

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S
DIALECTICAL MYSTICISM**
Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study
of De Visione Dei
(3rd Edition)

by
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THE VISION OF GOD
(De Visione Dei)

by

NICHOLAS OF CUSA

CHAPTER TITLES

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23. How Jesus died even though His union with life remained.
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25. Jesus is the Consummation.

I will now make known the things I previously promised you, most beloved brothers, regarding the ready accessibility of mystical theology. For I esteem you, whom I know to be motivated by a zeal for God, to be worthy of having disclosed to you this assuredly most precious and most abundant treasure. First of all, I pray the Heavenly Word and Omnipotent Expression, who alone can make Himself known, that I be given the ability to explain—in proportion to your ability to comprehend—the wonders which are revealed beyond all sensible, rational, and intellectual sight. But I will attempt to lead you—by way of experiencing and through a very simple and very common means—into most sacred darkness. Upon arriving there and sensing the presence of Inaccessible Light, each of you—of yourself and in the manner granted you by God—will endeavor to approach ever nearer. And [you will seek] to acquire in this lifetime, through a most pleasant savoring, a foretaste of that meal of eternal happiness to which we are called in the Word of Life by the Gospel of the Ever-blessed Christ.

2

If I strive to convey you by human means unto divine things, then I must do this through a likeness. Now, among human works I have not found an image more suitable to our purpose than the image of someone omnivoyant, so that his face, through subtle pictorial artistry, is such that it seems to behold everything around it. There are in existence many of these excellently depicted faces—e.g., the one of the archer in the forum at Nuremberg, the one of the preeminent painter Roger¹ in his priceless painting in the city hall at Brussels, the one of the veronica [i.e., of the image of Christ] in my chapel at Coblenz, the one, in the castle at Brixen, of the angel holding the emblems of the church, and many others here and there. Nevertheless, so that you not be lacking in practical experience, which requires such a sensible figure, I am sending to Your Love a painting that I was able to acquire. It contains the figure of an omnivoyant [individual]; and I call it the "Icon of God."

3

Hang this icon somewhere, e.g., on the north wall; and you brothers stand around it, at a short distance from it, and observe it. Regardless of the place from which each of you looks at it, each will have the impression that he alone is being looked at by it. To the brother who is situated in the east it will seem that the face is looking toward the east;

to the brother in the south, that the face is looking toward the south; to the brother in the west, that it is looking westward. First of all, then, marvel at how it is possible that [the face] behold each and every one of you at once. For the imagination of the brother who is standing in the east does not at all apprehend the icon's gaze that is being directed toward a different region, viz., toward the west or the south. Next, let the brother who was in the east situate himself in the west, and he will experience the [icon's] gaze as fixed on him in the west, just as it previously was in the east. But since he knows that the icon is stationary and unchanged, he will marvel at the changing of the unchangeable gaze.

- 4 Moreover, if while fixing his sight upon the icon he walks from west to east, he will find that the icon's gaze proceeds continually with him; and if he returns from east to west, the gaze will likewise not desert him. He will marvel at how the icon's gaze is moved immovably. And his imagination will be unable to apprehend that the gaze is also moved in accompaniment with someone else who is coming toward him from the opposite direction. Now, [suppose that] wanting to experience this [phenomenon], he has a fellow-monk, while beholding the icon, cross from east to west at the same time that he himself proceeds from west to east. And [suppose] he asks the approaching brother whether the icon's gaze moves continually with him. Thereupon he will be told that the gaze is also moved in this opposite manner; and he will believe his fellow-monk. And unless he believed, he would not apprehend that this [simultaneous opposition of motion] was possible. And so, through the disclosure of the respondent he will come to know that that face does not desert anyone who is moving—not even those who are moving in opposite directions. Therefore, he will experience that the unmovable face is moved toward the east in such way that it is also moved at the same time toward the west, that it is moved toward the north in such way that it is also moved [at the same time] toward the south, that it is moved toward one place in such way that it is also moved at the same time toward all other places, and that it observes one movement in such way that it observes all other movements at the same time. And while he considers that this gaze does not desert anyone, he sees how diligently it is concerned for each one, as if it were concerned for no one else, but only for him who experiences that he is seen I by it. This [impression] is so strong that the one who is being looked upon cannot even imagine that [the icon] is concerned for another. [The one who is pondering all this] will also notice that [the

image] is most diligently concerned for the least of creatures, just as for the greatest of creatures and for the whole universe.

- 5 On the basis of such a sensible appearance as this, I propose to elevate you very beloved brothers, through a devotional exercise, unto mystical theology. To this end I will [now] present three useful [considerations].²

6

CHAPTER ONE

THE PERFECTION OF THE APPEARANCE IS PREDICATED TRULY
OF THE MOST PERFECT GOD

In the first place, I think we must presuppose the following: whatever is *apparent* with regard to the icon-of-God's sight is *true* with regard to God's true sight.³ For, indeed, God, who is the summit of all perfection and who is greater than can be thought,⁴ is called "*theos*" by virtue of the fact that He observes all things.⁵ Therefore, if in the image the depicted gaze can appear to be beholding each and every thing at once, then since this [capability] belongs to sight's perfection, it cannot truly befit the Truth less than it apparently befits the icon, or appearance. For if one person's sight is more acute than another's, if one person's sight scarcely discerns nearby objects but another's discerns more distant objects, if one person's sight reaches its object slowly but another's arrives more quickly, then without doubt Absolute Sight, from which comes the entire sight of those who have sight, excels all the acuity, swiftness, and power both of all those who actually have sight and of all those who can be given it. For suppose I view abstract sight, which mentally I have freed from all eyes and organs. And suppose I consider (1) the fact that this abstract sight—in its own contracted being, according as those who see see by means of sight—is contracted to time, to the regions of the world, to individual objects, and to other such conditions and (2) the fact that, likewise, abstract sight is free⁶ from these conditions. Thereupon, I rightly grasp that it is not of the essence of sight that sight beholds one object more than another—even though the fact that while sight inspects one object it cannot [at the same time] inspect either another object or all other objects whatsoever characterizes sight in its contracted being.

- 7 But God, insofar as He is true Uncontracted Sight, is not sight that is less than the intellect can conceive abstract sight to be; rather, He is incomparably more perfect Sight.⁷ Hence, the appearance of the icon's gaze is less able to approximate the supreme excellence of Absolute

Sight than is conception. Therefore, that which is apparent in the case of that image must undoubