trace of life, as are the four elements of the world whether as simple in themselves or as composite: earth, I mean, water and air and ether. And this is why man is not inappropriately called the workshop of all creatures since in him the universal creature is contained. [For] he has intellect like an angel, reason like a man, sense like an [irrational] animal, life like a plant, and subsists in body and soul: [there is no creature that he is without]. [For] outside these you (will) find no creature. 733B

But perhaps someone will say that all these are also contained in the angel. To him I reply that sense, which is distributed among animals, cannot subsist except in a body constituted of the four elements. For there will be no sight where there is not fire nor hearing if air is absent. If moisture be removed neither smell nor taste will remain. The absence of earth removes all touch. But the bodies of angels are simple and spiritual and lack every exterior sense. For they do not receive the knowledge of sensible things through the phantasies of bodies, but perceive every corporeal creature spiritually in its spiritual causes, as we shall when we are changed into a nature that shall be equal to theirs. Therefore the angels lack corporeal sense because they are above it; and thus are removed from all irrational life, whether sensitive or deprived of all sense. They are not weighed down by composite and corruptible bodies. So you will find many things in man which the angelic nature totally rejects, whereas there is nothing in the angel nor in any other creature which is not naturally present in man. That angels do not possess sense 733C

And lest you should say, If then every species of life is in man he contains not one but many lives which differ from one another, 733D

for he has the irrational and the rational, and at the same time the sensitive and the germinal, consider more carefully the powers of the human soul; for while it is of one and the same subsistence and power and operation in all human bodies at once [and] generally and in individual human bodies specifically, [yet] it can perform all the vital motions and administrations of its body whether they are within or without. For beyond the corporeal senses it both reasons and understands like the angelic life, whithin the corporeal senses it exercises its power of perception in the likeness of irrationals without abandoning its rationality; it provides nourishment and increase to its body as the life that lacks sense and penetrates the plants and trees. It is everywhere wholly in itself *and, wholly in all things*, it preserves its senses whole. Thus the force of the germinal life is revealed in the bones and the nails and hair, for these parts of our body, being impervious to the air, participate in no sense; in the five-fold instrument of the senses it communicates with the irrational life which is proper to the animals that lack reason. In *all* these its nature does not permit it to be without [its own] reason in itself although it is often moved irrationally. Everything else that it can do apart from these powers, namely the powers of bestowing life and nourishment and perception through the senses, whether it does or suffers, right reason knows that it does or suffers outside the body.

734A

734B

Now that we have obtained this knowledge concerning the divisions and differentiations of Universal Life, let us return to the solution, to the best of our ability, of the question that was raised earlier, for it was that which prompted us to insert these remarks about the general soul or life.

38

Concerning  
the nutritive  
and germinal  
life

734C

For the question was, Why in the works of the Four Primordial Days no mention is made of any life or soul, and then on the Fifth Day Scripture suddenly breaks out and says, "Let the waters produce the creeping thing of living soul"; and he does not say, The "creeping thing of soul" simply, but adds "living" as though the soul were not a living thing. And the subject is, as I think, that species which we placed last among the divisions of the general life, and rightly so, because a subtle investigation of natures reveals that it is without any intellect or reason. And it is ignored by Scripture as though it were no life at all, whether soul or living soul, so that we may understand that it is the last and most imperfect participation in the life that is created as essence; and therefore the Divine Authority ordained that it should rather be reckoned among bodily rather than living numbers. It is right therefore that nothing



representing this vital motion was included among the operations of the Four Days in which the species of heavenly and terrestrial essences are brought forth [into the open] from the primordial causes and receive the perfection of their formation. For even on the Third Day there is no mention of it, on which the germination of the plants and trees from the earth is ordained, although in these its power of control is clear [to the corporeal senses] — not because this species of life does not have in nature a place for its share of existence — for the natural force that gives nourishment and increase to all things which cling to the earth by their roots and rise from out of the earth in the infinite number of shoots and plants, and brings them forth into their proper species in the likeness of each genus and in the natural sequence of flower, fruit, and seed disposed throughout individual places and times, is not to be lightly estimated — but because it can achieve nothing outside the body and reveals in itself no power of perfect life existing independently of bodies, it is numbered by the Divine Authority, as we said before, among the individuals of the corporeal nature rather than among the species of the general life; and because in itself it, that is, the germinal life, can be contemplated by the intellect apart from its association with the higher life, I mean the sensitive and rational, while the rational and sensitive are not permitted by nature to animate any body without it, Holy Scripture kept it apart. 734D

For the soul which lacks all sense seems as though it also lacks all vital motion, and therefore is called simply “soul”, but not “living soul”. Nor is this surprising. For if in infants when they are conceived in the womb or when they are issuing from the womb the soul is reckoned to be such as is altogether without reason and intellect because although it is both rational and intellectual it cannot show the signs of reason and intellect in its bodily parts, which are as yet of recent birth and imperfect, how much more appropriate is it that the soul which is by nature *deprived* [of the powers] of intellect and reason should not have the right to be designated in Scripture by the name of living soul? 735A

A. I accept this interpretation and perceive that it accords with the nature of things and with the Prophet’s discourse. But since there are many who contend that the corporeal bulks of plants and trees have no vital motion whatsoever, saying that they are animated by the moisture on which they flourish and by no other life, I should like to have the view of this matter which you have stated above corroborated by some weighty authority who should explicitly 735B

pronounce that plants and trees are controlled by some species of life, whatever it may be.

735C N. You are not, as I think, unaware that the opinion of all the philosophers who discourse about the world is, in respect of this part of nature, unanimous. For they say that all bodies that are contained within the sensible world are contained by a vital motion, whether they are in motion or at rest.

A. To all who practise philosophy or read the philosophers this is very well known. For both Plato in the “Timaeus” and Pliny Secundus in his “Natural History” provide *us* with very clear teaching [on these matters].

N. If, then, you desire the testimonies of the Holy Fathers, hear the noble Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, in his Seventh Homily on Genesis: “Let the waters bring forth”, he says, “creeping things of living souls. Now is the animate... animal first created. For although plants and trees are said to live because they participate in the nutritive and auctive power, yet they are not also animals or animate.” Again, Gregory of Nyssa, who is also called Nazianzen, brother germane of the aforesaid Basil, in his Discourse “On the Image” [in chapter viii, says, “Reason teaches that the power of life and soul is observed in three different ways. For one is” that which merely bestows increase and nourishment, and is called “auctive and nutritive because it supplies whatever is required for the increase of that which it nourishes; it is also called plant life and is observed in plants. For it must be understood that even in plants there is a kind of vital power which has no part of sense. But as well as this species of life there is a second which has both this” that the above-mentioned possesses, and in addition “the function of control through the sense, and this” species “is found in the nature of the irrationals. For it not only bestows nourishment and increase but also possesses the functions of sensible action and perception. But the perfect life in the body is formed in the rational nature, by which I mean the human; and is nutritive and sensitive and participates in reason and is controlled by the mind.”

735D

736A

The same (Gregory) in the same discourse] in chapter xv says, “Reason finds three different kinds in the vital power: the first is nutritive without sense; the second is on the one hand nutritive and sensitive [and] but on the other hand has no part in the operation of reason; there is also the third which is rational and perfect and penetrates to every power.”

736B

Augustine in his book “De uera religione” says, “Let us not make a religion of the cult of that life by which the trees are said to live since there is in it no sense, and it is of the same kind as that by which the numerousness of our bodies is activated, by which also the hair and the bones live, which are removeable without the sense (perceiving it). But better than this is the sentient life, and yet we ought not to worship the life of beasts; nor should we make a religion even of that perfect and wise rational soul whether as controller of the parts (of the body) or of the whole.” And these testimonies of the aforesaid Fathers are sufficient, as I think, to corroborate what we have said.

A. They are indeed sufficient, and we must pass on to *other matters*.

N. See how beautifully the range of nature develops as ordered by the Divine Oracles. Thus, on the Fifth Day it brings forth for the first time the creation of the animals that are endowed with the five senses.

736C

But concerning the soul of all the irrational animals I am not a little puzzled why very many of the Holy Fathers assert that it perishes with their bodies and cannot survive them. Thus Basil in his ninth homily on Genesis says, “Let earth bring forth living soul. Why” [he says] “does earth bring forth soul? So that you may learn the difference between the soul of the beast and the soul of man.” [And] “You will learn a little later how the soul of man was made; but now hear of the soul of the irrationals. Since, according to what is written, the soul of every animal is its blood, and blood *solidified* usually turns into flesh, and flesh when decayed returns to earth, it follows that the soul of beasts is an earthly thing. So, let the earth bring forth living soul. Notice the progress of soul into blood, of blood into flesh, of flesh into the earth; and then returning take the same way back from earth into flesh, from flesh into blood, from blood into soul, and you will find that the soul of beasts is earth. Do not think that it is an *older* substance than its body or that it remains after the dissolution of the flesh.”

39  
Concerning  
the soul of  
the irrational  
beings

736D

737A

Gregory of Nyssa too in his Discourse “On the Image”, the sixteenth chapter, says, “Now, if some things in creation have the nutritive function, or again others are controlled by the sensitive power, neither the former participate in sense nor the latter participate in intellect.” “But if it possesses perfection in the intellectual and rational soul, everything which is not so may indeed be a

homonym of soul, but not truly soul, only a vital function which makes use of the name of soul.”

737B But if it is as they claim, why is the main division of universal soul into rational and intellectual soul on the one hand, and soul which lacks reason and intellect on the other? Why are two mutually contrary species included under the one genus of life? For rational and irrational are not opposed to one another but (are made to) express a difference of species within the one genus.

The soul of  
irrational  
beings does  
not die

But living and dying are opposed to one another absolutely. For the one signifies a possession, the other a privation. But possession and privation are mutually contradictory. If, then, after the dissolution of the body one species survives while the other perishes, how will their genus preserve its integrity? For as, when a genus perishes, every one of its species must perish, so when the species perish reason requires that their genus must perish. For the genus is preserved in its species and the species in their genus. But if

737C of the forms or species which are constituted under one genus some can and do die while others cannot and do not, what are we to say of their genus? Will it both perish in some and not perish in others? — for that cannot remain a whole which suffers destruction in some of its parts, and therefore it will not be a genus but the collapse of a genus. For if of all things consisting of body and soul there is one genus which is called animal since in it all animals subsist as substances — for in it both man and lion and ox and horse are one and substantially one — how can it be that all the species of that genus should perish and only that remain which is allotted to man?

737D And therefore, if only one species should survive while the others pass away, the genus also will perish, for it surely will not stand in one species. [For] [I do not see] how one species can make any genus. For *since* the genus [is] the substantial unity of many forms or species [how will the genus stand when the substantial unity of the many forms or species does not remain? Now, that the many species *are* one in the genus] is the teaching of St. Dionysius in his chapter on the Perfect and the One where he says, “For there is no many that does not participate in the One, but (what is) many in the parts (is) one in the whole; and (what is) many (in) the accidents (is) one in the subject; and (what is) many in number or powers (is) one (in) the species; and (what is) many (in) the species (is) one in the genus.”

738A

Therefore if all species are one in their genus, how should that one in part perish and in part remain? And if that one is a

substantial one, how could it perish when in every creature there remain indestructibly and without increase or decrease these three: Substance, Power, Operation? And if the bodies of all animals, when they are dissolved, are not reduced to nothing but, as the natural reason clearly allows, return to the elemental qualities by the concourse of which they were materially made, how can their souls perish entirely, seeing that they are certainly of a superior nature — for none of the wise deny that any soul is superior to every body —, when it is [not] consistent with reason that what is inferior should remain and be preserved while what is superior is destroyed and perishes, or that what is composite should be kept in its separated parts while what is simple and without any composition and incapable of being dissolved should be destroyed? But who of those who study wisdom does not know that every body is composite while every soul is simple? 738B

And, what is stranger than all this, why do those who assert that irrational souls perish after the dissolution of the body — not unreasonably, as they claim, since they derive from the earth and to the earth return again — exalt with high praises the power of the irrational soul over the senses and prefer it to that of the rational soul in the senses of the body? For what man has as sharp a vision as the eagle *and* the gazelle? Who is endowed with a sense of smell like a dog's, and, not to prolong too far this discourse on the power of the irrational soul over the senses of individual animals, what must we say of the length of memory of the irrationals? Ulysses' dog recognized his master over twenty years. A camel who has suffered injury at the hands of his masters waits for many years for a suitable occasion for revenge, mindful all the time of the injury. The griffin, they say, is so chaste that when once he has lost his conjugal [mate], mindful of his first spouse, he preserves his chastity inviolate, and the same thing is related of the turtle dove by those who study natural history. Basil describes the piety of storks towards their parents. For when the father grows old and through excessive old age begins to lose his clothing of feathers, the sons stand around him and shelter him with their plumage and prepare abundance of food and also supply strong help in flight, raising him on either side in a tranquil flight which they support in every way. 738C  
738D

Therefore I cannot see how all these natural powers could be present in the irrational soul if it were earth, as the above-mentioned Fathers say, risen from earth and returning to earth again, or if it were not truly substantial soul. [And if the soul is earth, and earth a 739A

body, how is the body called soul when their natures are so widely different? And if the body is a soul it will necessarily have the life which enlivens that (soul) — for there is no body which lacks life and form; otherwise it would not be a body —, and that would mean that it was the soul of soul or life of life.] But let no one think that we say such things with the intent of overthrowing the opinions of the Holy Fathers, but rather of seeking with all our might a more reasonable way of accepting them, by deciding whether irrational souls perish when the bodies are dissolved and return to earth or whether, while abandoning the control of their bodies, they are preserved in their genera, and of holding firmly to that which everywhere is sought and found and concluded by sound arguments, namely, that every life or soul which controls a body derives its existence as soul or life by participation in one primordial life or soul — a participation which natural reason does not allow to be wholly abandoned, whether it appears in the control of the body or not. Therefore we say these things without prejudice to the opinion of any, but to urge those who read to look more deeply, and confidently follow, in consulting the truth, what seems to them the more likely explanation of these matters. But I would believe that these holy and philosophical men, and skilled in the accurate investigation of nature, taught publicly in this way for the sake of men who were uninstructed and entirely given up to the flesh like brutes and irrational animals so that they should not be so dominated by the flesh and subservient to its lusts but that, alarmed at such vileness in the irrational creature, they should mend their ways and raise themselves to the dignity of the rational creature in which they were created; and Gregory himself openly admits this in the sixteenth chapter of the “On the Image”. For after saying that the irrational soul is not truly soul, he adds a little later, “Let the lovers of the flesh learn not to bind their intelligence to the things that are visible to the sense, but to devote themselves to the observations of souls, because true soul is seen in men whereas the sense is held in common with the irrational (animals).”

A. Let each select what he prefers, and let him abide by what he has selected, but as for us, let us pass on to what remains to be considered.

739D 40 N. “Let the waters bring forth the creeping thing of living soul and that which flies over the earth under the firmament of heaven.” Here too understand “of living soul” to mean “the flying thing of living soul”. For more of living soul is found in the senses of flying

things than in those of the fishes. For according to Basil the sense of hearing is slow in fishes : they see with more blurred vision because of the water, and there is in them neither much memory, nor phantasy nor associative knowledge, while all these things abound in birds no less than in men, nay, more so. 740A

Now, it is rightly asked why the flying things [are said to be] brought forth from water. For it would seem more credible that as the animals which inhabit the earth are said to be created out of the earth, so also the fishes, which alone are the inhabitants of water, should be created from water, but the flying things, which plane through the air, should similarly be created from air. But this question can be reasonably met if [the nature] of waters [is considered, of which] there are two kinds : One is found in seas and rivers and is of a grosser quality ; the other in vapours and clouds and of a lighter quality. And the grosser kind is supported by the solidity of the earth, while the lighter is suspended *in the serenity* of the air until it assumes a grossness and heaviness which the thinness (of the air) cannot sustain. Thus it follows, by a natural deduction, 740B that the creeping things of living soul, that is, the genera and species of all fishes, are created from the grosser kind of waters, while the flying things, similarly in their genera and species, are created from the lighter, and since the region of the air which lies between the moon and the earth is divided into two parts, of which the upper is serene and subject to none of the disturbances which arise in the air from the earthly and watery vapours, while the lower is moist and of a more solid quality, and accommodated to the motions of the winds, the accumulations of clouds, and the other things which result from the proximity of the earth and of the waters, it is not unreasonable to believe that whatever is born of that part of the air which is of a moist and watery quality is created out of air. For the flying things could not traverse this part of the air which adjoins the lands and waters if they did not partake of the aerial nature at all ; 740C but as it is, since there is discovered in them both the lightness of feathers and the hollowness of bones and the faculty of flight we are given most explicitly to understand that they are created not only from water but also from air, something which is also easily seen from the nature of the amphibians which live both in the water and in the air, or in the water and on earth. For there are some flying things which spend part of their time in the air and part in the water, and while they live in the water adopt the form of fishes, but in the air that of birds, and this they do by changing their shape every six months. For for six months they swim about in the water and for six

months fly about in the air and descend to the earth like other flying things [and this species of birds always goes about in flocks whether  
 740D in the air or in the water and is called “luligo”]; from this we are given to understand that [the flying things] participate in the substance of both elements, that is, of air and of water. But there are amphibians, that is, things that live a double life, on earth and on the water: seals and crocodiles and many similar animals.

There is also another argument to prove that flying things are made from moist air. For they breathe in and out, and therefore dwell both on land and in the air, but in water they are suffocated, and therefore always swim on the surface, save for those amphibians which deliberately plunge beneath the waves.

741A But fishes, because they are created almost entirely out of thickened water, not being able to breathe in and out like the animals of earth and air, on contact with earth and air very quickly perish. However, they are not entirely deprived of respiration. For if they were absolutely deprived of it they would not sleep. But, as Pliny says, fish do sleep. Therefore they possess lungs which breathe in and out. But that breath they derive not from the thicker air but from that most subtle kind which penetrates all corporeal things.

Since, then, fishes and flying things clearly show more than other animals that their qualities are created from the moist nature almost entirely — for they are moist and cold —, for that reason Divine Scripture records that they are produced from the waters.

And observe carefully: he did not say, Let the water bring down, but, Let the waters bring forth, that you may understand  
 741B that, as we have said, there are two kinds of waters, a grosser kind in the sea and rivers, a lighter in the air, and therefore he brought this distinction into his narrative in the words “Let the waters bring forth”. Then he adds “the creeping thing of living soul and the thing that flies over the earth”, as though to say openly, [Let] one kind of water, the grosser, [produce] the fishes, the other, which is the lighter, the flying things, which one can also see from their very bodies. For we see that fishes are encumbered by the heaviness of grosser bodies, while the flying things are raised up into the height by the lightness of their feathers.

742A But in saying, “above the earth under the firmament of heaven”, he clearly signifies that the bodies of the flying things are not at all encumbered by the heaviness of earth, but *are raised* into the air from whose moist quality they are created.



“Under the firmament of heaven.” Since to the fineness and spirituality of the simple elements which, as we have explained, the Divine Oracles signify under the name of firmament or heaven, no other kind of animals shows a nature more similar than do the birds, it is appropriate that the flying things should be ordered to be made under the firmament of heaven, that is, in the vicinity of the quality of the most pure and all but incorporeal elements. Therefore the flying thing is created under the firmament of heaven, that is, close to, but below, the very light thinness of spiritual bodies. So much for the creation of the fishes and flying things in their primordial causes. Their procession into their genera and species follows.

“And God created great κήτη and every living soul” and so forth. Κήτης [that is, monster] is of the neuter gender with the 742B Greeks, and of the singular number, but in the plural, as in the case of the other neuter nouns with them, it ends in the letter α: κήτος, κητέα. Then there is contraction of the two syllables into one, that is of ε and α into η, κητέα, κήτη, and of the two accents, namely an acute and a grave, that is, into one, a circumflex. For κητέα is accented acutely on the second syllable, but is grave on the last, while κήτη carries the circumflex. But we must, as I think, put an end to this book and not prolong it further, if you agree.

A. Indeed I agree. And it would have required an end long since, if the prolixity of the reasoning had not held us back.



# PERIPHYSEON

## BOOK IV

N. In the First Book of this our Philosophy of Nature it was our object to prove that the uncreated creative Cause of all things which exist and all things which do not exist, the sole principle, origin, and universal Source of all, Which Itself proceeds from nothing while from It proceed all things, the Trinity which in three Substances is co-essential, and Which, Itself ἀναρχος (that is, without beginning) is the Beginning and the End, the one Good, the one God, ὁμοούσιος and ὑπερούσιος (that is, co-essential and superessential), is in fact an ὑπερουσιότης or superessential Nature That was our principal theme.

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Recapitula-  
741C  
tion of  
the natures

For as St. Epiphanius, the Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, says in his Ancoratus, or Discourse on Faith :

“The three Holies have a common holiness, and the three Agents a common activity : the three Designers design in unity and the Three Workers are three who work as One, and the Three Which subsist have a subsistence common to all Three, each existing for the sake of the others. This is called the Holy Trinity, in which there are Three who exist, one accord, one Deity of the same Essence, of the same power, of the same subsistence, and holding all similar things in common likewise : for the Deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit operates an equality of Grace. But how They are What They are we must leave to Them to teach us. For no one has known the Father save the Son, and no one has known the Son save the Father, and him to whomsoever the Son has revealed Himself : and this revelation is brought about through the Holy Spirit. Therefore these three Existents — Existents from Himself, through Himself or in

742C

Himself — are suitably known by each one in proportion as Φῶς, Πῦρ, Πνεῦμα, that is Light, Fire and Spirit, reveal Themselves.”

Such, as I say, was the teaching of Epiphanius to supply an orthodox answer to the question : What ought we to believe about the Three in the Holy Trinity, and what about the One? and to instruct those who seek after faith. And it seems to me that he was

743A employing the allegory of Light, Fire and Heat, substituting Spirit for the last. It need not worry us that he puts Light before Fire : for the Father is Light and Fire and Heat, and the Son is Light and Fire and Heat, and the Holy Spirit Light and Fire and Heat. For the Father illumines, the Son illumines, and the Holy Spirit illumines (That is to say, all wisdom and knowledge are the gifts of all Three) : the Father burns, the Son burns, and the Holy Spirit burns (for together They burn away our transgressions and transmute us, a burnt offering, by the action of θεώσις or deification, into the Unity which is Theirs) : the Father warms, the Son warms, and the Holy Spirit warms (for with one and the same heat of Love They cherish us and nourish us, and so lead us forth from the kind of formlessness of our imperfection, which was the result of the transgression of the

743B First Man, to the perfection of man when the era of Christ shall be fulfilled. Now, the perfection of man is Christ, in Whom all is consummated : and the fulfilment of His era is the consummation of the salvation of the Catholic Church, which is established among angels and among men).

In the Second Book we considered the nature which creates and is created, and decided that it subsists in the principles of things, or their Primordial Causes. For this nature on the one hand is created by that single Universal Cause and supreme Goodness Whose property it is by Its unspeakable Power to lead all things forth from non-existence into existence : and on the other hand does not cease to create the things which come after it, by means of their participation in it.

The Third Book treats of the Nature which is created but does not create, that is to say, of the ultimate effects of the Primordial Causes. These hold the lowest estate of nature, for the devolution of

743C the Universe ceases with them, having no further place whither to descend, for it is now established in the realm of corporeal objects. But in this book we also gave considerable attention to the Primordial Causes and to God, to His image which is reflected in Mind, Reason and Sense, and we enquired what kind of nothing that was from which God created all things, and how it could be

that the Only Begotten Word of God both makes all things and is made in all. We also briefly discussed the works of the First Intelligible week, up to the Sixth Day.

Now we come to the Fourth Book which starts with the works of the Sixth Prophetic Meditation of the creation of the Universe, goes on to consider the Return of all things into that Nature which neither creates nor is created, and so brings our work to its conclusion. The difficulty of this part of our theme, the conflict and clash of different interpretations, I find so formidable that in comparison to it the first three books seem like a smooth sea upon which, because of the calmness of the waves, readers could sail without fear of shipwreck, steering a safe course. Now, however, we enter upon a voyage where the course has to be picked from the mass of tortuous digressions, where we have to climb the steeps of obscure doctrines, encounter the region of the Syrtes, that is to say, the dangers of the currents of unfamiliar teaching, ever in immediate danger of shipwreck in the obscurity of the subtlest intellects, which like concealed rocks may suddenly split our vessel: and the length of this course is such that we must endure it even into a fifth book. Nevertheless, with the mercy of God as our captain and steersman and our sails filled with the propitious wind of his spirit, we shall pick through all these dangers the true and safe course, and reach the harbour which we seek, free and unhurt after a smooth voyage.

A. Let us spread sails, then, and set out to sea. For Reason, not inexperienced in these waters, fearing neither the threats of the waves nor windings nor the Syrtes nor rocks, shall speed our course: indeed she finds it sweeter to exercise her skill in the hidden straits of the Ocean of Divinity than idly to bask in the smooth and open waters, where she cannot display her power. For “in the sweat of her brow is she to get her bread” — so is she commanded by the word of God, and to till the field of Holy Scripture, prolific as it is of thorns and thistles, that is to give herself to the narrow density of divine understandings, and to follow with the unflagging steps of investigation the study of wisdom, undaunted by the seeming impassability of the path, “until she find the place of the Lord, the tabernacle of the God of Jacob,” that is to say, until the grace of God leading and helping and aiding and moving her by patient and assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures, she may return and reach again that which in the Fall of the First Man she had lost, the contemplation of Truth; and reaching it she may love it, and loving it she may abide in it, and abiding in it she may there find her rest.

3 N. God also said : “Let the earth bring forth the living soul in  
 744C its genus, cattle and reptiles and the beasts of the field according to  
 their species,” etc. “Let the earth bring forth the living soul” : that is  
 to say : Let the earth bring forth the living animal. This figure of  
 speech, very common in the Scriptural writings, is called συνεχδοχή  
 or *conceptio* : for the concept of the whole is implied in the naming  
 of the part, or that of the part in the naming of the whole. So the  
 word soul by itself frequently in the Scriptures signifies the whole  
 animal. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles it is said : “We were in the  
 ship two hundred and seventy souls” ; the souls, of course, were not  
 there without the bodies. And in Genesis : “All the souls of the  
 House of Jacob which entered into Egypt were seventy.” In the  
 Gospel the word flesh signifies the whole man : “And the Word was  
 made flesh” means that the Word was made a complete man,  
 consisting of flesh, soul and mind. And where it is said in another  
 744D place : “The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak,” by the  
 flesh is meant the whole of His humanity, and by the spirit the Holy  
 Spirit which was indeed in the stress of His Passion a ready helper  
 for Him in His task of redeeming the human race — it is that Spirit  
 which when He was nailed to the cross He commended to His  
 Father, saying, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit” :  
 745A which is as much as to say : Into Thy hands I commend the Spirit  
 Which proceedeth from Thee and from Me, for He is incapable of  
 suffering : I alone shall suffer in the flesh, for I alone put on flesh,  
 and was made flesh. I do not mean that even He, in His Godhead, is  
 capable of suffering, but that with the humanity which He alone put  
 on He was subjected to the capacity for suffering, its actual passion  
 and its death : these things He suffered together with the Manhood  
 which He had taken into the unity of His Substance. Since then it is  
 rightly said that He partook of the suffering of His Manhood, it is  
 equally true to say that He suffered. For the Substance of the Word  
 and of the Man is one, and is not divided in the Passion. And if you  
 require a more certain support from authority, hear what the same  
 Epiphanius says in his Discourse on Faith :

“He died for us once, consenting to bear suffering for our  
 sufferings : He once tasted death, even the death of the Cross :  
 745B willingly for us the Word encountered Death, that it might destroy  
 death : the Word was made flesh, and while It did not suffer in Its  
 Godhead, in Its incapacity for suffering It partook of the suffering  
 of Its Manhood. It remains incapable of passion, and yet the  
 Passion is attributed to It : Death is attributed to It, and yet It

remains in immortality : for He himself has said, I am the Life : and Life never dies, but accepting death on our behalf, He came to bring us life. For life came to us not through man, nor hope through the flesh. For, Cursed be he, He says, who places his hope in man, and, Whoso putteth his trust in man is like the tamarisk of the field. What conclusion, then, shall we draw from this ? Does it not appear from what we have said that Christ is man ? That He is so must be clear to everyone, for we unreservedly confess that the Word Our Lord was made man : this is not a matter of opinion but of truth. But the Man was not one who had achieved Godhead : for not in man did our hope of salvation lie ; not one of all the men since Adam could have achieved it. But God the Word was made man that our hope should not depend upon man but upon the true and living God made Man. For it is written that every high priest chosen from amongst men is constituted for the service of men. Therefore the Lord when He came took flesh of our humanity, and God the Word was made Man for us, so that in His Godhead we might obtain salvation, while in His Manhood He might bear the sufferings of us men, by His Passion resolving our passion and by His Death slaying death itself. But suffering is attributed to the Deity, and yet the Deity does not suffer : suffering is attributed to the Deity because so the Word, Which is holy and cannot suffer, willed when It came. We may think in this connection of a man who puts on a garment which has been soiled by stains of blood : although the blood is upon the garment it does not touch the body of him who wears it, although it be said of the wearer that he is soiled by the blood — In just such a way Christ is said to have suffered in the flesh, that is to say, in the Man whom our Lord became : and such a change in Himself wrought the Holy God the Word when He came down from heaven — as the Blessed Peter writes : Mortified in the flesh, but living in the Spirit : and again : Therefore Christ suffering for us in the flesh, we ourselves are fortified by this knowledge ; thus as the blood upon the garment is attributed to the wearer, so the passion of the flesh is attributed in His case to the Godhead, although the Godhead suffers nothing : so that the world's hope reposes not in men but in the Man whom the Lord became : but when He took upon Himself again His Godhead, the Passion was attributed thereto, so that the world might owe its salvation to the impassible Godhead. As the Passion was endured in the flesh, so the attribution of passion was endured in the Godhead, who neither suffered nor endured, that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says : If they had known they would never have crucified the Lord of

745C

745D

746A

746B Glory. So He is crucified, the Lord is crucified: and we adore Him crucified, buried, rising on the third day, and ascending to the heavens.” But that you may know that it was concerning none other than the Spirit that were spoken the words, “Father into Thy hands I commend my Spirit,” refer once again to the same treatise of Epiphanius:

“When you hear it said that He ascended to the right hand of the Father and obtained from the Father the promise of the Spirit, or the words: ‘To await the promise of the Father which you heard from Me,’ or: ‘The Spirit sent Him into the wilderness,’ or the words which He Himself spake: ‘Give no thought of what ye shall say, for it is the Spirit of My Father Which speaketh in you,’ or: ‘But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils,’ or: ‘But whosoever blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him,’ etc., or: ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,’ or: ‘But the Boy grew and was strengthened by the Spirit,’

746C ‘But Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan,’ or: ‘Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit’, or: ‘That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,’ or: ‘And I shall ask My Father, and He shall send you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth’ or: ‘Because Satan has filled your heart,’ said Peter to Ananias, ‘you lie to the Holy Spirit,’ and later on: ‘You did not lie to them, but to God,’ — from all these it follows that from God proceeds God, that is, the Holy Spirit.”

So much from Epiphanius.

A. Although this digression seems to have taken us some way from our subject, it is valuable for those who wish to understand the Holy Scriptures. For from it we have learnt that the Godhead of the Word is incapable of suffering, and yet shares in the suffering of Its humanity. And this agrees with what our Lord has said in His Gospel: “The Spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak”; and again: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit — where He

746D is speaking of no other spirit than the Holy Spirit. But we must return to our subject.

4 N. “Let the earth bring forth the living soul”: that is to say, Let the earth bring forth the living animal. Note the beauty of this figure, mentioned already, of the part for the whole, whereby the whole animal is indicated by its better part, the soul. And since of

747A the whole animal the lower part, the body, is derived from the earth, this same phrase is a command to the whole animal, body and soul, to be produced from the earth. For although the soul has nothing



earthly about it since it is not a body, yet since it combines with the body to produce the unity of the animal, the Scriptures can say that it too is formed from the earth. But if an enquiry is desired into the higher meaning of this passage, it can be interpreted in another way : We are wont to use the word "earth" to signify the constant mass of the totality of substantial nature, including both the visibles and the invisibles — everything in fact which we speculated to have come into being on the Third Day. Hence, when the Apostle says : "Mortify your members which are above the earth," he means us to mortify the members of our wickedness which are ours not because God created them, but as a result of our disobedience: so that above the earth, that is, in addition to the mass of nature which was created by God, we have built up, as it were, the body of universal sin : it is this that we must mortify lest we be any longer defiled by it. And in the place of the members of wickedness which we have destroyed, we should establish the members of righteousness, that is to say, the Virtues, so that in the same way as we, by our various vices, constructed upon the nature which God had created an abominable temple fit only for the habitation of the devil, so we should now build anew from the bricks of our virtues, which by the Grace of God have been supplied to us, a house acceptable to its Creator, that is, to the Creator of nature itself, from which all taint of evil should be cleansed and done away. This interpretation accords with the words of the Psalmist : "Sinners and evil-doers shall perish from the earth so as not to be." For here by another figure the effect signifies the cause, and by sinners and evil-doers are meant sins and evils, which shall perish from the earth of nature when it is freed from all evil, so as no longer to exist. For as long as our nature is held subject to sin and evil, so long will they appear to be, although in fact they are not : but when our nature is purged of them and returns to her former purity, all things which have no subsistence of themselves, that is to say, sin and evil, shall revert to utter nothingness, so as no longer to exist.

In another place the Psalmist in the name of a righteous liver bestows his blessing upon all the righteous : "They shall be like a tree that is planted by the water-side," that is to say, like the Word Which was made Flesh for our sakes at the end of all the ages. For the Apostle says that upon us "the ends of the ages have come down," using the plural for the singular End of all, namely Christ : for He is "the ends of the ages" because He is the consummation of all things. The Psalmist continues : "Not thus shall it be with the

wicked, not thus: but they shall be as the dust which the wind bloweth from the face of the earth,” calling the dispensation of the righteous judgment a wind because it is by that, with a winnowing fan in His hand, that He dispels the dust of all evil from the surface of the earth, that is to say, from the loveliness of the substance of nature. In another psalm the writer says of this earth: “His Spirit shall go forth and shall return again unto his own country”. Whose Spirit: Surely His Who, when nailed to the cross for us, drooped His head and gave up His Spirit. And whither is it to go forth? He descended into hell. For what purpose? To lead out our human nature which had been held in bondage there: for “He led captivity captive”. But since death was not able to hold captive Him in Whom she found no sin, He returns again to His own country: He reverts to His own nature, the nature which He had created, redeemed, and made His own: he puts on the body of immortality, the first state of man’s nature, and in addition the glory of His own Resurrection. And that you may know that He Who promised that His Spirit should go forth alone, shall Himself return not alone, but bringing the whole of human nature with Him, hear His very words: “If a grain of wheat fall not into the earth and die, it remains alone: but if it shall have died it beareth much fruit”. “Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit,” He says, “and shalt renew the face of the earth,” that is to say, Thou shalt restore the integrity of nature: and the Spirit may be taken to refer to the soul of Christ which, at the drooping of His head (signifying the condescension of the Deity to participation in the Passion), was given over for the world’s salvation, and it went out and returned to that nature which it had redeemed by its mission, and it was sent forth to restore the beauty of the nature which was destroyed in the first man; or the Spirit may be taken to refer to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, Who bowing His head, which is Christ, was given over in the passing death of the flesh for the universal creature, of which He is the Firstborn whose Spirit He is. He shall go forth and return again “unto His own country,” that is to say, into that Nature which He had abandoned because of the sin of the First Man; for that was “His own” until it transgressed and was abandoned by Him; but He returns to it again for the sake of Him Whose Spirit He is and who endured the Passion on its behalf: and at the time of the Resurrection He shall return again in yet fuller measure, and He shall be sent to restore by His power to its former glory the countenance of the universal nature. Therefore, seeing that on this earth that is common to us all, every animal was causally and primordially created as soul and body (for all things

were created in an honourable state), why should we be surprised that the Divine Precept ordained that there should be brought forth “the living soul”, that is, the living animal, which is simply the evolution into the tangible state of genus and species of those properties which it already contained latently in their *reasons* and causes? And see how the Sacred Text declares to us the natural sequence of events: “Let the earth bring forth the living soul *in its genus*.” Genus is mentioned first because all species are contained in it and achieve their unity in it, just as genus achieves its multiplicity by division into the general forms and differentiated species, a process which is also revealed in the words: “Cattle and reptiles and beasts of the field *after their species*”.

748D

From this we may see that that art which concerns itself with the division of genera into species and the resolution of species into genera, which is called *διαλεκτική* did not arise from human contrivances, but was first implanted in nature by the originator of all the arts that are properly so called, and was later discovered therein by the sages who make use of it in their subtle investigations of reality.

749A

A. From what you have said (and I find no fault in it) one could if one wished interpret in another way the text, “Let the waters bring forth of living souls both creeping things and things that fly above the earth”. For not only can this mean simply that fishes and birds were created from the moist and cold element of water which we can touch and see, but it is also capable of a higher significance relative to the deeply hidden recesses of nature in which these were created in their Primordial Causes before they evolved into their genera and species. For if we can take “earth” to mean the mass and fertility of nature, what is to prevent us from taking “water” to mean her concealed depths? In which case, for all animals, whether we are taught that they come from land or sea, we should recognise one and the same ultimate source, in spite of the fact that we speculate on them as separated: for some were created on the fifth Prophetic day, and others on the sixth. And I believe there is a reason for this: for it seems likely that the Earth was commanded to bring forth the land animals on the sixth day, the day of the creation of Man also, because their nature appears to exhibit a closer resemblance to that of Man. For excepting reason and intellect there is nothing in the nature of the human animal which the naturalist may not also observe in these others.

5

The difference that is found between the things produced by water and those by earth  
749B

749C

The visible  
749D  
earth and  
water gene-  
rate nothing  
of themselves

N. Far from anything preventing us, reason herself, in my opinion, if we could but listen to her more carefully, insists that we should understand the relation which exists between the Sacred Texts and reality. For there are many ways, indeed an infinite number, of interpreting the Scriptures, just as in one and the same feather of a peacock and even in a single small portion of the feather, we see a marvellously beautiful variety of innumerable colours. And this variety of interpretation is not contrary to nature, for this tangible earth and water are bodies composed of the qualities of the four elements: and they bring forth nothing of themselves and in spite of all appearance no natural species is born of them. No: it is by the operation of that Life Force which is called the nutritive, in accordance with the laws and principles which were implanted in those elements, that the potency of the seeds which they contain bursts forth from the secret recesses of creation, as far as it is permitted by the Divine Providence, through the genera and the forms into the different species of grasses, twigs, and animals: so that the coming into being of all things which appear to be born of earth and water originates from the same source whence the elements themselves have issued forth into their natural species and qualities and quantities. For there is a most general nature in which

750A all things participate, which is created by the One Universal Principle. And from this nature corporeal creatures are derived, and can be likened to streams which, issuing from one all-providing source, pursue their different courses through subterranean channels until they break out above ground in the different forms of the individual objects of nature. For the potency which I have mentioned, coming forth from the hidden places of nature through the various seeds, first declares itself in those seeds, and then mixed with various fluids pullulates into the distinct species of the sensibles.

A. Your account is logical and likely, for it accords with the observations of the naturalists. But since man, who was created on the Sixth Day, is thus set among the number of the animals, and comprehended under one genus with them, I should like to hear from you whether or not his creation is also included within the Divine Precept which commanded the earth "to bring forth the living soul".

750B N. This would be a hard question to answer if the Scriptures merely said "Let the earth bring forth the living soul". But the addition of the words, "in its genus", makes it quite clear that this precept applies to all the animals. For there is no species which is

not wholly included in its genus. It is true that the species of animal which is established in man is superior by virtue of reason and intelligence to the nature of the animals, and is only placed in that genus by the foresight of the Prophet's contemplation in order that he might describe his creation more spaciouly and in greater detail at the conclusion of all the things which God created. Thus he records this greatest and most precious species of animal twice in his vision of the events of the Sixth Day : first, under his genus, which is animal, he is commanded to be brought forth from the earth ; and then somewhat later he is separated a little from the rest of the animals, and mention is made of his creation as image and likeness of God.

The difference between the creation of man and of animals

750C

A. A single form, then, is first brought forth out of the earth together with the other animals : and a little later is said to be made in the image of God. Not unreasonably, I am troubled about this. For if the whole of that genus which is called animal with all its species was made in the "image and likeness of God" I should perhaps find nothing surprising in your doctrine that man was first brought forth from the earth with the rest of the animals and then a little later was made in the image and likeness of God : but since in fact the Sacred Narrative relates that only man, and no other animal but man, was created in the image of God, I find it somewhat strange that man was brought forth from the earth with cattle, beasts of the field and reptiles ; and yet he alone is formed in the image of God, and so removed far beyond all comparison with the rest of the animal kingdom : for it is written : "Let Us make man in Our image and likeness". And I find it stranger still that he was brought forth together with those over whom he is preferred and ordained to be master. For the Scriptures go on to say : "And let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over the universal creature and over every creeping thing that moves upon the earth".

750D

751A

N. Yes, you have good and reasonable cause for finding this strange : for these matters demand a most cautious and searching investigation. First let us establish beyond the shadow of any doubt that man was in fact established within the universal genus of the animals. The best proof of it is that this genus falls into three groups : cattle, reptiles, and beasts of the field. For there is, I think, a reason for this division. On the other Days, the Third for instance and the Fifth, in which mention is made of genera and species, there is no analysis of the genus into its species : either simply the genus

alone with its species indiscriminated is given, as on the Third Day, on which the earth was commanded to put forth the genera and  
 751B species of grass and twigs; or only the genus and one of its species, as on the Fifth, when the genus of fish is called “reptile”, and the genus of birds “volatile”, without in either case discrimination into species. For where it is said “And God created the great sea monsters” it is rather a question of substituting species for genus than of analysing the genus into its species. For how could a genus be analysed into one species, seeing that no analysis discovers less than two components? But on the Sixth Day not only do we have a description of the genus but also of its division into three species.  
 751C For it is written: “God said, Let the earth bring forth the living soul in its genus, cattle and creeping things and the beasts of the earth after their species”: or as the Septuagint has it: “God said: let the earth bring forth the living soul according to its genus, four-footed things, reptiles and beasts according to their genus; and so it was done.”

I believe, therefore, that this threefold division implies a threefold motion in the form of life which adheres to the bodies of the land animals and effects the union of soul to body (for the animal is the meeting-place of soul and body in sensation). But this threefold motion becomes intelligible in man only, the only rational  
 “Cattle” animal. For subject to his reason he has certain motions which may signify the rational motions of the soul be symbolised by the word “cattle” or “four-footed things”. For instance, by his skilled zeal to understand the sensibles he moves his five-fold sense in disciplined order towards cognition of them, and to this motion it is reasonable to give the name of “cattle”, for it is of no small assistance to the rational soul in acquiring true and accurate knowledge of all the sensibles, dispelling all falsehood. For there is, as it were, a kind of four-footed motion of the senses subject to reason. For everything in sensible nature of which we obtain knowledge through the sense is composed of four elements, or rather is constituted out of such a composition. For consider the  
 751D corporeal species and you will see that of whatever material each is composed it exhibits the qualities of the four elements. Whatever you hear or smell you may be sure is a product of the air of the four elements, and in like manner whatever you taste or touch arises from the combination of earth and water. So the term “quadruped”  
 752A is not inappropriate to the bodily sense, seeing that every sensible has its origin in the four elements and nowhere else.

Allegorical quadrupeds

But there are certain motions arising from the lower nature which might correctly be termed irrationals, which are resistant to reason. These, such as rage and covetousness and all the inordinate appetites of the corporeal senses, are wrongly attributed to sensible creatures. And since these motions which infect human nature belong properly to the brute creation, they are not improperly called beasts, especially as they are in continual revolt against the discipline of reason, and can rarely, if ever, be tamed thereby, but are ever seeking to attack savagely and devour the rational motions.

Beasts that  
resist reason  
752B

Moreover in the rational animal there are certain other motions, though not manifesting themselves, by which the body joined to that nature is administered. These motions are situated in the auctive and nutritive part of the soul. And since they perform their functions by their natural facility and as it were hiddenly — for they in no way agitate or disturb the disposition of the soul but, provided that the integrity of nature is preserved intact, pervade by a silent progress the harmony of the body — they are therefore not improperly given the name of reptiles. Now in all animals except man two only of these aforesaid three types of motion are found: that which resides in the sense and strictly speaking lacks the control of reason, and is therefore called bestial; and that which is attributed to the nutritive Life Force, and resembles the reptile. Man participates in these together with all other animals, and conversely all the other animals participate in them in common with him. Do you now see how it is that man is in all animals and all animals in him, and that yet he transcends them all? And if anyone look more closely into the admirable and well-nigh ineffable constitution of nature herself, he will clearly see that the same man is a species of the genus animal and also transcends every animal species, and thus admits an affirmation and a negation: for it may rightly be predicated of him: “Man is an animal”; and: “Man is not an animal”. For when consideration is given to his body and his nutritive Life Force, to his senses and to his memory of sensibles, and to all his irrational appetites, such as rage and covetousness, he is altogether an animal; for all these he shares in common with all the other animals. But in his higher nature, which consists in reason and mind and the interior sense, with all their rational motions, which are called virtues, and with the memory of the eternal and divine things, he is altogether other than animal. For all these attributes he shares with the celestial essences, which by the excellence of their substance transcend in a manner beyond our comprehension everything which is contained in the animal nature.

Human  
reptiles  
752C

Man is Animal  
and is not  
animal  
752D

753A

Therefore, as we have said, it may be claimed with equal justification of man that he is, and is not, an animal. And we may obtain corroboration of this from Holy Scripture. "Man in his animal nature," says the Apostle, "does not perceive the things of God". And again: "Man in his spiritual nature judgeth all things, but is himself judged by none." See how clearly, how unambiguously, he divides man into, as it were, two men: of whom one is animal, since his nature resembles that of the animals, which admits nothing spiritual within itself; and the other spiritual, since it has communion with the eternal, spiritual, and divine substances, and is free of all animality. And that part of him by which he is animal is appropriately termed the Outer Man, while that by which he transcends all other animals as well as the animal part of himself may be called the Inner Man. For in those who live according to the Spirit, in the words of the same Apostle, "the outer man wastes, but the inner man is renewed from day to day." For he who lives perfectly not only altogether despises his body and the Life Force which administers it and all the corporeal senses together with the objects which they perceive, and all the irrational motions which he perceives in himself, together with the memory of all transient things; but also, in so far as he is able, does away with them and destroys them, lest they should in any way prevail within him, and strives that he may become dead to them and they to him. But that part of him by which he partakes of the celestial essence he "renews from day to day", that is, he ascends from virtue to virtue by the movement and co-operation and leadership and perfecting power of the Grace of God.

753B

753C

The double creation of man

753D

And that nature through which man is in communion with the animals is called the flesh: and that by which he participates in the celestial essence is called Mind or Spirit or Intellect. Hear what the Apostle says: "By my mind I serve the Law of God, but by flesh the law of sin." And this has the support of innumerable other texts of Holy Scripture. So what is there so remarkable in the fact that man is understood to have a two-fold creation, seeing that he himself is in a manner of speaking a two-fold creature? That in him which resembles the animals was created with the animals, and that which resembles the spiritual creatures was created in itself and absolutely with the spiritual creatures. Let not your mind therefore be troubled that I said that man was produced out of the Earth in one and the same genus as the rest of the animals, and yet is made "in the image and likeness of God" beyond all animal nature.

A. My mind would not perhaps be so troubled if it could realise more clearly how the creation of man can be such that he is



of one and the same genus as the rest of the animals, and yet in his better part transcends all animal nature.

N. I cannot understand why you wish me to repeat myself. For we have said already that man, in so far as he is an animal, is found among the animals in one genus but that in so far as he is not an animal, he was created outside every genus of all the animals.

A. Alas, a still greater and far harder problem, I think, arises. 754A

N. Be good enough to tell me what it is.

A. Your opinion, I think, is that two souls co-exist in the same man, of which one administers the body, giving it life and nourishment and increase, and perceives the sensibles by means of the corporeal senses and stores the phantasies of them in its memory, and performs all the other functions which it is well known are performed by the souls of the other animals; while the other, which subsists in the reason and the mind, "is made in the image and likeness of God." But this seems altogether absurd.

N. Neither reason nor divine authority would permit me to hold that in the one man there are two souls. Indeed, they would forbid it, and it is not right that any true philosopher should maintain such an opinion. Rather I declare that man consists of one and the same rational soul conjoined to the body in a mysterious manner, and that it is by a certain wonderful and intelligible division that man himself is divided into two parts, in one of which he is created in the image and the likeness of the Creator, and participates in no animality but is utterly removed therefrom; while in the other he communicates with the animal nature and was produced out of the earth, that is to say, out of the common nature of all things, and is included in the universal genus of the animals.

754B  
The human  
soul

A. What, then, shall we say? Can the human soul be described as a certain single nature free from all composition or are we asked to believe that its unity is composed of a number of parts?

N. To one thing I hold most firmly, that the soul is simple and lacks all composition of parts; and one thing I utterly reject, that it receives into its nature any kind of composition whatsoever of parts which differ from one another. For it is whole in itself and its wholeness pervades the whole of its nature. For it is wholly Life, wholly Mind, wholly Reason, wholly Sense, wholly Memory, and it is as a whole that it gives life, nourishment, consistency and increase to the body. As a whole it perceives the sensible species through the

754C

whole of its senses ; as a whole it operates beyond the bounds of the bodily senses and treats, separates, combines and forms judgements upon the nature and order of the Universe ; as a whole it extends beyond and above every creature, including even itself in so far as it is itself reckoned among the numbers of the creatures, and, purged from all vices and all phantasies, revolves about its Creator in an eternal and intelligible motion. And since it is thus by nature simple, its division into the intelligible and substantial differentiations as it were of a whole into its parts is in accord with the plurality of its motions. This is the reason for the many names under which it goes. For when it is occupied with the Divine Essence it is called Mind and Spirit and Intellect ; when it is occupied with the natures and causes of creation it is called Discursive Reason ; when it receives the species of the sensibles through the corporeal senses, it is called Sense ; when after the manner of the irrational animals it performs those hidden operations within the body which give it nourishment and increase, its proper name is Vital Motion. But in all these cases it is everywhere whole.

754D A. Therefore the whole soul is on the one hand produced from the earth in the genus of the animals, and on the other hand is made in the image of God. For this and nothing else is what must follow from the foregoing arguments.

755A N. Just so. And no true and orthodox philosopher should doubt it, lest he appear impiously to rend in twain this most simple and indivisible nature.

A. I still do not see how one and the same man can, as this discussion seeks to demonstrate, be, and yet not be, an animal ; possess, and yet not possess, animality ; be, and yet not be, flesh ; be, and yet not be, spirit. How can such contradictory and mutually opposed predicates be understood of one absolutely simple nature ?

755B N. From what has already been said it should be as clear as day to anyone who looks into the matter more carefully that everything which seems to you to be contrary to the simplicity of human nature is in fact not only not contrary to but is entirely suitable. For among the wise it is maintained that in man is contained the universal creature. For, like the angel, he enjoys the use of Mind and Discursive Reason ; and like the animal, the use of physical sense and the capacity to administer his body : and therefore his nature is understood to include that of every creature. For the whole of creation is divided into five parts : the creature may be either a

body; or a living being; or a sensible being; or a rational being; or an intellectual being. And all these five parts are in every way found in man. For he possesses in his body the basis of his subsistence; then a seminal life to administer that body; sense to preside over that life; then reason to govern the natural parts that are inferior to itself; and finally Spirit, which holds the highest place of all.

And so all human nature, in what it shares with the other animals, is truly animal nature. What it shares with them is body; 755C  
 the life which controls the body; and the sense together with the memory which draws from it the phantasies of sensible objects. But insofar as it participates in the divine and celestial essence, human nature is not animal nature; for it participates in the celestial essence by reason and intellect and memory of eternal things. Here it is entirely free from all taint of animality. For in this part of itself it is made in the image of God: and it is with this part only, in men who are apt for it, that God holds converse. "For it is to that part of man that He speaks," writes St. Augustine in the eleventh book of the *City of God*, "because it is better than the other parts of which man is composed, and God himself alone is better than that part. For since man is made in the Image of God, he straightway is nearer to God (who is superior to him) in that part of himself by which he transcends the natures which are below him, those natures which he shares in common with the beasts." And be it noted that even in this life, even before the time when all that is animal in man becomes 755D  
 spiritual and all that is composite is made one in an ineffable simplicity, the whole man can be both an animal and a spiritual creature; but while it is only by the freedom of his will that he is animal, he is spiritual by the combined operation of freewill and of Grace, for without the latter the innate power of the will is quite insufficient to convert man into spirit. Therefore man becomes 756A  
 animal, and is so described, when he abandons those operations which accord with Reason and Intellect and are concerned with the knowledge of the Creator and of creation, for those irrational activities which among the brute beasts are concerned with the appetites of the body — and falls through his wilful appetite, so as to gorge his sensibilities with the deadly allure of the temporal and corruptible things which tend towards non-being. But he becomes spiritual when, turning wholly towards the better and kindled by the fire of Divine Love, he despises the world and the flesh in all their forms and, abandoning all the activities of animal nature, is wholly transformed into the likeness of the celestial essences, so that in the

quality of a life adorned with all the virtues there is anticipated in him the state to which He is destined by his immutable substance. Thus there are two ways of recognising the animal man : in one, he  
 756B lives entirely according to nature ; in the other, he falls through the irrational motion of his freewill tending to evil. The spiritual man also lives according to nature ; but also in accordance with good will helped by divine Grace, purified by act and knowledge and decked with the adornments of the virtues, he is recalled to the former dignity of the Divine Image.

A. This I freely accept. But there is still something I am not quite clear about. In the genus all species are one. But how can mutually contradictory species be one in their genus? For the definition of man seems to be in contradiction to those of the other animals. For man is a rational animal ; the others are irrational  
 756C animals. Do you not see how completely opposed to one another are the terms rational and irrational?

N. If you consider the natures of things more carefully you will find that this proposition, which concerns difference, is that we have in the one genus not two contraries but two *differentiae*. Let us take an example :

Every creature is either visible or invisible. This distinction is one of difference, not of contradiction. For visibility and invisibility are two properties which are separate from one another but not mutually repugnant. Likewise every creature is either corporeal or incorporeal. Again, in the Divine Nature there are distinguished the different states of the Divine Persons. For whereas the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten and the Spirit is neither begotten nor unbegotten ; and there are innumerable examples of the same kind. But to give you a clearer understanding I would ask you to observe that contradiction is always held to be within the same  
 756D species or part, whereas difference distinguishes one part from another : thus, if speaking of man one were to say of that species of nature which according to its substance is called man, that man is a rational animal and that man is an irrational animal, this would be the statement of a pair of contradictories, of which one will be true and the other false. For contradictory statements of one and the same subject cannot both at the same time be true or both at the same time be false, whether they be of a universal or of a particular  
 757A application.

So when you say: Man is a rational animal, horse is an irrational animal, no contradiction arises since the difference of substance between the rational and the irrational animal is made clear. For in allowing reason to man and denying it to horse you indicate the difference between man and horse. For it is precisely this that is man's difference from the other animals, that he possesses reason, just as it is their difference from him that they do not. But no distinction must be made herein between the possession and the lack; for the possession in man's case is the presence of reason, while in the case of the horse the possession is the absence of reason. For the horse is not deprived of that which it never could have possessed. Where there was no antecedent possession there will be no consequent deprivation. Death could never occur to any animal or to any being which participates in Life if there had not been an antecedent possession of life. And in like manner it would be wrong to call any animal stupid save that in which we see that the possession of reason was a possibility; nor insensitive save that in which the possession of sense could naturally inhere.

757B

A. Why, then, did you say that in one and the same subject two mutually contradictory predicates could not be both at the same time false or true, but that if the one were true the other must be false, so in the case where of one and the same animal it is said that it is a horse and not a horse? For now you appear to assert the simultaneous truth of contradictory predicates in man: that man is an animal, and that man is not an animal, and you declare that he possesses this character naturally until his whole animal nature becomes spiritual. And why is this so in the case of man only and not in that of the other animals, in whom it is absolutely true that they are animal and absolutely untrue that they are not animal?

757C

N. Do you believe that any other animal than man was made in the image of God?

A. Certainly not.

N. Do you deny that two mutually adverse predicates can be made of God, and can be true and in no way false, although they are not of the same power, as for instance when it is said that God is Truth and that God is not truth?

A. I would not dare to do so, seeing that He Himself has said of Himself "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life," while St. Dionysius the Areopagite says in the Symbolic Theology that God "is neither the truth nor the life:" for he writes that He "is

neither power nor light nor life,” and a little later “neither is He science nor truth.”

757D N. Perhaps Dionysius is contradicting Christ Who predicated of Himself that He was Himself the Truth?

A. Impossible.

N. Either statement is true, then : God is Truth, and God is not truth?

758A A. Not only true, but the profoundest truth. The one statement is made by affirmation and by metaphor from the fact that He is the Creator and Primordial Cause of Truth, and because it is by participation in Him that whatsoever things are true are all true; while the other is made by negation, and relates to that transcendence which is More-than-Truth. And so it is true that God is truth, since He is the cause of all truths, and it is also true that God is not truth, transcending as He does everything which can be spoken or can be thought or can exist. Nor have I forgotten that you added the words, “although both statements are not of the same power”; for affirmation is less capable than negation of signifying the ineffable Essence of God, seeing that by the former one among the created attributes is transferred to the Creator, whereas by the latter the Creator is conceived in Himself beyond every creature.

In human nature the image is in the animal and the animal is in the image

758B

N. You did well to recall this comment which I added. Why should we then be surprised if man, who alone among the animals is made in the image of God, can truly and simultaneously have it said of him that man is an animal, and that man is not an animal? For by this we at once understand that it belongs to the species of this animal to be specially fashioned after the image of God, concerning Whom predicates may be truly and simultaneously made which in the case of other animate creatures are mutually exclusive. And if affirmations and negations of the Divine Essence coincide for the reason that It transcends all things that were created by It and of which It is the Cause, who would not infer that affirmations and negations harmoniously coincide also in the image and likeness of It which is man, seeing that this animal transcends the others among which it is fashioned in the same genus, and is the cause for which they were fashioned? For what true philosopher is unaware that this visible world with all its parts, from the highest to the lowest, was created for the sake of man in order that he might preside over it and be the lord of all visible nature? This is the teaching of St. Gregory, who in his *Treatise on the Image* writes as follows :

“Every creature except man was established some how by the Divine power at the same time as the Mandate was given. But before the establishment of man there was a council, and he was prefigured by the Creator through the word of Scripture as to what he should be, and with what quality it were fit to endow him, and after what primal exemplar he should be modelled and of what material he should be made, and what function he should perform, and over what he should be lord. All these things were first considered by the Word so that before he came forth into being a more venerable rank in the world of becoming was allowed him as one destined to hold sway over all the things that are. For, to quote the Holy Word, God said: Let us make man in our image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea and over the beasts of the earth and over the birds of the air, and over cattle and over the whole earth.” 758C

And this was given him whether he sinned or not, although he would not have ruled in the same way if he had not sinned as he rules now that he has sinned. 758D

And to make matters clearer: do you suppose that man is an animal in that part which is made in the Image of God? Or that the Image of God subsists in that part in which he was brought forth among the beasts of the field? Or that either the one or the other, that is, either the image or the animal, is not truly to be found in man?

A. To the last question I would say at once that I make no such supposition; for that reasoning is sound which discovers both these aspects in man. But to the former questions, that is, as to whether the Image is in the animal and the animal in the Image I should reply with an unqualified negative were I not perplexed by something which you said before as to man being everywhere a whole in himself. For from this it appears to me to follow that the whole image must subsist in the whole animal and the whole animal in the whole Image throughout the whole man. 759A

N. I am surprised that this should trouble you, seeing that it is precisely herein that the image and likeness of God in human nature can be recognised. For just as God is both beyond all things and in all things, for He Who only truly is, is the essence of all things, and while He is whole in all things He does not cease to be whole beyond all things, whole in the world, whole around the world, whole in the sensible creature, whole in the intelligible creature, whole creating 759B

the Universe, whole created in the Universe, whole in the whole of the Universe and whole in its parts, since He is both the Whole and the Part, just as He is neither the whole nor the part ; in the same way human nature is in its own world, in its own universe and in its visible and invisible parts whole in itself, and whole in its whole, and whole in its parts, and its parts are whole in themselves and whole in the whole. For even the lowest and least valuable part, the body, is according to its own principles whole in the whole man, for the body, in so far as it is truly body, subsists in its own principles which were made at the beginning of creation ; and since human nature is so in itself, it goes beyond its whole. For it could not otherwise cleave to its Creator if it did not go beyond all the things that are  
 759C beneath it and beyond itself. For, says Augustine, between our mind by which we know the Father and the Truth through which we know Him, no creature is interposed. And in a fine passage of the *Symbolic Theology* the Areopagite, Dionysius, I mean, teaches the same thing :

“O friend Timothy, do you, strengthened by your sojourn among the mystical speculations, abandon not only the senses but also intellectual activities, abandon the sensibles and the invisibles, all non-being and all being, and emptying yourself of all knowledge restore yourself as far as possible to the Unity of Him who is beyond all essence and all knowledge ; for there by the immeasurable and absolute ecstasy of the mind you will ascend from yourself and all things, abandoning all things and liberated from all things, to the Superessential Ray of the divine Darkness.”

And in the Gospel Our Lord says : “Where I am there is My  
 759D servant also.” But He is above all things : above all things therefore is the man who cleaves to Him, and above himself in so far as he is in all things.

And although human nature while sojourning in this mortal life cannot by itself truly cleave to God, yet by the Grace of Him to Whom it cleaves it is both possible and in accordance with its nature to do so ; therefore we not improperly say that human nature cleaves to its Creator. For experiment is generally regarded as a test of  
 760A possibility, and that which is bound to happen some day is regarded as though it were already achieved.

But why did I say “in its own world, in its own universe”, when I could more plainly have said “in the whole world, both visible and invisible?” For humanity is wholly in the wholeness of the whole



created nature, seeing that in it every creature is fashioned, and in it all are linked together, and into it shall all return, and through it must all be saved. Hear what his Creator says : “Preach the gospel unto every creature ;” that is, to man. There is mind to be found, there reason, there sense, there the seminal life, there the body — not this corruptible body which is the result of sin, but that which man had before the Fall : not this composite and dissoluble body, but that simple and indivisible body ; not this animal and earthly body, but that which is spiritual and heavenly ; not this body begotten by both sexes from seeds through carnal intercourse, but that which was brought forth before the Fall out of the simplicity of nature and which is to be in the Resurrection : not this body which is known to the corporeal senses, but that which is still hidden in the secret place of nature : not that which was laid upon us in recompense for sin, but that which was already inherent in us in our uncorrupted nature and into which this corruptible and mortal body will be restored. “It is sown,” says the Apostle, meaning that it is born from the seed, “in corruption, it will rise in virtue.” In what sort of virtue ? Surely, in the virtue of that very body which was established according to nature in the beginning. “It is sown in derision, it will rise in glory ; it is sown an animal body, it will rise a spiritual body.” For everything that is created in man according to nature must of necessity remain eternally intact and uncorrupted. For it is not in accordance with the Divine Justice that anything should perish of that which He has made, especially as it is not nature herself who has sinned, but the perverse will which moves irrationally against rational nature.

Now of this there is an excellent proof : if the hatred of death is an innate quality in man, must he not also hold naturally in abhorrence the cause of death, which is sin ? And this is something common to all animals, to avoid and fear death and the causes of death. Therefore just as no philosopher wishes to enter into error, so human nature did not wish to sin, and therefore her Creator, being just, did not wish to punish her, but rather was it His will to impose upon her that in which might be purged that fault caused by the perversity of the will and the persuasiveness of the serpent, that it might not cleave to her forever. For the reasonable and intellectual nature, although not wishing to be deceived, was not incapable of suffering deceit, especially as she had not yet attained the perfection of her form which she was to receive as the reward of her obedience and by which she was to be transformed in *theosis* or deification. We

ought not therefore to judge human nature as she is manifested to the bodily senses and as in punishment for her Fall she undergoes the penalty of being born a temporal and corruptible object into this world by sexual intercourse after the likeness of the irrational animals and whose end is death ; but as she was established before the Fall in the Image of God, a condition in which she eludes in a mysterious way through the ineffable dignity of her nature every bodily sense and all mortal thought. Deceived and fallen, blinded by the murkiness of her depraved will, she has given up to oblivion herself and her Creator.

761A And this is the most wretched feature of her death, and the deepest profundity of her submersion in the fog of ignorance, that she has drifted so far from herself and her Creator and approached in likeness so near and so shamefully the irrational and mortal animals. And from this state none could again redeem her or call her or bring her back or restore her to the former condition from which she fell save the Wisdom of God Which created her and received her  
761B into the Unity of substance with Him, that thus he might save her and free her from all her woe. Let it then not trouble you that it is said of human nature that it is everywhere a whole in itself, that the Image is whole in the animal, and that the animal is whole in the Image.

6 N. For everything which her Creator primordially created in her remains whole and intact, though remaining hidden until now, awaiting the revelation of the Sons of God.

A. Perhaps I should not be in difficulty if you could clearly convince me of something which I cannot see for myself; for I wonder whether man would have been an animal if he had not sinned — or, to put the question in another way, was man an animal before he sinned? If he was not, why have we toiled so long to seek, and, I think, to find, man's state in the universal genus of the animals? For if he was not created in that genus, either before the Fall he was not an animal at all, or, if he was, he was fashioned in a different genus of animals. But neither does Holy Scripture make mention of such a thing nor does the most careful enquiry into nature reveal any trace of it. For all animals subsist in a single genus, from which they proceed by divisions. On the other hand, if from the text, "Let the earth bring forth living soul," we are to assume that man's state before the Fall was among the other animals, why does the Psalmist bring it against man after the Fall as  
761C

a great disgrace : “Man when he was held in honour, fell short of intelligence, and became comparable to the irrational cattle, and was made like unto them ?” Here the Prophet seems to make it quite plain that before the Fall man held the honour of a spiritual substance transcending the nature of all animals : but that slipping back therefrom and failing to realise the dignity of his nature he fell into the disgrace of a likeness to the beasts of the field. But if he was an animal before the Fall, why after the Fall is it held against him that he has acquired the likeness of the animals with whom he was in his nature created together in a single genus ?

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N. You would have reason to raise this question if the Prophet had simply said “He became comparable to the cattle, and was made like unto them ;” but he adds the epithet “irrational” and thereby makes it sufficiently clear that this is the chief charge against man, that while he was a spiritual and rational animal in his original state of the image and likeness of God he foolishly and irrationally acted against the command of his Creator and brought upon himself the likeness of the foolish beasts, dishonouring the natural dignity of his nature by a brutish activity which was improper to himself. It is not for being an animal that he is praised, but for being the image of God : neither is it for being an animal that he is blamed, but that he willed to distort the image which he could not destroy. For in the other animals irrational action is not shameful, for it is according to their nature, and they could not be animals without it. But in the rational animal it is a reprehensible distortion of nature to fall by the forbidden concupiscence of a perverse will into the activity of irrational animals, although to them it is natural, and to desire to remain therein, abandoning the more exalted beauty of the Divine Image.

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A. Rightly indeed is the rational animal blamed for acting in the way of the irrational animals ; and rightly to be reprehended is the man of honourable form who of his own free will clothes himself in the form of a beast and hurls himself from that which is the better down to that which is much inferior.

But there still remains the question why God created man, whom He wished to make in His image and likeness, in the genus of the animals. For since man had been chosen to be the principal participant in the Supernal Figure and to be the peer of the celestial essences in whom there is permitted to be no consubstantiality with the terrestrial animals, it would seem a greater honour for him to be constituted free from all animality. For the celestial essences are not

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The angel  
is not  
animal

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weighed down by earthly bodies, nor do they use corporeal senses for knowledge of sensible things. For they do not receive phantasies from without, but know inwardly within themselves the “reasons” of the things which they perceive. For that matter neither does the soul see outside itself the things which it perceives, but it does have to rely upon inward phantasies of them, which the angels do not require. I grant you that Plato defines the angel as a rational and immortal animal: but if our speculations about the nature of things are to be firmly grounded we ought not rashly to include among them anything which cannot be supported by the authority of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Again, Saint Augustine not only does not deny the possibility that the highest angels have spiritual bodies in which they frequently manifest themselves but actually asserts that this is so: but we are by no means bound by this to believe that the celestial substances are animals, especially as it is not the harmony and inseparable linking of celestial and incorruptible bodies with angelic spirits which produce an animal but the joining of earthly and corruptible bodies to rational or irrational souls through the medium of sense. Of course, if the exterior sense were present to the body and the intellect of the angel, nothing would prevent us from saying, as Plato was pleased to do, that the angel, being in that case a composite of body and soul with sense mediating between the two and intellect bringing life to the whole, was an animal: but in that case, why are angels not counted in the genus of the animals?

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For as to man, he would have been an animal even if he had not sinned: for it was not sin but nature which made an animal of him. Moreover there is no tradition which gives us the authority to say that the angels who sinned were animals, which would logically follow from such an argument. For that future bliss which is promised to the saints is taught to be nothing else but equality with the angelic nature, perfect and lacking in nothing. But who that was truly wise would believe that man’s destined transformation was as it were from an inferior to a superior animal, from an earthly to a heavenly animal, from a temporal to an eternal animal, from a mortal to an immortal animal, from an unhappy to a blessed animal? Would he not rather believe that all the things which in this life are understood or perceived to be attributes common to devout men and to the other animals are by a certain ineffable mutation changed into that celestial and incommunicable essence which has nothing of animality about it; and that this too would have been the

condition of man, had he not sinned? Why then is man created in the genus of the animals which are produced out of the earth, a genus in which he is not destined always to remain? For when this world, of which man is an animal part, shall have perished, all that is animal in man shall perish with it and in it. For it is not reasonable that when the whole shall perish the parts shall escape destruction. Moreover, if the whole world with all its parts is to be destroyed I fail to see how man, in so far as he is a part of the world, could survive the world, — or in what place or in what way. Hence my insistence in begging you to resolve this knotty problem.

763C

N. What you demand is a very advanced physical explanation of man's creation, which will require us to prolong our discussion considerably. When you ask why God should have created man, whom He proposed to make in His own Image, in the genus of animals, it should be enough for me to reply briefly that He wished so to fashion him that there might be one among the animals in which His Image was expressly manifested. But if one goes on to ask why He wished to do so, he is enquiring into the causes of the Divine Will, an enquiry which is over-presumptuous and arrogant. "For who hath known the sense of the Lord?" But if I should say that, you would relapse into an ungrateful silence and consider me incapable of producing a clear and full exposition. While, therefore, I will not tell you *why* He willed, for that is beyond all understanding, I shall relate, to the extent that He Himself has told us, *what* He willed to do. He has created in man all creatures visible and invisible, for the whole spread of creation is understood to inhere in man. For although after his transgression and the failure of supernal Light it is not clear yet how great was the first creation of man, nevertheless there is nothing naturally present in the celestial essences which does not subsist essentially in man. For there is innate in him Intellect and Reason, as well as the principle of possession of the celestial and angelic body, which after the Resurrection shall appear more clearly than light both in the just and the unjust: for it will be common to all human nature to rise again in eternal and incorruptible spiritual bodies. "It is sown," he says, "an animal body; it is raised a spiritual body." All this sensible world is fashioned in man. No part of it is found, either corporeal or incorporeal, which does not subsist created in man, which does not perceive through him, which does not live through him, which is not incorporated in him. Do not think here of man's physical stature, but rather of his natural potency, particularly bearing in mind that

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In man every  
creature was  
created

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in the human body itself the pupil of the eye, albeit the least of all the members in physical size, yet exerts the greatest power. If then  
 764B God did not create man in the genus of the animals, or at any rate, if He did not place the whole nature of all animals in man, how would the whole of creation, both visible and invisible, subsist in him? Reason, then, permits us to say that God willed to place man in the genus of the animals for this purpose: that He wished to create every creature in him. And if you ask me why He wished to create every creature in him, I reply: because He wished to make him in His image and likeness, so that, just as the Primal Archetype transcends all by the excellence of His Essence, so His image should transcend all created things in dignity and grace. But as to why it should be man whom He wished to create in His Image before all creatures visible and invisible, I confess that I am entirely ignorant.

Why God  
 wished to  
 create every  
 creature in  
 man  
 764C

A. I consider that you have given a sufficient and reasonable reply to my question why God wished to create man in the genus of the animals. But I have a further question to ask: In what way are all things created in man, and how do they subsist in him? Are they in him simply as essence, or simply as accidents, or do they play in him all the roles which we observe in universal creation, that is, essence, species, difference, property, and everything which is understood to relate to them?

N. I am in some difficulty as to how to give a rational answer to that question. For if I reply, simply as essence, you will rightly object that in that case only those things exist which subsist as essences, and other things which are understood to relate to essence or substance are not to be reckoned in the number of the universe of things — in fact are altogether without being; and if this is so, you will ask me, whence are those things which are understood to relate to the essence of existents? If I say that these things were made by God, you will ask: "Why then are they not included in the sum of the things which were created in man?" And if I say that they were not made by God, you will reply that in that case they are not; for if they were, they would not be from any other than the Universal Cause which is God. And if I grant that those things which are understood to relate to essences are not among the number of existents because they are not from God, you will at once ask: "How then do we have understanding of them? For nothing which is not from God can by any means be understood, because it does not exist in any way." If I say that not only the essences, but all things which are understood naturally to relate to them are from  
 764D  
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God and to be numbered among the parts of the whole, I shall undoubtedly be compelled to choose one of the two following alternatives : either that the whole universe of things was not created in man in its entirety, since only the essences were made in him : or that the entire universe of things, that is, the essences and everything which is perceived to relate to them and to inhere in them is established in man ; but if I say that it is not a part of the universe of things, that is substances, that is constituted in man, but the whole of it, you will follow with the hardest question of all : Was irrationality then made in him, and bestiality, quadrupedality, volatility and all the differences of the divers animals and of the other things, together with all species and properties and accidents and all the other innumerable attributes which seem to be so far removed from human nature that if they were indeed found in man, he would rightly be considered not a man but the foulest of monsters ?

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A. You have piled up the difficulty of the question, and deliberately raised up against yourself what would have been raised by another ; and thus you are in a position either to clear it up or to pass it over as being over-abstruse and go on to another ; but that would seem a most unsuitable proceeding.

N. Let us then make some attempt to examine it so as not to leave it for the time being wholly untouched.

765C

A. You will not be able to satisfy me otherwise.

N. Is it your opinion that everything which is known by the intellect or the reason or imagined by the sense can somehow be created and produced in the knower and perceiver ?

A. It seems to me that it can. For it is indeed my opinion that the species of sensible things and the quantities and qualities which I reach by my corporeal sense are in a certain way created in me ; for when I imprint the phantasies of them in my memory, and when I deal with them within myself by division and comparison and, as it were, collect them into a kind of unity, I notice a certain knowledge of the things which are external to me being built up within me ; and in the same way when I seek earnestly after certain concepts resembling the intelligible species, concepts of intelligibles which I contemplate with the mind alone, as for example the concept of the liberal arts, I feel them born and becoming within me ; but the relation between this knowledge and the things themselves which are its object I do not fully grasp.

The  
knowledge of  
things is  
better than  
765D  
the thing  
itself

N. How does it seem to you? Are the knowledges of things, made in the soul, of the same nature as the things themselves, or are they something different?

A. They are different. For how will the corporeal species of, for example, a certain animal or grass or tree be of one nature with the knowledge of it which is produced in an incorporeal nature? And in the same way how can the intelligible species of any discipline and the knowledge of it be of the one nature?

766A N. If then they are of a different genus or nature and not the same, tell me, I pray, which of the two is the more excellent? Are the things of a more exalted nature than the concepts of them, or are the concepts more exalted than the things?

A. I should have said that the visible species are of a better nature than the concepts of them, were it not for Saint Augustine who in the Ninth Book *On the Trinity*, chapter Eleven, gives the following opinion:

“When we learn of bodies through the sense of the body, a certain replica of the bodies is created in our mind: this is a phantasy in our memory. For it is certainly not the bodies themselves that are in our mind when we reflect on them, but replicas of them. Nevertheless the phantasy of a body in the mind is better than the species of that body, in as much as it is in a better nature, namely, in a vital substance, for such the mind is. Furthermore I would not dare to say that even intelligible things are better than the concept of them which is in the soul.”

766B

For it is a doctrine according to reason that that which understands is better than that which is understood. Thus, if the knowledge of all things subsists in the Divine Wisdom, I should not be rash in asserting that this Wisdom is incomparably superior to the things of which it is the knowledge. And if so, I believe that the same relationship proceeds from the Divine Providence throughout all creation, so that not only every nature which has the knowledge of that which follows it is better and superior, but also the knowledge itself, through the dignity of the nature in which it resides, greatly excels the object of which it is the knowledge. And therefore I should find it rather easy to say that the knowledge of the intelligible is antecedent to the intelligibles themselves.

N. You would perhaps be right in saying so if that which is formed is more excellent than that which forms.

766C

A. Why do you make this qualification?



N. Because the knowledge of the arts which is in the soul seems to be formed by the arts themselves. But if you could establish beyond doubt that the knowledge was not formed from the arts, but the arts from the knowledge, your argument would perhaps be running on the right lines.

A. Did we not prove a moment ago that everything which understands is more excellent than that which is understood?

N. We did.

A. Tell me then whether it is the skill of the mind which understands an art or an art which understands the skill.

N. I have no doubt that the art is understood by the mind. But if I were to say that the same art was known by the skill itself in the same manner as it is known by the mind which is endowed with that skill, I should be afraid of seeming to assert that the mind and its skill are two things furnished with the knowledge of the art, instead of being one and the same essence, in which the knowledge of the art is naturally present. If however the mind and its skill are not two different but, as true reason teaches, one and the same, I am compelled to admit that everything which is understood by the mind is also understood by its skill, and it must follow that the mind and its skill, or rather, the skilled mind, is of a more excellent nature than the art which it understands, if the things which understand are prior to the things which are understood. If, however, I were to say that the art itself was the skill of the skilled mind, the consequence would be either that the skilled mind and the skilled art were two entities with mutual understanding of each other and mutually understood, and thus enjoying an equal dignity of nature; or else the mind and its skill, and the art which it understands and by which it is understood, must be considered to be of one and the same essence. But it is not yet clear which of these alternatives should be adopted.

766D

767A

The mind, its skill and art are of the same substance

A. Perhaps it will be if, under guidance of God, we enter upon the right path of reasoning.

N. Let us then look into the matter more carefully. But first I should like you to tell me whether the nature of the mind which possesses the skill of the art is simple or not.

A. I think that it is simple. For being an incorporeal and intellectual substance it must therefore be without all compositeness.

N. You think rightly. Do you suppose then that something which does not naturally reside in its essence may adhere to it as an accident ?

767B A. I think indeed it may. For I see that many things are contingent to it. For example, it is not time ; yet it moves in time. Skill in the arts is an accident to it : for at one time it is recognised as skilled, at another as unskilled ; at one time disciplined, at another undisciplined ; now wise, now foolish ; sometimes, indulging in irrational cogitations, it is seen to be in error, while at other times it goes upon the path of right reason ; and so on.

N. So skill in the arts, or the art itself, do not naturally reside in it, but come to it from outside as the result of accidents.

767C A. I should not go so far as to say that ; for it is not likely that God should have created in His own image and likeness a mind in which skill and the art were not naturally inborn, for this would not be so much mind as a kind of brutish and irrational life. Nor do I think that it would be right to say that man's creation in the Image of God was rather by accident than by substance, especially when we see that intelligence and reason are present in the mind substantially.

N. Then [skill and the art] are not accidents to the mind, but are naturally present to it ?

A. I think it would not be rash to say so. For although through the accident of its transgression of the divine command whereby it became forgetful both of itself and its Creator the mind is born unskilled and unwise, yet when it is reformed by the rules of doctrine it may discover again in itself its God and itself and its skill and the art and all those things which subsist in it according to its nature, if it be irradiated by the Grace of its Redeemer.

767D N. It remains then to consider in what way skill and the art reside in the mind, whether as those natural qualities which are known as potencies, like the species of wisdom and science which it perceives in the reflection of the Divine Ray ; or as substantial and constituent parts of itself, so that mind, skill and the art would form a kind of trinity in one essence.

A. Your last suggestion is the one which I would accept. For the three seem to me to form a kind of substantial and connatural trinity.

N. Then mind intellectually comprehends both its skill and the art, and is intellectually comprehended both by the one and by the other (though not as to what it is, but as to the fact that it is). For otherwise the trinity will not be coessential and coequal.

A. I could not deny this, for reason compels me to admit it.

N. Consider then whether they are formed by one another or by some nature superior to them. 768A

A. If the Catholic Faith did not teach that this trinity is established and formed and intellectually comprehended by a higher nature, and if Truth did not assent to this teaching, I should have some justification for replying that they are perhaps formed by one another, or at least that they are their own primal Form. But under the circumstances, of course, I do not doubt that the trinity of the mind is formed by a superior Nature, seeing that all things that are formed take from It the origin of their Forms, and it is by being turned towards It that are formed all things which are turned towards It or can be turned towards It.

N. Any hesitation on this point would be extremely stupid. So only the Mind of God possesses in Itself the true knowledge of the human mind, of its skill and of the art, for by It and for It was this trinity formed.

A. Nothing could be truer than that.

N. Do you think that the human mind is one thing, and the concept of it in the Mind of Him Who forms and knows it another? 768B

A. That cannot be. For I understand the substance of the whole man to be nothing else but the concept of him in the Mind of his Artificer, Who knew all things in Himself before they were made; and that very knowledge is the true and only substance of the things known, since it is in that knowledge that they are most perfectly created and eternally and immutably subsist.

N. We may then define man as follows: Man is a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the Mind of God. Definition of man

A. That is an extremely true and very well tested definition of man; and not only of man, but of everything else which is formed in the Divine Wisdom. And I am not afraid of those who define him not as he is intellectually comprehended to be, but according to those things which are seen by the intellect to relate to him, saying that man is a rational mortal animal capable of sense and learning; and what is more amazing, they call this definition a substantial one, 768C

although it is not substantial at all but describes what relates to the substance from the attributes acquired by the substance from outside itself through generation. But the concept of man in the Mind of God is none of these ; for there it is simple, and cannot be called by this or that name, for it stands above all definition and all groupings of parts, for it can only be predicated of it *that* it is, not *what* it is. For that is what a truly substantial definition does : it asserts only *that* it is, but does not say what it is.

N. Does it seem to you that there is a kind of concept in man of all the sensible and intelligible things the human mind can understand ?

A. That clearly seems to be true ; and indeed the essence of man is understood principally to consist in this : that it has been given him to possess the concept of all things which were either created his equals or which he was instructed to govern. For how could man be given the dominion of things of which he had not the concept ? For his dominion over them would go astray if he did not know the things which he was to rule. Holy Scripture gives us a clear indication of this when it says :

Let the concept in man of every animal be its substantial name  
769A

“Therefore, having formed out of the earth every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens, the Lord God brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living soul that is its name.”

The substance of intelligible and sensible things in man is made according to the likeness of God

It says “to see,” that is, to understand what he would call them. For if he did not understand, how would he be able to call them rightly ? But what he called anything that is its name, that is, it is the very notion of the living soul.

N. What is so remarkable then, in the notion of nature, created in the human mind and possessed by it, being the substance of the very things of which it is the notion, just as in the Divine Mind the notion of the whole created Universe is the incommunicable substance of that whole ? And just as we may call the notion of all intelligibles and sensibles in the whole of things the substance of those intelligibles and sensibles, so we may also say that the notion of the differences and properties and natural accidents are the differences and the properties and accidents themselves.

769B

A. There is no objection to that.

N. Therefore, not only is irrationality created in the mind, but also every species, difference and property of irrationality, and all

things which are naturally learnt concerning it, since the knowledge of all these and similar things is established in it. By similar things I mean those which nature contains besides the animals, such as the elements of the world, the genera and species of grasses and trees, quantities and qualities, and all the innumerable multitude of differentiations. True knowledge of all these is implanted in human nature although it is concealed from her that she has it until she is restored to her pristine and integral condition, in which with all clarity she will understand the magnitude and the beauty of the image that is fashioned within her, and will no longer be in ignorance of anything which is established within for she will be encompassed by the divine Light and turned towards God in Whom she will enjoy the perspicuous vision of all things. 769C

What else does the great Boethius mean when he says: "Wisdom is the comprehension of the truth of the things which are and whose lot it is to be endowed with immutable substance. And by the things which are we mean those which are neither enlarged by extension nor diminished by retraction nor changed by any variations, but ever preserve themselves in their proper strength by the exercise of their own resources. Such are qualities, quantities, forms, magnitudes, smallnesses, equalities, conditions, acts, dispositions, places, times, and whatever is found in any manner united to corporeal objects. They themselves are by nature incorporeal and flourish by reason of their immutable substance, but through participation in body their circumstance is altered and through contact with the variable object they pass into changeable inconstancy;" and where else do you suppose these things subsist but in the notions of them contained in the soul of the wise? For where they are comprehended, there they are; and they are nothing other than the understanding of themselves. 769D

Man's substance is his concept of himself in himself

A. The solution of this present problem demands a complex exposition, and an unceasing flow, as though from an inexhaustible source, of countless and various cognate problems pours forth from all sides of it in the process, so that it would not be unfairly compared to that fictional Hydra of Hercules whose heads grew again as often as they were cut off in such proportion that for one that was severed a hundred sprang up. Moreover this figment is a symbol of human nature, for that too is a hydra, that is to say, a kind of multiple source of inexhaustible depth into which none save Hercules, that is, virtue, may penetrate. "For no one knoweth what things are in man, save the spirit of man which is in him." If then 770A

that inner notion which is contained in the human mind constitutes the substance of those things of which it is the notion, it follows that the notion by which man knows himself may be considered his very substance.

N. It certainly follows. For we have already said that the  
770B human mind, and its knowledge by which it knows itself, and the discipline by which through learning itself it obtains that knowledge of itself, subsist as one and the same essence.

A. What then are we to say about our definition of man? Did we not just now arrive at the conclusion that man is a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the Divine Mind? But if that is so, and if we were not overhasty in arriving at this definition, how can man's substance be the notion by which he knows himself?

N. Surely we were not overhasty. For that definition which declares that a certain concept formed eternally in the Divine Mind is the substance of man is true. But neither is our present teaching unreasonable, namely that the knowledge by which the human mind knows itself is in man his substance. For every creature is considered  
770C under one aspect as it exists in the Word of God in which all things are made, and under another as it exists in itself. This is what St. Augustine means when he says in his *Hexæmeron* :

“In one way the things which are made through It are subordinate to It, in another the things which It is are in It. For the understanding of all things in the Wisdom of God is the substance of all things, nay, it is all things. But the knowledge by which the intelligible and sensible creature has intelligence of itself as it is in itself stands, as it were, for a kind a secondary substance in it, by which it has only the notion that it knows and is and wills, but has no notion what it is. The primary substance, constituted in the Wisdom of God, is eternal and immutable, while the secondary is temporal and variable; the one precedes, the other follows; the primary is primordial and causal, the secondary derivative and caused; the primary contains all things as a whole, the secondary comprehends through knowledge as particulars as many things as  
770D are allotted it by its superior, and are subjected to it; the secondary emanates from the primary and will return to it again.”

I am not now referring to that superessential substance which by being itself is God and the sole cause of all things, but of that which is created as a primordial cause in the Wisdom of God, and of

which the effect is this substance which we have made secondary, and is so disposed by the natural order of things.

A. We should understand, then, that man has two substances, one that is a genus among the Primordial Causes, and another 771A which is a species among the effects of those Causes.

N. No, I should not say that there were two substances, but one which may be conceived under two aspects. Under one aspect the human substance is perceived as created among the intelligible Causes, under the other as generated among their effects; under the former free from all mutability, under the latter subject to change; under the former simple, involved in no accidents, it eludes all reason and intelligence; under the latter it receives a kind of composition of quantities and qualities and whatever else can be understood in relation to it, whereby it becomes apprehensible to the mind. So it is that what is one and the same thing can be thought of as twofold because there are two ways of looking at it, yet everywhere it preserves its incomprehensibility, in the effects as in the causes, and whether it is endowed with accidents or abides in its naked simplicity: under neither set of circumstances is it subject to created sense or intellect nor even the knowledge of itself as to what it is. The substance of man understood simply

A. How can it be, then, that the human mind, as you have been asserting now for some time, possesses a notion by which it knows itself and a discipline by which it learns of itself; and yet, as you now maintain, is not discernible either to itself or to any other creature? The human mind cannot be understood

N. Both assertions have the full support of reason. For the human mind does know itself, and again does not know itself. For it knows that it is, but does not know what it is. And as we have taught in the earlier books it is this which reveals most clearly the Image of God to be in man. For just as God is comprehensible in the sense that it can be deduced from His creation that he is, and incomprehensible because it cannot be comprehended by any intellect whether human or angelic nor even by Himself what He is, seeing that He is not a thing but is superessential: so to the human mind it is given to know one thing only, that it is — but as to what it is no sort of notion is permitted it; and, a fact which is stranger still and, to those who study God and man, more fair to contemplate, the human mind is more honoured in its ignorance than in its knowledge; for the ignorance in it of what it is is more praiseworthy than the knowledge that it is, just as the negation of God accords better with the praise of His Nature than the affirmation and it shows 771C

Ignorance is to be praised more than knowledge

771D greater wisdom not to know than to know that Nature of Which ignorance is the true wisdom and Which is known all the better for not being known. Therefore the Divine Likeness in the human mind is most clearly discerned when it is only known that it is, and not known what it is ; and, if I may so put it, what it is is denied in it, and only that it is is affirmed. Nor is this unreasonable. For if it were known to be something, then at once it would be limited by some definition, and thereby would cease to be a complete expression of the Image of its Creator, Who is absolutely unlimited and contained within no definition, because He is infinite, beyond all that may be said or comprehended, superessential.

772A A. How then is every creature made in the knowledge of man, which does not even know of itself what it is, and this is thought to be its great glory, the mark of a superior nature and indication that it is circumscribed by no finite substance ?

772B N. I assure you that there is a very strong argument which points to the fact that every creature is created as substance in man. For we are taught by Gregory the Theologian (who touches on this matter in his controversy with those who deny that the Word of God is superessential and maintain that it is contained within some substance and therefore does not transcend all things but is to be counted among their number, seeking thereby to show a distinction between the Substance of the Father and the Substance of the Son), that of the substance of all things we cannot have a definition of what it is. So the human replica of the Divine Essence is not bound by any fixed limit any more than the Divine Essence in Whose Image it is made. And it is the same with the attributes by which it is surrounded : its time and place ; its differences and properties ; its quantities and qualities ; its relations, conditions, positions ; its acts and its passions : of these too it can only be understood that they exist but by no means what they are. From this it follows that there is no creature that can be held to possess any other substance but that reason by which it subsists in the Primordial Causes within the Word of God, and thus there can be no definition of what it is, seeing that it transcends every substantial definition. There can only be circumstantial definition, which relates to its accidents whereby it proceeds through generation into its proper species, either intelligible or sensible.

8 A. Both Holy Scripture and our own reason declare that the human and the angelic nature are either the same or very similar ; for both man and angel are held to be, and in fact are, intelligible



and rational creatures. And if there is this close correspondence between them it is reasonable to enquire why we are taught that every creature is made in man but not in angel. 772C

N. There is a good reason for this, I think. For we observe in man not a few things which neither reason understands nor authority transmits to subsist in angel. For instance there is this animal body which, according to Holy Scripture, was attached to the human soul even before the Transgression; there is the fivefold bodily exterior sense; there are the phantasies of sensible objects, which through that sense enter into the soul; there are the perplexity and difficulty which delay the reason's enquiries into the nature of the Universe; the painful industry which it requires to discriminate between vice and virtue; and very many other things of that sort. For that all these things are lacking to the angelic nature while present in nature no truly wise man would deny. Nevertheless, Augustine in the Eighth Book of the *City of God*, Chapter Seven (*sic*), would appear to have taught that the angels have sense, for in that chapter he praises the contemplative power of the great philosophers because "they saw that all forms of mutable things, whereby they are what they are (of what nature soever they be) have their origin from none but Him that truly is and is unchangeable. Consequently neither the body of this universe, the figures, qualities, ordered motion, and elements disposed from heaven down to earth, and whatever bodies are in them, nor any life — whether that which nourishes and conserves, as in the case of trees, or that which has this but also perceives, as in the case of the animals, or that which has all this but also understands, as in the case of man, or that which has no need of the support of nourishment, but conserves, perceives and understands, as in the case of the angels — can have being but from Him who has only simple being." 772D  
The angels do not sense 773A

But I should say that he was here referring to the interior sense. For who does not know that the celestial being is untouched by very many of the parts and motions of nature which are naturally innate in the human being? And of those things which are not innate in it either as substance or happen to it as accident, it is not reasonable to hold that the celestial substance possesses the knowledge. For although the Angels are held to administer this world and every corporeal creature, yet we must by no means suppose they do so through the instrument of the corporeal senses or by movements through space or time or by visible manifestations. Nor would it be right to say that it was through some defect in their power that they 773B

do not have those accidents which are ours through the shortcomings of a nature which is still subject to variations of space and time. For when they transform their spiritual and invisible bodies into visible apparitions in order to reveal themselves in space and time to the mortal senses, they accept this accident not for their own sakes, but for the sake of those men of whom they are in charge and to whom they declare the mysteries of God. For with them vision is not exercised through sense nor conditioned by space, nor their knowledge of how they shall act in administering nature conditioned by

773C time, for they eternally transcend all time, and all space in the contemplation of Truth, in which the causes of their administration are present all at once to their sight. And do not suppose that I am speaking of all celestial essences, — I speak only of the higher orders who stand ever before the face of God and in whom there is no ignorance save that of the Divine Dark which excels every intellect. In fact, the lowest order, the angelic properly so called, through which the higher orders carry out the mandates of divine Providence either in the human mind by means of apparitions or in the other parts of this world, is not yet free from all ignorance, for, as

773D St. Dionysius the Areopagite in his book on the *Celestial Hierarchy* most ingeniously shows, “It is instructed by the higher orders and initiated into knowledge of divine mysteries beyond its ken.”

And so not unreasonably are we told to believe and understand that every visible and invisible creature is created in man alone. For no substance has been created which is not understood to subsist in him, no species or difference or property or natural accident is found in nature which either is not naturally in him or of which he

774A cannot have knowledge ; and the knowledge of the things which are contained within him excels the things of which it is the knowledge by so much as the nature in which it is constituted excels. For every rational nature is rightly preferred to the irrational and sensible nature because it is closer to God. Wherefore it is also rightly understood that the things of which the knowledge is innate in human nature have their substance in the knowledge of themselves. For where they have the better knowledge of themselves, there they must be considered to enjoy the truer existence. Furthermore, if the things themselves subsist more truly in the notions of them than in themselves, and the notions of them are naturally present to man, therefore in man are they universally created, as will no doubt be proved in due course by the Return of all things into man. For why

774B should they all return to him if they did not in some sense partake of

his nature, and did not in some manner proceed from him? But about the Return we have promised to speak in its proper place.

A. Although these matters seem extremely difficult since they pass beyond the limit of simple doctrine, yet if we consider them with the speculative reason, they are sufficiently consistent with the capacity of the understanding of the human condition, and are most useful in establishing what now may be properly admitted, that man was not brought forth in the genus of the animals: rather every genus of animals was brought forth from the earth, that is to say, from the solid part of nature, in him — and not only every genus of animals was made in man, but the whole created Universe; so that truly of man may we understand these words of the Truth: “Preach the Gospel unto every creature.” Also the Apostle says: “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now.” But if there be any to whom these things seem too abstruse or altogether incredible, let him, if unversed in all the natural arts which are called liberal, either keep silent or learn not to argue rashly about what he cannot understand: or if he is learned he will plainly see that (to offer him an example from one of these arts) geometrical figures do not naturally subsist in themselves but in the “reasons” of the art to which they belong. For the triangle which is seen by the corporeal sense in a material object is a kind of sensible image of something which is present in the mind; and of this triangle whose substance is in the instructed mind he will have understanding, and with sound judgment estimate which is the better, the triangular figure or the triangle which it is the figure. And if I am not mistaken, he will find that the figure is a true figure, certainly, but a false triangle, whereas the triangle which subsists in the art is the cause of the figure and is the true triangle. And I am not speaking of the imaginary triangle which proceeds from the mind through the memory into the sense, and through the sense into sensible figures, nor of that which returns again from the sensible figure through the corporeal sense and is implanted in the memory, but of that very triangle which endures immutably in the art itself, where line and angle exist together, and where there is not one place for the angle, another for the middle, another for the extremity, another for the point, another for the spaces of the sides from the point, another for the spaces of the angles from the point, another for the point from which the lines originate and in which the angles are enclosed by the meetings of the lines; but all these things are one in one and the same notion of the geometer’s mind, and the whole is understood in the particulars and the particulars in the

whole, unified in the intellect itself, for the intellect is the substantial cause of all things which it understands, and that from which the figures of the geometrical bodies proceed into their species. And what we have said of the triangle must also be understood of all other figures, whether angular or curved or oblique, and whether plane or solid. For all these subsist in their notions which are comprehended under one and the same "reason" in the skilled mind instructed in the art. If, then, the geometrical bodies, whether they are formed in the phantasies of the memory or in some sensible matter subsist in the rational notions of themselves which lack all phantasy or matter, beyond anything which is perceived by the bodily sense or imagined by the memory, why should it be so strange that the natural bodies also, composed of the qualities of the universal elements, have their substance in that nature in which there is knowledge of them, especially as all the perceptions of bodies are incorporeal? For the species in which they are contained are incorporeal, nor would any wise man doubt that quantities and qualities are likewise of an intelligible nature and proceed from the intelligible reasons of vital substance.

775B

9 N. Whoever looks intently into the nature of things will soon find that this is the way in which they are constituted.

How every creature was created in man, even if we read that he was made after the creation of all

775C

A. After this discussion it will not be inappropriate to enquire in what way every creature is created in man, seeing that we are taught that man himself was created last of all. For if the whole of created nature, both visible and invisible, was created before him, as is handed down to us by the Divine History, and we read of nothing being created after him, how can it be explained that we can perceive that every creature is created in man? For if anyone should say that created nature was created twice, first after its species in itself and then as a genus in man, I should find difficulty in bringing such a view into accord with reason, for if that were the case, man would possess no substance of his own, but would be a kind of amalgam of many things, in fact of the whole creation which had already been established before, one manifold conglomeration of divers forms.

775D

And worse still, if every creature whether visible or invisible is in itself most perfectly created (and since the Creator is perfect and more-than-perfect, it cannot be believed that He has created anything that is imperfect), how should it receive as it were a second perfection of its nature in man, whose creation was the last of the Divine Operations? And if it did, then it would not be out of nothing that God created man in His own Image, but out of those

things which were created before him. But if anyone shall say that the human body was not made out of nothing, but out of a kind of earth, namely clay, what would he say about the better creation of man which undoubtedly was established in soul and spiritual body in his first creation? For the former (that is, the soul) was made by the Divine Breath, nay rather, it is the Divine Breath, formed, as we believe, not out of something, but out of nothing. 776A

N. I see that this question is involved in a great deal of obscurity and requires versatile skill for its solution, but rather than burke it altogether we shall make some attempt at examining it insofar as we are inwardly enlightened by the Divine Ray. But first tell me, I pray, if the intelligibles or sensibles are prior to the mind which understands them or the sense that perceives them?

A. I think I should be right in saying that where there is one thing that understands and another that is understood, and where that which understands is of a better nature than that which is understood, the understanding mind or the perceiving sense is prior to the thing which is understood or perceived. But where the things themselves understand themselves, as far as that may be, I should not say that they are prior to themselves, for where the things itself and its knowledge of itself are one, I do not see what kind of precedence there can be. 776B

Although I know that I am, my knowledge of myself is not prior to myself because I and the knowledge by which I know myself are not two different things: if I did not know that I was I would not be ignorant that I did not know that I was: therefore whether I know or do not know that I am I shall not be without knowledge: for there will remain the knowledge of my ignorance. And if everything which is able to know that it does not know itself cannot be ignorant of the fact that it is (for if it did not have any existence at all it would not know that it did not know itself) it follows that absolutely everything has existence which knows that it is or knows that it does not know that it is. But if anyone is so far sunk in ignorance that he neither knows that he is nor perceives that he does not know that he is, I should say that either such a one is not a man at all, or that he is altogether dead. 776C

In the foregoing arguments we have sufficiently established the fact that these two things inhere at once and inseparably and eternally in the human soul: knowledge and ignorance. For it possesses the knowledge that it is a rational and intelligible creature; and the ignorance of what intelligence and reason are.

N. Then you did not exist before you knew or did not know that you existed?

A. No. For at one and the same time I received my being, and the knowledge that I was, and the understanding that I did not know what I was.

N. Tell me, when does man receive the knowledge of himself: in that creation in which all men generally were made in their Primordial Causes before the beginning of time; or in that generative process by which in the course of time known only to God and  
776D predetermined by Him man issued forth into this life?

A. In both, I think. In the one it receives the knowledge in a general manner and secretly in the causes, in the other it receives it in a special manner and openly in the effects. For in that primordial and general state of all human nature no one knows himself as a species nor begins to have a particular knowledge of himself, for there is one general and common knowledge of all, known only to God. For there all men are one, and that one is made in the Image of  
777A God, in Whom all are created. For as all the forms or species which are contained in the one genus do not as yet become subject through differences or properties to the intellect or the sense, but subsist as a kind of unity which is still undivided until each shall receive in its individual species its property and difference in an intelligible and sensible form: so in the case of the individual in the common unity of human nature, he does not behold either himself or others of like substance with himself until he has proceeded into this world in the time appointed for him in accordance with the reasons which are eternally established.

N. Why then does not everyone know himself as soon as he has arrived through generation into this world?

A. I could safely say that here we have an indication of the penalty which our nature must pay for its transgression. For if man  
777B had not sinned he certainly would not have fallen into such a depth of ignorance of himself, any more than he would have suffered the shame of sharing with the irrational animals the propagation of his species by means of the two-fold sex, as the wisest of the Greeks maintain with the most convincing arguments. For He Who alone was born without sin into the world, to wit, the Redeemer of the World, never anywhere suffered from such ignorance, but as soon as he was conceived and born had understanding of, and could speak and teach concerning Himself and all things. This was so not only

because He was the Wisdom of the Father from Whom nothing is hid, but because in order that he might purify the corruption of humanity He put on an humanity which was incorrupt — not that the humanity which He put on is other than the humanity which He restored, but He Who alone is incorrupt remained in it as a means of healing the wound of our perverted nature, hidden in its inmost reasons. For human nature perished entirely in all men except in Him in Whom alone it remained incorruptible. And indeed He himself is the greatest example of Grace, not because He was freed of any part of the guilt of human nature, but because He alone of all men through no previous merit was joined by unity of substance with the Word of God, in Whom all the elect and all who receive the fulness of His Grace become the sons of God and participants in the Divine Substance. 777C

N. There was then in human nature the potency of possessing the fullest knowledge of itself had it not sinned.

A. Nothing is more likely. For most mighty and most wretched was that fall in which our nature lost the knowledge and the wisdom which had been planted in her, and lapsed into a profound ignorance of herself and her Creator, even though we understand that the desire for the bliss which she had lost remained with her even after the Fall, which would certainly not have been the case if she had lost *all* knowledge of herself and her God. 777D

N. So the fullest knowledge both of herself and her Creator was implanted in her as part of her nature before the Fall, in so far as the knowledge of a creature can comprehend itself and its cause? 778A

A. Such is my opinion. For how would she be an image if in some respect she differed from that of which she is the image? — except of course in the relation to the subject, about which we spoke in the earlier books when we were discussing the prototype or principal Exemplar and its image. We said there that God Himself was the Principal Exemplar, subsisting through, by and in Himself, neither created nor formed nor changed by any thing; whereas His image, which is man, is created by Him, and does not subsist through, by or in itself, but, at the hands of Him Whose image it is, it has received being in accordance with its nature, and being God in accordance with His Grace. But all other things which are predicated of God may be predicated of His image also: but of God essentially, of the image by participation. For it is by participation in the Supreme Good and the Supreme Goodness whose image it is, that 778B

the image is both goodness and good; by participation in that Eternal and Eternity by which it is formed, that it is both eternal and eternity; by participation again in that omnipotence by which it is created and turning to which it is specified that it is itself an omnipotence. For if human nature had not sinned but had adhered unchangeably to Him Who had created her, she would certainly have been omnipotent. For whatever in nature she wished to happen would necessarily happen, since she would wish for nothing else to happen save that which she understood that her Creator wished to happen; moreover, if she had fully adhered to her Creator and not abandoned Him so as not to lose her likeness to Him, she would fully comprehend His omnipotent and unchanging will and all the other things which may reasonably be predicated or contemplated or understood in God and in His image.

778C

N. If then the perfect knowledge both of herself and her Creator was present in human nature before the Fall, it would not be remarkable if in reason we found that she then possessed the fullest knowledge of natures similar to her own, like the celestial essences, and those inferior to herself such as this world with its causes, which are subject to the intellect, and that this science still abides in her, generally in potency only, but in the highest men in act.

A. To those who understand these matters clearly there would be nothing remarkable in that, for it is true and probable.

N. And it is to the great and true glory of the human race that it is so, and especially to Him Who willed to make it so. Wherefore in like manner we should accept the following account of His intellect and His knowledge. Just as the Creative Wisdom, which is the Word of God, beholds all things which are made in It before they are made, and that very beholding of all things which are beheld before they are made is their true and eternal and immutable essence, so the created wisdom, which is human nature, knows all things which are made in it before they are made, and that very knowledge of the things which are known before they are made is their true and indestructible essence. Accordingly, the knowledge in the Creative Wisdom is itself rightly held to be the primary and causal essence of the whole of creation, while the knowledge in the created nature is the secondary essence and subsists as the effect of the higher knowledge. And what we have said about the primary and causal essence which is constituted in the knowledge of the Creative Wisdom and about the secondary which is its effect and

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The difference  
between  
divine and  
human  
knowledge



which is reasonably stated to subsist in the human soul, may without hesitation be applied to all the attributes which are observed to be attached to the essence of all creation. For the accurate examination of nature shows us that whatever circumstance attaches to the substances in the human intelligence proceeds through the created wisdom from the knowledge of the Creative Wisdom. Now, attached to the essences there are the sensible species, quantities, qualities, places, times and like attributes without which the essence cannot be understood. 779B

We can then sum up everything that we have been trying to teach briefly as follows :

Just as the understanding of all things which the Father made in His only begotten Word is their essence and is the substance of all those attributes which are understood to be attached by nature to the essence ; so the knowledge of all things which the Word of the Father has created in the human soul is their essence and the subject of all those attributes which are discerned to be attached by nature to that essence : and just as the Divine Understanding is prior to all things and is all things ; so the intellectual knowledge of the soul is prior to all the things which she knows and is all the things which she fore-knows. Therefore all things subsist as causes in the Divine Understanding, but as effects in human knowledge. 779C

As we have often said before, this does not mean that the essence of all things in the Word is something other than the essence of all things in man, but one and the same essence is contemplated by the mind under two different aspects, as subsisting in the eternal Causes, and as understood in its effects : for There it surpasses all understanding, while here it is understood only through the consideration of the attributes which are attached to it : in neither case, however, is it permitted to the created intellect to know what it is. For if it could be known it would not entirely reproduce the image of its Creator in itself, for from those things of which He is the Principle, the Cause and the Maker it can only be known that He is, but *what* He is escapes all sense and all intellect. The creation of no creature preceded 779D man ; the creation of man preceded in dignity and knowledge

A. There was, then, no creature, either visible or invisible before the creation of man — neither in place nor in time nor in rank nor in birth nor in eternity nor, in a word, in any order of precedence. For in knowledge and rank, though not in place or

time, man's creation is prior to those things which were created with it or in it or below it, but simultaneous with the creation of those who are his equals in the hierarchy of nature, that is to say, the celestial essences. For human nature also participates in the celestial and intelligible essence, and it is to human as well as angelic essence and nature that the scriptural text refers: "He created the heavens in His intellect," which may be interpreted: He created the intelligible Heavens. For this reason it is not easy to understand how all things visible and invisible are established in man if man was created as substance together with the angelic essences. For it does not seem in accordance with reason that on the one hand the beginning of his creation should be simultaneous with that of the celestial powers and on the other that they should be created in him.

The creation  
of angel and  
man was  
simultaneous

N. If you look more closely into the mutual relation and unity which exist between intelligible and rational natures, you will at once find that not only is the angelic nature established in the human but also the human is established in the angelic. For it is created in everything of which the pure intellect has the most perfect knowledge and becomes one with it. So closely indeed were the human and angelic natures associated, and so it would be now if the first man had not sinned, that the two would have become one. Even as it is this is beginning to happen in the case of the highest men, from whom are the firstborn among the celestial natures. Moreover the angel is made in man, through the understanding of angel which is in man, and man is in the angel through the understanding of man which is established in the angel. For, as I have said, he who has a pure understanding is created in that which he understands. So the intelligible and rational nature of the angel is created in the intelligible and rational nature of man just as the nature of man is created in the nature of angel, through the mutual knowledge by which angel understands man and man angel.

There is nothing strange in this. For when we enter upon a discussion together the same thing happens: each of us is created in the other: for when I understand what you understand I am made your understanding, and in a certain way that cannot be described I am created in you. In the same way when you clearly understand what I clearly understand you are made my understanding, and of two understandings is made one, formed from that which we both clearly and without doubt understand. For example, to take an illustration from numerology, you understand that the number six is equal to its parts: and I understand the same thing, and understand

that you understand it just as you understand that I understand. Each of our understandings, formed by the number six, has become one, and thus I am created in you and you are created in me. For we ourselves are not other than our understandings; for our true and ultimate essence is understanding specified by the contemplation of truth. Moreover we are taught by the Apostle (when he forbids our understanding to cherish visible forms, saying, “Be not fashioned after this world”) that the understanding can conform not only to natures which are co-essential with itself, but also to natures which are inferior to it when it understands and senses them in love. Consequently, by reason of this mutual understanding, it is not untrue to say that the angel is created in man and man in the angel, and by no law of creation or method of precedence can it be rightly believed or understood that angel is prior to man, although, according to many, the prophetic narrative speaks first of the creation of the angelic nature and subsequently of the human. For, as St. Augustine points out in the Eleventh Book of the *City of God*, it is not to be believed that Divine Scripture, in the relation of the operations of the six Primordial and Intelligible Days, was entirely silent about the creation of the celestial powers, but either on the very first page of Genesis, where it is written “In the beginning God made heaven and earth,” he indicated their creation by the name heaven, or a little later, where it is said “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” The aforesaid Father asserts that the creation of the angelic nature is implied in both places, but especially in the second. For in the former text the name heaven refers rather to the establishment of the whole invisible creation in unformed matter than to the specific formation of the angelic nature. But the words “Let there be light, and there was light” he has no hesitation in ascribing to the formation of the celestial essences — although he mentions the interpretation of others who refer this divine precept to the creation in the upper parts of the world of a primal light subject to the sense and occupying space. However this interpretation he refutes by very acute arguments in his *Hexæmeron*.

780D

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The words “And God divided the light from the darkness, and God called the light day, and the darkness He called night” he interprets in a double sense: either light means the formation in its proper species of the angelic creature, and darkness the formlessness of that creature while yet imperfect, a formlessness which is prior to the form in origin though not in time; or the division of the light

781C from the darkness signifies the segregation and differentiation of that part of the angelic nature which had immutably adhered to its Creator, deserving through its obedience the foretaste of bliss, from that part which did not abide in truth but in punishment for its pride fell into the darkness of ignorance of its future fall and lasting misery. But whoever wishes to learn more of this twofold interpretation of the most holy master, let him zealously read his own words in the *Hexæmeron* and in the aforesaid volume of the *City of God*, which I think it would be redundant to quote in this little discussion of ours as it is lengthy and available to all.

A. Right. For there is no cause to introduce the opinions of the Holy Fathers, especially those that are widely known, except where the gravest necessity requires that reason be supported for the sake  
781D of those who, being untrained in it, are more amenable to authority than reason.

10 But I should like to learn from you why the establishment of the angelic nature is related on what is called the First Intelligible Day, that is in the first movement of the Prophetic Meditation, and then a description of the four days of the sensible Universe is interposed before the formation of man is introduced in the sixth movement of the Meditation ; or, to put it more clearly, why is man  
782A not introduced at the very beginning of the contemplative Act of the whole creation, instead of at the conclusion of all, when that operation has already been six times repeated? For not only the angelic essence, but also the essence of sensible things, seems to precede in dignity, not to say time, the creation of man.

N. It is in this very fact that the exaltation of human nature over all existent things is most clearly shown : for by this it is made abundantly clear that in all those events which are related before the creation of man, he himself was already created, in fact that all things were created in him. For perhaps the chief reason why the creation of the angels is not more explicitly stated than by the word "light", why it is not said : "Let there be angel," or : "Let Us make  
782B angel" in the same way as it is written, "Let Us make man" is that we may understand that the creation of the substance of man, no less than that of angel, is to be inferred in the creation of *light*. But if man participates in the creation of the celestial essence which is signified by the creation of *light*, what true natural philosopher would not conclude that all things that are related after the creation of light are created in man, not only in his knowledge of them but in their very being — especially when he is in no doubt whatever that

this sensible world was created for the sake of man, that he might rule it as a king rules his kingdom and as a husband his household, and that he might use it to the glory of his Creator, subordinated to no part of it, in no way dependent on it, but raised above it ruling it alone? For if man had not sinned he would not be ruled among the parts of the Universe, but would himself rule the whole of it as his subject: and he would not employ for that purpose these corporeal senses of the mortal body, but would govern eternally and faultlessly the whole and the parts of it in accordance with the laws of God, without any physical act in space or time, but solely by the rational apprehension of its natural and innate causes by the easy use of right will. But if he were to abandon his Creator and fall down into the world from the lofty station of his nature, he would then lose his rank and be ignobly counted among its parts, and be himself corrected by the Divine Justice and pay the penalty for his sin.

782C

So the reason why man is introduced at the conclusion of the narrative of the equipping of this visible world is that we might understand that all the things of which the creation is narrated before that of man are universally comprehended within him. For every greater number includes within itself the lesser. For if the creation of man was clearly stated at the beginning of the narration of the creation of the visible and invisible Universe, all the rest of nature, of which the creation would be narrated in order subsequently, would reasonably appear as subsisting outside his nature. But as it is, since the creation of man is introduced at the conclusion of all the divine operations, it is shown that the divine creations all subsist and are comprehended in him. And indeed, in the case of the celestial essences, that is, the angels, we said that they subsisted in him in two ways. In one way because, were he not hindered by the earthly habitation of this mortal body which is the result of sin, he would be co-essential with them, that is to say, co-intellectual and co-rational: in another because their mutual recognition is so closely knit that united by reciprocal intellection and formed by the simple contemplation of truth, the angel is born in man as man, and man is born in the angel as angel. What shall I say of the operations of the second movement of the Prophetic Meditation? Do we not recognise that that Firmament, which is the solidity of the simple elements set between the upper waters of the Primordial Causes and the lower waters of the unstable motions of corporeal and corruptible nature, which flow in space and time through the processes of birth and decay, — do we not recognise that it is established in the essence

782D

All things  
that are  
783A  
narrated in  
the works of  
the First Six  
Days were  
created in  
man

The creation  
of the  
firmament in  
783B  
man

of man? For what shrewd student of human nature does not observe therein the universal elements of the world?

The creation  
of earth,  
water, grasses  
and fruits in  
man

What should be said of the operations of the Third Day? Do we not recognise in man the stability of substance which is signified by the phrase "Dry Land," and the instability of the transient accidents which is signified by the inundations of the "waters," and the distinction of the one from the other by their natural differences? And do we not reckon among the parts of human nature that vital principle which gives nourishment and increase and life to the grasses and twigs?

783C

And as on the First Day the principal part of man, that most sublime light, that is to say, Intellect and Reason, was established together with angelic nature in the creation of Light; so on the Fourth Day of the Prophetic Meditation, there was introduced according to a rational order the creation of that secondary light which is called exterior sense, created for the apprehension of the shapes and species and qualities and quantities of visible things. For although the exterior sense, which is the intermediary between the soul and exterior objects, belongs properly and naturally to the soul, yet it is reckoned with the body because it exerts its power through bodily instruments. So the Prophetic Meditation did well to establish, in the fourth place of creation of things, the creation of that sense which is attached to a body formed out of the four elements of the world. Now the modes of this sense are three, of which the first without danger of error announces to the mind the species of the sensibles: and this it does so admirably that with the greatest ease and without labour the mind is able to form unclouded judgments upon these species in all clarity. This mode is therefore not improperly called the larger luminary for it does not deceive the mind, but with all the brightness of the sun uncovers every sensible species and lays them bare before the reason.

The triple  
mode of  
sensing

783D

The creation  
of the sun in  
man

The second mode, which is likened to the lesser luminary, is one through which the mind is often deceived, as though wandering uncertainly through some nocturnal tasks: consequently it cannot easily form true judgements upon objects which it receives through sense. Examples of what I mean are the oar which appears to be broken when it is dipped in the water, the reversed face in the mirror, towers which appear to those sailing to move, the counterfeit of voices which the Greeks call ἠχῶ, and a thousand other illusions of this sort, which are found naturally in all the senses of the body. And the rational soul must employ the most anxious care and

784A

The creation  
of the moon  
in man

utmost industry to distinguish these from true appearances when forming its judgments. For these have no existence in nature, but are formed in the senses and frequently deceive the mind and put it into the error of taking false things for true.

The third mode is that which admits to the mind, in multiplicity and accumulation, numbers of sensible forms. It takes from the sphere of sensible nature, decorated with the various orders of innumerable species, the choirs, as it were, of the countless stars, and is so bewildered by the confusions of so many mingled phantasies that scarcely if ever can it form a judgment about them which will be free from error; but attempts by means of certain logical processes to make statements which will to some extent resemble the truth, and to be certain about things which are themselves uncertain. And it disputes about the minutest principles of visible nature without ever employing the same method twice: sometimes offering opinions which, like bright stars, show a degree of clarity and proximity to the truth; sometimes opinions that are more obscure and further from the truth, like dimmer stars; sometimes very obscure and very far from the truth, like those stars which are scarcely to be seen. Therefore the third power of the senses is described under the metaphor of the stars of different brilliancies. 784B

The creation  
of the stars in  
man

Thus the three modes of sensation are established in the three orders of celestial luminaries. For as the sun is in the world, so is the most sure and infallible mode of sense in man: as is the moon, so is the ambiguous phantasy which is, as it were, a doubtful light to the sentient mind: as are the stars so are the imperceptibly small numbers of the phantasies which are produced by the innumerable and imperceptible species of bodily objects. And do not let it surprise you that human perceptions — I refer to the bodily senses — are signified by the greater things of the world, namely the celestial bodies: for the soundest reason teaches us in no uncertain way that man is one, and in his unity a greater One than the whole visible world, not by the bulk of his parts but by the dignity of the harmony of his rational nature. For as the holy Father Augustine teaches us that “the soul of a worm is better than the body of the sun that illuminates the whole world” — for the lowest form of life, however humble, is to be preferred by reason of the dignity of its essence to the first and most valuable of bodies — what then is surprising in the fact that all the bodies of the whole world are of lower degree than the sensation of man? First because the natural 784D

cause is of a higher order than those things of whose creation it is by nature the cause — and indeed no wise man doubts that the sensibles were created for the sense, and not the sense for the sensibles. Next, because it is reasonable that the nature which makes a judgment is of a higher order than that upon which the judgment is made — and it is perfectly plain to every careful observer of nature that the senses form judgment upon the sensibles and not the sensibles upon the senses. A further consideration is that sense is only found in living substance, in which the vital activity is most manifest, while the sensibles, in so far as they are bodies, need not always manifest the vital activity, for they exist in the lowest place of creation. For there are some sensibles in which the vital activity scarcely ever or never appears. Finally no sensible is a vital principle even though it may appear to be moved by a vital principle ; whereas sense, as nature herself teaches us, is not only alive but is itself, in its essence, Life. And if the quantity and magnitude of the bodily mass of the sensibles is a matter for praise, still more so is that quantity and magnitude of power which subsists in the senses. See what power there is in the sense of the eyes which can gaze into the infinity of the light-filled space and can mould within itself the divers and innumerable species of bodies, colours, shapes, and all other things of which the phantasies enter the memory by means of this sense : And what will you say of the power of hearing, which can absorb and discriminate between so many voices which are heard at the same time and conflict with one another ? And anyone who in this way considers the other senses will contemplate for himself their marvellous and indescribable virtues.

From the foregoing we may see how the intelligible principles of created nature, in so far as our mind can grasp them, are created in the human Intellect ; and that similarly the sensible species of the same Universe, with the quantities and the qualities, in so far as our sense may apprehend them, discover the causes of their creation in the human sense, and therein subsist.

But since sensation is not confined to man, but is present by nature in the other animals, it undergoes a further distribution. In the Fifth Movement of the Prophetic Meditation it is attributed to the creeping things of the sea and the birds of the air. Rightly so, since the sense which was conferred upon nature on the Fifth Day is itself fivefold.

And on the Sixth Day it is applied to the land animals. The reason for this is, I think, that they have a closer kinship with man,

785A  
Of sense  
and sensible

785B

785C

Another  
triple division  
of the senses  
which  
likewise are  
made in man



who was created on the Sixth Day, than the animals which were produced from the nature of the waters.

Thus man himself, whose creation is detail by detail mystically foreshadowed in the contemplations of the Divine Act referred to before, seeing that all the foregoing were created in him and with him, not in chronological order but the order in which causes flow forth into their effects, is at last manifestly formed as the climax of the whole Universe, by the sixth repetition of the Prophetic Meditation, so that in that number not only the perfection of human nature but the creation in it of all which was revealed prior to it might be symbolised. For the Scripture says: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image and likeness, and let him rule over the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air and the beasts and all creation, and over every creeping thing which moves on the earth. And God created man in His image, in the image of God created He him." 786D

Here it should be first noted that in the creation of all things which from the beginning of creation are described in the foregoing Five Intellectual Days, the Unity and ineffable Trinity of the divine superessential nature, or, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite calls it, the "Fecundity of the Highest Good", is not openly expressed — although in the text "In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth" it is not unreasonable to see a reference to the Persons of the Father and the Son: the Father in the word "God", the Word in the word "Beginning". And a little later the Holy Spirit is introduced in the text "And the Spirit of God brooded over the waters." So in the creation of the Primordial Causes the Holy Trinity is given Its proper place. Moreover, in the procession of the Causes into their forms and species Holy Scripture makes a similar reference to the Trinity; for instance: "God said, Let there be light". By the name of God is intended the Father, and by the sensible word implied by the phrase "He said" His only begotten and super-intelligible Word, in Which and through Which He made all things that are. But in the text "God saw the light because it is good" the Holy Spirit is intended, as also on the other days wherever it is added "And God saw it, because it was good." But on the Sixth Day, when man is created, both the Unity and the Trinity of the Divine Nature are stated most explicitly: the Unity in the words "And He said," where "God" is understood or, as in the Septuagint, openly expressed, "And God said;" while in the plural verb "Let Us make" are expressed the Three Substances of the One Essence, or as the Latins 786B

786C

more usually have it, the Three Persons of the One Substance. Rightly so: for where the Image is created, there the Primal Exemplar of which it is the Image is most explicitly revealed.

- 11           Now although man is a unity, he is in a manner of speaking composed out of a number of parts, for it is agreed that he is made up of body, that is, matter possessing a sensible form, and soul, which in turn is composed of sense, reason, intellect, and vital motion. It may therefore be asked whether it is throughout all his parts that man is created in the image of God, or only in respect of those which occupy the loftier or most lofty place in his nature. And  
786D I shall be grateful to hear what is your opinion in this matter.

- A. This is a question on which almost all the scriptural commentators have something to say. And in the first place they unanimously allow that it is not in respect of his body that man is created in the image of God: for God is incorporeal; there is no corporality in His Substance nor does it befall Him as an accident. But as to whether it is in the soul as a whole, that is, throughout all the parts which are discerned in it, or only in the higher parts that man is created in the image of God, has been a matter of most vigorous debate among spiritual authors, and the conclusion has  
787A been reached that nowhere but in the most exalted part, that is to say, the intelligible, is the Divine Image expressed. For this part is seen to be threefold, consisting clearly of Intellect, Reason and the Interior Sense; which have been the subject of many exchanges between us in the earlier books. For many philosophers deny that the image of God is to be found in that Vital Principle by which the body is administered and by which the human soul seems to have a common nature with the nutritive and auctive life-principle which is the special attribute of grasses and trees; or in that five-fold and exterior sense in which man shares a common nature with the irrational animals; although these are regarded as parts of the soul. But a more careful examination of the human soul reveals that its nature is of the simplest, and that it is wholly a whole in itself and by  
787B no means is it unlike itself in any part, or inferior or superior to itself in any of those qualities which are found in its essence. For, as has already been said, it is as a whole that it administers the body and gives it nourishment and increase; as a whole that it perceives through the senses; as a whole that it receives the phantasies of the sensibles; as a whole it is in the numbers of the occursors which first take up the phantasies of the sensibles; as a whole in the progressors which conduct them into the mind; as a whole in the recorders

which commend them to the memory; as a whole in the whole memory; as a whole above the whole memory, whether of the sensibles or the intelligibles. It is not therefore a diversity of parts — if we have to assert that it has parts — which is distinguished in the soul, but a variety of functions and movements. For its movements are its parts, which produce divers cognitive faculties in the soul. For she herself is everywhere in herself whole and individual: but her movements, which are also called soul-numbers, because they are found in the soul, are designated by different names. For when she is occupied in a contemplative activity about her Creator, transcending herself and transcending the understanding of all creation, she is called intellect or mind or spirit: when by what may be called the secondary activity of her nature she investigates the causes of nature, she is called reason: when having found them she distinguishes them and defines them, she is called interior sense: when she receives through the organs of her body the phantasies of the sensibles, she is called exterior sense (not because the exterior sense is itself the essence of soul, but because it is through it that she perceives the forms and species of the sensibles; for there is a vast difference between the nature of the simple mind and the multitudinous variety of the bodily instruments): when she administers the body by giving it nourishment and increase, she gets the name of Vital Motion: and yet she is of the most simple, the most indivisible and the most impartible essence and is not diminished in her minor offices nor magnified in her greater offices nor is she most in her greatest offices, but in all she is the equal of herself, as the great Gregory of Nyssa affirms in his *Treatise On the Image*.

787C  
A repetition  
of the  
motions of  
the soul so  
that they may  
be seen more  
clearly

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From this we may understand that the whole human soul is made in the image of God, since it is wholly an intellect which intellects, wholly a reason which reasons, wholly a sense in the interior sense and in perception, wholly life and life-giving.

Now there are two principal aspects under which we recognise the creation of the human soul in the image of God: first, in that, as God is present throughout all the things that are and can be comprehended by none of them, so the soul penetrates the whole frame of her body but cannot be included within it. Secondly, in that as of God only being can be predicated, but in no way can it be said of Him what He is, so the human soul is only understood to be, but what she is neither herself nor any other creature understands. Thus the aforesaid Gregory in the Eleventh Chapter of the above-mentioned *Treatise on the Image*, drawing a distinction between the

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bodily senses and the nature of the mind, in treating of the mind says that it is incomprehensible.

- “What then in its very nature is the mind,” he asks, “which divides itself up with the powers of the senses, and through each of them receives befittingly the knowledge of the things that are? For no wise man, I fancy, doubts but that it is something other than sense. For if it were itself what sense is, it would certainly have an affinity in sense operation with one of the senses: for it is simple, and no variety may be admitted into the simple. But now if the senses are compared with one another, it is seen that touch is one thing and smell another and that the others are similarly related to one another without mingling, seeing that each has its apt and proper function. The mind itself, then, must be something of a
- 788C nature altogether different from sense, if we are to keep its intelligible simplicity free from all variety. “Who,” asks the Apostle, “has known the mind of God?” But I would rather say: “Who has understood his own mind?” Would those who place the Nature of God among the things which they hold within their comprehension say if they understood themselves, if they knew the nature of their own mind? Is it perhaps a thoroughly partible nature, and thoroughly composite? How should an intelligible be in composition? Or what would be the mode of putting together the different genera? But if it is simple and incomposite, how is it divided into the manifold divisions of sense? How is variety found in the simple, or unity in variety? But to know the solution of these things of which there is question I have recourse to the very words of God Himself.
- 788D For He says: “Let Us make man in Our image and likeness.” So long as the image does not lack any of those things which are discerned in the Primal Exemplar, it is a proper image: but if in anything it departs from conformity to the primal Exemplar, there it is no longer an image. Is it not therefore necessary because incomprehensibility of essence is among the things which are predicated of the Divine Nature, that he to whom the Image has
- 789A been apportioned shall imitate wholly the Primal Exemplar? For if the nature of the Image were to comprehend the Primal Exemplar, it will itself be beyond comprehension. If contrariety is found in those things that are predicated (of the Divine Nature), which must happen in this case, the fault is attributed to the image. But since the very nature of our mind, which is made in the image of its Creator, escapes knowledge, it possesses an exact likeness to that

which is placed above it by the fact that in itself it is unknowable, showing the characteristic of an incomprehensible nature.”

Again, in the Thirteenth Chapter he writes :

“Since God is Himself the most beautiful and best of all things, that towards which all things which have a desire towards the Good aspire, we therefore say that the mind also is so created in the image of the Fairest — in so far as it participates in the likeness of the Primal Exemplar — as much as it is permitted to reside in the Good. But if in some manner it transgresses beyond this limit, it is denuded of the beauty of that in which it had been residing. Indeed we say that the mind is adorned with the beauty of the Primal Exemplar in the same way as a mirror is adorned by the reflection of that which appears in it. By the same analogy again we hold that the mind possesses a nature administered by itself, and that this is adorned by a beauty which is derived from it, as though it were a reflection of a reflection, and that the substantial material, that is the material substance, associated with this nature is held and embraced by it.”

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Now the reason why he says this is that nature is properly observed only in association with matter, because matter “floats” about until it discovers the form by which it is established.

“Therefore (he continues) if one thing is held by another, the presence of the True Good is brought down through all things co-rationally and forms by means of that which is placed beneath it that which is consequent to it : that is, it forms matter by means of mind. But when the dispersion of this most excellent connaturality is brought about, and in a contrary manner that which is above becomes that which is below, then occurs the deformation of that matter which has been described by nature, that is, by the natural order. For matter by itself is a deformed thing, when the order of nature has been changed and the natural beauty of the deformed is destroyed — that beauty in which it was formed through the mind — and so the distribution of the baseness of matter is extended through nature into the mind, so that you will no more see the image of God in the character of what has been formed. For the mind, placing the form of good things, like a mirror, behind itself, throws away the manifestations of the greatest Good, but at the same time absorbs into itself the deformity of matter, and in this way evil is generated, produced by the elimination of good. For every consequent event is good which properly possesses the First Good: but every thing

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The forming  
of matter by  
mind

789D

The  
generation of  
evil

790A which is extraneous to relation and likeness to the First Good is altogether lacking in good. If therefore in accordance with the reasoning given the One which truly is is reasonably held to be good and the mind is created in the image of the Good, and is the possessor of well-being; but the nature of the body, which is contained in the mind, is as it were the image of an image — from this it is demonstrated that our material principle is constituted indeed and stabilized when it is administered by the nature of the mind; but it is dissolved again and decays when it is separated from the mind which contains and stabilizes it, and is banished from connaturality with the Good. And this occurs through no other means than the conversion of its nature to its opposite, when desire is felt, not for the Good but for that which has need of a forming principle. For it is necessary that all matter be conformed through its lack of proper form to something dishonourable and a likeness of deformity.”

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A little later St. Gregory writes :

“And from this the conclusion is drawn that in the composite man the mind is indeed administered by God, but our material life is administered by mind, provided that it remains in its own nature, that is to say, in the image of mind: but if it abandons its nature, it is also alienated from that operation which occurs through the mind.”

The three things by which the constitution

790C of the whole man is made

Now anyone who closely follows the words of this theologian will find references everywhere in the text of the *Treatise on the Image* to a threefold division in the constitution of man, out of which the order of his nature is woven, as though it were produced by the composition of the three: that is, the mind; the vital motion, which he sometimes calls the fluid, and sometimes the material, life principle; and the informed matter. So that the whole man is said to consist of Mind, the material Life Principle, and Matter itself. And indeed the mind, in which all the virtue of the soul subsists, is made in the image of God, and is the mirror of the Supreme Good, since in it the incomprehensible form of the Divine Essence is in an ineffable and incomprehensible way displayed. But the material life principle, whose specific activity centres about matter, and which for that reason is called material, seeing that it is involved in the mutable matter of the body, is a kind of image of the mind, and, as St. Gregory says, a reflection of a reflection: so that the mind is a representation of the Divine Nature, but the vital motion, which is also called the material life principle, is with matter itself the form of mind, as it were a second image, through which the mind displays

the form even of matter. And thus, in a way the whole man can be suitably described as fashioned after the Image of God, although really and primarily it is only in the mind that the Image can be seen to subsist. It is like this: the mind receives the cause of its formation, without any intervening creature, from God, while the vital motion receives it from the mind, and finally matter receives the cause of its formation from the mind through the vital motion. Thus matter follows vital motion, and vital motion follows mind, and finally mind follows God: when therefore it turns towards Him it preserves the beauty and integrity of its nature: but when it turns away from Him it wastes and disfigures not only itself but also that which is subject to it, that is, the material life principle and matter itself as well.

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Vital motion

But in connection with this vital motion, a question of some importance arises. For it is necessary to enquire whether or not it pertains to the nature of man. If it does not, why is it called the image of an image, that is, the image of the mind? And how could mind through it produce a form for matter? But if such a vital principle is entirely part of the substance of man, how can we say that man is a product of soul and body only, and how is it that the vital principle is found in nothing wherein the matter has been dissolved? For it does not have its home in matter, which has already been abandoned by all vital motion when it is deprived of the presence of substantial life which is the soul. Nor is it seen to subsist in the soul which is unaffected by matter after it has ceased to control the body. For this reason I think that no better explanation can be given of the vital motion than that it is a kind of link or junction between body and soul, through which they are attached to one another, and by means of which the body is formed by the soul and is given life by it and is administered by it in waking and sleeping, that is, whether the soul gives attention to the activities of the body, or withdraws from the senses, and rests within itself as though forgetful of its body. But even then it does not cease in a secret and ineffable silence to administer the body, bestowing upon all its parts food for the nourishment and preservation thereof. But when body and soul are separated from one another, there is an end of that vital motion. For it cannot live when it has nothing to move, that is to say, unless that is preserved through which it has movement, since it is nothing else than the movement of mind governing body. But on death there is an end of movement and of being moved, so that movement therein perishes entirely. For the coming to rest of the moved or the mover

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is the end of all movement. Therefore when the soul rests from moving her body, all vital motion, that is, the whole material life principle, ceases to be. Therefore the same Blessed Gregory writes in his Fourteenth Chapter :

791D “This material and fluid life of bodies, which goes forward by a continuous motion, possesses the virtue of being in this: that its motion has no rest. For just as a river is seen to fill a valley through which it flows by the impetus of its flood, without the same water being conveyed twice over the same place, but some flows downstream and some flows from above ; so what is material in this life, moved as it is over a certain place, is changed by a continual succession of flux and alteration so that it can never cease to move ; and so its inability to stop results in unceasing motion, which is  
792A different but involves the same appearances. But if ever the motion shall cease, it will procure an absolute cessation of being, that is to say, it will utterly cease to be.”

But if you wish to see how the mind is enclosed in no part of the body while by its presence it administers the whole body, and is everywhere a whole throughout all the parts it administers, hear what St. Gregory has to say in the Fifteenth Chapter of the same treatise :

792B “It was the purpose of our treatise to show that the mind is not retained in any given part of the body, but that it is in contact with all parts equally, and consequently operates the motion in accordance with the part of the nature which is subject to it. But there are times when the mind follows the inclinations of nature, as if it were the servant. For often the bodily nature commands it, and imposes  
792C upon the mind the emotion of one who grieves and the desire of one who rejoices, so that it takes the initiative ; exciting in the mind the hunger for food or the desire for some delightful thing. And the mind receiving these stimulants enters into a conference with the body for the purpose of gaining opportunities of satisfying them. This, however, is not the case with all, but only with those who find themselves more in the condition of captives, who force the reason to serve the desires of the bodily nature, and employ the mind servilely to flatter the lust which operates through the bodily senses. But in the more perfect it is not so. For the mind rules by reason, and is not passive, but chooses that which is useful: the mind  
792C marches before and nature follows after. Now reason discovers three varieties in the vital force: the first is that which gives nourishment without sense; the second is that which gives nourish-



ment and sense, but is without the operation of reason; and the third is perfect and reasonable, which penetrates every power so that it may take up its abode in them, although it has more sway over the intellectual. But let no one suppose from this that there are three souls mixed together in a corporate man, or that each of these can be marked off from the others by its proper limits, so that we come to believe that the human soul is an amalgamation of many souls. The true and perfect soul is by nature a unity, intellectual and immaterial, and is bound to the material nature through the senses. Now all matter is in a state of flux and mutability. If then it partake of the life-giving power, it is moved to increase: but if it fall away from the life-giving act, its motion will be towards corruption and it will perish. Therefore neither can there be operation of the sense without the material essence, nor of the intellect without the sense.” 792D

And in the Sixteenth Chapter he speaks again about sense:

“The mind is not contained in any particular part of the things that are in us, but is extended equally in and through all parts. It neither contains the body as something outside it nor is contained as something within it. This can properly be said of utensils or jars or other such objects where one is placed within the other. But the intellect is associated with the body by a contact which is ineffable and unintelligible: being neither within the body, for the incorporeal cannot be contained within the corporeal; nor held from without, for that which is incorporeal cannot be encompassed, but mind draws near to nature after a super-rational and unintelligible mode and is fitted to it and is considered in relation to it, neither placed within it nor enfolded by it: but how this can be is not to be explained or comprehended save that it is through the proper disposition of that permeable nature that the mind also becomes effective. But if that nature suffers some flaw, the movement of the intelligence is proportionally disordered.”

The soul is contained neither within 793A the body nor without the body

By this he means to say: If the instrument of the body is damaged or is in any way deficient, and the integrity of its natural constitution has by some accident been spoilt, the movement of the intelligence, that is, the movement of the mind, wavers in that part where the damage has occurred to the instrument, that is to say, where it is unable to actualise its administrative potency — not because the mind is at fault, but because that part, being damaged, cannot receive the power of the mind. 793B

But since it is necessary to make a diligent examination of 12 human nature, and to distinguish beyond question what in it is

created in the image and likeness, that is, in the like image of God, and what in it is far removed from the likeness of the Divine Image, I thought fit to bring in the words of the most holy and most wise  
 793C master Gregory. In the Seventeenth Chapter of his *Treatise on the Image*, then, he writes :

“Let us consider again the word of God : Let Us make man in Our image and likeness. What notions, unworthy of man’s excellence, derived from external things, have been conceived by those who seek to magnify man by comparing him with this world, as if it existed in him. For they call him μικρόκοσμος, that is, a little world, consisting of the same elements as those from which the Universe is created. But those who praise man with this title have forgotten that the properties for which they honour him are common to the mouse and the flea. For in these too, the composition is of the same four elements, as in every single living creature there is a portion,  
 793D any consistency of nature at all. What are we to think of man made after the stamp and likeness of the world when the heaven has passed away and the earth has been changed and all things contained in it have passed away with the disappearance of the world which contained them? But according to the Church’s  
 794A reasoning, the greatness of man lies not in his likeness to the created world but in the fact that he is created according to the image of the Creator of Nature. What then, you will rightly ask, is the “reason” of this Image? How can the corporeal be assimilated to the incorporeal? How the temporal to the eternal, that which is mutable and fluid to the immutable, that which is passive and corruptible to the impassive and incorruptible, that which dwells with evil and ever turns towards it to that which is pure from all evil? For between that Mind, the Divine, which is the Primal Exemplar, and that which is created after its image, a vast space intervenes. For if the image possessed a likeness to the Primal Exemplar then it could rightly be given the same name : but if the imitation is far removed from the archetype it is no longer its image but something different. So how  
 794B can man, this mortal and passive and quickly withering object, be the image of the Nature which is immortal, pure, and ever-existent? Only that Truth Which truly is fully knows the true “reason” of this image ; but after a search for the truth of this by calm speculations and opinions, in so far as it can be grasped, we say in reply to these questions the following :

“Neither does the Word of God lie when it says that man is made after the image of God : nor is the misery even to unhappiness

of human nature assimilated to the bliss of the life that knows no passion. For we must choose between two alternatives: if someone compares to God that which is ours, either the divine is passive or the human impassive, if the principle of likeness is to be equal in each. But if the Divine is not passive, nor our own nature free from passion then what other principle remains on which we may affirm the truth of the Word of God which declares that man was made in the image of God? Must we reject the Holy Scripture? Let us then open up a way which shall lead from what is written to what we wish to solve. After He said "Let Us make man in Our own image and let Us make him after this sort," the text goes on to say that "God made man, after the image of God made he him, male and female made He them." It is then stated in the text before us, that these words are uttered for the refutation of heretical impiety, so that by learning that the only-begotten God created man in His own image, we may not separate the divinity of the Father from that of the Son, seeing that the holy Scripture also calls both God, Him Who created man and Him in Whose image he was created. But we must not go on about this. Now we must turn to the question how an unhappy thing can be called by Holy Scripture a similitude of what is divine and blessed. For this purpose the text must be examined carefully. For we find that that which was made in the image of God is one thing and that which is shown to be now in unhappiness another. "God made man," it is written, "in the image of God made He him." The creation of that which was made in the image is completed, and then follows according to the structure of the text an *epanalepsis* or repetition, "Male and female created He them." For I think that all will agree that this is something outside the Principal Image. For, according to the Apostle, in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. And yet the text says that man is divided into these two categories. Does it not then appear that there is a two-fold fashioning of our nature, one by which we are assimilated to God, the other by which we are divided by this differentiation? For something of this sort is implied in the construction of the words; for first it is said that "God created man, in the image of God created He him;" and then are added the words, "Male and female created He them," — something which is alien from the properties of God. Now it is my opinion that a right and excellent doctrine may be drawn from this scriptural text. This doctrine is as follows:

"Humanity is the middle term between two extremes widely separated from each other, namely, the incorporeal nature of God,

- and the irrational nature of the beasts. Let us consider each of these extremes in relation to man: the divine portion, which is a rational and intelligible nature, and which does not admit the distinction between male and female, and the corporeal constitution of the irrational nature and its falling by division into two kinds, the male and the female. Each of these is wholly present in all who participate
- 795C in human life. But from the order in which the generation of man is related we learn that the intelligible nature comes first, and that the association and kinship with the irrational nature is something which was super-added to man. For it is first written that God made man in the image of God, showing by these words that, as the Apostle says, in one who is so created there is neither male nor female. Then the material properties of human nature are added: "Male and female created He them." What are we to learn from this? And let no man accuse me of dragging out the matter in question. God in His Nature is every good thing that can be known. But the highest existing intelligible and comprehensible Good
- 795D creates human life for no other reason than that well-being should be its property. And therefore, moved to create our nature, He would only be employing an imperfect power of goodness if while granting some of what He contains to man he withheld full participation through envy. But the perfection of His goodness is
- 796A apparent in this, that not only does He bring man from non-existence into generation, but ordains that he shall not lack goodness. But seeing that the catalogue of individual goods is long, and not easy to enumerate, Scripture indicates them all comprehensively by saying that man was made in the image of God. For by this is meant that he made human nature a participant in every good. For if God is the plenitude of good things, and man is an image of God, the image must resemble the Primal Exemplar in this respect also, that it is the plenitude of all good. Is there then not in us every form of good, every virtue, every wisdom and every thing whatever that is best? In this respect also it is the image, in that it is free from all
- 796B necessity, and is subjected to no natural or material authority but possesses in itself a will which is capable of obtaining its desires. For virtue is a voluntary thing, free from all domination. For that which is constrained under duress cannot be a virtue. Therefore if in all things the image exhibits the stamp of the beauty of the Primal Exemplar, except for a difference in a particular, it will not yet be an entire likeness, although in all parts it shows that it is not far removed from being so. What kind of difference do we see between God and the man who is like unto God? This, that the one Nature is

uncreated, while the other obtains its being through creation; and this difference of character leads to others that follow as a result. For it is agreed that a nature which is uncreated cannot undergo change, but always remains the same, while the creature does not subsist without change. For the very transition from not-being into being is a kind of change, the God-willed transmutation into existence of that which does not exist. And just as the Gospel calls the impression on the coin the image of Caesar, from which we learn that the shape of that which is moulded is in the likeness of Caesar, but the subject itself is something different from Caesar — so also in the present instance of the imagings which are taken from the Divine Nature, considering their existence in human nature in those in whom there is a likeness to God, we discern a difference of subject between that which is observed in the uncreated and that which is observed in the created nature. Seeing therefore that the one remains ever the same while the other, being a created product, takes its origin from a mutation, and itself naturally possesses a changeableness akin to that mutation, for this reason He Who in the words of the Prophet knows all things before their generation, following or rather foreknowing by his prognostic power, into what the motion of the human will would by its own virtue and power resolve itself (for He saw that which was to be) built upon the image the superstructure of the distinction between male and female. And in this there is no longer a likeness to the divine Primal Exemplar, but, as has been said, a property of the less rational nature. But the reason for this superstructure will only be known to those who regard the truth in its purity and are ministers of the Word. But we, in so far as we are able, in giving our opinion from certain conjectures and from what follows from them, shall not dogmatically set forth what comes into our mind, but propose certain theories which may be suitable to the ears of the faithful as though for practice in disputation.

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“What, then, is our opinion in this matter? The text “God created man” is not limited to a single individual but applies to all humanity. For the name of Adam is not here given to the creature as later on in the story, but the name given to the man who was created is of universal application. Are we not to gather from the universal application of the term nature that in God’s prescience and power the whole of humanity was understood to be in question in that first creation? For we should regard none of the creatures made by God as infinite with Him, but the Wisdom of the Creator is the defining

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limit and measure of each one of them. Therefore as an individual man is limited by a certain quantity of body, and his substance is measured by the extent of the surface by which his body is perfected, so, I think, the whole plenitude of humanity was included by the God of all men through His prognostic virtue, as it were in a single body: and this is the teaching of that text which says that 'God created man, in the image of God created He him.' For the image is not in a part of man's nature, nor grace in any one of those considered to have grace, but such power attaches to the whole genus equally. It is an indication of this that mind is allotted to all men alike, so that all possess the power of understanding and taking counsel: and it is the same with regard to all the other things by which is revealed the Divine Nature in that which is created after It. And the man who was revealed in the first constitution of the world, and the man who is to come after the consummation of all things, both equally bear within them the Divine Image. And the reason why the totality is described as one man is that in the power of God there is no past and no present, but what He beholds is contained in the ever-present comprehensive operation of His Universality. Therefore all human nature, which has endured from the beginning until now, is an image of Him Who truly exists: but that differentiation of the genus into male and female was a later addition to the constitution of the human form."

And let it not surprise you that we so often have recourse to the opinions of the same author; for our purpose is not to improve upon his treatise but to clarify our problem. In the Eighteenth Chapter of the same discourse he writes:

“The glory of the Resurrection promises us precisely this: the restitution of the fallen to their pristine state. For the Grace to which we are to look forward is the Return to our first way of life, leading back to Paradise once again him who was expelled therefrom. Therefore the life of those who have been restored to that which is properly held to be the life of the angels, was itself before the Fall an angelic life: and therefore the Return itself to our former way of life is likened to the angels. But just as it is written that there is no giving in marriage among them and yet that their armies consist of infinite myriads — for so Daniel has related it in his visions — perhaps if no perversion and falling away from the angelic nature had been wrought in us through the same man by sin, we should not now be compelled to multiply ourselves by matrimony. For in the angelic nature there is a different mode of propagation, and one which

There would  
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be no  
marriages if  
man had not  
sinned, nor  
multiplication  
of (human)  
nature  
through male  
and female,  
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would be  
neither male  
nor female

cannot be described or understood by human reason : but yet it is so, and the same mode would operate in those who were created a little lower than the angels, to give increase to man according to the measure appointed by the plan of the Creator.

“But should one have difficulty and make enquiry into the mode of propagation of souls if man did not enter into the intercourse of marriage, we shall indicate the mode of the angelic substance which in that one essence exists in infinite myriads and are numbered as many. For to one enquiring how man could survive without matrimony, we will suitably reply, in the same way as the angels manage without matrimony : for that man was like unto them before the Fall is shown by his Return once more to that nature. 798B

“Well then, now that these questions have been well decided by us, a return must be made to our former question, namely how after the establishment of the image itself God imposed upon its formation the superstructure of the differentiation into male and female? I offer as useful in this connection a theory which I put forward previously. For He Who brought all things into being and formed man entirely in His Will after the Divine Image, did not establish intervals in which future things would gradually be added, through his knowledge of the number of souls which was required to bring humanity to its fulness, but intellected through His prognostic act the whole of human nature at once in its fulness, and gave it a place of high honour and a tranquility co-equal with that of the angels. But since He foresaw by His contemplative power that man would not rightly walk in the way of a good will and would therefore fall from the angelic way of life, He formed in our nature a plan of propagation suitable to those who have been snared into sin, so that the number of human souls should not be diminished when human nature had fallen from the power of propagating itself in the angelic mode, and implanted in man the irrational method of propagation of the beasts of the field in place of the glorious fecundity of the angels. Moreover, the great David, bewailing the misery of man, seems to me to lament human nature in these words, ‘Man when he was held in honour did not understand his honour,’ referring to his equality of status with the angels. ‘And so,’ he said ‘he was now compared with the beasts of the field’ who are without reason. For in very truth man has become like cattle, now that on account of his inclination towards the material nature he has accepted the animal mode of generation.” 798C 798D 799A

N. The whole drift of the words which you have taken from this great theologian is towards an understanding that man is created in the Image of God in his mind only and in its innate powers — now the innate powers of the mind are wisdom, knowledge, the faculty of reason, and those others which by adorning the mind show it to be in the likeness of the Creator — and that all men were at once and together created in that one man about whom it is written, “Let us make man in Our image and likeness,” and “in whom all men sinned:” for at the time he was all of mankind that existed; and that in him all men have been driven forth from the bliss of Paradise. [And if man were not in a state of sin, he would not be suffering the division of his simplicity into the sexes. And this distinction has absolutely no connection with the divine image and likeness, and would never have existed had man not sinned, nor will it exist after the restoration of our nature to its pristine condition, which will be manifested after the general resurrection of all men. If then man had not sinned, no one would be born through the intercourse of the sexes nor from seed, but just as the angelic essence while remaining one is at once and together without temporal interval multiplied into infinite myriads, so too human nature, had it been willing to obey the mandate, and had it obeyed it, would have at once and together broken forth into the number foreknown to its Creator alone. But God, Who neither deceives nor is deceived, foresaw that man would abandon the rank and dignity of his creation, and therefore superimposed upon human nature an alternative mode of propagation, by which this world might be extended in space and time to allow for man to pay for his general offence a general penalty, by being born like the rest of the animals from a corruptible seed. But while we are collecting these and many similar passages from the teachings of this master, many questions emerge on all sides, of which the first and most important strikes one most forcibly: if all men, not only those who have been and those who are but also those who shall be, were at once and together created in that divine word which says, “Let Us make man;” and if those corruptible bodies which are born from a corruptible and mortal and material seed are external to the human nature which is made in the image of God, and are superimposed upon it because of our sin and would therefore have no existence if man had not dishonoured the beauty of the Divine Image in which he is created: it is not irrelevant to enquire how the first creation of man is in the image of God, for the second is not in the image but is something superimposed upon that image for the reason already stated. Did the first

After the  
resurrection  
there will be  
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neither male  
nor female

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Enquiry into  
the body  
made in the  
first creation

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creation take place only in the soul apart from the body, or in soul and body together? If in the soul alone, how can it be called man, seeing that it is agreed that man is composed of two natures, the invisible nature in the soul and the visible nature in the body? I should not think that it was only a part of man that was then created, or that we should synecdochically understand the words, "Let us make man," chiefly because the Prophetic Books give us the fullest and most perfect account of the creation of all natures. If on the other hand the first creation is rightly referred to soul and body, that is, to the whole integral man, then it must at once be asked what kind of body that was which man possessed at his first creation. For true reason cannot accept that this body was something super-imposed upon us because of sin, for it was established in the first natural conformation of man. 800B

A. This question is not a superfluous one, and the posing of it and its solution will not be without value. As you are the poser, you have made yourself responsible for the answer. For I do not think you would have asked it unless you had some answer in readiness.

N. That body which was created at the establishment of man in the beginning I should say was spiritual and immortal, and either like or identical with that which we shall possess after the Resurrection. For I would not easily admit that it could have been a corruptible and material body at a time when the cause of corruption and materiality, that is, sin, had not yet appeared. And a still greater objection is that it is quite apparent to the reason that if that very body which was made at the first creation of man before the Fall is after the Fall suddenly changed and made corruptible, then that corruptible body was not a superstructure but is simply the spiritual and incorruptible body transformed into an earthly body: and therefore the authority of the great master, Gregory the Theologian, would seem to waver, a thing not to be believed. For the unhesitatingly asserts that the whole which in the first creation of man is created in the image of God remains in its psycho-somatic structure eternally incorruptible. Passing over the lucid arguments by which he affirms beyond doubt that neither were souls created before bodies nor bodies before souls, but that the whole man was made at once and together in the Divine Counsel in which it is said, "Let Us make man," and that at the same time by a kind of second begetting imposed upon the first, he is born into this world, as happens now, at a given moment of time, as a result of the sin of the perverse will of human nature, and that that spiritual and natural body which is 800C 800D

in eternal association with mind and forms one composite entity with it is distinguished from that which was added as a penalty for our transgression, we come to his most brilliant explanation of this matter in the Twenty-Seventh Chapter of the Treatise to which we have already had recourse so often :

801A “For the fluidity and mutability of our nature is not all-pervasive. If it were so it would be altogether unknowable for we should have by nature no stability: but a more careful analysis shows that there is something of us which endures, while another part is subject to change. For the body undergoes change by increase and diminution, like garments, which are changed with the changing of one’s age. But throughout all these changes there is a form which abides and is itself unchangeable, never giving up those marks which were inscribed at one time on it from its very nature: and this with its marks is apparent in all bodily changes. But change, which results from some passion and which is an accident super-imposed upon our form, is removed through the Word of God. For 801B that deformity through formlessness, like some strange face, takes its own form; but when that formlessness is removed by the Word — as in the case of Naaman the Syrian and the ten lepers as told in the Gospel — the face obscured by the disease shines forth in health again along with its marks. Therefore in the conformity of the soul to God, it is not that which displays the flux of mutability and the capacity of transformation which is the innate quality of the soul, but that which is permanent, and likewise unchanging in our composition, that is placed in our soul. And the mutable qualities of our composition are an additional form to the differentiations of our species. But this composition is nothing else than a mixture of the elements: and the elements, from which the human body also is composed, are constitutive principles of the universe. It necessarily follows therefore that, since the species is permanent in our soul, like the device of a signet ring, those impressions of the signet which 801C are to be repeated according to the form are not unknown to the soul, but in the time when the impression is to be made anew she will again receive to herself whatever will fit the character of her form. And the form which will be impressed upon her will be in accord with the characters impressed upon her in the beginning.”

You see how nicely he distinguishes the property of the first creation from those which were added to it? For whatsoever in human bodies is seen to be immutable is proper to the first creation: but whatever in them is perceived to be mutable and variable, this

has been added later, and subsists outside the body's true nature. Now in all human bodies generally there is one and the same common form, and that abides ever unchangeable in all. For the innumerable differences which are accidental to the one form do not arise from the "reason" of the first creation but from the qualities of the corruptible seeds. Therefore the spiritual form is itself the spiritual body which was made in the first creation of man. But that which is derived from matter, that is, from the qualities and quantities of the four elements of the sensible world together with that qualitative form about which we had something to say in the earlier books, since they undergo increase and diminution, undoubtedly pertain to the composition of the superadded and, one might say, superfluous body. And the material and external body is like a garment and is not improperly regarded as the outward expression of the internal and natural body: for it is moved through times and ages, suffering increase and loss of itself, while the interior body remains ever immutably in its proper state.

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But seeing that the exterior body also is created by God, and is added by Him to the other, the greatness of the Divine Goodness and His infinite Providence towards all things which are was not willing that it should entirely perish and be reduced to nothing, because it comes from that Providence and holds the lowest rank among creatures; now everything which is born into this world by generation in space and time must have an end whether the interval between its birth into this life and the end of the same life be a very short while, a day, an hour or a moment; or a very long period of centuries, or a moderate period of seasons or years, this being demanded by the nature of created things. For everything which comes into being in the world and is composed of the stuff of the world must of necessity be dissolved and perish with the world. It was then necessary for the exterior and material body to be resolved into those elements from which it was put together: but it was not necessary that it should perish, because it came from God. The interior body, of course, endures forever and abides without change in those principles according to which it was constituted with and in and through and for the sake of the soul. But since the species of that other body, the material and dissoluble, abides in the soul, not only during life but even after dissolution and return into the elements of the world (for the dispute between Abraham and the rich man shows that the idea of the body abides with the soul after death): therefore the soul cannot forget or cease to know her parts

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wherever among the elements they may be scattered. For although they are something which has been added to human nature as the result of sin, they cannot be devoid of all connection with it, seeing that they were added and created by the same Creator as created the nature, and therefore in the restoration of man to the unity of his nature they are to be recalled, so that at the time of the Resurrection the soul will receive the whole of that which had been subject to her. This is the meaning of the master's saying: "It necessarily follows that since the species is permanent in our soul, like the device of a signet ring, those impressions of the signet which are to be repeated according to the form are not unknown to the soul." By this he means that while the species, that is, the idea inscribed on the signet, or exterior body, which he calls the signet of the inner, abides in the soul even after the dissolution of the signet, she is not without knowledge, because of that idea which always abides, of the parts of the signet which are scattered among the elements, and which on the day of the Resurrection are to be reformed in the signet, that is, in the body conformed to the soul, which is the interior body. For the exterior and material body is the signet of the interior, on which the form of the soul is expressed, and therefore is rightly called its form.

But do not think that I am teaching that there are two natural bodies in the one man. For there is only one body by whose fitting together with the soul so as to form with her one nature and one substance man is made. For that material body which is added to it is not so much to be regarded as a true body as a kind of mutable and corruptible garment of the true and natural body. For that is not true which does not eternally abide and, in the words of St. Augustine, "that which begins to be what it formerly was not, and ceases to be what it is, is already not." Hence it comes about that this mortal, corruptible, earthly and animal body is never simple but has a certain accretion added to it, and thereby is distinguished from the simple body itself, which was created in man in the beginning, and which will be.

14 A. What then shall we reply to the most holy and godly theologian St. Augustine, whose teaching seems to go against these arguments? For in almost all his books he shows no hesitation in declaring that the body of the first man before the Fall was of the animal form, was earthly and was mortal, although it could not have come to a mortal end if man had not sinned, for it died through sin as the Apostle says: "The body indeed is dead through sin." Thus in the first book on the *Baptism of Young Children*, when

arguing against those who say that Adam was so created that even had he not deserved to die because of his sin, he would nevertheless have died, not as a punishment for a fault but through the necessity of nature, he writes :

“What response have they to the Scriptural Authority that God said in reproach and condemnation to the First Man even after his sin, ‘Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return?’ For he was not dust in respect of his soul, but, as is clear, in respect of his body, and it was through the death of that same body that he was about to return unto dust. For although he was dust in respect of the body, and the body in which he was created was an animal body, yet, if he had not sinned, he would have been changed into a spiritual body and without danger of death into that incorruption which is promised to the faithful and to the saints. And the yearning for this within ourselves is not only apparent to ourselves but also is indicated by the words of the Apostle when he says : ‘For in this we complain, desiring to put on our habitation which is from heaven, which if we put on we shall not be naked.’ For as we are in this habitation we are weighed down and mourn, in which we do not wish to be despoiled, but to be garmented afresh, in order that mortality may be swallowed up in life. If, then, Adam had not sinned, he would not have to be despoiled of his body, but would be clothed anew with immortality and incorruption, in order that his mortality might be swallowed up in life, that is, that he might exchange his animal nature for a spiritual. For there was no fear for him that he should remain too long in his animal body and be burdened with age and after a period of old age gradually arrive at the point of death. For if God provided the Israelites with garments and sandals, which after so many years were never worn out, what would be strange if his power could grant obedient man that possessing this animal and mortal body, he should possess it in such a manner that he might become aged without enfeeblement, and be destined at a time willed by God to pass without the mediation of death from mortality to immortality? For just as this flesh which we now possess is not invulnerable by the fact that it is not necessary for it to be wounded, so that flesh was not immortal by the fact that it was not necessary for it to die. I believe that this Grace was conferred upon those who were translated hence without undergoing death, even while they were still in the animal and mortal body. For neither were Enoch nor Elijah for all their years tarnished by old age, and yet, as I think, they were not while upon earth

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Enoch and  
Elijah  
804B already changed into that spiritual kind of body which is promised in the Resurrection and which was first manifested in Our Lord, save perhaps that they do not lack that food which refreshes by its own consumption. But from the time when they were translated they so live as to enjoy a society similar to that of those forty days when Elijah lived without food save for a cup of water and a cake of bread. Or if there is a need even of such resources as these, perhaps they feed in Paradise as Adam did before he was compelled to depart thence as a penalty for his sin. For he had, I think, refreshment from hunger from the fruits of trees and a bulwark against old age in the Tree of Life."

804C But what purpose would be served by piling up the mighty proofs of this mighty and admirable man when it is perfectly clear to all who read his books, but especially *Genesis Understood Literally* and the *City of God*, that concerning the body of the First Man before the Fall his teaching is none other than that it was animal and mortal. For if it had not been animal, how would it have been bidden to ward off hunger by eating of the fruits of Paradise, and old age by eating of the Tree of Life? For, as St. Augustine himself often declares, the first human creatures are held to have eaten of the fruits of Paradise before the Fall, and to have done so in a corporeal sense.

804D N. Let him reply who will and can: but for you and me perhaps it is enough to read the opinions of the Holy Fathers concerning the condition of man before the Fall, and to enquire cautiously and diligently into the findings of each one of them. But it is not our business to bring one into conflict with another, or to justify one against another, knowing as we do that after the Holy Apostles none of the Greeks has higher authority in expounding the Holy Scripture than Gregory the Theologian, and none of the Romans than Aurelius Augustinus. And what if in what appears to be a controversy between great men we wish to find an agreement by saying that that body which Gregory says was added as a superstructure to human nature by the Divine Prescience on account of the future sin is the same as that which Augustine calls animal, and if Gregory does not refrain from saying that there were two  
805A creations of man, the one a substantial creation in the image of God, the other widely different from that image, and divided because of sin into male and female and Augustine said that there was one division into male and female and was silent about the other which is in the image of God and lacks all sex? What relevance has this,

when we consider that it is not a true estimate of St. Augustine to say that he was silent concerning the creation of man in the image of God but expounded that which according to Gregory was established on account of sin in the image of the beasts of the field — especially as anyone who glances through his books will have no difficulty in discovering that in the First Man male and female were created in the image of God, and the animal bodies themselves with which they were endowed before the Fall were not the result of punishment for sin, but of the necessity of nature, that is to say, for the fulfilment by procreation of the predestined number of holy men, which from human nature are to be made one in the angelic society of bliss, until the Celestial City might be filled with holy angels and with holy men? 805B

But I do not cease to be amazed why he calls that body animal which he exalts with loud praises as spiritual and blessed. For that it was blessed before the Fall he himself testifies in the Tenth Chapter of the Fourteenth Book of the *City of God*:

“But it is a fair question whether the First Man or the first human creatures (for there were two in marriage) had in the animal body before the Fall those affections before they sinned from which we in the spiritual body shall be free when our sin is purged and done away, namely, concupiscence and joy, fear and grief. If they had them, how could they have been blessed in Paradise, that memorable abode of bliss? Who can finally and absolutely be called blessed that either fears or sorrows? But how could those human creatures either fear or grieve in that copious affluence of such great goods, where they were out of the danger of death or any evil sickness of the body, having all things that a good will desired and lacking all things that might be offensive to the physical or mental contentment of man? Their love for God was immutable, there existed between them the faithful and sincere association of loving consorts, and from that love they derived great joy, having power to enjoy in full what they loved. They were in a peaceable avoidance of sin, and so long as that continued it kept out all external annoyance which might distress them. Did they desire, do you think, to taste of the forbidden tree, and yet fear to die, and thereby experience distress even then and even in that place through the passions of lust and fear? God forbid we should think this to have been where there was no sin at all, for sin could not be absent where there was a lust for that which was forbidden by God, and abstinence through fear of the punishment instead of the love of righteousness. God forbid, I 805C 805D

say, that before any sin was there should yet have been such a sin that that should be proved true in relation to the Tree which God said in relation to the woman: “Whoever looks upon a woman to  
806A lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart.”

“How happy then were the first human creatures, being troubled with no perturbations of the mind nor hurt by any discomforts of the body! Even so happy should all mankind have been if those had not committed sin which they transferred to their posterity; and if none of their seed had committed an act worthy of condemnation. And this bliss remaining until by the utterance of the benediction ‘Increase and multiply,’ the number of the predestined Saints were fulfilled, then should another and better bliss have been given us, namely, that which has been given to the most blessed angels, wherein there would be an eternal security from sin and death; and so should the Saints have lived then without tasting of labour, sorrow or death, as they shall do now in the Resurrection of the Dead when the bodily incorruption is restored to them, after they have endured them all.”

806B Again in the Twenty Fifth (*sic*) Chapter of the same book he writes:

“Therefore man lived in Paradise as he desired so long as he only desired what God commanded. He lived enjoying God, the good Source of his own well-being. He lived without need, and he had life eternal in his power. He had meat for hunger, drink for thirst, the Tree of Life to ward off old age. His senses were free from all bodily corruption and from all discomforts arising from the body. He feared neither disease within nor violence without. The acme of health was in his flesh, and fulness of peace in his mind; and as Paradise was neither fiery nor frosty, so was the good will of its inhabitant offended neither with desire nor fear. There was no sorrow at all, no empty delight. But their joy was perpetuated by  
806C God’s mercy, when they loved Him with a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith. Their wedlock love was faithful and honest, in harmony they watched over mind and body, and kept the Precept without trouble. They were neither weary of leisure nor unwillingly sleepy. And can we not suppose that in all this material ease and human happiness they might beget their children without the disease of lust, and move those members by the same agreement of the will as they performed their other functions and without the deceitful goad of passion, the man being laid in his wife’s lap in peace of mind and body without corruption of integrity?”



You see how he celebrates and praises the happiness of each sex in Paradise before the Fall; how holy and immaculate was their married state; what a blameless love and inseparable association existed between the pair; how lovely was the way in which those holy beings propagated their kind, and increased them to the number foreordained; finally you see that after the happiness of Paradise they were to be translated to the bliss of the angels. It is not surprising if one should express astonishment that it can be believed that animal bodies have dwelt in such a height of bliss. 806D

A. Was it not settled between us when we were discussing the creation of human nature that man had been placed in the genus of the animals, in fact, that all the animals were according to their substance created in him, not only because the knowledge of all things existed in him, but also because the visible and invisible Universe was established in him? 807A

N. That was certainly our conclusion.

A. Why then should it be considered strange or incredible if human bodies are said to have been animal bodies before they sinned in Paradise, seeing that they were established in the genus of animals? For we are compelled by reason to choose between two alternatives: Either, if we wish to say that his body was not animal, we must deny that man was created wholly in the genus of the animals; or, if we cannot dispute or deny the fact that he was a kind of animal created in the genus of the animals we cannot deny that the body which he had before the Fall and that which would have been in bliss if it had not sinned, was an animal body.

N. You reason acutely. Now, do you hold that God made all things at once? 807B

A. That is certainly my belief and conviction. For all things whose birth into the world is marked by intervals of time were created at one and the same time both before the world and with the world, although the administration of the Divine providence does not fill the Universe with them all at once, but in temporal succession. For the Lord says: "My Father works until now, and I work."

N. You understand rightly. Do you think that God made man in the genus of the animals because He foresaw that he would come to live as an animal and that he would fall from the beauty and dignity of the Divine Image into a life of irrational animal passion?

A. It seems likely. For He Who made all things at the same time made the future.

The two  
creations of  
807C  
man were  
simultaneous

N. Since then this foreknowledge is most sure and cannot be deceived, at the same time as He created man He created the consequences of his sin even before he had sinned, and we may without impropriety judge that of the things which were created together in man, some, like those in which we see the image of God that is to say, Mind and Reason and Interior Sense, or, in other words, Essence, Potency and Act, were creations of the goodness of God, others are there on account of the transgression which was foreknown and was most certain to befall. For there are many things of which God has foreknowledge but of which He is not the Cause, because they do not substantially exist: wisely He creates and ordains all things in such a way that they may not disturb the fairness of the Universe, and He alone has the power to make good out of the evil of the irrational will.

What  
followed  
from sin

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Now all these things, the animal, earthly and corruptible body; the sex that is divided into male and female; propagation by a mode similar to that of the beasts; the need of food and drink and clothing; the increase and decrease of the body; the alteration of sleeping and waking, and the inevitable necessity of both; and all similar limitations from which human nature would have been

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entirely free if it had not sinned — as it is destined one day to be free again — are the consequences of sin and were added to man's nature at the time of his creation as something external to his nature on account of sin before sin was committed, by Him whose foreknowledge is not deceived. In saying this I am following Gregory of Nyssa and his commentator Maximus, without contradicting other Holy Fathers of the spiritual doctrine who seem to have thought differently, being of the opinion that these things refer to the first and substantial creation of man. And if you ask why God should create in man before he sinned the characteristics which were made because of sin, remember that in God nothing is before and nothing after, because for him there is nothing past, nor future, nor the passage from past to future, for "to Him all things are at once present." Why should He not then simultaneously create those things which He saw were to be created and willed to be created? For when we say "before and after sin" we are demonstrating the

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multiplicity of our thought processes which is due to the fact that we are still subject to temporal conditions: but to God the foreknowledge of sin and the consequence of sin itself are contem-

poraneous. For it is in man, not to God, that the sin was a future event, and that the consequence of sin anticipates the sin itself, seeing that even the sin itself anticipates itself in the same man. Because the evil will, which is latent sin, was antecedent to the tasting of the forbidden fruit, which is open sin. This is relevant to the interpretation of the text "Jacob I loved but Esau I held in hatred." For at the time neither the good nor the evil deeds of either had been committed, and their consequences, that is, the love and the hatred in the temporal order, were already effected in the eyes of Him to Whom the Universe is contemporaneous and one.

This also is the teaching of that same master Augustine in the Thirteenth Chapter of the book from which I was quoting before: for concerning the first human beings he says:

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"But evil begins within them secretly at first, to draw them into open disobedience afterwards. For there would have been no evil work had there not been an evil will before it, and what could begin this evil will but pride, that is the 'beginning of all evil?'"

The meaning of this is that man was never without sin, for he was never without the mutability of the will. For that too, the irrational mutability of the free will, which is the cause of evil, must be accounted a kind of evil: for who would dare to say that the cause of evil is not itself evil, when the free will to which it was given to choose the good made itself the slave and follower of evil? It is this which St. Augustine seems to have wished to imply. For he does not say "Man lived in Paradise," or "He *had* lived in Paradise;" not "He lived in the enjoyment of God," or "He *had* lived in the enjoyment of God;" not "He lived without need," or "He *had* lived without need." For if he had used these verbs in the preterite, he might well be thought to mean that for a space of time man was in actual possession of perfect and sinless bliss in Paradise. But he says: "Man *began* to live in Paradise, *began* to live in the enjoyment of God, *began* to live without need," and this class of past tense is called by accurate observers of the different significances of the tenses the inceptive: because it signifies the inception and indication of some action which by no means necessarily reaches perfection.

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Now as to the fact that the first human creatures were in 15 Paradise for no temporal space. Augustine teaches in the Ninth Book of the *Hexameron* as follows: "Why was there no sexual intercourse between them until they had left Paradise? We may reply at once, because as soon as the woman was created, and before

they came together, that transgression was committed on account of which they were destined for death and departed from the place of that blessedness. For Scripture makes no mention of a time elapsing between their creation and the birth of Cain.”

- 809B But that Adam was in Paradise for a period of time before the woman was moulded from his side let him declare who can. Therefore that praise of the life of man in Paradise must refer rather to the life that would have been his if he had remained obedient than to that which he only began to spend and in which he did not continue. For if he had continued in it even for a brief interval he must necessarily have achieved some degree of perfection, and in that case perhaps this master would not have said “He began to live,” but “He lived” or “He had lived :” although if he had used the preterite and pluperfect in this way, or if he used them elsewhere, I should rather think that he was using the preterite for the future than that he meant that man had continued for a space of time in the blessedness of Paradise before the Fall, for the following reason,
- 809C that he was expressing the predestined and fore-determined blessedness which was to be man’s if he had not sinned, as though it had already occurred, when in fact, that is, in the effects of the completed predestination, it was still among those things which were destined to be created at some future time.

Now I say this because often when he is writing about Paradise he does use the preterite and pluperfect, as any careful reader of his books can discover for himself: for instance in the Eleventh Book of the *Hexameron* :

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread until thou art changed into the earth from which thou art made, for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return. Who does not know,” he asks, “that these are the labours of man upon earth? Nor is it to be doubted that if that bliss which had existed in Paradise were retained they would not have been.”

- 809D “Had existed,” he says, not “began to exist,” nor is this surprising since very often the Divine Authority speaks of the future as though it had already happened. For who would have expected to find the Devil in the bliss of Paradise, who fell as soon as he was created, as the Lord says in the Gospel: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in truth.” Augustine, about whom we have just been speaking, has something to say about this sentence of Our Lord also in the Eleventh Book of his *Hexameron* :

“That the Devil was never in a state of truth, that he never lived a blessed life with the angels, but that he fell at the very beginning of his creation — this must not be accepted in the sense that he was created an evil creature by the good God, but rather that he was depraved by his own will: for otherwise it would not have been said that he fell in the beginning. For [on this supposition] he did not fall but was so created: but from the moment of his creation he turned his face away from the light of truth, being swollen with pride and infatuated with the love of his own power. Therefore he did not taste the sweetness of the angelic life, not because after trying it he rejected it, but because through his unwillingness to accept it he abandoned and lost it. Therefore he could not have had foreknowledge of his own fall for foreknowledge is the fruit of piety. But he was straightway impious, and was therefore mentally blind, and he did not fall away from a state which he had actually accepted, but from one which he would have accepted if he had been willing to subordinate himself to God. But since this was precisely what he would not do, he fell from that state which it was intended he should accept, and did not escape from the power of Him under Whom he would not serve, and was so weighed down by the punishment that he cannot joy in the light of righteousness, nor escape from his sentence.”

810A  
As the devil  
was never in  
the delights  
of Paradise  
so never was  
man

810B

Likewise he is thus addressed in the character of the Prince of Tyre in the Book of Ezechiel the Prophet: “Thou art the signet of similitude and the crown of glory, thou wast in the delights of the Paradise of God, thou wast adorned with every precious stone,” etc., events which so to speak refer to a time prior to the Devil’s fall. And in fact there had been created by the divine dispensation that which was to have been in the Devil had he not fallen. But if when such things are said of the Devil the passage of time has a mystical meaning and Scripture is rightly understood only in this way, what is there to prevent us from giving the same interpretation to man’s having been in Paradise before the Fall, that is to say, that that would have happened to him if he had not sinned: especially as no authority divine or human, has recorded how much time he spent in the bliss of Paradise before the Fall? Why should nothing be said of this, if we are to understand that he was there? On the other hand there are not lacking proofs that the time of his existence before the Fall was either very short or none at all. For there is no record of his having carried out before the Fall any of the commands which were given him, for instance, “Increase and multiply and replenish the earth,” that is, Paradise. Would he not have been continuously

810C

begetting a happy progeny if he had dwelt for any length of time in Paradise before his transgression, feeding upon the Tree of Life, lest his body should suffer corruption? Why did not the virtue of that divine and spiritual medicine prevail to keep him from sinning and  
 810D falling into corruption? For if the food of the Tree of Life furnished his body with health and incorruptibility for one or two or a number of days, and not indefinitely, it did not then have such virtue as it is recorded and believed to have had. Or why should that be called the Tree of Life which only had the power of reducing the process of corruption, and not of altogether eliminating it and of endowing those who eat of it with the gift of eternal life? For if the nature of  
 811A that tree is the antidote of every disease, so that it gives life to all those who feed on its fruit, why can it not conquer death in those who take of it, still more in those who eat of it? Sin, you will say, was too strong for its virtue, rendering it inoperative. Then the evil of sin was stronger than the goodness of life.

Let us therefore consider the truth of the Tree of Life in the words of Our Lord. Speaking of the Devil He says: "He was a man-slayer from the beginning." Do you think that the Fall happened to any other man than him alone whom God created in His image?"

A. No.

N. From what beginning was the Devil a man-slayer? Was it from the beginning of his own creation or from the beginning of the  
 811B creation of man, or perhaps both, if both were created together and neither had his creation before the other? If the creation of the Devil was prior to that of man how was the devil a man-slayer from the beginning? But if the creation of man was prior to that of the Devil, how can the Devil be called a man-slayer from the beginning of the creation of man? If, to take the remaining possibility, it was from the beginning of the creation of both that the Devil was a man-slayer and the man slain, what time is allowed for man's life in Paradise before he was slain by the Devil? This argument is clearly supported by the parable in the Gospel: "A certain man was descending from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." For it is not said that a certain man was *in* Jerusalem and fell among thieves. For if human nature had remained in Jerusalem, that is, Paradise, it certainly would not have met with thieves, that is with the Devil and his satellites. Therefore he was already beginning to  
 811C descend from Paradise under the impulse of his irrational will and was beginning to hasten to Jericho, that is, into the weakness and

instability of temporal nature, and was already wounded by his fall, and despoiled of all those natural goods in which he had been created. From which we are given to understand that man fell himself before he was tempted by the Devil — and not only this but also that it was not in Paradise, but in his descent therefrom and in his freely willed abandonment of the joy of Paradise, called here Jerusalem, that is to say, the Vision of Peace and in his fall into Jericho, that is, the present world that he was wounded by the Devil and despoiled of his bliss. For it is not to be believed that the same man could both have been abiding in the contemplation of eternal Peace and also have fallen at the persuasion of a woman corrupted by the poison of a serpent; or that that serpent, I mean the Devil, who had already fallen from Paradise, that is, from the ranks of the angelic nature, could have prevailed over a man who was not yet in a state of sin and was not already himself falling from the sublimity of the Divine Image. And the same doctrine, that man was created equal to the angels but did not abide in that rank, but soon began to deviate from the path of goodness, seems to be taught in the Eighteenth Chapter of St. Gregory's *Treatise on the Image*, which we have already quoted before, and which we must now quote again: 811D

“He Who brought all things into being and formed man entirely in His Will after the Divine Image, did not establish intervals in which future things would gradually be added, through his knowledge of the number of perfect souls which was required to bring humanity to its perfect fulness, but intellected through His prognostic Act the whole of human nature at once in its fulness, and gave it a place of high honour and a tranquility co-equal with that of the angels.” 812A

Here you are to understand that the said master puts the past for the future tense. For he says that it was by God's prognostic Act that He established human nature in a place of high honour and a tranquility co-equal with that of the angels; and how can that be understood save in the sense that although man had now been established in the Causes he was not yet proceeding into the effects of his blessedness. And St. Gregory gives the reason for his not having proceeded: 812B

“But since He foresaw by His contemplative power that man would not rightly walk in the way of a good will and would therefore fall away from the angelic way of life, he formed in our nature a place of propagation suitable to those who have been snared into sin, so that the number of human souls should not be

diminished when human nature had fallen from the power of propagating itself in the angelic mode, and implanted in man the irrational mode of propagation of the beasts of the field in the place of the glorious fecundity of the angels.”

812C If then these words of the holy Theologian are true — and it is safe to assume that they are — we can understand nothing else but that human nature abode in the Paradise in which it was naturally created for no temporal interval and without sensible effects, but that it quickly deviated from the way of truth and received as a punishment for the activity of its perverse will the division into the two sexes whereby it might propagate its kind after the manner of the beasts of the field.

And therefore if human nature had remained in that blessed state in which it was created it would not have needed sexual intercourse for its propagation, but would have multiplied as the angels multiply, without the use of sex. The venerable master Maximus, the commentator of our Theologian, in his *Treatise on Baptism* agrees with this :

Man's first  
creation  
according to  
812D  
the Spirit

813A “Those who put a mystical interpretation on Holy Writ and glorify it with more exalted speculations in so far as they are relevant, declare that man was made in the image of God in his principles, being born altogether of the Spirit through his will, and by accepting the likeness which was due to his observance of the Divine Mandate which was to be given him : so that the same man might be on the one hand an image of God according to nature, and on the other a Son of God, and God, through the Spirit according to Grace. For it was not otherwise possible for man to be shown as the Son of God and God by the deification of grace, unless he had already been born of the Spirit through his will, through the self-moving and free power that he naturally possesses. But the First Man, abandoning this God-making and Godly and immaterial birth, and by giving greater glory to that which is revealed and is pleasurable to the senses than to intelligible and mystical goods, was deservedly condemned to the disordered and material and corruptible birth of bodies, for God worthily judged that by willingly preferring the worse things to the better man exchanged his free, passionless, spontaneous and chaste birth for a birth that was painful and servile and confined to the image of the irrational brutes and the beasts of the field ; and that in exchange for the divine and ineffable honour of his association with God, he was taking the dishonourable intercourse of the irrational beasts. But wishing to liberate man



from this condition, and to lead him back to his divine blessedness, the Word Who is the Creator of human nature truly becomes a Man and the issue of men, and is born from man according to the body, but without sin.”

But that you may know that it is not an invention of our own but something which we have learnt from the aforesaid author 813B Maximus, that man did not taste of the Tree of Life, but from the start took his first and deadly nourishment from the forbidden tree, and did not raise his intelligible eye to the Divine Light, hear what he says in the Twenty-Eighth Chapter of his Commentary on the words of Gregory :

“Not willing to lift the eye of his soul to this Divine Light, our first father Adam like a blind man in the darkness of ignorance which was his punishment willingly clutching with both hands at his material degradation, gave himself up entirely to the senses, through which he imbibed the corrupt poison of that bitterest of beasts.”

Now by the corrupt sense by which Adam was deceived he means the woman : for among the Greeks *αἴσθησις*, *sense*, is of the feminine gender ; and by the bitterest of beasts he means the Devil, 813C who instilled the poison of his wickedness into the human mind through the medium of the corporeal sense. Then he goes on to say a little later :

“And when sense, knowing full well that death was in the forbidden tree, yet offered him the fruit of it, he made it his first repast, and thus accommodated his life to its food, rendering it mortal and fluid throughout the corruptible body.”

Then he adds : “So if he had trusted in God rather than in his fellow-slave, the sense, and had fed on the Tree of Life, perhaps he would not have laid aside the gift of immortality, which would have been preserved by his participation in Life, since all life is preserved by its own appropriate and suitable food. But the food of that blessed life is the bread that came down from heaven, and gives life to the world, as the Word Itself truly says of Itself in the Gospels.”

But the First Man was unwilling to feed on this fare, and was 813D therefore deservedly rejected from the Divine Life, and received from its parent death another life, through which he endows himself with an irrational form and obscures the transcendent beauty of the Divine, and by feeding upon the fruit betrays the whole of nature to death. But it is not our present purpose to argue against those who, admitting that man lived in bliss for a temporal period before the

The  
814A  
Beginning of  
the discussion  
on Paradise

Fall, yet dare not say how long a period that was: for we are prepared to say only those things which seem to us to be probable; to refute the opinion of others who think otherwise, or to treat it with contempt, or to pronounce it false, is none of our present business. And now I think we ought to turn to the consideration of that Paradise itself.

A. Let us by all means do so. For this is the right method of discourse, not to give the impression of deviating to the right or the left, that is to say, neither to depart from the doctrine which the Catholic Church has accepted as being of the highest and the holiest authority, nor spurn those who, we know, have a simple understanding, since they are contained within the sincerity of the Catholic Faith. "For let each one of us," as the Apostle says, "be rich in his own perception." For to approve our own perception or that of those whom we consider to be the best while rejecting the perception of others is either extremely dangerous or most insolent or at least productive of controversy. Let us therefore in this business proceed  
814B with caution, humility and moderation in the footsteps of the Holy Fathers.

16 N. St. Augustine writes in the Eighth Book of his *Hexameron* :

"I am not unaware that concerning Paradise much has been written by many, but their opinions fall more or less into three categories: of which one is of those who hold that Paradise is only to be understood in a corporeal sense; the second of those who say it is only spiritual; the third of those who believe that it is both, that is to say, both corporeal and spiritual. And to be brief I confess that it is the third opinion that I hold myself."

And in the Eleventh Chapter of the Fourteenth Book of the *City of God* he writes:

814C "Wherefore in a Paradise both corporeal and spiritual man made God his rule to live by. For the Paradise was not corporeal for the body without being spiritual for the Mind: nor was it spiritual to be enjoyed by man's inner senses without being corporeal to be enjoyed with his outer senses: no, it was both for both. But after that proud and therefore envious angel fell from the spiritual Paradise turning through that pride from God to himself, desiring to creep into man's sense by his malevolent subtlety because, falling himself, he envied man's constancy, he chose to become a serpent, one of the creatures that then lived harmlessly and in subjection with these two human beings, the male and the female, in the corporeal

Paradise, a creature slippery and pliable, wreathed in knots, well fitted for his work, through whom he would speak.”

You see how he asserts that there were two Paradises, the one spiritual in which man lived a happy psychic life, the other corporeal in which he lived a happy corporeal life. But in the book which he wrote on the *True Religion* he seems to say that there was only one Paradise, the spiritual :

“This is the first sin of the rational soul, the desire to do that which the highest and innermost Truth forbids. Thus man is driven out of Paradise into this world, that is, out of eternity into time, out of plenty into want, out of stability into instability : not however from a substantial good into a substantial evil, for no substance is an evil, but from an eternal good into a temporal good, from a spiritual good to a fleshly good, from an intelligible good to a sensible good, from the highest good to the lowest good.”

Notice the expression, “from an intelligible good to a sensible good.” Does this not clearly imply that Paradise is intelligible and not sensible? For if he had intended to say that it was sensible he would have said : “From a sensible good (namely the corporeal Paradise) to an inferior sensible good” — unless we are to believe that this passage refers only to the spiritual Paradise from which the sinning soul was expelled, and that he has refrained from mentioning the expulsion of its body from the corporeal Paradise. For he does not say : “This is the first sin of man,” but “This is the first sin of the rational soul.” But I would rather suppose that by the name of the better part of man he is referring to the whole. For it is not to be believed that if there ever were, or still are, two Paradises man would have suffered for his transgression by being expelled from the spiritual but not from the corporeal unless we are to believe that in this place he has only expounded the expulsion of man from the spiritual Paradise, and that he has refrained from mentioning his expulsion from the sensible.

St. Ambrose also in the introduction to his book *On Paradise* seems to postulate in the same way two Paradises, particularly in the following passage :

“In this Paradise, therefore, God placed the man whom He created. Moreover, you are to understand that it was not that man who is according to the Image of God that He placed in Paradise, but man who is according to the body. For that which is incorporeal cannot be in a place.”

815C But a little later when he comes to give his explanation of Paradise he most clearly shows that not only is Paradise to be understood in a spiritual sense, but that it is nothing else than the man himself. Here I think he is wholly indebted to Origen, although he does not specifically refer to him, for he says :

“There was one before our time who has remarked that man’s transgression was committed through pleasure and through sense ; for he took the form of a serpent to represent pleasure, and the form of the woman to represent sense, and saw a representation of man in the mind and the intellect. Now the Greeks call sense αἴσθησις and the mind, which he asserted to have been brought into transgression by the deception of the sense, they call νοῦς. It is appropriate then that in Greek νοῦς has a masculine form and αἴσθησις a feminine. Hence some call Adam the ‘earthly νοῦς’.”

And somewhat later he writes :

815D “Paradise is therefore a fertile ground, that is, a fecund soul, planted in Eden, that is, in pleasure, or it is the ploughed land in which the delight of the mind doth grow. Moreover Adam is, as it were, νοῦς, and Eve αἴσθησις or sense. And see what supports the soul possesses to use against the weakness of nature or the exposure of creation to dangers. There was a fount to irrigate Paradise. What 816A is this fount ? Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Fount of Eternal Life, and His Father too. For it is written : Seeing that you have in you the fount of life ; and again, from her belly shall flow the living waters. It is called the Fount, and it is called the River, and it irrigates the fruitful Tree of Paradise that it may bear the fruit of life eternal. This fount, then, as you have read, is in Paradise. For it is written that the fount proceeds out of Eden. That is to say, the fount is in your soul. Hence Solomon also says ‘Drink the water from your vessels and from the founts of your wells.’ This is the fount which proceeds from that well-tilled and pleasurable soul ; and this fount, which irrigates Paradise, is the power of the soul which bursts forth from the highest fount. And this fount, it is written, is divided into four springs. The name of the first is Phison” — and so on.

816B The four rivers of Paradise The same Saint Ambrose goes on to discuss most lucidly the four rivers of Paradise, comparing them severally to the several virtues of the soul : Phison, which the Greeks call Ganges, to Prudence ; Geon, which is the Nile, to Temperance ; Tygris, which is so called because of the swiftness of its current, to Fortitude ; Euphrates to Justice. See in what a spiritual way he interprets Paradise.

A. Yes, I see it. But perhaps someone might say that he is here rather employing allegory than intending to deny the existence of a material Paradise. For if he did not believe in the existence of a corporeal and local Paradise, he would not perhaps in the course of the above-mentioned work after the exposition of the spiritual Paradise, which is either the soul herself or some spiritual environment of the soul, have gone on to expound the text "And God took the man whom He had made, and placed him in Paradise, to till it and watch over it." "Note," he says "that the man is already existing when he is seized. For he existed in the land of his creation. Then the power of God seized him, breathing into him the processes and increases of virtue. Finally he placed him in Paradise, as though caught up by the breath of the divine service. Notice here that man was created outside Paradise and woman inside Paradise, and from this learn that it is not by the nobility of place or class but by virtue that a man acquires Grace for himself. For although man was created outside Paradise, that is, in a lower place, he is found to be the better of the two, while she who was created in a better place, that is, in Paradise is found to be inferior. For the woman was first deceived, and then herself deceived the man." 816C

Is it not clear from these words that he wished to postulate a local Paradise, and therefore a corporeal and sensible one?

N. It is not our intention to dispute with those who hold such opinions. For whether there be two Paradises, the one corporeal and the other spiritual, we neither deny or affirm. We are merely comparing the opinions of the Holy Fathers: it is not ours to say which should be followed rather than another. Let each abound in his sense, and let him choose which he will follow, avoiding all controversy. But in what sense the master of highest authority and of the acutest and most exalted genius has put forward these suggestions in his commentaries on Holy Scripture it is not clear to us — unless perhaps, as we have very often found in his expositions, he has followed the Greek theologians, and particularly Gregory. For the Greeks maintain that there are two creations of man, one in the Image of God, in which there is neither male nor female but only universal and indivisible humanity most like the angelic nature, of which we are unmistakably taught by authority and right reason that it lacks all sexual distinction; the other and second, which was added as a result of the foreknowledge of the Fall of the rational nature, and in which sex is established. Rightly then is it described as having occurred outside Paradise, and in a lower place out of the 817A 817B

earth of its creation, seeing that it was added on account of sin. Therefore the male sex which was added to the nature created in the Image of God was made outside Paradise. But because even that sex is added as though taken from elsewhere to a previously existing nature, namely, the divine Image, it is established in Paradise together with the first creation : where also, as in a higher place, the second sex, called by the name of woman, and drawn from the side of the first, is added to it as an assistant in the procreation of offspring in the shameful manner of the irrational animals.

And since the creation of the male sex is prior to that of the female not in terms of time but in terms of honour (for woman was made from man in the first creation, but not man from woman), he therefore says that the creation of man was outside Paradise, and that of woman inside, so that you may understand by this that man was made a better creature than woman even outside Paradise, that  
 817C is, outside the rank of the Primordial Causes, and that woman was created, as it were, within Paradise, that is to say, within the union of the sex which was added to the simplicity of the Divine Image. Or you may put it this way : since in every man it may be said that there are two men, for the Apostle says : “The outer man is corrupted but the inner man is renewed,” the inner man is properly formed in Paradise after the Image of God, while the outer and corruptible man is formed from the clay of the earth outside and below Paradise : and by the fact that man is seized and placed within Paradise is meant that if God had operated His saving power in him, and if man had observed the Divine Precept, he also could have  
 817D attained to the rank of the First Man who was created in the image of God. But since he refused to obey the Divine Precept, he abandoned not only his Creator, but also the dignity of the Image. And therefore he was cloven into two sexes, the male and the female, a cleavage which derived its origin not from nature but from sin. And therefore although the woman was made from the man in  
 818A Paradise, she was not for that reason better than man, for she took the occasion of her creation not from the Divine Image which was created within Paradise, but from the penalty of her future transgression. For she also was causally created in the outer man, who deservedly because of his sin was created outside Paradise from the clay of the earth ; and she was subsequently in honour though not in time taken from the side of man in Paradise.

But whether it was this or something else which our master wished to convey, it is not our intention to quarrel with those who

believe that there were two Paradises, as I said before, the one spiritual, the other corporeal, answering to the double nature of man — especially as we find that constantly in the scriptural accounts many references to the truth of nature are to be taken both as historical facts and as spiritual signs. Thus Abraham had two sons, one from his handmaid, and one from the free woman : these were historical events. But they also have the allegorical significance of the Two Laws, that of the Old Testament and that of the New. The Rock from which the waters flowed followed the Chosen People in the wilderness : but the Apostle says : “Now the Rock was Christ.” And what of the constitution of these two very beings, the male and the female in Paradise, which is under discussion at the moment ? Do they not signify, as the Apostle bears witness, Christ and His Church ? What then would be so strange in the fact that the corporeal Paradise was created as a symbol of the spiritual ? And we know that Origen, that supreme commentator of Scripture, declares that Paradise is nowhere and nothing else than that which is established as he says, in the Third Heaven, into which St. Paul was rapt. But if it is in the Third Heaven, then it is certainly spiritual. For the spiritual nature of the Third Heaven into which St. Paul was rapt is not doubted by the best authors in either tongue : for they all agree in calling it intellectual.

But Epiphanius the Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus reproves Origen in this, and uncompromisingly maintains that Paradise is on earth :

“It is a certain sensible place in the eastern parts of the earth with sensible trees and rivers, and the other objects which are believed concerning Paradise in a simple corporeal sense by those who cleave to the corporeal senses.”

For the same Epiphanius “has”, he says, “no doubt” that those tunics of skin which God stitched together for man after his transgression were, as an historical fact, made from the fleece of the sheep which, as he says, were in Paradise : and he reproves Origen who by a very fine and truthful allegory interprets those skins as signifying the mortal bodies which were added to the first human beings as a punishment for their sin. Almost all authors, Greek and Latin, follow Origen in his theory of the tunics of skin.

It would not be irrelevant, I think, to insert here the opinion of the great Gregory of Nyssa concerning the food of Paradise, and the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the Twentieth Chapter of his *Treatise on the Image* he writes :

“Rightly is it said that man will not return into the same species of life : for if the species of the former life consisted in eating, in the after life we shall be released from this activity. But I, giving ear to Holy Scripture, recognise not only a corporeal food, and not only a fleshly joy, but also another kind of food, which bears a certain analogy to the nourishment of the body, a food of which the goodness is conveyed only into the soul. ‘Feed of My loaves,’ says Wisdom to the hungry, and those who hunger and thirst after this food are blessed of the Lord: ‘Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness,’ and: ‘If any thirst,’ He saith, ‘let him come to Me and drink.’ And the great Isaiah says to those who are able to appraise his greatness: ‘Drink of happiness.’ And there is also a kind of prophetic curse against those who are worthy of vengeance, that they shall be tormented with hunger. But this hunger is not a need for food and drink, but a deprivation of the Word. For it is not, He says, a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but a hunger for hearing the Word of the Lord. Are not these delights, then, to be found in the Eden of God’s planting? For the meaning of Eden is ‘delights’. For that the trees there bore a certain kind of fruit, and that man was by it undoubtedly enabled to eat, and that the fruit of which he partook when he lived in Paradise was by no means transitory or mutable may be rightly understood from these words: ‘Of the fruit of every tree which is in Paradise thou shalt eat.’ Who shall give to him who hungers healthily for it the fruit of that tree which is in Paradise and which comprises every good thing, and whose name is therefore πᾶν that is, ‘all’, and of which the law of nature makes man a participant? For by a universal and over-ruling reason every from of the good contains naturally in itself the whole, and is One. Who shall keep me away from this food mixed from the other tree? For to the discerning it is by no means difficult to see what is that ‘all’, of which the fruit is Life; and what is that mixture of which the end is death? For He Who offers that enjoyment of that ‘all’ freely by everyone is the same as He Who by His Providence and by a certain principle prohibits man from its indiscriminate participation. And I think that this Law is explained by the great David and the wise master Solomon : for each of them understands that the permitted food has a single grace, the Good itself, which truly is, and which is wholly good. For David says ‘Rejoice in the Lord,’ and Solomon calls that food, which is the Lord, the Tree of Life. Therefore is not that tree whose food is given by the Law to him who is formed in the Image of God the Tree of Life and ‘All’-tree? Separated from it as a

819B

819C

Christ is the  
 tree of life,  
 for He is  
 every good

819D

820A



contrary is the other tree, whose fruit is the knowledge of good and evil : it is not the case that this tree specifically produces in part each of the contrary things indicated ; it produces a confused and mixed kind of fruit, a composite of contrary qualities. And its fruit is forbidden by the Lord of Life : but the serpent commends it so as to prepare an entry for death. He persuades us giving us counsel, painting that fruit with the beauty of good and the delight of evil, that it might seem desirable, and that desire might lead us to tasting.”

Again in the twentieth chapter of the same treatise he writes :  
 “Now what is that tree whose fruit is the mingled knowledge of good and evil, a knowledge which is impregnated with the delights of the senses? I think it would not be far wrong to say that the Greeks call the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil γνῶστών, while the Tree of Life they call πᾶν γνῶθι. I employ the term ‘tree’ for the purpose of *theoria*. I think I should not be wandering far from the truth if by the understanding of the mind, in so far as these things can be understood, I employ the following argument :

“I think that by ‘knowledge’ the Scripture does not mean ‘skill’, and I find that in the Scriptures a certain distinction is drawn between knowledge and judgment or discrimination. For as the apostle tells us, skilfully to discriminate the good from the evil is the mark of a perfect disposition, and of properly trained senses. And therefore he lays it down as a precept that all things should be judged and that judgment is the property of the spiritual man. But knowledge does not everywhere mean the skill and expertise of that which is signified, but an affection towards that to which Grace is given — as when it is written, ‘God knows those who are His,’ that is to say, He gives His Grace to His own. And to Moses He says : ‘For I knew thee above all.’ But to those whose wickedness is proved He Who knoweth all things saith : ‘I never knew you,’ that is to say, I never bestowed My Grace upon you. Therefore is it not the tree whose fruit is this mixed knowledge that is prohibited? But that fruit which has the serpent for its spokesman, that is, advocate, is a mixture of contraries, to wit, of good and of evil. And it is perhaps for this reason that pure evil, manifested by itself and in itself according to its proper nature, is never offered, that is, is never revealed naked. For no evil would be effective which was not coloured with good, by which it may attract him whom it has seduced, that is to say man, to lust after it. But now it is somehow mixed with good. It harbours destruction in its depths as in a secret

- ambush, but outwardly displays, for the purpose of seduction, a certain appearance of good. Thus the beauty of material wealth
- 821A seems to the greedy a good: but avarice is the root of all evil. And who would fall into the filthy swamp of intemperance unless he estimated pleasure as good and something desirable, and by this snare is enticed into passion? And it is the same with the other hidden sins, each distinguished by its own particular pleasure. They seem desirable as a good, through this allurement, to those who do not examine the matter carefully. Since then many take for good that in which the senses delight, and since that which seems to be the good, while it is not, has the same name as the Good which is; that is to say, the true Good which is goodness itself: for this reason the concupiscence felt towards evil as though towards the Good is called by Scripture the knowledge of good and of evil, where the term 'knowledge' has the significance of a kind of interaction and concretion of good and evil. It is neither absolutely evil, for it is surrounded by good; nor is it purely good, for evil is concealed within it: but Scripture tells us that the fruit of the forbidden tree which, it says, brings those who taste of it to death is a mixture of both. It all but proclaims this teaching, that the Good, which by nature truly is and is simple and uniform by nature, is free from all duality and mingling with its opposite. But evil is varied and is so formed as to have some good mixed with it but is found on trial to be different. For it is not found to be as it is estimated, but becomes the source of death and the cause and principle of corruption. Therefore the serpent shows the sinner the fruit in such a way as to represent on the face of it that it has no evil. For by an obvious evil man, probably, would not have been seduced, and so he adorned the obvious evil with a specious appearance, and made it enticing by a form which was pleasurable to the sense, and thus revealed it to the woman, persuading her to taste it. For the Scripture says: 'And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat' and that it was fair to look upon, and beautiful to know, and so she accepted the fruit and ate it. And so that food became for man the mother of death. Therefore it is fruitful of mixture, if we rightly interpret the obvious sense in which that tree is named the knowledge of good and of evil — because in the evil of the death-bearing properties which are in its sweetness, in so far as it sweetens the sense it appears good, but in so far as it corrupts what it touches it is the source of the worst evil. Therefore, when it worked in the life of man as a death-bearing evil, at that moment man, so great a thing and so great a name, the Image of the Divine Nature, is made like unto vanity, as the Prophet
- The teachings  
on the tree  
called  
γνωστόν
- 821B
- 821C

says. Therefore the Image is associated with what is understood to be our better nature : but the sad and unhappy things which relate to this life do not belong to the likeness of God." 821D

See then of what nature Paradise, its trees, and its fruits were thought to be by this Theologian. 822A

A. I see very well. They were clearly spiritual and unlocalised. But I should like from you a clear and brief explanation of those things which he expounds rather obscurely.

N. Whoever looks closely into the words of this Theologian will find that his teaching is none other than that the word Paradise is a mere figure of speech by which Holy Scripture signifies the human nature that was made in the image of God. For what God in truth planted is that very nature which He created in Eden, that is to say, in the delights of eternal bliss, in His image and likeness, that is, in an image which in every way resembles Himself save only, as I have said before, in His status of subject, a nature which by reason of the blessedness of its likeness to God is greater and more excellent than the whole sensible Universe, not in respect of size, but in respect of the dignity of its nature. And the fertile soil of this Paradise was the essential body, which possesses a possible immortality in potency. For the natural body is said to die because it appears to share the death of that which is added to it : but in fact it is always immortal in itself. For statements such as "It may die, it may not die" refer to that which it suffers as an adjunct to itself. For the body of the First Man, as St. Augustine says, might not have died, and would not have died if it had not been corrupted by the poison of transgression, but would have blossomed with the flowers of spiritual beauty, and would never have grown old with the accumulation of time. 822B

Paradise  
means human  
nature

And the water of this Paradise is the sense of the incorruptible body able to receive forms and formed by the phantasies of sensible things without being deceived.

And the air of this Paradise, illuminated by the Rays of the Divine Wisdom, was the reason, by which it might have knowledge of all things.

And the ether was the Mind which was centred on the Divine Nature in an eternal and ineffable immutable motion and mutable stability, and on the other things which are to be predicated about the Divine Nature, but which, since they cannot be understood, must be honoured in silence. 822C

Therefore Scripture testifies that in this Paradise flows the Fountain of Life, from which we are told under an allegory of the four principal rivers of the sensible world that the four streams of the virtues divide, namely, prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice. And these spiritual rivers bursting forth from the Divine Wisdom, which is the fount of all life and all virtue, water the surface of the human nature : first, arising in the secret recesses of humanity, in the most hidden channels, as it were, of the intelligible earth they issue in invisible virtues : then they spread out into the manifest effects of good actions and produce innumerable kinds of potencies and acts. For from them every potency and every act proceeds and into them returns : but they themselves proceed from the Divine Wisdom, and into It return.

822D

823A

In the same Paradise there are two trees, of which, according to the exposition of our Theologian Gregory, “the one is called  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ ,” that is, “all”, “the other  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$ ,” that is “knowable:” but if we analyse the interpretation of this word, it does not satisfactorily express the meaning of the tree. Therefore, for the sake of a better understanding of what is signified by that tree we have decided to substitute for  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$  the name *mixed*.

But what is this  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ , of whose fruit man was commanded to feed?  $\Pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$  is that tree of which the Scripture says : “And the Lord God produced from the earth the All-tree that is fair to look upon and pleasant to taste and also the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise.” Notice how the Prophetic Meditation describes and names one and the same tree in two ways : first as the All-tree which is fair to look upon and pleasant to taste, and then as the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise. And a little later it is written : “From the All-tree of Paradise thou shalt eat,” where by “the All-tree” is meant a single tree. Now, let no follower of our Theologian’s doctrine imagine that there was in Paradise a large number of trees of different forms and different fruits, as though it were a forest thick with trees : there were but two, the one  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ , and the other  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\acute{o}\nu$ . And the  $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$   $\xi\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\omicron\nu$  that is, “the All-tree”, of Paradise is the Word and Wisdom of the Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the fruit-bearing All-tree and is planted in the midst of the Paradise of human nature in two ways : first through His own divinity, by which He creates our nature and contains it and endows it with nourishment and life and light and godhead and movement and being, “for in Him we move and live and have our being;” and secondly through taking our nature upon Him in the unity of His

The “All-  
tree” of  
Paradise  
823B  
which is  
Christ

823C

Substance in order that He might save it and recall it to its former state, so that He came to subsist in two natures, a divine and a human. And this is what the Scripture says: "And the Lord God produced from the earth," that is, from our material nature, "the All-tree," that is, the Incarnate Word, in Which and through Which all things are made, and Which is all things. For It alone is the substantial Good. For the other things which are called good are good not through themselves but through participation in Him Who in Himself truly is the Good Which is, and all good and goodness, and the fount and origin, the cause and principle, the end and perfection, the movement and rest, the middle and the end, the environment and the place, of all goodness and all good : and His fruit is life eternal, and His food is joy and bliss and ineffable delight, and His countenance is fair to look upon. For he is the Beautiful and the Beauty that lies in all things beautiful, and He is the cause and perfection of Beauty, and those who taste and feed on Him know no satiety : for the more they feed on Him the greater grows their desire for that repast.

823D

From this "All-Tree," then, that is to say, this plentitude of all goods, the first human beings were ordered to take their food : and the whole human genus until now is bidden to live by it. But since our first parents refused to take their food therefrom, preferring to it the deadly fruit of the forbidden tree, not only they but the whole genus which sprang from them were by the most righteous decree of God expelled from the dignity of their nature and condemned to death. Do you now see what the holy Prophet, or rather, the Holy Spirit through the Prophet, wished to signify by the phrase "All-tree"?

824A

A. I see clearly : nothing else, I think, but God the Word made man is the All-good of the whole of Paradise, that is to say, of the whole of our nature, and nothing else subsists than Him to partake of Whom (that is, to regard Him with a devout Mind, or believe in Him faithfully) is eternal life and incorruptible health ; but not to know Him or to deny Him is eternal death and infinite corruption.

824B

N. You understand correctly. It now remains to speak of the γνωστόν, that is, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It has already been suggested that to make things easier the word γνωστόν be translated not literally but in such a way as to give a true interpretation of its meaning, *mixed*. And in fact according to the above mentioned master whose teaching about Paradise we follow and reproduce in order to dissipate the obscurity of the

The tree of knowledge of good and evil which is called γνωστόν

problem, the γνωστόν is that evil disguised under the colour of good which is instilled into the senses of the body and is the direct opposite of the former tree, the πᾶν. For just as in this all good is reflected and all good exists, so in that is the totality of all evil. The one, therefore, is all good which truly subsists, the other every evil which seduces all evil men by its appearance of good.

Now it is not irrelevant to enquire why the account relates that both trees were in the midst of Paradise, the “All-Tree,” which is also called the Tree of Life, and the other tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil. And the answer, I think, is something like this: If it be first supposed that the whole of human nature was implied, that is to say, the visible and the invisible, the exterior and the interior, that which was created in the image of God and that which was added to it on account of sin, then anyone who has read the text of the blessed Gregory’s *Treatise on the Image* will find that there is in the whole of human nature, both generally in all and specifically in individuals, a sixfold division. First there is the division into the two principal parts of the body and the soul; then body, that is, the exterior man, is logically divided into three subdivisions, of which the first is the body itself constituted out of formed matter, of which only being may be predicated, than which the understanding finds nothing lower in nature. The second part, which lies above it, may be called, and is customarily called, by many names. Thus it is named the nutritive and auctive part because it provides the body with nourishment and causes it to grow and holds it together that it may not fall apart and dissolve. It is also called Vital Motion, a name which is appropriate because not only does it give life to the body, but also motion, either locally through space or through numbers of place and time — by numbers of place I here mean those in which the fulness of the body’s parts is achieved, and by numbers of time those in which increases of ages are brought to perfection. The third subdivision, which is manifested in the five-fold bodily sense, receives the phantasies of all sensible objects which surround man externally and conveys them to the memory.

In these three parts the whole of the exterior man is constituted. But the inner man, who subsists in the soul alone, and is made in the image of God, has also a three-fold division. For it possesses the Interior Sense, through which the soul distinguishes and forms judgments upon the phantasies of the sensible objects which she receives through the corporeal sense. Next she possesses Reason, through which she investigates the “reasons” of all things which are

apprehended by the intelligence or the sense. But the highest part of man is the Mind, above which there is found nothing higher in human nature, and whose proper function is the government of the parts which are inferior to it, and the contemplation of what lies above it, namely, God, and of what lies in it and subsists about it, according as it is allowed to ascend.

Is the sixfold division of human nature clear to you? Human nature is, and lives and perceives through the body; it perceives outside of the body, and reasons, and intellects. But the three properties which are discerned in the lower part of man are corruptible and susceptible to dissolution, while the triad of the upper part, which is wholly and absolutely constituted in the soul alone, is incorruptible and indissoluble and eternal as befits that which has impressed upon it the Image of the Divine Nature. And therefore, as we have shown in the previous books, the Greeks give to this triad in human nature, which St. Dionysius tells us can neither be dissolved nor corrupted nor in any way destroyed, the names οὐσία, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. 825C

Therefore the limits of human nature are to be considered as the upper and the lower boundaries of Paradise, beyond which no created nature may be supposed to exist. For above mind there is only God and below matter, that is, only body, there is nothing — not that nothing which is called so and thought to be so because of the transcendence of its nature, but that which is conceived and called so because of its lack of all nature. You will also find, if I am not mistaken, that mind holds the highest place in human nature, and the material body the lowest. And if you now turn to the intermediate parts of the same nature you will find below Mind, on the upper side, Reason, and above body, on the lower side, Vital Motion, by which I mean the nutritive life principle; and again in the midst of this nature, as in the midst of Paradise, two senses, the exterior which adheres to the Vital Motion and the body, and the inner sense which is inseparably joined to Reason and Mind, and is consubstantial with them. Therefore, these two senses, occupying as it were the two middle positions of the Paradise of human nature, represent those two intelligible trees, πᾶν and γνωστόν: the interior πᾶν and the exterior γνωστόν. For in the interior of man abide truth and every good, which is the Word of God, the only-begotten Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ outside of Whom there is no good, since He is all good and substantial Good and Goodness. And to Him is opposed on the other side the evil thing and evil. And since 826A  
The "all-tree" and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in human nature

- there is no evil which is found to exist substantially in nature, nor proceeds from a fixed and natural cause, for considered in itself it is absolutely nothing but the irrational and perverse and imperfect motion of the rational nature, it can find no other abode in the universal creature save where falsehood resides: and the proper residence of falsehood is in the corporeal sense. For no part of human nature is the recipient of error except the exterior sense, and that is the means through which the interior sense, the Reason, and even Mind are very often led astray. Therefore it is in this place of falsehood and vain phantasies, namely in the corporeal sense which the Greeks call αἴσθησις and symbolise by the woman, that γνωστόν, that is, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil, is established, which is evil painted to resemble good, or evil in the form of good, or, to speak plainly, a false good, or evil hiding under the guise of good, whose fruit is a confused or mixed knowledge. For there is in it a confusion of hidden evil and apparent good which at first seduces the sense in which it lies as a woman is seduced,
- 826B
- 826C unable to discern the hidden evil under the appearance of good by which it is disguised. For in itself evil is a deformity and an abhorrent ugliness which, if the erring sense beheld undisguised, it would not only refuse to follow or take delight in, but would flee from and abhor. But the unwitting sense errs, and in erring is deceived, because it takes the evil for something which is good and fair to look upon and pleasant to taste. To take an example, when the phantasy of good, for instance, or of any other sensible material, is impressed upon the corporeal sense, the phantasy itself seems fair and lovely, because it is taken from a creature which is outwardly good. But the woman, that is the carnal sense, is deceived and delights in it without perceiving the evil which lies hidden in the false and phantastic beauty, that is to say, voluptuousness which is the
- 826D “root of all evil.” “Whoso looketh upon a woman to lust after her,” saith the Lord, “hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,” meaning by that: Whoso implants in his carnal desire the phantasy which is taken from the female form has already committed adultery in his thought, for he is seeking the ugliness of lust which is enticing him secretly under that false appearance of the female form.

- So then, as we have said above, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is pernicious and deadly wickedness masquerading under the form of good, and this tree is planted, as it were, in a woman, that is, in the carnal sense, which it deceives. And if the
- 827A mind consents to the sense, then the integrity of the whole of human



nature is destroyed. For if the highest part of that nature transgresses, what lower part will remain unharmed? and the fruit of this tree is the mingled knowledge of good and of evil, that is, the indiscriminating appetite of evil imagined as good, and love and lust and pleasure, through which in the form of a serpent the ancient enemy of the human genus first urged transgression and then brought death upon the whole of nature: upon the soul which abandoned God, and upon the body which was deserted by the soul. Knowledge, therefore, in this place signifies not some science of the recognising and distinguishing of natures, but an illicit motion and confused hankering after a coveted evil, that is, sin, which for the purpose of deception is disguised in the false appearance of a likeness to the good.

But perhaps you wish to enquire whether it was God Who 827B  
implanted in the Paradise of human nature such a tree, whose fruit is the mixed and confused appetite for good and evil, whose nature is evil disguised under the phantasy of good, whose food was the cause of death?

A. Certainly I wish to ask that, and I think it is proper that I should. For if God did create it, He might well be considered the creator of evil and the cause of death — which would be a most impious thing to say of Him Who is the Author of all good things, and all the more impious to believe or think it. But if it was not planted by God, whence was the seed of it sown in human nature?

N. We must first consult Holy Scripture which unhesitatingly ascribes a divine planting to that tree which is called  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ . For it says: “And the Lord God produced out of the earth the All-tree that is fair to look upon and pleasant to feed upon,” and then, as though in explanation of the quality of that tree which is “all tree,” “also the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise.” By this is meant that that tree is not only every good and every beautiful thing and every pleasant and spiritual food, but also the Tree of Life, by which that Paradise, that is, human nature, is alive, for it is planted in the midst of it. But it is not sufficiently clear whether that which follows, “and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil,” is governed by the preceding words, so that we should read “and He brought forth the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil in the middle of Paradise as He did the Tree of Life,” or whether the phrase is to be taken independently: “and there was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil,” so that we should not take it to have been brought forth by God, but only opposed by its contrary quality to 827D

- the first tree, so that as that was all good and life and the cause of life in those who live, so this was all evil and death and the cause of death in those who die. Or perhaps, since it is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil, we should understand that in respect of its form of good it is from God, for He is the Cause of every form and all beauty, whether that form and that beauty are perceived by the mind or the sense in some substance or whether they lie in the phantasies of sensible matter which are received by the senses and of which the bodily sense is the proper abode, since it is from the bodily sense that they are carried to the interior sense : but in respect of the evil itself which is clothed in the form of the good,
- 828A but which in itself has no form and is unknown, it is neither from God nor from any sure or definite cause. For evil is inconstant and without cause, for as a substance it does not occur anywhere in nature. Therefore that tree in respect of its evil is not to be referred to any cause, because it is entirely devoid of being : but the form of good by which the unwary are deceived because it is taken from matter (by the phantasy of which it is formed) which is both made and made good by the Creator of all things, consequently can be by no means evil. Therefore the form by which evil seduces those whom it destroys is good, since it is the phantasy of a good : but the evil itself is absolutely evil and is not created by any good for it is the contrary of every good.
- 828B And if you examine closely the nature of the phantasies by which evil is painted, for in her naked self she cannot appear, being without form or beauty or cause, you will see for yourself that it is altogether good. And this can be most clearly shown by the following argument :
- Let us suppose two men, of whom the one is wise and by no means tickled or stung by the goads of avarice, while the other is foolish and greedy, pierced and torn by the needles of his perverse desire, are brought into one place and a vessel offered them made of pure gold and set with most precious jewels, endowed with the loveliest form, fit for the use of a king. Both, the wise man and the greedy one, see it, both receive through the corporeal sense the
- 828C phantasy of the vessel itself, both store the phantasy in the memory, both bring thought to bear upon it. But the wise man by a simple mental process entirely refers its beauty, the phantasy of which he ponders within himself, to the glory of the Creator of Natures : no enticement of cupidity steals upon him, no poison of voluptuousness infects the purpose of his pure mind, no lust contaminates it. With

the greedy one on the other hand it is altogether different. Directly he has absorbed the phantasy of the vessel he blazes with the fire of cupidity, he is consumed, he is poisoned, he dies: for instead of referring the beauty of that nature and of its phantasies to the glory of Him Who said "Gold is mine and silver is mine," he plunges and is swallowed up in that most stinking swamp of cupidity. Notice that for both the phantasy of the same vessel was good and beautiful. But whereas in the sense of the wise man it is simple and natural and free from all evil, in the greedy one it is a double phantasy, mixed with the contrary evil of cupidity, which is mixed with it and given form by it and coloured by it so as to seem good whereas it is a most poisonous evil. Evil, then, is not implanted in man's nature, but established in the perverse and irrational motion of the free and rational will. And it appears that this motion comes not from within human nature but is induced from outside, by a bestial intemperance, and by the subtle devising of the ancient enemy it is tinged and mingled with good so as to deceive the lustful affections of the carnal senses, and thus to destroy them by death.

828D

829A

Now in saying this I do not wish to refute the interpretation of those who maintain that this Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil is of its nature wholly a good, and that its creation in a local Paradise was an historical event, and that its fruit is the knowledge, that is to say, the experience, of good and evil. For if the first human beings had abstained from touch and taste of it, as they were bid, their experience would have been of the eternal life, of everlasting bliss without the interruption of death. But should they consent to the wiles of the devil and illicitly in their most wretched concupiscence partake of the deadly food of its fruit, they would encounter the experience of eternal death and unhappiness. But whoever has thought it worth while to read with close attention the discussion that we have been conducting is in a position to choose from the above mentioned opinions of the Holy Fathers which we have set on record the one which it seems best to him to follow, and to see that he cannot bring it against us that what we have said is not corroborated by any authority or is presumptuously invented as a counterblast to the traditions handed down by the Fathers of the Church.

829B

Here you have, then, what I think is as clear and brief a modest explanation of Paradise as my capacity can supply.

A. Yes, but I should like you to make an ἀνακεφαλαίωσις or recapitulation which may embrace in the form of a conclusion and

17

Recapitulation

make precise all the scattered remarks which you have made about Paradise.

N. We have said:

829C That the plantation of God, namely, Paradise, in Eden, that is to say, in the joy of the eternal and blessed happiness, is human nature made in the image of God.

That the fount that is therein is Christ, concerning Whom the Prophet, addressing the Father, says: "For in Thee is the Fount of Life;" Who also invites all those who thirst after righteousness, saying: "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink."

That its rivers which flow from the Fount of Wisdom are the four cardinal virtues of the soul, and that from them every virtue and every good act is disseminated.

829D That its "All-Tree," of which it is written: "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in Paradise, planted by streams of water," by which is meant that all the oracles of the prophets, all the symbols of either Law, the interpretations of those symbols, and all the exoteric and simple doctrines that flow about it, is the Word of God found in human nature and incarnate in human nature.

That the tree of mixed knowledge in this Paradise is the indiscriminating or confused hankering of the carnal senses to satisfy the various lusts which are concealed under the appearance of good and which deceive and destroy unwary souls.

That the man in this Paradise is mind, which presides over the whole of human nature.

That the woman therein is the sense, to which if mind incautiously consent, it is lost.

830A That the serpent therein is the forbidden pleasure by which those things which charm the senses are illicitly and damnably desired.

And do not think that my theory that there were only two trees in Paradise, πᾶν and γῶστόν, is disproved by the reply which the woman is reported to have given to the Devil: "We feed on the fruit of the trees which are in Paradise:" for she did not say "We feed, that is are bidden to feed on the fruit of the All-Tree," but of trees, in the plural, as though those were many trees of various kinds upon which they were permitted to feed. But it is possible to believe that what the woman called the All tree was in fact a great number of

trees, for the word “all” is not used in a singular significance but has reference to that which has a plural content. For all (every) man is the manifold number of human nature, and again this manifold number, since it partakes of a single nature, is wont to be described as one man. What would be surprising, then; if the term “All-Tree” meant a large number of trees? For God the Word, Who is All-Tree, that is, all good, and is One, is at the same time Many, and is the Source of all good, that is to say, of every virtue and wisdom and essence which bears fruit in human nature. Therefore all the rational motions of rational nature which man is permitted and commanded to perform, since they are the derivatives of the common good of all, that is, the Divine Wisdom, in human nature, that is, the plantation and Paradise of God, are described as a great number of fruit-bearing trees: but these trees all subsist, as it were, in that one in which all goods are one. Therefore the woman said well when, not yet deceived and still conscious of the virtues implanted in her nature, she called the single  $\pi\alpha\nu$  tree many trees, for in it are all good things.

830B

830C

I do not wish it to be thought that I am only following the doctrines of the Greek writers about Paradise, and am either ignoring the Latin writers or am incapable of finding among them support for this interpretation: for I should then seem to have spoken rashly, proposing a doctrine that would not be supported by the masters of both tongues. Therefore it is necessary as well as relevant to insert into our discussion the opinions of St. Ambrose about Paradise, if you agree.

A. Certainly I agree. For who but a madman would dare to reject the opinions of so great and wise a man?

N. St. Ambrose, then, writes in his book *On Paradise* as follows:

“There are some who think that that precept, to eat of the Tree of Life and not to eat of the forbidden tree, is neither appropriate to the Creator of Heaven and earth and all things nor suitably addressed to the inhabitants of Paradise, for the life that they led there was similar to that of the angels. Therefore they cannot accept the view that this food was earthly and corruptible and for eating, for the inhabitants of Paradise neither eat nor drink but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. Since, therefore, there is in food neither a great prize, for it is not by what we eat that we are commended to God, nor a great danger, for not that which enters into the mouth

18  
Here Saint  
Ambrose  
attributes his  
830D  
interpretation  
not to himself  
but to others

831A

defiles a man, but that which proceeds forth from the mouth, there seems to be no question but that the precept was unworthy of such an Author unless you identify this nourishment with that perfect food which the Lord promises to His Saints as their great reward: 'Behold, those who serve me shall feed, but you shall go hungry.' For this is the food which contains eternal life, which if any man lose he shall die the death — for the Living and Heavenly Bread is the Lord Himself Who gives life to this world. Therefore He Himself says: 'Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood you shall not have eternal life.' There was, then, a certain bread which God commanded the inhabitants of Paradise to eat. What was that bread? Hear what it is: 'Man ate the bread of angels.' Good bread is also doing the will of God. Do you wish to know how good that bread is? The Son Himself feeds on it, for He says: 'My food is to do the will of My Father Who is in heaven.'"

831B

Observe what kind of food the great master teaches that it was which the Lord commanded the inhabitants of Paradise to eat: not a corporeal or corruptible food, but spiritual, none other than the Word of God and His will.

A. I observe, and I greatly marvel how well he agrees with the interpretation of Gregory the Theologian, who also, as we saw, "unhesitatingly asserts that the food and fruit and drink of Paradise are spiritual and intelligible." Furthermore, if the food of Paradise is spiritual and intelligible, it necessarily follows that that "All-Tree", whose fruit that food is, must also be regarded as intelligible and spiritual. For it is incredible and is contrary to reason for an incorporeal and intelligible fruit to grow from a corporeal and sensible tree. Again, if both the fruit and the trees are spiritual, does not this compel us to believe and maintain that the place in which they subsist is not corporeal either but spiritual?

831C

N. What you say is to the point, is reasonable, and very like the truth. But in order that we may have the unshakable support of this father Ambrose, let us look more closely into what he has written in this book about Paradise and almost everything which the Divine History declares that it contains:

"Many careful students are puzzled as to how, if at first it was God's gift to men that they should be set in Paradise, or at the end it was as a reward for their great merits that every just man is snatched up into Paradise, animals also, both the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, are said to have been in Paradise. Hence for the

831D

most part they believe that Paradise is the soul of man, in which the seeds of the virtues, as it were, germinate : but that man, that is, the mind of man, is placed there to till and to guard Paradise. For it is by the virtue of the mind that the soul seems to be tended ; and not only tended, but thereafter protected. But the beasts of the field and the birds of the air which are brought to Adam are our irrational emotions, because the beasts and cattle are the various passions of the body, either the more violent or the more sluggish ones. And as to the birds of the air, what else should they be but the empty thoughts which hover birdlike about our souls, and often lead it in varied motion to one thing or another ? Therefore there was found no other similar helpmeet for our minds but the sense or αἴσθησις ; only that could our mind find like to itself.

The beasts  
and birds of  
Paradise

832A

“But perhaps you will argue that these things also, the passions of the body and the vanity of the empty vacillating thoughts, were placed in this Paradise by God, and that therefore He Himself was the author of our transgressions ? Consider what He says : ‘You have power over the fishes of the sea and over the birds of the air and over all creeping things which creep upon the face of the earth.’ You see that He has given you power to make judgments upon them and by the sober definitions of your judgment discern the genus of each. God called all things to you that you might learn that your mind should be supreme over them all. Why have you desired to cleave to those things which are not of your kind, and to join yourself to them ? He gave you a sure sense by which you might know all things and judge your thoughts. With justice you were driven forth from that fertile field of Paradise, for you could not keep His commandment. For God knew that you were a fragile thing, He knew you were incapable of judgment ; and it was for that that He said to you, as to rather fragile creatures : ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged.’ Therefore because He knew you to be uncertain in your judgments, He desired that you should be obedient to His mandate, and so laid a command upon you : and if you had not transgressed it you could not have incurred the dangers of your unsure judgment. But since you willed to judge and so dared, He therefore added : ‘Behold Adam has become one of us, so as to know good and evil.’ You willed to arrogate judgment to yourself : you should not then refuse the punishment for perverse judgment. But He has placed you over against Paradise so that you may not lose the memory of it. Finally the righteous are often snatched into Paradise as Paul was, and heard there ineffable things spoken. And you, if through the vigour of your mind you be rapt from the first

832B

832C

832D heaven to the second and from the second to the third, seeing that in the first each man is a body, in the second a living body, and in the third a spirit, you will be so rapt to the third heaven that you may see the splendour of the spiritual Grace: for the animal man does not know the things of the Spirit of God. And therefore the ascension to the third heaven is necessary for you in order that you may be rapt into Paradise and you may now be taken there to judge all things without peril: for the Spirit judgeth all things and is judged of none.”

833A See how Ambrose confirms the interpretation of Origen but weakens that of Epiphanius. For Origen maintains that Paradise is in the Third Heaven, which is the intellectual heaven, that is, in man himself as Mind. But Epiphanius, as we have shown above, giving an over-simple interpretation, considers Paradise to be some earthly place, and the trees to be earthly and the fountains sensible: but this is not acceptable to right reason. For it is not to be believed that the Paradise into which the Apostle was rapt was other than that in which the first man was made in the image of God and from which he was thrust out in punishment for his sin. For the Divine History mentions but one Paradise and but one man created in it — though the one man includes both male and female, if the words of the Holy Fathers are to be followed. For the male is the Intelligible Principle

833B of human nature which the Greeks call νοῦς, the female is sense which they call by a word in the feminine gender, αἴσθησις: by whose mystical marriage the future union of Christ and His Church is prefigured. And this man and woman, that is, mind and sense, were not only permitted but enjoined by the Divine Law to eat of the Tree of Life, that is to say, of the Wisdom and Word of God, Which is the Lord Christ. For He is planted in the midst of the paradise of human nature, and is the spiritual Bread which is the food of angels and of perfect men whose conversation is in heaven. They are forbidden, however, to hanker after the indiscriminating and confused knowledge of good and evil which is implanted in imperfect souls by delight in the beauty of material objects. To abstain from this is to merit eternal life, wrongly to use it is to incur eternal death.

833C But as to the other things which Scripture has to say about Paradise, although they are introduced by anticipation and as having taken place in Paradise, they are more and more reasonably understood to have occurred outside after the Fall, seeing that they were added to human nature as a penalty for its transgression and concern the outward man.



For instance: "Therefore the Lord God formed man of the clay 19  
of the earth, and breathed in his face the breath of life, and man  
became a living soul." How is that which is created in the image of  
God formed out of the clay of the earth? And how could the same  
thing be said of him, "man became a living soul," as was said of the  
other beasts, which had been brought forth from the earth: "Let the  
earth bring forth living soul?" Have we not here good reason to  
believe that there were two creations of man? For first it is written: The first and  
"And God created man in His own image in the image of God 833D  
created He him." This is the first creation, in which there is no second  
mention of the clay of the earth nor of the living soul. But then creation of  
follows a second creation which began with the division of his man  
nature into two sexes as a punishment for transgression: "Male and  
female" he says, "created He them." First, by the use of the  
singular, the unity of human nature before the Fall is indicated: 834A  
"In the image of God created He him:" but then the plural is used with  
reference to the division of that nature after the Fall: "Male and  
female created He them."

From this division followed the assimilation to the irrational  
animals: "Man" he says, "was made a living soul." He does not  
say: "a life-giving spirit." "The First Man," says the Apostle, "is of  
the earth earthy, the Second Man," in Whom the whole of human  
nature is restored, "is of heaven heavenly. And first," that is to say,  
in the First Man, the transgressor, "there was not that which was  
spiritual but that which was animal: then," that is, in the Second  
Man, the restoring, "that which is spiritual." Moreover this is made  
perfectly plain by the text of the Divine History. For after the  
second creation of the earthy man from the clay of the earth as a 834B  
living soul in the likeness of the rest of the animals has been  
introduced, to avoid confusion with the first creation in the image of  
God there is a particular reference to the latter: "Now the Lord  
God had planted a Paradise of pleasure from the beginning," that is,  
from the first creation. Clearly this means: Do not relate to the first  
creation the text "and man became a living soul," but to the second.  
Take the first to be the plantation of Paradise: for God planted a  
Paradise of pleasure, that is to say, God planted human nature in  
Eden, in the joy of eternal bliss. And where had He planted it? In  
the Beginning, that is to say, in the Word, in which God made  
heaven and earth.

Notice the precise meaning of the verbs. In speaking of the  
second creation the Prophet used the verb in the past tense, "Man 834C

became a living soul :” but in the first the verb is in the pluperfect : “The Lord God had planted a Paradise,” so that you may know that the first is prior to the second, not of course in time, but in dignity and blessedness. And in the First Man had been a creature of so spiritual a nature that he did not require the use of any corporeal sense, but could depend wholly on the function of his intelligence. To this too St. Ambrose bears witness :

The nakedness of Adam and Eve

834D “And their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked.” “And before that they were naked,” he says, “but they were not without the covering of the virtues : they were naked because of the simplicity of their habits and because their nature was innocent of the cloak of deceit. But now the human mind is veiled in many concealments of pretence. So after integrated and incorrupt natures are robbed of their sincerity and simplicity, they begin to seek after earthly and artificial things with which to cover the nakedness of their minds with delights and conceal their hidden genital organ. For how did Adam use his body, who saw all living things and endowed each with a name? How did they know? By an inner and a higher knowledge they knew that they lacked not tunics but the coverings of the virtues.”

835A So in the same way in which he saw all the animals, he recognised his own nakedness, that is to say, with the sole eye of the interior knowledge and the simple eye of the mind, without the aid of the perishable and corporeal sense. By this we are given to understand that the First Man before he was despoiled of the garment of the virtues was able to contemplate all the animals and birds which, we are told, were created from earth and water and were distributed about the spaces of the earth in their own places and natural lairs, by contemplation not of a localised kind nor by the corporeal sense, but by the observation of the mind alone (which excels every corruptible sense, and all place and all time) of the principles according to which they were created.

There is also a reference to the First Man’s nakedness in Gregory the Theologian’s *Treatise on Easter* :

“Such a condition became man in the beginning, to be naked by reason of his simplicity and his artless life and his freedom from every veil and barrier.”

835B Maximus explains these words in the Forty-First Chapter of the *Ambigua* :

“Naked perhaps, as the master says, by reason of the manifold contemplation and knowledge of natural objects, and a life that was artless in regard to act and power, subsisting apart from varied artificiality, having for its raiment the immaculate principles of the virtues. And without any veil or barrier, because it is not in need of that knowledge which resides in the sensible perceptions and visible objects to introduce the understanding to divine matters, since it possesses access to the simple vision of the uniform and continuing power and knowledge of the things which are next after God; an operation which requires only to be put into action to manifest itself spontaneously. Therefore they who desire to rise again through philosophical reasoning from the fall of our first father, let them begin by the total removal of sensual passions; then flying above 835C preoccupations with the reasons of the arts and finally natural contemplation, let them look upon the eternal and immaterial knowledge that is absolutely without forms impressed from sense, or intellection deriving from the lead of reason. Then just as God made the First Man in the beginning, they will be naked in the simplicity of knowledge, unbounded life, and the death of the law of the flesh.”

And the trance which the Lord God sent upon Adam must be 20  
 interpreted in the same way. For that sleep appears to be both the Adam's sleep  
 cause of sin and also sent upon, or rather, permitted after, sin. For Scripture often employs a figure of speech which describes what God permits to be done as though He Himself does it. So that trance was the deflection of the intention of the mind, which ought always and inflexibly to have been fixed upon its Creator, to the delights of 835D  
 material objects, and it was the lust for carnal copulation, as the blessed Ambrose explains :

“What is that trance,” he asks, “other than the turning of our mind for a while to sexual intercourse when we seem to incline the eyes that were intent on God's Kingdom and bend them to some sleep of this world, and to fall asleep for a while to divine matters, taking our rest in profane and worldly things?”

After this trance, that is, this turning away of the mind from eternal to temporal things, from God to the creature, there follows a 836A  
 sleep. “After God” he says, “sent the trance upon Adam, Adam slept,” that is to say, he separated himself entirely from the vigour of eternal and blessed contemplation and, emptied of every virtue, fell into the delight of sensible things, abandoning completely the spiritual senses.

And here it is to be noted that after Adam fell asleep Scripture introduces the creation of woman, by which it is implied that if human nature had not by the irrational motion of the free will deserted the simple and pure integrity of its constitution in which it was made in the image of God, but had always and unchangeably remained in the contemplation of the truth, it would on no account have suffered division into two sexes in which it becomes like the irrational animals, but would propagate in the same way as the  
 836B number of the angels is multiplied without the aid of sex. But since of his own accord he fell asleep, that is, human nature willingly fell from its dignity, it acquired the division of that nature and a generative process similar to that of the beasts of the field.

“And when he had fallen asleep” he says, “He took one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh, and the Lord God fashioned the rib which He had taken from Adam into woman.” Now although under the figure of this one rib which God took from Adam seem to be signified both the division of his nature into two sexes, and the taking away from him of the guardianship of the universal inner virtue which was within him before he had sinned; and by the flesh which was put in the place from which the rib was taken seems to be meant that most unhappy alteration whereby the guardianship of virtue and blessedness was exchanged for the deadly folly of vice and wretchedness: yet I think we are rather to understand here a prophetic prefiguration of the mystery of Christ and the Church. For as the Apostle teaches, the First Man, Adam, is always a figure of the Man to come, Christ: but an inverse figure. For in the First Man nature was split into male and female: in the Second Man it is brought together, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. In the First Man all nature was expelled from the blessedness of Paradise: in the Second Man it is recalled and re-established into that same blessedness. In the First Man flesh is put in the place of rib, that is to say, weakness in the place of power: in the Second Man weakness and death are swallowed up while power and eternal life are bestowed upon human nature, “for as in Adam all men die, so in Christ are all men made alive.”

836D Therefore, as St. Augustine says, “Adam sleeps and Eve is made: Christ dies and the Church is made.” While Adam sleeps Eve is made from his side: when Christ is dead His side is pierced that the sacraments may flow forth upon which the Church is built. For the Blood stands for the consecration of the Cup, the Water for the consecration of baptism.

In the First Man human nature puts on tunics of skin, that is to say, mortal bodies, renouncing the nakedness, that is, the purity and simplicity, of its proper nature: in the Second Man she has the tunics of skin taken from her, and all the folly of mortal bodies is removed, and the nakedness, or simplicity, of her former state is resumed. 837A

So, as I have said before, although we read the events described by Scripture as taking place after the trance had been sent upon Adam as apparently occurring in Paradise, it is more reasonable and accords better with the truth to believe and understand that they were added to human nature as a punishment for disobedience after the transgression and therefore outside Paradise. For if the Paradise of God which He planted in delights is the human nature which was created in the image of God and was not disfigured by spot of sin, I do not see how we can understand that anything which is held to be outside the dignity of that nature and the cause of its Fall was not also outside Paradise. But I am not unaware that Holy Scripture very frequently makes use of that figure of speech which is called by the Greeks ὕστερον πρότερον and by the Latins *praeposterum* or anticipation, the equivalent of the Greek πρόληψις; Matthew the Evangelist uses it when he describes the passion and Resurrection of the Lord. For he writes of the events which took place at the moment of the Resurrection as though they occurred at the time of the Passion: 837B

The things which we read were suitably done after the sin

“Now Jesus crying again in a loud voice yielded up His Spirit, and behold the veil of the Temple was rent in two parts from the top to the bottom, and the earth was moved, and stones were split, and tombs were opened up, and many bodies of the Saints which had been asleep arose and coming forth from their tombs after His Resurrection came into the holy city and were seen by many.”

All these things occurred in a series of events after the Resurrection of the Lord, but the Evangelist wished to adopt this figure of speech and so described them as taking place just after the Passion. For it is not to be believed that the tombs of others were opened before He opened His own tomb, or that witnesses to the truth of the Resurrection were already resurrected before He of Whose Resurrection they are witnesses should Himself have arisen. 837C

So the drowsiness of Adam, and the sleep that followed it, and the removal of the rib, and the division of the one nature into two sexes, and the mystical recognition of his wife, and all the other events which prefigure Christ and the Church; as well as their

837D recognition of their nakedness, that is, of the purity of their nature (which did not at first cause them to blush because they were clothed in the raiment of the virtues which is unspotted by the delights of the irrational emotions), which in sinning they lost, and in losing became conscious of, and the deceptive and crafty persuasion of the serpent, and the conversation between the woman and the serpent, and her seduction by him, and the illicit plucking of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and the fatal tasting of it, the willing consent and fall of the man, not because he did not know that it was a sin but because he thought it but a light one to consent unto his only wife (for it was not Adam but the woman who was seduced ; for he did not sin unwittingly, and therefore was worthy of a severer punishment), the opening of their eyes wherein they saw their nakedness, the sewing of girdles from fig-leaves, the hearing of the voice of the Lord walking in Paradise, the flight of them both, Adam and his wife, from the face of the Lord God and their hiding of themselves in the tree, and all the other events up to the expulsion of man from Paradise ; — all these things Holy Scripture records by anticipation and out of their proper sequence as having taken place in Paradise, whereas they are the consequences of sin. For if Paradise is human nature as it is made in the image of God and established on an equality with the blessed state of the angels, then as soon as it willed to turn away from its Creator, in that very moment it fell from the dignity of its nature. For even before he consented unto his wife he began to wax proud. For if the Divine History records no temporal interval between his creation and his fall, how else can this omission in Scripture be interpreted than that soon after man was created he waxed proud and was therefore ruined? But the weightiest proof of this is in the Devil's guilt of manslaughter : for he "was a man-slayer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth." He too without any intervening delay fell by pride as soon as he was created and by his not surprising envy of the man who was created together with himself and by his destruction of him with the poison of his guile.

No sooner  
was man  
838B  
created than  
he fell

But you have heard enough of Paradise, I think.

The fig-tree

A. It would perhaps be enough if only you would give your opinion about that fig-tree from the leaves of which they sewed their girdles, and of the Lord God's walking in Paradise.

838C

For the tunics of skin have been dealt with already.

21

N. That fig-tree is not inappropriately regarded as the divine precept of the law given to the first human beings in Paradise. Now

that precept was as follows: "Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil thou shalt not eat." And that they might keep the precept the more carefully the peril involved in transgression was not hidden from them: "For on the day on which thou eatest of it thou shalt die the death." There was then a law given to the first human beings in Paradise, and that they kept the words of it in their memories is clear from the reply which the woman gave to the serpent: "Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we may feed, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of Paradise God commanded us not to eat nor to touch it, lest we die." But the serpent put a wrong interpretation on the words of the Law so that first he might seduce the woman, that is, 838D the sense, and then through her gain access to the man, or mind. He belittled the true and saving power of the Divine Precept, which if that woman had known and loved and revered, she would not perhaps have been seduced by the serpent, nor have enticed her 839A husband to his downfall, nor would they have sewn together for themselves girdles, that is to say, practices according with the desires of the flesh and its pernicious obscenities, of figleaves, that is, of the words only of the Precept; but would have taken and eaten of the fruit of the fig-tree, that is of the true and life-giving power and understanding of the divine Law, and would have lived in bliss for all eternity. Thus when the Divine Law is perversely interpreted and is only observed according to the letter and is corrupted by the superstitions of man or devil, it becomes favourable to the lusts of the flesh and wears girdles sewn together from irrational emotions, as though from empty leaves, being devoid of every virtue and true intelligible principle. But when it is well and spiritually understood, and is purged of every carnal sense and superstition, it brings forth saving and life-giving food for those who eat of it, that is, who understand it rightly according to the spirit. 839B

The girdles

Of this fruit the first human beings were unwilling to eat, and were therefore all the more ready to believe the interpretation of the false-tongued serpent. They did not accept the fruit of the fig of the Law for the nourishment of their spirit, but only leaves, empty of nourishment and full of deceit, that is to say, they accepted only the verbal sense, words woven together by the subtlety of the Devil, by which they could cover up the obscenity of their lusts. The fruit of the fig-tree

And here we are in agreement with St. Ambrose, who in his book on Paradise explains the fig-tree as follows:

“They sewed figleaves and made themselves girdles. As to the interpretation of ‘fig’ in this place, we have a whole series of divine texts to instruct us. The Scriptures record that those are secure who shelter beneath the vine and the fig; and Solomon has said: ‘Who plants a fig-tree and does not eat of the fruit of it?’ and the Lord
   
 839C came to a fig-tree and was offended at it because He found no fruit but leaves only. So I learn from Adam what those leaves are, for after he had sinned, he made himself girdles of the leaves of the fig, who should rather have tasted of its fruit. The righteous man chooses the fruit, the sinner the leaves. What is the fruit? The fruit of the spirit, says the Apostle, is charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, modesty, continence, and love. He did not have fruit who did not have joy: he did not have faith who was about to transgress the precept of God: he did not have continence who tasted of the tree which was forbidden him. Therefore whosoever transgresses the Precept of God is despoiled and stripped and naked, and becomes a thing abhorrent to himself, and wishes to cover himself with certain figleaves, perhaps certain empty and obscure treatises, which the sinner stitches together with fabricated pronouncements, taking
   
 839D them word by word, to form a veil wherewith to cover up the shamefulness of his consciousness of thought and deed, that his shameful parts may be hidden. Thus he who desires to hide his own guilt, or records the fact that the Devil is the author of his sin or draws attention to the traps into which the flesh may fall, or
   
 840A suggests some other agent for his transgression sews leaves on himself. And he often produces instances from the scriptures of just men falling into sin, quoting ‘If a man be taken in adultery,’ and Abraham’s sleeping with a handmaid, and David’s love for the wife of another, and his taking her as wife. These leaves he sews to himself, these examples from the text of the prophetic Scriptures, but the fruit of them he thinks he can do without. Do you not think that the Jews also sew on leaves when they interpret in a corporeal sense the words of the spiritual Law? Their interpretation loses all the fruit of its verdure and is damned with the curse of eternal sterility. Therefore the good interpretation, namely the spiritual, is the fruitful fig-tree under which the righteous and the saints take their rest, and he who has planted it in the souls of others (as Paul
   
 840B says ‘I planted, Apollo watered’) shall eat the fruit thereof. But the evil interpretation will not be able to bear fruit nor preserve its verdure. It was all the more serious then that Adam girdled himself with this interpretation in the place where he should have girdled himself with the fruit of chastity.”



You have heard Ambrose on the fig-tree. Hear him now on the Walk of God in Paradise, that is, in human nature as He had created it in His own image, which He never abandoned nor gave over to destruction, in which after a mystic and spiritual manner He is always walking, examining the hearts and the reins of each, enquiring in an intelligible voice after the causes of our transgression, and rebuking and correcting us with a mercy greater than the justice of His vengeance. These, then, are the words of the said master :

The Lord's  
walking in  
Paradise

“And they heard the voice of God as He was walking towards evening. What is meant by the walking of Him Who is always everywhere? But I think there is a kind of walking of God through the sequence of the Holy Scriptures: for they seem to be pervaded by the Divine Presence, as when we hear that He beholds all things, and that the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and when we read that Jesus knew their thoughts, and when we read: ‘Why think ye evil in your hearts?’ So when we recall these passages, we recognise the voice of the Lord as He is walking. So the sinner had run away not in order to hide from the sight of God, but because he desired to hide his works within his own conscience, not wishing them to be brought into the open. For to the righteous man it belongs to see God face to face, because the mind of the righteous man is not only present to God, but even reasons with God, as it is written: ‘Judge the child and justify the widow and come, let us reason together, says the Lord.’ Therefore when the sinner reads the Holy Scriptures, he hears the voice of God as though walking towards evening. What can the words, ‘towards evening’ mean but the lateness of the recognition of his fault and of the shame that he has of it now that it has been committed, but which he should have felt before he committed it? For while sin boils up in the body, and the soul is agitated by the corporeal passions, the sense of the transgressor does not think of God, that is to say, he does not hear Him walking in the Holy Scriptures, he does not hear Him walking in the minds of men. For God says: ‘Seeing that I shall dwell among them, and walk among them, and I shall be their God.’ Therefore when the fear of the Divine Power returns into the senses of our soul, then we blush, then we try to hide ourselves, then are we taken in the consciousness of our sins, in the midst of the Tree of Paradise, where we have committed our offences, wishing to lie concealed, and thinking that God does not look into the hidden places.”

840C

840D

The evening

841A

The tree  
where the  
transgressors  
tried to hide  
themselves

From these words of our master you may understand that that tree in the midst of Paradise in which the fugitive sinners had

thought they could hide themselves is none other than the secret places of man's thought and conscience.

The voice of  
841B  
God

“But,” he goes on, “He Who looks into our souls and our thoughts and penetrates even to the division of the mind said to Adam: ‘Adam, where are you?’ In what way does God speak? With a corporeal voice? Not so, but by that power which is greater than the voice of the body, and which pours forth oracles; the Voice which the Prophets have heard, the Voice which the faithful hear, the Voice which the impious do not understand.”

841C

Anyone who examines closely the meaning of such treatises may see for himself that Paradise is not a localised or particular piece of woodland on earth, but a spiritual garden sown with the seeds of the virtues and planted in human nature, or, to be more precise, is nothing else but the human substance itself created in the image of God, in which the Tree of Life, that is the Word and wisdom of God, gives fruit to all life; and in the midst of which streams forth the Fountain of all good things, which again is the Divine Wisdom. There that fig-tree which is the divine Law has its roots, of which the true and spiritual interpretation is the fruit of life to those who eat of it, that is to say, to those who devoutly and perfectly understand it, while the perverse and carnal interpretation according to the letter is the empty and unfruitful leaves with which the transgressors of the Divine Law strive to cover their faults by deceitful excuses, daring even to place the blame upon the Lawgiver Himself, or upon the Devil, or upon some other person, or comparing them with deeds which the Holy Patriarchs symbolically performed, interpreting them literally in a carnal sense without at all understanding the spiritual meaning, and bringing forward such examples taken from the Holy Scriptures as relevant to their transgression, of whom the Apostle aptly says: “The letter kills but the spirit makes alive.”

841D

In this intelligible Paradise God goes walking. For He is the Guardian and Inspector of the Garden which He has made in His image and likeness. His is the Voice which cannot be expounded: “Adam where are you?” This is the voice of the Creator rebuking human nature. It is as if He said: Where are you now after your transgression? For I do not find you there where I know that I created you, nor in that dignity in which I made you in My image and likeness, but I rebuke you as a deserter from blessedness, a fugitive from the true light, hiding yourself in the secret places of your conscience, and I enquire into the cause of your disobedience.

842A

Do you suppose that I do not know what you have done or whether you have fled or how in fear of My voice you have concealed yourself or in what way you came to a late recognition of your nudity, that is, of the purity and simplicity of the nature in which you were created? Have you not gone through all this because you have eaten of the tree of which I commanded that you were not to eat? For if you had not eaten perhaps you would not fear the voice of your Creator as He walks within you, nor flee from His face, nor have become aware of the nakedness which you lost when you sinned.

Now although about the Forbidden Tree itself we have already said a great deal in the preceding chapters, taking Gregory of Nyssa as our guide, I think we must speak a little more about it, introducing this time the exposition of that most noble master, the monk Maximus. For he understands the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil to be the visible creature which man followed when he abandoned his Creator. For within the visible creature is voluptuous delight and the occasion of anxiety and the fruit of death, which is a kind of compound of the false good of lust and the evil of the sorrow which is to follow. For there is no pleasure provided by the visible creature which is not followed by want: and want is followed by anxiety and the sorrow of death. And although when pleasure smiles, the anxiety and cause of death lie hid, they are already there in the human soul, being born at the same instant. The anxiety lies concealed beneath the false beauty of pleasure and it is a kind of fruit compounded of manifest lust and latent anxiety. But when pleasure and delight in the visible creature begin to fade there remains revealed in all her nakedness the anxiety which is born of the craving for the visible good which is no more. St. Maximus writes as follows:

“Were a man to say that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil is the visible creature, he would not be far wrong. For it has the perception which naturally produces pleasure and anxiety. Or since the creature possesses both spiritual principles of visible things and the principles which nourish the mind, and again a natural power of delighting the sense, but of corrupting the mind, it is called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil. For considered under its spiritual aspect it has the knowledge of good, but taken corporally it has the knowledge of evil. For to those who receive that knowledge with their bodies it becomes the mistress of the passions, bringing upon them forgetfulness of divine things.

Therefore God meanwhile intervened to forbid man to have perception of the visible creature, so that at first, as was very just, he might by participation of Grace learn his proper Cause, and the immortality with which he was through Grace endowed, and might then through perception of this tree be perfected in impassibility and immutability. And as though made God by deification he might by communion with the blameless Deity contemplate the creatures of God and have knowledge of them as a god and no longer as a man, 843A having through Grace in wisdom the same knowledge of the things that are as God has, because of the same transmutation of mind and sense to deification. This is the interpretation of the Tree which must be accepted according to a solution which meets all the considerations.”

See how beautifully and how clearly he explains the meaning of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil. It is, he says, the nature of visible things, which when comprehended in a spiritual sense in its principle provides the knowledge of good and a spiritual fruit to those who comprehend it. But those who incontinently lust after it in carnal concupiscence, and put it to a use contrary to the laws of God it infects with a deadly knowledge. Thus the cause of evil is not implanted in nature itself, but in the intemperance of those who use her wrongly. And this is that woman, or, I might say, that tree, of whom the Lord says: “Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” 843B For the outward appearance of material things, although it is in its nature beautiful, gives occasion of death to the senses of those who incautiously and lustfully consider it. For God created the visible creature to this purpose, that through it, as through the invisible, His glory might abound, and that He, Who cannot be known as to what He is but that He is, might be known as the One Creator of the whole creature, visible and invisible. And for that reason God forbade human nature to take pleasure in knowledge of the visible creature until it had attained the perfection of wisdom, in which having achieved deification it might reason together with God concerning the principles of visible things. Nor could that woman, that is to say, carnal sense, have enticed that man, that is to 843C say, mind, to delight in the material creature exteriorly considered, if he had wished to possess the knowledge of the Creator before that of the created. The order of the Divine Law, then, was first to know the Creator and His ineffable beauty, and then to contemplate the creature with the reasonable sense controlled by the dictates of the mind and to refer all its beauty to the glory of God, whether the

inner beauty of the principles or the outward beauty of the sensible forms. But man in his pride despises this order of the Divine Law, and places the love and knowledge of his Creator beneath the outward beauty of the material creature, and thus incurs the danger of the wrath of God, and falls into the death of the body and the soul and the destruction of his whole nature, for he has neglected to observe the most just and beautiful order of the Divine Law.

In speaking thus of the Forbidden Tree I have had regard for the interpretations of reputable commentators of Holy Scripture. 843D  
The same interpretation is introduced by St. Augustine into the Eleventh Book of his *Hexameron*:

“But I am not unaware that it is the opinion of some that it was by their overhastiness that those first human beings anticipated their desire for the knowledge of good and evil, and because they wished, before the time was ripe, for that which was being reserved for them at a later and more opportune occasion; and that the object of the tempter’s action was that by plucking too soon fruit that was not suitable for them they might offend against God, and, exiled and 844A  
damned, they might be debarred from the use of His creature, which had they approached at the proper time, as God willed, they could have profitably enjoyed. These things we have spoken for the benefit of such as may wish to take that tree not in the literal sense of a real tree with real fruit, but in a figurative sense, so that they may come to some conclusion that can be approved by right belief and truth.”

But our master Augustine seems neither to support nor reject this theory of a spiritual Paradise: this is consistent with his belief that there were two paradises, the one earthly and local and possessing the properties of sensible nature, the other entirely spiritual, in the image of which the earthly and sensible one was made.

A. Those who hold such opinions concerning the Forbidden Tree do not seem to me to depart from the truth: for it is likely and 844B  
quite in accordance, I think, with sound reason that man should have been driven by the most righteous judgment of his Creator away from the sweetness of the Tree of Life, that is to say, from the delights of the internal contemplation, in which and for which he was created, at the very moment that he began to feed on the Forbidden Tree, that is, to presume to make improper use of the sensual knowledge of sensible matter. For if he had followed the natural and rational procedure, that is, if he had first devoted the whole of his attention to the contemplation of the Cause of all things, and then of the principles according to which and in which

all things were made, he would neither have been excluded from the intelligible food of the Tree of Life, which is the internal awareness of the Divine Wisdom, nor have been prohibited from tasting the forbidden apple, which is the knowledge of visible matter, at the ripe  
 844C and convenient time when that Wisdom should have been perfected by which he should know first God and then the creature without error and without taking delight in the lusts of the flesh. For it is impossible that knowledge of the creature could be an impediment to the rational soul, in which the perfect contemplation of the Creator begins to shine forth. But where the observation of created nature precedes the knowledge of the Creator, there is no way of escaping the phantasies and illusions of sensible things. Consequently there cannot be freedom from error save in those who, bathed in the splendour of the Divine Ray, take the path of right contemplation and seek themselves and their God; for in these the knowledge of the Creator precedes the knowledge of the creature.

Therefore, the creature is not evil, nor is the knowledge of it  
 844D evil, but the perverse motion of the rational soul abandons the contemplation of her Creator and turns herself with lustful and illicit longing to the love of sensible matter, pursuing a fatal path from which unless she is first set free by the Grace of God there can be no return. For, as St. Augustine says, because human nature possesses free will she is capable of doing herself injury. But once she is wounded and disabled she is no longer capable through free  
 845A will of healing herself. But now we must discuss the matters which still remain to be discussed.

23 N. What remains? Has not enough been said about Paradise? For of the action of the man when, rebuked by the voice of God, he brought the charge against the woman in order to attenuate his and her guilt by laying the blame upon Him Who had given him the woman, and of the action of the woman herself in transferring the cause of transgression to the serpent, I do not think it is necessary to speak, for the matter has been sufficiently discussed by the commentators of Holy Scripture.

A. On the contrary, I think it both useful and necessary. For there may be those who think that these accusations by which the man laid the blame for sin upon the woman whom God had given him, and thus upon the Giver of the woman, and the woman upon the serpent, are reasonable and justifiable defences excusing them from  
 845B punishment, unless they are convicted by right reason and rejected

as unjustified and reprehensible and shown to deserve the highest penalty which sin may be awarded.

N. Let us consider the words of Scripture itself: "Adam said, The woman Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree and I did eat." Pray tell me, Adam, who gave you the woman? The Lord, you say, Who made her. And why did He make her and give her to you? Why, when you were sleeping, that is to say, when you were turning the attention of your mind from the contemplation of truth to the love of a carnal spouse, did He take the rib from your side and make of it a woman and give her to you when you were sinning and abandoning Him? Why did He not make the woman whom He gave you in the same way as He made yourself? You yourself, as is fit in one who chose earthly things for heavenly things, were made of the dust of the earth. It is fitting that the woman should have been taken out of your side, seeing that the cause of your transgression originated from yourself. You will reply, I think, that God made all these things because He willed them. And so He made them, because He "foresaw that they were so to be made, Who made all things whatever He willed." But I am still asking you why He thus desired to make for you a woman. You will answer: Who can investigate the causes of the Will of God? "For who knows the sense of the Lord?" You do not know, therefore, for what reason God made the woman whom He gave you? I do not, you will say, unless it were for assistance in procreation and in the multiplication of the human nature which was made in me in the beginning and received from me the beginning of its propagation. Here I disagree with you and refute your contention by sound reason. For human nature would not have required the shameful mode of procreation by male and female which resembles that of the irrational animals if it had not by pride and contempt of the beauty of its simplicity in which it was created in the image of God abandoned the angelic mode of propagation which, as I have now said many times, is entirely independent of the sexual act. So you must look for another reason why the woman was given you. For the one which you have put forward is false. The Image of God in which man was made is free and independent of all sexuality. I know of no other reason, you reply, save that which I have given and which I perceive that you have refuted. I am surprised to hear you say that you are ignorant of those things which happened as a result of your pride and disobedience. For I, who have sinned in you and in sin have died, am not ignorant. For there cries out in me a very

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clear and irrefutable reason, and one which bears the authority of many of the Fathers. If human nature had remained in that most pure and most simple bliss of the Divine Image, it would never have succumbed to sexuality, nor ever have been subjected to the shameful manner of procreation of the irrational living creatures. But since it was not willing to continue in that dignity in which it was created, but chose to propagate its species ingloriously among the other animals, its Creator Himself, foreseeing all things which man would do and be, when he had been destroyed by the perverse motion of his free will, added to his nature the two-fold sex to enable him to breed like the beasts. Why then do you transfer to the woman the guilt of your transgression, when it was from yourself, from your own pride and contempt and consequent desertion of God that the cause of the making of the woman proceeded? This is also made quite clear by God's ironical words: "It is not good for man to be alone. Let Us make for him a companion like unto him." The meaning is: Man whom We have made in Our image and likeness does not think it good to be alone, that is, to be a simple and perfect nature abiding everywhere without the division of his nature into sexes, being wholly in the likeness of the angelic nature, but prefers to tumble down headlong into earthly couplings like the beasts and so to multiply out of his seed the unity of his nature through carnal generation and the sexual organs of his body, holding in contempt the mode of propagation of the heavenly host. Let Us then make for him a companion like unto him through whom he can perform what he longs to do, that is to say, a woman who is fragile and unstable like the male, and is eager for earthly lusts. This is indicated in the Scriptures by anticipation: "Male and female created He them," vessels, that is, for the carnal procreation of offspring, since the dignity of the spiritual propagation and of the Divine Image were now despised. Why then do you attempt to transfer the cause of your transgression, which is attributable to yourself, upon the woman whom your Creator gave you, and indeed upon the Creator Himself? Such a shift of the guilt is no defence but rather an aggravation of the offence.

But perhaps someone will say that in maintaining that the division of human nature into male and female, by which sexual intercourse and matrimony and procreation and the increase of the species are made possible, were the penalties of transgression, we are attacking wedlock and the procreation of children. To such we would reply: We do not attack wedlock so long as it is a legitimate



union for the purpose of procreating children and not for the gratification of lust, and so long as the faith and chaste modesty of each sex is preserved. Indeed we praise these institutions since they are permitted and ordained by God. For He says: "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth;" and none of the orthodox would doubt that each sex, without which carnal intercourse could not take place, is created by God. For the Scripture says: "Male and female created He them," and in another place: "What God hath joined let no man put asunder." On the other hand we unhesitatingly affirm that carnal intercourse, although it be the legitimate union of God-fearing persons, cannot be unaffected by the lustful and illicit itch of the flesh. For it is in this that children born after the flesh inherit the guilt of everlasting death, a guilt from which they are freed only by baptism into the Catholic Church. We further declare that those carnal couplings whereby human nature is propagated in space and time would not have been necessary if man had not chosen to adopt a method of procreation similar to that of the beasts of the field in exchange for the angelic mode of increasing his nature. Thus David says: "Man did not understand that he was in honour and so came to compare himself with the irrational beasts of the field, and was made like unto them."

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But let us turn now to the reply of the woman, in which she passes the blame for her sin on to the serpent. "The Lord God said to the woman, why have you done this? She replied. The serpent deceived me and I did eat." And you, woman, why do you transfer the charge to the serpent when you yourself are the creator of your sin? The very serpent to whom you attribute the fault creeps within yourself: carnal concupiscence and delight are your serpent, which is begot upon the corporeal sense by the motion of the irrational soul. Vainly, then does the woman, that is, the carnal sense, transfer her blame upon the serpent, that is, upon irrational delight, of which she herself is the origin. For the illicit delight in material things does not spring from nature but from the imperfect and irrational motions of the sinning soul who in her fatal lustfulness bursts through the corporeal sense into the love of sensible things. And the ancient enemy would not have had access to the male part of the soul, that is, the mind which is created in the image of God, unless first he had seduced the corporeal sense, which is, so to speak, a woman: and the mind would not have consented to the pernicious delight in material things and the monstrously abused enjoyment of the corporeal sense if proud presumption had not already existed in

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848A him. So the pride of the mind and the illicit delight of the corporeal sense by coupling together gave human nature over to death ; from which only the humility of Christ and the love of spiritual things in faithful souls won her back and set her free. So there is nothing and nobody, woman, to blame for yourself save yourself, for you are proved to be yourself the author of that illicit desire upon which you attempt to shift the blame.

In this connection you ought to study well the text of the divine words, which because of the sluggishness of our wits and the carnal senses which subject us, corrupted by our original sin, to this spatio-temporal existence, has set out as though taking place in space and time, but in a marvellous order full of mystic meaning, things which occurred simultaneously and which are not divided by any intervals of time. Thus the first to be interrogated is appropriately enough the man, that is, mind, for he presides over the whole paradise of human nature and should properly be the guardian who sees that the Divine Precept is not violated. And he is interrogated thus: Adam, where are you? Of which the meaning is: Adam, you who before you sinned were established beyond all space and time, where are you now, transgressor, answer Me. You were in heaven, a blessed creature, like unto the angels: you are now on earth, proud creature, like unto the brutes. Then it is the woman's turn to be questioned, and she is asked why she did what she did. Note here that the sentence of the examining judge is not given upon the man and the woman together, but time seems to be allowed for the correction of their wicked excuses, and space is given for indulgence. At last, however, when the serpent's turn comes, he is not interrogated, nor is any time allowed him to shift the blame on to some other person or thing, for that he could not do, being the Primordial Cause of all evil; but the sentence of the righteous Judge follows on him immediately, for God says to the serpent: "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou among all animals and among the beasts of the field." Notice that neither the man nor the woman but only the serpent is cursed. For God does not curse the things which He made, but blesses them; and mind and sense are both creatures of God. But carnal delight arises outside of divine creation from the irrational passions of the human soul, and therefore comes under the severity of the divine sentence, because it supervenes from outside on the nature which was created by God. So this cursing of

848B of time. Thus the first to be interrogated is appropriately enough the man, that is, mind, for he presides over the whole paradise of human nature and should properly be the guardian who sees that the Divine Precept is not violated. And he is interrogated thus: Adam, where are you? Of which the meaning is: Adam, you who before you sinned were established beyond all space and time, where are you now, transgressor, answer Me. You were in heaven, a blessed creature, like unto the angels: you are now on earth, proud creature, like unto the brutes. Then it is the woman's turn to be questioned, and she is asked why she did what she did. Note here that the sentence of the examining judge is not given upon the man and the

848C woman together, but time seems to be allowed for the correction of their wicked excuses, and space is given for indulgence. At last, however, when the serpent's turn comes, he is not interrogated, nor is any time allowed him to shift the blame on to some other person or thing, for that he could not do, being the Primordial Cause of all evil; but the sentence of the righteous Judge follows on him immediately, for God says to the serpent: "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou among all animals and among the beasts of the field." Notice that neither the man nor the woman but only the serpent is cursed. For God does not curse the things which He made, but blesses them; and mind and sense are both creatures of God. But carnal delight arises outside of divine creation from the irrational passions of the human soul, and therefore comes under the severity of the divine sentence, because it supervenes from outside on the nature which was created by God. So this cursing of

The divine  
curse

848D God is nothing else but the most righteous and irrevocable condemnation of the things which are outside nature and defile it.

But the significance of those living creatures and beasts of the field in which principally resides the carnal delight by means of which the Devil seduces the soul and lives as it were in his principal abode is excellently and exhaustively expounded by St. Ambrose in his book *On Paradise*. They are all the irrational passions of our rational nature which is signified in Scripture by the word "Earth". Do not let it surprise you that both carnal delight and the subtlety of the Devil are indiscriminately signified as though mingled together under the figure of the serpent : for sometimes the serpent is a direct representation of the Devil himself, at others of the lustful appetite of the carnal soul, that is, the soul which lives according to the flesh, which is caught in his toils, at others again it is a confused and indistinct representation of both, implying that the one is involved in the other, for the one cannot exist in separation from the other. For wherever there is a lustful thought in the soul, there at once will be an entrance for the unclean spirit; and wherever there is an entrance for his diabolical subtlety, there will be present the itch of universal evil. And in whatever corporeal sense, which is signified by the woman, these two come together, there must necessarily follow the illicit tasting, or wrong use, of the forbidden fruit of the beauty of material objects : and this brings death to the soul, of which death the death of the body is the shadow. 849A 849B

But concerning the curse which damned the serpent and the sentences which were delivered upon the woman and her husband Adam, sentences in which there was more of mercy than of vengeance, I think it would be superfluous for me to speak now. For it will not be considered necessary for me to expound what has already been satisfactorily expounded by the Holy Fathers; for why, it might be asked, should we repeat what has been made so clear and plain in their writings, as though we thought we could produce a better explanation? God forbid that this should be thought of us, who are barely able to follow in their footsteps. 849C

A. It certainly would not seem necessary if this were not the only occasion when you have experienced such diffidence. But it will seem strange and inconsistent with the method and exposition of your discourse if, after having considered it proper to speak of practically all that the Scripture has recorded concerning the nature of the spiritual Paradise and the things that were created in it, although your disquisition was little more than a cursory and brief epitome of the opinions of the Holy Fathers, this one passage you should have left wholly untouched, passing it by in awed silence.

Therefore it is not right that you should entirely ignore these matters, but rather give a brief but plain account of them.

849D

<sup>24</sup>  
The belly of  
the serpent

N. Let us hear the consideration of the divine indignation against the serpent: "On thy belly shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." We have already said that in this passage the Scripture describes the serpent as signifying both the subtlety of the devil, and the indulgence of the flesh, and both bound together in an indiscriminate and indissoluble embrace.

A. Good, and lucid, and not inconsistent with the truth.

850A

N. The belly of this serpent is the prudence of the flesh in which the cunning of the devil's deceitfulness is dominant. And his belly is also empty and false-sounding wisdom which does not edify the mind but only inflates it. Thus the serpent's belly is both carnal prudence and empty and false wisdom, both of which God shall bring to destruction: "I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and the prudence of the prudent shall I reprove." But if you ask what is the difference between the prudence of the flesh and empty philosophy, here is a formula which discriminates the one from the other: The prudence of the flesh is the false virtue which paints the vices with the colours of virtues; which shades wickedness to resemble goodness; which clothes baseness in the garment of honour: but the true and simple virtues it conceals by drawing them out of the sight of the mind so that it may not be able to recognise their pure face, and thus it deceives the carnal senses and deludes and ruins souls with deceitful images of false virtues and brings them down to the darkness of eternal death. Empty and useless wisdom is best exemplified among the perfidious Jews and venomous heretics; it is the wisdom which follows only the letter of Holy Scripture, and hates, despises, neglects and has no knowledge of the spirit or mystical sense of it; it is that which deludes the souls of carnal men by inventions entirely devoid of truth about the nature of the Universe, despising the truth of the natural principles in accordance with which the universal creature was created, and drawing attention by the use of strange and far-fetched expressions to its pompous and grandiloquent style, or disguising itself by means of the tortuous intricacies of false propositions and syllogisms under the form of truth which shall deceive the unwary.

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Of these two vices, therefore, the belly of the serpent, that is to say, the subtlety of the devil and the enticement of fleshly indulgence, is composed. It is upon this — his belly, that is — that the serpent

goes, that is, on which he is raised and in which he boasts, usurping the human state. This may be understood from the words of the Prophet: for he did not simply say: Upon your belly shall you creep or crawl, but, figuratively, On your belly shall you walk. This of course is a figurative expression for no one would claim that the serpent was literally a walking animal and not a creeping one. But no creeping animal goes erect upon the earth: they all drag themselves along the ground. But everything which walks must before it starts to walk be raised from the ground. Therefore “Upon thy belly shalt thou walk” means “You shall be raised up in pride upon your subtlety and cunning, which is composed of empty wisdom and carnal prudence, by which you have deceived deluded man and reduced him to your power, and have bound him in the chains of sin, and have merged him in the whirlpool of eternal death, and you shall walk towards the increase of vices and the accumulation of your damnation, elated and vainglorious in the success of your evil in the hearts of infidels.” “And earth shalt thou eat” means “You shall feed upon the earthly cogitations, and the carnal desires and the deadly deeds of those who hanker after earthly things.” “All the days of thy life” means for as long as your kingdom, like a false light, shall shine and prevail over human nature. For not forever will you reign a conqueror over the Divine Image, but either man will while yet in this life be set free from your power that is in Christ the Redeemer, or generally at the end of the world, when death the last enemy will be destroyed through the same Christ Who is the Word of God, and human nature will be universally restored to its pristine state.

850D

The food of  
the serpent  
851A

“I shall place enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” Woman is the corporeal sense which is naturally implanted in human nature, through which — in those, that is, who are perfect — the beauty of the visible creature is referred to the Glory of God. Between this, that is to say, the woman, and the serpent, who is the lustful indulgence in material beauty and the subtlety of the Devil which resides in it, a great enmity has been established by God. For the woman, that is to say, the perfect sense of the perfect, hates the carnal desire for material things, but the serpent has a hostile intent towards spiritual and divine virtues.

The seed of  
the woman  
and that of  
the serpent  
851B

“And between thy seed and her seed.” The seed of the woman is the perfect, natural and multiple knowledge of visible things, free from all error. For it is to this end that corporeal sense is established

in man, that by means of phantasies it might become the intermediary between the sensibles and the intelligibles. But the seed of the serpent is the deadly increase of innumerable transgressions, a fact of which no true philosopher is ignorant.

851C            “She shall bruise thy head.” The head, or beginning, of the  
The head of    serpent is compounded as it were of two parts: for every evil has  
the serpent    taken its origin from the irrational motion of rational nature and the  
                     hateful subtlety of the Devil: and this head is bruised by the sense of  
                     the perfect and faithful because the subtlety of the Devil does not  
                     deceive them nor do they offer any entry to the secret and creeping  
                     approach of the first promptings of sin nor do they accommodate  
                     access to the irrational motion. Although that head is regarded as  
                     one, it is divided into a number that is infinite, for the universal evil  
                     is so manifold that there is no part of it from which the seeds of the  
                     vices may not spring; and this multitude is crushed by that woman  
                     to whom Solomon is referring when he says: “Who shall find a  
                     virtuous woman?” that is to say, the virtue and wisdom which lodge

851D            in the senses of the perfect and faithful. The prophetic author of the  
                     Psalms also refers to this woman when he says: “Thou hast broken  
                     the heads of the dragon and thou hast given him as food for the  
                     people of the Ethiopians.” The people of the Ethiopians are the  
                     multitudes of the nations which believed in Christ, and which are  
                     symbolised figuratively under the form of this woman, of whom  
                     Isaiah says: “The people which sat in darkness have seen a great  
                     light.” For by Ethiopians are meant those who are darkened or  
                     humiliated by virtue of their changed condition, and it is a  
                     description which may be appropriately applied to the people of the  
                     gentiles who, before the coming of the True Light, Which is God the  
                     Word, were in darkness, that is to say, were surrounded by the  
                     darkness of ignorance and the most dense cloud of eternal death.  
                     But when they have humbled themselves and accept the faith, they  
                     are enlightened and refreshed by a spiritual repast, which the Divine  
                     Wisdom prepares from the bruised heads of the dragon, that is,  
                     from the pluralities of universal evil which He has overcome.

The change  
of doctrine  
from sense to  
wisdom  
852A

                     The Psalmist says of this dragon: “The dragon himself which  
                     Thou hast formed to be deluded.” The dragon himself, the devil,  
                     that is, and his universal body, that is, the plenitude of universal  
                     evil, is that which Thou hast formed to be deluded by Thy Saints  
                     who outwit his pernicious and deceitful ambush, lay bare and  
                     destroy the stratagems of evil with which he attempts to demolish  
852B            the bastions of goodness, and shatter with the hammers of the

virtues the principles of evil which sprout from him in abundance. This opinion is consistent with the words of the Holy Job : “This is the beginning of the creation of God, which He created that it might be deluded by his angels.” But how can that spiritual dragon with all his members which follow after him in evil be called a divine creation or formation? There are two ways in which he may be called so. Firstly, because all the rebellious angels and all men who follow them have been created, in so far as they subsist in their natures, by God, they are not improperly called a divine creation and formation. Secondly, because symbolical expressions like these, which occur in such passages of Scripture as these, do not always signify the natures of demons or wicked men in which the Creator of all things established them, but those parts which were added as a punishment for the disobedience of both the angelic and the human creature to the Essence which was created in them : for example, the aerial bodies of demons and the earthly members of mortal men which should unhesitatingly be accepted and understood as the penalty for transgression, which has been added to the simplicity of the nature which was created by God. But as to whether the nature of the demons shall be set free from the aerial bodies which have been added to it in the same way as human nature, assisted by the Grace of its Redeemer, shall at the moment of the Resurrection be liberated from its animal and corruptible bodies, must be discussed in another place.

852C  
The unclean  
body  
superadded  
to the spirit

And now a brief summary. Not only the celestial powers which never abandoned their Creator, but also the rebellious powers shall eternally and inseparably possess those natural bodies which were made at the creation of the angels, for these bodies are spiritual and therefore incorruptible. But what is added thereto from the qualities of this world in punishment for their wickedness grows old as doth a garment with that from which it was taken and so may be regarded as perishable. Therefore when the Prophet says: “That dragon which Thou formedst to be deluded,” it seems that we should not be far from the truth in taking him to mean by the dragon the deadly subtlety of the Devil and his members whether found in angels or in evil men ; by the creation or formation (for there is a disagreement in the interpretations of the Hebrew expression which have been made for the service of the Church), either their nature in which before their fall they were established by God, or that which was added to them in consequence of their pride. But in whatsoever way we interpret creation and formation, whether as nature, or as what

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is added to nature, the Devil with his whole body was made to be outwitted by the Saints and the Holy Angels not as to the nature in which he was created, but as to his future state when through pride he should have abandoned the dignity of his nature. For he will be outwitted by the angels of God because by the goodwill and Grace

853B of their Creator they remain fixed in that state of happiness in which they were created; whereas he, deceived by his proud ignorance which prevented him from foreknowing his fall (for had he known perhaps he would have taken steps to avoid it), and puffed up with the rage of envy, of his own will tumbled into his misery. But righteous men who have been set free and enlightened by their devotion towards their Creator and Redeemer outwit him when, seeing through his disguise of goodly shape and the speciousness with which he tempts them into vice, and the deadly poison of wickedness, at once bruise his head, and grind with the teeth of inward discrimination the spiritual food, which is the Divine Providence, and which distinguishes vices from virtues so that no subtle guile may deceive them, and feed on the pure banquets of the good which are cleansed from all admixture of evil. Nor is their woman, that is, their sense, deceived by the beauty of material objects, through which by the mediation of lustful delight the ancient serpent pours the deadly poison of the vices into the minds of imprudent men. Therefore the woman, or sense, which incited, moved, assisted, supported and led to the perfection of action and contemplation by the virtues of the Stronger Woman which is the Word of God, distinguishes evil from good, and bruises the head of the serpent and the primordial heads of diabolical suggestion and crafty delights, whereby these righteous men win joy and divine refreshment. For what greater joy can there be for those who spend their lives after the spirit than first to conquer in themselves the serpentine and lustful wiles of the devil, and then to ward them off from those of the faithful who are less advanced in action and contemplation than they, lest they too be captivated by the same tricks of the deceiver? "And thou shalt lay siege to her heel." The

The teeth of  
the wise with  
which they  
crush the  
853C  
serpent's  
head

853D  
The heel of  
the woman

854A

853C the heel of the woman, who is αἴσθησις, is the phantasies of sensible things, that is to say, the images which are imprinted by the corporeal manifold upon the five senses. Therefore that heel must be five-fold. For it is divided into the familiar five organs of sense, namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Now some of these extend far beyond the framework of the perceiving body, like sight and hearing. For I behold the sun and the moon and the other stars which are situated far from that place where the mass of my little



body roams. For where they are, there I behold them in the rays of my eyes which dart out thither without a moment's delay, and in which are formed the phantasies of the afore-mentioned stars. You see then how far, in the organ of vision, this woman can extend her heel. The same applies to those things which are near, or in the middle distance. We find the same property in the function of the natural organ of hearing. For hearing fares forth from the confines of the body to receive imprinted upon it the forms of sounds or voices which are produced by the clashing of cymbals either from near or from afar. But others of the senses, in the opinion of many who study their nature, are retained within the limits of the body, such as smell and taste. But there are some who think that the sense of smell leaps out of the body, and their opinion is not to be despised; for we can smell odours, either good or otherwise, which originate at some little distance from our bodies. But as to touch no physicist doubts but that it operates both inside and outside the body. For it exercises its power alone and without the other senses, whereas none of the other four can without its co-operation fulfil their function: neither can vision see unless it touches what it sees, nor hearing hear unless it touches what it hears, nor smell smell unless it touches what it smells, nor taste taste unless it touches what it tastes.

854B

This, then, is the heel of the woman, the five-fold sense formed by the phantasies of sensible things, to which the subtle serpent lays siege. To the sense of sight it lays siege when it persuades unwary souls to lust dangerously after the beauty of shapes and colours. And we must think in the same way of the harmony of voices, the suavity of odours and the delights of savours and of those things which are in the reach of the sense of touch. All these things, when perceived by the soul through the corporeal sense with imprudent desire, that is, with carnal concupiscence, distil the mortal poison of disobedience to the divine precepts, and nourish the seeds of all the sins. This is what is meant by the earlier Scriptural passage, in which it is said: "Therefore the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to look upon and of a pleasing aspect, and she took of the fruit and did eat, and gave unto her husband." The woman here is a figurative expression of the exterior sense, which is entranced and deceived by the phantasies of sensible things, while the man signifies the mind, which by illicitly consenting unto the corporeal senses, is corrupted, that is to say, separated from the contemplation of the innermost truth.

854C

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25                    “To the woman also He said : ‘I will multiply thy sorrows and  
 855A thy conceptions : in labour shalt thou bring forth thy sons’.” Here it  
 The sorrows and is clearly given to understand that if man had not sinned he would  
 and have contemplated the natures and the principles of all things in a  
 conceptions most pure manner with the utmost ease not only by the interior  
 of the woman intellect but also with the exterior sense, for he would have been  
 freed from the necessity of all logical discourse. But after he had  
 sinned, the mind perceives through the corporeal sense only the  
 surfaces of sensible things, with their quantities and qualities, their  
 positions, their conditions, and the other aspects which submit to  
 corporeal perception. And all these it reaches not in themselves, but  
 through their phantasies, in interpreting which, its judgment very  
 frequently errs. Therefore not without the manifold labours of  
 study, which Scripture calls the sorrows of the woman, can he arrive  
 855B by means of the same sense at a multitude of conceptions, that is, at  
 the rudiments of an understanding of intelligible beings, and at the  
 procreation of sons, that is to say, of right judgments concerning  
 nature.

Now it is for this that the Divine Authority imposes upon the exterior sense the sorrows and the conceptions and the sons: because every work of wisdom, and every conception of the mind, and pure knowledge of truth take their origin from the bodily sense, for reason ascends step by step from lower to higher things, and from outer to inner.

“And thou shalt be under authority of the man, and he shall be lord over thee.” Here the Divine Voice promises the restoration of the natural order of human nature, and the Return to the condition in which it was first created. For the natural order should be as follows : the Mind subordinated to the authority of its Creator and remaining ever obedient to Him ; and then the sense freely subject to the authority and injunction of the Mind ; and finally the body subordinated to the sense. For so the creature would be at peace and in harmony in itself and with its Creator. But now after the transgression of the Divine Mandate, this order, for the preservation of which man was created, and this peace and communion between Creator and created, is upset. For of his own accord and under no compulsion but corrupted by his love of sensible things, man has abandoned his God ; although there is no other good in our substance but to abide in Him. Therefore God, wishing to humiliate the pride of human nature, permitted man to abuse his own irrational but willed motions, so that he might himself become a

proof of what the Grace of his Creator and the reward of obedience would have conferred on him, and what the irrational emotions and the proud transgression of God's Mandate had brought him. And hereupon there followed a kind of divorce between the male and the female, that is, between mind and sense. For the corporeal senses did not obey the precepts of mind according to the laws of nature. And this divorce has been clearly and beautifully alluded to by the Apostle: "In my mind I serve the Law of God, but in my flesh the law of sin." By flesh he means the carnal sense which disobediently resists the rational motions of the mind even in those who are perfect. In another place he writes: "I see in my members another law which contendeth with the law of my mind, making me captive unto the law of sin." You see here the discord between the law of the mind and the law of carnal sense, which dominates the members of those who live according to the flesh, and contends with the minds of those who live according to the spirit in mortal members for the exercise of virtue, and for that reason is called by the Apostle the law of sin, that is, of carnal sense. But when our nature is restored and recalled to its proper order, this discord and divorce shall be changed into the peace of a spiritual and natural wedlock, in which the body will conform and be subject to the sense, the sense to the Mind, and the Mind to God. This becomes clearer to us if we examine the Septuagint text: "And thy conversion shall be towards thy husband, and he shall be the lord over thee;" words which express most clearly the Return of human nature to its former order.

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Now in the words to man which seem to be written in the form of a curse, "And the earth shall be accursed in thy work," etc., it is not easy to see what is meant by that earth which is accursed in punishment for the transgression of the Mind, which is the male part of human nature, nor what is meant by the curse itself, whether it is the severity of God's wrath, or a kind of mystical rebuke; nor is it clear to see why the Mind itself, which committed the fault by listening to the voice of the woman and eating the forbidden fruit, did not incur the curse; nor what those labours may be in which he devours the accursed earth, nor what the days of the life of the Mind, nor of what kind are the thorns and tares which the earth is to bring forth, nor its grass which he devours, nor the sweat, nor the face, nor the return of the Mind into the earth from which it was formed, nor the dust. No problem, or at least, no very serious one, arises if these things are given, as by many authors, an historical interpretation, that is to say, are regarded as sensible objects

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occurring on this earth which is inhabited by man and arise from it. But if they are taken as referring to human nature itself, as in the case of the earlier discussion about Paradise, they require a considerable amount of elucidation.

In the opinion of St. Augustine, they are, on the one hand, to be taken as actual historical events, and, on the other, as containing a prophetic meaning, as he writes in the Eleventh Book of the *Hexameron*:

856D “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I had commanded you that of that only you should not eat, the earth is accursed in your works. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and you shall eat the grass of the field. In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return to the earth from which you were taken: for earth you are and unto earth shall you return. ‘Who,’ asks St. Augustine, ‘does not know this, that these are labours of the human race on earth?’ Nor can it be doubted that they would not have been if that felicity had been preserved which had existed in Paradise. There is therefore no objection in taking the words in the first instance in their normal meaning. But we should also look for and preserve the prophetic significance which particularly at this point is intended by God when He speaks.”

857A You see how he bids us that this text of Holy Scripture be given both a literal and a figurative interpretation? He does not, however, in this book explain what the prophetic and figurative meaning is. Had he done so, I think it would have been sufficient for us, and we should not have asked for another explanation: but since he does not, let us, with the help of God, hold a brief enquiry into the meaning of these words which were spoken by God.

Another theory

A. Let us do so. For they should not be passed over altogether.

N. It will be sufficient, I think, to put forward the solution of the blessed monk Maximus: and in order that that solution may be expressed the more clearly, let us propose his enquiry.

A. We could do no otherwise.

N. In the Fifth Chapter of his *Scholia*, then, he proposes the following problem:

“What is the allegorical interpretation of the earth which is accursed in the works of Adam, and his eating of it in sorrow, and

his feeding on the grass of the field after the growth of thorns and thistles, and lastly his eating of bread in the sweat of his face? For no man was ever seen eating earth or grass, nor is it recorded in the judgment of history that man ever ate bread in the sweat of his face. 857B

*Answer*: The earth itself, accursed in the works of Adam, is the flesh of Adam, which is always created by the works of Adam. (These works are the passions of his knowing mind). It is cursed with a barrenness of virtues, that is of the works of God. This earth he eats in anxiety and much sorrow, enjoying its own brief pleasure. And this flesh, through this corrupting enjoyment, spawns in him thoughts and cares like thorns, and great temptations and dangers like thistles, and irrational fury and luxurious concupiscence which all prick him on all sides: so that it is well nigh impossible for him to get and feed on, that is, achieve, the health and integrity of that flesh, for it is like withered grass: and then after many appalling vicissitudes he eats bread in the sweat of his face, that is, in that very lowliness of the flesh in its sense and in the toil of tedious consideration for sensible things, he gets the bread to sustain this present life, either by skill or by some other device provided for the maintenance of this life. Or is the earth rather the accursed heart of Adam which through transgression is exiled from the celestial goods? This earth, through practical philosophy, he eats with many tribulations, purged as it is through consciousness by the cursing of the baseness of its works; and again, subjecting to reason thoughts germinated in it, like thorns, concerning the generation of bodies and teeming ideas, like thistles, concerning the providence and judgment of Incorporeals, it plucks, spiritually, as it were grass, a physical contemplation. And thus, as though in the knowable sweat of the face of intelligence he eats the bread of theology in accordance with the knowledge whose face is incorruptible, the bread which alone is the bread of life and which preserves the generation of those who eat of it to incorruptibility. So the earth if well eaten is itself a purge through the action of the heart, but the grass is knowledge itself based on the contemplation of the nature of those things which have been created: but the bread is true doctrine based on the theology of the mysteries.” 857C

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Practical  
(philosophy)  
purges the  
vices Physical  
purges  
harmful ideas  
on the nature  
of things

Theology  
supplies the  
858A  
bread of solid  
contemplation

Thus far Maximus. Now I think that the days of the life of the mind in which it tolls purging the earth of its heart signify not only those days through which the seasons of the present life pass and in which the body is sustained by the soul, but also that temporal interval in which the souls, relinquishing the control of their bodies,

abide in another life until they take back their bodies. For we believe that souls can be purged both in this present life, which soul and body spend in company, and in the other life after the death of the body, that is, after its dissolution and its Return into the four cosmic elements from which it was gathered up and composed, until the end of the world and the resurrection of the bodies and the day of judgment. These then are the days in which the mind eats the earth of its heart, that is, performs the function of purgation. For after the end of the sensibles we read that no further purgation will be practised for then will have occurred the Return of nature to its original purity. And perhaps this is the meaning of the text, "Until you return to the earth from which you were taken," which could be interpreted: For such a length of time your face, that is, the rational enquiry into truth, will sweat from the labours of your purgation in practice and theory, until you return to the earth from which you were taken, that is to say, into the immutable stability of the Primordial Causes, from which you derive your origin. When you have arrived there you will sweat no longer.

Souls, freed  
from their  
bodies, can  
be purged up  
to the day of  
858B  
judgment

You are earth  
and into  
earth you will  
go

858C Now there are many scriptural passages which clearly indicate that by the term "earth" is meant the bliss of eternal life and the stability of the Primordial Causes, from which all things which are have their origin. For instance, to Abraham it is said: "Go forth from thy country and from thy kin and from thy father's house, and come unto the land which I shall have shown unto thee," and later: "Abraham set out thence and came to a southern country, and dwelt between Cades and Assur," that is, between sanctification and beatification, where all the bliss of the Saints is established in eternal rest. For being sanctified, that is, being purged from every disease of body and soul, they shall live in bliss according to the laws of nature. And if we consider another meaning of Assur, which is Mesopotamia, we shall find a more estimable subject for contemplation and one most apt to the present matter. For Mesopotamia is so called because it is in the midst between the rivers. Now, are we to believe that the abode of the holy souls and of the whole of restored human nature will be anywhere but in the midst between the rivers of the virtues? — these rivers which flow from the Source of all good things? And what else but this is mystically signified by the Land of Promise to which the people of God were led after they had been set free from the Egyptian captivity and slavery? This is the land of the living, in which the Saints shall possess a double blessing, 859A that of the body and that of the soul. It is of this too that the Lord

Himself speaks when He says : “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

But the following phrase, “Earth thou art and unto earth shalt thou return,” or, according to another version. “For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return,” can be understood as follows : Since the mind’s nature, which is made in the image and likeness of God, took its origin from the fertile soil of the Primordial Causes, we therefore believe that it must of necessity return there. And if it be asked why in the other translation this earth is given the name of dust, there can be no other reason than that, as it is from the dust of the sensible earth that all things born of earth take the cause of their birth, so the numerical multiplicity of all things visible and invisible is generated from the fertility of the Primordial Causes, and at the end of the world shall return to it again. But this we say not in refutation of the simplicity of those who accept the historical truth of this scriptural passage, and who try to maintain that these words signify the dissolution of the human body into the four elements of this world, which are included under the general term of earth, although they do not perceive what great difficulties lie in this interpretation. For if the voice of God spoke thus about the dissolution of the body, why was it predicted of the man alone? Why not of the woman also, whose body is no less destined for dissolution? Again, why does Divine reproach condemn the whole man to dissolution, when it is only the lowest and least valuable parts of him, namely the body and the bodily sense, that are dissolved, while the natural simplicity of the soul, free from all compositeness, by no means undergoes dissolution but remains forever indissoluble, whether its movements are rational or irrational? — unless perhaps they would say that we are to take this passage as a synecdoche, a figure which occurs very frequently in Holy Scripture, whereby the part is understood from the whole. This is possible if the words are taken to refer not to the mind itself but to the male sex alone which is extended to include the female sex. Finally why do they not observe that the works speak not so much of dissolution or corruption as of restoration? For at the very moment when the corruptible and mortal body is done away, the incorruptible and immortal is restored. For no one’s body is destined to return to corruption. So these words foretell the Return, not into this earth, but rather to the spiritual nature.

But let each choose the theory he will : I, however, taking my reasoning from the opinions of the Holy Fathers, of Ambrose and

Augustine, and also of the venerable Gregory Nazianzen who is also called the Nyssaean \*, and of his commentator Maximus the monk, have put what seemed to me the more probable opinion before you, sometimes in answer to your questions, sometimes in comments upon your expositions. And as there are certain things which at the beginning of this book we promised to discuss, but which its lengthiness has prevented us from mentioning, we must postpone the examination of them to the next volume. And in the same volume we have also determined to treat at some length of the Return of the natures into their Primordial Causes and into that Nature which neither creates nor is created, that Nature which is God Himself. But if you are impatient to know why it is said of the Divine Nature that It neither creates nor is created, I will say a few words here by way of foretaste.

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The divine  
nature  
neither  
creates nor is  
created

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The Divine Nature, therefore, for this reason is believed not to be created because It is the Primal Cause of all, and there is no principle beyond It from which It can be created. On the other hand, because after the Return of the created Universe of things visible and invisible into its Primordial Causes which are contained within the Divine Nature, there is no further creation of nature from the Divine Nature nor any propagation of sensible or intelligible species; for in It all will be One, just as even now in their Causes they are One and always have been so. Therefore we can rightly believe and understand that this Nature creates nothing. For what should It create when It alone is all in all things? And now, if you agree, let us put an end to this book lest it run on too far.

860C

A. I quite agree, for I have been anticipating the end for some time.

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\* Eringena sometimes confounds the two Gregories



# PERIPHYSEON

## BOOK V

N. "Now, therefore, may he not perchance put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat of it, and live forever?" Before we consider the prophetic virtue of these words, which give the clearest promise of the Return of human nature to that same bliss which in sinning it had lost, a preliminary indication of the arrangement of this whole chapter must be given, in which it will be clear to the careful reader that the Prophet Moses was speaking in allegory. The sequence of the chapter is then as follows :

I 859D  
The  
expulsion of  
man from  
Paradise and  
on man's  
Return  
860D

"The Lord God also made for Adam and his wife tunics of skin and clothed them therewith, and said, Behold, Adam has become as one of Us. And the Lord God sent him forth out of Paradise, that he might labour on the earth out of which he was formed. Now therefore, may he not perchance put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat of it, and live forever. And he cast Adam out, and set Cherubim before the Paradise of pleasure, and a flaming sword turning every way to guard the path to the Tree of Life."

Then, concerning the words, "Now therefore, may he not perchance put forth his hand," and so on as far as "live for ever," there might be some doubt as to who spoke them, whether the prophesying Theologian or the speaking God, were it not made clear in the Septuagint version which has : "And now," said God, "May he not at some time extend his hand, and take of the Tree of Life?" But I think no attentive reader could doubt that however the words are taken they contain the promise of the Return of human nature to its pristine state. For I do not regard as careful readers

861A

those who think that in this passage the particle *ne* has a negative rather than an interrogative meaning, expressing as it were a doubt, and believe that man's expulsion from Paradise was for the express purpose of preventing him from taking from the Tree of Life and living for ever. For how could human nature after it had sinned take  
 861B of the Tree of Life and eat of it and live for ever, when it was not yet liberated from sin, or from death which is the wage of sin, seeing that even before its transgression it neither took of this tree nor ate of it, as any careful examination of the Scriptures will show? For were it to have taken and eaten, then certainly it would neither have sinned nor fallen, but would have lived in bliss to all eternity.

Furthermore, if that Paradise from which man was expelled was local and terrestrial, and if the Tree of Life which was planted in the midst of it was an earthly and sensible tree, and brought forth fruit that was suitable for bodily consumption, why would God not have driven man forth only from that tree, and fenced him off in another part of Paradise from which he could not gain access to it?  
 861C If the eating of the Tree of Life, which was permitted only to rational creatures, were the sole cause of man's living in eternal bliss, why could not man after sinning have passed his wretched and mortal life of temporality in some other part of Paradise? If the other animals, and especially that serpent through whom the ancient enemy practised his malice, were in Paradise, and yet, as we believe, were not able to live eternally in bliss, since they were not created to feed on the Tree of Life, why could not man be permitted to remain among them, since right reason would teach us that the rational creature, even if it sin, is superior in the dignity of its nature to every  
 861D irrational creature even if it has not sinned? If then the irrational creatures remained in Paradise after man had been driven forth, why was not he, being more excellent than they, permitted to remain among them in Paradise even though he had sinned?

Or was it that the other animals were expelled with him from Paradise? But if anyone should believe that, let him search the Holy Scriptures or the testimony of the Holy Fathers, or from both, for evidence that the animals to whom man before his sin gave names in Paradise were expelled from Paradise with him when he sinned. And  
 862A if he fail to find it, let him cease to think of Paradise and its animals in a carnal sense, and let him at once turn to the spiritual meaning which is taught by truth, for that is the one and only way of penetrating the approaches to the mystical writings. Come then, and pay close attention to the power of the divine words.

A. I am alert and ready to learn the lesson you will teach me : for it is very important, and few, I think, have dealt with it before. For concerning the Return of human nature and of all things contained within it and dependent upon it into the eternal “reasons” from which it proceeded, and concerning its restoration to its pristine dignity I have not read or heard of any text, although here and there among the holy books and the writings of the Holy Fathers the outline of such a doctrine is frequently discernible.

N. The Return of which we speak is implied in the Voice of God saying: “Now therefore,” or as the alternative translation more explicitly puts it, “And now, said God.” Here we are to understand that the Divine Mercy and infinite Goodness, so ready to forgive and pity us, to sigh over the fall of the Divine Image, and in His clemency to condescend unto us and to bear in patience the arrogance of man is saying: Now therefore, I behold man driven forth from Paradise; formerly blessed, now become wretched; once rich, now needy; once an eternal being, now a temporal; once enjoying everlasting life, now mortal; once wise, now foolish; once a spiritual creature, now an animal; once heavenly, now earthly; once enjoying eternal youth, now growing old; once happy, now sad; once saved, now lost; once the prudent son, now the prodigal; straying from the flock of the heavenly powers I behold him, and I grieve for him. For it was not to this end that he was made: he whom you his neighbours and friends now behold driven forth from Paradise into the region of death and misery was formed for the possession of eternal life and blessedness, to consort with the heavenly orders who had adhered to their Creator and remained in everlasting bliss — though a number of them were lost in man’s transgression. Do you see the largeness of the divine compassion which is compressed within the single temporal adverb Now, and a single causal conjunction Therefore? This same divine compassion, converting the lamentation for man to a consolation both of man himself and of the Heavenly Powers, promises under an ambiguous and interrogative form of speech the Return of man into Paradise. For He says: “May he not perchance put forth his hand and take of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever?” The meaning is: We must not mourn unduly the death of man, nor weep so profusely for his fall from Paradise; for hope of the Return is not entirely taken away from him. It may be that he will put forth his hand, that is, stretch his zeal for good conduct by practising the virtues, so that he may take of the fruit of the Tree of Life, which is the Spiritual Gifts

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862D

of the Word of God, and eat the food of pure contemplation, by virtue of which he shall live forever and never revert to the poverty  
 863A of temporal things, which shall perish altogether at the end of the world, but pass wholly into God and be One in Him.

What follows in our text makes this clear; for it says: "And He cast Adam forth, and set Cherubim before the Paradise of pleasure and a flaming sword turning every way to guard the path to the Tree of Life." I do not suppose you have forgotten how in the Fourth Book, following the opinions of the Holy Fathers of either tongue who are learned in expounding Paradise, we made it quite clear, at least in our opinion, that the Paradise from which man was driven forth was nothing else but his own human nature which was formed in the Image of God. It was from the dignity of that Image that the same human nature, contemning God's order fell. Whence it follows that the sending or driving forth of man is nothing else but the loss of that natural felicity for the possession of which he was created.  
 863B For it was not his nature that was lost (that, being made in the image and likeness of God, is necessarily incorruptible), but the felicity which would have been his if he had been obedient to God instead of treating Him with contempt.

A. No, I have certainly not forgotten. It is all fixed firmly in my memory.

N. What is it, then, that is said? "And He set before the Paradise of pleasure" — that is, before the spiritual delights of human nature — "Cherubim." What is meant by this name? Is it that heavenly Power which holds the third place in the first Hierarchy of the angelic orders, in which the sacred tradition reckons the Seraphim, the Cherubim and the Thrones; or is the word used solely in the literal sense or is that name intended to teach  
 863C some other doctrine by a higher significance? In order to answer this question we must first show what is the literal meaning of this term. *Cherubim* is translated "the variety of knowledge," or "the outpouring of wisdom," as St. Dionysius the Areopagite tells us in his book *On the Celestial Hierarchy*. And he has the support of Epiphanius who, in his book *On Hebrew Names*, interprets *Cherubim* as "full knowledge," or "the knowledge of many things." But if Scripture means here the heavenly essence then we must admit that Paradise is of a spiritual nature. For reason does not permit us to believe that the spiritual nature, which is placed next to God, and is ever moving before His face, could be set in front of a local and  
 863D earthly Paradise. We should have to say that it was not really

Cherubim that was set before Paradise, but one of the lowest orders of the Heavenly Powers, which is called near-angelic, and that it is given the name of Cherubim because it is by Cherubim that he is ordered to place himself before Paradise. For whatsoever is performed in nature by the lower orders of the heavenly beings is to be referred to the higher orders, since the lower do nothing but what they are instructed by the higher to do. That is why it is recorded that Seraphim purged the Prophet Isaiah although, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite shows, “it was not by his own act that Seraphim purged the prophet, but through one of the lowest orders of the angelic and celestial essences,” who merited the name of Seraphim because it was at the command of Seraphim that he purged the prophet, and because that purgation is not to be attributed to the immediate purgator but to him who ordered that the prophet should be purged. 864A

But even so, are we not faced with the same difficulty? For it is not likely that an angelic substance even of the lowest order could be situated in some earthly place. But if we accept in this context only the significance of the name without relating it to the celestial essence (to which that name belongs), we can say that God placed Cherubim, that is, the variety of knowledge, or the pouring forth of wisdom, before the Paradise of pleasure, that is to say, before the sight of rational human nature although it had been driven forth from Paradise, that is, removed from the dignity of its first creation, so that it might have a means of regaining its knowledge of itself, and so that, when purged by practice and theory, and disciplined by the study of wisdom, it might have the will and power to return into its former felicity which in sinning it had abandoned. From this we may understand that the Divine Compassion exceeds the Divine Vengeance in driving man forth from Paradise. For it was not the will of the Creator that His Image should be totally destroyed, but rather that it should be fashioned anew, and be disciplined by the variety of science, and “watered” and enlightened by the pouring forth of wisdom, and be rendered worthy to draw near once more to the Tree of Life from which it had been removed, and to partake of its fruit, so that it should not perish but have eternal life. 864B 864C

But should anyone wish to look deeper into the matter he will see that by the word *Cherubim* is signified not inappropriately the very Word of God Itself. For the Word of God, in Which are concealed the treasures of science and wisdom is always, without intermission, present to the powers of observation of human nature,

advising, cleansing and enlightening it, and eventually leading it back to the pure perfection of its nature. For is there anything strange in the word *Cherubim* signifying the Wisdom of God, for that Wisdom is called the Power and the Angel of Great Counsel. Hear what the Apostle says of God the Father: "For from the creation of the world the invisible things of God are understood and  
 864D perceived through the things that are made, and also His eternal Virtue and Power," and in short by a kind of wonderful metaphor the Wisdom of God is intimated in Holy Scripture by the names of all the Heavenly Essences. Similarly it would not be wrong to take the flaming sword to mean the Word of God Itself. For It consumes and divides: It consumes our faults, for "God is a consuming fire," and cleanses the irrational filth of our nature. And It divides that  
 865A nature, and separates it from those things which have been added to it as the result of sin and mar it and deface it and make it to be dissimilar from its Creator. That Sword, which is the Word of the Father, the only-begotten Son, is rightly held to be wisdom and virtue which turns every way, because, though by nature immutable, It is yet moved by Its ineffable compassion and mercy to save human-kind.

Such, then, is the Cherubim, such the flaming Sword which turneth every way and which is set before the eyes of our soul, that is, before Reason and Mind.

Again: "To guard the path of the Tree of Life." This it does that we should not consign to oblivion the Tree of Life, but should always, as indeed we must, have before the eyes of our heart the memory of that Tree and the Way which leads towards it.

And do not think it strange that I should have taken the word  
 865B *Cherubim* as a singular noun when the blessed Jerome has declared that such Hebrew nouns ending in *-im* are masculine plurals. For I follow Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, who takes both Seraphim and Cherubim as singulars; in fact, both in Greek and Hebrew one is accustomed to put singular for plural and plural for singular.

But what is that Way which leads to the Tree of Life? and what is that Tree to which it leads? Is it not the Son of God, Who says of Himself: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life?" And as to His being the Tree of Life, that is clearly stated in many passages of Holy Scripture, so that there is no lack of evidence.

In this part of Holy Scripture, then, a whole mass of symbolical names for the Word of God are accumulated. For It is called

Cherubim, and a Fiery Sword that turneth every way, and the Way, and the Tree of Life ; by which we may see that the Word Itself never recedes from human consciousness, and that It is always most ready to enlighten us and nowhere and at no time does it permit us to be unmindful of the bliss we lost through sin, desiring that we should return to it, and until that shall be accomplished, by taking pity upon us It stimulates us to tread with the firm footsteps of theory and practice the journey which leads thither. "I have come," He says, "to bring fire upon the earth, and what do I wish but that it should kindle?" 865C

But before we treat of the Return of our nature, I should like, if you agree, to draw from the sensible world some very convincing evidence which sets the Return beyond all doubt. Examples from sensibles by which the Return is proved 3 865D

A. Certainly I agree. For from examples based on the nature of the sensibles a logical dialectic can lead us to a clear knowledge of spiritual things.

N. Ask yourself then whether even the local and temporal returns accomplished by members of this visible world do not contain some mystical meaning.

A. I could not easily deny that they do. For it is my opinion that there is no visible or corporeal thing which is not the symbol of something incorporeal and intelligible. But I should be grateful if you would briefly cite one or two examples of these returns on which you wish to base your argument. 866A

N. I think it is as clear as day to all who study either by abstract speculation or concrete experience the nature of the physical Universe that the heavenly sphere of the fixed stars is perpetually revolving, and returns to its original position every twenty-four hours. In like manner the Sun arrives at the same point on the equinoctial diameter at the same moment of time, i.e., sunrise, after a space of four years ; and the moon returns to the same point on the zodiac where it first began to shine after a period somewhat more than twenty seven days and eight hours. And about the return of the other planets it would be superfluous to speak, for it is very well known to all that are skilled in astronomy. For the natural laws governing the revolutions of the two greatest luminaries will provide sufficient evidence of the doctrine I am trying to affirm. 866B  
The moon is recalled to the beginning of its course after the conclusion of the nineteenth year, the sun at the end of the twenty-eighth. Multiply these two numbers together and you get a total of

- 532 years. At the end of this period these two luminaries, having fulfilled the complete Paschal Cycle, are said to return to the same numbers and positions of places in the zodiac and times in the Great Year, and to fulfil the entire harmony of their course. And what of the air? Is it not recalled to the same qualities of cold and hot or temperateness at regular intervals? And what of Ocean? Does it not
- 866C in all cases follow the course of the luminary, and keep the regular periods of its return? In the daily tides, whether ebbing or spring or neap, it does not interrupt the regularity of the various natural returns. And what of the creatures of sea and land, the grasses and the twigs? Do they not in like manner keep their proper seasons for generation of fœtus, flower, leaf and fruit? In short, there is no corporeal creature enlivened by the Vital Motion which does not return again from the beginning from which it set forth. For the end of every movement is in its beginning: it is concluded in no other term but that origin out of which its movement began, and to which it ever seeks to return in order that therein it may have peace and rest. And this can be said not only of the parts but of the whole of
- 866D the sensible world. For the end of it also is its beginning, which it seeks and in which it will rest when it has found it; a rest which will not consist in the abolition of its substance, but the return into those “reasons” whence it sprang. “For,” says the Apostle, “the figure of this world shall pass away.” The Holy Father Augustine briefly expounds this sentence of the Apostle as follows: “figure, not
- 867A nature,” meaning by “nature” essence, I think, by a use common both in Latin and Greek. For the Greeks very frequently put φύσις for οὐσία and οὐσία for φύσις. The proper use of these words is οὐσία, essence, for that which in every creature, visible and invisible, can neither be corrupted nor increased nor diminished — φύσις “nature,” for the bringing to birth of essence in space and time into some material which can be corrupted and increased and diminished and affected by different accidents. For οὐσία is derived from the verb εἰμί, “I am,” of which the masculine of the participle is ὢν, the feminine οὐσα, whence οὐσία: but φύσις comes from the verb φύομαι meaning “I am born,” or “I am planted,” or “I am generated.” Hence every creature, in so far as it subsists in its
- 867B “reasons”, is an οὐσία: but in so far as it is procreated into some material, it is a φύσις. But, as I have said, just as among the Greeks οὐσία is used indiscriminately for φύσις and φύσις for οὐσία, so among the Latins “essentia” is used for “natura” and “natura” for “essentia,” although neither has lost its proper meaning.



The essence, then, of sensible things, which is what this Father meant by "nature," will, as true reason faithfully teaches, abide for ever, for it is created unalterably in the Divine Wisdom beyond all space and time and change. But nature is brought forth in space and time, and becomes the nucleus of the other accidents, and at a moment fore-ordained by the Maker of all things is destined to perish, as no student of philosophy can doubt. Now what is the mystical meaning revealed to us by the general and particular movements of the sensible world, and others like them, these revolutions, these undeviating returns from the beginnings of movement to the same beginnings again — for that which as the source of movement is called "beginning" is the same as that which, when motion is consummated in it, is called "end;" and among the Greeks "beginning" is called τέλος, which really means "end:" they name both beginning and end τέλος without distinction — what but the Return of our nature to its beginning, out of which it was made, and in which and through which it moves and towards which its tendency is always to return? For all men in general, whether perfect or imperfect, chaste or defiled, redeemed through knowledge of truth in Christ, or lingering in the darkness of the ignorance of the Old Man, have one and the same natural yearning after being and well-being and being forever and, in the comprehensive phrase of St. Augustine, after living in bliss and escape from misery. For this activity of living and subsisting in bliss comes from Him Who is Ever-Being and Well-Being and Being in all. And if it is a necessary rule that every natural activity is ceaseless and unresting until it attain the end it seeks, what can check or restrain or arrest the necessary activity of human nature from arriving at that towards which it naturally tends? For there is no creature which desires and tends towards not-being; and does not rather shun it lest it should happen to cease to be, and indeed, how hard it would be for anything which is made by Him Who truly is and is beyond being to return to nothing. But if perchance a God-like nature is by some principle of unlikeness separated from its Archetype, it ever strives to return thereto, in order that it may regain the likeness which it has destroyed. For if the visible fire when it is ablaze in some material and lifting up the mane of its flames is ever striving upward, nor ever seeks by the movement of its blaze a downward path, how can it be believed that the intelligible fire of the substance which is created in the Image of God should ever be retained in the depths of death and unhappiness from arriving by its natural yearning and the aid of the Grace of its Creator to the heights of life

867C

All human  
nature will be  
freed

867D

868A

868B

and blessedness? But by this we mean not that the nature of all things will be equally blessed, but that it will be equally free from death and unhappiness. For being and living and immortality will be common to all, good and evil alike; but well-being and blessed being will be the special property of those only who are perfect in practice and theory. Or how could it be convincingly proved that that most loving Creator of rational nature should prevent the rational motion thereof from attaining its God?

Examples  
from  
intelligibles  
by which the  
868C  
Return is  
demonstrated

But it is not only by examples taken from the sensibles, but also from those things that can only be apprehended by the mind, that led us to suppose, believe, and understand that all things under stress of natural law return to the beginning of their movement and their Primordial Causes: such are those arts to which philosophers give the name "liberal," of which I perceive I must say a word or two in support of my argument, if that will not seem tedious or superfluous to you.

4 A. Neither tedious nor superfluous does it seem to me, but extremely useful and relevant that just as we have taken some illustrations of the Return of nature from the sensible world, so in like manner we should introduce as evidence of the same Return theories of the intelligible world which are only apprehensible to the perception of the mind, especially as these proofs have a greater validity of establishing belief in a doubtful matter which are drawn from the invariable laws of the true arts than those which are taken from the conjectures of the corporeal sense — and indeed without the guidance of reason and intelligence these can neither be discovered nor proved, for the true knowledge of sensibles cannot be attained by the corporeal sense alone.

868D

869A N. How does it seem to you? Does not that art which the Greeks call "Dialectic" and which is defined as the science of good disputation, concern itself with οὐσία as its proper principle, from which every division and every multiplication of those things which that art discusses takes its origin, descending through the most general genera and the genera of intermediate generality as far as the most special forms and species, and again perpetually returning according to the rules of synthesis by the same steps by which it descended until it reaches that same οὐσία from which it issued forth, does not cease to return to it, in which it yearns to rest forever, and in the neighbourhood of which it seeks to operate by an activity wholly or largely intelligible?

And what of Arithmetic? Does not that also start from the Monad, and descending through the different species of numbers, return once more, the problem solved, to the same Monad, beyond which it can ascend no further? For all numbers, and all species of numbers, begin from the Monad and have their end in it, and subsist in it both actually and potentially, in the same way as all genera and all species are contained and preserved in οὐσία. 869B

In Geometry the same applies. In just the same way it starts from its principle, called in Greek σημεῖον, in Latin *signum*, and using plane and solid figures, surfaces, sides and angles, constructs spaces of length and breadth and depth. When all these are resolved, it returns to its principle, the point, in which all the potentiality of the art resides.

And what of Music? Does not that also begin from its principle, called the note, and build up harmonies whether simple or compound, and then resolving them again seek once more its note, its principle, in which resides all its act and all its potency? 869C

And as to Astronomy, who does not know that its chief function is to study the movements of the stars through space and time, beginning its journey from the indivisible unit, and ending in a recourse to the same when the temporal intervals have been resolved.

So that you see that these concepts of the rational mind all seek back to their principles in which they find the end of their activity. For in all these, as we said, the beginning and the end is the same thing.

A. Yes, I see. And in my opinion the method of demonstration, which makes use of the intelligibles, effectively substantiates the theory we are now discussing, namely the Return of Nature. But I am not quite clear why, when you were bringing forward the Liberal Arts as evidence, you omitted Grammar and Rhetoric. 869D

N. Know, then, that they were omitted not for one reason only: firstly, because many philosophers, not without reason, hold that these two arts are in some sort branches of Dialectic; secondly, for the sake of brevity; and lastly, because Grammar and Rhetoric do not deal with the nature of the Universe, but either with the laws of human speech, which Aristotle and his school show to be not a natural phenomenon but one arising out of the behaviour of articulate beings, or are concerned with particular causes and persons, which has no relation to the nature of the Universe. For 870A

when Rhetoric attempts to treat of common situations relevant to nature she uses not her own resources but those of Dialectic. I do not mean by this that Grammar and Rhetoric have no principles of their own, for the one starts from the letter, the other from the hypothesis or stated problem, and into these they are resolved again, the art of good writing returning to the letter, the art of good disputation to the hypothesis. I mean rather that arguments taken from the nature of things are better for defending or refuting propositions which are made for enquiry into matters of doubt, than arguments thought out by the inventiveness of man : and the arts of good writing and good disputation have been discovered and constituted by human reasonings.

870B

A. Why, then, are they reckoned among the Liberal Arts, if they belong not to nature but to the human mind?

N. As far as I can see, for no other reason but that they cannot be separated from the mother of all the arts, Dialectic. For they are like branches springing from her or tributaries flowing into her, or better still the instruments through which she displays her intelligible discoveries for the use of man.

A. I will not quarrel with this reply, for it seems probable. For it is possible for the rational soul to discuss within herself the Liberal Arts without recourse to the utterance of articulate speech or fluent disquisition. It remains to be seen in what way all this is relevant to our present discussion.

870C

N. What do you mean?

5

A. What else but to corroborate from authority that the beginning of natural motions is identical with their end, and differs from it in nothing.

N. If that is what you want, listen to the words of the Blessed Maximus in the Nineteenth Chapter of his *Ambigua* :

“Everything that is naturally in motion is moved entirely by its cause ; and everything that is moved by its cause exists entirely by its cause ; and everything which exists by its cause and is moved by its cause, has as the sole principle of its existence that cause by which it is and from which it is impelled into being. But the end of its movement is the same cause through which it moves and towards which it is drawn. But everything which exists and is moved by a cause is likewise begotten by that cause. But if the end of its movement is that cause by which it is moved, that by which it is

870D

made is the same cause. Therefore of every existent whatsoever and of everything which is naturally in motion the one cause is the beginning and the end, namely the Cause through which everything which exists and is moved moves and has its being. For this subsisting power, being active, both as principle divinely creates the things that are created and sends them forth : and as end draws them back to itself and terminates their existence. But if everything which moves is also created, it is by a cause that it is and moves and is created : and nothing which does not exist through a cause is either created or moved. For that is not moved which does not in all things and through all things possess a cause of being : but if that which is uncaused is likewise wholly motionless, then the Divine is motionless ; for It has no cause for Its being, being Itself the Cause of all things that are.” 871A

You see how very clearly he shows that the Cause of all things and the end of all things is the same.

A. Yes, I see. But how this concerns the present problem I do not understand. For it seemed to me that your present subject is not God, Who is the Beginning and End of all things, for from Him and through Him and in Him are all things, and to Him all things tend : but the temporal principles of sensible nature, which are perceptible through their movement in generation and through space, and the theoretic origins of the intelligibles, which are perceptible to the mind. And it is not yet clear to me how such things as you have indicated can serve as illustrations for reasoning about God. 871B

N. I am surprised that you are so slow of wit that you do not at once see where this discussion is leading. Do not all the arguments which we have taken from the nature of the sensibles and the intelligibles point in one direction, namely, that as each must by its nature return to its own principle, whether that principle be sensible or intelligible, so also human nature, as we must have no hesitation in believing, and as is clearly shown by these very sound arguments taken from physical nature, must also return to its own principle, which is none other than the Word of God in Which it was created and immutably subsists and lives? For if God is the Principle of all things which are and all things which are not — by which I mean, of the things which are subject to the bodily senses and the mind, and of those which, by reason of the excessive subtlety and excellence of their substance elude the perception both of the bodily senses and the mind — and if He is the Object of their desire ; and if that desire is not prevented by any cause from attaining its End ; why should we 6 871C

doubt that in the case of human nature, which was specially created in the image and likeness of the single common Principle of all things, it shall return thither whence it came — all the more because

871D it did not issue forth from that Principle in such a way as to abandon It altogether; for, says the Apostle, “in Him we live and move and have our being;” but because through sin it has become tarnished by a kind of un-likeness, we speak of it as having fallen away therefrom. For likeness brought it near, unlikeness removed it to a distance. For it is not by bodily paces but by the affections of the mind that it moves away from, or draws near to, God. It is not by spatial interval that we recede from the light of the sun, but by the loss of our eyes, or the closing of them, or by the setting of the sun itself. It is not space that separates us from health, but pain. In like

872A manner, when we take leave of life, blessedness, wisdom, or any other virtue, it is by the deprivation of those virtues, either by death, or unhappiness or folly or sin. And as the skin of the human body is smitten by the ugly contagion of leprosy, so human nature is infected and corrupted by its insolent disobedience, and rendered hideous by it, becomes unlike its Creator. But when by the medicine of the Divine Grace it shall be cured of that leprosy, then shall it be restored to its former beauty; what is more, in itself the nature

The hidden  
incorruptible  
body which  
872B  
shall rise  
again

which was created in the Image of God never did lose the bloom of its beauty nor the integrity of its essence, nor could it do so: for the divine form, though enabled by sin to acquire corruptible qualities, itself ever remains immutable, as we may learn from the words of the Blessed Gregory of Nyssa. For in the twenty seventh chapter *On the Image*, which treats of the Resurrection, he writes:

“It is not incredible that the resolution or Return of the rising bodies is from the mixture of the four universal elements of the world to the proper state of nature (of the hidden and incorruptible body which rises.) For the fluidity and mutability of our nature is not all-pervasive. If it were so it would be altogether unknowable, for we should have by nature no stability: but a more careful analysis shows that there are some things in us which endure, while others arise from mutability. For the body undergoes change by increase and diminution, like garments, which are changed with the changing of one’s age. But throughout all these changes there is a form which abides and is itself unchangeable, never giving up those marks which were inscribed at one time on it: and this with its marks is apparent in all bodily changes. But change, which results

872C from some passion and which is an accident superimposed on our

form, is removed through the Word of God. For that deformity through formlessness, like some strange face, takes its own form; but when that formlessness is removed by the Word — as in the case of Naaman the Syrian and the lepers as told in the Gospel — the form obscured by the disease will shine forth in health again along with its marks. Therefore in the conformity of the soul to God, it is not that which displays the flux of mutability and the capacity for transformation which is the innate quality of the soul, but that which is permanent, and likewise unchanging in our composition, that is placed in our soul.” 872D

See how clearly and explicitly the Nyssaean demonstrates not only that the form of the soul is made in the Image of God, but also that the natural form of the body, which copies the image of the soul, remains ever incorruptible and immutable. For whatever is added to the natural body from the mixture of the elements, and whatsoever is added to the soul from the impurity of irrational motions, is for ever in a state of flux and in process of decay. And this, he says, is admirably represented by the story of Naaman the Syrian and of those ten who were cleansed by Our Lord, as the Gospel relates. For that Syrian, and those ten, had not lost the human countenance; they had only been smitten and covered up by the tumours and filthiness of the leprosy; from which we are to understand that our nature is neither lost nor changed, but tarnished by the stains of vice. That this Syrian stands for the type of human nature is obvious: for the meaning of Naaman is “comely”; and the meaning of Syria is “the contemplation of heavenly things.” Would not this have been the state of human nature had it not succumbed to pride? For it was made comely and for the contemplation of heavenly things, but because of its transgression it was smitten with leprosy. But Naaman, descending into Judaea and returning again into Syria at the command of the Prophet Elijah left his leprosy in the River Jordan and renewed the skin of his body. And will not our nature too, when it becomes aware of its slothfulness and the foulness of its vices, descend into the confession of its wretchedness, and returning again into itself be purged? And who will purge it? Elijah means the Saviour, or salvation of God. Is not our Elijah Our Lord Jesus Christ the Word of God, the Saviour and Salvation of God? For He shall be the Salvation of our nature in its return into Syria, that is to say, when He shall command us to return to our former nature, namely, the contemplation of the intelligible powers. And where shall He purge us? In Jordan, a word which means “The Descent of the Lord,” or “The Descent of Judgment,” or “Power,” 873A 873B

- 873C or "The Furthest Land," or "Their Ascent." And when do we  
 The return of hope and believe that the salvation and Return of our nature into  
 human the Syria of heavenly contemplation will occur? Is it not when the  
 nature to the Lord shall descend in His glory, when He shall descend to judge the  
 intellect quick and the dead, and shall show forth His power to the furthest  
 lands, that is, at the end of the world, when heaven and earth shall  
 pass away in their ascent, that is to say, in the raising up of the  
 Saints into eternal bliss, in fact, in the general resurrection? For the  
 general resurrection is the ascent of all from death into life, from the  
 animal and corruptible body into the spiritual and incorruptible.  
 Moreover, all the leprosy and corruption of human nature will be  
 transferred to Gehazi and be heaped upon him. Gehazi means "He  
 who beholds a valley," or "separation from vision," and is intended  
 to represent the Devil, who, being the wicked servant of our  
 873D Saviour, without Whose command and permission he may not  
 perform the operations of his malice, is continually gazing out into  
 the valley of destruction and eternal death, and is cut off from the  
 contemplation of truth in penalty for his pride. Therefore our  
 leprosy, which had marred the Divine Image by the hue of the  
 Devil's envy shall be returned to him again, overcome with grief at  
 our salvation and restoration, and the pains of it will be heaped  
 upon him.

- 874A What shall I say of the ten lepers? Are they not too types again  
 of our nature, which has been redeemed by the Redeemer, and  
 which is being redeemed day by day in the individuals, and which  
 will be redeemed and set free universally at the end of the world?  
 For it is not unusual for human nature to be represented by the  
 Decad, thus: without doubt human nature consists of soul and  
 body; now the body exhibits a fivefold nature, namely the four  
 material elements and the form which contains and forms them; but  
 soul also shows a five-fold nature, for it consists of Mind and  
 Reason and the Two-Fold Sense (interior and exterior), and the  
 Vital Motion by which it administers the body. Here you have, I  
 874B think, the Decad of man which will be released, as though from  
 leprosy, by the Grace of his Creator and Redeemer from all the  
 misery that has been added to him, and will be reduced to the  
 Monad, so that not as a Decad but as Mind alone he may remain as  
 One in the pure contemplation of the One Truth. This is the  
 significance, I believe, of the one leper who alone returned to the  
 Lord to offer glory to God for his healing, coming back as it were  
 from the far off country of dissimilarity to abide with his Liberator



and Healer. But the other nine were not to be found. For the whole of human nature will be resolved into the single Mind so that nothing shall remain therein save that Mind alone by which he shall contemplate his Creator.

But before speaking of the purgation of human nature and its Unification with itself and its Creator, in Whose Image it was made, I think it would be appropriate to say something about the Return itself. For unless something is first said about the depth to which it fell and from which its Return begins, and by what steps it ascends and to what it tends, and where it will end, it will be difficult to make our argument convincing. 7 874C

A. I think you are quite right. For who could give a satisfactory demonstration of the Return unless he had first shown by sound logical reasoning whither our nature fell, and whither and by what means it shall return?

N. Among the faithful there can be no doubt as to whence it fell and where it arrived, for the Psalmist says: "Man when he was held in honour abandoned the intelligible principle, and is numbered among the foolish beasts, and is made like unto them." He relinquished, then, the honour of the Divine Image and of his equality with the Heavenly Powers, and fell into the likeness of the irrational animals. His nature, which was in itself naturally fitted for seeking and loving heavenly things, is oppressed with earthly lusts and carnal desires; that which was fashioned to delight in reason is tossed about by irrational emotion: for there is no bestial emotion which is not found in man once he has sinned: and sure reason teaches us that what is praiseworthy in beasts is reprehensible in man. 874D

Why is this? Because in the beast irrational emotion subsists in accordance with its nature, but in man it is contrary to his nature. Now whatsoever is implanted according to nature is good; but whatsoever is added contrary to nature, however good it may be in the bestial substance in man is improper and alien: and these irrational emotions of human nature derive from no other source than the substantial influence of the beasts to which by sin that nature has become assimilated. This is shown by the same Gregory of Nyssa in the Eighteenth Chapter *On the Image*: 875A

"I think it is from this source, namely, from likeness to the irrational animals, that there appear in human nature the particular passions also, like a river bubbling up from a spring. This is shown

by the fact that our own passions are related and equally manifest in us and the beasts. For it is not right to suppose that a passionate disposition could have its source in the human nature which was formed in the Divine Image. For man's likeness to God does not  
 875B consist in his rage, nor was it from lust that that transcendent image was created. Likewise, fear, and ferocity, and desire for the greater and hatred for the less and all such emotions are far removed from the stamp of the Divine beauty. Therefore it must be that human nature draws them to itself from its irrational part. For the forces upon which the irrational life depends for its preservation, when transferred to the human life, become the passions."

It was, then, as no wise man doubts, into these irrational emotions which belong naturally to the bestial life, but are found in human life as passions, that man fell, and from these again that he suffered a further decline into bodily death and dissolution. Nor could there have been so great a fall, nor deeper pit. For there is in nature nothing lower than that which is bereft of life, reason and  
 875C sense : nothing lower than the corruptible body — for no nature is permitted to return into nothing. It is from this lowest depth of his Fall that the Return begins.

This lowest depth of the Fall is the dissolution of the body. Therefore the dissolution of the body is the starting point of the Return of nature. In the death of the flesh, therefore, although considered the penalty for sin, is conferred upon human nature not so much a vengeance as a boon : so that the dissolution of the flesh, which we call death, should more reasonably be called the death of death than the death of the flesh. For if the sages are right in giving the name of death to this mortal life which is spent in the corruptible flesh, why should the end of that life be called death, when it does not so much bring death to the dying as the liberation from death? So the Blessed Maximus in the Twenty Eighth Chapter of the *Ambigua* writes :

875D "It is wrong, I think, to call the end of this present life death : rather it is a separation from death, a release from corruption, a liberation from slavery, a rest from turmoil, an end to warfare, a way out of confusion, a return from darkness, an easement from sorrows, a silence from ignoble pomp, and leisure from instability ;  
 876A it draws a veil over baseness, and affords a refuge from the passions ; it is the wiping away of sins, and in short the end of all evils."

The end of this present life, then, is the beginning of the next ; and the death of the flesh is the token of the restoration of our nature, and the Return to our pristine integrity.

The first step in the Return of our human nature is taken when 8  
the body suffers dissolution and turns back into the four elements of the sensible world from which it was composed.

The second is fulfilled at the Resurrection when each shall take 8  
his own body out of the common fund of the four elements. Here arises the question of the properties and differences after the resurrection

The third when body is changed into soul.

The fourth when soul, and in fact the whole human nature, shall revert to its Primordial Causes, which ever and immutably abide in God. 876B

The fifth when that spirit with its Causes is absorbed into God as air is absorbed in light. For when there is nothing but God alone, 876B  
God will be all things in all things.

By this I am not trying to prove that the substance of physical nature will perish, but that by these aforesaid states it will change into something better. For how should that perish which is clearly seen to turn into something better ? So the change of human nature into God is not to be thought of as a perishing of the substance but as a miraculous and ineffable Return into that former condition which it had lost by its transgression. And if every subject which has unobscured intelligible knowledge becomes one with the object of the intelligible knowledge, why should not our nature when it contemplates God face to face become, in those who are worthy and as far as the capacity of our nature for contemplation allows, by its ascent into the cloud of contemplation become One with Him and 876C  
within Him ?

And I do not wish here to dispute the opinion of those who say that no body can be changed into a life-giving principle, nor any life-giving principle changed into a body, especially as this appears to be the teaching of the Holy Father Augustine ; but I am simply taking as my guides through this discourse on the Return of Nature Gregory the Theologian and his commentator Maximus, as well as St. Ambrose in his Exposition of the Gospel according to St. Luke.

Neither do I wish to compel anyone to believe what is to him incredible. Of these stages of the Return of which I have been speaking some are universally accepted by traditional theology, while others are the subject of the widest disagreement. Thus, there

is no dispute about the return of the body into the elements from which it came nor of its temporal resurrection into itself: but  
 876D concerning the passing or transmutation of body into soul, or of soul into the Causes, or of all into God, opinions differ greatly, and almost every possible teaching has its supporters. Many, accepting only the dissolution of the body into its elements and its return to its proper condition at the moment of the Resurrection, deny any further ascent, bringing their teaching to an end with a discussion of  
 877A the nature of the post-resurrection body. As to the transfusion of bodies into souls, of souls into Causes, and of Causes into God, some deny it altogether, while others express doubt, and are so cautious that they even hesitate to allow that the Humanity of Christ could have been converted into Divinity. And since their authority is too important to be ignored, we ought to say a few words about their opinion on the matter.

Here arises  
 the question  
 of the  
 deification of  
 Christ's  
 humanity

The Blessed Aurelius Augustine in the Tenth Book of the *Hexameron* writes as follows :

“First, let us be quite sure of this, that neither can the nature of the soul be changed into bodily nature so that that which was once soul now becomes body, nor into the nature of the irrational soul so that that which was once the soul of man now becomes the soul of a beast, nor again into the nature of God so that that which was once soul now becomes God ; nor on the other hand can the body or the irrational soul or the substance of God be changed so as to become a human soul.”

Note that he here denies either that the human soul, or rational nature, can be changed into God, or that the body can be changed  
 877B into soul. Boethius also, in the Second Book *On the Trinity*, declares :

“The human soul is not transmuted into the Divinity from which it derives. But if neither the body nor the soul could be changed into Divinity, then certainly humanity could not be transmuted into Deity ; still less is it possible to believe that body and soul can be changed into one another, for neither can the incorporeal become corporeal nor the corporeal incorporeal, since there is no common substance upon which the accidents of the one could be changed into the accidents of the other.”

It is not possible to interpret the words of these authorities in any other way than that no corporeal nature can be changed into an  
 877C incorporeal. Yet, far from raising any objection to their opinion, we

gladly accept it : but we are fully aware that the Greek theologians thought otherwise ; and although we have had frequent occasion to cite them in the foregoing discourse concerning the Return of Nature, I consider it necessary to have recourse to them again. The Blessed Gregory the Theologian in his Funeral Oration for his brother Caesarius speaks of the Resurrection as follows : “And a little later, the soul will receive that which was born with her, namely, the fleshly body, and therewith contemplates the things which are Yonder, that is, in the future life. And God, who put it together and took it apart, through the medium of a certain material which we believe to be clay, namely, the flesh, shall after a manner known to Himself make it Yonder a fellow-heir of glory. And as the body, which was born with the soul, shares her labours, so it shall be wholly absorbed into her from its mortal and passing life and partake of her joys and, liberated from this mortal and transitory life, shall be with her one soul, one mind and one God.” 877D

Maximus explains this passage as follows :

“As the flesh is through sin absorbed in corruption, and the soul is made corporeal through the acts of the flesh, and the soul’s knowledge of God is turned into such ignorance that she no longer knows if God exists : so at the moment of the Resurrection, in accordance with a happy future conversion, through Grace of the Incarnate God in the Holy Spirit, the flesh will be absorbed by the soul in spirit, and the soul in God, Who is truly the Life, and the whole soul shall manifestly possess Him as the most unique Whole of all things. And to speak plainly, that divine Grace of Resurrection shall through converting us from present things about which we are now occupied shall in the future show us all the things that are ours, so that, just as here death has been given the strength to swallow us up through sin, so Yonder it is justly enfeebled and deposed through Grace.” 878A

See how clearly and openly these theologians express their unhesitating conviction of the Return of the body into the soul. And lest any should think that we can find no Latin author who supports this view of the unification of nature, that is to say, of the Return of the lower orders into the higher, I shall quote here the opinion of the Blessed Ambrose which is to be found in that place of his Commentary on Luke where the Gospel speaks of the woman who hides three portions of yeast that they may ferment into one : 878B

“The Apostle teaches us that we should walk not in flesh but in the spirit, so that sanctified through the vessel of regeneration,

and putting off the old man with his lusts and clothing ourselves with the new man who is created after the Image of Christ, we may go forth not in the old way of the letter but in the new way of the spirit, by which we may obtain at the moment of the Resurrection the incorruptible communion of body and soul and spirit.”

And a little later :

878C “Thus, if in this life the three ingredients of body, soul, and spirit endure in one and the same leaven, that is, in the union of the Church, until they are fused into one so that there is no difference between them and we no longer seem to be composed of three different ingredients, so in the future life those who love Christ will possess an incorruptible unity and we shall no longer be composite. For we who are now composite shall be one, and shall be transformed into a single substance. For in the Resurrection there shall not be one part inferior to another, as in this life our weak and corruptible flesh (is inferior), rendered by the condition of corporeal nature susceptible to wounds and injuries, and weighed down by material bulk from rising above the earth and walking on high ; but in the resurrection we shall be formed into the beauty of a simple creature : then that shall be fulfilled which was spoken by John, “Most beloved, now are we sons of God and it is not yet revealed what we shall be ; but we know that when it shall be revealed, we shall be like unto Him.” For since the nature of God, Who is a  
878D Spirit, is simple, so shall we also be when we are formed into the same Image ; for as is the Heavenly One so shall be the heavenly ones. So as we have borne the image of that earthly body, let us also bear the Image of this heavenly which it behoves our Mind to put on.”

879A But we should not understand Ambrose, that most admirable  
The Doctor, to mean that there will be a confusion or transmutation of  
substance of substances, but rather a certain ineffable and incomprehensible  
the body is becoming one of our substances which is the clear purport of his  
incorporeal teaching. For nothing exists in human nature which is not spiritual  
and intelligible, for even the substance of the body is intelligible. And it is not incredible, nor repugnant to reason, that intelligible substances should become together so as to be one, and yet each not cease to retain its own subsistence and property — though in such a way that the lower are contained within the higher. For it conflicts with sound reason that the higher should be contained within the lower, or be attracted to it or consumed by it. But it is of the nature of the inferior to be attracted to the superior, and to be absorbed by

it — not in such a manner as to cease to exist, but rather so as to be preserved in it, and subsist in it, and be one with it. For air does not lose its substance when it is wholly converted into the light of the sun, even though nothing appears in it that is not light : but the light is one thing, the air another. It is only because the light prevails over the air that the light alone appears to exist. Iron, or any other metal, when melted in the fire, is seen to be converted into fire, so that it appears to be pure fire: and yet the substance of the metal is preserved. It is in the same manner, I think, that the substance of the body will pass into the soul, not so that that which it is shall perish, but so that it shall be preserved in the better essence: and we should believe the same about the soul herself when she passes into mind: she is preserved therein in a more beautiful aspect, and one more like unto God. And I would not say otherwise of the transference, not yet of all substances but of rational substances, into God, in Whom all things shall find their end, and shall be one. 879B

Now, for all that has been said concerning the unification of human nature without the destruction of the property of individual substances support can be found in the teaching of Maximus. For commenting on the Sermon on Hail by the great Gregory of Nyssa at the place where he writes, “And the ineffable Light shall receive us, and the contemplation of the Royal and Holy Trinity Which illuminates us more plainly and more purely, and is wholly mingled with the whole of our mind, and which alone I hold to be the Kingdom of Heaven,” Maximus adds: 879C

“In every rational creature, whether angel or man, those who have not corrupted through negligence any of the divine reasons, naturally bestowed on them by the Creator, in its motion towards its end, but have rather saved themselves through temperance, knowing that they are and ever shall be unchangeably as it were organs of the Divine Nature, who are wholly inspired by the Whole of Deity, just as if their bodies were constituted like their souls, these, made for a transcendent Lord, He turns to His Will and fills with their proper glory and blessedness, and to them He gives through nature and through Grace an eternal and ineffable life — altogether free from any knowledge of the constituent character of this present and characteristically corrupt life — which life, that is eternal life, is made not by air that breathes nor channels of blood which flows from the liver, but by the total participation of Himself totally by them, Who was joined to a body as is a soul and embraced a body through the medium of mind as He Himself knows — so that the 879D

soul may put on immutability, the body immortality, and the whole man deity through the Grace of the Incarnate and God-making God, the whole man yet remaining soul and body according to his nature, and the whole man made in soul and body God through Grace and through the divine Ray of blessed glory which radiates his whole being, than which no brighter nor more exalted light can be comprehended. For what is more to be loved than *ἔωσις* or Deification, conferred upon the worthy? For through Theosis God, united to those whom He has made gods, has wholly established through Goodness His Allness.”

See what he says: the whole man remains in soul and body according to his nature, and yet he is made through Grace in soul and body wholly a god. The property of each nature (soul and body) will be preserved; but they will form a unity: the properties of the natures will not destroy the unification, the unification will not destroy the properties of the natures.

880B A. Although what you say seems consistent with reason, to less skilled philosophers it will seem like the self-contradictory ravings of a madman. For you quote the great Gregory of Nyssa as saying “that the soul shall absorb the whole of her body into herself, and shall be with it one, a soul, a mind, and a God,” an opinion supported by Maximus where he says: “Certainly at the moment of the Resurrection, in accordance with a happy future conversion, through Grace of the Incarnate God in the Holy Spirit, the flesh will be absorbed by the soul in spirit, and the soul in God,” and then you add the opinion of the Blessed Ambrose on the unification or Return to the One of human nature, so as not to give the appearance that you were following the authority of the Greek writers only without corroboration from the Latins, even of those concerned with philosophy. His teaching is that human nature consists of three entities, body, soul, and mind, like three brands of flour, I will not say mixed together, but united as it were into a single leaven at the moment of the Resurrection by the bond of charity so as to produce not a composite nature but an utter simplicity and indivisible unity. For, he says, “It shall not be restored to the Image of God unless as pure spirit, free from all composition.”

880D But then, after giving the opinions of these Fathers concerning the most simple unification not only of human nature in itself but of human nature in God, you introduce this saying of Maximus: “The whole man remains in his nature as body and soul, and yet the whole is in body and soul made God through Grace.” What are we



to understand from these words but that the bodily nature will remain for ever as it is, and will by no means pass either into soul or into mind or into God, in spite of the fact that the blessed and incorruptible glory of the Resurrection is to consist in its unification with soul and mind and God? In like manner he understood, I suppose, that the nature of the soul and the nature of mind shall not pass away but each remain in its proper substance. And there is no small difference between soul and mind, for the latter is concerned solely with divine matters, whereas the former is concerned with creatures. But if this is so, how are these opinions to be reconciled? 881A

N. Why these things should perplex you I do not know. I have done my best to persuade you that the unification of intelligible natures can be achieved without accumulation or composition, and without endangering the permanence of individual properties. For, as I have many times stated in the previous books, there abide in every substance whether embodied or disembodied (if there can be any substance save God which has not a body of some kind, either intelligible or sensible) three things that can neither change nor be removed, essence, potency, and natural act. Are not these three one, one not by composition, but an utterly simple one and an inseparable unity? None of these can exist without the others because all belong to one and the same substance: and yet, when we think of them, we are aware of certain differences between them. For to be is not the same as to possess the potency to act, nor the act itself. It is one thing for a tree to be, another for it to have the potency of growth, still another thing to grow. It is one thing for a man to be, another thing to have the potency of intellection, another thing to grasp with the intellect that over which he has the potency of intellection. And there is no doubt that these three are present to every creature, whether visible or invisible. 9  
The unification of intelligible natures, their properties and differences persisting 881B

Here is another example of the unification of natures, free from confusion, mixture or composition. Is it not a fact that in one species there are many individuals, and in one genus many species, and in the one essence many genera, but in such a way that, as true reason teaches us, in the single οὐσία each genus preserves its proper principles distinguished from those of another, not confused nor mixed nor compounded together, but unified so as to form, as it were, a one which is both multiple and simple? And the same is true of the species in the genus, and the most special individuals in the species. For each one of these severally possesses both its own property and unification (with the rest), without any composition. 10  
881C

Another example, taken from numbers abstracted from matter. Is it not a fact that all numbers, whether finite or infinite, that is, whether they can be comprehended in the consideration and specification of reason or whether they transcend the contemplation and thought of the human mind while still in this life, subsist in the

881D Monad? And yet there is in the Monad no composition of numbers, nor confusion nor mixture: nevertheless each preserves therein its potency and act its own individual principles. For who could fairly argue that two and three are so compounded in the Monad that the number two which is in the Monad is twice one, or the number three is three times one? For if that were the case, it would not be a

882A Monad but an accumulation of many divers parts and a mass of disunited members. But the Monad is rather the single source of all numbers in a marvellous oneness: and in it two and three are one, while preserving their proper principles, and by it they are brought into harmony, dwelling therein without any corporeal mass or phantasy or phantasm of discursive reason, or the combination of phantasy and phantasm, subsisting in the simplicity of the intelligible intellect, whence they issue forth into corporeal or incorporeal objects by act and operation either of nature, i.e., by a natural or artificial action, or of arithmetic. And it is exactly the same case with all the numbers which proceed from the Monad and return to it again.

And consider the point, from which all lines proceed, and to which they all return. In the point they are one, nor is that one a

882B composite, but unification from various principles.

Similar examples occur among the sensibles. You will not deny, I think, that the rays of the eyes and that the radiations from the celestial bodies and other sources of light are sensible and corporeal?

A. Who would deny it? For if the light of the luminaries is corporeal, why not also that of the eyes? Were they not so they could hardly occupy place or have spatial extension.

N. And whether the light of eyes and luminaries is corporeal or not, nobody would deny that it is sensible.

A. No one. But why do you hesitate there, as though doubtful whether light is or is not a body? I should like to have your definite opinion on that.

11  
882C N. The nature of light is not now under discussion: but since you ask me I will say briefly what I think about it. A rational enquiry into the nature of the physical Universe discovers therein

three principles: for everything that exists is either body, or bodiless, or something between the two which is called "corporal." It is so called because, though itself neither corporeal nor incorporeal, it is perceived in association with bodies. Now a body is that which is extended in length, breadth and depth, and may either be a physical object or a geometrical figure: the bodiless is without spatial extension, of which life, when isolated from matter, is an example. The corporal, however, is such a thing as colour, shape, and so on, which are not themselves bodies but the attributes of bodies: and are not incorporeal since they are always found in association with bodies. Now light is colour, and its function is to reveal the shape of visible things: I see no reason, therefore, why we should not say of it that it is neither a body nor bodiless, but that intermediary which is called corporal and is sensible. 882D

A. Resume the discussion. There is no need to linger further over this matter, for I shall have no difficulty in accepting that the light of the eyes or of the luminaries is colour, and consequently neither corporeal nor incorporeal. But I am still a little uncertain whether, for instance, the ray of sunlight or the ray from the eye of an animal is a body or corporal, nothing more, that is, than the colour which is perceived in association with bodies. Therefore I shall ask you to define the word "ray."

N. My opinion is that a ray is a fiery substance of maximal subtlety, simple, pure, swift, mobile, brimming with light, from which proceeds a brightness which illuminates and reveals the places and bodies into which it penetrates. 883A

A. This definition carries conviction. But what follows from it?

N. From this definition you may understand how it is possible that the vision of a countless number of men and other animals that are gifted with sight can at one and the same time be directed upon a single visible object. For instance, a little golden ball placed upon the topmost pinnacle of a tower is simultaneously visible to all that stand about it in any direction, and each one of the beholders fixes upon it the rays of his sight, and no one says to another, Remove your sight so that I may see what you are looking at: for all may see at once. If then so many rays may flow together into one, without any confusion or mixture or composition between them, for each one of the observers retains his own proper sight, so that all are by a wonderful unification directed upon one and the same object: why 12

The  
unification  
883B  
and  
separation of  
spiritual  
bodies

should not all men be restored into some mystical unity, although each retains unimpaired the properties of his body, his soul and his Mind?

Here is another example taken from the sensibles, which Dionysius the Areopagite also employs in speaking of these matters. Suppose a number of lamps burning simultaneously in a church, and radiating their light from different positions. The light which they give is single, is it not, so that no bodily sense can distinguish the light of one lamp from that of another? And yet it is most certain that the lights of the many lamps are by no means confused, though formed into one light. For if someone were to remove one of the lamps from the building in which they are burning, and carry it, still alight, into another place, it will leave behind it no trace of its own light in the brightness of the other lamps, nor take any of theirs with it. And the same would be true of any of the other lamps, no one of which, if removed, would take with it the light belonging to another, nor leave behind any of its own.

13 Can we not apply the same principles to the human voice and the sounds of musical instruments: For every sound, whether of the human voice, or of the pipe, or of the lyre, retains severally its own quality while many of them in unity produce with suitable agreement a single harmony. Here also the argument from acoustics makes it clear that the sounds themselves are not confounded, although they are unified. For if any one of those sounds were to be muted, it alone will be silent, and none of the other sounds will supply the melody that came from the one that is now silent. From this it is clear that when it sounded with the others, it retained the property of its own quality. For if it had been confused with the rest, it could not have withdrawn the whole of it when it fell silent. For that which is confused or mingled cannot easily recover its own property.

From these and similar examples taken from the intelligibles and the sensibles you may easily see how there can be a unification of human nature without sacrifice of the properties of individual substances. But since our discourse is about the Return, we must now enquire what it is of the body that will return into soul so as to become with her, as Gregory the Theologian says, "one soul, one mind, one God," or, as the Blessed Ambrose puts it, "that it may be fermented into an incomposite unity:" for the substance of the body is to remain immutably without transformation. The same St. Gregory answers this question in a few words: "by being absorbed from its mortal and fleeting life." By this he means:

What it is of  
the body that  
will return to  
soul

“When whatsoever in the body is mortal and fleeting has been absorbed from life.” The Apostle teaches without equivocation the same thing when he says: “It is sown an animal body, it will rise a spiritual body,” and again, “When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality.” Therefore, the earthly, mortal and transitory mass, which is made up and composed of the different qualities of the sensible elements, under the form which is subject to the corporeal senses (because, as we have shown in the preceding books, it was something added as the punishment of sin to the natural and substantial body) shall be done away and changed into something better, into spirit and stable substance, which knows neither transience nor death; and it is this which will return on the day of resurrection. For we hold the very wholesome and orthodox belief of those godly men Gregory the Theologian and Maximus, and are imbued with the doctrine which they support by inconfutable arguments, that the Creator of human nature created the whole of it at once, and not the soul before the body nor the body before the soul. Therefore we not unreasonably maintain that when we were first created, body as well as soul subsisted without the capacity for corruption and death. For it would be contrary to reason to suppose that He Who created our whole nature together made one part of it (the soul) immortal and incorruptible, and the other part (the body) mortal and corruptible. Therefore we have the right, I think, to suppose that the whole of human nature, soul and body, was at first created immortal and incorruptible.

884B

884C

The soul is  
not before  
the body nor  
the body  
before the  
soul

The wise aver that the angels were also created in this condition, not doubting that they were established as immaterial spirits and spiritual bodies free from all corruption. But they say that to men and the disobedient angels there were added as punishment for sin corruptible bodies of earth and air; earthly bodies for men, and aerial bodies for the angels. But that which was added to us because it was taken upon Himself by our Redeemer, Who emptied Himself and received the form of a servant, shall be changed into spirit and into that same substance which God created in the beginning; “when death is swallowed up in victory,” and the whole man, the outer as well as the inner, the sensible as well as the intelligible, will be made one by Unification.

884D

885A

But if anyone finds it impossible to believe that the earthly body can be transformed into spirit, let him observe how the qualities of sensible objects change into one another while the

substances of which they are the qualities remain unaltered. Let him observe how the quality of water is transformed into the quality of fire ; how the clouds concentrated out of the air are resolved again into air so refined that no trace of their solidity remains ; how the air likewise, as we have often remarked, is consumed by the light of the sun ; how smoke is changed into flame. Finally, let him consider the most telling argument of all : if the qualities of corporeal objects are themselves incorporeal, a fact which no opponent could reasonably deny, and if all earthly bodies are the results of concentrations of these same qualities, it is all the less strange or incredible that that which is composed out of incorporeal qualities can return to the condition of an incorporeal object.

885B A. To anyone who has a clear conception of the substances of objects and their qualities, of their transformations and compositions, and also of their unifications, their descents from the Primordial Causes and their Return to them again, it will, I am sure, appear neither strange nor incredible. Certainly to myself, who am without bias towards any particular opinion or inclination to attack any, even if it differs from yours, what you say seems to be well reasoned. For I do not need further evidence to be persuaded that the unification of substances does not involve a disruption (of the nature of the substance) or transformation or confusion or mixture or composition ; and that at the same time the Return and resolution of the qualities from which all these sensible bodies are compounded is into those very substances a part from which they could not subsist. For no quality or quantity or accident of any kind can subsist by itself. Therefore I do not think it would be incautious to say that this Return of which we are now speaking will not be a Return of substances, for these remain immutably and indissolubly what they always were, but of the qualities and the quantities and other accidents, which of themselves are unstable and transient, subject to the conditions of space and time, susceptible to birth and decay. And if that is the case, as true reason persuades us that it is, there arises a question which should not be overlooked but on the contrary be examined with diligent care.

N. Tell me, I pray, what is this question which requires us to exercise our wit in such close enquiry?

14  
885D A. The question whether the substance of created things, and their essences, and their "reasons" proceed and descend from the Primordial Causes through generation in space and time, and the

acquisition of a variety of accidents ; and then, when time runs out, that is, when this sensible world comes to an end, they return once again to those Causes from which they sprang: or if they remain immutably in their Causes beyond all birth and decay, all space and time, and in short all accidents whatsoever, so that it is only those additional but naturally innate *συμβάματα*, or accidents, appropriately termed passions by the learned, which proceed from the Causes and by putting on matter produce this visible world, and these only which, sharing in the eventual dissolution of this world, return to their proper substances to abide there and terminate their mutability therein, being there free from every vacillation of birth and passing away and from the quantitative changes which are conditioned by spatiotemporal relations, and united with their spiritual substances by that mystical unification whereby they become with them an eternal, indivisible, immutable One. 886A

The world is not made of causes or substances that remain unchanging

N. This is a very deep enquiry, and one that has not been brought into the open before in the debating chamber of the mind. But because you have posed it with the utmost discretion and in an orderly fashion, we can dispose of it without too much trouble: in fact, you have almost answered it yourself.

I imagine that you do not doubt that the Universal Causes 886B which are created and substantiated in Wisdom reside there eternally and immutably, never withdrawing therefrom to any other place, and never sustaining any fall into a condition that is lower than It. For if in any way they fell short of It they would no longer be subsisting in themselves.

A. No, I have no doubt whatever concerning the immutable permanence of all the Causes in that Divine Wisdom Which is the Word of God the Father, in Which and through Which they were created and do subsist. For both Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers uncompromisingly proclaim this doctrine.

N. What is your opinion about substances, which were created and do subsist in these Causes? Do you not think, indeed, is it not an article of our faith, that these too, the substances, ever and immutably abide in their Causes, and never in any manner fall away therefrom into any other place ; but that, just as the Primordial Causes do not separate themselves from Wisdom, so neither do the substances separate themselves from the Causes, but subsist in them for ever? And as the Causes cannot exist apart from the substances, so the substances cannot flow forth from the Causes. 886C

A. Nothing is more likely, nothing more comprehensible, nothing closer to the truth or worthier to be believed and firmly held.

The world is made of the qualities of causal substances only and not of other matter  
886D

N. It must then be from the qualities of these substances (I use the term in the sense to which the philosophers have familiarised us, to denote all things which happen as accidents to the substances, and are mutable and dependent upon those substances) that this world is shaped and compacted, and it must be back into them again that it will be resolved. For to everything which begins to have its being in time there must be an end of being. But I do not believe that these qualities of substances wholly abandon the substances upon which they depend so as entirely to immerse themselves in the matter of the sensible world: but in a miraculous and mysterious manner known to their Creator alone they continue to remain associated with their substances in an inseparable bond. At the same time, through intelligible intercourse with one another, they generate this world of which they are the component parts. For we have  
887A reason to believe that not only the Causes but also the substances of all bodies, whether of the general bodies or the particular, which make up the Universe exist in a realm above this visible world. And it is from these, which are incorporeal and intelligible, that the corporeal and sensible derives its origin.

15 A. Let it rest at that: for I see that no other solution of the question can be found. Nevertheless, I should still like you to show briefly how we may distinguish between the Causes and the substances if both are incorporeal and intelligible.

N. *Causes* we name the “reasons” of the first order or generality which were established instantaneously and together in the Mind of God: while *substances* are the individual and most special properties and “reasons” of individual and most special objects, properties and “reasons” which are distributed among the Causes and established in them.

A. A brief but explicit distinction. It was, then, from the Causes and substances that our world, formed by combinations of their dualities, issued forth; and it will be to them again that she will  
887B return and into them that she will be transformed when the time comes for her dissolution.

N. Yes, we should convince ourselves that nothing is closer to the truth than that. For Truth Himself has said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away.” But into what shall heaven and earth pass away? Into nothing?



A. God forbid. That cannot be admitted, if by “nothing” is meant the absence and deprivation of all things which are and which are not : in that sense no creature, whether visible or invisible, can fall into nothing.

N. To what place, then, is it that heaven and earth and all that 16  
is in them shall pass away? For that which Truth has spoken shall inevitably come to pass.

A. To no other place, I suppose, than into those principles whence they sprang : and as it was from the Causes which are the first order of generality, and from the most special substances that through the materialised qualities and with the addition of form 887C  
they proceeded; so it will be to these that they will undoubtedly return. But I should like to know what are those words of Truth which will not pass away. Do not imagine they are the sort of words which are produced by the vibrations of the air, such as Truth Himself used in His speech with men when He was present in the flesh : for these were transitory, as are the words of others.

The causes  
are the words  
of Wisdom  
which do not  
pass

N. I should say that by these words of Truth, or one might call them words of the Word, for Truth is the Word, are meant none other than these Causes and substances, for these are immutable “reasons” of things, created in the Wisdom of God, and in accordance with which all things visible and invisible were created, and into which heaven and earth shall pass away. But they 887D  
themselves shall never pass away, and we may think of them as ineffable and immutable words eternally present in the Only-begotten Word of God. It was these words, I believe, which were heard by the Apostle when he was snatched into Paradise. For what man or angel can express or know the essence, quality or number of the “reasons” of nature which before all time and before every creature the Father created in the Beginning, that is to say, in His Word?

A. Are not, then, the Causes and substances of nature constituted in the Word of God to be counted as creatures? For you said that they were before all time and before every creature. 888A

N. No, I do not consider them as creatures : for the proper definition of a creature is that which issues forth by generation at a given time into its proper species, whether this be visible or invisible. But that which was established before place and time, for the very reason that it is outside place and time is not properly to be called a creature, although by the figure of speech known as *συνεκδοχή* the

Universality of things, which is subsequent to God, is called a creature because it was established by Him.

17  
Local and  
temporal  
motion  
888B

But there is another question. Must it be that all things which move in time likewise move in place? Here we encounter a great diversity of opinion not only among Christian metaphysicians but also among pagan. Some say that these two, place and time, are outside the corporeal creature and envelop it round about, so that the creature is contained within them and bounded by them. And because that which contains is obviously greater than that which is contained, place and time are not to be counted among the parts of the Universe but extend beyond it. Moreover, since they are incorporeal they cannot, it is held, be regarded as bodies.

He speaks of  
corporeal  
places

888C

Others, on the other hand, include place and time within the created Universe: for they say that they were brought forth and created simultaneously with the other things which are contained in it, and as all these issued forth from their Causes, so in like manner did place and time: for before place and time were created their "reasons" had from the first been within the Word of God, in which all things are made. And they argue further that if place and time were prior to the world then they must be eternal, and if eternal they must be either God Himself or else the universal Primordial Causes which subsist in the Divine Wisdom. But this is absurd: for the two greatest errors to which mankind is prone are, according to St. Augustine, "to think that there is a place above heaven, or a time before the world." Therefore secular time came into being with and at the same moment as the world, and cannot be regarded as prior to it.

888D

Thus sound reason compels us to reckon place and time among the contents of the world, and consequently not only is everything which comes into the world produced in place and time (for the birth and change of everything may be measured in terms of place and time), but simultaneously with place and time, and with them goes forth from the general Causes which are before the creation of the world.

889A

Now, as to our question whether everything which moves in time must also move in place, there is again disagreement in the teachings handed down by the Catholic authorities. All start from the position that only God moves by Himself without place and time; but when they come to the movement of the spiritual creature which is free of all material mass, they begin to diverge in various ways. Some affirm that the spiritual creature moves in time but not

in place, whereas (as they not unreasonably maintain) the corporeal creature moves both in time and place. This opinion commands widespread support including that of St. Augustine, who says of God: "He moves Himself without place or time; He moves the created spirit through time but not in place; He moves the body through place and time."

The motion  
of the  
spiritual  
creature

But others, who, as Maximus shows us in his *Ambigua*, follow the teaching of Gregory the Theologian, are convinced that place and time are inseparable concepts, so that every temporal thing is a local thing and conversely every local thing is a temporal thing, and a thing which could be moved in time without being moved in place or moved in place without being moved in time is not to be discovered in nature.

It is not for us to decide which of these two opinions is the more worthy of adoption: Let each exponent who is concerned with this matter decide for himself which of the two seems to him the more reasonable. But as for us, we must return to our subject.

889B

A. A cautious observation. It is best not to attempt rashly to judge between the judgments of venerable authorities: for you can hardly prefer the one without appearing to slight the other, which gives great and immediate cause for dispute.

N. No Catholic philosopher, I think, who studies the sense of Holy Scripture would say that place and time were created before the world.

18

A. Certainly I would not contradict them in their belief and understanding. For their belief is wholesome and their understanding is pure. For what but eternity itself can antedate the world. Does not the Scripture say: "All things were made in the twinkling of an eye," where the word "all" must include place and time; and also: "He Who dwelleth in eternity created all things at once."

889C

N. What then shall we say if place and time did not exist before the world, and only eternity is antecedent to it? Would it not be reasonable to deduce that correspondingly they shall not remain after the world? For if place and time are to be reckoned among the contents of the Universe, how can they remain after it has come to an end? For the whole must either abide as a whole or perish as a whole: to remain in part or to perish in part is impossible. For if a single part of the whole perish, the whole no longer exists: for by the removal of that single part it ceases to be a whole. Similarly, if a single part is preserved and the rest perish, the whole is destroyed.

When the  
world is  
ended, will  
places and  
times persist?

Therefore the whole world either wholly perishes or wholly shall  
 889D abide forever. But it shall perish : therefore it shall wholly perish ; no  
 part shall be left undestroyed after its destruction. But place and  
 time are parts of it : therefore place and time shall perish in it and  
 with it.

I speak of place here not in the sense of definition, which  
 permanently resides in the mind, but in the sense of that space in  
 which the quantity of a body is extended.

These two components of the world, place and time, are called  
 by the Greeks *ὄν ἄνευ*, that is components without which the others  
 cannot exist. I think we can safely adopt this expression as  
 applicable as long as the whole of which they are components  
 890A endures ; but once the world has passed away it has no longer any  
 significance. For when that which required to be located and  
 circumscribed is no more, how shall place continue to exist ? For if it  
 is the place of nothing it is not place : what is meant by place when  
 the placed thing is taken away ? There is no such thing as a place  
 which is not the place of something. And it is the same with time.  
 For when there is no motion to be measured by or divided into  
 temporal intervals, how can there be any time ? For time is the exact  
 and natural measure of movements and pauses. So when the  
 measurable thing passes away, the measure must perish also : in  
 what does time consist when motion ceases to be observed ? As  
 890B motion only subsists in a moved object, so time only subsists in  
 measurable motion. Therefore just as there will be no motion when  
 no part of the world is moving, so there will be no time when no  
 motion is being measured.

Now concerning the end of the world and its passing away there  
 is no uncertainty among Catholics. Reason, natural necessity and  
 the most reliable authority of Holy Writ all demonstrate that it must  
 pass away. And it is for this very reason that the greatest of the  
 natural philosophers have hesitated to admit or to teach that this  
 world came into being in time through the process of generation :  
 for they could not do so without being forced to concede that it shall  
 pass away in a temporal end. For if they allowed that the world  
 began in time, they must admit that it shall end in time. Therefore  
 some of them have attempted to prove that the whole Universe,  
 890C matter and form, is coeternal with God : others, that the unformed  
 matter only is eternal, attributing to God only the creation of its  
 form — for they say that though matter is eternal, and subsists

co-eternally with God, it has need of God to endow it with form, having no power in itself to form itself.

Now the wholesome doctrine of the Church most firmly 19  
believes and most clearly perceives that the One Omnipotent God  
Who is the Principle and Cause of all things, of the things that are  
and of the things that are not, endowed the world at the moment  
when He willed to do so, with both matter and form; and shall, at  
the moment determined by Himself, make an end of it. For He Who  
made all things in their eternal Causes before they were established  
in time is also the End of all things: for to Him shall return all things  
which from Him proceeded and in Him have their movement and  
stability. The Lord Himself, in the words which we have just quoted,  
says of the passing away of the world: "Heaven and earth shall pass 890D  
away, but My words shall not pass away." And lest anyone should  
suppose that these words can mean that the passing away of the  
world is from one place to another place, or from one time to  
another time, or from one visible form to another visible form, or  
from one quality to another quality, or from one quantity to  
another quantity, let him consider the way in which the Prophet  
addresses the Creator of the World: "The heavens are the works of  
Thy hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest." By using this  
unequivocal phrase, "They shall perish," he makes clear the meaning 891A  
of "They shall pass away."

Now if "the heavens shall pass away" what is to be thought of  
those things which are contained within their bound? If the most  
excellent part of the Universe is to perish, is it to be supposed that  
the inferior parts will remain? And if that which bounds and  
contains shall perish, shall that which is contained and bound be  
preserved? It is hardly likely that the better passes away and the  
worse survives; and the Prophet did not say: "Heaven is the work  
of Thy hands; *it* shall perish," but: "The heavens are the works of  
Thy hands; *they* shall perish;" by which we may clearly understand  
that not only the heaven of the fixed stars which circumscribes and  
surrounds the totality of sensible creation, but also the ethereal  
heaven in which the seven planets have their orbits, and the aerial 891B  
heaven which occupies the space between the earth and the moon,  
are also to perish. For the corporeal air which is nearest to the earth  
is sometimes called heaven. As in Genesis, where the birds are made  
to fly beneath the firmament of heaven — though at other times it is  
called earth, as in the Psalm: "Praise Him on earth, ye dragons." If  
then all the regions of heaven and even the most subtle bodies are to

perish, do you think that the waters and the lands will remain, whose nature is more passive than that of fire or air, and more susceptible to corruption? John the Theologian, prophesying about the end of the world, wrote in his Apocalypse: "For the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more;" and Solomon: "Everything which was is that which shall be, and there is nothing new under the sun," by which he meant: Only God, and the  
 891C universal Causes which are in Him, was before the world; and only He, and the universal Causes in Him shall be after the world. But the world itself, which is under the sun, and which took its origin from the Eternal Causes, shall into these same Causes return. It shall not be what it now is. For everything which begins to be that which once it was not, ceases to be that which it is, and already is not.

Consider the most unequivocal opinions of Holy Scripture concerning the end of the world. In saying that "heaven and earth shall pass away" God brings together the most divergent species into a single genus. In saying "The heavens are the works of Thy hands: they shall perish," the Prophet brings together the less divergent regions of ether and air. Finally John the Evangelist says: "The sea is no more." These sentences teach us that there will remain no part of the Universe which shall not be done away. This doctrine cannot be questioned.

A. What, then, are we to say when the same Solomon declares:  
 891D "Generation comes, generation goes, but the earth abides in eternity?" If it shall pass away, how does it abide, and how shall it abide in eternity?

N. By these words we are not to suppose that Solomon is referring to that part of the Universe which lies at the centre, and which is the lowest (because beneath it there is nothing), which is the habitat of the human race while it is still in its mortal condition, but that earth of which the Prophet speaks: "Who foundest the earth upon its stability: it shall not waver forever and ever" — for it is the immutable stability of all natures in their essential and substantial Causes, whose immovable foundation is the Wisdom of the Father, which shall not waver forever and ever. For Holy Scripture customarily gives the name of "earth" to the immutable stability of  
 892A natures, and especially to the permanence of human nature. Thus the Apostle says: "Mortify your members which are above the earth," by which he means: Mortify your vices, which are above the permanence of your nature, so that when they are weeded out the

seeds of your virtues may grow. This is the Land of Promise into which the multitude of the faithful shall return when they have been set free from Egypt, that is, from toil or darkness (for Egypt has both these meanings), and have passed through the sea of baptism, and have been disciplined in the wilderness of this present life. This is the land which the sons of the spiritual Israel shall possess when they see God face to face. This is the land which was revealed in a figure to the Patriarch Abraham, and given him for an eternal possession. But if these texts taken from the Divine Scriptures are not sufficient evidence of the impermanence of this earthly mass in which we now live the lives of the beasts of the field, other scriptural passages must be added. Peter the chief head of the Apostles writes in his Second Epistle: "Now the heavens which now are, and the earth, are laid up by the same word, reserved for the fire in the day of the judgment and the destruction of wicked men;" and John in the Apocalypse: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are done away, and the sea is no more." Now the followers of Gregory Nazianzen the Theologian, in applying "the new heaven and the new earth," to, as Peter says, "the new heavens and the new earth," to the restoration of human nature to its former state, and to its return to its ancient dignity, are not, I think, very far from the truth.

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892C

A. We have now been talking long enough about the end of the world, or rather, about its Return into the eternal Causes from which it issued forth. But I should like to have a clearer idea about the consummation of this process.

N. I am surprised that you should ask this, when you yourself just now had no hesitation in defining the end of the world as the Eternal Causes which subsist always without change in the Word of God. And we had already agreed before that of all things that are in motion or at rest, or in mobile rest or stable motion, if I may use such an expression, the beginning does not differ from the end but is one and the same. So it follows that if the principles of the world are the Causes out of which it originated, its ends will lie in the same Causes, and to these it must return. When it has completed its course it will not be brought to nothing but led back to its Causes, and there it will be preserved and rest for all eternity. But if the Word of the Father, in whom all things are made and have their being, is the Cause of all causes both visible and invisible, will not the final end of the world be this Cause of Causes? Shall they not end in Him, when all movement shall find rest in that towards which

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it moves, and which is none other than the Word of God, an End beyond which the appetite of no creature can reach further? For there is no further goal to be sought or longed for: the common end of the whole creation is the Word of God. Thus both the beginning and the end of the world are in the Word of God, indeed, to speak more plainly, they are the Word Itself, for It is the manifold end without end and beginning without beginning, being ἀναρχος, save for the Father.

Hence we may make a brief summary of the argument which it has required so much exposition to prove, and define the position thus: All things are from Him and to Him all things return: for He is the Beginning and the End. And this is most clearly the conclusion reached by the Apostle when he says: "Seeing that from Him and through Him and in Him are all things."

893B It is also very clearly manifest in the five-fold division of all created nature, which, as Maximus in the thirty-seventh Chapter of his *Ambigua* says, "is handed down by the authority of the Apostles." For here too we find the Return and the Unification of all things through the same divisions and mutations of the whole creature into the One, and finally into God Himself.

The fivefold separation and unification of all natures

The first division of all natures is that which divides what is created from what is not created, which is God. The second divides created nature into sensible and intelligible.

The third divides the sensible into heaven and earth. The fourth distinguishes Paradise from the habitable globe. The fifth and final division segregates mankind into male and female.

893C In man every creature is established, both visible and invisible. Therefore he is called the workshop of all, seeing that in him all things which came after God are contained. Hence he is also customarily called the Intermediary, for since he consists of soul and body he comprehends within himself and gathers into one two ultimate extremes of the spiritual and the corporeal. That is why the sacred account of the Creation of the Universe introduces him at the end of all, signifying that in him is the consummation of the totality of created nature.

So it is from the unification of the division of man into the two sexes that the Return and unification through all the other divisions will take its start. For in the Resurrection sexual differentiation will be done away, and human nature will be made one, and there will be only man as it would have been if man had not sinned.



Next, the inhabited globe will be made one with Paradise and there will be only Paradise. Then heaven and earth will be made one, and there will be only heaven. And note here that it is always the lower nature that is transformed into the higher. The sexually differentiated mankind is transformed into man, for sexuality is inferior to humanity; and so the inhabited globe, which is inferior to Paradise, is transformed into Paradise. Earthly bodies, being inferior, will be changed into heavenly bodies. Next, there is a unification of the whole sensible creature, followed by a transformation into the intelligible, so that the universal creature becomes intelligible. Finally the universal creature shall be unified with its Creator, and shall be in Him and with Him One. And this is the end of all things visible and invisible, for all visible things shall pass into intelligibles, and all intelligibles into God Himself. But, as we have often said, this wonderful and ineffable unification does not involve the confusion of the individual essences and substances.

Now this whole process was perfected by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in Himself by rising from the dead and showing a foretaste of all things that are to come. For when He rose He was not a sexually differentiated man. For although the form in which He appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection to confirm their faith was the form of male sex in which He had been born of a virgin and had passed His life among men until His Passion (for they would not otherwise have recognised Him had He not revealed Himself in the form in which they knew Him), it is impossible for the faithful to believe or even imagine that after the Resurrection His being was limited to a single sex; “for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female,” but simply the true and whole man, that is, body, soul and mind, without the addition of any sexual feature or other comprehensible mark, for these three are in Him One, and are made in Him God without alteration or confusion of their special properties. For He is wholly God and wholly man: a single Substance, or, to use the commoner term, one Person, not subject to change in place or time, for He, both God and Man, transcends all times and all places; without form and yet the Form of all things, and the Image of His Father’s Substance; like unto none, and yet all things seek to be like Him. For the Humanity of Christ, made One with God, is contained in no place, is moved through no time, is limited by no bodily shape characteristic of sex, since it is exalted above all these things, and not only above these, but “above all virtues and above all powers,” and all the other spiritual orders, for “He sitteth upon the right hand of the Father,” a position to which

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Christ's  
resurrection  
sexless

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- no creature can attain. Therefore we should be right to oppose those who attempt to locate the Lord's post-Resurrection Body in some particular part of the world, and to show that it moved in space and time, or that it was confined within the world in that sex in which it appeared in the world. For how can a body which in the Oneness of the Divinity is above all things be one among them? And it must be remembered that He Who rose from the dead has returned to Paradise. For it is not to be believed that any interval of time
- 894D elapsed between His return from the dead and His entry into Paradise, nor that that Paradise into which He entered when He rose from the dead is localised or contained in any part of the sensible world, nor that when He manifested Himself to His disciples He was outside Paradise, but that at one and the same time He was within Paradise and manifest to His disciples. He was already in Paradise because in Him human nature was restored: but those to whom He revealed Himself were not yet in Paradise, that is
- 895A to say, were not yet in their restored nature. And when He vanished out of their sight, He did not depart from them in a local sense, but veiled Himself in the subtlety of the spiritual body which as yet was imperceptible to the fleshly eyes of the Apostles. From this we learn that the Paradise which He entered when He rose from the dead is nothing else but that very integrity of human nature which He restored in Himself, and in which the First Man, had he not sinned, would have continued in glory. That is the Paradise which is promised to the Saints. Partly, in their souls, they have entered it already; partly, in their bodies, they are still outside. So did He in Himself achieve the unification of Paradise and the inhabited globe. He was the Paradise of the inhabited globe itself. For everything which He took upon Himself from the inhabited globe, the material flesh with its accidents (except for sin) and His masculine form, He changed in Himself into a spiritual nature.
- 895B And then, not only did He exalt and bring back the humanity which He had received and refashioned in Himself to a parity with the angelic nature (as we see from His Ascension into heaven, when before the eyes of His disciples He was lifted into the air and received out of their sight by a cloud, which demonstrates both His perceptibility and His subtlety: for before His Passion He said: "Father, show forth Thy Son.") — not only that, but also exalted it above all angels and heavenly powers, and, in short, above all things that are and all things that are not. And that which He perfected in Himself particularly, He shall at the time of our Resurrection perfect generally in the whole of human nature — that is, not only

shall He convert into spirit all things which humanity acquired from this material world after its transgression, but also shall bring it into an equal share of the heavenly glory of the angels. 895C

And do not be surprised that we repeat again here matters which were fully dealt with in earlier books; for it is required by the order of discourse we must necessarily follow that the same theories and arguments be re-introduced and repeated many times, and recalled to the memory by a kind of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις. I say this because in the earlier books we have already had a considerable amount of anticipation of the doctrine of the Return of Nature in the form of extracts from the Blessed Maximus. But now this preliminary treatment must be elaborated.

Maximus treats of the unification of Creation not only in his *Ambigua* but also in the *Scholia*, where, in the forty-eighth Chapter, he gives the mystical interpretation of the Towers which Ozias built in Jerusalem: 895D

“Perhaps the scriptural account means by the angles the different unifications appointed through Christ for the various creatures. For by mystically transforming into spirit the division into male and female and by liberating human nature from those accidents which in both male and female are the effects of the passions He achieved the unification of man. Then He achieved the unification of the sensible world which comprises the sensible Paradise and the habitable globe by removing the barrier which keeps them apart. Next he unified earth and heaven, showing that the whole nature of the visible Universe was in itself a unity. Then He unified the sensibles and the intelligibles, and showed that the nature of all created things understood by a mystical reason was one. Finally, by a reason and method exceeding nature He effected the unification of the created nature with the Nature that is not created.” 896A

A. What am I to say to all this? In what way and by what analogy are we to believe that when Our Lord arose from the dead He was not defined by any sensible form, and particularly not by that which He received when He was born of the Virgin? And since He was and is the Exemplar of the general resurrection that is to come, it must necessarily follow, if He rose without any sexual characteristics, that all men generally must be without sex at the resurrection and thereafter.

N. Further discussion of this matter is superfluous, for in the previous books we have repeatedly shown with good reason supported by the opinions of the Blessed Gregory and his commentator  
896B Maximus that in the life to come after the resurrection there will be no distinguishing mark of sex whatever in human nature, that is, no distinction of form between male and female ; for human nature will have returned into that form which was made in the Image of God. The Image of God is neither male nor female ; this division in our nature came about as the result of sin.

A. So there will be neither male nor female in the future life, for the simplicity of our nature, alone surviving, shall have swallowed up into itself the double nature of sex which now is.

N. Why do you show so much hesitation over this? For speaking generally of mankind in the resurrection, the Truth says :  
"They shall not marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels in heaven." Do we not hold that the angels consist of spiritual and intelligible body? Yet we have no difficulty in thinking of them as free from any limitation of form. For we need not  
896C suppose, because the Divine Account has stories of them appearing in the likeness of men, that it is of their nature to be confined in such a shape. It is assumed for the occasion, for by no other means was it possible, or at least it would not be easy, to appear before men and speak with them. If then the angels are entirely free from limiting form, why should we be surprised that men, once they have become equal with the angels, shall be free from all sexual qualifications and all distinguishing form? They could not otherwise be equal with them.

And there is nothing in this which is an obstacle to belief. Bodies do exist which, being liquid or spiritual, are not confined to a  
896D precise form. I cannot accept that a liquid or spiritual substance of the purest nature is limited to a definite size or circumference or by any other physical factor: reason does not allow us to do so. The four simple elements of the world are not bound to particular shapes. For they are in the world everywhere, and there is no part of it where their concourse is absent. But how can that which is in the world everywhere be confined to any form? There are such things, then, as bodies without sensible form. Another example is provided by the rays of light from the eyes: are they not also corporeal and yet shapeless?

Now, if you were to say that the angels possess intelligible form I should entirely agree: and it follows that men also in the

resurrection will similarly possess intelligible forms : far from denying it I stoutly maintain it. But what and of what kind those forms are which the angels already possess and which men are destined to possess I confess I do not know at all. St. Augustine has a phrase : “Until my body pass into the disposition of my will.” But this I do know, that many eminent philosophers hold widely different views concerning man’s post-resurrection body, and it will be as well to bring them into the scheme of this volume, lest I should seem either to despise them or not to have read their books. 897A

A. The method of discourse which we are following requires that you refer to the opinions held on these matters by all the theological writers whom you have read (for I fancy you have not read them all. That would be an impossible feat for anyone). In this way the reader will be given the opportunity of choosing the opinion he prefers to follow. But at this point I should like to ask you why we say that a thing perishes when we know that it will return into its own Primordial Causes, and indeed into God Himself. It should rather be said of it that it lives forever, than that it dies and passes away. 897B

N. An easy and succinct way of replying to your question would be to refer to Dionysius the Areopagite’s exposition of the prophetic text, “Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” According to his interpretation the death of the saints means in this passage nothing less than their ascent into God through the loftiness of their contemplation whereby though still in the body they have transcended all things visible and invisible. Was not Peter himself, the head of the Apostles, dead to every creature and did he not ascend into God when, upon Our Lord asking, “Who say ye that I am?” he replied : “Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God?” And was not John the Evangelist dead to all created things when he transcended all things by the loftiness of his contemplation when he summed it all up by saying : “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” — and all the rest of that marvellous and ineffable Theologian’s contemplation ? And consider the Apostle who, when still in the bonds of the mortal body, pronounced himself to be dead and crucified : “The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” Such then is the death of the saints, who by the power of their contemplation ascend into God Himself, transcending all things even their own natures deified by the excellence of Divine Grace. 21 897C

And just as those who are filled with virtue and wisdom even  
 897D while they are still established in this world die in their mind, though  
 not with their body, so shall it be with the whole world at its  
 consummation. For it shall return into Him Who, because He  
 transcends being, is called Not-Being, not so as to be wholly deified  
 or made one with God as the heavenly powers and those human  
 intelligences who are illuminated, purged and perfected, but in such  
 a manner that, as I have frequently stated, each one of the parts of  
 which it is constituted shall return into its Cause. But the Causes of  
 all things subsist in God, as no one of the faithful will deny. For  
 898A anyone who does so is either an unbeliever or a fool. We can,  
 therefore, in a sense, say of that which is brought back to its cause  
 that it has returned to God. And lest you should suppose that it was  
 too bold of me to describe God as Not-Being, or that I have no  
 authority for doing so, hear the words of the Blessed Dionysius the  
 Areopagite in the first chapter on the *Divine Names*:

“In our exposition of the theological outlines, we said that the  
 One Unknown Super-Essential, Which is in Itself the best that is, He  
 Who is namely, the Three-fold One, ὁμόθεος and ὁμοῦγαθος, can  
 neither be uttered nor comprehended. But the angelic henads of  
 holy powers which must be regarded as contemplating or participat-  
 ing in the Good Which is more-than-unknowable and more-than-  
 light, are themselves hidden and unknown, and subsist alone in  
 those of His angels who, for reasons that transcend the knowledge  
 of the angels, are worthy thereof. Human intelligences that have  
 898B achieved unification, in so far as it is permitted them to do so, in  
 imitation of the angels become conformable to God, seeing that  
 they rest from every intelligible operation, and thus is brought about  
 the unification of deified intelligences with the Supreme Light,” that  
 is, with God. “By discarding all things that are they offer to Him the  
 most powerful praise. Thus they are verily and supernaturally  
 enlightened by the most blessed unity with God Which is the Cause  
 of all things that are, and Which because It is superessentially  
 898C exalted above all things that are is Itself Nothing.”

Notice how the theologian has no hesitation in ascribing the  
 name Nothing to the Supreme Light, or God, Which lightens every  
 intelligible and rational creature. And he gives his reason for doing  
 so: “Because It is superessentially exalted above all things that are.”

It is, then, the common end of all created things to return, by a  
 kind of dying, into the Causes which subsist in God; and it is the  
 property of the intelligible and rational substance, by the power of

contemplation, to become One with God; and, through Grace, to become God Himself.

A. I plainly perceive that the end of the world is nothing else but its return into its Causes, and is therefore a transmutation into something better than what it now is. But because the most important part of the sensible world is the body of man, not because of its size but because of the dignity of the rational soul which forms it and gives it life and rules and contains it, it is, if I am not mistaken, concerning the return of this that the method of our treatise compels us to speak.

N. You are right. That is the course which we must now 22 pursue.

A. Proceed then.

N. It is the common doctrine of the Universal Church that the 898D second stage in the Return of the human body (for the first stage consisted in the dissolution of its elements) is its resurrection.

A. It is meet and right that all believers should agree that the second stage of the body's Return is nothing other than its resurrection and re-integration from the four universal elements into which it has been dissipated. But the question is whether the resurrection of the body is the consequence of Grace or of nature, or of the combined operation of the two. For I have not found many authorities to guide me in this matter. Will the resurrection be according to nature or 899A grace or both?

N. I do not recall either having seen mention of it among the Latin authors: not, I imagine, because it has not been dealt with by some writer whom I have not yet come across (for it is not to be believed that the authors of the Roman tongue have entirely ignored so great a matter, or having taken note of it have refrained from comment); but because if any treatment of the question has been undertaken it has not come my way. Therefore it is as the result of lengthy speculation of my own that I now put forward the view that the general resurrection of the dead, of the wicked as well as of the good, could not be effected without the Grace of the Redeemer of the world: and that natural virtue is insufficient to achieve it: so that if God the Word had not been made flesh and had not made His dwelling with men and had not taken upon Him the whole of our human nature, in which He Himself suffered and arose from the dead, there would be no resurrection of the dead at all. I had been led to this opinion by what He Himself has said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." For this implies that only through His 899B

Incarnation this gift which is shared by all without exception was bestowed upon the human race, namely the resurrection from the dead, or the restoration and reintegration of the whole of human nature, which is constituted of body and soul. But if the Word of God had not taken human nature upon Him and had not risen therein from the dead, nobody at all would have received the grace of resurrection, but the bodies of men like the carcasses of the other animals would lie forever in the dust of the earth.

I found further inducement to this belief in the words of the Apostle: "God the Word is the first fruits of the dead."

899C Such, then, was my theory concerning the resurrection of the dead. But when I read the Homily on Faith by Epiphanius the Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, which is called *Ancoratus*, and the dissertation of the great Gregory the Theologian *On the Image*, I changed my opinion, setting less store by it than by the need for agreement with their teaching, and I accepted the view that the resurrection of the dead would be effected by innate virtue. I think, therefore, it would be not inappropriate to insert into our discussion the words of these doctors. Epiphanius, in speaking of the resurrection, and attempting to convince the Greeks who totally denied it, writes as follows:

899D "Now the Greeks find the resurrection wholly unacceptable, for they have no knowledge of God or of His ordinances. Nevertheless they will rise again in spite of themselves. The very creation itself affords them proof of it, providing by daily instances types of the resurrection. The day wanes, and we undergo a kind of death: but when night is past day returns again and breathes life into us, revealing to us a symbol of the resurrection. The harvest is gathered in, and this year's sheaves are cut, a clear figure of our passing hence: but the seed thereof is sown in the earth, and is fruitful; for the seeds that are planted after the harvest," that is, after the fruit has been gathered in, "shall rise again. The locust dies and is buried, but the earth conceives from that which was ejected from it and after a while brings forth that which was entrusted to it. The seeds of fruits are sown and at first die: for if they do not first die, they cannot be made alive. In our own bodies also God has wrought signs of the resurrection, for in our ten fingernails and ten toenails He furnishes evidence of our hope; and in the hair which crowns our heads He foretells our resurrection. For hair and nails, which in us seem to be inanimate bodies, are cut every day, and yet they always grow again, thus signifying our hope in the resurrection.

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Natural  
examples of  
resurrection



“It is not idle fabling to draw these examples from nature for instruction of the unbelievers. Doves, animals that do not fly fast together, die for six months and (then) after forty days they straightway come to life again. *Κύνθαροι*, i.e., dung-beetles, feeling that death is near, conceal themselves in balls of dung, and, hiding, bury the balls in earth; and then they are found by virtue of a bodily fluid to rise again from their dead bodies. Of the Phoenix of Arabia it is not necessary for me to speak — for the fame of it is known to many, both of the faithful and the unbelievers. This, however, is its case: after living for five hundred years it becomes aware that its death is near. It constructs for itself a sepulchre of aromatic branches and carries it into the city of the Egyptians which is called Heliopolis, that is, the City of the Sun, and after inflicting many wounds upon its breast with its talons it generates fire from its body wherewith it kindles the material which it has laid beneath its sepulchre, and is thus entirely consumed, both flesh and bone. But by the operation of God a cloud appears and rains upon it, and extinguishes the flames that are consuming its body, but the bird is already burnt to death. When the flame dies down the ashes of the carcass are abandoned; and after they have been inert for one day, they generate a worm, and the worm puts on plumage, and becomes a new Phoenix; and on the third day it attains its full stature, and in that form reveals itself to those who search out the place to tend it, and then returns to its own country whence it came, and thus that which was consumed with fire is made youthful again.”

Such are the words of Epiphanius. If then there is a natural power which effects these restorations in nature and renews the parts of the human body and brings irrational animals to life again, as our author shows by his examples: we should not be surprised to find that there is a vital and an innate virtue which never abandons the human body and is capable of restoring the body itself to life and to the fulness of its human nature. For the divers and particular bodies of the other animals, and of all sensible things, shall in general pass away with the world, according to that manner of passing away which has already been described. For the vital motion that is in them and which is active and mobile so long as they are held together by their forms ceases to operate when they are dissolved. And yet it by no means abandons their substance: for since all sensibles and all intelligibles are established in the plentitude of human nature, is it so unreasonable of us to suggest that the whole earth, with all its parts, shall by a kind of general resurrection rise again when the time shall come for the restoration of that nature

The vital motion does not desert the  
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substances of  
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resurrection  
of all things  
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world in man

(i.e., human nature) in which the whole of it is contained? Especially as, on rational consideration, we find that the nature of all the sensibles is itself one and the same, and has nothing to do with the dimensions of the corporeal bulk of this world but consists of a unification of incorporeal substances not made up of an accumulation or composition of parts: just as in the Monad and in the centre of the circle we do not see the quantity or quality of the numbers or the lines (which inhere in them) but only a virtue which has neither area nor volume, neither quantity nor quality. For throughout the whole it is wholly itself, confined to no place and moving through no time.

Further, if in the universe of sensible things human nature is supreme, and if higher natures always attract lower natures to themselves (for we cannot reasonably allow that higher natures are absorbed into lower natures, since the proof that lower natures pass into higher is certain), is it not a rational supposition that human nature shall in the end of all things gather into herself all things which were first established within her and beneath her so as to produce a single unification?

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But I do not think we should pass over what the same Epiphanius has to say concerning the spiritual subtlety of the post-resurrection body of man. When he is discussing the post-resurrection Body of Christ, in which we have before us the most perfect example of the resurrection of all mankind, he writes as follows: "He made His way through closed doors; for He raised up His fleshly body as a spiritual body, and yet not as something other than what it was. And that which it was He made one with His Deity, so that it possessed the subtle nature of spirit. For if there was not in it the subtlety of spirit, the body which He received would have possessed weight. But to show that this corruptible body of ours shall in truth put on incorruption (for if it is mortal, it shall put on immortality), He made His way through closed portals—showing that His solid limbs were now spiritual limbs, His mortal body an immortal body, His corruptible body an incorruptible body. And in order to convince all those who are in doubt about our salvation, by which I mean our resurrection, in accomplishing His resurrection He exchanged His body for a subtle spirit." Note with what assurance he affirms the resurrection of spiritual bodies and the ineffable Return into a subtle state, and the absorption by spirit of all the turgidity of that earthly bulk which is subject to the corporeal senses and is limited to space and time. In this he shows

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his complete understanding of the words of the Apostle: "It is sown an animal body, it will rise a spiritual body."

A. I take note of it, and I readily embrace the teaching of this great man. As to the spirituality and non-localisation of human bodies after their resurrection, when human nature, which consists of soul and body, shall be made equal with the angels, I had already been convinced of it by the teaching of the Fathers as well as finding evidence for it within myself, for I consider nothing more likely or closer to the truth than that our bodies, changed into a heavenly quality, lay aside every earthly characteristic, and become inapprehensible to mortal sense and free from all limitation of place. For if, as we have often said, the elements of this sensible world in their simple form penetrate everything which lies within their sphere, and are not hindered by the density of any circumscribing body from being diffused in all directions (for what careful exponent of the nature of this visible mechanism, what explorer into the subtlety, nay rather, into the incorporeality, of its catholic elements, would not unhesitatingly declare that the subtle air freely penetrates, without obstacle to delay it, all the realms of heaven and earth, as well as those of the atmosphere and the sea, and that the fiery nature, even more marvellous, and more closely akin to the subtlety of spirit, being simple, pure, and inapprehensible to every corporeal sense, fills and contains not only all the regions of the world, but also invades by reason of its greater degree of subtlety and closer similarity to the spiritual nature, since it is the innermost of all elements, that most subtle element of the air itself? And we must have the same notion concerning water and earth in their uncompounded states: for these too penetrate to a proportionate extent all bodies everywhere) — if this is so, why should we marvel if the resurrection body rise above every sensible quality, and is unencumbered by bulk and unconfined by place, and, if I may say so, wholly transmuted into spirit, and becoming most like to life itself, is raised because of its ineffable and spirit-like tenuity above everything which the bodily sense can grasp?

As to your view that the resurrection of the body is brought about with the co-operation of its innate virtue, and is not entirely due to the Grace of the Incarnate Word, I am now for the first time beginning to wonder whether this is not so; and whereas I formerly had doubts whether the innate virtue could effect resurrection (for, like yourself, I attributed the restoration of man wholly to his Redeemer) now at last, guided by reason, I feel assured on this

point. For we have been told that there has never been any miracle in this world which is contrary to the nature of God: but such manifestations of power as are recorded in the Sacred History, though prompted by the Will of God, are wrought by the effectual administration of natural causes. And if the general resurrection of the dead, of which we have the supreme example in Christ, may be considered as the very miracle of miracles, for almost all other natural phenomena may be taken as symbols thereof, would it not  
902D be reasonable for us to suppose that resurrection is brought about by the actualisation of the potency of natural causes controlled by the Divine Will?

N. Resurrection is effected, then, by the co-operation of both agents, nature and Grace.

A. So I believe. But how much of the operation is attributable to Grace and how much to nature I am not sure. For no shrewd explorer into the secrets of wisdom would allow that the two are identical.

903A N. No, the difference between them is great, and worthy to be examined by diligent enquiry and set forth in clear exposition.

The gift and  
grace of  
divine  
goodness  
Now this branch of learning should be treated under three heads: There is first the inexhaustible and infinite diffusion of the Divine Goodness through all created things; and then the twofold stream thereof into those things that are given by nature and those things that are donated by Grace. Thus the three things to be considered are: Goodness; Its gifts; and Its Graces. Our reason is keen enough to discern one from the other, and to attribute to each its properties.

903B A *gift* of the Divine Goodness is that which is supplied to all nature, distributed among the genera and species of all creatures, and which the Superessential Goodness Who is God universally bestows upon all from the highest to the lowest, that is, from the intelligible nature, which is the highest of all creatures, to the corporeal nature, which occupies the last and lowest place in the Universe. For instance, it is a gift of Goodness for the nature of the created Universe to be, for it was Goodness which brought it forth from non-existence into existence. Thus the Blessed Dionysius in the fourth chapter of the *Celestial Hierarchy* writes:

“First of all it is true to say that the Superessential Divinity by conferring out of His universal goodness essence upon the things that are, brought them forth into being. For it is proper for the

Cause of all things and the Goodness that is above all things to call all things that are into its own community, that each one of the things that are, be limited by its proper measure. All things therefore that are participate in the Providence which flows forth from the Superessential and all-causative Divinity. For I suppose that none of the things that are would have obtained their essence, had they not obtained it from their Principle. All existents therefore participate in His being; for the Divinity Which is beyond being is the being of all things.” 903C

Thus far Dionysius. But the Superessential Goodness bestows upon all things not only the gift of being, but also of eternal being. For every essence and substance derives its being and subsistence from no other source but the Superessential and Supersubstantial Goodness Which in Itself truly is and truly subsists. For there is no substantial or essential good which exists of itself save that alone by participation in which all things receive the gift of well-being, and the elect alone the Grace of deification. And there is no essence or substance established in the Divine Goodness which does not eternally and immutably endure: for whatsoever things cannot endure perpetually are accidents superadded to substances and clustering about them like accretions, and destined to return to them. Every nature, therefore, which has been brought into essence and is preserved from perishing to all eternity is a gift of the Divine Goodness. 903D

Now between being and eternal being there is an intermediary, which is called well-being. Without this intermediary the two extremes, being and eternal being, although existing, cannot rightly be said to exist truly: for if you take away well-being, being is not truly being, nor eternal being truly eternal being: only that which exists well and blessedly truly is and truly is eternal. But this intermediary, well-being, is a Grace of the Divine Goodness, associated with the free and good motion of the will of the intelligible and rational creature. Well-being, in fact, is the product of two causes: free will, and the divine contribution which Holy Scripture calls *Grace*. This contribution, however, is not bestowed generally upon all, for only the angelic and human natures receive the Grace of deification, — and not even upon all men and angels, but only upon those angels who are aflame with love of their Creator and remain in constant contemplation of the Truth, and only upon those men “who are called according to (the divine) purpose.” Furthermore, the contribution of Grace is not contained 904A 904B

within the limits of created nature, and does not operate by natural power, but produces its effects superessentially and independently of the causes of created nature. Therefore, if the resurrection of the dead will depend upon Divine Grace alone, all innate virtue will be useless as also that vital motion which never abandons the substances of nature, whether, as in the case of the numbers in the Monad, it is by act and potency latent, or as in the case of the numbers when they issue forth from the Monad and in the other instances of effects issuing out of their causes into the open, it is by act and potency patent; or if, on the other hand, innate virtue is capable without the aid of Grace of effecting the resurrection: how is it possible to believe that the power of the Redeemer of the human race is needed for the resurrection of the dead, although He has said: "I am the resurrection and the life?" For these words of Our Lord should be applied not only to the resurrection of souls from the death of unrighteousness and impiety to the life of righteousness and holiness which is the contemplation of Truth, but also to the resurrection of bodies, of which He gave us the supreme example in His own Flesh. Therefore, if we are to be true to our faith we must attribute the power to effect the resurrection both to the gift of the Divine Goodness which is given to us in accordance with our natural capacity, and also to the bestowal upon us by the same Goodness of His Grace which exceeds all natural powers.

904D The Apostle James distinguishes these two, gift and Grace, from one another as follows: "Every good gift and every perfect Grace is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." Which is as much as to say: Every gift of substance and restoration of natures, which is the combined effect of nature and Grace, and every perfect deification, or  $\Theta\acute{\epsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , as the Greeks call it, of those who are worthy to receive eternal bliss, comes from a single source, namely from above, and from the Father of Lights. This should teach us that the gift, as we have said, is received universally by all creatures in their subsisting substance, but the Grace is specially reserved for the superessential deification of the elect. For it was not the Will of the Divine Providence, nor was it proper nor even possible, that the Universe should be ordered in any other way than that first He should bestow the gifts of essence and substance, and then that He should adorn them with Graces, namely the virtues that are appropriate to the dignity of the angels and men "whom He foreknew and foreordained to become images of the Only-Begotten Word of God."

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To conclude briefly: Nature is a *datum*, Grace is a *donum*. It is nature which brings things out of non-existence into existence: it is Grace which brings some of the existents beyond all existents into God Himself. For right reason does not allow us to reckon with the rest those who participate in the divine Unity which transcends the rest. For Truth Itself says, speaking of Itself: "Where I am, there shall My servant be." We have no hesitation in believing that He is above the rest. Therefore His servants likewise are above the rest: while others, who do not attain to the power of pure contemplation (of the hierarchy of theophanies), occupy subordinate positions either among the theophanies or in the realms of lower natures. I say "in the theophanies" in the plural because the intelligible and rational natures would not contemplate truth in the same manner, but the level of contemplation is apportioned and defined in each according to its proper proportion. He is referring to the angelic and human natures, which occupy the highest place in the Universe.

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The order of theophanies

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I do not wish to imply that any creature save the Human Nature of the Word can transcend all the theophanies, or ascend without any theophany intervening to Him "Who only has immortality, and inhabits the inaccessible Light," but that some of the theophanies are so exalted that they are understood to be exalted above every creature in a contemplation very close to God: these are regarded as theophanies of theophanies. For God in Himself is visible to no creature whatsoever, but in the cloud of contemplation is seen and shall be seen, as the Apostle says: "We shall be rapt into the clouds before Christ, and so we shall be ever with Him." But the other natures which were created by Truth not for the contemplation of Truth but that through them the contemplative virtues might give glory to Truth, remain and ever shall remain at rest in their proper stations, free from all limitation of space and time. For when the world which is governed by space and time shall come to an end, what is left to be limited to space or subject to the mutability of time? When nothing more shall come into the world by generation or go back into it by decay, all things shall be at rest. For when the world passes away no part of it shall remain. And if no part of it shall remain, then the whole shall be done away. For it shall pass into the Causes whence it came, in which there is neither space nor time, but only the simple and uncompounded "reasons" of space and time, in which all things are one, and not distinguished by any accidents. For all things shall be simple, without composition of substance and accidents, and, if I may so express myself, there will be a simple unity consisting of a manifold unification of all creatures

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in their principles and Causes, and of the principles and Causes themselves in the Only-Begotten Word of God, in Whom all things have their being and subsistence. Herein lies the difference between nature and Grace, *datum* and *donum*, and the properties which are peculiar to each, as well as those which they share in common.

A. Yes, I think I understand, and I should like briefly to recapitulate your teaching.

N. Do so.

A. Nature, you said, is a *datum*, Grace a *donum*.

N. Yes.

906C A. You then gave a property of each : to nature that of having come from nothing and of abiding forever, to Grace the power of deifying, that is, of bringing into God those men whom the accession of the Divine Goodness freely and without the aid of nature or antecedent deserts raises up over all things that are and are contained within the bounds of the created Universe. But there is something which these two, nature and Grace, share in common : and this is held to be the resurrection of the human substance, that is, the passing of mortal bodies into immortal, of corruptible into incorruptible, of animal into spiritual, and of spatio-temporal into eternal bodies free from all (local) limitation.

N. You have summarised my words correctly. This is what I wished to convince you of, and I see that I have succeeded.

906D A. There is still one doubt remaining in my mind, however. I do not fully understand how you can assert that there can be a resurrection not only of human nature, but also of the sensibles which are contained in the world.

907A N. I am always surprised that you are so doubtful about questions of this sort, when, as you yourself have more than once admitted, you have been told that all things visible and invisible are created in man, and are therefore destined to rise again with him on the last day. It is not my intention to speak here of the resurrection of the invisibles. It is the resurrection or Return into their Causes of sensible bodies that we are discussing. If then human nature is a composite of the intelligibles and sensibles, that is, of soul and body, it is not surprising that the totality of all the sensibles should rise again in the human body and pass over into whatever state the human body passes into, — though not of course into that deification which is a Grace bestowed only upon the perfectly purged intellects, but into the Causes only.



If you want a convincing proof of this, listen carefully to what follows. To start from the simplicity of the Catholic Faith, from which every ascent to the purest knowledge of nature must take its beginning, you would agree, I suppose, that all things that are and all things that are not, all things, that is, that are subject to sense and intellect, and all things that transcend every sense and intellect and yet are inferior to God, and in the words of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, move about Him, are created in the Word of God beyond the comprehension of natures subordinate to Him. 907B

A. This I believe unhesitatingly, and in so far as I am illuminated by the Light from on high, I grasp it with my intellect, for we are told by Holy Scripture that "in the Beginning God created heaven and earth." For by the Beginning is meant the Only-Begotten Word, in whom the Father created all things; and by heaven and earth are signified the visible and invisible creations. And in another place it is said in a simple and general manner: "Thou madest all things in Thy Wisdom." By this is meant that the totality of creatures is made in the Word of God. 24 907C

N. Do you then hold that all things that were created in the Wisdom of God are living or lifeless? Or to put it more clearly and accurately, that everything which was created in the Wisdom of God is life and wisdom, and participates in Life and in Wisdom, or not? And if everything which was made in the Wisdom of God is life and wisdom, did it originate in time, or did it exist from all eternity so that there was no time when it was not? And if so, there will be no time when it shall no longer be; for if its beginning was in time then it must end with time.

A. God forbid that it should enter into the hearts of the faithful to believe of everything that was made in the Word of God that it is not life, and life endowed with wisdom and lasting eternally, having no beginning or end in time. For even corporeal natures, and every sensible creature, are in Him life endowed with wisdom and eternal existence, so that in Him, in a mysterious and incomprehensible yet credible manner every creature lives and is life. And since without Him there is nothing, He brought forth all created things from Himself, as though into an external place. For it is possible to say of the eternal creature that it is both within and without Him: for the Causes and principles of nature are said to be within Him because of their likeness to Him and their simplicity: but the effects of those Causes and principles are considered to be outside Him owing to their unlikeness to Him: for they are variable 907D 908A

in place and time, and are differentiated into genera and species by properties and accidents. Therefore they are said to lie outside the simplicity of the Divine Wisdom, although without It there is nothing and in It all things are simple and universal life. For what could be contained within the Wisdom of God that was wanting life, or was not itself life, seeing that Wisdom Itself is the True Life and More-than-Life, and there is nothing in It which is not either Itself or a perfect image of It? And does not John the Theologian say: “All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made: in Him was the life?”

908B

N. Every creature, then, exists and lives in the Word, Which is the Wisdom of God; and nothing which is in it can perish. For if that which contains, namely Life and Life Eternal, abides and lives without change, then everything which is contained within it of necessity exists, and abides forever, and is eternal life.

A. To deny this would not only be impious but excessively foolish, for the whole weight of scriptural authority and all the theologians agree that every creature exists eternally in the Word of God. Thus, St. Augustine has declared briefly but most convincingly in the sixteenth chapter of the twelfth Book of the *City of God* that God not only was always the Creator of all creatures, but is also their Lord as well, and just as there was never any time when He was not the Creator, so neither was there a time when He was not Lord. “Wherefore,” he says, “if the Lord God was always Lord, then He must always have had a creature to be lord over, — a creature not begotten of Himself, but created by Him out of nothing, and not co-eternal with Him. For He was before it, although there was no time when it was not; for He is not antecedent to it by an interval of time, but by His unchanging perpetuity. But if I am to reply to those who ask how the Creator could always have been the Lord if the creature over which He is Lord did not exist from all eternity, or if it did exist from all eternity how the creature could have been created and was not rather co-eternal with its Creator, I am afraid I should give the impression of asserting what I do not know instead of teaching what I do know.”

908C

These words of the Father may be interpreted as meaning that creatures possess not so much eternity as late arrival. For if, he seems to be saying, I should assert, what I most certainly know, that God is from all eternity both Creator and Lord of his creation, and that therefore there could not have been at any time lacking a creature for Him to be Lord over, for if the creature had not been

908D

from all eternity subject to the Lord, it would follow that neither would the Creator from all eternity have been Lord over His creation. But He was always Creator and Lord: therefore it must follow that the creature over which He is Lord was always a created being. For it is not an accident in the Creator of all things to have created what He has created, but if He is antecedent to His creation and extends beyond it it is only because of the perpetuity: I am afraid (he is speaking ironically) I should perhaps give the impression of affirming what I do not know instead of teaching what I do know. For of this I am sure: that the creature and its Creator, the Lord and that over which He is Lord, could not be separated one from another. But I do not mean by that that the creature is co-eternal with its Creator, or that that over which He is Lord is co-eternal with the Lord; for the Creator is prior to the creature, and the Lord to that over which He is Lord, by eternity — though not in time, but because the Creator and Lord is the Principle of the creature and of that over which He is Lord, and the Creator and Lord is Himself *ἄναρχος*, that is, without principle. But we declare our Creator and Lord to be the one and only God, that is, the most high and holy Trinity, one Essence in Three Substances: and in this Trinity, if considered in Itself, the Father only is regarded as *ἄναρχος*; the Son and the Holy Spirit are not altogether *ἄναρχοι*, for they have a Principle, namely the Father. For the Son is begotten of Him, and the Holy Spirit proceedeth from Him.

N. I think you will agree that it was only the Primordial Causes that were created in God and serve Him as their Lord, and not their effects which are rightly regarded as the materials from which this world is composed.

A. Precisely. I hold that the Causes of nature were created from all eternity, but that their effects have issued forth into this world at different times in different places, and are still issuing forth and will continue to do so.

N. An opinion which is not inconsistent either with Catholic doctrine or with genuine intelligence. Well then: is it your view that it is only the Causes of nature that have existed from all eternity, while their effects are temporal; and that therefore it is only the Causes that will abide forever, whereas their effects will be done away with?

A. I had always supposed so: but since embarking on this present discussion with you, I begin to be drawn by the inexorable

process of our reasoning to the view that not only the Causes but also their processions, which philosophers call the effects, are to endure forever, although in such way that the processions will not have permanence in themselves but by returning into their Causes.

N. Am I right in supposing that you still have some doubts about this?

A. I cannot deny it. For although right reason urges me to  
909D change my former opinion, there are a number of novel ideas in your theory which are not quite clear to me.

N. Tell me, please, what is clear to you, and what it is about which you are either wholly in the dark, or which you partly understand and are partly prevented from doing so by the obscurity and subtlety of the subject.

A. Of the creation from eternity of the Causes, of their everlasting permanence, and of their enduring into infinity, my mind is perfectly clear. That is something which I fully understand without a shadow of doubt, chiefly because I am quite firm in my  
910A belief that they are created in the Wisdom of God, and in my understanding of what that implies. None but the impious and the foolish can doubt that that which is created in the Wisdom of God shall abide forever. But about the effects, which you agree with the philosophers in calling the processions, I have for some time been in doubt whether they shall endure as the Causes do, or perish with the world so as not to return into their Causes and be preserved in them but so as to be reduced to that nothing out of which they were created, and have no further existence whatsoever.

N. By the effects of the Causes we here mean the whole sensible  
910B world with all the parts of which it consists. For as to the intelligible world there cannot be two opinions: it will never perish, because in it there is nothing which is susceptible of corruption. It will abide forever as will the Causes of which it is the effect, namely the celestial essences — although the Blessed Dionysius the Areopagite asserts that certain angelic powers shall ascend to a higher degree of the contemplation of God than that which they now occupy, “until God shall be all in all.”

25 A. I have hitherto been in some doubt about the effects of the invisible Causes, that is, about the invisible world, as to how they can be said both to perish and to abide. For these two processes, perishing and abiding, appear to be mutually contradictory: how can that which abides perish or that which perishes abide?

N. Have you not just admitted that your chief reason for certainty about the eternity of the Causes was the fact that they were created in the Word of God? For (you argued) nothing can perish which is contained within the Everliving Word, in Whom all things are eternal life, subject to no corruption or decay. 910C

A. Recalling the words of the Apostle, "in Whom we live and move and have our being," I am so certain of this that I would sooner deny my own existence than profess ignorance of it. For if I am not in Him I cannot be at all. And if I do not know this I am brought into the death of folly and ignorance.

N. Tell me, then, whether the Word of God, in Whom the Causes of all things eternally subsist, came into the effects of those Causes, that is to say, into this sensible world, or not.

A. Whosoever would deny this would be a stranger to the True Faith which worships one God and preaches the Incarnation of His Word. For Theology teaches us: "And the Word was made flesh," that is to say, the Word was made man: for "flesh" is substituted for "man" by a figure of speech known as the part-for-the-whole construction. Moreover the Incarnate Word Itself says of Itself: "I went forth from the Father and I came into the world, and now I leave the world again and go unto my Father." By this is meant: I Who am equal in divinity to the Father, and of one and the same essence with Him, went forth from Him that is, emptied myself, taking upon me the form of a slave, that is to say, I was made flesh, and received the whole of human nature; and now I leave the world again and go to my Father, that is to say, I transport beyond every world into my Deity, above all things that are and are not, the form of the servant, and the whole of human nature, body and soul and Mind and in general everything which I took upon me from that creation which consists of visible and invisible existence, preserving the principle of the natures of which I subsist. 910D 911A

He went forth, then, from the Father, and came into the world, that is to say, He took upon Himself the human nature in which the whole world subsists: for there is nothing in the world which is not comprehended in human nature. And then He left the world again and went to the Father, that is to say, He raised up the human nature which He had taken upon Himself above all things visible and invisible, above all the heavenly powers, above everything which can be uttered or imagined, by unification with His Deity which is equal to His Father. For although He preserved wholly in 911B

Himself and in the whole human genus the whole of human nature which He wholly took upon Him, restoring some to their former state of nature, raising others because of the excellence of their worthiness beyond nature to the state of God: yet nowhere but in Himself alone is humanity united to the Deity in a single substance, so that transmuted into Deity itself it transcends all things. For the Head of the Church reserved this property for Himself alone, that His humanity should not only participate in Deity, but, after He had ascended to His Father, should itself become Deity: to such a height none but He has ever ascended nor shall ascend. This is the meaning of what He explicitly says of Himself in another place: “No one has  
 911C ascended into heaven but He Who came down from heaven, the Son of Man Who is in heaven.” That is to say: No one has ascended to the Father but He Who came down from the Father, and yet in coming down from the Father He did not leave the Father’s side: He abideth ever in the Father, for the Father abideth inseparably in Him, and He in the father. “For,” He says, “I and the Father are One.” He alone has brought His humanity into this union, for the others whom He deifies He sets beneath Himself in a mere participation in the Deity each according to the height attained by his contemplative power, and establishes in Himself as in a house,  
 911D all whom He has chosen to become of like form with Himself. Therefore God the Word of God, in Whom all things are created according to their Causes and subsist, descended in His Divinity into the effects of the Causes which subsist in Him, that is, into the sensible world, taking upon Himself our human nature in which is contained every creature visible and invisible.

A. In this you have the full agreement of Catholic doctrine. For the Word of God made Man Himself after his Resurrection from the dead instructed His disciples with these words: “Preach the gospel unto every creature.” By “every creature” He meant  
 912A “man,” for He did not command them to preach His gospel to the irrational minds of insensible creatures, but to man alone, in whom every created nature is comprehended.

N. Every creature, then, is in man?

A. We must have no hesitation in saying so.

N. You admit, then, that the word of God, in Whom and through Whom and for Whom according to His Divinity all things were made, descended according to His humanity into the effects of the Causes?

A. Most certainly I do.

N. Why did He descend?

A. Tell me, I pray.

N. For this reason only, I think: that in His humanity He might save the effects of the Causes which in His Divinity He possesses eternally without change; and that He might call them back into their Causes that they might be preserved in them by a mystical unification, just as the Causes also are preserved. By this is meant that if the Wisdom of God did not descend into the effects of the Causes which enjoy everlasting life in it, the principle of the Causes would perish: for no Cause could survive the destruction of the effects of the Causes, any more than the effects could survive the destruction of their Causes. For because Cause and effect are relative terms, they come into being together, they pass away together, or together they endure for ever. 912B

A. Therefore in the Only-Begotten Word of God, Incarnate and made man, the whole world is restored even now according to its species, but at the end of the world will return universally and in its genus. For what He wrought specially in Himself He will perfect generally in all: and not only in all men but in every sensible creature. For when the Word of God took upon Himself our human nature He also took upon Himself every created substance which is contained in that nature. Therefore in assuming human nature He assumed every creature. If then He has saved and restored the human nature which He assumed, He has also restored every creature, visible and invisible. Hence we rightly believe and understand that the Incarnation of the Word of God was beneficial to angels not less than to man. For just as it conferred upon man the benefit of redemption and the restoration of his nature, so it conferred upon the angels the benefit of gnosis: for before the Word was made flesh It was incomprehensible in every visible and invisible creature whether intelligible or rational, whether angel or man, for It was then hidden in secret above all things that are and all things that are not, and transcended everything that can be uttered or conceived. But at the Incarnation It descended from Its secret place by a marvellous and ineffable and infinitely manifold theophany into the knowledge of the angelic and human natures, and That Which transcended the knowledge of all natures took from all a nature wherewith It might be known, and thus by an incomprehensible harmony brought about the unification in Itself of the 912C 912D

sensible and intelligible worlds. The inaccessible Light gave access to every intelligible and rational creature. This is the burden of the angels' song which the universal Church on earth and in heaven never ceases to sing in sensible and intelligible melody: "Glory be to  
 913A God on high and in earth peace to men of good will."

Thus we may briefly conclude: All things visible and invisible, that is to say, the sensible and intelligible worlds, are restored in Him, and recalled to an ineffable unity: in hope now; in fulfilment in time to come; in faith to-day; in form to-morrow; in theory now; in fact then: already in that Man in Whom it was achieved specially; in the future to be perfected in all generally. Let no man therefore think it a slight matter that the Word of God was made man as though only human nature was saved thereby: but let it most firmly  
 913B be believed and most clearly understood that by the Incarnation of the Son of God every creature in heaven and on earth was saved; and by every creature I mean body, vital motion, sense, as well as reason and Mind. For except for God Himself can you think of any other nature besides these?

N. None. In the whole of creation there is no other division For whatever is is either the known or unknown Mind, or Reason, or Sense, or the Life which gives nourishment and growth to bodies, or body itself: and all these were assumed by the Word of God at His Incarnation.

A. How are we to apply this? Are we to say that the irrational animals, and even trees and plants, and all parts of this world from the highest to the lowest, are restored by the Incarnation of the Word of God?

N. I wonder why it is that you so often return to this question.  
 913C When the Word assumed the nature of man, did He not take upon Himself every creature, visible and invisible, and was He not the Saviour of everything which, being in man, He took upon Himself? And if in taking human nature He took upon Himself every creature, then He is the Saviour of every creature, and every creature will be saved by Him to all eternity.

Bodily  
 masses will  
 not rise again

A. Are then the physical objects which are extended in space and time and composed of many different parts, as well as the visible forms by which they are prevented from coalescing into one indeterminate mass, to be included in the general resurrection of man? And if even the parts arise into the masses and shapes and species by which the visible world is adorned and of which it is



composed, must it not follow that the whole physical world will not perish but return into the same state? For if the parts are to be restored, why not the whole?

N. We do not say that the masses and forms of visible and sensible bodies will be resurrected, but that in the resurrection of man, as we have often agreed, they will return with man and in man into their Causes and principles which were created in man. And in this condition all animals will have a better right to be called animals than in the corporeal and sensible effects. For it is there where they subsist that they are truly animal. And the same applies to all the sensibles, whether in heaven or on earth. For all things which vary according to place and time, and which are subject to the corporeal senses, should not themselves be regarded as truly substantial existents but as transitory images and verifications derived therefrom. We may take as an illustration of this the voice and its image which the Greeks call ἠχῶ; or bodies and the shadows which they throw either in the pure air or in water or in any other medium capable of producing them. All such can be shown to be not themselves real, but false images of the real. So, just as the echoes of voices and the shadows of bodies do not subsist of themselves because they are not substances; neither can sensible bodies, which are a kind of image of substantial things, subsist of themselves. For our natural reason teaches us that not even the bodies of men which now have spatial extension and vary by increase and diminution and move from place to place; nor their forms, whether those common forms in which all human bodies participate or those special forms which are controlled by the size of each body, will play a part in the resurrection, but will pass into the spiritual nature which cannot be confined by space or time or any particular forms which are derived from their quality or size. I am not at the moment rejecting the opinions of those who hold a totally different theory about the resurrection of bodies, asserting that those of human beings will rise with the same quality and form in which they fell, and that they will keep their sex, whether male or female. About these I shall have something to say later. But that the nature of the resurrection of animate nature will be as I have described, that is a Return into their Causes, can be firmly corroborated from the words of St. Dionysius, who in the sixth chapter of the *Divine Names* speaks as follows of the Divine Life:

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The return of animals into their causes

“The life and immortality of the immortal angels and the imperishable nature of their perpetual activity exists and subsists

from it" i.e. from the Divine Life, "and through it. For that reason they are said to be everliving and immortal — and yet they are not immortal, for it is not of themselves that they possess the gift of immortal life and immortal being, but from that Cause which is the Giver of Life and the Creator and Preserver of all life. And so, just as we declare It to be *in onte*" (he is speaking of essence: for the Greeks call the Divine Essence  $\delta\nu$  as well as  $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ), "because It is the Cause of Being, so also do we declare It to be in this," i.e. life, "since the Divine Life is Life-in-Itself, vital and substantial, and Universal Life, and the Vital Motion springs from this Life which transcends all life and every principle of universal life. From It do souls derive their indestructibility, and all animals and plants possess the power of living according to the lowest harmony of the soul. And when this," i.e. the general life and the special and particular life, "is withdrawn, all life perishes from the earth, in the words of the Scriptures, and perishing through their incapacity to participate in life, they turn and become animals once again."

These words of the Theologian are not to be taken as implying a resurrection of irrational animals or a restitution of insensible objects into the original shapes and sizes with which this world is filled, but the return into their Causes from which they proceed and in which they substantially exist. For he did not say that the Divine Life was the Cause of only the angelic and human, that is to say, of the intelligible and rational life, but of all life generally. Now every life, as has been abundantly demonstrated in the earlier books, is either rational, or irrational, or nutritive and active, that is to say, either angelic, or human, or animal, or insensible, as in trees, grasses, and such, in which the vital motion operates by itself. Therefore it is not of human life only, but of all forms endowed with the breath of life; and not of human bodies alone, but of all bodies which the spirit of life supports, that the Divine pronouncement is made: "Thou shalt take away their spirit and they shall fail and return unto their dust." For there is no life rational or animal or nutritive, which for long, still less forever, can enliven and administer corruptible and mortal bodies. Therefore it abandons them, and the bodies abandoned by it shall fail and shall return into their dust. And this is what he means by saying "they shall fail," that is, the animals and plants, through their incapacity to participate in life, for because of the weakness and fragility of earthly and corruptible bodies they cannot participate in life forever. Now, whatever life performs in human bodies, whether it

Any life  
cannot vivify  
a corruptible  
body for long

controls them or abandons them, is referred to the Creator. Therefore it is written: "Thou shalt take away their spirit." It does not mean that God Himself takes away the spirit from anybody, but that in course of time He permits spirits that are weighed down by corruptible bodies to retire from them so that they may by their natural motion return to them again when they are changed into incorruptibility and spirituality. For that which is born together with them into this world cannot abandon them forever, but at the end of the world they shall take them again, when that in the Causes which governs and that which is governed shall, by a mysterious harmony become an inseparable unity. Therefore it is written: "Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be made:" by which is meant: Send forth the vital spirit, which Thou hast made, or rather: permit it to be sent forth and return by its own natural volition into the bodies which it has abandoned for a while. "And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth:" that is: When the bodies are inseparably united to their vital forms, Thou shalt restore the integrity of their nature, to which is given the mystic name of Earth.

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And if anyone should deem it incredible and contrary to common sense that irrational and insensible natures should pass into the nature of man, let him first carefully observe how the lower parts of human nature such as the corporeal sense and the nutritive life and the body itself closely resemble the state of the irrational, insensible and material bodies. And if that is so, what is strange or incredible in the fact that like changes into like, so that a one like unto itself is produced out of many like things, and subordinate likenesses pass into superior natures of which they are likenesses? For common sense cannot accept that the higher natures should be changed into the lower, but the lower naturally tends towards the higher and desires to be made one with it.

916A

The passing  
of irrationals  
and  
insensibles  
into human  
nature

Let him next consider how the passions of the irrational creature which after man's fall from the glory of the Divine Image human nature put on as something added to it for a punishment for sin and which, although now part of that nature, it did not possess before its transgression, can change, in those who are made perfect, into natural virtues. Now by the passions I mean pleasure and pain, lust and fear, and the emotions that arise from them. There is no doubt that these can be changed into virtues: lust can be changed by those who so wish into an intellectual longing for the things of God; pleasure may take the form of innocent delight in the nutritive function of the soul; fear, a precaution against the future punishment

916B

of sins; sorrow, repentance which checks our present ill deeds. If then the passions, which the rational nature has won over to herself from the irrational, can be changed into the natural virtues of the soul, why may we not believe that irrationality itself may not be changed to rationality? For even pride, which is held to be the chief of all vices, is in the virtuous man changed into love for the high places of heaven and contempt for the frailty of earthly things, as the Apostle tells us: "Be wise in the things that are above, and not in things that are on earth." Briefly then, there is no vice that cannot in wise men, by the operation in them of the Grace of God, be changed into virtue. And so good may come out of evil, though evil can never come out of good. For goodness has the power of swallowing up its opposite in itself, while the foulness of evil can never stain the radiance of goodness. If then we admit that vice can be changed into virtue, although the one is the contrary of the other, why should we not also admit that by a marvellous unification lower natures can be transformed into higher natures, which are not their contraries? But I have spoken enough on this subject.

A. Quite enough.

26  
Resurrection  
917A N. Now since in teaching that the resurrection of bodies is effected by natural virtue with the co-operation of the Grace of God through the Incarnation of the Saviour of the world we introduced the testimony of Epiphanius, I think we should also cite the views of Gregory the Theologian on the same subject.

A. It is necessary to do so. For we are taught that that which is established out of the mouths of two reliable witnesses is sure evidence.

N. In the twenty second chapter of the *Treatise on the Image*, where he is arguing that the hope of resurrection depends not so much on scriptural prophesy as on the very necessity of nature, he writes as follows:

917B "Evil is not strong enough to prevail over the power of goodness. Nor is our ignorance and folly superior or more singular, i.e., more simple than the Wisdom of God. For it cannot be that that which is changeable and inconstant is more powerful and simpler than that which ever remains the same, and is firmly established in the Good. But the purpose of God everywhere and in every way remains immutable, while our nature cannot remain firmly established in evil, because it is variable. For that which is

ever moveable, if its progress is towards the Good, because of the exaltation of the Good, will never desist from its upward journey. For it will never reach the end of its quest, which would bring to rest the movement of him who should attain it. But if it moves in the contrary direction and pursues a course towards evil and reaches the very depths of evil, then that which is ever-moving finds because of its nature no resting place, for when it has crossed the expanse of evil its motion must of necessity be directed towards the Good. For since evil does not extend without limit, but is kept within the bounds of necessity, it follows that Evil ends and there Good begins. And so it is that, as we have said, our ever-moving nature shall come at last into the good way, where it is punished by the memory of its former miseries so that it fall not into the like again. So that as a result of the necessary limitation of evil, our course will eventually lead us back to the Good. For just as, according to the astronomers, the whole Universe is full of light, and darkness is caused by the shadow thrown by the earth intervening when it turns away from the rays of the sun, a shadow that is in the shape of a cone, because the sun is many times the size of the earth and its rays spread out around it on all sides and join together to form the apex of the cone, so, on our hypothesis, if the virtue of anything exceeds the measure of that which casts a shadow, it will be altogether plunged in light when it has passed beyond the darkness of that shadow: and this is the case with our nature, for when we pass beyond the bounds of evil, when we attain the apex of the shadow of evil, we shall be changed into light once more, since the nature of good is infinitely more abundant than the measure of evil: and we shall once again attain to Paradise, and to that Tree which is the Tree of Life, and to the Grace of the Image (of God) and to the dignity of our First Principle."

Human nature always seeks God by a natural motion and never finds what it seeks because it is infinite

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918A

You see how clearly and logically and with what conviction he argues, first, that evil cannot be eternal but of its very nature must come to an appointed end, and at the appointed time shall be done away with. For if the Divine Goodness, which is active for good not only in good things but also in evil things, is eternal and infinite, it is obvious that its contrary can be neither eternal nor infinite: otherwise it would not be its contrary, nor opposed to the Good. For eternal natures, although they may differ in quality, yet share the same eternity. The Divine piety and severity differ in quality, since one punishes sins and the other is forgiving: both nevertheless are eternal. But evil is altogether opposed to the Divine goodness. Therefore evil must have an end, and there is no nature in which it

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can endure for ever, but in all things the divine goodness will be active and manifest. Therefore our author can assure us that our nature is not established in evil, nor is destined to be held forever in the bonds of evil, but all evil being done away with, shall return to the  
 918C good once more. For just as the extent of the shadow of the earth which is called night into the regions of the air and the ether is not infinite, but, as the physicists tell us, is of a length of 126,000 stades; and the rays of the sun which envelop the earth close round it on all sides pressing the shadow into the shape of a cone so that eventually it contracts into nothing, so evil, which is like the shadow of sin afflicting our nature, is compressed by the abundance of the eternal Goodness from on high so as to be entirely done away with, while the irrational emotions of the human soul shall be changed into the rational affections of truth.

Then he goes on to assure us that our human nature is always in  
 919A motion (a view which is shared by almost all theologians) in its search for the Supreme Good Which was also the source of its motion, and towards Which it hastens as to its proper end. For every rational creature, of whom it is proposed to suppose that all subsist in human nature, even in the toils of its sins and perversities, is always seeking its God, from Whom it has its being and for the contemplation of Whom it was created. For rational nature never seeks the evil, though it is often deceived and led astray into the way of error approving the false for the true, which is the property of error, so that it does not follow the proper direction towards the Supreme Good — even so, it is still the Supreme Good that it is seeking. It is this erratic movement to which the name of evil is properly given: For evil is the intellectual soul's forgetfulness of natural goods, and its failure to actualise the virtues that inhere in  
 919B nature, and the irrational orientation of her natural powers in some direction other than her proper end, which is brought about by erring judgment. By her proper end I mean the cause of all things that are, towards which all things naturally tend. Furthermore, since this irrational motion, which is the cause and accomplishment of all evil and wickedness, is circumscribed and brought to a complete end by the abundance of Goodness, human nature will eventually, by exercise of its reason and in accordance with the natural virtues which inhere in it, moved by its search for its proper cause, ascend and return into Paradise, by which is meant delight in the virtues which, innate in it, it lost in sinning; and in its ardent desire for the  
 919C fruit of the Tree of Life, which is the contemplation of the Word of

God, it is eager to put on once more the dignity of the Divine Image in which it was created. But since that which it seeks and towards which it tends, whether it moves in the right or wrong direction, is infinite and not to be comprehended by any creature, it necessarily follows that its quest is unending, and that therefore it moves forever. And yet although its search is unending, by some miraculous means it finds what it is seeking for : and again it does not find it, for It cannot be found. It finds It through theophanies, but through the contemplation of the Divine Nature Itself it does not find It. Now by Theophanies I mean the species of all things visible and invisible, by the beauty and order of which it is made known that God exists, and it is found not *what* He is, but only *that* He is : for God's very nature is unknowable and unutterable, since the Inaccessible Light transcends every intellect. This is the meaning of the Psalmist's words :  
 "seek the Lord and be confirmed in Him ; ever seek His Face." This 919D  
 is that spiritual way which leads to the Infinite, and which is trodden by all purged and perfected souls who seek their God. For even the Heavenly Powers ever seek Him upon Whom they ever long to gaze, and this is the cloud about which Dionysius the Areopagite writes to 920A  
 Dorotheus :

"The divine cloud is the Inaccessible Light in which God is said to dwell. While it is invisible owing to the excess of its brightness and the inaccessible superexcellence of its superessential radiation, everyone is worthy to know and see God in it, without however seeing or truly knowing the Light in which He is beyond sight or vision, knowing this only, that He is in all things, sensible and intelligible, according to the words of the Prophet : 'Thy Wisdom hath become marvellous for me and I shall not be able to attain unto it.' Moreover, as the divine Paul is said to have known God, knowing Him as existing above every intellect and every knowledge (for which reason he says that His ways are not to be traced, and that His judgments are inscrutable and His Graces indescribable, and that His peace passes all understanding), so he finds Him above 920B  
 all things, and by this he knows that He is above every intellect, because He is above all things the existing cause of all."

The same author in his letter to the monk Gaius writes :

"The darkness is blotted out in the light, and the brighter the light the more blotted out it becomes ; the sciences blot out ignorance, and many sciences blot it out the more. Taking the word ignorance not in its privative but in its supereminent sense, you may declare, with more than truth, that our ignorance of God is hidden

(is hidden because even those who possess this incomprehensible Light do not know what it is they possess, as the Evangelist bears witness: 'And the Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness hath not comprehended it.' Therefore the Divine Light is given the name of darkness, for it is incomprehensible. Similarly the gnostic power of those who contemplate it, because it is beaten back by it, is also frequently called darkness, for it is hidden from them that have the Light and the knowledge of nature.) For the Darkness which transcends all light is impenetrable to all light and conceals all knowledge. And if anyone who saw God understood what he saw, it would not be God that he saw but one of those creatures which derive their existence and knowability from Him. For He Himself resides above Mind and above Being, and is therefore utterly unknowable and invisible, being superessential and known above Mind. And it is this perfect ignorance, understood in the higher sense of the term, which constitutes the true knowledge of Him, a knowledge beyond all things."

The Evangelist did not overlook this, for he says: "No man hath seen God at any time." And Ambrose says: "As He never was visible, so He never shall be visible." And the very Truth Himself says: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and no man knoweth the Son save the Father."

But as to the question whether the humanity of the Word of God is, like His divinity, incomprehensible to every creature and transcends every intellect after it has been taken up into the Deity of the Word and is made one substance with It without confusion of the two natures, human and divine, of which those who adhere to the Catholic Faith believe and understand that the One Christ Our Lord and Saviour consists; or whether it is knowable to our rational and intelligible nature, and is confined within the limits of the created Universe, that is to say, within the number of things which can be known and defined: let each hold the opinion he prefers. As for myself, I have no hesitation in following in the footsteps of those who prudently declare that the humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ is so united to His divinity that it is (save for the distinction of the natures) One in it and with it, for the humanity and divinity of Christ are one Substance, or, to speak in more familiar language, one Person; and as His Divinity surpasses every intellect, so also His Humanity, which is exalted above the Universe of visible and intelligible creatures, above all place and time, above all limit and definition, above all the heavens, above all virtues and powers,



above everything which can be uttered or conceived, above everything which comes after God, and above Being itself, is incomprehensible and inscrutable to every creature. And this we have already taught in an earlier part of this book.

A. The exaltation to a superessential sphere above all things of the Incarnate Word, together with the flesh which It took of the Virgin and the whole manhood with which It made Itself One, has been fully demonstrated by you and is corroborated by the Holy Fathers. But I am still not entirely convinced (for there are many conflicting opinions on the matter) that the whole of human nature, loosened and set free from the chains of its wickedness as your discourse has already taught, shall ascend to the same place whither Christ, the First Fruits of that nature, ascended: for I had thought that only partly, in respect of the elect, was it to be set free, while the rest, that is, the wicked, were to be kept forever in the torment of the everlasting fire. For if the whole of human nature shall ascend thither, or, to put it more plainly, shall return into that state which it abandoned through sin — if He has, by redeeming it, raised it wholly, what are we to say? Does it not follow that there will be no everlasting death of misery, no eternal punishment of the damned? For what will be left to be tormented, if the whole nature, in which both the good and the wicked participate, shall be not only entirely set free from death and sin, but shall even return into God Himself? What has become of that flaming heat of eternal fire to which the severity of the most righteous judge shall commit the wicked, saying: “Depart, accursed, into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels?” What has become of the eternal punishment which the impious shall incur, if no part of human nature is to remain which may be subjected to it? For if all evil is done away with, what evil man is left? For every evil man is evil because of evil, and thus when evil comes to an end, the evil man must cease to exist also. For when the cause ceases, the effect must cease likewise.

The same principle applies to life and death. For if “death shall be” wholly “swallowed up in life” as sin is swallowed up in goodness and suffering in bliss, who will be tormented by death and suffering when no man is excluded from life and bliss?

But what a multitude of awkward inconsistencies and arguments contrary to right reason would confront anyone who asserted that while a part of human nature should return into God, the other part should remain in eternal punishment: He would be compelled to

Is the whole of human nature freed and will be freed in Christ?

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The difficulties that arise for those who hold that part

of human nature will be freed in the blessed, part tortured in the unhappy

admit that God the Word took upon Himself not the whole of human nature, but only a part of it, and that therefore it was not His will to save the whole human genus, nor did He do so : which would be an absurd belief. Moreover, true reason and sound speculation of nature would deride his division of the simplicity of human nature into parts, and the implied view that it is composed as it were of many like and unlike parts, whereas it is in fact one and simple and free from all composition and unlikeness and multiplicity of parts : for were it not so it could not have been made in the Image of God, but rather in conformity with the manifold variety of mortal and corruptible bodies — a thing which it would be most foolish and most dishonourable to believe, and totally contrary to the truth. Further, if human nature is the image and likeness of God, the whole Image is in it as a whole, and in each individual which participates in it, and admits neither in itself nor in another any division or partition or possibility of division or partition, whether in potency or in act, of its uniform simplicity. For if the Divinity in Whose Image humanity is created is one and indivisible, it must follow that the latter also is one and indivisible, and that all men without exception are in it One. But if anyone doubts that I have the warrant of the authority of the Holy Fathers for my view that humanity is simple and indivisible, let him hear the words of the blessed Origen in his third book on the *Epistle to the Romans*. He is commenting on the text “I have said, ye are gods and sons of Him Who is on high,” and he adds the word “all,” thereby bringing the whole human genus into the context. Then he goes on to say :

“Now, as you are men, you shall die. Hence it is written : ‘And God repented that He had made man upon the earth, and God grieved in His heart and said, I will destroy man;’, whom I made, from the face of the earth. This, I think, is said not only in relation to the destruction of the Flood, but something from this is mysteriously prophesied for the future, so that one should understand by ‘I will destroy man’ that which God says through the prophet : ‘For behold, I blot out thine iniquities like a cloud,’ that it may be understood that in destroying man according to that which he is, He shall afterwards fashion him as a god, in that time when God shall be all in all.”

Let him also read Gregory, the great theologian, where, discoursing on human nature in the seventeenth chapter of the *Treatise on the Image* he says : “What are we to make of this ? The text ‘God made man’ refers to the whole of humanity, without limitation. For

Adam is not named here in common with the rest of creation, as in the later parts of the account. The name is applied universally to created man, but not to anything else. Are we not, therefore, led by this term applying to the universal nature (of man) to some persuasion that all humanity was embraced in the Divine Foreknowledge and Power in the first creation? For we must suppose that for God nothing that He has created is infinite, but that the Wisdom of the Creator is the defining measure which limits every one of the things that are. Therefore just as every man is limited to the size of his body, and his measure is the magnitude of his substance, a magnitude which is proportionate to the surface of his body, in the same way, I think, in the gnostic virtue of God the whole plenitude of human nature was comprehended within one body. This is the meaning of the words 'And God created man, in the Image of God created He him.' The Image is not a part of that nature, nor was this a special Grace conferred only upon certain individuals out of those which are considered to be made in it, but a property conferred upon the whole genus. An indication of this is the fact that mind is established in all alike, for all possess the power of understanding and taking counsel and all those other functions in which the Divine Nature is imaged forth in that which is created in it. Such also is the condition of that man who was manifested when the world was first created, and who will appear again after the consummation of the Universe: both equally show forth in themselves the Divine Image. The whole human genus is called one man for this reason, but in the (gnostic) virtue of God nothing is past and nothing is present, but all things that are seen are contained equally for Him in a present comprehensive operation of the universe. Therefore the whole of human nature from first to last appears (to Him) as a single spectacle of that which truly exists. But the differentiation of the genus into male and female is an addition subsequent to the establishment of its form."

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Therefore, if the Word of God took human nature upon Him, it was not a part of it (for that would be nothing) but the whole of it universally. And if He took upon Himself the whole of our nature, then clearly it is the whole of it which is restored in Him, for all things are restored in Him, and no part of that humanity which was wholly assumed by Him is abandoned to the eternal punishments and inexorable toils of sin, the precursor of torment. For in no man does God condemn that which He created, but He punishes only that which He did not create. Not even in the case of the transgressing

923D angels does He punish their nature, nor shall He do so: He will rather extinguish in them their wickedness and impiety and baneful power, as He will also in those wicked men who are their adherents, and perhaps we may say that their eternal damnation will consist in the total abolition of their wickedness and impiety.

924A Thus I am in a quandary, buffeted on either side by mutually opposed doctrines as though between the stormy billows of the ocean and the rocks against which they break, and I am wearied by long and inconclusive arguments. No way of escape do I see. For if, to put briefly what has been stated above more fully, I say that the whole of human nature is taken up into the Word of God, and therefore by the cooperation of the natural capacity for resurrection which does not permit any nature to perish nor be punished forever, must be saved in Him, what remains to be handed over to everlasting damnation? It will look as though I am going against Holy Scripture which explicitly threatens eternal punishment to the devil and all his host. If on the other hand I put forward the opinion that not the whole of human nature was assumed and saved by Christ or shall be liberated through its natural capacity for resurrection, but only a part of it shall return into the glory of the Divine Image, the rest remaining captive in eternal damnation, shall I not be refuted both by right reason and divine authority? For reason most clearly shows that nothing can remain in permanent opposition to the supreme Goodness and Life and Blessedness; for goodness sets bounds to evil, and utterly consumes it, as life does to death, and blessedness to unhappiness, and virtue to vice and its causes and all such things: while divine authority declares: "I am thy death, O death; I am thy devourer, O hell," and again: "The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed" — referring to the devil, who is the author of death, and indeed death itself. This word in Greek is masculine, Θάνατος; and therefore the text reads ἐχθρός Θάνατος, that is Θάνατος the enemy. And again, the angel says to the prophet Daniel in a vision:

"Seventy weeks are abbreviated to thy people, and to thy sacred city, that its prevarication may be consummated and that its sin may have an end and its iniquity be destroyed and that my everlasting justice may be shown."

924C By the symbolic number of seventy weeks the whole of time from the first until the second coming of the Saviour is signified. For the course of this life, which runs through seven "days," is implied

by the number seven. It is said that this course is abbreviated. For compared with eternity all times are brief.

Trembling therefore I stand in this narrow pass, pierced as it were by weapons from either side, not knowing which way to turn, or which path I had better follow. For the choice is not easy between the two alternatives: either to eliminate the eternal punishment of wicked angels and wicked men; or remove from a part of creation the dominion of the divine Goodness and Blessedness wherein all sin and sorrow shall be done away.

N. Be patient. For light will come to the mind whereby the hidden places of the darkness are illuminated, obscure things are made plain, things hitherto unknown revealed, elusive things recalled, the unlimited restrained, the indefinite defined, ambiguities brought into some kind of sure opinion. First, let us consider how far we are in agreement, what has been clearly defined and how much is still left undecided, and how we should enquire further into the latter. 924D

A. There is no other reasonable course in the investigation of nature.

N. In your report on your speculations I find much that is firmly established in accordance with reason. But as to the matters in which you admit you are still in doubt, I think we must recapitulate the points where you find yourself unsure, so that setting at rest your perplexity we may offer a definite opinion on the topics under discussion and we may no longer appear to be equivocating and avoiding bringing anything to a proper conclusion. 925A

A. Let it be so.

N. No philosopher of nature doubts that all things are contained in the Divine Mind.

A. To do so would be ridiculous, for all philosophers are in agreement here, following the teaching of the Apostle: "From Him and through Him and in Him and for Him are all things." Dionysius the Areopagite, in the Seventh Chapter on the *Divine Names*, says:

"It is rightly said that of every mind and every reason and every sense the Divine Wisdom is the Principle and the Cause and the Substance and the Consummation and the Preserver and the Source."

The blessed Ambrose, in his *Commentary on Luke* says, referring to the Apostle :

925B “In the Lord Jesus are established all things in heaven and on earth, all things visible and invisible, and He is before all men, and all abide together in Him.”

But to quote the opinions of the rest of the Fathers on this subject would be a lengthy matter, and unnecessary.

N. If then all things subsist in the Divine Mind, it follows that outside It there is nothing.

A. Above, below, and without It there is nothing.

N. He is, then, altogether all things.

A. Just so. For what else do we mean by all things than the knowledge of them in the Divine Mind, as Dionysius says in the same chapter :

925C “The Divine Mind contains all things by a wisdom that transcends all things, for in the same measure as He is the Cause of all things He contains in advance within Himself the knowledge of all things. Before the angels were created He knew them and brought them forth as angels, and all other things by knowing them He brought forth from within Himself, Who is, as it were, their Principle, and conferred being upon them. This, I think, is what is meant by the saying : ‘He knew all things before they were brought forth.’ For the Divine Mind did not know existing things by learning of their existence, but He had foreknowledge of them, and had already elaborated them from Himself and in Himself, and it was this process that constituted their cause. Not that He considered each object in its species, but that He knew and comprehended all things in one comprehensive cause, just as the light contains within itself as cause the foreknowledge of the dark, knowing not the dark save as derivative of the light. Therefore in knowing Itself the Divine Wisdom knows all material things after an immaterial mode, and all divided things after an indivisible mode, and the many as One, knowing all things and bringing them forth in Himself, Who is One. For if, as we are taught, God is the One cause of all existents, it is in this same One Cause that He knew all things as existing from Him and already subsisting in Him. And it is not from existing things  
925D that He will receive knowledge of them, but He Himself will be the bestower upon all things severally of their knowability.”

N. The Divine Mind, then, knows no evil and no sin. For if He did, they would have substantial existences, and would not be without a cause. As it is, however, they have no cause, and therefore are not essentially in the number of created natures, and consequently are quite alien to the Divine Knowledge.

A. True reason will not have it otherwise. For the Divine Knowledge is the Cause of all existents, and therefore whatever He knows must exist in nature. But whatever is not found in nature can by no means be found in the Divine Knowledge. 926A

N. God, then, does not know wicked angels or wicked men or any transgressors of His Law.

A. He knows their substances, and everything which He created in them, and which subsists in Him. But He is altogether ignorant of what is added as a result of their perverse motions, which is accidental to that nature which takes its substance from Him. For whatsoever He did not create is wholly alien to His knowledge.

N. I imagine you have no doubts about the eternity of the Divine Nature and of all things which are created in It and through It and for It and from It, and that It alone is truly and uniquely eternal, and that every eternal is eternal through participation in Its eternity?

A. How could I have any doubt about this, when so much evidence is provided by reason and divine authority? For if the One God is the Cause and End of all things it follows that He alone is uniquely eternal, and everything which partakes of Him is only (derivatively) eternal. For what else can be eternal save Himself and that which is created in and from Him? 926B

N. Do you consider that sin, and its henchmen death and damnation, and the divers penalties of the damned were created by God or participate in His virtue? For as to the text, "Life and Death are from the Lord God," the reference is not, I think, to the death which humanity suffers because of sin, and by which it pays the punishment of corruption which follows the sin, but that of which the Psalmist says "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints," which means, Right dear is the passing of the purged and perfected souls into the inmost contemplation of Truth, which truly is true Blessedness and everlasting life. This is the death experienced even in this life by those who live religiously, and piously and chastely seek their God, in which they behold as in a 926C

mirror darkly that which they seek, but in the life to come when they return into their former glory of the Divine Image to which they were created, raised above all things they shall see their God “face to face”, in so far as it is given to the comprehensible and intelligible creature to behold the incomprehensible and unintelligible Cause of the Universe. By “face to face” is meant “in the highest possible theophany,” as the Apostle says: “We now behold as in a mirror darkly but then face to face,” meaning by the word “face” a certain apparition, comprehensible to the human intellect, of the Divine

926D Virtue which in Itself is perceived by no creature. Further, if evil and death and unhappiness are contrary to the nature which has been created by God, and are not created in the Cause of all things nor participate in it, I am surprised that you are still hesitating over the possibility that evil and the death of eternal torment shall for ever afflict that human nature which the Word of God set free by taking it wholly upon Himself, although right reason shows that nothing contrary to the Divine Goodness and Life and Blessedness can be coeternal therewith. For the Divine Goodness shall consume evil, eternal Life shall swallow up death, Blessedness shall absorb

927A unhappiness. For it is written: “I am thy death, O death, I am thy devourer, O hell.” But perhaps you still feel that the Lord Jesus, in taking human nature upon Him and saving it did not take upon Him or save the whole of it, but merely a small fragment? But such an opinion is refuted by reasons already given.

A. Now I perceive that there is no way out for me, and no argument remains to show that evil, death and damnation shall finally overwhelm human nature either in whole or in part: for it is wholly redeemed and liberated in the Word of God Who has brought it wholly within the unity of His Substance. So, defeated by

927B the force of sound reason, I am compelled to admit that the whole of human nature must be set free in all who participate therein, and that every bond of evil and death and damnation must be loosened when that nature returns into its Causes, which subsist in its Saviour. But convinced as I now am about human nature, I am still uncertain whether it is in every creature that evil shall be done away with, or only in human nature. For I am of the opinion that the demonic intelligences shall never be without evil and all its consequences; and therefore while granting that, by the bestowal of the Grace of God in cooperation with natural virtue, evil shall be wholly eliminated from the nature of man, I think that in that of the demons it will endure forever, and will be co-eternal therein with the



Divine Goodness; and therefore evil will not be eliminated from every nature.

N. I think you have not yet quite grasped the fact that God 927C punishes no nature created by Him, whether in human or demonic nature; but that in all natures He punishes what He has not created, i.e., the irrational motions of the perverse will. But to remove all doubt once and for all, hear what the blessed Augustine says on the subject of evil and the demonic nature in the eleventh book of his *Hexameron*:

“Some believe that (the Devil) did not deviate into evil of his own free will, but was wholly created therein, although he was created by the Supreme Lord God and Creator of all natures. And they call upon the evidence of the Book of Job, where it is written of the Devil: ‘This is the beginning of the creation of God, which He made in order that it might be played upon by His angels.’ — a passage consistent with the words of the Psalmist: ‘This dragon which Thou hast fashioned in order to play upon him’ unless by the words ‘whom Thou hast fashioned’ he means something different 927D from the phrase ‘this is the beginning of the creation of God,’ which seems to imply that He had fashioned him from the beginning as an evil and envious seducer, so that he is absolutely diabolical, not as the result of corruption of the will, but created so. But how can this interpretation be harmonised with the words ‘God made all things, and, behold, they were exceeding good,’ when it is found that the Devil, not because he was corrupted by his own will, but because he was so created by the Lord God, is essentially evil? Let them try to answer that.

“A wiser and more subtle theory is the following: Not only in its first creation but even now after the corruption of so many wills 928A all created things generally, i.e., the universal creature, is exceeding good, not because in it the evil are good, but because their evil cannot succeed in upsetting and debasing the order and harmony of the Universe which is under the command of the Divine administration, i.e., the power of His Wisdom, for to every will, evil as well as good, there are yet certain appropriate limits of power and measures of award, so that even the evil wills are justly and suitably ordered, and the Universe is fair and lovely. But as to the opinion, and it is clearly a just one, that it would be contrary to His Righteousness that God should in any nature condemn, for no prior offence, that which He has created therein, while the condemnation of the Devil and his angels is established by the evidence of the Gospel, where 928B

the Lord proclaims that to those on the left hand He will say 'Depart into the eternal fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels;' we must believe that it is certainly not his nature, which God created, that must submit to the punishment of the everlasting fire, but his own evil will."

Ambrose, in his *Commentary on Luke*, shows most clearly that the evil of the demons is not eternal: "The demon," he says, "begins to pray for the power of entering into the swine. And first he ought to observe the clemency of the Lord, Who Himself never condemns any man at once, but each man is the author of his own punishment. The demons are not sent (unwillingly) into the swine, but they themselves ask for it, because they cannot bear the brilliance of the heavenly light, any more than those with weak eyes can bear the rays of the sun, but choose shady places, shunning the light. So the demons flee from the brightness of eternal Light, and fear before the time is due the torments they deserve, not because they foresee the things that are to be, but because they recall the things that have been prophesied. For Zacharias had written: 'And it shall be in that day that the Lord shall destroy the names of the idols out of the land, and there shall be no memory of them, and I shall purge the foul spirit out of the earth.' So we are taught that they shall not remain forever, lest their evil should be eternal. Now therefore, fearing that penalty, they cry: 'Hast Thou come to destroy us before the due time?' But because they desire to prolong their existence even though they must relinquish their human habitation, on account of which they know they must undergo punishment, they ask to be sent into the swine."

But in case you should suppose that not only the wickedness in the Devil but also his substance shall be done away with (for by substance he means not the nature created by God, but the whole consequence of the Devil's apostasy, i.e., the prompting of his pride, the hostile will, the baseness of his idolatry; for in so far as he is named Devil, he subsists entirely of these and their like, as though they were his members, and the same may be understood of the aerial body which was added to his nature), and lest you should think that death and the sting of death, which is sin and all evil, shall not perish in every rational creature, but that only in part of creation shall these be abolished (while in part they shall remain), hear what the great Origen, that most diligent enquirer into the nature of things, says in the third book of the *Treatise on First Principles*, concerning the end of the world, that is to say, concerning

the Supreme Good to Which the whole of nature is hastening that God may be all in all (for according to his teaching the end of the world is nothing else but the being of God as all things in all things):

“Let us ask ourselves what is meant by the ‘all things’ which God shall become in all. My own opinion is that this phrase ‘God is said to be all things in all things’ means that even in individuals He is all things. In individuals He will be all things in such a way that whatsoever the rational mind, purged from all filthiness of sin and utterly cleansed from the fog of evil, can either feel or understand or think will be God, nor will that mind behold any more anything else but Him, nor cleave to any but Him, and God will be the mode and measure of every one of its motions. Thus God will be all things. For there will be no more any distinction between good and evil because evil will be no more: and in him who no longer has contact with evil God is all things: and he who resides evermore in the Good and for whom God is all things no longer shall desire to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. Therefore if the end shall be brought back to the beginning, and the outcome of all things shall be related to their origin, He shall restore that condition which the rational nature possessed at the time when it had no need to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, so that all sense of evil being removed and converted into purity, God alone, Who is One will become for it all things, not in few or in many instances but in all, for death will be no more, the sting of death will be no more, evil will be no more at all. Then indeed will God be all in all.

“But some hold that that perfection and blessedness of rational natures shall at last come to rest in that state which we have described, so that all things shall possess God and God shall be all things in them, only if no association with corporeal nature removes them. For otherwise, they think, the glory of the transcendent blessedness will be limited, if an admixture of material substance is added. We have treated and thrashed out more fully the ideas on this matter that we encountered earlier on. But now, since we find that the Apostle Paul has made mention of the spiritual body, let us consider how we should interpret his teaching only as far as we can. As far as I can understand it, I think that the quality of the spiritual body is such as to be a fitting abode not only for all hallowed and perfected souls, but also for the whole creature that is to be liberated from the servitude of corruption. It is of this body also that the Apostle says ‘We have a dwelling not made with hands, being eternal in the heavens, i.e., in the mansions of the blessed.’ This

930A gives us an indication of the purity and subtlety and glory of that  
 body compared with those which are now, even the most splendid  
 and heavenly, visible and made with hands. But of the other we are  
 told that it is not made with hands, but is eternal in the heavens.  
 Since, then, those which are visible are temporal whereas those  
 which are invisible are eternal, all these bodies which we behold or  
 can behold on earth and in heaven and which are made with hands  
 and are not eternal are far excelled by that which is neither visible  
 nor made with hands but eternal.

The  
 simplicity  
 and unity of  
 bodies after  
 the  
 resurrection

930B “This comparison gives us an indication of the glory, splendour  
 and brightness of the spiritual body; and hence the truth of the  
 saying ‘that the eye has not seen nor the ear heard nor the heart of  
 man conceived the things which God has prepared for those who  
 love Him.’ But it cannot be doubted that the nature of the body  
 which we now possess can be changed into the quality of the most  
 subtle and most pure and most glorious body by its Creator, in so  
 far as the state of nature shall summon it, and dues of its rational  
 nature shall demand. Finally, when the world was without variety  
 and diversity, matter presented itself in all humility through diverse  
 appearances and forms, as to its Lord and Creator, so that He might  
 make from it the diverse forms of heavenly and earthly things. But  
 since nature hastens to that end, that all may be one even as the  
 Father with the Son is One, it follows that where all things are one  
 there will be no more diversity. Therefore even the last enemy, the  
 930C Devil, who is also called death, is said to be destroyed: so that there  
 is no sorrow any more, for there is no more death, no more  
 diversity, for there is no enemy.

930D “The destruction of the last enemy is to be understood not in  
 the sense that his substance, which is made by God, perishes, but  
 that the hostile intention and will, which proceeds not from God but  
 from himself, shall be done away with. He shall be destroyed, then,  
 not in the sense that he will cease to be, but that he will cease to be an  
 enemy and death. For to the Omnipotent nothing is impossible, and  
 nothing is irreparable to its Creator. For to this end He made all  
 things that they should be, and those things that were made in order  
 that they should be cannot not be. And to this end shall they be  
 endowed with mutability and variety, that in accordance with their  
 deserts they should obtain a better or a worse condition. But  
 substantial destruction cannot happen to things which God has  
 created to the end that they should be and that they should endure.”

Thus, what Ambrose left in doubt, Origen makes clear. For when Ambrose says "We are taught that the demons shall not remain forever, lest their evil should be eternal," it is uncertain whether he means that the substance of the demons shall perish together with their evil, or only the evil on account of which they are called demons, while their nature remains incorruptible. But Origen 931A unhesitatingly affirms that in demons the substance created by God shall abide forever, while the evil which is found in their perverse will shall perish eternally. For the expressions "demon," "devil," "the enemy," and "death" are not applicable to the nature but to the evil will. Therefore St. Augustine has taught you that "in the Devil God shall punish not that which He created but that which He did not create;" and Origen that the substance of the Devil shall never be done away with, but only his evil. And to convince yourself more surely of this read what the great Dionysius the Areopagite says in the book *On the Divine Names*, where he argues that there is no evil in the nature of the demons, and that that nature can neither 931B be corrupted nor diminished.

"But not even the demons are evil by nature. For if they were," 28 he says, arguing from the premiss that the demons are created from the Good, and have a natural subsistence, and are turned away from the Good by abandoning it, "they could neither have been created from the Good, nor have any place among existent things, nor even have turned from the Good by nature, but would have been evil from all eternity. Next, are they evil to themselves or to others? If to themselves, must they not destroy themselves? If to others, what is it that they destroy, essence, potency or act? If essence, that would be contrary to nature: for they could not destroy things which by their very nature are indestructible, but only those things which are susceptible of destruction (i.e., they destroy no nature, for no nature is susceptible of evil). Even so, destruction is not in all cases and in every respect an evil. No existing thing is destroyed, insofar as it is an essence or a nature, but the reason of its harmony and proportion is weakened by a failing in natural order, whereas it should remain as it was. Again, this impairing is not absolute: for if 931C it were so, it would annul the destruction as well as the thing destroyed: such a destruction would destroy itself, and that cannot 932A be an evil but a deficiency of good. For that in which there is no trace of the good will not be among existent things. And we may apply the same argument to the destruction of potency and act. (Just as nature cannot be destroyed, so neither can natural potency and natural act suffer destruction.)

“Then how may we say that the demons, which were made by God, are evil? For whatsoever things are brought forth and substantiated by the Good must themselves be good. One could say that they are called evil not with reference to their nature, for they came into being from the Good and derive therefrom a good essence; but with reference to what they are not, through their incapacity, as the Scriptures say, to preserve their own principle.

932B For, tell me, in what do the demons offend save in ceasing from their condition and activity in the sphere of the Good? If it were otherwise, if the demons were evil by nature, then they are always evil. But in evil there is no permanence. If, then, they eternally preserve their self-identity, they cannot be evil. For to remain always the same is the property of the Good. But if they are not evil eternally, then they have not evil by nature, but by a deficiency in the angelic virtues. But they are not altogether deprived of the Good, for they have being, life and understanding, and there is in them a certain tendency of motion. They are called evil simply because of a deficiency in their natural operation. Their evil consists in a decadence, a desertion and a paralysis of the qualities that are proper to them, an imperfection and a failing in power, a flaw in the faculty of preserving their perfection, a taking away, a fall. What else in the demons is evil? Irrational rage, a mad lust, an intemperate

932C fancy. But although these are found in demons, they are not confined to them, and are not found in all, and are not evil in themselves. For in other animals it is not the possession of them, but the deprivation and destruction of them that causes evil in the animal. The possession of them rather constitutes and preserves the animal’s nature, which possesses them.

933A “So the race of demons is not evil insofar as nature is observed, but rather insofar as it is not. Nor is the good with which they are endowed taken away from them, but it is they that depart from it. Nor must we say that the angelic graces conferred upon them have ever undergone change — for they preserve their integrity and are manifestly present — it is the demons who stop up the sense by which they can contemplate their own good. Therefore that which the demons are is derived from the Good, and therefore they are good, and seek the Beautiful and the Good; for all things that are tend towards being, life and understanding. They are called evil, and rightly so, because of their deprivation of, flight and fall from the goods that are proper to them: that is to say, they are evil according to what they are not; and since they are desirous of what does not exist they are desirous of evil.”

Notice the force and subtlety of his language. First he makes the brief general statement that the demons are not evil by nature, 933B  
 “But not even the demons are evil by nature.” Then he gives the reason: “for if they were they could neither have been created from the Good,” that is, by God, Who alone derives His Goodness from Himself: for everything which is created by Him is good, for evil cannot come out of good, nor can it be reckoned in the number of natures which exist.

“Nor even have turned from the Good by nature.” That is, it is not in their nature that they are changed from good angels into the malice of a perverse will. For such are the words our author is accustomed to apply to the transgressing angels.

“Turned.” This refers to the change from nature of the good angels, and the fall from wisdom.

“But would have been evil from all eternity.” The negative is understood from the preceding phrase, and the meaning is that they are *not* evil from all eternity. For that which is evil by nature cannot always have existed: it is impossible for the nature of evil and wickedness to be eternal. But the demonic substance is imperishable: 933C  
 therefore it cannot be evil by nature.

Thereafter the argument is maintained by means of questions. “Next, are the demons evil to themselves or to others?” That is to say, if it were a fact that they were evil by nature, they must be evil either to themselves or to others.

And “if to themselves, must they not destroy themselves?” Yes, destroy! Impossible, for no nature can destroy itself. For in every nature destruction is an accident. Therefore if the nature of demons were evil it would not be so to itself, for it cannot destroy itself. For evil is the destruction not of evil, but of good.

“If to others.” If they were by nature evil to the others, the good angels, “what do they destroy” in them, “essence, potency or act?” He means they can destroy none of these three: for essence, 933D  
 potency and act are in all things incorruptible, for in these three every nature subsists. Hence he goes on to say:

“But if essence, that would be contrary to nature.” We are speaking of the essence by which nature subsists. That is, “they cannot destroy things which by their nature are indestructible,” i.e., essence, potency and act, “but only those things which are susceptible of destruction,” things which can be destroyed, like the natural accidents, the qualities and quantities and the other attributes which

934A can be made greater or smaller, and are described as being in a given subject. But it is not by evil that they are destroyed. For the accidents of a substance to become greater or less is not an evil, nor a destruction, but a kind of issuing forth (from the nature of the substances) and a falling away from their capacity. Therefore he says:

“Destruction is not in all cases nor in every respect an evil,” that is, not even are the things which are susceptible to destruction destroyed by evil, because it is not wholly evil. For in this text the single negative is to be understood twice: “*not* in all cases and *not* in every respect evil.” For what, having no existence of its own, could destroy? For every kind of destruction of which we have experience in the nature of mutable things is either a falling short of perfection or a change from one rational species to another, or a transformation of the general into the particular or of the particular into the general: these things are not evils, but the natural qualitative and 934B quantitative events and conversions which affect natural objects. The rest of this chapter (of the *Divine Names*) is straightforward and does not require exposition. For its teaching is very plain: none of the things which exist are to be destroyed as far as their essence or nature is concerned; the term “destruction” is to be interpreted as a falling short of their proper rank, and a flaw in the harmony. For it is through these two faults that the mutables are prevented from eternally preserving their self-identity. Therefore destruction is not an evil, but an insufficiency of good. For if it were evil it would have no place in nature.

St. Dionysius also teaches that the demons are not evil in what they are, for they derive from the Highest Good and participate of the Highest Essence; but they are called evil because of what they are 934C not. And he shows quite clearly what it is in them that is called evil, namely, their incapacity to abide by their Principle, i.e., the Highest Good, from which they derive being; and they neglect and abandon their proper condition and activity in relation to divine goods; as well as other things in respect of which the wretched state of the demons is expounded by our Master with admirable lucidity, as he also expounds the goodness of their nature and the fact that none of the graces with which they were endowed at their creation is changed in them or annulled, “but that the integrity and purity of their nature abides forever, although the demons themselves no longer comprehend their speculative powers,” which are innate in them for the purpose of contemplating their Creator should they



desire to do so, "but fleeing from the True Light and falling away from" the contemplative energy of the angels who are perfect in their connaturalness with them, "they seek that which is not": that is all that is meant when we speak of evil and wickedness.

934D

You see, then, that the nature of demons is both good and a creation of the highest Good, and that it is on account of what they are not and not of what they are that they are called evil. From this it naturally follows that the only part of them which is permanent and which is never to be punished is that in them which is created by the Most High God; while that in them which is not of God, that is, their wickedness, will be done away with, lest evil come into existence in any creature whatsoever, whether human or angelic, everlasting and coeternal with the good.

935A

The same thing is to be understood concerning death and damnation, lest anything which is contrary to Life and Blessedness could be thought coeternal with them. But if wickedness and death, and the sting of death which is sin, and all damnation, and above all the last enemy, which is the malice of the demons and universal impiety (and the true death), shall be totally abolished from the whole of nature, would not the consequence be that nothing would remain but the whole creation purged from every stain of wickedness and impiety and utterly free from all death and destruction? This is the general resurrection of the universal creature, which shall be free from servitude, and the renewal of nature, which is typified by the earth in the words of the Prophet: "Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail and shall return to their dust: Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be made, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth." And again he says that "the Lord rejoices in His works, when the sinners and evil-doers shall fade from the earth as though they had not been." For how can anyone derive his nature from sin, when sin does not exist? or how can there be an evil man when evil is done away with? As the Prophet says again: "the impious shall not rise on the day of judgment." For when humanity is restored in the resurrection, it shall be purged of all impiety and damnation and death. Therefore there shall be no resurrection of the evil and the wicked: for only nature shall rise again; evil and wickedness shall perish in eternal damnation.

935B

A. What then of that eternal fire, and the penalty of the lake of burning brimstone, and the worm that dieth not, and all the other torments which Holy Scripture reserves for the Devil and all his host? If these are regarded as historically true and have the property

935C

of sensible objects, then they must have a physical existence in some part of the physical world. And if so, it must mean that either the whole or part of this world shall be reserved for the perpetual damnation of the damned, and therefore it shall not entirely be drawn up into the consummation of the Return into its Causes when "God shall be all in all," — for that and nothing else, as we have already agreed, is what is meant by the consummation of the world, namely, God's being all in all things. And furthermore, and more importantly, what is left to be punished if no substantial subject remains worthy of punishment? Moreover, if the whole world, and the whole universal creature which has been created by God is not  
 935D to return into the eternal Causes in which it has its subsistence, then our whole discourse up to this point is proved vain, and breaks down completely.

N. If that were so, not only should we indeed have laboured in vain, but the testimonies of the Holy Fathers upon which we have drawn would be brought into contempt: which God forbid.

A. Then come to my assistance and give a satisfactory explanation of these forms of torment which are foretold by the History that does not lie.

29 N. It is our belief that the various kinds of punishment will not  
 936A be found localised in any place anywhere in the whole of this visible Universe, or, to be succinct, anywhere within the length and breadth of the nature which is created by God. Moreover they never shall exist, any more than they do at present, save in the perverse motions of evil and corrupt wills and consciences, and consist in late and unavailing repentance, and in every kind of perversion of power, whether in the human or the angelic creature. Now that which is perverted is that which is wholly destroyed; and what shall be wholly destroyed is every capacity for sin, for evil-doing, and for the practice of impiety. But when the faculty for all wickedness is wholly removed, will not the sole occasion for that faculty, the perverse will, be extinguished also? — just as "faith without works is dead?"  
 936B For faith without works is mute: and so it is in the case of sin when there is no occasion for sinning; evil where there is no evil-doing; and impiety where there is no worship of idols. For although the lust and fever of evil-doing will always be present in perverse wills, seeing that the object of lust can never be attained, and the flame of evil will have nothing but itself to consume, what else is left but stinking corpses lacking all vital motion, lacking, that is, all substance and potency of natural goods? And here it is, perhaps,

that we have the most severe torments of evil men and evil angels, the lust for evil combined with the impossibility of assuaging it either before or after the Day of Judgment.

The view that it is not in any spatial locality or in any corporeal prison but each within the confines of his own evil will that the Devil and his associates shall be punished is clearly put by the blessed Ambrose in his *Commentary on Luke* where he expounds the passage from the Gospel: "He shall be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth :"

"What" (asks St. Ambrose) "is the outer darkness? Is it in some prison or quarry that sentence must be served? Not at all. But whosoever lies outside the disposals of the Heavenly Precepts is in outer darkness : for the Precepts of God are Light ; and whosoever is without Christ is in darkness, for Christ is the inner light. Neither therefore is there any physical grinding of teeth, nor any eternal fire of corporeal flames, nor is that worm a corporeal worm, but the meaning of these expressions is that just as fevers and worms are the effects of an ill-balanced diet, so he who does not temper his sins by the practice of sober abstinence, but rather adds to them other sins, contracts from the mixture of old and new sins an illness, and will be consumed in the fire of his own fever and devoured by the worms of his own body. Hence Isaiah also says : Walk in the light of your fire, and in the flame which you have kindled. The fire is that which is produced by the wretchedness of our transgressions. The worm is the bite of irrational sins upon the mind and the physical sense, which devour the bowels of conscience and which like worms are ever generated one from another, as though out of the body of the sinner. Finally God, speaking through the mouth of Isaiah has declared the following: And they shall behold the limbs of the men who have transgressed against me, and their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be extinguished. And a gnashing of teeth reveals the agony of the unworthy, for the fact that his repentance is too late, too late his remorse, too late his self-rebuke, for having sinned with such persistent wickedness."

Note then in what kind of place our Theologian locates the torments. Where is Judas chastised, who betrayed our Saviour? Can it be anywhere but in that defiled conscience in which he betrayed his Lord? What kind of penalty does he pay? The tardy and ineffectual repentance with which he is eternally consumed. What does Dives suffer in hell? Is it not the lack of those sumptuous

banquets upon which he used to feed in this present life? What is the flame that consumes that most impious King Herod but the rage  
 937B which drove him to slaughter the Holy Innocents? These examples of the perverse motions of evil wills, by which through a most righteous recompense they torment themselves for their sins and these wounds caused by various lusts are enough for our purpose. For each evil liver shall be tormented as though by an inextinguishable flame by the lust of his own sins with which he burned when in the flesh. And as to the punishment of the perverse wills of the demons, what should we think it to be but the eternal bridle that holds them in check, and the eternal destruction of their wickedness? For what worse punishment can the wicked suffer than the incapability of actualising their wickedness or of doing harm to anyone? This is the chain with which our Lord Jesus Christ bound the Devil when He descended into hell; taking away from him the power of destroying those whose belief in Christ was perfect and devout and  
 937C those who observe His Commandments: — although before the Day of Judgment the demons beg not to be punished, but to be sent into the swine, that is to say, into licentious men, in whom they may continue to exercise their powers. For they are condemned to a closer bondage after the judgment when every creature shall be set free from the Devil's power, and wholly absolved from servitude, and shall return into its proper Cause, that is to say, into God, Who is the Beginning of all things and their End. "For," says blessed Maximus, "the administration of visible things in terms of generation and passing away will be brought to an end in the great general resurrection, by which man is born into the immortality of immutable substance, for the sake of which the nature of visible things took unto itself being through the mode of generation, and with which it shall receive through Grace the non-corruptibility of  
 937D essence. Therefore it is to loosen these bonds of the visible creature that the Word of God is born of man in the flesh without sin of man, and is baptised into the spiritual Sonship, for our sakes voluntarily undergoing generation, God according to His Essence, and the Son of God according to His Nature; that he might bring to an end generation out of the body, He is born as a body without sin, and through baptism into the spiritual sonship the Nature of God was willing to suffer for us His Nativity. For since Adam of his own free will abandoned the spiritual generation into deification, and was  
 938A born after the flesh into corruption, He in His infinite goodness and mercy became man for the sake of our sin, and He Who alone is free from sin convicted Himself for us and condescended to be born by

generation in the flesh, thereby showing Himself stronger than the weight of our condemnation and restoring the birth of the mystical body in the spirit. And loosening in Himself for us the chains of fleshly birth, He gave us power through birth in the Spirit to become the Sons of God, not after the flesh and the blood, but as believers in His name.”

And it is envy because of this which is the greatest torment the Devil suffers within himself. For he is tortured by the sight of the great general resurrection of the human substance, and in it of all visible things into an immutable immortality, by which they have eluded his clutches, although he had decreed that their substance should be surrendered to him for imprisonment and utter destruction, and that it should be kept in the pains of eternal death and everlasting torment. For when the mutability of fleshly birth and passing away shall have come to an end, wherein shall be found the power of the Ancient Enemy? Nowhere. 938B

A. I think that everything you have said is in accordance with reason and could be verified by authority. But there still remains, it seems to me, one very difficult problem: Upon whom will those punishments actually fall, which, the Divine Testimony declares, are destined not only for the devil but for sinners. To select a few from many possible examples, Our Lord in the Gospel warns us that He will say: “Depart from me, ye wicked, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels,” indicating that the devil and his angels are to be consumed in everlasting fire. And in the Apocalypse we find this: “The devil, who seduced them, is cast into a lake of fire and sulphur where the beasts and the false prophets shall be tormented day and night forever,” where by “day” we understand the damnation of the wicked which is revealed to the pure intellects of angels and of men, and by “night” the depth of the Wisdom of God which is known to none. Observe that I am not now enquiring about the nature or location of the punishments, for I am sufficiently convinced by what you have just said on the authority of Ambrose, that they will be neither physical nor sensible nor in time nor in any place. That must clearly be so, for when the world comes to an end, there will be neither corporeal nor sensible entities nor space nor time in which we could conceive those torments taking place. For all these things will come to an end with the world, since all bodies will be resolved into spirit, all place into a non-extended simplicity, all time into eternity. Therefore we should interpret the eternity of that fire about which Our Lord shall say “Depart from 938C 938D

me, ye wicked, into eternal fire,” and in another place: “They shall  
 939A depart into eternal torment,” and again in the Apocalypse, “They  
 shall be tortured by day and by night forever” not as duration or as  
 an infinite succession of temporal revolutions, but as referring to the  
 irrevocability and incommutability of the decree of the most  
 righteous of all judges. The same is true of the eternity of the life of  
 the blessed, which we must not look upon as an extent of time, for it  
 remains forever unchangeably in itself, transcending all time without  
 beginning and without end. Hence anything that is called eternal  
 must be thought of as being nowhere but in God, lest we should  
 imagine that there could be any eternity outside Him Who alone is  
 eternal and Eternity itself. Thus the attribute of eternity could be  
 properly applied either to the unalterable severity of His most just  
 decrees whereby in the wicked He allows the eternal punishment of  
 that which He did not create, or to His ineffable and supernatural  
 grace by which He deifies and exalts above all things those whom  
 He foreknew and predestined to take the form of the Image of His  
 Son. For nothing is coeternal with God, just as nothing is contrary  
 939B to Him. He, then, alone is eternal in those who are in Him  
 and live in bliss eternal through His Grace freely bestowed: but to  
 those who are without Him, since they are not from Him, and  
 therefore although they are said to exist in fact have no being at all,  
 He is eternal in the severity of His judgment. So it is not about the  
 corporeality, the locality or the temporality of the punishments that  
 I am questioning you: for it is clear that the torments of the wicked  
 will be of a spiritual nature. But I am still not satisfied in what we  
 ought to consider these punishments to lie. For since the punish-  
 ments are accidents they must belong to some subject. If there can  
 be no accident unless it be in a subject, and if subject is to be defined  
 939C as that which subsists of itself, then it must follow that the  
 punishments will lie in some subject which subsists of itself. Further,  
 if everything that subsists of itself obtains its subsistence from Him  
 Who is the cause of all that subsists (for anything which is not from  
 the cause of all that subsists, is altogether nothing and does not  
 subsist in the number of existing things), then it must follow that the  
 condemnation to punishment must exist in some substance which  
 obtains its subsistence from God. But if we allow that, we shall no  
 longer be able to say that the Divine Justice does not punish in any  
 creature that He has created that which He has created, for in all  
 things which are from Him everything which He, Who is impassible  
 and indestructible, created must likewise be impassible and indes-  
 tructible and susceptible to no passions. Now, by passions here I do

not mean those which are innate in its nature, such as the senses of 939D  
 the body, but those that are alien to its nature, and which hover  
 about the bodily matter in this our mortal life: for these cannot  
 affect or destroy the trinity of our nature, which is essence, potency  
 and act, although they seem to be attempting to assault it. The  
 passions to which I refer are: sexual propagation in the manner of  
 the irrational beasts; bodily increase and decrease; all the diseases 940A  
 to which the body is heir, including its final dissolution; also the  
 irrational impulses to which the rational soul is subject, and which,  
 deriving from matter, revolve about it. None of these things are part  
 of the primal creation of man, but originate from his general sin;  
 and therefore they will perish with the matter which they have  
 infected when that primal creation of man shall be freed from these  
 passions and all others like them, and be purged in the spiritual fire  
 of the divine grace and goodness. This is what the prophet Isaiah  
 means by Jerusalem when he says: "I will sanctify her in flaming  
 fire and it will devour matter like hay." Here the fire is not that  
 which by a most just decree tortures the wicked, but that which by a  
 most merciful grace purges away the uncleanness of our nature. But 940B  
 if the Divine Justice in every creature excludes from punishment  
 anything which was created by the Supreme Good, so that not only  
 may it exist but also that it may endure forever impassible and  
 unaffected by conflicting passions, how may that be punished which  
 is clearly seen to have no existence in nature whatever? How may  
 such be the subject of chastisement? Or, how can the torments of  
 the damned exist without a subject to afflict?

N. An extremely knotty problem, and difficult to solve, as you  
 say. In this question we have three choices, one to be accepted and  
 the other two to be rejected. For we are bound to admit: either that  
 that which has no existence in nature whatsoever can be punished in  
 itself in the absence of any subject (a proposition which reason  
 cannot accept, for how can that be punished which does not subsist  
 in anything?); or that there is in nature some subject which  
 undergoes punishment (which you have seen for yourself to be even 940C  
 more offensive to reason and to authority; for everything which has  
 been established in nature by the Supreme Good, whether as  
 substance or as accident, is excluded from punishment by the Divine  
 Justice and providential care, so that there should be no sorrow or  
 suffering found in the universal creature); or that that which is  
 punished does not exist in itself but is punished in some subject  
 which exists and is free of all punishment. Choose which of these  
 three we shall adopt.

A. I should choose the third, which is a combination of the first two, if it were possible to defend it. For we are prevented by our previous investigations from saying either that that which does not exist and is not found in nature can be tormented ; or that a natural subject can be punished. But it does seem credible and likely to me  
 940D that a vice which does not exist of itself but is in some subject which exists of itself and is impassible, because it is not allowed to suffer, could suffer punishment — though at the moment it escapes my mind if such a thing could be.

N. Truth comes with eagerness to those who sincerely and devotedly seek her, and reveals herself to them: she reveals what escapes their minds. But let us seek her together, proceeding in a  
 941A logical manner, taking turns as to who shall lead the discussion and who shall follow.

A. Do you lead first.

31 N. We are speaking about the Return of human nature, and of  
 The praise of  
 humanity  
 all things which are created in it and for it, in it and with it into its First Cause. For I am not discussing now the substance of the demons, which the creator of all things created in them good and indestructible, nor am I enquiring as to whether that nature too when it is purged shall be brought back to its First Cause which by its transgression it abandoned, or whether it is to persist in its perversity and refuse to contemplate the Truth forever. With regard to that let us for the time being be content to be assured of this : that the demonic nature itself is not punished nor ever shall be punished but that the glory of its primal state before it waxed proud and seduced mankind abides in it eternally and immutably without any diminution and shall ever so abide ; while the wickedness which it  
 941B contracted through pride shall be totally destroyed lest it should be coeternal with the Goodness of God. But concerning its salvation and its conversion or Return into its proper Cause we presume to say nothing, for this reason : that we have no certain knowledge of it either from sacred scriptures or from the Holy Fathers that have dealt with this matter, and therefore we prefer to honour its obscurity with silence, lest in searching into matters which are beyond us we should rather fall into error than ascend into the Truth. Let us, then, rather, by God's aid, pursue our enquiries into a matter which does not lie beyond us, namely, our own nature.

A. It is right for us to do so : for not only are we permitted but  
 941C are actually enjoined to make this enquiry. For Solomon says : "If



you do not know yourself, walk with the beasts of the field.” For he who is ignorant of his own nature and that of his fellow beings is not much better than a brute beast. Again, Moses says: “Look to yourself,” and read as in a book the history of the activities of your soul. For if we are unwilling to learn and know about ourselves, that means that we have no desire to return to that which is above ourselves, namely our proper cause, and shall continue to wallow in the bed of carnal matter and the death of ignorance. For there is no other way to the most pure contemplation of the First Cause than the certain knowledge of Its image which comes after It. For between the archetype and its image and likeness, that is, between God and man, there is no intervening nature. It was because they understood this that the Greeks called humanity ἀνθρωπία that is, 941D ἀνωτροπία a turning towards what is above or ἄνω τηροῦσα ὀπία that is, “holding the gaze aloft.” For man was created for the contemplation of his Creator, without any creature interposed.

N. Come then, tell me, do you think that that human nature, which has no creature interposed between it and its creator, is a simple indivisible nature, not susceptible to partition?

A. That is what I believe. For otherwise it would not be the Image of God, Who is a single and indivisible One, and One Essence 942A in three substances; and herein too man is understood to be His Image in the trinity of *esse, uelle, scire* (being, willing, knowing), as is stated by St. Augustine in his *Confessions*. But Dionysius the Areopagite teaches that this trinity consists of essence, potency and act. There is, however no disagreement here, only a verbal difference, and not even that in each case, for both call (the first member) *esse*. But the second member is called by one *uelle*, by the other potency — but even here there is no real difference, for there is no potency which belongs more properly to the nature and substance of man than to will well. Again although one says *scire* (knowing) where another says act, what is the act proper to a rational nature if it is not to know itself and its God, in so far as That Which is beyond all knowledge can be known? This then is the act which is proper to 942B our nature, and it is not beyond us but within us. What else should we desire to know but our Cause, Which by Its ineffable Providence is within us and by Its incomprehensible power is beyond us? But about these matters enough has been said, I think, in the earlier books.

N. Quite enough. But don't be afraid or think it not worth while to run over them again if you think that will make the subject clearer to you.

A. Certainly not.

N. Human nature, then, is in itself a simple creature, but in its "reasons" it is infinitely manifold; just as its Cause also is in Itself simple and more than simple, but in Its effects in the nature that was made by It It is infinite and more than infinite. Now the cause of human nature is that Supreme Goodness Which alone is good in Itself to which humanity is most similar; and just as the Cause is everywhere wholly in Itself, so human nature, as the Image which  
 942C most perfectly resembles It, is also everywhere wholly within itself. And just as the Divine Goodness is wholly in every nature which partakes of It, and is not prevented by the malice or folly of anyone from pervading the Universe which It has established, so human nature is distributed through all men, and is wholly in all, and wholly in each individual, whether good or evil. For no man's folly repulses it, no man's malice restrains it, no man's vice corrupts it; no filth defiles it but it is pure in all; it is not puffed up in the proud, it does not sicken in the cowardly; in the greater bodies it is not greater, nor in the smaller less, but in all it is equal, and proceeds in equal measure into each of the natures which participates in it; it is not better in the good than in the evil, nor worse in the evil than in the good; in perfect bodies it is not more perfect than in those which  
 942D for some reason have lost their perfection or have never attained it. An illustration: the sun's ray penetrates the pure and the impure alike, but it itself remains pure in all, and is not more pure in brightly shining natures than it is uncontaminated in tarnished natures. For it exists (wholly) in all things which it illumines. It shines in the darkness and, lo, it allows no darkness within itself, while it comprehends within itself the causes of darkness, not only as shadows but as deprivations of light: for there is no darkness in nature which is not bounded by light. For if it is in bodies, no matter how far those bodies extend, in the end the light will encompass it;  
 943A and if it is in spiritual natures in the form of ignorance of the Truth, the brightness of Wisdom will set a limit to it. In like manner there is no deprivation which is not caused by that of which it is the deprivation. For if the light had never shone forth, then the darkness, which is the deprivation of light, would not have followed. The deprivation, therefore, and that of which it is the deprivation,

belong to one genus : as light and darkness of one genus, sound and silence, form and formlessness, and all pairs of this kind.

But who can worthily describe the Image of God, and who can find worthy objects with which to compare it? But that you may know that human nature is equal in all men consider the common form of human bodies: no one human being is more human than another; for if he be afflicted with any deformity or marked by any distinguishing feature, that deformity and that feature do not derive from his nature, but from some corruption of the perfection of his body, or from some accident which comes from without and which attaches to individuals certain distinctive marks, while the form remains the same as it was generally imposed by nature upon all. One fivefold bodily sense is present to all alike, even though in many its organs, by which I mean the eyes, the ears and the other instruments through which the exterior sense operates, are imperfect. And what of reason and mind? Are they not innate in all men generally, even though all do not make good use of them? For many abuse their natural goods and thus are the causes of their own damnation. And there are many other equally apparent indications of the community of human nature in all men. 943B

What true philosopher, then, or careful observer of the nature of things would not at once declare that the irrational impulses of evil wills can be punished in those who partake of a nature which is good, rational and impassible; but that as the evil will does not contaminate the goodness of the nature, so neither does the torment which is inflicted on the evil will torment the natural subject in which the evil will is the accident and in which it is contained? For just as that nature in itself is free, and utterly untouched by any sin, so is it universally free and untouched by any punishment that is inflicted for sin. For even worldly judges, provided that in passing sentence on the guilty they are not actuated by a spirit of vindictiveness but by the desire for correction, — even worldly judges seek to punish not the nature of the criminal, but his crime. It is only because they cannot punish the crime in itself in isolation from the nature that is its subject, that they have to punish the body together with the crime. But the most excellent creator of all natures and their most righteous Providence and most just Avenger of the crimes of those who despise Him or know Him not, punishes in the nature which He created only the crime which He did not create; but liberates and isolates from the crime that which He has created, and in a mysterious manner acquits that which He has created, and 943C  
What suffers pain and where?  
943D  
944A

punishes, or rather allows to be punished only that which He has not created. For sins do not pertain to the nature but to the will : the cause of all sin, whether in angel or in man, is his own perverse will ; but the cause of the perverse will itself is not to be found in the natural impulses of the rational and intelligible creature, for the Good cannot be the cause of evil. Therefore it is uncaused, and has no natural origin. So we are confronted with this inexplicable mystery : the evil will of transgressing angels and men, although it is itself uncaused, is the efficient cause of every sin and every punishment of sin. And if anyone should say that the beginning of all sin is pride, let him see if he can find pride subsisting in nature : it is neither essence nor potency nor act, nor is it a natural accident :  
 944B rather is it a deficiency of inner virtue, and a perverse will to power, as it is written : How can he who is dust and ashes be proud? for even in life his bowels decay. Pride is said to be the beginning, not the cause of sin, because it is the first step and flood of the first sin, in which all have sinned: but it cannot be called a cause for there is nothing in which it subsists naturally, and in itself it is absolutely non-existent.

Therefore what is punished is the irrational impulse of the perverse will which arises in rational nature, but that nature remains everywhere what it was and in all things that partakes of it it is good, unmenaced, undamaged, unharmed, uncontaminated, incorruptible, impassible, immutable, for it eternally participates in the Supreme Good ; everywhere it is blessed, most glorious in the Saints, in whom it is deified, most excellent in sinners, to whose sins it sets the limit,  
 944C so that their proper substance shall never be reduced to not being and so that they shall never suffer the destruction of those natural goods which were bestowed upon them at their creation ; in those who inherit perfect bliss she rejoices in the contemplation of the Truth, in those who are paying the penalty for their sins she rejoices in the preservation of their substantiality ; in all alike she is whole and perfect and the Image of her Creator ; purged from all the filthiness of vice which from without in this mortal flesh has defiled and deflowered her, she returns restored to the pristine glory of her former state, to which she has been recalled by the grace of her Redeemer and Preserver.

From this we may understand that at the end of this sensible world there will in the nature of things abide no wickedness, no corrupting death, nor any of that suffering which in this life still afflicts our fragile matter ; for all things visible and invisible shall

rest in their Causes. Only the lawless will of wicked men and angels, 944D  
 smitten with the memory and conscience of its evil ways shall abide  
 in torment, and of those things which in this life it had lusted after,  
 and in the future life it had hoped to obtain, nothing will be found :  
 "for in that day shall perish all their imaginations." Their imagina-  
 tions will perish, he says, not their substances. But what are those  
 imaginations of which he speaks? Surely the vain phantasies of 945A  
 those sensible things which in this life they long for with insensate  
 desire, and which haunt the minds of those who through their  
 wickedness have been blinded by irrational affections. And those  
 who invent these phantasies shall themselves become very like them.  
 For nowhere will they find the solidity of real truth, but will be  
 tormented by empty dreams. Hence Maximus in the sixteenth  
 chapter of his *Ambigua* writes :

"Those who meditate wisely on the divine words, say that  
 perdition and hell and the sons of perdition and similar phrases refer  
 to those who make to themselves in the affectation of their minds a  
 substance of that which is not, and thus become themselves in all  
 things like the phantasies they invent."

I might add what St. Augustine says in the twelfth book of his  
*Hexameron* where he argues that while souls are still established in 945B  
 this flesh their joys and sufferings are insubstantial, existing in  
 phantasies ; but in the future life, when they have received back their  
 bodies, while the righteous shall rejoice in the solid contemplation  
 of the Truth, the wicked shall weep from what they suffer from the  
 insubstantial simulacra of sensible things. But in each case the  
 substance will go unharmed and unpunished.

For there are two kinds of passion : one whereby the deified are  
 rapt into the most pure knowledge of their Creator : and the other  
 whereby the wicked are submerged into the most profound ignorance  
 of the Truth. And it is no wonder if that which the wicked suffer in  
 their dreams while still imprisoned in this corruptible flesh and  
 thereafter in phantasies suffer in hell, they shall suffer in torment  
 even more keenly when they have received their spiritual bodies,  
 awaking as it were out of a heavy slumber ; so that, as Augustine  
 says, they shall suffer true punishments, they shall have false images  
 in things not true, real sorrow, real lamentation and real terror, 945C  
 tardy repentance and the consuming fire of their thoughts.

The passion of the just, on the other hand, shall be this : when  
 they have received their spiritual bodies and when their minds have

been deified they shall enjoy true blessedness in contemplation of the Truth, true joy, and true happiness, because everything which in this life they accepted by faith they now see face to face.

But each shall behold that Vision in his own way. For, says the Truth, "in My Father's house are many mansions." Good and wicked alike, therefore, will be confronted by phantasies or appearances, but those of the righteous will be the representation of divine contemplations: for not in Himself, but through certain apparitions of Himself appropriate to the capacity for contemplation of each  
 945D one of the Saints, shall God be seen. These apparitions are the clouds of which the Apostle speaks: "We shall be snatched up into the clouds going before Christ." By the clouds he means apparitions of the divine phantasies which vary according to the height of contemplation attained by each of the deified.

But the wicked will be given over to phantasies of mortal things and manifold false appearances corresponding to the manifold  
 946A impulses of their evil imaginations; and just as the deified shall ascend through an innumerable number of stages of divine contemplation, as it is written: "The Saints caught up in the clouds of vision shall go from virtue to virtue and shall behold the God of  
 Good and evil experiences  
 gods in Sion," behold Him, that is, not as He is in Himself, but in the mirror of the divine phantasy; so those who are separated from God shall ever descend through the different degrees of their vices into the depths of ignorance and into the outer darkness, where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But in both the good and the evil, their human nature will ever remain undamaged, unimpaired, uncontaminated, and free from all the conflict of the passions: for both the good and the evil there will be a body equally spiritual, containing no trace of animality; equally indestructible, containing no element of corruption; of an equally noble nature, from which all reproach has been removed;  
 946B equally essential, and equally eternal. These are the natural and general goods which the whole of human nature after its regeneration, shall share: these are "the gifts which descend from above from the Father of Lights," distributed universally among all, so that no one is excluded from participation in them and no one is deprived of them, for without them no one can subsist. No man's unworthiness can prevent their bestowal; no man's worthiness is worthy of them, for they exist before every merit. It is solely due to the widely flowing plentitude of the Divine Goodness that they flow in endless streams everywhere through all things upon all men. In no

man are they increased : in no man are they diminished : but they are equally present to all men, good and evil alike. From no man are they withdrawn, but they shall abide eternally and substantially in all, when all taint of corruption and the conflict of the passions has been removed. They may, however, acquire contrary accidents, 946C  
 namely good will and evil will and they are capable of virtue and of shame : good will and virtue are present to them by nature and by Grace : but the harmful impulses of the evil will, which are rightly and properly held to be no more than accretions to our true nature, are present to them as accidents which have no cause either natural or supernatural, and therefore the natures which experience them, whether within themselves or without, remain unaffected by them. For that which by deprivation is nothing comes neither from nature nor from Grace : for it is neither a substance nor a natural accident, nor any one of those four natural virtues which clothe the soul, prudence, temperance, courage, or justice ; nor either one of their two sources, wisdom or mercy, which in turn flow forth from love ; 946D  
 nor is it any one of the forces which proceed from these, which I will not mention, as it would take me too long and would be irrelevant to my theme ; nor is it the supernatural excellence of the ineffable deification which transcends every creature, and which “neither the eye hath seen nor the ear heard nor the heart of man been able to attain.” For that is not to be found in the totality of nature but above it ; and it is not included among the powers of created nature.

But lest you should be surprised that I say that human nature can receive contraries without being affected by them or having the calmness of its simplicity disturbed, here are some examples of such a case :

The similarity  
 of the nature  
 947A  
 of the just  
 and the  
 impious

The air which surrounds us and which by inhalation and exhalation through our lungs as through the smith's bellows ever fans the fire of our hearts, a process which the animal nature never allows to cease for a moment, bears clouds, some bright and others dark, some receptive of the sun's light, others repelling it ; the former acquire the bright translucency which illumines them and which closely resembles the purity of the ether, from the upper regions, while the latter derive from the lower regions the obscure density which resists the light and which resembles the impurity of earth. But the air itself always retains, unchanged in the one and in the other, its subtle and serene quality : it is not densified in the clouds, nor disturbed by the disturbances, which it carries : while it receives both light and darkness, its own nature is neither increased

- 947B by the light nor diminished by the darkness: while it receives both the hot and the cold, its own substance is affected neither by the one nor by the other. The "body" which it acquires from earthly and aquatic vapours can become hot in it or cold, or can accumulate into clouds or move about in the winds or liquify into rain or solidify into snow or hail or into those other forms which, originating from the vapours I have mentioned (called by the Greeks ἀτμίδες, are carried by the simple and spiritual nature of the air while they are made heavy with the weight of earth and water: but the air itself, as we remarked before, preserves its purity and spirituality intact, and is not more pure or spiritual in the light than in the darkness, nor more subtle or more capable of penetrating bodies that are inferior to itself in calm than in storm. Therefore the word the
- 947C Greek philosophers give it is worthy of it. For *aer* means spirit, and the Physicists frequently describe it as a simple and spiritual body. And those who ascend to the summit of Mount Olympus have sure evidence that it is so, for no ἀτμίς or vapour whether earthly or aquatic reaches that height.

- But that the lower air should receive vapours to the advantage of mortal animals who without air to breathe would not be able to live comes about by the decree of the Divine Providence. For if air were inhaled into the lungs of mortal bodies in its simple state without any admixture of liquid or solid elements, it could by no means kindle the fiery nature which is in the heart and therefore the
- 947D whole body would grow cold, bereft of the virtue of heat through which the vital motion governs the limbs. It was for the very purpose that the subtle nature of the air should contain an admixture of vapours when it entered the lungs and thus with added force ignite the fire in the heart, that the lower part of the air which is diffused in the neighbourhood of the earth and water was made to receive liquid and solid elements, without, however, any harm or detriment or increase or change or transformation of its own most simple and serene nature. For this very purpose, I say: for the aery
- 948A spirit by itself is not sufficient to kindle the fire in the heart or to nourish inanimate bodies without the addition of some solid matter; for the combination of the fiery and aerial element does not produce sensible motion, because owing to the fact of their excessive subtlety they are always at rest and free from all disturbance. But when they are mixed with the lower elements of earth and water, by exerting their force upon the more solid quality of these, they actualise their proper motions whereby sensible bodies are governed.



Now, I brought forward this example in order to show clearly that in its regenerate state human nature, having nothing left in it of an earthly or watery or massive quality, shall be utterly undisturbed, once it is totally converted into spirit : but that nevertheless it will, without any change in its restored state or any contrary passion, be capable of receiving contrary qualities. For just as the air, which we took as a figure for human nature, receives ethereal splendours from above and vapours distilled from water and earth from below ; so when our human nature, which is made in the Image of God but has miserably fallen through its own irrational impulses into the love of sensible things and into corruptible bodies which weigh it down, is restored in the day of its regeneration into its former state, it shall in those who are deified be illuminated by the Divine Rays shining within it and above it ; and in those who are deprived of all blessedness, shall be subject to the phantasies and memories from below and from without of those temporal and transitory things which infect them in this life — not that human nature pays the penalty in itself, but that those things which against the will of the Creator it attracted to itself shall be separated from it and damned and utterly destroyed : the sort of things I refer to are : malice, and impiety, and every other form of wickedness which made of the works of the flesh, that is, of the soul living according to the flesh an occasion for original sin. These things, if we look for them in isolation, are nothing, for they are not in the number of those which derive their substance from the Creator of all things : they have crept into rational nature by their likeness to irrational animals, but they shall be wholly destroyed in it lest they should do it lasting harm — though I do not deny that the recollections of them will remain as torments in the wills of the wicked. For the utter destruction of all evil in all human nature does not mean that the phantasies of evil shall not be forever preserved in the consciences of those who in this life practised evil, and if forever preserved, then forever punished : just as the Return of that same human nature into the state of Grace which it lost through sin, that is, into the glory of the Divine Image is not the same as the deification of the good conscience of each of the Saints, whereby in this life he served his God in all things, above every virtue of human nature ; or its life of blessedness ; or its exaltation above all the things that are. For where He is, Whom in this life they loved and ever desired to see, there shall they be also.

948B

948C

The  
conscience of  
the evil is  
punished in  
phantasies  
948D

949A

These are the five degrees of contemplation of the rational creature : The first is its observation of that universal and substantial 32

The fivefold  
contemplation  
of the  
rational  
creature

virtue which is common to all whereby all men both good and evil participate at one and the same time in their primal state.

The second is the contemplation of its processions into this mortal life through the bodily generation of individual men.

The third is the contemplation of its general Return through its own nature into that angelic state which it abandoned when it fell into this world.

949B The fourth is in those who participate in it, and who while living in this mortal flesh and seeking above all things the Creator of all things, are worthy through their own good will and by the aid of Grace to return into the common integrity of their proper nature, and shall then by the gift of God's Grace be carried up above all things, and leaving all else behind, shall be brought to God.

949C The fifth contemplation is of those who shall possess the universal goods which are innate in our nature and which by their universality excel and shall excel all without exception, but shall not be able to attain to those highest gifts of the Divine Grace which are prepared and reserved for the righteous alone, for in this life they were seduced by their love of temporal things from serving God — and that love shall be to them in the new life, whether in their souls alone or in the bodies which they shall receive back again a consuming and inextinguishable fire, for they shall not find there the things which they incontinently lusted after here, but shall only behold vain and foolish phantasies of them, which when they attempt to embrace them as though they were real things shall melt away like clouds, since they have no substantial basis. For they shall be, as the Scriptures say, vanity of vanities and all vanity. These are the imaginations about which the Psalmist says in words which we have already quoted above : "In that day all their imaginations shall perish." By this he means that all the imaginations which in this life those who are given up to fleshly desires take from earthly things and fix in their hearts shall perish in that day when the Truth shall appear, and those who rise again in the spirit shall find none of those things on which their hearts were set when they were alive. For 949D those things on which their hearts were set when they were alive. For what shall the infidel Jew or the proud Ishmaelite or the pagan in his impious blindness find of that false happiness which his folly promises him in the future life? On the other hand, how great will be his affliction, how great will be his suffering, and with what a flame of unsatisfied wanting he will be tormented when he finds none of those earthly and transitory pleasures for which he had vainly

hoped, and nothing will be left for him but the vague intangible elusive shadow of the things he had hoped to gain ! Ever desiring to seize it, and never being able to do so, for it is nothing : that will be his eternal punishment. And the same infernal torment shall be the lot of those, who, while professing the Catholic Faith, hope in the future life for carnal delights and the sensible pleasures of space and time. 950A

Hence it can be seen that nothing that belongs to nature will endure punishment, but only the vain imaginings of guilty souls, which in themselves are outside all nature because they are not among the number of natural substances ; for they are the products of evil will and earthly lusts. For just as the blessedness of the righteous, as I have often said, shall be raised by the Grace of the Creator above all natural virtues : so the affliction of the wicked shall be thrust down below every nature by the justice of that same Creator. For what is more degraded and what is thrust deeper below the lost bounds of nature than the vanity of vanities and the false imaginations of things that shall perish forever ? Hence arises this strange and inexplicable process, attested by true reason and by the authority of Holy Scripture, and demonstrable in no other way : the righteous are blessed beyond every natural good, while on the other hand the wicked on the contrary are punished by being set below every natural good ; but that nature which is shared by the righteous and the wicked alike has as it were an intermediate position, neither enlarged by the beatification of the righteous nor diminished by the misery of the wicked, enjoying only its own proper good, containing the substances of all things, and controlling all things in all things that participate in it. For it is the general form of all things which participate in it — it is the individuality of individuals and the infinite measure of their plurality — and the sum of their corporeal increase in space and time. By time I here mean the interval in which the human being arrives at its perfect bodily fulfilment, by space the volume occupied by his physical mass. From it proceed the natural accidents of souls and bodies. But what more need I say ? That human nature which is common to all men is set by its Creator as a balance between two opposite extremes, the blessedness of the Saints and the misery of the wicked, so that in those who are righteous it may acquire from above by the ministration of grace a certain ineffable beauty beyond its own powers ; and in those who are wicked it is protected by the Law from being infected by any of the turpitude from below. For no man's turpitude is turpitude in it, 950B  
Natural goods  
950C  
Nature contains things which are not in her naturally

950D no malice harms it, no error leads it astray. Its Creator beautifies everything which He created in it and punishes nothing; but everything which He did not create in it, He tolerates and permits in it but does not allow to go unpunished: and this punishment is to be understood in a double sense: either the indulgent punishment of the sins of those who return to their proper Cause; or the eternal torment of those who ever flee away from their Cause.

33 But if you ask me how those things which are not made by God  
 951A are found among the things which are made by Him; or how the things which are considered as lying outside human nature can be punished within it, I shall first answer you in the simplicity of the Catholic Faith: "Who knoweth the intention of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" — for "His ways are at all times unsearchable." How should we look for reason in the works and the Providence and the justice and the goodness of Him Who transcends all reason and all mind and is exalted above everything that can be uttered or conceived? If you insist on reason in these matters, ask  
 Why all things were made  
 951B also how all things were made from nothing; how this world shall be brought to an end and returned into its Causes; how our bodies shall be converted not only into spiritual bodies but also, according to Gregory, into souls; how we, who in this life are composed of three so to speak seeds, body, soul, and mind, shall in the future life be fused into the one simple substance of indivisible spirituality, as Ambrose teaches; how men, who are by nature mortal (for everything which does not derive its essence from itself is called mortal) shall through Grace be changed into immortal God. And finally, lest we should seem to be lingering too long over this matter, if you ask me how that which is not according to nature and is outside nature can be forced into nature and maintained and punished there, while nature itself remains unpunished and unimpaired by the conflict of the passions: I shall ask you how those things which exceed the virtues of nature can be possessed by those who are within the confines of nature, — that is, how the Saints without stepping beyond the bounds of their proper nature shall receive  
 951C those things which are beyond nature, namely the gifts of Grace.

But if the reason and mind not only of men but even of angels are insufficient to answer these questions, be patient and give way before the incomprehensible virtue of God, and honour it with your silence: for until that is attained, no reason and no mind is adequate. Humbly admit, therefore, that by the dispensation of the Divine Providence those things which are outside and contrary to

nature can be sustained by the virtue of nature and can be punished within her, while she herself remains as she was, free from all harm.

But you may say, although it is beyond the power of the rational and intelligible creature to know these inscrutable miracles of the Divine Power, or why or in what manner all things that were created were created, they do not in all men so far elude their powers of understanding that they arrive at no reason whatsoever as to why they were created. Thus, you may argue, the reason why all things were created from nothing was that the might and magnitude of the divine Goodness might be revealed and glorified through His works : is not this the teaching of the Psalmist when inspired by the spirit of prophesy he commands that every creature, visible and invisible, shall praise the Creator of all things : "Praise the Lord in the Heveans," etc. ? And at the end of that Psalm, with a most wonderful understanding of theology he gives us most clearly to understand that all things shall return into their spiritual nature : for the Psalm ends with these words : "Let every spirit praise the Lord." If the Divine Goodness had remained alone silent and inactive in Itself, then it would never have provided an occasion for Its glorification ; but as it is, pouring Itself out into all things visible and invisible, and existing as all things in all things, and thus enabling the rational and intelligible creature to know It, and providing the rational and intelligible creature with matter for the praise in the innumerable beauties of the rest of creation, It created the Universe to this very end, that there should be no creature that would not, either in itself or through itself or through another, offer praise to the Supreme Good.

There is another reason why all things were created out of nothing. The Supreme Good, Which is good by virtue of subsisting by Itself and in Itself should not withhold Itself from the condition of those goods which are good not by themselves nor in themselves, but by It and in It. And for this reason It brought forth pristine things out of non-existence, that It should not be reproached for envy in withholding Itself from the creation of those things which It could create. Were that so, It would not be the Lord, nor the Creator of all natures, nor the rich and never failing source of all natural goods, nor the most righteous Disposer of rewards, nor the Providence that governs all things, if It had created nothing.

As to the ending of the world, and its Return into its Causes, the following reason might be given : All things which proceed from the Cause of all things and from the Primordial Causes which are

34  
Why the  
world will go

952C established in It by their natural motion seek their principle, and can  
back to its have no rest so long as they are separated from it.  
causes

Another reason : All things which flow from the source of all things would become polluted, and indeed would be totally destroyed if they could not and did not return to their source. For the prevention of the Return of visible things into their invisible Causes would be not only contrary to the universal tendency of nature, but actually harmful to it. The transmutations of our mortal bodies not only into spiritual bodies but also into souls comes about as the result of natural necessity, so that, just as the rational soul, which is created in the Image of God, shall return into Him of Whom it is the image and likeness, so too the body, which is created in the image of the soul and is, as it were, an image of an image, shall, laying aside  
952D the earthly weight of its corporeality, return into its cause, which is the soul, and through it as through an intermediary into God Himself, Who is the One Cause of all things.

This process can be most clearly illustrated in many ways : We see water change into vapour, and vapour into flame : thereby what was water is now changed into flame. Finally, flame is changed into  
953A the element of fire. Again, according to the Physicists, the sun's ray absorbs into itself nourishment from the sea and from the rivers and from all the areas of water and the moisture that is in the earth, and thereby transforms the liquid into its own nature.

35 As to the fact that we are composite creatures in this life, but after the unification shall be a simple entity, the reason is as follows : It was necessary that the Image of the One Supreme Trinity, Which in Itself is simple and not composed of parts, should be brought back into its unity and indivisible simplicity ; for otherwise it would fall short of its proper glory, and its beauty would be defaced, a thing which the Divine Clemency would not permit. For the First Cause does not allow the image of Itself, which was created by It after Its own nature, to be forever separated from Itself by any deformity or unlikeness or composition which would be incom-  
953B patible with Its own simplicity. And so it is with the Return of mortal men, whether they are considered to be mortal because they do not subsist by themselves or in themselves or because from the mortality which was the penalty of their original sin they are absorbed into their God, Who alone is immortal. For it would not be in accordance with the goodness of the immortal Creator that His Image should be eternally the prisoner of death. And if He permitted it to become mortal and to die as a punishment for its

perverse will which refused to obey Him, that is an indication rather of His mercy than of His vengeance. For He wished to correct it that corrected it might be brought back to Him, for if it were not corrected it would be banished for ever and separated from Him for all eternity.

If, then, you would explain by such means not *how*, but why these things are done (for whereas *how* they were done eludes every intelligence, I do not deny that theoretical speculation does reveal in some measure *why* they were done) I too will try to adduce reasons of my own. Thus it seems to me that He Who created and ordained the universal creation allowed the perverse impulses of the human and angelic will to be punished within their nature (although the nature itself ever remains unimpaired and totally free from the conflict of the passions) for this reason: that “by comparison with the perverse will of the wicked,” as St. Augustine says, “the rational will of the righteous might be raised to the greater glory. For,” says he, “the artist introduces black into the colours of his picture so that by comparison with its obscurity, the other colours may shine forth more brightly.” For that which in some part of nature appears to be deformed in itself, considered in nature as a whole is not only beautiful and beautifully ordered, but is the efficient cause of the beauty of the whole: Wisdom is manifested by comparison with foolishness, and knowledge by comparison with ignorance, which is the absence and deprivation of it; life is revealed by comparison with death which is the absence of life, and light is glorified by contrast with darkness which is the deprivation of light: and, in a word, not only is it by contrast with their opposing vices that all virtues are glorified, but without that comparison they would be without glory. In the same way the blessedness of the righteous obtains its glory from the torments of the damned, and the joy of the good will from the sorrow of the evil will; and, as true reason does not hesitate to affirm, all things which in parts of the Universe are judged by those who cannot contemplate the whole to be evil, dishonourable, base, miserable and painful, are when regarded in the Universe as a whole, as in the total beauty of a picture, neither painful nor miserable nor base nor dishonourable nor evil. For whatsoever is ordained by the dispositions of the Divine Providence is good and beautiful and just.

For what is more desirable than that the immeasurable glory both of the Universe and its Creator should be manifested by the contrast of opposites? What is more just than that those who have

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Why pain is permitted within a painless universe

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deserved well should occupy the highest place in nature, and those who have deserved will occupy the lowest? What is more honourable than that the Universe of all things should be adorned by the properties of the individuals it contains? Therefore no true philosopher believes that there can be any wickedness or wicked man, any impiety or impious man, any misery or miserable man, any punishment or punished man, any torment or anyone liable to torment, any baseness or base man, any dishonour or dishonourable man, in the noble harmony of the whole Universe than which nothing is more excellent, nothing more holy, nothing more blessed and free from punishment, nothing more beautiful, nothing happier  
 954C and nothing more honourable: for it is created and ordained by Him Who is the highest honour, the highest beauty, the highest happiness, the highest peace, the highest bliss, the highest holiness, the highest good.

For what we contemplate in the parts of the Universe appears differently when we consider it in relation to the whole. Thus, what in the part seems discordant, in the whole is found to be not only not discordant, but an addition to its beauty. Hell, which the Greeks call "Αδης that is, sorrow, or the deprivation of joy is known by the evil to be evil when it is considered by itself: but when it is considered as forming a part of the perfect beauty of the Universe it is made for the good a good, for not only does it show forth the severity of the most just of all judges and the irrevocability of His judgments but it also adds to the glory and embellishes the beauty of the blessed state of the angels and the Saints.

954D Why then should that not be permitted within the confines of nature which adds to its glory and embellishes its beauty?

The Latin word *infernus*, which is given to the various torments of the damned, derives from popular superstition, as St. Augustine shows in the twelfth book of his *Hexameron*. For as the ancients placed their hopes in fables, so they placed their souls in sepulchres: they believed that as the corpses of their dead were buried in the ground, so the souls contained by those bodies were imprisoned in the same  
 955A sepulchres. So they called their habitation *infernus*, meaning a place beneath the earth. So the false opinion spread that the souls were locally situated beneath the earth. But the Greeks, displaying as usual a greater intelligence and a subtler accuracy called the nether regions ὕΑδης that is "suffering." For in their careful study of the visible and invisible nature they failed to discover any place in which the torments of the damned could occur except in the disappointment



and hunger and deprivation of the covetous will of wicked angels and evil men for the things which they used to desire so incontinently ; for these afflictions produce in them the suffering whereby the irrational lusts of rational souls are tormented, whether in this life or the life to come : disappointment because they cannot find that which they hoped to find ; hunger and deprivation, because they are totally deprived of what they had hoped to possess for the gratification of their evil and illicit lusts, so that never again will they be permitted to abuse it. 955B

And this is all that is meant by the punishment and torment of evil imaginations and irrational desires, namely, the grief and sorrow with which the conscience of the wicked is afflicted within itself : and this grief and sorrow cannot be called evil, because they happen to those they torment in accordance with the most righteous dispositions of Divine Providence, and because since in the sum of nature evil does not exist it cannot be said to be. Indeed, in those who mourn their sins, the suffering is good, as the Lord says in the Gospel : "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Grief is good in those too who find the time slow and weary until they enter into the bliss that is promised them. It is under this grief that the Apostle was suffering when he cried : "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," to say nothing of the pains of those who became the martyrs of Christ. 955C

Grief and  
sorrow are  
not evils

But even the grief and suffering of evil desires whether in this life or the other are not evil, for they punish the evil desires : for the grief that comes from the longing for temporal things, like an inextinguishable flame burns the unsatisfied appetite : and the pain, which comes from the rotting of the lustful desire when its object is taken away, devours like the worm that does not die.

And there is another reason why the grief and suffering of the wicked cannot be evil, for they are as it were the material cause of that most rich glory, that eternal joy and salvation which are enjoyed by those who return into God.

Here, then, is the answer to your third question, which you put before the other two ; namely, how that which was not created in nature either as a substance or as a natural accident and, in short, does not come from God at all can be punished in a natural and substantial subject which was created by God and which in itself is not punished nor suffers with that which in it is punished. And now you may rightly understand, what is most worthy of belief : that in 955D

no nature which God has created does He punish what He has created ; but only what He has not created does He punish.

956A A. Yes, here is the answer : and yet all my doubt is not entirely removed. For I still do not see clearly and without any misgivings how that which is not can be punished or how that which is cannot be punished. For I should have thought it easier to punish that which is than that which is not.

N. Here again you seem to have forgotten what has gone before, and I am afraid that far from being rescued from your present difficulty you have sunk back into it once more.

A. Your fears are exaggerated. Some of the problems we have discussed together are as clear to my mind as ethereal light : others I see obscurely like broken clouds cutting across the sky. Therefore I  
956B have the courage and patience to go over again what is not yet perfectly clear to me, in the hope that it may become so.

N. Very well, then. Is it not true that everything which is was brought forth from non-existence into existence by Him Who truly is, and is the superessential Cause of all essence? Or is there anything in nature which does not receive its substance from Him?

A. Why do you ask me what every sound philosopher knows perfectly well and unhesitatingly declares ? For all things come from the One, and there is nothing which does not come from It.

N. Do you, then, think that anything which comes from Him can be destroyed ?

A. I do not. For whatsoever He brought forth into essence He did not do so merely that it should be, but that it should always be, for it is always in Him as in a cause. But everything which always is is eternal ; and everything which is eternal is true ; and everything which is true is totally indestructible. Therefore nothing which was  
956C No nature can be destroyed by the Creator nor by any creature greater or inferior or equal to itself created by the One Principle of all things is liable to destruction. For what could destroy it ? For it is neither true nor likely that it would be destroyed by the Creator Who created it for the very end that it should exist for ever. And it is impossible for it to be destroyed by a created nature better than itself, if such there be, for the good cannot become a cause of corruption to the good ; and still more difficult by a creature lower than itself, for that which is inferior cannot corrupt that which is superior to it ; nor can it be destroyed by some equal good, for no good seeks to destroy its equal, with which it shares the same potency and act and essence. So it remains

that no nature destroys another nature, nor wishes to do so nor can do so.

But there is another sure reason why none of those things which come from the One God Who is Creator of all things, can undergo destruction or be destroyed. For if it should begin to be destroyed, there would some time come an end of its destruction. For anything which begins to suffer any experience expects one of two ends to its passion : either it will be completely destroyed so as no longer to exist, and its destruction will cease with it, for destruction must of necessity perish with that which it destroys, since there will then be nothing for it to destroy : or else the process of corruption will reach a point where it is resisted by some indestructible element in that which it destroys ; and since it cannot destroy it then necessarily the process of destruction must come to an end when it encounters it. But neither of these alternatives is compatible with reason. No nature can be completely destroyed so as no longer to exist and be reduced to nothing, for it was created for the express purpose that it should exist for ever. But if it should begin to suffer destruction, and the process were continued until it was entirely annihilated, then clearly it would be reduced to nothing, which would be utterly inconsistent with the virtue of a nature created by the Supreme Good. Therefore no nature begins to be destroyed or need fear that its destruction will be completed. On the other hand, if one of God's creatures begin to suffer destruction but there remain in it an indestructible element wherein the destructive process is arrested, clearly it would be this remainder alone which was created by God whole and indestructible, into which destruction cannot enter, and in which therefore the process of destruction never even begins. Therefore none of those things which are created by the Supreme Good is or can be destroyed.

N. I see that you are recovering your reasoning powers, and are able to give a clear and sound explanation of what seemed to you obscure. So now that you have given a definite opinion about the indestructibility of natures created by God, consider this question : Can anything which cannot be destroyed be punished ?

Can what cannot be destroyed be punished ?

A. I do not see how that could be. For just as I believe that every destructible thing can be punished, so it seems to me that no indestructible thing can be punished. For surely, corruption itself is a kind of punishment, as when our mortal bodies suffer that affliction which we describe as the sudden destruction of health, we feel we are punished thereby : and as everyone would agree, our

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souls, which while they are imprisoned in our bodies suffer with them, are in a way punished also, although our reason teaches us that the simple nature of the soul cannot be destroyed or punished or infected by the sufferings of the body : however the soul is said to suffer with the body because so long as it lives in the body and is combined with it, it toils to preserve the body from destruction, for it ever seeks to bring the body which is added to it into a unity with itself, and to preserve it in that unity lest it should dissolve and be destroyed.

N. So since the soul, which is created in the Image of God, is never destroyed in itself, it is therefore never punished ?

957D A. In the light of our previous arguments it must be so. For no spiritual substance can be punished in itself, still less can a substance which is made in the Image of God.

N. What, then, of the body ? If it is destroyed, is it punished ?

A. It is only punished so long as it can feel punishment, and if feeling is a property of the soul alone, as is indicated by the condition of dead bodies, the body is destroyed but is not punished. For in the case of inanimate bodies, such as wood and stone and the seeds of grass, we can say that they are destroyed, but not that they  
958A are punished. But if the external sense belongs to the body as well as to the soul, it would be difficult to deny that the body, as well as being mortal and animal and destructible, can also be punished.

N. So, if mortal bodies are capable of sensation then they can be both destroyed and punished ; but if they are without sensation, it appears that they could only be destroyed, but not punished ?

A. So I believe.

N. Not all mortal bodies, then, whether they are capable of being destroyed, or of being both destroyed and punished, are created by God. For we have already agreed that nothing which was created by the Supreme Good can suffer corruption or, for that reason, punishment.

A. Who but a madman would presume to deny that this visible world and the sensible bodies which it chiefly comprises was created by God ?

958B N. How then can the bodies which it comprises be either destroyed or punished ?

A. I find that destruction can be understood in two ways. According to the one, destruction consists of the coming together of

the general elements into generation in the visible species, and the dissolution of the species again into the general elements from which they were formed : according to the other, while we affirm that of no creature can the essence, potency and act be impaired, we also declare that the wills of the rational and intelligible creation can be destroyed by irrational impulses.

The first seems rather to be a reciprocal transformation of sensible bodies in space and time than a destruction, for whatever is ordained by the Divine Providence is a source of embellishment to the Universe rather than of destruction : for hereby is preserved both the natural stability of substances and the mutability of natural qualities : and as these are the two components which fulfil the sensible creature it is wrong to give the name of destruction to the variety of temporal things which is due to their development and the dissolution of their development. This is the sense in which the apostle should be understood when he says, speaking of the frailty of the human body : “This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality,” and again : “The body which is being destroyed weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation keeps prisoner the sense in its manifold imaginations.” Here he is not only speaking of the dissolution of our present frail and mortal body into the simple elements from the coming together of whose qualities it is composed, but also of its recall from those elements and its Return into its spiritual and indestructible qualities ; while by the word corruption he means the mutability of the earthly body. For sensible and temporal are not despised by those who seek after the spiritual and eternal because they are evil, but because they are mutable and inconstant, waiting for their mutability to be changed into something better : for by comparison with those things that are constant and immutable and are not waiting to be changed into something better they seem contemptible and abnormal and inferior. 958C 958D

The second meaning of destruction refers not to the transformation of mutable creatures within nature, but to those disturbances of their wills which occur outside their nature. For destruction in this sense which does not take its origin from God, should rather be called the viciousness of the perverse will ; just as what happens to bodies in this world is not destruction either, but a transformation of their natural variety and mutability, and therefore it is not punished. For the natural sufferings should not be regarded as punishments in the nature which is the subject of those sufferings. And if anyone should argue that the transformations through birth 959A

and dissolution of sensible bodies within themselves are the results of the sin of human nature, and therefore may rightly be termed destructions, let him remember that in the spatial and temporal changes of nature consist the beauty and the order of the whole visible creature, and that mutability and variety have no cause but the dispositions of the Divine Providence, and that they rather contribute to the perfecting of human nature and to its recall to its Creator than to the punishment of sin. For they are the spiritual medicine by which God willed to recall His Image to itself and into Himself that wearied by its experience of the tedium of mutable things, it should long to contemplate the stability of immutable and eternal things, and ardently seek for the everlasting forms of true things, in the beauty of which it may find its rest, all variety being done away with. Hence it is that often before in this discourse it was definitely agreed that destruction and punishment could be found in no other place but the perverse and illicit impulses of the will of the rational and intellectual creature, which do not take their occasions either from God or from the nature which He has created: for they have no cause, and if they are sought for in themselves they are found to be nothing but the deprivation and failure of the lawful and natural will.

N. Therefore it would be contrary to reason that that which cannot be destroyed can be punished: but everything which comes from the One Cause of all things must of necessity be indestructible: therefore it is impossible that anything which comes from the One Cause of all things can suffer punishment. Therefore if Holy Writ, which neither deceives nor is deceived, bears witness that the punishments of the damned shall come to pass, it follows that you must admit that punishment and torment and destruction occur in something created by God — and therefore rightly said to exist and reasonably held to be impassible, — and should boldly return to the position about which you seemed to doubt, and without hesitation declare that only that which does not exist can be punished in that which exists; that is to say, only the perverse will, which is entirely without substance, can be punished in the phantasies of sensible things, phantasies which we must not think of as entirely non-existent, because they are the impressions upon the memory of natural forms. But that which is, while it supports by its potency that which is punished and allows it to be punished, in its essence cannot be punished. So that what is said about the Divine Justice is supremely true: that in no creature that It created does It permit

that which It created to be punished, but punishes that which It did not create.

A. You have sufficiently and amply covered this matter.

N. Sufficiently certainly if you now see clearly without any misgivings that things must be so and not otherwise.

A. I see clearly and every doubt has been removed that prevented me from understanding how the totality of the creation established by God cannot be punished, and is free from all destruction.

N. Let us go back, then, to our main subject, that is, to the Return of the created Universe into its Causes.

A. I think we should first ask ourselves how those punishments can be eternal, if there shall be no more evil, for evil cannot be co-eternal with the good; and no more impiety, for impiety cannot be co-eternal with the worship of God; and no more wrongdoing, since wrongdoing cannot forever oppose the Laws of God; and as true reason compels us to believe, when there is no more evil, there will be no more any evil man, for the evil man is evil because of his evil; when there is no more impiety, there will be no more any impious man, for the impious man is impious because of his impiety; and when there is no more wrongdoing how can any wrongdoer remain? But no wise man doubts that wickedness and impiety and wrongdoing will perish, when he considers that evil cannot exist save where there is something for it to harm. But in the time to come, when "God shall be all in all," and every creature shall be freed from its bondage, whom will evil find to harm? No one. And it can be shown in the same way that impiety must perish. For how shall impiety or the impious man exist when the worship of false gods shall be totally suppressed, and the One God shall be recognised in all by all the Saints and all the damned? How shall wrongdoing endure when no one will be able to transgress the Laws of God? The teaching of Holy Scripture is most clear: "Let sinners and evil doers perish from the earth that they may no longer be." We must not, however, suppose that it is their nature but their sin and their wrongdoing that shall perish. The Blessed Jerome teaches the same doctrine in his *Commentary on Ezechiel* where he quotes the prophet Isaiah referring under the allegory of Jerusalem to the general purgation of the whole of human nature: "I shall sanctify it in the flaming fire and it shall devour matter as hay." Here the word matter can be understood in two ways: it is either the unformed

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Why when their causes are removed, namely evil and impiety, their punishment will be perpetual

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matter which was created out of nothing and from which the structure of this sensible world, by the diversity of the forms impressed upon it, is composed: this matter he shall burn up like hay, when it shall be sanctified, that is, purged, in that nature that was made in the Image of God, so that nothing material or temporal, or earthly or visible or transitory or mutable shall remain in it: for it shall be totally changed into a spiritual stability and one-ness. Or the prophet intended by this word all the opportunities  
 961A for vicious and wicked deeds, namely, evil, impiety, and wrongdoing. Or perhaps he intended it to be interpreted in both ways. How then can there be torments when there is nothing left in the world to merit them?

N. We have dealt sufficiently with the question in what has gone before and have, I think, obtained a satisfactory answer. But, since you insist, we must make a brief resume of the previous discussion. We had settled our differences and come to a complete agreement that all evil and every evil man, all impiety and every impious man, all wrongdoing and every wrongdoer shall by the most just decree of that divine judgment be abolished like stains that have to be wiped away and completely removed from the face of nature so that they shall not mar the integrity of nature forever: and this is confirmed not only by the authority of the holy Fathers and of Sacred Scripture, but also by the investigations of sound reason.  
 961B But the empty imaginations of men in the phantasies of temporal things shall abide forever in the souls of those who, though they shall regain the perfection of their nature, shall not be changed into glory; and shall burn with a tardy remorse, as with an inextinguishable fire, for the things which in this life they coveted in their unruly and incontinent lust.

Furthermore, I think that those who wish to show that the rational nature both shall endure for ever and also shall forever be consumed in the flames of its torments fall into ambiguity when they use the illustration of the non-inflammable stone which can be forever burned and yet eternally endure, so that neither its substance nor its quality nor its form is either diminished or destroyed, even though the flame which burns it is never extinguished: for this  
 961C illustration could be as reasonably employed to show that the natural goods of the rational nature shall not only endure forever unimpaired, but also, in those who are purged and sanctified and receive besides their natural goods the grace of deification, they shall blaze forever in the glory of eternal blessedness which is the



inextinguishable flame of the grace of God, so that in them, while their natural beauty abides forever, the splendour of their deification shines out over all.

I think you can now distinguish between that which shall be totally destroyed and that which shall be subject to eternal punishment.

A. I can : for I see that while sin and the occasion for sin shall be totally abolished from nature, the phantasies of those temporal things by which imperfect souls are seduced while they live in the flesh shall remain and be subjected to the everlasting fires of punishment, so that in them may be tormented the evil desires of evil men. But I have still one more problem which is not inconsiderable : if there is nothing that is co-eternal with the goodness and the blessedness and the other virtues of God, how can we oppose to the Truth something that is co-eternal with it, namely falsity and the false ? For, it seems to me, if falsehood is opposed to Truth, then so is the false to the true. But if every phantasy is false, and therefore falsity, it must be that phantasy is the opposite of truth. But if the phantasy of temporal things is to be punished eternally, the phantasy itself must be eternal, and therefore eternally opposed to Truth.

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Why  
phantasies, if  
false, will be  
co-eternal  
with truth

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N. Your doubt would be a reasonable one if the clear illumination of that Truth of which you speak had revealed to you beyond doubt that phantasy and the false were, without distinction, one and the same thing, so that every phantasy would be false and every false thing a phantasy. As it is, however, there is a great difference between phantasy and the false, and in fact only that which can properly be called false is opposed to Truth, while phantasy is not the contrary of Truth.

A. Please explain to me what that difference is which distinguishes phantasy from the false.

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N. They are distinguished by their definitions. The false is that which seeks to be what it is not : to appear other than it is : to have predicated of it that which it is not. Typical examples are the flight of Daedalus, a fable that is neither true nor likely, but a completely false account, which deceives only the foolish. Daedalus never flew, though it is reported of him that he took ship from Crete to Euboea. It is called false because it deceives the judgment of those who err in taking the false for the true ; which is the proper nature of error. This is the true definition of the false, although frequently in

dialectic affirmative and negative propositions are deemed false: a negative proposition such as “every man is not an animal;” or an affirmative such as “every man is righteous.”

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Phantasy, on the other hand, is a kind of image or apparition taken from visible or invisible form and impressed upon the memory. For no corporeal or incorporeal thing is in itself apprehensible to the senses of our earthly body, but nature allows images of sensible objects to be impressed upon the exterior sense, and of intelligible things upon the interior sense. And then these impressions, flowing as it were in two streams, one from the sensible and one from the intelligible, converge upon the memory, one flowing from the lower nature through the corporeal sense, the other from the higher nature through that sense which belongs to the soul alone. And everything which the memory receives from these two sources and retains, is rightly called phantasy, or, as we have just said, apparition. For “phantasy” comes etymologically from the Greek verb φαίνω of which the literal translation is “appear.”

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How, then, can phantasy be opposed to Truth, when it is Truth itself which, inapprehensible in its proper nature, comes and reveals itself in a mysterious way to those that seek it through these phantasies, or theophanies as they are called? And if every phantasy is a kind of image of natural objects impressed upon the mind, how can that which proceeds from nature be considered contrary to the Truth, when no nature is opposed to Truth? And this is supported by the firm conviction that no phantasy which is not drawn from some source not contained in nature can be impressed upon the senses or the memory; for nothing entirely deprived of substance and form and quality can be conceived under any image or likeness, and therefore by no phantasy. For the phantasies of the false and fictitious bodies of unclean spirits which become manifest to the senses of the men whom they deceive should rather be called shades than phantasies.

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A. Phantasy then must be something good, seeing that it is an image of nature.

N. I cannot deny that that is so. For it must be accepted that everything which springs from natural causes is good.

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A. Then you must admit that the good can be punished. For you said that the phantasies of temporal things are destined for eternal punishment.

N. Not so. For I did not say that the phantasies themselves were to be tormented with punishments, but the irrational impulses of the perverted will which are contained in them: for we have already agreed that that which is not cannot be punished save in some good thing which is.

A. You remember, no doubt, your foregoing arguments in which you firmly convinced yourself that the phantasies of temporal things that are implanted in the soul whether in this life or hereafter in the life to come are altogether nothing at all, and that it is for that reason that the perverted wills are punished in them, for when they think they can grasp them in some object, they slip from the clutches of those who desire to grasp them, and vanish away. 963C

N. I do remember: nor do I regret what I have said. For I did not say that the phantasies were a substantial good, but I demonstrated beyond doubt that they inhered in substantial goods and derived from them. And whether they are found in the punishments of the damned or in the rewards of the righteous, I have no hesitation in declaring that they are goods wherever they are found, for even the bliss of the Saints, which consists in the contemplation of the Truth will be supplied through phantasies, which to distinguish them from other kinds of phantasy the theologians call Theophanies. For in Himself God, "Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in inaccessible Light" is and always shall be invisible.

But as to whether falsity and the false can perpetually be opposed to Truth and the true, and co-eternal therewith there ought to be no doubt among the wise. For what man who thinks 963D reasonably about the condition of the future life would say that falsity would continue to exist when the Truth shall appear in all things and the false shall be removed not only from nature but also from the judgment of the whole rational and intelligible creature; when no one deceives and no one is deceived, for nature shall have returned into her proper Causes in which nothing shall be seen save Truth and the true, in so far as the contemplation thereof shall be 964A permitted to each one of the Saints in proportion to the measure of the Grace that is conferred upon him? For it shall appear to all, though not in the same measure but in an infinite number of ascents and descents of Theophany both to the righteous and to the unrighteous, but it shall appear to all; and in all the unrighteous it will only be their unrighteousness that shall be punished and abolished, while their nature, purged and chastened shall abide and ascend by those same steps by which it had fallen into sin. And it is

time to discuss what remains to be discussed in connection with this Return.

A. It is time. But first I should like to know the answer to a question which vexes me very much : if the whole Universe of nature is to return into God, how can it suffer any punishment within itself? For it is not to be believed that there can be punishment in God.

Whether  
everything  
that is called  
964B  
hell and  
punishments  
exists or not?

N. Tell me, does all that is meant by hell and damnation exist or not?

A. You put me in a dilemma. For if I should say "It exists" you will at once ask me why that which is should not, with all the other things that are, return into Him from Whom all things take their being: but if I should say "It does not" you will then ask me why I reckon that which does not exist to be among the things which will return into God. And again if I admit that everything that is meant by hell is outside the Universe, I shall at once be shown to be arguing unreasonably, and I shall unwillingly have to confess that there is nothing remarkable in the fact that that which does not exist among the things which are in God should not exist in God either: and I should be mocked by the reason which incontestably declares that outside God and the Universe which He created nothing can rightly be imagined or understood to exist. For everything that is  
964C and everything that is not is bounded by the Creator and His creation. On the other hand, if I should say that hell is within the Universe, I should have to admit that not only that which is but also that which is not is contained within the limits of the divine Goodness and justice and Providence. For we believe that not only the things that are but also the things that are not, whether because by their excellence they transcend all understanding or through deprivation of the things that are they fall below the level of the things that are understood to be, are under the governance of that Divine Power beyond Whose bounds it is impossible for anything that is or for anything that is not to stray. For that which is driven forth from the rank of the Blessed cannot go outside the Laws of  
964D God within which all is contained, but that which falls from the higher level enters into one of the lower orders, and is there retained. For every rank, the highest on top and the lowest at the bottom and the intermediaries, is established by God, and maintained within Him; and outside of Him there is nothing, but within Him everything that is and everything that is not is in a wonderful and inscrutable manner comprehended. Therefore, whether I say that

hell exists, as the Scriptures testify, or whether I say that it does not exist in nature, in neither case can I deny that it is contained within the things which shall return to God, and that it is bounded by Him 965A  
 Who bounds all things and outside of Whom nothing can be imagined or believed or understood, especially when we consider the undoubted facts that darkness is contained within light, silence within sound, shadow within body, and all similar things which derive their causes from their opposites. For whether they be the absences of some entity, or the failures, or the deprivations of it, or the opposites or the contraries of it, they cannot be thought to exist save through that of which they are the absences or failures or deprivations or opposites or contraries. In fact their existence is like that not only of substances and natures, but of their contraries. For there is no vice which does not take its nature from the virtue to 965B  
 which it is opposed.

N. I am really delighted that by the strength of your own mental powers you have broken the trap you had set for yourself, and escaped from it. For, unless I am mistaken, you now at last understand that not only everything which was created by the One God but also everything which was devised and superadded by the irrational impulse of the rational and intelligible creature is contained within the order of the Divine Providence, both now and in the time to come when the universal creature shall return into its Causes and be brought back into its God and the full beauty of the created Universe shall be perfected. And it is not strange that it should be so: for no nature can inflict punishment on another nature, and no vice can destroy the virtue in which it is contained; not only that, but all these things, since they are ordained within the Laws of God, go to make up the perfection and the beauty of the whole of nature, 965C  
 and provide the perfect harmony of the whole visible and invisible world, in which no discordant note is heard.

A. You are right. For I deliberately set that trap for myself, that is, I deliberately raised those questions, so that I should no longer be caught in it, but escaping therefrom should see with a clear mind that the unification of the universal nature consists of the coming together of many mutually opposed elements, learning from the theory of music that there is no melody that delights the mind or produces a beautiful effect save that which consists of the proportionate intervals of different voices, which by their relation to one another create the sweetness of the song. And here is a strange thing, and hard for the mind alone to understand: that it is not the

- 965D different sounds produced, for instance, by the pipes of the organ or the strings of the lyre or the stops of the flute, (which, since they are perceptible to the senses, may be regarded as having an existence in nature) that produce the sweetness of the harmony, but the proportions of the sounds and the proportionalities between them, the relation of which is received within the mind alone, and appreciated by the interior sense. And these proportions and proportionalities of sensible sounds and voices are rightly said to be, for not only is the corporeal sense completely unaffected by them, but it is
- 966A only within the highest faculties of the rational mind, far beyond all sense, that they are contemplated, as things which transcend nature; and yet, while they are to be reckoned among the things that are not, it is they that produce and control that most noble harmony in the things that are, whether he who hears understands what causes the sweetness and the beauty in them or not: for there is in all an interior sense from which harmonious relation and concordant unification of things are not hidden. For who can explain the virtue of the number six, which is regarded as the basis of all harmony? Who can explain the ratios that are contained in it, of three to two, of four to three and of double? Or why the Universe of all visible and invisible creatures is constituted in it as in a kind of archetype?
- 966B It is not so strange, therefore, that the harmony of the whole of creation is composed out of the things which exist as substances and natural accidents on the one hand, and, on the other, of the things which do not exist, whether through their transcendence, or through failure and deprivation, when in all things that are and all things that are not, no evil or evil thing shall remain to stand against the goodness of all things, nor baseness nor ugliness against the loveliness and beauty of all things when it shall return into its Causes and its Creator. So it does not disturb me to hear that that most beautiful harmony shall be produced by the punishments of evil wills and the rewards of good wills: for punishments are good provided that they are just; and rewards are good provided that they are freely disposed, rather than measured out according to the merits of those who deserve them: for I have the example of harmonies composed out of the mingling, in due proportions and
- 966C proportionalities, of high, low and intermediate notes. And if anyone shall object that the perverted wills of evil men and angels, which deserve to be punished, are evil and so, at the restoration and Return of nature shall still be evil and still suffer punishment; and that therefore the beauty of nature will not be entirely free from the

taint of evil, I shall reply: God has disposed, and right reason recognises, first that whether within nature or outside it no evil is to be found, as Dionysius the Areopagite shows in his *Book on the Divine Names* by many arguments which it would be tedious and unnecessary to reproduce here; and secondly, that the perverted impulses of perverted wills are not evil, but unruly. For how can that which proceeds from the free will of the rational creature be described as evil? The freedom of the rational nature which was created in the Image of God was given by God, for that which is the Image of God should not obey His Laws by compulsion. It must be, then, that nothing which results from that liberty can rightly be described as evil or an evil thing: for otherwise evil and the evil thing would be contained in something. And if free will is conferred upon the rational and intelligible creature not that through it it might sin, but that through it it might serve its Creator in reason and beauty, yet becoming as it were a prisoner of its own irrational impulse it is drawn into unruliness, the result is not an evil, but something which requires correction by the Divine justice, and redemption by the Divine Clemency, if the free will becomes submitted to that correction and that redemption: but if, puffed up with pride, it contumaciously persists in its perverse impulses, its lustful energy is checked from grasping that which it illicitly desires. And this is all that is meant by the punishment of the perverted free will, namely, the prohibition imposed upon its unruly impulses which prevents it from satisfying its lust.

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I say this so as not to appear to contradict the most blessed Dionysius the Areopagite, who not only denied that evil was to be found or allowed by reason to exist in any nature or substance but also in the irrational affections of rational nature. For there is no vice in the rational creature which is not also a good in some irrational creature, and therefore it is impossible to find anything which is universally prohibited; but properly speaking, what is prohibited in anything is not an evil but is something which is unlawful in that in which it is prohibited. Thus, to illustrate this by a few examples, pride, according to Blessed Dionysius and Gregory the Theologian is a good in the horse, but an unlawful and inappropriate quality in the man. Ferocity is good in the lion, and cannot be dissociated from his nature, for a gentle lion is not a lion, having lost his essential character; but in the rational nature that same ferocity is a vice and a forbidden thing. Filth is proper to pigs but alien to man: and there are other similar examples of qualities

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which in the beasts are natural goods but in man or angel are vices  
 967C contrary to their nature : in no case, however, are they evil. For, as  
 we have said, that which is not evil in the whole, cannot be evil in the  
 part : although it may be unruly, and require to be purged or  
 restrained.

There remains nothing, then, to reduce or depreciate the  
 perfection and beauty of the whole Universe, whether here where  
 the sensible world is still pursuing its course, or There, where it shall  
 return into its Causes and remain at rest in them. And although now  
 it is only to a few truly wise men that this wisdom is revealed, in the  
 time to come it will be plain to all, for then the Truth will shine forth  
 through all in all, and shall reveal without any obscurity or doubt  
 the secrets of all nature. For in the time to come the Truth itself shall  
 shine through all things, not only upon those who in this life are  
 967D righteous and duly seek after the Truth, but also upon the unright-  
 eous and the wicked who are corrupted by their evil ways and hate  
 the light and flee from it. For all shall see the glory of God. And this  
 is not inconsistent with the text : “Let the wicked be taken away lest  
 he should see the glory of God.” For here by “see” the Holy  
 Scripture means “enjoy”, so that the meaning is : “Let the wicked be  
 taken away lest he should *enjoy* the glory of God.” For when we are  
 suffering from a disease of the eyes, we cannot enjoy the light, but  
 968A wish to flee from it and seek to hide ourselves in darkness, not  
 because we do not know what light is and how useful it is to those  
 who can look upon it, but plead the weakness of our eyes as the  
 reason for avoiding its radiance. In the same way the impious too  
 when they are condemned to punishment attribute their hatred of  
 Truth to their impiety, and suffer the unavailing pangs of tardy  
 remorse. This is the lesson of the rich man who suffering the  
 torments of hell, “lifting up his eyes when he was in the midst of the  
 torments, saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” He  
 saw Abraham and Lazarus in the glory of the contemplation of  
 God, but he himself is deprived of the delights of that glory and in  
 the affliction of his tardy remorse begs Abraham to send to his  
 brothers who were still alive and warn them that they should not live  
 as he had lived, that thus, being warned, they should escape the  
 place of torment.

N. Do not you be influenced, then, by those most false and  
 968B foolish pronouncements and empty opinions that derive from  
 mortal imaginations, according to which the goodness and beauty  
 and justice of the Universe can be reduced and destroyed by those



things which seem to them base and evil : for they do not know that in all things which are comprehended within the Universe nothing evil or base or unjust is to be found. For the Supreme Goodness and Beauty and Justice which wisely disposes all things does not permit those things to exist among the things that are and the things that are not, nor shall it ever do so. And if any one should ask : Whence come those things which are called evil and dishonourable and unjust, and where are they to be found? he should be answered : they come from no other source and are to be found nowhere else but in the vanity of vanities and in the false reasonings of those who blasphemously pretend that that is which is altogether non-existent, and regard everything which interferes with their lustful pleasures and prohibits or restrains them as evil because it causes them pain. Therefore they even go so far as to criticize the disposition of Divine Providence, saying that any restraint or hindrance or suppression of the force of the free will is an evil, not realising that all such restrictive measures are manifestations of the most loving mercy of the Divine Goodness. For it is the part of the most excellent and undisturbed Creator to watch over the good which He has created, lest it should perish and be consumed in its destructive impulses. But they accuse the most merciful Creator of all things of punishing what He has created, and rail against Him, saying that in the case of many men God created them for the express purpose of punishing them, in order that He might have an object for His wrath : for they do not perceive that God inflicts His punishments on nothing that He has created, but only allows to be punished that which He has not created.

Evil and  
punishment

968C

968D

Moreover the base and evil things which they have done they ascribe to God : for they argue that if these things were offensive to the Creator of all things, He would never have permitted them to happen in the nature which He has created. But in fact He has fore-ordained that dishonourable and base things should exist side by side with the beautiful and honourable things, so that He might have an opportunity of displaying His justice, rendering in accordance with His divine Laws rewards to those who live well and honourably, and punishments to the evil doers who are polluted with the filth of their base and dishonourable deeds ; but to each according to the unalterable decree of the fate to which He had already predestined them. And this teaching they base upon the words of the Apostle : “Who is able to stand against His Will ?” And thus they make God responsible for the inevitable causes of their

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evil lives, saying that He had predestined them from the beginning ; for in the blindness and folly of their hearts they cannot behold His supreme Goodness and Beauty, or, to speak more accurately, that He is the inexhaustible and never failing Fountain of all Goodness and Beauty and Honour : but He cannot be the author or predestinator of evil or the evil man, of baseness or the base man, of dishonour or the dishonourable man. For all these are the products of irrational desires. For if they had proceeded from the Divine  
 969B Predestination, it would follow that they would have a permanent place in nature : for who can doubt that whatever is disposed by the Divine Predestination must abide eternally ? But these shall perish in eternity and shall be annihilated from the whole Universe of Nature. Therefore they cannot have proceeded from the eternal causes predestined by God.

They argue in the same blasphemous manner about the equity of God. For they say that it is unfair, if not unjust, in His not having distributed His goods equally among all men, for, they say, He raises up some, and casts down others ; some He leaves poor, upon others He multiplies riches ; some He blinds with the darkness of ignorance, on others He sheds the light of wisdom ; He makes some masters and others slaves ; and they cite all the other instances which  
 969C reveal the divers and infinite variety exhibited by the human condition in this mortal life. For they do not see, first, that the temporal and transitory goods of this life are not true goods, because they cannot last forever, and deceive rather than benefit those who pursue them, for they are shadows without substance, and are distributed alike to the good and the wicked because from both alike they shall be taken away. But they are distributed to all in due order and without confusion : for it is not only the eternal and everlasting goods that are conferred according to His unswerving Laws, but also the temporal and transitory goods : so that His Beauty may appear in time as well as in eternity. Secondly, they do not perceive how the most just Creator of all things and their most wise disposer imparts the gifts and graces of His boundless Goodness  
 969D to each according to the Laws of His Providence, and in nothing is He deceived. For the judgment of mortals upon the Divine Providence and Dispensation must be false when they do not know the Principles upon which the state of the Universe of all things visible and invisible is governed. Furthermore, in their folly they have failed to observe that the most equitable disposer of all good things disposes the natural goods upon all equally ; for the natural goods

are allotted in the same way both to the good and to the evil : true, this is not apparent in this sensible and transitory nature, for it is as yet concealed in the innermost recesses of nature ; but it will become manifest in the restoration of the universal creature, when the Truth shall be revealed in all, and all such vain imaginings of mortals about the Creator and His creation shall perish, when "God shall be all in all," and nothing evil or base or dishonourable or unjust shall be found in the harmony and beauty of the whole of nature, and everything which has been invented by the groundless opinions of mortals shall be proved void, and so be entirely done away with, for it is nothing. 970A

O how blessed are they who behold or shall behold in their mind all things under God in their unity! Their judgment is deceived in nothing, for they contemplate all things in truth. To them nothing in the Universe is painful or hostile, for they do not judge the part but the whole, and this they can do because they themselves are not in any part of the whole nor in the whole itself but are raised by the loftiness of their contemplation above the whole and every part of it. For if they were contained in any part of the whole or in the whole itself, they would not be able to have a right judgment of the parts or of the whole, and therefore if any would have right judgment of the parts and of the whole he must first rise by the strength and purity of his mind above all the parts and above the whole of the created Universe. As the Apostle says : "The spiritual man judgeth all things, but is judged of none." But whither ascends that spiritual man, who judges all things but is judged of none save to Him Who created him? Is it not to Him Who transcends and embraces all things and in Whom they are contained? So he ascends into the God who contemplates the whole created Universe at once, and observes it and judges it ; and his judgment is not deceived, for it beholds all things in the very Truth which neither deceives nor is deceived, because it is that which it is. 970B

The spiritual  
man judges  
all things ; he  
himself is  
judged by  
970C  
none

And it is by virtue of his inner contemplation that the spiritual man enters into the Causes of the things which he judges. For it is not according to the external appearances of sensible objects that he observes all things but according to the inner principles and the immutable order of their processions and the archetypes in which they are all united and all One. So that the spiritual man judges all things there where all things are One, and truly and immutably live and subsist, and whither all things which have proceeded from the Primordial Causes shall return again, without anything left subject 970D

to the mutability of time or confined by the limitations of space, for when this sensible world comes to an end the whole of nature shall transcend the dimensions of space and time and return into its Causes in which all things are One. And even space and time themselves, as well as all things which in this life are ordered and moved and limited by them, must return into their eternal Principles, which Holy Scripture calls eternity. For how can secular time continue when there shall be no more temporal things? and how can there be space when there are no more spatially extended objects? And this is why it is impossible that hell should occupy a sensible and corporeal place in the Universe, and the opinions of those are false who deceived by their imaginations declare that hell is either under the earth or in the womb of the earth or in some other earthly locality: for they do not realise that the earth itself beneath which or within which they say that hell is situated shall totally perish; and if the earth shall perish, then clearly nothing beneath it nor within it to which they could give the name of hell, will endure. Therefore neither hell, nor the everlasting fire which shall consume the wicked, nor the worm which dieth not can have any place within the sensible and corporeal creation. All these expressions are employed by Holy Scripture in allegory, as St. Ambrose testifies and as is clear from the Greek expressions which, as we have said, show more plainly what is meant in Scripture by the term "hell." For they call it ἄδης, a word which I have already explained as meaning "without delight" or "without pleasures" or "unpleasurableness." They also call it λύπη, which means "sorrow" or "grief" or "mourning;" and ἄχος which signifies the burden of despair, which drags down and submerges as in a deep whirlpool the evil desires when they are afflicted by their need for those temporal things which in this life they incontinently desired and engulfs them in the fogs of the insubstantial phantasies of sensible things by which they are tormented, perpetually rejected and eternally spurned by the irrevocable might of the judgment of God. All these terms used by the Greeks clearly show that hell and its torments are not sensible objects situated in space or time, whether in one of the four elements which are the parts of this world or in the whole of it; but they are a sad and lamentable condition, a dour and inescapable prison full of despair, and a lack of all good things, and exist only in phantasies and the least substantial of dreams.

A. About hell and its torments you have said enough. I am now completely convinced that they are not substances within the

visible and invisible creation, for they are neither body nor spirit, but the most just condemnation of the sinful and unruly lust of those who abuse their natural good, that is, the judgment of their free will ; and that condemnation is good not only because it is just (for everything that is just is good) but also because it is comprehended and ordained by the Laws of God, among which there can be nothing which is not good and just and honourable. And the phantasies in which it is contained are good too: for even the shadows cast by bodies, although no one doubts that they are insubstantial, clearly always derive their origin from the splendour of light, without casting upon the beauty of the light any taint of ugliness or dishonour. 971D

See what glory and praise is acquired by the virtues of perfect souls when they control and contain the vices that are within them, and tame and dominate them and force them into obedience and submit them to the Laws of God so that the evil which assaults the soul shall not drown it in the depths ! Often they completely destroy those vices, often they convert them into themselves, so that vice becomes virtue. This shows that the vices are not absolutely evil, but only unruly : for if they were evil they could never be changed into virtues, and the same may be said of everything else which, though seeming to rise up against nature from the perverse motions of the abuse of the free will of rational nature enslaving itself of its own will, yet are not permitted to hamper the order of the Universe, but rather are compelled by the eternal Laws of the Providence and Justice of God to add to its glory. Therefore I see with perfect clarity and without any hesitation or doubt both that the created Universe shall return in all its perfection into its causes and into God Himself, in whom all things subsist ; and that the most just punishments of irrational desires which have been bestowed upon them or permitted and irrevocably determined by the sentence of the most righteous Judge shall ever abide within that perfection, for far from doing harm to anyone they will provide an ineffable scope for its glory and its beauty. 972B

Definition of  
punishments

One might safely say, therefore, that the rewards and punishments are not disposed spatially but qualitatively, so that on the one hand they are united since they are the dual foundation on which the government of the state of the Universe is based, and on the other hand, they are distinct in their effects. For the effects of sin are weeping, lamentation, sorrow, tardy repentance, the insatiable fire of lust which never finds rest in anything, the abounding corruption 972C

and undying worm of vice, and the thick darkness of invincible ignorance in which there is no knowledge of true things or the Truth itself, that is no joy in partaking of the Truth. For the binding of the feet signifies the difficulty in walking in the Laws of God, and the binding of the hands the difficulty in performing good deeds in conformity with the virtues, and all other such things have an allegorical interpretation which it would take too long, and indeed

972D would be impossible to expound. But the effects of good deeds are joy, happiness, peace, bliss, blessedness, glory, equality with the holy angels, and in short *theósis* or deification, whereby "God has prepared Himself for those who love Him, that which neither the eye has seen nor the ear heard and which has not ascended into the heart of man." But if the effects of the Causes are contrary to one another, it follows that the Causes also must disagree.

Definition of rewards

And if anyone should ask how things so different can be united into a single whole, how, that is, virtues and vices can be comprehended within the bounds of nature, let him consider how in a great and richly appointed palace the healthy and the feeble, the seeing and the blind, the joyful and the sorrowful, the carefree and the anxious, the rich and the poor, he who is beaten with rods as a slave and he who is exalted with honour as a lord, he who is shut up in a prison as a criminal and he who is free from chains as a man proven innocent of all crime, and all similar diversities of persons can at the same time be contained in one place. And if that is so, and it must be clear to almost all men that it is so, why should we hesitate to believe or have difficulty in understanding that the one harmony of the Universe when it is restored and brought back into its causes includes both the future healing of the rational creature through the Grace of its Redeemer by Whom it is wholly received, and the future suffering of penalties appropriate to its deeds by the feeble instability of the perverted will which had attached itself as an alien thing to that nature, but must now be disposed according to the Law? That it should include, on the one hand, not only the healing but also the enlightenment of nature itself, and, on the other hand, the blindness of the evil wills in the perpetual darkness of the absence of the Redeemer? That it should include, on the one hand, not only the healing and enlightenment of that nature which is created in the Image of God, but also its Return into Paradise, which the wise interpret as meaning the place of spiritual delights, and on the other hand the leprosy which had disfigured it because of its sin, and must now burn with eternal pain in the total absence of all relief? That, in

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short, that harmony should include all such opposites : nature and guilt ; reward and punishment ; for in a marvellous and inexplicable way nature, altogether free, sustains the phantasies in which its guilt expiates its sin.

973C

N. All of what you say is convincing, and supported by sound argument. But at this point those who speak of spiritual things in a carnal way will object : How will the heathen suffer for their impiety in worshipping idols and denying the true God, or the Jews for their treachery in refusing to accept that the Incarnate Word of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and in all respects equal to Him according to His Divinity, or the false and superstitious imaginations of the other peoples who reject the Truth, if in the future life their nature will be wholly saved, so that neither their bodies nor their souls nor any other part of their nature will be set aside for the torment of eternal punishment? It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to convince such people, that it is not in the nature of the Justice of God, but quite contrary to it, to punish in anything that He has created that which He has created ; but to punish that which He has not created : for all the effects of evil, and all the punishments they merit flow not from nature, but from the wicked impulses of the will of each evil man, which sound students of nature usually call vices : an appropriate term, for they contend with the natural affections. They derive from original sin, in which all men, with the exception of the Redeemer of the human race, have collectively sinned. But this is attributed to nature and called a sin of nature not because that nature which was created in the Image of God committed it, but because the irrational misuse of the rational good of the free will which was given to it by God and the turning towards the love of sensible things concealed its proper beauty which belongs to the condition in which it was created in the beginning and obscured its proper glory. For to lay the blame upon nature is to lay it upon the Creator of nature Himself : if nature is the cause of sin, then God, Who is the Cause of nature, must also be the cause of nature's sin ; and nature which is created in the Image of God would not completely resemble its Archetype if it contained the cause of sin within itself. For as the cause of evil and of sin cannot subsist in the Archetype, so neither can it subsist in the nature which is created in Its image and likeness. For it would be most ridiculous to say that human nature first lost its likeness to and image of its Creator and then received into itself the causes of sin. Anyone who said so would have to explain by what sin our nature lost that

An objection  
of the carnal

973D

The source of  
sinning  
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likeness and image, for it would never have lost it if it had not sinned. But if human nature never lost the likeness and image of its  
 974C Creator and since this likeness and image are reckoned among its natural goods and acquisitions which are not taken away or reduced or increased either in human nature or in any nature which is created by Him Who disposes all things and endows them with substance, who but a madman would say that the natural goods can admit the causes of sin, or that sin arises from them? For if they do so admit, their natural beauty is marred, their dignity is diminished, their immutability is shifted and their order is shaken? Therefore no rational nature can contain the causes of guilt, for otherwise it would be dissimilar to its Creator.

But it may reasonably be asked: If the cause of sin is not attributed to nature lest it should be attributed through nature to its  
 974D Creator, because nothing which comes from Him can admit the causes of sin or sinning, why should one not argue in the same way that the cause of sinning should not be attributed to the free will either, lest the cause of guilt should be laid upon Him Who endowed nature therewith? For He Who gave us our nature also created in it a free will; and if nature is a good and an indestructible good, then so also should the freedom of the will be. From this it must follow that just as the causes of guilt are not established in nature, so  
 975A neither are they established in the free will: for the cause of evil cannot be established in any good.

There is no natural cause for the illicit mis-use (of free will) or evil

And then, we may ask, if no sin arises from natural causes, whence does it arise? And if anyone should give the correct and reasonable answer, and the one that is supported by the best arguments, that sin derives its origin from no other source but the irrational impulses of the rational nature, and by the misuse of the freewill, it will immediately seem as though the occasion of the irrational impulse is established in the rational nature. Such a person will seem to be asserting that the irrational motion pertains relatively to the rational nature and takes its occasion from it; and therefore it would have to be confessed that the causes of the irrational impulses can be traced back to God. For if every natural cause of rational nature is established in God, it must follow that  
 975B whatever is attributed to nature must be attributed to its Cause. But if it could be shown by sound reason that the irrational impulse is not related to the rational nature, but is diametrically opposed to it, as irrational is opposed to rational, we are left with the question, whence comes that irrational impulse in which the cause of sin is



established? And here no other situation for the cause of the irrational impulse seems more likely than the misuse, contrary to the Laws of God, of the natural goods, which is the characteristic feature of the perverted and unruly desire of the free will, which uses the good in the wrong way. Examples of this misuse are so common that there can be hardly anyone who could not produce a copious supply of them from his own nature. Be it noted, however, that the highest goods of our nature cannot be used by anyone in the wrong way. For it is beyond any man's natural power to abuse the essence, the potency, and the act; or wisdom, mind, and reason: for these are they which occupy the highest place in our nature. 975C

But the intermediate goods of our nature, such as the practical intelligence and sense-perception of our body and the body itself, and the lowest goods, such as those things which lie outside us, and are established in sensible nature, it is within our power to use either well or ill. Thus, practical intelligence is a natural good bestowed upon man by God to enable him to devise and invent worthy and useful things: but the perverse will put it to evil purposes, using it as an opportunity for doing harm and for the deception and destruction of those it wishes to deceive and destroy. The sense of the eyes, to say nothing of the other senses, is a natural good bestowed by God to enable us to receive the corporeal light so that through it and in it the rational soul may be able to apprehend the forms and numbers of sensible objects and to learn the truth about them so that it may put them to their proper uses: but this too can be misused by those who pursue the beauty of visible forms with lustful concupiscence, as Our Lord says in the Gospel: "Whoso looketh upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart," where the word "woman" is employed to signify the beauty of the whole sensible creation in general. 975D 976A

And as to the lowest sensible goods, is it not clearer than day that these can be used well by the good and ill by the evil? The good use them to the glory and in the service of the Bestower of all good things, but the evil to the gratification of the impulse of their perverse desire.

But if anyone wishes to discover the causes of this unruly misuse and this perverse desire let him look for it: for my part, as the result of much search, I am quite sure that they cannot be found. For just as evil is uncaused and none can discover whence it comes, so the unruly misuse of natural goods arises from no natural cause.

And here I am following the Blessed Dionysius the Areopagite in his book *On the Divine Names* and St. Aurelius Augustinus in his book  
 976B *On the Free Will*. For it is foolish to search for causes of those things which are not contained in any genus or form or species or in any one of those goods which were created and ordained by the Supreme Good and Creator of all things, because everything which was not created by Him is entirely without cause or substance.

And I think it is more appropriate to say that the cause of the punishments is the lustful appetite rather than the evil will, for this might lead one to suppose that there were two wills in one and the same nature, the one good and the other evil, whereas in fact there is only one will contained in human nature, though it is sometimes put to good purposes and sometimes to evil purposes. Lust, on the other hand, is not only entirely excluded from the natural goods, but is  
 976C seldom if ever found in Holy Scripture used in a good sense. For it was through lust for power and for preeminence above all things that the first man in whom all sinned, was seduced and persuaded into sin by the Devil saying to him : "On the day on which you eat of it" (the forbidden tree), "your eyes will be opened, and you will be as gods, possessing the knowledge of good and evil." O what a lust of pride there was in that man who desired by his own power to become god !

Therefore neither the impiety of the heathen nor the faithlessness of the Jews nor the fanciful ravings of the other nations flow from natural causes, but from the lustful desires of their vain imaginations, and therefore in none of these things shall their nature be punished, but their lust. For all the vices which are the contraries of the virtues and which seek to destroy our nature are usually comprehended under this form. Therefore all that remains to be punished with torments is that most gross lust which is common to  
 976D the heathen who worship false gods, the faithless Jews who renounce the Truth, and those other nations who imagine vain things and empty phantasies of what they pretend will be theirs to enjoy in the time to come, although they will find in them nothing but intangible shadows ; while the Universe of Nature which was created by God will endure unscathed, most perfect, and unpunished.

977A But, as I have frequently said, the general punishment of all the wicked will consist in the sorrow and lamentation caused by the absence and loss of those things in which in this life they delighted ; they shall have the phantasies of them forever, as it were, before their eyes, but ardently desiring to grasp them they shall be unable

to do so, for they are nothing : and the things to which they look for consolation are to them the source of restless despair. Hence arises that tardy remorse and that vain plea for consolation which is signified by the tongue of the rich man begging for a drop of water from the tip of the finger of the poor man Lazarus, for, as he said, "I am tormented in this flame." For the tongue is an allegory of the prayer for help in the flame of tardy penitence for sins ; the water an allegory of cooling freshness ; the finger, of the distribution of rewards by which we believe the Saints in the after life will be able to succour those who suffer punishment. For we are here given to understand that not only those who are still living in the flesh, but also those souls who have abandoned the flesh are able to pray for help to the Saints, either that they may be entirely freed from their punishment or that their torment may be mitigated ; but prayer is useless if in this life they have fallen into the very depths of sin, that is, if in this life they have performed no good deed which would merit mercy in the life to come. 977B

But there is another form of punishment common to all the damned, which, as the climax of their torments, represents all the sins they have committed in this life and in which they have persisted without repentance and without the chance of purgation after death, in the fierce and hideous shapes of wild beasts, so that those things in which here they took such evil delight when they were alive, shall impose most just punishment by appearing there under terrible aspect. Most just : for what could be fairer or more becoming the Divine dispensation than that those things which the unrighteous in this life pursued in a fire of unruly lust, in the life to come which it would be more accurate to describe as an eternal death they shall, in their torment, flee in a panic of terror ; and yet shall not be able to escape them ? 977C

But these and all other indescribable and innumerable kinds of punishments shall exist only in the phantasies of sensible things. For the wide fields of the memory both here and there are spread with phantasies, arranged according to a perfect order. These orders enter into the city of the soul as though through five gates, the first order through sight, the second through hearing, the third through smell, the fourth through taste, the fifth through touch. And these phantasies are of two kinds : the first comprises the rewards that are prepared for those who have lived a good life on earth, but not the best ; the second, the punishments meted out to those who live evil lives. But the Saints, who even while in the flesh have by the power

The  
phantasies in  
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which the just  
are given  
rewards, the  
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of their works and their wisdom conquered the world and the flesh and themselves and by the loftiness of their contemplation have ascended into God, receive as the reward of their labours no phantasy of sensible things but the theophanies of the Divine  
 978A Energies, and in addition the Grace of deification itself. For it is one thing to remain within the natural goods; this is prepared by the Divine dispensation for all men generally: it is another thing to transcend all nature and its goods, and attain to God Himself; this is the gift of the Grace of God. For “where the body” that is, the Truth, “is, there the eagles” that is, the minds that contemplate it, “shall be gathered together.” And again, those who do not go beyond the bounds of the natural goods fall into two categories: for we must distinguish between those who as a reward for their good conduct and pure innocence not only shall escape all punishment, but shall receive worthy rewards known only to God, so that they shall possess the natural goods, and in addition partake to a certain degree of the superabundant generosity of God, though not to the  
 978B extent of deification; and those in whom only the integrity of their nature will be restored, while the lust of the flesh and the incontinence of their life will be condemned to eternal torment: for these torments which are ordained by the Laws of God shall never harm the nature within whose potency they are comprehended and maintained, nor mar her beauty in whole or in part.

It is in his own conscience, therefore, that each man either receives reward or suffers punishment: his nature in either case remains unaffected.

But enough of all this. Let us now revert to the Return of the creature to its original state, which is the principal topic of our discussion.

The Return  
 of human  
 nature  
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A. Let us do so by all means. For we have dwelt overlong on this matter, and time is short. Indeed, I am afraid that our readers will be beginning to grow weary with hearing the same thing repeated so many times in different ways.

N. When a subject is complicated and has many different aspects, it is necessary that the explanation should be complicated and repetitive. And perhaps there are not a few who would prefer to hear the explanation repeated many times than have a brief and cursory summary of matters which often escape the mind’s eye. Such a summary would be more likely to pass over the difficulties than resolve them, and increase ambiguity instead of removing it.

A. Proceed whither and in whatever way you like. But please come now, without further digression, to the main question, which concerns the Return. For these incidental problems will prevent us from ever bringing our discussion to an end.

N. About the general Return of the whole creature into its Causes at the end of the world we have already spoken : it remains to deal with the special case of the Return of human nature. The Return of the whole of human nature into its first condition shall be in Him Who took that whole nature upon Himself, namely, in the Incarnate Word of God. We must consider this Return in two ways : first, the restoration of the whole of human nature in Christ ; and then, having dealt with its general aspect, we must consider the individual bliss and deification of those who shall ascend into God Himself. For it is one thing to return into Paradise, another to eat of the Tree of Life. Thus, we read that the first man, when he was created in the image and likeness of God, was placed in Paradise, but we do not read that he ate of the Tree of Life. For having first chosen to taste of the forbidden tree, he was prevented from enjoying the taste of the Tree of Life : that would have been his to enjoy thereafter, had he obeyed the Divine Precepts. But even before tasting of it he could have lived happily had he not sinned the moment he was created. From this it follows that while the whole of our nature, which is included generally in the man who was made in the image and likeness of God, shall return into Paradise, that is, to the glory of our original state, it shall only taste of the fruit of the Tree of Life in the case of those who are worthy of deification. Now the Tree of Life is Christ, and its fruit is the blessed life and eternal peace in the contemplation of the Truth ; for that is what is meant by deification. "For" says St. Augustine, "the Blessed Life is joy in the Truth, Which is Christ." And perhaps the Apostle means the same thing when he says : "For we shall all rise again, but we shall not all be changed." For this is how many, indeed almost all, translate the Apostle's words from the Greek. By this he means : All of us men, without exception shall rise again in spiritual bodies and in the integrity of our natural goods, and we shall return into the ancient state which was ours in the beginning ; but not all of us shall be changed into the glory of deification, which transcends all nature and Paradise itself. Therefore, just as the general resurrection is to be distinguished from the special transformation, so the Return into Paradise is to be distinguished from the tasting of the Tree of Life. For in the one is signified the restoration of nature, in the other, the deification of the Saints.

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Now, in saying this I am not unaware that others have translated the Apostle's words differently. Some interpret : "For we shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed"; others, including John Chrysostom, "For we shall all be changed, but we shall not all sleep." But I do not think these interpretations are relevant to our present task.

979D A. I fail to see why they are not : for if a man discusses the Return of the sensible creature, must he not also deal with the resurrection of the body ? Of course he must : for the Return and the resurrection are one and the same thing. What else is the resurrection from the dead than the reversion to the natural state ? Please explain briefly, then, the meaning of those interpretations which you wished to pass by without a word.

980A N. Those who adopt the interpretation, "We shall all sleep but we shall not all be changed," seem to me to understand the Apostle as saying : We shall all die : for what man alive shall not see death ? But we shall not all be changed : for those who from the beginning of the world until the Second Coming of the Lord, that is, until the end of time, have died, are dying and continue to die, do not expect the general resurrection of their bodies to take place immediately after death, but that, except for those who rose again with Christ, a period of time must first elapse : but those who, while still alive, experience the end of the world and the Coming of the Lord shall not only sleep but shall also be changed : for in their case there will be no interval between their sleeping and their waking, that is, between their death and their resurrection : it shall be, as the Apostle says, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Therefore death is not so much death for them as a transformation, for how can we speak of death when there is no interval between the departure from this life and the passage to the next ?

980B Those who interpret, "We shall all be changed but we shall not all sleep" mean that in the resurrection that is to come all men shall be changed from this life to the future life either immediately or after a period of bodily death, "when" as the same Apostle says, "this corruptible" (the body) "shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory, and death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed ;" but we shall not all sleep : that is, not all men shall suffer the death of the flesh before they are changed from the temporal life to the life eternal. For those who experience the Coming of the Son of Man while they are still living in the flesh shall not undergo the dissolution of bodily

death nor the separation of the soul from the body, but shall be transformed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and therefore shall not sleep, for their life will not be interrupted by any period of death. This interpretation has the wholehearted support of St. Augustine and John Chrysostom, and seems to be consistent with Catholic doctrine which firmly teaches that Our Lord Jesus Christ when He comes shall judge both the living and the dead, that is, both those who while still in the flesh have experienced the Coming of the Judge and those who have already suffered the dissolution of soul and body. 980C

A. Not all, then, who return into Paradise, that is into the former state of human nature, shall partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life?

N. Certainly not: only those who have overcome the world and the flesh, as it is written in the Apocalypse: "To him that overcometh I shall give to eat of the Tree of Life which is the Paradise of my God." For, as has been said before, by Grace and by nature it is given to all men in general to return into Paradise: by Grace alone it is given to the deified alone to eat of the Tree of Life. 980D

A. Why, then, do the Scriptures say that the Tree of Life is in the midst of Paradise, if it is not granted to all who shall return to Paradise to eat of its fruit?

N. Note that the Scriptures do not simply say that the Tree of Life is in Paradise, but, more precisely, that it is "in the midst of Paradise." By the word Paradise you are to understand the whole of human nature, in which all men, good and evil, participate; but the phrase, the midst of Paradise, signifies those innermost and secret recesses of that nature in which the image and likeness of God is explicit: it is here that is planted the Tree of Life, that is, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom only those whose faith and works are wholly purged and whose knowledge is wholly enlightened and whose wisdom and understanding of the Divine Mysteries is most perfect are permitted to contemplate. This is shown, I think, in the mystical building of the Temple of Solomon. For while all men without exception, circumcised and uncircumcised, male and female, of every nation of the world could enter the outer portico either for prayer or for commerce and could carry on their business there, only the priests and Levites could enter into the Portico of the Priests and the Portico of Solomon. Then the priests, after they had purified themselves by washing in the brazen bath which stood in 981A  
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the Portico of Solomon, would enter into the outer temple where the shewbread and the candlesticks were, but no one but the High Priest was permitted to pass beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies, where were the Ark and the altar of incense and the altar of sacrifice and the two Cherubim. By this we are given to understand that all men are placed according to their degree within the precincts of the natural Paradise as though within a temple ; but only those who are

981C sanctified in Christ, shall enter into its inner parts, and of these again only those who are in the Supreme Pontiff, Christ, and are made one with Him and in Him, will be brought into the Holy of Holies, or innermost part of all, where Christ is, Who is signified by the altar because by His strength He supports all things ; and He is not only an altar but an altar of incense : for His fragrance, that is, His praise and glory, fills all things. He is also the Ark which contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is also the Rod, because He rules and measures all things : and the Manna, because He feeds all men. He is the Altar of Sacrifice because He ever intercedes for us to His Father offering to Him the universal Sacrifice and the world's Ransom, namely His Humanity, which He sacrificed and surrendered for the purification and the redemption of the whole human race without any exception. For as there was nothing of that nature, save sin, which He did not receive, so there is

981D nothing of that nature which He shall not redeem, and by redeeming shall not save and sanctify. For He is the Redemption and Salvation, the Purification and Illumination and Perfection, of the whole human nature collectively and individually, and around Him are stationed the Cherubim, that is the angelic orders through whom He governs and disposes all things visible and invisible.

And perhaps the reason why the Cherubim about the Ark, that

982A is, about Christ, are two in number is that the angelic order administers both the sensible and the intelligible worlds, but an alternative interpretation could reasonably be that one stands for the intellectual nature of the angels, the other for the rational nature of man : for no wise man doubts that the intelligible and rational natures are next to Christ.

You see then what a high thing it is, transcending our natural faculties, to approach this Tree which is planted in the midst of Paradise, that is to say, of human nature, and to partake of its fruit. It was to this Tree, far removed from all others, and only accessible to the deified that Paul was brought when he was rapt into the third heaven of our nature, that is to say, having passed every body and



every vital spirit, into the Mind itself, in which the Word of God, that is, the Tree of Life, dwells in Light inaccessible transcending in a mysterious way all essence, all potency and all act, beyond and yet at the same time within the nature that was made in the Image of God. 982B

Therefore all men, each according to his degree, shall enter into Paradise as into a spacious and secret temple, and He shall dwell among them, Who said : "I shall be in the midst of them." Hence the Prophet declares : "I shall pay my vows in the sight of all His people, in the halls of the House of God, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." For Jerusalem means "vision of peace," or "temple of peace," and it is the House of God which is built on the summit of the mount of lofty contemplation, to which the Prophet exhorts all men to ascend by the degrees of virtue and the heights of contemplation, saying : "Come, let us ascend to the Mountain of God and enter the House of the God of Jacob." For God dwells nowhere but in the nature of men and angels, to whom alone it is given to contemplate the Truth. But we should not think of these two natures as two separate Houses: they are one and the same House built out of two intelligible materials. It is of this House that the Lord seems to be speaking when He says : "In My Father's House are many mansions." In the halls of this House all men will possess mansions when they return into their Causes, whether their time on earth was spent well or ill. For no man can spoil its beauty or debase its honour or subtract from or add to its spaciousness. For what could be excluded from it or what could be unable to enter into it, seeing that in it no man's baseness is base, no malice harms it, no deceit deceives it, no wickedness of unclean spirits or irrational impulses of evil men contaminate its beauty ; they even embellish it. For there is no beauty which is not produced by the contrast of like and unlike, of things that are contraries and opposites ; nor would the Good be so praiseworthy if it were not set against the condemnation of evil. Therefore although in itself evil is condemned, when the Good is praised in contrast to it it does not appear altogether damnable. For that which contributes to the honour of the Good cannot itself be altogether without honour. Would the Creator of good things and the Ordainer of evil things have permitted evil in the Universe that He created if it conferred no value upon it ? That He would not can be very easily inferred from the comparison of sensible qualities or human characters. Thus the glory of the fruitful tree is increased by comparing it with the barren, and the glory of the continent man by comparing him with the lustful. Therefore in the Paradise of human 982C  
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nature each man shall have his proper place according to his conduct in this life, some, as it were, in the outer porticoes, others further in, in rooms that are closer to the Beatific Vision, others again in the spacious temples of the Divine Mysteries, others finally in the innermost Theophanies above every nature shall be with Him and in Him Who is above nature and above being. Blessed are they who enter into the Shrine of Wisdom, which is Christ; who have

983B access to the uttermost darkness of that most excellent Light in which they behold all things at once in their Causes; where the distance between the good and the evil is not of a spatial or temporal order but of merit; where not the magnitude or beauty of bodies is honoured but the glory and grandeur of virtues; where distinction and nobility of morals, not persons, is sought; where all share the same nature but not all share the same Grace; where all are One, and yet not one: One as to substance, not one as to their affections. Abraham and the rich man were one in their spiritual substance which all human nature takes and in which it abides inseparably: but they were not one in their spiritual qualities, for between them

983C there was a great gulf fixed. Abraham rejoiced in eternal peace, while the rich man groaned in inextinguishable fire. That is why the rich man saw Abraham as one that was afar off. Who can express how great is the distance between joy and sorrow even in this life, let alone in that in which no sorrow shall come after the joy of the righteous nor any joy after the sorrow of the impious, for the awards meted by the Divine Justice according to the merits of each can never be changed. This is the great distance and the unbridgeable gulf which divides the punishments from the rewards. For from the fact that the rich man could speak to Abraham as though he were close to him instead of far away you may understand that he was not separated from Abraham by his nature but by his guilt. Those who

983D are divided by difference of awards are still united in essence. Just before the Passion of the Lord Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter were supping together with Christ in the one room, but one was close to Christ and the other far removed. The one who dipped his hand with Christ in the dish was the betrayer of Christ, the other of whom it was not said that he dipped his hand with Christ in the dish was he

984A who contemplated the Divinity of Christ. The one in his greed sold the Man-God, the other in his divine wisdom knew the Man as God. The one by a bodily kiss betrayed the body, the other by a spiritual kiss showed his love for the divine Spirit. I tell you this that you may know that man draws near to Christ or is separated from Him not in a local sense but by merit. Hence it may be seen that while all men

participate in one and the same nature which is redeemed in Christ and free from that servitude under which in this life it still groaned and suffered, so that in it all are made One, the qualities and quantities of their deserts, that is, the differences between the good actions of men who helped by the Grace of God lived well their life on earth, and the evil actions of those who deserted by the justice of God lived ill are variously and infinitely large and manifold. But all these things are in due order comprehended in that one spacious House in which the state of the Universe created in and by God is displayed in many divers mansions, that is, in many degrees of merit and grace. And that House is Christ, Who comprehends all things by His potency, disposes all things by His Providence, governs all things by His justice, adorns all things by His Grace, contains all things by His eternity, and perfects all things by His deification, for “from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him are all things.” 984B

A. Everyone endowed with true faith and a sound understanding of nature would agree that your words are reasonable and probable. But to those who imagine that nothing exists outside the spatial and temporal extension of the physical world they will seem like the incredible ravings of a lunatic. For they assert that this sensible world shall not return into its Causes, nor perish utterly, but that it will remain as it is, only with all its qualities improved: comprising the bodies that it had comprised, extended as now in space and time, the sum of many parts, enclosed within the boundaries that now enclose it. And they teach that the place where the bodies and souls of the damned are to be tormented by the heat of the eternal fire is in the lower part of it. We have discussed this theory in earlier books but I should like to recall it for a moment. 37 984C

Some locate the place of torment between the earth and the moon: others in the lower parts of this region (which is called aerial) which are more opaque, being closer to the earth, and filled with clouds: others again in the innermost recesses of the earth, deep down in vast caves always darkened by densest fogs, as becomes the children of darkness. And they say that these damned shall rise again with the same bodies with which they died, having the same size, the same sexual distinctions, the same number of limbs, in fact identical with what they were when they were alive in all respects except that instead of mortal and temporal they shall now be immortal and eternal, and instead of being animal they shall now be spiritual. But this change they do not attribute to the virtue and 984D 985A

Those who understand hell in a local sense

nature of the Grace of Divine Goodness, but to the ruthless and irrevocable severity of the powerful Judge ; for they see the gifts of Nature and of Grace as the cruelty of vengeance, arguing that the bodies of the damned are immortal, spiritual and eternal for no other reason than that they should undergo perpetual torment. Moreover, they have no hesitation in saying that the fire which shall burn them is corporeal and sensible, and they have the same fantastic notion about the undying worm and the sulphur lake : they are quite sure  
 985B that all these things are spatially extended bodies. They declare that women shall rise again in the female sex and men in the male sex, and each in his former condition, and that the functions of the limbs shall not cease, although they are now of no further use, and a great many other things that reason finds it easier to ridicule than to examine.

But the Apostle deals with the matter in a double statement. Speaking of the general resurrection of all human bodies he says : "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." But if all bodies shall rise again in glory and power, with all reproach and weakness removed, what sort of glory and what sort of power will that be for those who are condemned to eternal torment ? My argument is not affected by what he says in  
 985C another place : "Has not the potter power to make one vessel for a noble use and another for a dishonourable use ?" for there he is not discussing the bodily resurrection but confuting those who try to blame God for choosing some and rejecting others, for making some vessels of His mercy and abandoning others as vessels of His wrath. And if anyone should say that he is not speaking of the resurrection of all human bodies in general but of the special case of the resurrection of the righteous let him consider what the Lord Himself said about Himself after He had raised Lazarus : "I am the Resurrection." He did not specially say, I am the Resurrection of the righteous, but He spoke generally : "I am the Resurrection." If, then, He is the Resurrection, then it follows that He must bestow Himself equally to all whom He raises just as God the Father  
 985D "maketh His sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust." And perhaps He Himself is that Sun which rises on all alike, and that rain which rains on all men equally. But while He bestows the Grace of resurrection and life on all men generally, in the special case of those who believe in Him He brushes away as a cloud not only the death of the body but

also that death of the spirit which is ignorance of God and the most grievous torment of the damned. But as He granted to all men equally that they should be, so He shall grant to all men equally that they shall rise again and possess the likeness of the angelic nature. 986A

But the upper parts of the sensible world, which are called ethereal, and which extend from the moon upwards to the outer limit of the sphere of the fixed stars, they set apart for the bodies of the Saints : for they regard it as a reasonable distribution that just as the lowest and murkiest parts of the Universe are allotted to those who deserve punishment, so the highest and most pellucid should be reserved for those who are worthy of reward. And here again they do not hesitate to declare that the bodies of the Saints have spatial extension, and retain the same stature and the same number of parts as was theirs previously, and are distinguished by their male or female sex, only admitting that they are changed into spiritual qualities and most subtle substances resembling ethereal bodies so that all that was here earthy and ephemeral shall there be heavenly and eternal, and all that was here heavy and perishable shall there be free from all weight and all taint of corruption, so that they may move wherever they please just like the rays of the eye : but they will still be in possession of their limbs and bodily organs, occupying the space that they occupied before, the eyes and the instruments of the other senses, the head down to the shoulders, the arms, the chest, the feet, and all other members disposed as in their previous life. 986B

When I read of such things in the books of the Holy Fathers, I stagger, so to speak, amazed and horror-struck. Then I begin to ask myself how these most spiritually minded men who have ascended beyond the consideration of all spatial and temporal things and by the power of contemplation have risen above the whole sensible world, could have approved such teachings in their writings and handed them down to posterity, and the only reason I can conceive is that they were induced to imagine and set down such things that they might encourage at least those who are so devoted to such earthly and carnal speculations and have only been nourished on the rudiments of the faith to ascend to the contemplation of spiritual things. For those who imagine that there is nothing beyond this sensible world are more prone to renounce than to embrace the true contemplation of nature. If they were to be told that there was to be no place, no time, no body, no bodily substances after the end of this world, they would at once burst out with the indignant objection : "Then in that case there will be nothing at all, if nothing 986C

of this kind is to remain !” and they would turn away in scorn from  
 986D those who promise only spiritual things and refuse the things of  
 sense. So it was, I think, that bearing these things in mind and  
 taking into account the thinking of the simple faithful, these great  
 and good men thought it better to teach that earthly and sensible  
 bodies would be transformed into heavenly and spiritual bodies  
 than that all bodies and all bodily and sensible things would be  
 987A totally done away with. For to the carnally minded it is more tolerable  
 to believe that the earthly body will be changed into a heavenly body  
 than that all corporeality will be totally annihilated.

I think the Apostle had the same motive in mind when he said  
 of the resurrection of the earthly body : “It is sown an animal body,  
 it shall be raised a spiritual body.” For this could be interpreted : The  
 earthly and animal body, which is sown into the ground when it  
 undergoes the dissolution of death and destruction, shall be raised a  
 spiritual and heavenly body ; that is to say its earthly quality and  
 quantity shall be changed into spiritual quality and quantity, and in  
 short, as many, if not all, interpret his words, from an earthly thing  
 it will become a heavenly thing, and from being a corporeal thing it  
 will become a spiritual thing ; but it will still be body. From being a  
 heavy body it will be changed into a subtle body ; but it will never  
 transcend the condition of etherial bodies, nor will it ever lose its  
 987B bodily qualities, although from being earthly those qualities will  
 become heavenly, as smoke is changed into flame. But whoever  
 studies closely the writings of St. Ambrose or Gregory the Theo-  
 logian or his commentator Maximus will find it clearly stated that  
 the change is not from an earthly into a heavenly body, but a  
 complete passing into pure spirit, and not into that spirit which is  
 called ether, but into that which is called Mind. Thus Ambrose  
 denies to it all composition, so that after the resurrection body, soul  
 and Mind shall be one, a simple one, not a one made up of three  
 elements but unified into a single ineffable harmony, so what appear  
 987C here as three will there be made one Mind. Gregory in like manner  
 unhesitatingly declares that at the moment of the resurrection body  
 shall be changed into soul, soul into Mind, Mind into God, so that  
 God will be all in all things, as air is changed into light. And the  
 Apostle himself, if we examine his words more closely, implies the  
 same thing : “It is sown,” he says, “an animal body, it shall be raised  
 a spiritual body.” That is to say : The body, which is sown an animal  
 body, is the same as the spiritual, that is, the changed, body, which  
 shall be raised into spirit ; or, to speak more plainly, from body it

will become spirit. This he declares openly when he says : "It is sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power." For where is the glory or the power if the body is raised in the quality of the stars or in the subtlety of the ether, and moves with its speed ? My argument is not affected by what the Apostle says in another place : "The brightness of the sun is one thing, the brightness of the moon another, and the brightness of the stars another ; and one star differs from another in brightness. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead." For here he is using the analogy of the most excellent and glorious bodies of the sensible world to teach the Grace of the resurrection and of the divine Theophanies and that each partakes of regeneration in a different degree. For this is what is meant by the words, "One star differs from another in brightness." By this beautiful and apt simile of the variety of the celestial luminaries this admirable Doctor shows the infinite varieties of award meted out by the most righteous judge to all men according to their deserts.

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Therefore do not listen to those who say that after the resurrection that is to come the bodies of men will shine in the etherial sphere in such a way that the degree of brightness of each will correspond to the worthiness of his earthly life whether good or bad ; and who compare the physical brightness of the righteous to that of the sun and the moon and the stars, and the darkness of the wicked to that of the lesser luminaries. For they are contradicted by reason supported by the Holy Scriptures which clearly state that all human bodies shall share the same glory and power in the same spiritual and immortal and eternal state. For this comes to all men generally without discrimination from nature and from grace. And how does it benefit the righteous man that his body should become as radiant as the sun ? or what disadvantage is it to the wicked man that his body should become as dark as the dimmest of the stars ? The glory of the righteous will consist not in the brightness of his body, but in the purity of the contemplation in which he shall see God face to face ; and the disgrace of the wicked will be not in the ugliness of his physical shape but in the deprivation of the sight of God. For it is the presence of the Truth that makes a man blessed, and its absence which makes him wretched. For instance, take two men who are of the same age and stature, and are equally endowed with beauty, bodily health, noble birth, soundness of the senses, strength, agility and all other physical advantages, but of whom one is wise, honourable in his conduct and endowed with all the virtues

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which adorn the soul, while the other is foolish, depraved in his conduct, and corrupted by all the vices which warp the soul : how does it matter to either the physical advantages which they enjoy to an equal degree when the sole interest of the one is to attain the Supreme Good for which he is seeking, knowing that his own good lies in nothing but in cleaving to the Supreme Good and in finding his rest and eternal joy therein; hoping to complete there the blessedness he has begun here ; ever striving to raise his entire self, body, soul and mind, above every creature to Him Who is exalted over all things: while the other, blinded by the darkness of his ignorance does not perceive that already in this life he is preparing  
 988D for himself the torments of eternal damnation, not realising while he is alive that the pleasures of this life and the sorrows of the next spring from one and the same source, for in this present course of life they flow together in such a way that the pleasures show a fair face to those who pursue them while the sorrow that is to come conceals itself within them ; but when the course of this mortal life comes to an end, the pleasures come to an end too, and only that sorrow, so long hidden that it was thought no longer to exist, shall remain to torment him with the inextinguishable fire of his lust for the pleasures which he has lost.

989A From this it is most clear that our sole quest should be joy in the Truth, which is Christ ; and our sole dread the deprivation of it, for that is the one and only cause of all eternal suffering. Take Christ from me, and no good is left for me, nor is there any torment left to terrify me. For I hold that the deprivation of Christ and His absence are the sole torment for every rational creature, and that there is no other. But on this subject much could be said : let us return to finish our discussion.

989B N. Before we bring this book to its close I think we should say a few words against those who oppose our teaching with certain Scriptural texts from which they claim to deduce that these sensible elements and the whole extent of the world's mass will endure forever, and that the positions and movements of human bodies after their regeneration shall be ordained by it. They believe that no body will ascend beyond this world or be transformed into spirit. They argue as follows : If heaven and earth shall pass away so that nothing corporeal, nothing possessing size or occupying space, no movement in time or space, no spatial extension or disposition, shall remain, how do you explain the text : "There will be a new heaven and a new earth?" For these words not only deny that the heaven



and earth will be destroyed, they even suggest that they will be restored and renewed.

Here is my reply to them : It is an extremely common usage in Holy Scripture to express the whole by one or more of its parts, or to call the whole Universe by the name of its principle division. Therefore, since the constitution of the whole sensible world extends between two opposite and contrary extremes, namely, heaven and earth, the Prophetic Spirit aptly expresses the renovation, that is, the transformation into its spiritual substances, of the whole visible Universe by the phrase, "a new heaven and a new earth." By the word heaven you are to understand all ethereal and heavenly bodies, and by the word earth, the lower and intermediate bodies ; so that the whole sentence refers to the transformation of the whole visible Universe into its spiritual Causes. Indeed, it would, I think, not be far from the truth to say that the distinction between the new heaven and the new earth signifies the distinction between the visible and the invisible creature. For it would be quite reasonable to call the restoration of the spiritual nature a renovation of heaven and that of corporeal things a renovation of earth. For we have the word of the Apostle that "all things in heaven and earth are restored in Christ." For not only sensible creatures but also intelligible creatures shall in a way that cannot be described, for it is known only to God, pass into their Causes, that is into the most pure knowledge of their Causes by which they combine with them in such a way that that which purely knows and that which is purely known are made One. This, I think, is what the Lord means when He says in the Gospel : "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away."

Again, the words, "There shall be a new heaven and a new earth" can be understood with special reference to the renovation of human nature and its unification with itself. For while it is still in this life our nature is composed of two substances, body and soul. And since the great dissimilarity between these two substances of which we are now composed came about as the result of man's transgression in his primal state, the Apostle teaches that they belong to the old man, and that we must put off the old man and put on the new, that is, Christ, in Whom our nature, consisting of body, soul and mind, is renewed and made one and from being composite is made simple. And that which has already been performed in the Head of human nature, that is, in Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, shall be performed in the whole nature, when the new earth of our

body shall be changed into the new heaven, that is into the new condition of soul. And then by a further ascent body and soul together shall be changed into spirit, and Spirit into God Himself: and this whole shall be performed in Christ and through Christ, Who is the End and Consummation of our nature.

And then again, congratulating themselves upon having found the strongest and subtlest and most irrefutable arguments to convince us, they say: If this earth which is heavy with bodies, and which occupies the lower and intermediate parts of creation, shall perish, then the moon which is its neighbour and the constellation nearest the earth must perish too; and if the lesser light, then also the greater light: for if the whole perish, no part will remain. But if this is to happen, how do you explain the prophetic promise: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days?" We are not now (they say) referring to the allegorical interpretation which takes the moon to be the Church which shall shine forth in Christ, who is the Sun of Righteousness, and Christ Himself, in Whom the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost shall appear most manifest to all who contemplate Him, but to the literal magnification of the two greatest of the heavenly bodies. Now, if these luminaries, far from perishing shall actually have the brilliance of their enduring bodies increased,

990C The prophecy that the light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, etc.

990D why should we not suppose that what is true of the intermediate parts of the world will be true also of the lower parts, especially since St. Augustine in the later books of *The City of God* appears to teach that it is not the bodies themselves that shall pass away, but their qualities shall be changed into something better. In the same way neither the shape nor the size nor the sex of the human body shall pass away, but shall merely be clothed with spiritual and immortal qualities. And in his letter to Dardanus he does not hesitate to declare that the Body of the Lord, after His Resurrection, is in heaven in a local sense in the same fleshly form and substance as it appeared on earth, with the sole addition of the quality of

991A immortality. Nature is not taken away from Him, and therefore He is not omnipresent as God is, and is not changed into divinity beyond all space and time, transcending everything that can be uttered or understood. And when He comes to judge the quick and the dead, He will descend as a visible body from some spatial locality. But this argument is not so difficult to refute as they imagine. Our reply is as follows: The moon signifies the whole sensible creation. This is reasonable enough, for as the moon is

susceptible to increase and decrease, so this whole universe is susceptible to the coming into being and passing away of its parts : there is in it nothing that is constant or stable, for as everything that it contains had a beginning, so it must have an end. On the other hand, by the course and brightness of the sun is meant the most fair disposition of the spiritual nature, orderly in its stability and its movements. The light of the moon, therefore, will be like the light of the sun when the manifold and mutable variety of bodily objects, and their puzzling elusiveness, now appearing to the senses and now escaping from them, now showing a perfect form, now an imperfect form, shall be changed into the most perfect and constant brilliance and uniform beauty and glory of spiritual substances: while the light of the sun, that is, the perfect beauty of spiritual things, shall be increased sevenfold, so as to be like the light of the seven days, that is to say, of the Primordial Causes which are established in the splendour of the highest Wisdom. The number seven is frequently employed as a symbol for them because they were created in the Word of God in the first six mystical and intelligible days and on the seventh rest in their perfect consummation in Him in Whom they were created. This is that intelligible Sabbath which was prefigured and had its beginning in the creation of nature, and shall be manifested and perfected in nature's consummation, when the whole sensible creature shall be changed into the Intelligible, and all Intelligible into the causes, and the causes into the Cause of all causes, Who is God, and shall rejoice in eternal peace, and shine with ineffable splendour and keep the endless Sabbath.

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And as to those who confront us with Augustine, as though they wish to show that they have a greater respect for his teaching than we and that they have made a more constant and careful study of his opinions, let them consider what he himself has said in those same books of *The City of God* concerning the passing away and destruction of that sensible, and corporeal heaven and all that it contains, in which they think the blessed master included also the Flesh of Christ after His Resurrection; and let them read how that man of most subtle intellect perceived the corporeal heaven which is to be totally destroyed to be entirely different from the flesh of Christ wherewith after His Resurrection He was equipped in the same mode of spatial limitation in which He lived among men as man created out of men. Therefore it is more likely that this great and most skilful enquirer into all things human and divine and this most copious commentator wrote in a manner suited to the intelligence of

Christ's  
humanity  
after the  
991D  
resurrection  
is everywhere  
as God

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his readers than that he should have been in disagreement with the Holy Fathers who preceded him in time, Ambrose and Gregory the Theologian, from whose authority he does not elsewhere depart. But as for me, without embarking on any controversy, I have no hesitation in interpreting Our Lord's own words, "I and My Father are One" as referring not only to His Divinity, but to His whole Substance, God and Man, and therefore the whole Christ, the Word and the Flesh, is omnipresent, and is not limited in space either in respect of His Wholeness or of any Part of Him, whether it be His Divinity or His Humanity, of which two parts, as it were, His whole Substance is constituted. And in support of this we have the opinion of St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, who in his third book *On the Trinity*, expounds the Lord's prayer to His Father ("And now, O Father, glorify Me in Thyself with that glory which I had before the world was made") as follows :

992B "The Word made Flesh had not ceased to be that which He was, but began to be that which He was not. He had not abandoned that which is His, but had taken upon Himself that which is ours. He asks for that which He has taken upon Himself the glory of that which He does not abandon. Therefore the Son Who is the Word, and the Word made Flesh, and the God Who is the Word, and Who was in the beginning with God, and the Word that was the Son before the creation of the world, and Who was now made Flesh, prayed that this Flesh might begin to be for the Father what the Word was, so that that which was created in time might receive the  
992C glory of that which is without time, so that, transformed into the power of God and into the indestructibility of spirit, the destructibility of the flesh might be absorbed."

38 If then the Flesh of Christ is transformed into the power and the indestructibility of the Spirit of God, then that Flesh itself must be power and indestructible spirit. And if the power and Spirit of God are omnipresent and transcend space and time and everything that exists, no one can doubt that that Flesh when it is transformed into the power and Spirit is neither limited in space nor changed in time, just as the power and spirit of God, which is the Word into Whose unity and substance it has been received transcends all space and time and every other limiting factor in the Universe. So I need  
992D not quote more than a single passage of St. Augustine on the subject of heaven and earth as they now are and as they shall be after the Day of Judgment, although there are many others. In the Thirteenth Chapter of the Twentieth Book of the *City of God* he writes :

“After the Judgment has been completed, then this heaven and this earth shall cease to exist, and a new heaven and a new earth shall begin to be. For it is not by complete annihilation but by a change of matter that this world shall pass away... Therefore the Apostle also says: ‘The shape of this world passes away, but I would not have you anxious.’ The shape passes away, not the nature.” 993A

Now, tell me, how is this inconsistent with my words about the passing of this world into its Causes, which St. Augustine called its nature? He says, this heaven and this earth shall cease to exist, but their nature only will remain: we, following in his and others’ footsteps, that everything in this world which is sensible and extended in space and time, and everything that is susceptible to change will perish, that is to say, will pass into its substance or nature, but that its nature, which is contained immutably and indestructibly after an incorporeal and intelligible mode in its Primordial Causes, will endure forever. But if anyone is so far from the truth as to say that the nature and substance of this world is sensible and corporeal and extended in space and time, and susceptible to generation and passing away, he is not worth answering, for every intelligent physicist accepts as an axiom that the nature and substance of bodies is itself incorporeal. And if he should say that from the time of His Resurrection until the Day of Judgment the Flesh of Christ shall continue to be bounded by the limits of this corporeal heaven, and only after its destruction shall ascend above all the heavenly powers, he shows that he does not understand what the Catholic Church teaches about the whole nature of Christ, namely: “He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.” And no one but a fool would claim that the Flesh of Christ even when transformed into Spirit, that is to say, into God Himself, is retained within this world while the celestial powers rise above it, when we see that the thickest clouds when they are consumed by the rays of the sun are changed into it. 993B

And suppose he should ask: what is unreasonable in believing that the Flesh of Christ on the one hand, whether in motion or at rest, must occupy some part of space in the corporeal heaven even if it have free choice over the part it occupies, provided that His Soul, as also His Divinity is omnipresent and pervades all things? Do we not admit that the spirits of the angels transcend every corporeal creature and beyond all space are moved in a non-spatial sense, but the bodies in which they are wont to appear to men occupy a part of space and are contained within the bounds of the sensible creature? 993C

The bodies of the angels

Our reply would be: the bodies of the angels are no more enclosed within the walls of the corporeal creature than their spirits are: for the bodies are contained in the spirits as in their Causes: they are not material bodies composed of the qualities of the elements of the physical world, but spiritual bodies that have been made one with Mind: this is the nature of the bodies in which the angels manifest themselves to whom and when and in what manner they desire. But these bodies are not phantasies, they are real. There can be no doubt that the spiritual bodies are true bodies, proceeding from genuine causes. It was in such a body that we believe Christ to have appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection — not that this Body was different from the body that was born of the Virgin, crucified and raised again from the dead: it was the same body, but from being mortal it had become immortal, from being animal it had become spiritual, and from being earthly it had become heavenly. And it would have been in such bodies that the plurality of human nature would have been propagated out of its secret recesses, had that nature not sinned. For each man contains hidden within himself the “reason” of his body, into which this mortal and earthly body shall be transformed at the resurrection, and in which it will become similar to the angelic body, so that men “shall become equal with the angels.”

So there is no reasonable obstacle to our firmly believing and understanding that Our Lord Jesus Christ is omnipresent in both His natures, which are made One in His indivisible substance, and that no part of Him is confined in space or time or any other way in which the creature is limited. For He is everywhere wholly God; He wholly transcends things that can be said or understood; He wholly is in the Father, and is wholly made One with the Father; He is wholly God in the whole man, and wholly man in the whole God, without sacrifice to the individuality of either nature.

Such then is the ineffable and transcendent harmony of our Head, a harmony to which all His members when they have been made one with one another shall return, and “come together into the perfect man in the fulness of the time of Christ,” and He shall be and shall appear as One in all, and all shall be and shall appear as one in the One.

For no attention should be paid to those who put a different interpretation on these words of the Apostle: “Until all shall come together into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, into the perfect man, into the measure of the fulness of the

time of Christ," saying that they refer to the perfect stature which the fleshly body of Christ had attained in the thirtieth year of His age, and attempting to show that it is in this physical stature and age that all men will appear after their resurrection, even those who died before their time or decrepit or suffering from some bodily defect or encumbrance. But the folly of these ravings can be very easily shown if we examine the Apostle's own words, which refer not to the growth of the Flesh which Christ had taken upon Him, nor to His stature, nor to His age, but to that Body of Christ which is the Church: and of this Body which is the Church, the measure and perfection and fulness of its spiritual time is identical with Him Who is the most perfect and spiritual Head of the Intelligible Body, and the End and Consummation of all things. Consider the words the Apostle addresses to the Ephesians: "He has put all things under His feet and has set Him as Head over all the members of the Church, which is His Body, and the fulness of Him Who fills all in all things." And a little later in the same epistle you hear him explaining what those members are from which Christ wished to construct and did construct a Body for Himself: "Some He gave as apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." You have seen the members, you have seen the material: enquire now of the Apostle for what purpose those members are required. He replies: "For the perfecting of the Saints in the work of administration and for the building of the body of Christ, until all shall come together in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God." See the beginning of the building, the unity of the faith; know the perfection of the building, that is the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God. Here then shall the growth of the stature of Christ begin, and it shall be perfected when Christ shall appear as a perfect and single man, with and in the whole of His Body, the Head in the members and the members in the Head; and the measure and fulness of the time of Christ shall be most clearly seen, not with the eyes of the body, but by the virtue of contemplation that belongs to all the Saints that have been made one with their Head; and the spiritual time which is the fulness of all virtues, and which is established in Christ and His Church, shall be accomplished, with all else that is understood as pertaining to the eternal happiness and perfection of blessedness in the Son of God.

But as to the resurrection of human bodies, St. Augustine unhesitatingly affirms in his books on the *City of God* that each man shall rise again in that size and stature which his body should have attained in the flower of his youth, whether it ever reaches it, or

whether it was prevented from doing so by death, or whether it fell away from it in age. On the other hand the Blessed Gregory the Theologian, and St. Ambrose and the venerable doctor Maximus also, as we have often said, show beyond doubt that the immortal and spiritual bodies shall not be defined by the features of their corporeal shapes or qualities or quantities, because they have been  
 995C made ineffably one in an indivisible simplicity with the spirits which are defined by no limits.

Now the reason why they erroneously teach that all human bodies shall rise in the stature of the Body of the Lord is not far to seek. Inadequate understanding of the Greek text, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας, “into the measure of the age,” leads them to interpret ἡλικία as referring to the fulness of the age of the body, whereas in fact it signifies rather the growth of the soul in virtues than the spatial expansion of the body in time. This is why the philosophers call the soul the daughter of ἐνδελέχεια, that is, the daughter full  
 995D grown in virtues; for the word is derived from ἔνδον ἡλικίᾱ, that is, of inward age. Therefore no well instructed person would interpret the Apostle’s words as meaning the full growth of the body, but rather the completion of the Church in its Head, which is Christ; and the consummation of Grace and Blessedness and the unification which passes man’s understanding.

And I am surprised that those who contend with us about the magnification of the bodies of the luminaries of the world ignore the prophecy of the Lord in the Gospel about the passing away of the whole sensible world in the passing away of its parts: “But  
 996A immediately after the tribulation of those days,” He says, meaning, After the persecution of Antichrist, “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give forth her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.” From this we understand that the sun and moon shall not endure after the extinction of their light, nor the stars after the passing away of the ether and the sphere in which they are set. And this prophecy of Our Lord we regard not as an allegory merely but as a reference to the destruction of the whole world and the dissolution of bodies. For many to whom the idea of this destruction is repugnant, have recourse to the allegorical interpretation only, and take the passing away of the sun to mean the shaking of the faith even of the most perfect who shall be alive on that day when the son of iniquity shall appear. For his persecution shall spread  
 996B such a cloud of error and faithlessness that all the people of heaven (that is, the Church) shall either conceal for a while the light of their



orthodox faith, or in their terror diminish it, or fall away from it altogether ; not only the carnal (signified by the moon), but also the more spiritual (signified by the stars) and even those most exalted and spiritual doctors of the faith, who are here represented by the sun.

And I do not deny that this interpretation is reasonable : what I reject is the violence they do to the literal interpretation, saying that there shall never be an extinction of the light of the heavenly bodies at the end of the world, but that its radiance will be surpassed by the transcendent splendour of the Judge Who is to come and of the celestial essences who shall descend with Him when He comes to judge the quick and the dead. They support this belief by an illustration taken from the rays of the rising sun, whose brilliance dims the light of the other stars and blots it out altogether from our sight, while their own light is kept vivid and undiminished, for the sun from which they receive it is ever present with them. The fact that the sun's rays themselves are sometimes obscured from the earth by the interposition of the body of the moon they ignore. 996C

Now the reason for the error of those who think in this misguided way is, I think, the following : they suppose that the Judgment will take place in some definite place within the confines of this world, and that the Judge and His holy angels will descend physically from some place in the upper parts of sensible nature : some, for instance, suppose that the seat of Judgment will be on the frontier between the aerial and ethereal realms, which the physicists describe as the sphere of the moon ; others agree with the Jews in imagining it to be situated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, not realising the true meaning of this word. For Jehoshaphat is a compound of two words, ἰαω and σαφατ. ἰαω has many meanings, for it can be interpreted "invisible", or "Lord", or "glory" or "it was, and is, and shall be ;" while σαφατ means "judgment." Jehoshaphat, therefore, means "the invisible judgment" or "the judgment of the Lord" or "the glorious judgment" or that He Who judges "was and is and ever shall be." Therefore Joel, beholding in the light of prophecy the spiritual significance of the Divine Judgment, and that it was not a visible judgment situated in the physical Universe places it in the mystical Valley of Jehoshaphat, and taking upon himself the person of the Lord Whose glory shall appear in the excellence of His judgment and Who was and is and ever shall be, proclaims : "Let the nations arise and ascend into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for I shall sit there and judge all the peoples 996D 997A

The errors of those who assert that the judgment will be in some part of the world

in turn.” His meaning is : Let all men arise from the dead and ascend into the high place of My Judgment, the deep and secret place which lies beyond the understanding of all men. Thus are those who imagine such things clearly condemned by sound reason. For how shall Our Lord Jesus Christ to Whom the Father has given the Judgment move through time and space, after He has raised His Manhood above all space and all time and above everything that  
 997B can be thought or uttered into the unity of His Godhead, Where He sits eternally without change on the right hand of the Father and ever shall so sit, from which He rules and judges all things and ever shall so rule and judge? For that which the Catholic Faith professes in the Creed of the Church, “from thence He shall come to judge both the living and the dead” we should not interpret as meaning that He moves through space or emerges in any way from the secret recesses of His Nature into this world to appear in visible members to the corporeal senses of those who are to be judged ; but that each man, good or evil, shall behold His coming in himself, in his own conscience, when they shall be set free, and God shall reveal the hidden places of the darkness and each man shall be the judge of his own deeds and thoughts.

997C Therefore Augustine writes in the thirteenth Chapter of the twentieth book of the *City of God* :

“By a certain divine power all men shall recall in their memory all their deeds, whether good or ill and with wonderful rapidity shall judge them in their minds, so that knowledge shall either reprove or excuse the conscience, and that is how all and sundry shall be judged.”

And this divine power is appropriately called a book, for in it is read whatever of its deeds is preserved, as the Apostle says :

“For all men shall stand before the judgment throne of the Lord, each man bearing what his body performed, whether good or ill.” By the judgment throne of the Lord, he means the exaltation of His majesty, which shall everywhere appear to all men in all things, and at its manifestation “the wicked shall behold Him Whom they  
 997D have pierced, and all the nations of the earth shall weep.” And so the Sign of the Son of Man, the honour and glory of His Cross, shall shine forth before all.

And perhaps this will be the flame that shall come at last and spread through all the world and consume it, namely the manifestation of the Word of God in every creature, when in all men, good

and evil alike, nothing shall show but the intelligible Light, which now pervades all things invisibly but then shall pervade all things openly. This is that flame, I think, of which It Itself says: "I am a consuming fire." For it shall consume all things when it shall be all in all things, and it alone shall appear in all things. In His Gospel He also says: "I have come to bring fire upon earth, and what else do I desire but that it should burn?" Here the word "earth" means the whole sensible creature, and the burning fire is the brightness of His manifestation in all things that is to come and the burning of His judgment. And this is how it is understood by St. Augustine in his commentary on the Fiftieth Psalm:

998A

"What is a holocaust? A total consumption by fire? It was called a holocaust when the whole animal was placed upon the altar to be burned. So that fire shall consume the whole of us, and that flame shall destroy the whole of us. What is that flame? That from whose heat none can hide himself. What is that flame? That of which the Apostle says "on fire with the Spirit" Not only shall our soul be consumed in the divine fire of His Wisdom, but our body shall be consumed in immortality. So the holocaust shall be offered, and death shall be swallowed up in victory," and he continues interpreting in too great detail to be reproduced here the allegory with which Holy Scripture describes the judgment that is to come.

998B

The clouds in which will be taken up the saints who go to meet Christ in the air

A. I agree that it is too long to quote here, but I should like to hear in a few words what are those clouds in which the Saints are to be snatched up into the air and brought before Christ; and also what is meant by the air in which they shall ever be with Christ in the clouds themselves. I am thinking of the words of the Apostle where he says: "We who are left a remnant," that is, we who have not yet ascended into the glory of deification, "shall be snatched up in clouds into the air and brought before Christ, and there shall be ever with Him."

N. We have said something before about these clouds, following the teaching of Maximus, in earlier books of this discourse. However I shall now add to what was then said the exposition of St. Ambrose. Maximus says that each one of the Saints shall have his own cloud, meaning the special virtue and excellence of his own contemplation. According to the degree of knowledge of the Truth to which he attains, so will be the extent to which he will be snatched up into the air and brought before Christ, that is to say, brought into the height and splendour of the most pure Mind, and so in the cloud of his contemplation he will see and rejoice in the Theophanies. Ambrose

998C

- on the other hand says that the clouds are the Patriarchs, for instance Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in whose faith and works and wisdom, as in clouds of brightest splendour the heirs of the New Testament shall be snatched up into the presence of Christ. In like manner Moses and the other prophets, and the apostles also, who had direct experience of the virtues and the teachings of the Lord
- 998D Himself are clouds; and those who in this life follow their example in faith and works and hope and charity and knowledge and wisdom are in those virtues as in clouds caught up like them so as to meet Christ, whether they were still alive or loosed from the bonds of the flesh. Whither do you suppose Enoch and Elijah were caught up whilst still alive if not into the presence of Christ Who they knew in spirit was to come into the world? Whither Abraham, of whom the Lord Himself says: "Abraham saw my day, and rejoiced"? Why do
- 999A I need to go on? Whither Job, who said: "I have heard Thee with the hearing of mine ear, but now I see Thee with my eye"? Whither Moses when he ascended into Mount Sinai? Whither the other prophets when they foresaw His coming in the flesh, and ran to meet Him in the spirit? Whither was Peter caught up when he replied to his Lord's question with the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"? Whither Paul, when he ascended into the third heaven? Are not all these, and all who like them have been each in accordance with his proper degree of contemplation, snatched up into the presence of Christ, now with Him and in Him in the spiritual air of virtues and contemplations?

- Now all these and similar intelligible clouds were symbolised by that sensible cloud which received the Lord, at the time of His Ascension, out of the sight of His disciples and in which He was carried up into heaven. For He needed no vehicle composed of
- 999B clouds to carry Him into the aerial and ethereal regions, being Himself after His Resurrection purer and lighter than every creature, visible or invisible, neither admitting nor suffering to remain in His spiritual Nature any element of spatial movement. But He wished to show to his disciples by a visible sign whither He would after an invisible mode ascend in the hearts of those who love and follow Him. For He Himself ascends in the contemplations of those who ascend to Him; and without Him no man can ascend to Him. For, as He Himself says, "No man ascendeth unto heaven save Him that came down from heaven," nor does He Himself descend from heaven when, ascending to Himself He raises them up with Him in their holy contemplations. Therefore He continues: "The Son of

Man Who is in heaven," where by heaven he means the Father, from Whom He went forth at His Incarnation and to Whom He returned after His Resurrection. For wherever in the Gospel we read that the Lord raised His eyes to heaven, we should understand that His Father is intended, Who alone is greater than He in the sense that the Father as cause precedes the Son. 999C

Now that the saints are with Christ and in Christ in the purity of their contemplation is understood in three ways. They may be in that condition when they are still confined within the earthly body; or when they are loosed from the earthly body; or when they have received the heavenly body. All these three modes are very clearly illustrated by the Transfiguration of the Lord on the Mount, where Elijah is an example of those still living in the flesh, Moses of those who are loosed from the earthly body, Our Lord Himself of those who have risen from the dead. Thus by the Transfiguration of His Body He revealed to His disciples the manner of the general Resurrection.

But do not suppose that Elijah, still living in the flesh, came to Christ from some localised Paradise, or Moses from some place of souls, taking upon him his body again: or that when the Mystery of the Transfiguration was completed they returned to the places from which they had come. But you must faithfully believe and unhesitatingly understand that they came from no other place but from Him with Whom they appeared in the Mount, that is to say, in the height of spiritual vision, which at that moment occurred without the operation of the bodily senses; and in Whom they were before they appeared; and from Whom they did not depart in order to appear; and to Whom, after their sacramental manifestation was completed, they returned, and are nowhere but in Him in Whom and with Whom they are One. This is clear from the fact that the three disciples who were chosen to see the Mystery of the Transfiguration, when they lifted their eyes saw no one but Jesus alone. 999D 1000A

But to understand this more clearly you should read what St. Ambrose says in his *Commentary on Luke*:

"Know that that cloud is not composed of the vapours that issue from volcanoes or the black fog of compressed air which covers the heaven with the terror of darkness, but it is a cloud of light which moistens, not our bodies with rain or showers, but our minds with the dew of faith, being sent down upon us by the Word of God. And when the Word of God is uttered Jesus is found alone.

1000B Thus, although there were three, they are now become one. Three are seen at first, one is seen at last: for they are all one in the perfection of their faith. Finally this is the Lord's prayer to the Father: "That all may be One: not Moses and Elijah only are one in Christ, but we also are the one Body of Christ. Therefore they are received, as it were, [in one body] into the Body of Christ to show us that we too shall be One in Christ Jesus."

A. We have now spoken enough of the clouds in which the Saints are caught up into the Presence of Christ. But it is worth while enquiring what is the nature of those heavenly clouds in which the Son of Man shall come. Please explain briefly, therefore, of what sort they are.

N. I would say that the clouds of heaven in which the Son of Man shall come cannot be other than the heavenly substances themselves which are always attendant upon Christ in the virtue of  
1000C contemplation. But because they cannot behold the most high and holy Trinity in itself, for it is incomprehensible and transcends the intelligible vision and all the faculties of mind, and can only contemplate It in comprehensible Theophanies which are of like nature with themselves, therefore they are called the clouds of heaven. From these divine manifestations in which they behold God, Our Lord Himself applied the name of clouds to the celestial substance with whom and in whom shall be revealed His coming, and the fulness of His majesty be most clearly manifested to all men, good and bad alike.

But the principle of their spiritual nature does not allow these celestial clouds to move in a local sense. They move, rather, in a spiritual sense, and thereby execute in the nature which they govern and over which they preside that which in the Cause of all things they see has to be done, and themselves without motion through  
1000D space or time dispose all time and all space and all things that are contained in them. What is meant by their coming is their appearance in visible shape to those who are worthy to behold them, and their going is their withdrawal from every corporeal sense.

Do not be disturbed that I should say that spiritual substances do not suffer temporal motion whereas St. Augustine declares "that only God moves by his own agency without space or time, while the spirit created by Him suffers itself to be moved, by Him Who moves all things, through time but not through space, and the body both  
1001A through time and through space." For I am here following the

Greeks, who do not hesitate to assert that everything which moves through space must also move in time, while everything that lacks motion through space must also be without motion in time. For these two, space and time, must either both be present together, or both be equally absent, for it is impossible to separate the one from the other.

A. It is not our present business to dispute about the authorities of either language. Let each follow which he will, not decriing the other. And now that you have spoken about the intelligible clouds, though briefly, please come back to the Return, and bring our wayward vessel and its weary mariners to harbour.

N. The Return of all things which shall be brought back into their causes when this sensible world shall pass away and the intelligible world which is above us shall be fulfilled in Christ, is to be understood in two senses. For there is a general Return and a special Return. The general Return is the lot of all things which shall be brought back to the Principle of their creation: the special Return, of those which shall not only be restored to the Primordial Causes of their nature, but shall achieve the consummation of their Return, beyond every rank in the hierarchy of nature, in the Cause of all things, which is God. We can obtain examples and allegories of each from the Holy Scriptures.

1001B

Since in the natural order of things the genus is prior to the species we must deal first with the general Return. The first example of the genus was when the people of God, freed from servitude to the intelligible Pharaoh, that is to the devil and his host, under the leadership of the spiritual Moses, Who is Christ, crossed the Red Sea with dry feet, that is to say, by the firm path of human nature, avoiding the seas of irrational impulses, and overcame and overthrew the hostile tribes, that is, the armies of the vices, and after the death of their bodies, that is to say, of their carnal fancies, in the desert of the virtues where everything mortal and corruptible is done away with, only in the pure spirit as sons of good works returned into the Promised Land. And the fact that two of all those who had set out from Egypt reached the Promised Land while still in the flesh signifies that our double nature of soul and body shall return to the Promised Land, which we had abandoned by sin, in our Saviour, whom Jesus the son of Nave, that is of their beauty, prefigured, with Caleb, that is, the free will of our heart, accompanying us. For Caleb means "heart" or "every heart." For as the devotion of each heart will be helped by the grace of God, so it will follow its Saviour

Another  
theory about  
1001C  
the waves

1001D

into the land of the living and of those who use well their natural goods.

That the whole of human nature will return to the first condition of its nature can be deduced from the recall of the children of Israel from the Egyptian captivity because Scripture makes no mention of any one of the people of God remaining in Egypt. All  
 1002A with one accord fled thence and all without exception were freed from the hands of their most cruel masters. And from the fact that not one of those who returned out of Egypt was overwhelmed or drowned in the waves but all, as the Apostle says, “were under the cloud”, that is, under the divine protection, “and all crossed the sea, and all were baptised under Moses in the cloud and in the sea” we are shown that that baptism shall be universal which shall be perfected at the end of the world, when the mystical Moses shall lead from death into life His people who are the whole human race, redeemed in His blood, and purified from all malice and wickedness, when nothing shall be seen in any man save the simplicity of his  
 1002B nature, through the merit of Him Who took that whole nature upon Him, and purified it, when the intelligible King of Egypt, who is the prince of this world, had with his innumerable hosts of evil and all the vices by which he had held captive the Image of God created in man shall be overwhelmed in the waters of the Red Sea, that is in the infinite vastness and depth of the effusion of grace which is poured forth upon our human nature in payment for the Blood of Christ. For as the Blood of Christ was shed for our redemption and shall effect our restoration into the first state of our nature, so it is a source of harm to the devil and his angels and shall effect the downfall of their empire and the increase of their torments. For as the flooding of the Red Sea, which is the shedding of the Lord’s blood, rescued human nature from the depths of everlasting death and brought it into the life eternal, so it drowned the wickedness of the devil in everlasting damnation. For the pride of the devil can  
 1002C suffer no greater penalty or deeper affliction than his envy at man’s salvation and the consequent despair: not because he too, had he wished, could not have returned to the Creator of his nature, but because bound in the toils of his own evil will he will forever hold in detestation the sweetness of bliss, and ever grieve in perpetual torment that man has escaped from his clutches.

Nor is the prophet Isaiah silent about the general salvation of the human race in Christ, for he lifts up his voice and cries: “The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthali, the way of the Sea of



Galilee across Jordan. The people of the gentiles which sat in darkness, have seen a great light, and on those who sat in the valley of the shadow of death the light has arisen."

What is that people who sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death but the multitude of the human race infinite in number and known only to God? For after abandoning the light of Paradise, it sat in the darkness of ignorance and in the valley of the shadow not only of that death which separates the soul from the body by dissolution, but of that which separates God from the soul through sin. From this double death the whole human race is set free by that Light Which has arisen over all, and Which says of Itself: "I am the Light of the World." Even now that light has in part destroyed the worship of the idols in those whom it has brought to the recognition and service of the true God, and has washed away the filth of their wickedness in the waters of baptism and consumed it in the fires of penitence: but in the end, when not only the general death of the body but also the death of the soul shall be done away with, it shall expose the rites and ceremonies of the idolaters and the superstitions and iniquities of all the heathen and shall reign supreme over the universal creature. For all men, good and evil alike, when they stand before the judgment Seat of the Lord, shall know that "God is One, and there is no other god but Him." For when there is no more denial of the Truth, then all must confess that God is One. For even the blind cannot deny that the light which they cannot see is seen by those who can.

But as to the fact that the salvation of our whole nature is already effected in Christ, anyone who wishes can see from the interpretation of the names that are mentioned. Thus Zabulon means "the habitation of virtue." Therefore that Light which has arisen upon those who sit in darkness, is the Virtue and the Wisdom of the Father. And what is its habitation? Is it not our nature in which He desires to take up His habitation at His Incarnation? Consider the words of the Evangelist: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Humanity of Christ, then, is the spiritual Zabulon, and in it we all are saved, and being saved, take up our habitation therein, and shall dwell there forever. For He is our virtue and our strength.

Nephtali means "breadth." And what is our breadth? Is it not Christ, Whose charity and mercy embrace the whole human race, and Who died for sinners "when who would dare lay down his life even for the good?", Who loved all men equally, when for all men

He gave Himself up? For this is the fulfilment of the law of nature, which He fulfilled in Himself when He endured death for all men. The Law of Nature is the universal love of all men, without any respect of persons, which in Christ was most perfectly fulfilled, when He proceeded from the Father “Who did not spare His only Son but gave Him up for the sake of us all.”

But there is another way in which “breadth” may be understood as Christ. Thus breadth is that in which the plane figure is manifested, and for that reason is called in Greek *epiphania*. Christ, therefore, is our epiphany, that is, manifestation of our plane figure. For of the three substances of the Supreme Good, one of Them became manifest to us in the form of the man Christ, that is, the  
 1003D Incarnate Word of God, and so made Himself comprehensible to our corporeal senses. For no one has ever seen the Father or the Holy Spirit united in substance with a creature.

Moreover Ezechiel in the allegory of the three cities prophesies the return of the whole human nature. For he says: “And do thou, Jerusalem, also be ashamed, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.” And then he adds:

1004A “You and your daughters shall return into your ancient state, and I shall bring them back, restoring them with the Return of Sodom and her daughters and with the Return of Samaria and of her daughters, and I shall bring back your Return in the midst of them.”

From this it is clear, as St. Jerome says, the Wrath of God is not of His nature, but it is our wickedness that provokes the most kind and most merciful God to anger. The text continues:

“And your sister Sodom and her daughters shall return into their ancient state, and Samaria and her daughters shall return into their ancient state, and you and your daughters shall return into your ancient state.”

The Septuagint reads:

“And your sisters Sodom and her daughters shall be restored as they were in the beginning, and Samaria and her daughters shall be restored as they were in the beginning, and you and your daughters shall be restored as you were in the beginning.”

1004B These words of the prophet, or rather, of the Lord speaking through the prophet, are expounded by the blessed Jerome as follows:

“Among other fables and interminable genealogies and fantasies which the Jews invent is this notion about the coming of their Christ, whom we know as Antichrist : Sodom is to be restored in a thousand years, as a kind of Paradise of God, and Samaria shall recover her former felicity, and both shall be brought back from the Assyrians into the land of Judea. And Jerusalem also is then to be built.”

A little later he writes :

“But we, leaving the perfect knowledge of these things to the judgment of God, clearly maintain that after the Second Coming of the Lord and Saviour there will remain nothing earthly, nothing lowly, but only the Kingdom of Heaven, which is first promised in the Gospel.”

What more is said about the matter by this Commentator I omit because it is of a moral nature and discusses the Return to the Catholic faith only of the gentiles and heretics and sinful souls. 1004C

Moreover, one may reasonably say that the mystical week of the Law, which occurred every fifty years, of which the Hebrew name *Jobel* signifies Liberty, because all men received their liberty in it, and each man was released from any sentence he might be under, and allowed to return to his former home, clearly symbolises the Return of which we are speaking, and which comes after this present life has performed its seven revolutions.

The Return of nature is foretold by David the Prophet-King, when he says “Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be made, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.”

Consider again the parables of the Gospels, for instance that of the Prodigal Son who wasted in a foreign country the portion which he had received from his father, and then driven by want and remembering who he was and induced by penitence, returned to his father, who received him most affectionately and forgivingly and bestowed upon him not only his former grace but even slew the fatted calf in his honour. Who, then, is that son? Is he not man created in the Image of God? For the Heavenly Father created two natures capable of knowing Him, the angelic and the human, and upon each He bestowed the Grace of Sonship. But man is regarded as the younger son, and angel the older, because Scripture records first the creation of the angel, then that of man. Therefore that part of the angel host which never abandoned its Creator is the elder son, and man who wholly fell and strayed away from his Creator is the 1004D 1005A

younger; who after a while, however, shall return again to his Father and receive the best garment, that is, the first condition of his nature. In addition he shall receive the girdle of the virtues, which is signified by the ring, and the price of the death of Christ, which is represented by the sandals that were put upon his feet, and which is life eternal which is the price paid to all men generally and was  
 1005B earned by the death of the Lord. And then the fatted calf shall be brought in and slain. And what is that calf? Is it not the man Christ, filled with the sevenfold Grace of the Holy Spirit, and heavy with the fatness of the letter and the visible nature? For in these two, the letter and visible nature, the corporeality of Christ is manifest, since it is in them and through them that He is perceived, in so far as He can be perceived. For Christ is the spirit of the Law “and the invisible things of God are made manifest through the things that are made, and His power and eternity are everlasting;” or, in the words of the blessed Maximus when he is explaining what Gregory the Theologian said of the Nativity: “The Word was materialised:”

“The Word, Which is simple and incorporeal and Which is the spiritual nourishment of all that comes after It, deigned by His  
 1005C fleshly presence to take from us and on behalf of us and in accordance with our nature, though without sin, material substance for the divine powers that are in heaven.”

As to the fact that that son represents the human race, passing over John Chrysostom’s commentary on this parable because of its length, we may content ourselves with what the blessed Ambrose says in his *Commentary on Luke* :

“The species of the human race may be expressed in one man, the Prodigal Son. When Adam was, we all were in him. When Adam perished, we all perished with him. Therefore man is made again in that man who perished, and that man made in the Image and likeness of God, is, by the mercy and longsuffering of God, brought back into that Image.”

You see then that this parable teaches allegorically that not a part only but the whole of the human race is to be restored in Christ.

1005D The parable of the lost drachma is to be interpreted in the same way. After the whole world, like the house, has been turned upside down, it is found by the woman, that is, by the Wisdom of God, which made it and possesses it. And it is reckoned as a tenth part because not only is human nature made equal with the nine others of the angels, but there is no angelic order into which human nature,

after its restoration will not enter according to its intelligible degrees, so that it will fulfil the perfect *denarius* of the heavenly city, as Dionysius the Areopagite declares in his book on the *Celestial Hierarchy*. And that would have been its lot if it had not sinned.

And you should think the same of the hundredth sheep, which had strayed away from the heavenly fold, and which was sought and found by the Good Shepherd, Who is Christ, and when he had found it he carried it on his shoulders back to the flock from which it had strayed. It is numbered the hundredth because after the Fall of human nature the perfection (represented by the number 100) of the Heavenly Jerusalem who is our mother is diminished ; and will be restored to its full number of 100 when the human race returns to it in its Head Which is Christ. 1006A

Now, in this connection there arises a question of no small importance : a question which has been raised before, but never so far as I know answered : for if it has, I must confess, the answer has never come my way. The question is, if the number of men that shall return to take their place in the Heavenly City, that is, in the society of the company of the blessed under the One God, is equal to the number of the transgressing angels who fell therefrom. Clearly, either the number to which the human race has increased from the first man to the end of the world must be equal to that of the apostate angels, so that their heavenly thrones which they relinquished in their pride, may be sufficient for the whole human race to take on their Return : or, if the number of the fallen angels is less than that to which the human race has grown, a superfluous part of human nature equal to that by which it exceeds the number of the fallen angels will be excluded from the company of the Kingdom of Heaven : for they will not be able to ascend there if they can find no place in heaven for them. Only that part which equals the number of the fallen angels will return. And this would mean that not all men were redeemed in Him Whose will it is that all men should be saved and come to the recognition of His Truth. And indeed most authors of either language do not hesitate to declare that the number of men that shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven is not less than the number of angels that abandoned heaven. In that case, we must choose one of two alternatives : either the number of all mankind is equal to the number of evil angels, or the number of mankind is greater than the number of apostate angels, which would mean that not all partakers in human nature will return to the principle of their Creation : but this conclusion is wholly unacceptable for reasons already given 1006B 1006C

concerning the salvation of the whole of mankind in Christ, and which cannot be denied.

1006D To quote the Holy Fathers on this subject, that is, on the comparison between the men who are to be restored and the angels who have fallen would take too long: I will content myself with a single quotation from St. Augustine: discussing the nature and fall of the demons in the first chapter of the twenty-second book on the *City of God*, he writes:

1007A “A nature which might have enjoyed God proves itself to be created good by the very fact of its misery at not enjoying God, Who punishes the voluntary fall of the angels with the most just penalty of eternal unhappiness, whereas to those who stand firm in the Supreme Good He has given as a reward the assurance of eternal perseverance so that they can be sure of perseverance to the end. He also made man upright, endowed with free will, an earthly animal yet worthy of heaven, if he should stay fast by his Creator; but should he abandon Him, he would partake of such misery as was appropriate to this nature. He foreknew that he would sin in breaking the Law of God and desert Him. And yet He did not take away from him the power of free will, foreseeing the good use that He would make of man’s evil by gathering together through His Grace as many of the mortal race which had been justly and deservedly condemned as would replenish the part of the angel host which had fallen, and so that chosen and heavenly kingdom would not suffer loss in the number of its citizens, and indeed might even enjoy an increase.”

1007B This conclusion of the most holy doctor should by itself be sufficient to teach us that the number of the human race to return into the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than the number of those who fell therefrom. And I think this is what the prophet David meant when he said: “I have announced and I have spoken: they are multiplied beyond number.” For he was referring to those who are purified and redeemed by the sacrifice of the Body of the Lord, and whose number exceeds that of the angels who through the pride of one renegade were hurled from the glory of blessedness. The next verse makes this abundantly clear: “Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not: but Thou hast made Thy Body a holocaust for me.” By this he means: The sacrifice of the Law and the offering for the purification and redemption of the human race You did not desire to offer, but You made for my sake the Body of Christ a holocaust

1007C in the fire of His Passion on the altar of the Cross; and asked no

further recompense for our sin. For Grace is more abundant than transgression, and the Passion of Christ avails infinitely more in bringing us life than the sin of Adam in bringing us death.

So whether the number of wicked men is equal to that of the fallen angels, or whether it is greater, in neither case are we prevented from believing that the whole human race is redeemed in Christ and shall return into the Heavenly Jerusalem. For if it is equal, as many who have studied the matter believe, it redounds to the praise of our Redeemer Who in His Providence ordained from the beginning that the number of the human race should be exactly sufficient to supplant the Prince of this world, from whom He has taken away not only the whole realm of human nature but also his own inheritance from which he was expelled because of his swollen pride ; and this inheritance was bequeathed to us for all eternity, so that he might be tormented by a punishment of twofold anguish : the loss through the unjust slaying of the Second Man of the kingdom he had obtained through seducing the First Man ; and his envy at seeing his enemies in possession of his own heavenly birthright which he had abandoned. If, on the other hand the number is greater, then we should offer Him the greater glory in that He not only distributed among us in heaven the possessions of our ancient enemy, but has prepared for us in His Heavenly Kingdom even more mansions than for those who had fallen. 1007D

And now I think I have given sufficient illustrations of the general Return into Paradise.

A. You certainly have. For to make an exhaustive collection of all the allusions to these matters scattered throughout the Scriptures would be a long and perhaps a tedious business. But I should like to know the significance of the envy of the elder son for the younger when he returned to his father and was feasted with the fatted calf. For if the two brothers signify the human and angelic natures I find it difficult to see what sort of envy the good angels could feel at the salvation of the human race and at its Return to its Father, Whose substance, the Grace of the Image in the mansion of this mortal life, it had wasted in servitude to the devil. For we are told that the Holy Angels grieve at man's destruction, not that they envy him ; for they are fellow-citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and possessors of the substance and inheritance of their Father. And the Lord Himself bears witness that the heavenly Powers rejoice when the sheep is found and brought back on the shoulders of its Shepherd, and by this one sinner the whole human race is implied. And if the elder son 1008B

symbolises the general angelic nature why is it said that he came in from the fields and demanded angrily that his father substitute a kid, and acted in other ways repugnant to the angelic nature?

- N. The question is difficult to solve, but I think there is one  
 1008C way of doing so, namely on the principle of parabolic transition. For parables are of two kinds. One is of a straightforward narrative in which the meaning of the characters remains unchanged, and there is no transition from one significance to another; while in the other kind the elements of the story change from one significance to another. It is to this kind that many of the Holy Fathers, and especially the blessed Ambrose, attach this particular parable, and we find them expounding it accordingly. The first part of the parable, which consists of the division of the Father's substance, and the elder son remaining with his father while the younger wanders away and wastes his share of the property he had inherited  
 1008D from his father and describes the other misfortunes that followed the fall of man, is clearly an allegory of the two natures, the intelligible nature of the angels and the rational nature of man. But with the return of the prodigal there is a transition of meaning. The Return itself is to be interpreted in two ways: in the general sense of the Return of the whole human race, on account of the slaying of the fatted calf, that is of Christ's Passion which He suffered for the salvation of the whole world; and in the special sense (and it is here  
 1009A that the parable begins to shift its meaning) of the Return of the gentiles, who are represented by the younger son, through faith in Christ, to their Heavenly Father, whose Image they had tarnished by the filth of their idolatries and the vainness of their imaginations on account of the envy of the Jews, who are represented by the elder son, at the conversion of the gentiles by the preaching of the Apostles. For the Jews, although they had very often been corrupted and led astray into the worship of demons, yet had never altogether, as they thought, denied the God of their fathers — and yet they did deny and still deny that Christ is the Son of God, and therefore they deny His Father. For he who denies the Son denies the Father also, Who if the Son is denied is no longer a Father. In their infidelity they demand a kid from the Father of Christ Whom they deny, but they will not accept the kid from the Father of Christ: they accept it, however, from their own Father, of whom Jesus Christ, Whom they  
 1009B deny to be the Son of the Father, is speaking when He says: "You are from your Father the Devil," and from the faith of the gentiles they turn to him. Therefore they do not ask of the Father that they



may eat of the fatted calf, that is the Lord's Christ, but they demand and expect the base and wanton kid that is prone to every lust, namely the Antichrist, on whom they vainly hope to feed and in whom they vainly hope to reign. And coming from the fields, that is, from worldly occupations and from the laborious task of observing the law according to the letter, "I heard music and singing," that is to say, on all sides the concordant and combined harmony of the people of the gentiles feasting together in Christ and returning to their Father, that universal harmony which is the product of perfect faith and which is found in the intelligible apprehension of the Truth, and joy at their liberty and redemption. And therefore moved by envy he becomes angry with him who is his brother after the likeness of nature but appears as an enemy because of the unlikeness of the infidelity of the Jews to the faith of the Christian religion, and complains to his father at his reception of the son who had lost the good things of his nature, whereas he himself is more wasteful of his natural riches because he denies the only Son of God, the Creator and Saviour of all men. For while the unbelieving heathen deny the Word of God through ignorance, the Jews deny Him through envy; and as the sin of ignorance is more venal than the sin of envy, so the gentiles are less wasteful of their natural goods than the Jews. Therefore the gentiles, when they have been brought forth from the darkness of their ignorance and summoned into the light of the Truth, are received, while the faithless Jews who deny the Son, are left in the passions of their ignominy and the most grievous pangs of envy until at the end of the world, by the ineffable generosity of the Divine Goodness, they too shall be received, when "they shall be turned towards evening, and shall be hungry like dogs, and they shall prowl about the city," that is, the Christian society, wishing to be received into it, and the words spoken by the prophet in another place shall be fulfilled: "Let all my enemies be confounded and be in awe of me, let them be turned back again and let them be confounded very swiftly."

This, then, is my exposition of this parable, as far as my little wit, following the teachings of the spiritual philosophers, can take it. It is now time to deal briefly with the symbols of the special Return of human nature.

A. Time demands that this should be done, and our discourse brought to its long expected end. But I have been particularly attracted by that division of the Gospel parables into two classes which you mentioned. It is not only in parables, but in many other

scriptural passages as well that the divine nectar flows forth in forms of speech of this kind, and the contemplations of the mystical discourses afford an easy way of interpretation to those who study them. We can see that the text of the holy prophets has not one but many meanings, only from the use of very many transitions — through periods and sentences and subdivisions — from various senses to various others and from those back again to the same

1010B through hidden and frequent returns. Error or extreme difficulty of interpretation are experienced by those who adopt a single species of exposition without allowing for transition to various allegories. For the text of Holy Scripture is all interrelated, and is a tissue of indirect and oblique allusions worthy of Daedalus. But the Holy Spirit did not ordain this to spite our understanding — let no man think that — but to exercise it and make it worthy of the reward of its effort and ingenuity : the reward of those who labour in the study of Holy Scripture, which is a pure and perfect understanding.

A prayer  
1010C O Lord Jesus, I ask of Thee no other reward, no other blessedness, no other joy than this : to understand in all purity and without being led astray by faulty contemplation Thy Words which are inspired by the Holy Spirit. For this is the crown of my happiness, this the consummation of perfect contemplation : the rational and purified mind shall find nothing beyond this for beyond it there is nothing. For as there is no place in which it is more proper to seek Thee than in Thy words, so is there no place where Thou art more clearly discovered than in Thy words. For therein Thou abidest, and thither Thou leadest all who seek and love Thee. Therein Thou preparest for Thine elect the spiritual banquet of true knowledge, and passing you minister to them. And what is the path along which Thou leadest them, O Lord, but an ascent through the innumerable steps of Thy contemplation? And ever dost Thou open that way in the understandings of those who seek and find Thee. Ever art Thou sought by them and ever art Thou

1010D found, — and yet ever art Thou not found : Thou art found in Thy Theophanies in which Thou appearest in the minds of those who understand Thee after a manifold mode, as in a number of mirrors, in the way in which Thou permittest to be known not what Thou art, but what Thou art not : not what Thou art, but that Thou art : Thou art not found in Thy superessential nature in which Thou transcendest and exceedest every understanding that desires to comprehend Thee and to ascend unto Thee. Thou grantest unto Thine own Thy Presence by a mysterious manifestation of Thyself :

Thou eludest them by the infinite and incomprehensible transcendence of Thine essence.

A. But let us, I beg, hasten on to the consideration of the Special Return and with it put an end to our discourse. And let us no longer linger over delay in many repetitions whose purpose is to make it more easily understood, lest we should seem to have made our discourse more full of words than instruction. 1011A

N. The whole rational creature, of which the created species is found in man, and which by nature contains the desire for blessedness and the faculty of knowing the Supreme Good, that is the Most High Trinity from Whom flows every good, is likened by Our Lord in the Gospel to ten virgins. These ten virgins, carrying their lamps, that is, their faculty of apprehending the Eternal Light, went forth to meet the bridegroom and the bride, that is, Christ and His Church, which is already in heaven, and consists partly of the holy angels and partly of the perfectly purified souls of those in whom while still in the captivity of this mortal life and corruptible flesh are sown the first fruits of human nature so that they have become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. But why do they go out to meet Him? Because, in the ineffable condescension and knowledge of His mercy, moved by love for our salvation, the Redeemer and Bridegroom of our rational nature is ever coming in spirit, accompanied by all the Heavenly Powers and all the Holy Souls, to receive us. And that Bridegroom is ever crying in the ear of the heart of all mankind, and saying: 1011B

“Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me that I am gentle and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.”

He comes then to meet us all, and is accompanied by His Bride, which is the Heavenly Jerusalem, and He desires to receive us all into the society of His City. 1011C

And observe that the whole of humanity is compared to the number ten. This is because it possesses the tenth region in the territory of the kingdom of Heaven.

So the ten virgins, that is the total number of mankind, are moved by a natural desire to go forth to meet Him who loves them and who comes to them, not by a bodily movement but by intelligible affection. But although the rational movement towards their end, which is Christ, is the same for all, and the desire for the eternal Light, which is signified by their lamps, is the same for all,

they do not all share to the same extent in that Light which lighteth every man that cometh into this world. For as the blessed Dionysius the Areopagite says, "that in which all by nature desire to participate is the One : but all do not equally participate in the One." There is nothing in nature which is totally deprived of participation in the One ; nevertheless all the virgins will not equally go out to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride. For those who, as well as the faculty for apprehending the True Light, also possess the Light itself, which the oil supplies, will come to the Bridegroom Himself, and will enter with Him into the spiritual marriage feast, while those who only possess the faculty of apprehending the Light, and are not illuminated by and conformed to the Light itself, although they will go forth to meet Christ, that is to say, will ascend not only in the desire which is innate in their nature but also in actual experience to those things which are their sole natural goods, which subsist in Christ, yet they shall not attain to the supernatural Grace and joy of deification in Him.

Now we see the significance of the tenfold division. For it is written : "Five of them were foolish," that is, imprudent, "and five prudent." The foolish brought only their lamps, but not the oil with them, whereas the prudent as well as the lamps, carried oil in the lamps as well. The vessels of the prudent virgins are the same as those of the imprudent, for reason, which is, as it were, the natural receptacle of the Divine Light, is equally distributed throughout the integrity, or virginity, of that incorruptible nature which knows neither increase nor diminution, but it does not in all cases receive the light to an equal degree. And this is not due to any fault of grudgingness or insufficiency in the Light itself, for it is present to all and shines equally upon all, streaming out over all in inexhaustible profusion : it is due to the fact that the power of the eyes which perceive that spiritual light is unequal, so that some enjoy it to a greater, some to a less degree, while others again are completely closed to it, such as those unclean spirits which refuse to turn towards it — not because they are wholly cut off from participation in the truly existing Light as far as concerns the intelligible substance in which they were created by the Supreme Good, (for in that case they would be reduced to absolute non-existence, for anything that is totally deprived of participation in it is completely outside the realm of nature), but because inasmuch as they are infected by the irrational impulses of their perverse wills, they are prevented from participating in the true Light, for instead

of directing their gaze upon it, they turn to themselves, that is, to their own wickedness. But if they would look towards their proper nature, and towards its creator, they would immediately become blessed. And if anyone should ask: "If the faculty of apprehending the divine Light is bestowed equally upon the whole rational nature, why is not the potency and act of apprehending it also bestowed equally either in this life or the life to come?" let him enquire of that man who, dazed and bewildered before that inaccessible light, cries out:

"O the depth of the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, how unsearchable His ways in every age! For who has known the sense of God? Or who has been His counsellor? And who has first given Him anything, that he may be paid back again? For from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him are all things." 1012D

Let him enquire why the bestower of all good things did not distribute the power of contemplating Him equally among the angelic orders. For the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones have a deeper and closer and purer contemplation of Him than the Virtues and Powers and Dominions; and these again a more excellent and brighter contemplation of Him than the Principalities, Archangels and Angels. But who will answer his enquiry? Only he who meditates upon the scripture: "God made all things according to measure and number and weight," that is to say, in order. 1013A

But how could the Universe which God created possess beauty if God had made all things equal? For even the pleasure and beauty of sensible harmony consists not in like but in unlike sounds, related to one another according to rational proportions.

Again, suppose the following problem should be proposed: If the first man had not sinned (thus bringing upon himself the punishment of multiplication of the human race into male and female) and instead of propagating mankind through male and female, either produced all mankind at once out of the secret recesses of nature according to its proper species and numbers in the same way as all the angels proceeded simultaneously from their causes, or brought forth into this world each individual at his appointed time without sin and without employing the means of propagation of the beasts of the field: would all men enjoy the same power and rank, or would men, like the angels, be disposed in accordance with the Divine Providence and Wisdom each in his proper rank? 1013B

Such a man receives his reply, I think, from Him Who promises to man that after the resurrection "They shall be as the angels in Heaven." But Angels are disposed according to their proper ranks : therefore men too will be disposed according to the different degrees of their virtues. And if they shall be so after they have sinned, it follows that they would have been so if they had not sinned, that is to say, they would not have attained the fruits of contemplation in the same way. Further, if, as St. Augustine says, the first man in his

1013C primal condition, before he had sinned, was neither wise nor unwise (for if wise, he would not have abandoned God in order to satisfy his wife, nor acted incautiously in imitating the pride of the subtle devil : for he was not seduced, but puffed up with pride : if unwise, one is forced to believe that God created in His own Image and likeness a foolish man, and who could believe such a thing?), it follows that he was balanced in a midway position between wisdom and unwisdom, destined to become wise if he should observe the ordinance of God. For the Scripture does not say ; "Let us make man Our image and likeness," but "Let us make him *in* Our image and likeness," which clearly means : Let us make man to this end, that, if he keep My commandment, he may become Our image and likeness. Therefore he was not created wise, but capable of wisdom

1013D if he should desire it. He could have gained wisdom and attained his proper condition if he had not consented to scorn the counsel of God. But since he did not lift himself up erect and ascend to wisdom by keeping the commandment, but by his own will fell headlong through his transgression into the lust for temporal and sensible

1014A things, we must think of him as being, even before his sin, inclined rather to unwisdom and imprudence than to wisdom and prudence : for the unwisdom and imprudence are prior to the sin. But this befell him not as the result of his creation but by the waywardness of his own will, which does not derive from natural causes : therefore it was he himself who made himself unwise and imprudent before he transgressed the commandment. But if he had not disobeyed the commandment perhaps he would not have been driven out of paradise ; he would have enjoyed only the goods of his nature which he had received at his creation, and would have taken some delight in them, but he would still be deprived, as a penalty for his folly and waywardness, of participation in the highest wisdom and prudence. For in the case of many, and indeed almost all, imprudent and unwise men, we see that they are happy and content in the nobility of their birth, in a numerous kindred, in the health and vigour and

1014B beauty of their bodies, in the cleverness of their wits, in the

eloquence of their speech, in a beautiful and seemly wife, in the plentifulness of their offspring, in their affluence of worldly riches, not to mention dignities and honours and those other desirable things in which this world delights. In all these things they take so much pleasure that they would be content to go on living in this way forever, without a wish or a thought for the delights of the spirit. This was the condition of the first man and woman before their transgression, and it is to this condition, namely enjoyment of their natural goods alone without the adornment of the virtues that that part of the human race which is signified by the five foolish virgins shall return ; but we may reasonably suppose that the other part of the human race which is represented by the five prudent virgins, is to be raised up beyond all natural goods to that height to which man would through Grace have ascended had he not sinned, that is to say, to participation in the highest wisdom and all the virtues, and through that participation attain to deification and the contemplation of the truth ; and thus it will enter in to the spiritual marriage feast of its Bridegroom. To this feast none is admitted unless he is shining with the light of wisdom and aflame with the fires of Divine Love : and of these two qualities, wisdom and love, the nourishment is action and contemplation : therefore none is allowed to ascend to this feast who is deficient in action and contemplation but is totally excluded from it, even though he is endowed in the highest degree with natural goods. For it is not nature that raises the human mind thither, but Grace, which thus rewards obedience to the commandments of God, and the most perfect knowledge of God, in so far as that is granted us in this life, through what He has created and what He has written in His Scriptures. Consider, then, the central meaning of this parable, and how it makes a transition from the genus to the species in the same way as the other parable we have discussed, that of the two sons who divided their father's substance between them. In that, you will remember, it was first the general Return of mankind that was signified, and then the special Return of the gentiles : in this, in like manner, the general Return of the total number of mankind to the former condition of their nature is signified by the ten virgins who go forth to meet the Bridegroom ; the Special Return of all the Saints by the five who were prudent. For the number of the elect is a species of the human genus. So besides the Return to the ancient principle of their nature which is common to the generality of mankind, the parable also alludes to the ascent beyond nature into God Himself in the special case of the ineffable deification. For all, as we have already said, shall return

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1015A

- into Paradise, but not all shall enjoy the Tree of Life — or rather, all shall receive of the Tree of Life, but not all equally : but that the natural goods too, which all share alike, are fruit of the Tree of Life, only the fool does not know. For, as we have already mentioned, πᾶν ξύλον, or “every tree” is a name for Christ, for He is the fruitful
- 1015B Tree of all good things, He is everything that is good and the Disposer of all good things. All men therefore by their general participation in natural goods shall enjoy His fruit, but His elect shall enjoy the special benefit of the exaltation above all nature of their deifications. It is these deifications, in which only the righteous shall participate, that are signified by the spiritual marriage feast, to which the prudent virgins are admitted. Not all shall enjoy these supernatural goods but only those who, in the words of Gregory the Theologian, “are permitted to transcend matter and flesh, as though they passed beyond the clouds and the veils, and through reason and contemplation to come into the presence of God, and be received into the most pure light, in so far as that is possible for human nature.” These are blessed by their ascent from here and their
- 1015C deification There. But the use of this word, Deification, is very rare in the Latin books. However, we often find it implied, especially in the works of Ambrose. I am not sure of the reason for this reticence : perhaps it is because the meaning of this word *Theōsis* (the term which the Greeks usually employ in the sense of the psychic and bodily transformation of the Saints into God so as to become One in Him and with Him, when there will remain in them nothing of their animal, earthly and mortal nature) seemed too profound for those who cannot rise above carnal speculations, and would therefore be to them incomprehensible and incredible, and thus the doctrine was not to be taught in public, but only to be discussed among the learned. For there are many Divine Mysteries that the Holy Fathers do not touch upon but pass over in silence for this reason : weak eyes cannot bear the brilliance of the light.
- 1015D These few examples taken from the divine parables are sufficient, I think, to explain the general and the special Return of the human race to its Principle, by which I mean its primordial creation, and in the case of those who are worthy to enjoy the purest participation in Him, into God Himself, and the reversion of the whole sensible nature, which is created in man and for his sake, into
- 1016A its Causes, when there shall be not only the general Sabbath in all the works of God, but also the special sabbath of sabbaths in the holy angels and the saints, and the House of God shall be filled, and



each shall have in it his proper place, some below, others above, some at the very summit of nature, others beyond every natural virtue in the presence of God Himself. And so that great feast will be ordered and celebrated, from which the substance of no man shall be rejected, for the substance was made by God; and to which the wickedness of no man shall be admitted, for the wickedness was not made by God. For our nature shall be purified, the vice shall be winnowed away, the grain, which is our substance, shall be stored, the stubble, which is sin, shall burn in the flame of the Divine Judgment, the places hid in darkness shall be illumined, and God shall be seen as all in all.

A. Yes, the examples you have given are sufficient, I agree. But I would like you to explain the rest of this last parable.

N. To what do you refer?

A. To the delay of the Bridegroom, to His sleep, to the sleep of 1016B all the virgins, and to the other incidents which you have not so far touched upon.

N. The Bridegroom's delay signifies, I think, the temporal interval between the Lord's first and second Coming; or better perhaps between the beginning and the end of the world. For throughout the whole six ages of the world there neither has been nor will be any time in which the virginity, that is, the integrity, of human nature, which in no man is destroyed although in all men save Christ is defiled, does not strive to ascend to meet its Bridegroom. In some it is foolish, in some it is prudent, but in all, it is desirous of its Creator and its home on high which it has abandoned. For the desire for happiness is by nature common to all, to the wise and to the unwise, to the good and the evil. In this temporal interval during which the world runs its appointed course 1016C some sleep while others doze. The sleepers are those who are already dead or about to die: the dozers those who shall still be alive in the flesh when the end of the world shall come. These are said to doze rather than to sleep because they will not die a thorough death, nor will they be detained in death for any period of time, but as though weighed down by sleep but not overcome by it, they will be transformed into the other life without an intervening period of death. Here, though, St. Augustine seems to agree with those who say that in that most swift passage of those who shall be alive at the end of the world there will be a brief moment of death. For in the twenty-first chapter of the twentieth book on the *City of God* he writes:

1016D “If we believe that the saints who shall be found living when Christ comes and who shall be caught up into His presence shall in that instant leave their mortal bodies for a while and return quickly into those same bodies in their immortal condition the doubt is cleared in the words of the Apostle, both when he says: “The seed you sow does not come to life unless it first dies,” and “We shall all arise again” or “We shall all sleep.” For they shall not attain immortal life unless they shall first have spent a little while in death and consequently also shall have a share in the resurrection after they have slept for a while, which though short shall not be nothing.”

1017A The middle of the night, in which the outcry is made and the Bridegroom comes signifies the end of the world whose coming none can foretell and the advent of the Spiritual Bridegroom which no knowledge can comprehend. For He Himself has said: “Of that day and that hour no man knows, nor the angels of heaven, nor the Son of Man, but the Father only.” And at the conclusion of this parable He says: “Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.”

The outcry signifies those most certain signs which shall herald the destruction of the world and the coming of the Lord, events which He Himself foretold to His disciples on the Mount of Olives.

The rising up of all the virgins signifies the rebirth of the whole human race. The prudent virgins furnish their lamps, that is, their rational impulses, with the tallow of good works and the brightness of a pure knowledge. But these two, good works and knowledge, the foolish virgins do not possess. And as to the prudent virgins who  
 1017B refuse to give of their oil to the foolish, they can have no more likely symbolical meaning, I think, than the prudent souls to whom their merits shall appear as base and inadequate things on that intelligible day in which each one shall acknowledge the depths of his own conscience, and not to be compared with eternal bliss, as the Apostle says: “For the passions of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come and will be revealed in us.” And the Lord Himself says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” blessed, that is, are those who value themselves and their deserts as nothing, and consider themselves to be altogether wanting in the riches of virtues, “for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Therefore shall it be said to them that seek help from Him, “lest perchance it may not be sufficient for us and for you.” This can be  
 1017C understood in two ways: either the “lest” is to be taken in the

negative sense, and extended in its effect, or it is taken to express doubt and restricted, as in the book of Genesis: "Lest he put forward his hand and take of the tree of Life." And that it was not through envy that they refused to share their poverty of merit with the foolish virgins by giving them oil is clear from the fact that they do give them advice: "Go rather to them that sell, and buy." That is to say: Go to those whose supply of merits is not only sufficient for themselves but could also bring assistance to those who were able to do them honour in this life, and provide them with merit in the life to come.

But while this tardiness and negligence were being displayed the Bridegroom came and took those virgins who were prepared and arrayed for His coming and brought them into His marriage feast, that is to say, into His Deification, where He glorifies the most perfect intelligences with the supernatural Grace of contemplation of Himself; while the others He left in the enjoyment of natural goods, but excluded from the heights of that ineffable Deification "which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, nor has it ascended into the heart of man." This is the significance of the words, "The door was shut", the entry, that is, into the contemplation of God face to face, which shall not be opened to those who lived in this life carelessly, neglecting to fill the vessels of their reason with the oil of knowledge and good works, even though, induced by a tardy penitence they cry out, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." 1017D 1018A

This double repetition of the name of the Lord signifies either the excessive longing of human nature for the contemplation of its Creator undarkened by the clouds of ignorance exhibited by those who in this life lived without the support of righteous conduct; or more probably the ignorance of those uninstructed Christians who in their inadequate appreciation of the loftiness of the Catholic Faith suppose that Our Lord Jesus Christ is composed of two substances (whereas He is in fact one substance in two Natures) and seek for that which it would not benefit them to receive. And that is why they receive the reply: "You ask and you do not receive, for your asking is ill."

How many are they who are either completely ignorant of the Divine Essence in three substances or the three Substances in the One Essence, or totally refute it, and whose demand for an entrance into the marriage feast of the pure contemplation of God takes the form of false thinking and materialist opinions! How many are they who make such a division in the Lord Jesus Christ that they can 1018B

neither believe nor understand that His Divinity is united to His Humanity, and His Humanity to His Divinity in one Substance or, as the Latins more usually say, in One Person, whereas in fact His Humanity and His Divinity are One, and One inseparably, except for the special property of each of His two Natures ! Therefore it is meet and right that to those who double the substance of Christ and cry "Lord, Lord, open unto us" that the reply shall be : "Verily verily I say unto you, I know you not," by which is meant : "I allow  
 1018C you to be ignorant of the intimate and secret marriage feast of My divinity and My humanity which before the world was made I have prepared for those whose intelligence of Me is pure, and to which, now that the world is at an end I have brought them in. For while you were still living in the flesh you did not prepare yourselves to become worthy of the delights of that feast : but I permit you to remain within the bounds of the natural goods which I created in you."

In like manner He says that those who on the Day of Judgment shall cry "Lord, Lord, did we not do many good deeds in Thy Name?" shall be told : "I know you not ; depart from me," and in another place, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

So the Word that is made one with the Flesh and the Flesh that is made one with the Word receives into the indivisible Unity of the single Substance of two natures, human and divine, only those who  
 1018D with the single eye of perfect contemplation behold the Unity of His Substance so as to recognise both the Man in the Word as truly the Son of God and the Word in the Man as truly the Son of Man without confusion of the Natures, and that Our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son of God and Son of Man.

And there you have a brief, but I think reasonable, exposition of this parable.

A. Yes.

N. What is there left to say before we close our work ?

A. Nothing, I think, but some short ἀνακεφαλαίωσις of its  
 1019A general matter, namely the Division of Nature.

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 A  
 recapitulation N. We have divided Nature, which comprises God and His creature, into four parts. The first species consists of and may be defined as the nature which creates and is not created, the second as the nature which is created and creates, the third as that which is

created but does not itself create, the fourth as that which neither is created nor creates.

The first and fourth natures can be predicated of God alone : not that His nature can be divided, for it is simple and more-than-simple : but it can be approached by two modes of contemplation : when I consider Him as the Principle and Cause of all things, reason convinces me that the Divine Essence, or Substance, or Goodness, or Virtue, or Wisdom, or whatever else may be predicated of God, was created by none, for nothing greater is prior to the Divine Nature, but all things, both the things that are and the things that are not, are created by It and through It and in It and for It. On the other hand when I consider that same Nature as the End of all things and the ultimate Consummation to which all things tend and in which the limit of their natural motion is set, I find that It is neither created nor creating. For just as the Nature Which is from Itself can be created of none, so neither does It create anything. When all things which have proceeded from It either through intelligible or sensible generation shall by a miraculous and ineffable rebirth return to It again, when all things have found their rest in It, when nothing more shall flow forth from It into generation, it can no longer be said of It that It creates anything. For what should it be creating when It Itself shall be all in all, and shall manifest Itself in nothing save Itself? 1019B 1019C

Concerning the two intermediate species enough has been said in the preceding books, and by any who study them carefully they can be clearly understood. The one is recognised in the Primordial Causes, the other in their effects. That which consists in the Causes is, on the one hand, created in the Only begotten Son of God, in Whom and through Whom all things are made ; and, on the other hand, creates all things which emanate from it, that is to say, all its effects, whether intelligible or sensible.

But that nature which is constituted in the effects of the causes is only created by its own causes, but does not itself create, for there is nothing in nature which comes after it. And therefore it is for the most part to be found among the sensibles. It is no objection to this that angels and men, whether good or evil, are sometimes thought to create some new thing unknown in this world before to human experience, for in fact they create nothing, but produce something out of the material creature which has already been created by God in its effects through its Causes ; if good, they do this in accordance with the laws and precepts of God, if evil under the deceitful 1019D

inducement and the crafty plottings of the subtlety of the devil. But all things are so ordered by the Divine Providence that no evil exists substantially in nature, nor anything which could disturb the City of God and its polity.

- 1020A       And after we had undertaken this fourfold contemplation of Nature under these four species, of which two belong to the Divine Nature as Beginning and End, and two to the created nature as Cause and Effect, we thought good to adjoin some theories concerning the Return of the effects into their Causes, that is, into the "reasons" in which they subsist. And we found that the nature of this Return was threefold. First, we considered the general Return which consists in the transformation of the whole sensible creature contained within the confines of this world, of all bodies, that is to say, whether perceptible to the senses or too subtle to be perceived, so that there is no body contained in corporeal nature, whether
- 1020B       latently or patently endowed with vital motion only, or enriched in addition with corporeal sense of the non-rational soul, which shall not return through the mediation of its life process into its hidden causes : for among the things which derive their substances from the cause of all things there is nothing which shall be reduced to nothing.

- 1020C       The second aspect of the Return concerns the general Return of the whole of human nature when it has been saved by Christ into the original condition in which it was created, and into the dignity of the Divine Image which is as it were a kind of Paradise which was obtained for it by the merits of One, whose Blood was poured for all mankind in common, so that no man might be deprived of the natural goods in which he was created, whether he has passed this life well or ill. And the goodness and magnanimity of God, which
- 1020C       surpasses all speech and understanding shall so pervade the whole of human nature that it shall be punished in nothing which emanates from the Supreme Good.

The third aspect of the Return is concerned with those who, besides ascending to the highest point of the nature which is created in them, shall, through the abundance of the Grace of God, which is supplied through Christ and in Christ to His elect, pass beyond all the laws and limitations of nature and on that superessential plane be transformed into God Himself, and shall be in Him and with Him One. The path they traverse can, as it were, be divided into seven stages : the first will be the transformation of the earthly body into vital motion ; the second of vital motion into sensation ; the

third of sensation into reason; then of reason into mind, wherein lies the end of every rational creature; then this fivefold unification of the parts of our nature, in which body, vital motion, sensation, reason and mind are no longer five but one, in each case the lower nature becoming absorbed in the higher not so as to lose its existence but to become with that higher nature one, shall be followed by three more stages of the ascent: first the transformation of mind into the knowledge of all things which come after God; secondly, of that knowledge into wisdom, that is into the innermost contemplation of the Truth, in so far as that is possible to a creature; thirdly, and lastly, the supernatural merging of the perfectly purified souls into God Himself, and their entry into the darkness of the incomprehensible and inaccessible Light which conceals the Causes of all things. Then shall the night shine as the day, that is to say, the most secret Mysteries of God shall in a manner which we cannot describe be revealed to the blessed and enlightened intelligences: then shall the perfect solidity of the supernatural cube, which consists of the number eight be achieved, to which reference is made in the title of the Sixth Psalm: "The Psalm of David for the Octave." And it was for this reason that the Resurrection of the Lord occurred on the eighth day, that that blessed life which shall begin with the end of the world when this life shall have run its sevenfold course through its seven ages should be mystically signified, when human nature, as we have said, shall through the eight stages of its ascent return into its Principle. Five of those stages lie within the limits of nature, while three lie beyond nature and beyond being in God Himself. Then the fivefold number of the creature shall be united with the threefold number of the Creator, so that in nothing shall it be manifested save as God alone, in the same way as in the most purified air nothing is manifested save the light alone.

Here, then, we complete the matter of this work, which is divided into five books. And if any shall find that I have written in it anything unacceptable or superfluous, let him blame my rashness and carelessness, but in humble contemplation let him pardon with a generous heart a human intelligence which is still burdened with the bonds of the flesh it still occupies. For while we are still in this murky life no part of our studies can be perfect, I think, or entirely free from error: not even the righteous, so long as they are alive are called righteous because they are so but because they desire to be so, and long for the perfect righteousness that is to be: they take their name from their inclinations. For I would not believe that any man

so long as he is burdened with his mortal limbs and fleshly senses, save only Christ, could attain to the perfect condition of virtue or the height of contemplation of the Truth, and in this I have the support of John the Evangelist. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." And the Apostle says: "Now we see in a glass darkly," and in another place: "We know in part and we prophesy in part."

But if there is in this work anything of value and contributive to the building of the Catholic Faith, let it be attributed to God alone, Who alone unlocks the things that are hid in darkness and brings to  
 1021D Himself those that seek Him and are not deceived by any error, but are cured from all error; and to the Universal Cause of all good  
 1022A things, without which we can do nothing let all, with one mind in the charity of the spirit, give thanks with us, not tempted by the allure of hostile criticism or consumed with the fire of envy, the one vice above all others which strives to loosen the bond of love and friendship. In peace, however, with all those who receive what we have written kindly and have the keenness of intellect to grasp it, or spitefully reject it and condemn it without first finding out what it is they condemn, I dedicate this book in the first place to God, Who has said: "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you," and in the second place to you, Wulfad, most beloved brother in Christ, and collaborator in my studies, entrusting to you the examination and correction of it. For it was begun under your encouragement, and was brought to its  
 1022B close, such as it is, with the help of your knowledge. But if, taking note of those matters which I was compelled to omit from the text of this work because of the weight of the material I had to deal with and the number of doctrines I had to expound; and of those matters too of which at some time or another I promised to expound, never mind how briefly, you shall prove to be a stern collector of your dues, when the work has been read and the promises discovered, I shall deal with them together rapidly, point by point as far as I can. But in the meantime I beseech my readers to be content with what they have already, considering that the powers of my poor intellect are weak, if they can be said to exist at all, and my capacity for enquiring into the things of God is negligible, howbeit devout.  
 1022C Support me not less by the strength of your own most subtle mind than the labours of my imperfect contemplation, and if not in the company of my rivals at least in that of my friends and the searchers after truth. This, I think, will not be a great labour for you: for



when such things fall into the hands of true philosophers, provided that the subjects they treat are of interest to them, they not only attend to them gladly but embrace them as their own. If, however, they fall into the hands of those who take more delight in attacking than in understanding, no great effort should be made to refute them. Let every man hold what opinion he will until that Light shall come which makes of the light of the false philosophers a darkness and converts the darkness of those who truly know into light.

Thus ends the book *περὶ φύσεων μερίσμου*, that is *On the* 1022D  
*Division of Nature*.



### 3

## NOTE ON SOURCES IN THE GREEK AND LATIN FATHERS IN THE *PERIPHYSEON*

For the first three books one must refer to the *apparatus criticus* of the edition of the *Periphyseon* by I.P. Sheldon-Williams, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968 (I), 1972 (II) and 1981 (III).

A survey for the whole of the *Periphyseon* for both Greek and Latin Fathers is available in J. Dräseke, *Johannes Scotus Eriugena und dessen Gewährsmänner in seinem Werke De Divisione Naturae*, Leipzig 1902, reprinted by Scientia Verlag Aalen 1972. This may be supplemented for the Greek Fathers by Lenke Victorisz, *Greek Sources in the Periphyseon of John Scotus, called Eriugena*, (Dissertation at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies), Toronto 1966. For Maximus the Confessor, see now J.-M. Garrigues et A. Riou, *Annuaire 1969-70 de la V<sup>e</sup> Section (Sciences religieuses) de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Paris 1969, p. 312-314. For the Latin Fathers, particularly Ambrose, see G. Madec, "Jean Scot et les Pères latins," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 1976, XXII, 1-2, p. 134-142. For Augustine alone see the same scholar's, "Le dossier Augustinien du *Periphyseon* de Jean Scot (livres I-II)," *Recherches Augustiniennes*, vol. XV, 1980, p. 241-264, (III-V), *Recherches Augustiniennes*, vol. XVIII, p. 183-223, 1983, and "Observations sur le dossier augustinien du *Periphyseon*," *Eriugena: Studien zu seinen Quellen*, ed. W. Beierwaltes, Heidelberg 1980, p. 75-84.

Appended is an independent list of the references to the Greek Fathers as quoted in *Periphyseon* IV and V. The references are to Migne's *Patrologia*

*Latina* 122 for Eriugena and Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* for the Greek Fathers : 3 (Dionysius); 11, 14 (Origen); 43 (Epiphanius); 44 (Gregory of Nyssa); 90, 91 (Maximus).

#### Book IV

<i>P.L.</i>		<i>P.G.</i>	
122.	741C ff.	43.	137C–140A
	745A ff.	43.	185B–188C
	746B	43.	144C–145A
	757C	3.	1060C, 1061D
	cf. 1176B		
	758C	44.	133C–D
	cf. 1176B		
	759C	3.	1017A–C
	cf. 1173A		
	772A	44.	156B
	773C	3.	273B
	786A	cf. 3.	592A
	788A	cf. 44.	153D
	788B	44.	153C–156B
	789A	44.	161C–D
	789C	44.	161D–164B
	790B	44.	164C
	791C	44.	165A
	792A	44.	173D–176B
	792D	44.	177B–C
	793C	44.	177D–183D
	797D	44.	188C–192A
	801A	44.	225D–228D
	802C	44.	228B
	812A	44.	189C
	812B	44.	189C–D
	812C	91.	1345D–1348B
	813B	91.	1156C
	813C	91.	1156C–D
	813C	91.	1156D–1157A
	818C	cf. 43.	112B ff., 128B ff.
	819A	44.	196C–197B
	cf. 831B		
	820A	44.	197C–201A
	831B		
	cf. 819A		

835A	91.	1352B
835B	91.	1356A-B
842C	90.	257C-260A
857A	90.	277C-280B

**Book V***P.L.*

122

870C  
 872B  
 cf. 801A  
 875A  
 875D  
 877C  
 877D  
 879C, cf. 880C-D  
 880B  
 880B  
 884A  
 cf. 877D  
 889A  
 cf. 481C  
 895C  
 895D-896A  
 898A  
 899C  
 901B  
 903B  
 914C  
 917A  
 920A  
 920B  
 922C  
 922D  
 925A  
 925B  
 929A  
 931B  
 937C  
 937D  
 945A  
 1005B

*P.G.*

91. 1258C-1260A  
 44. 225D-228B  
  
 44. 192A-C  
 91. 1157C-D  
 91. 1249D  
 91. 1249D-1252A  
 91. 1088A-C  
 91. 1249D  
 91. 1252A  
 91. 1249D  
  
 cf. 91. 1180B-C  
  
 90. 436A-B  
 90. 433C-436C  
 3. 593B-C  
 43. 172C-173C  
 43. 184B-C  
 3. 177C-D  
 3. 856A-C  
 44. 201A-204A  
 3. 1073A-1076A  
 3. 1065A  
 14. 925C-926A  
 44. 185A-D  
 3. 868B  
 3. 869A-B  
 11. 335C-338B  
 3. 724C-725C  
 91. 1348D-1349A  
 91. 1348A-D  
 91. 1236D-1237C  
 91. 1285C



# 4

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The first three books of this translation are a reproduction, with the minimum necessary adjustments, of that by Dr. I.P. Sheldon-Williams in the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies' edition of the *Periphyseon*, still in course of completion, for which due gratitude to the Institute is hereby expressed. To this has been added the publication of a draft translation of the remaining two books of the work, exactly as edited by H.J. Floss in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* 122, prepared by Sheldon-Williams and considerably revised by me — not however, for reasons of desirable continuity, to the extent of eliminating unusual elements of style and structure that indicate Sheldon-Williams' close and conscious affinity with Eriugena.

This work takes the form of a catechetical dialogue in which a "Nutritor" and "Alumnus", effectively "Master" and "Disciple" (terms used in some later manuscripts and some modern editions), discuss the doctrine to be imparted: the Disciple is a mere foil to the Master who expounds almost everything.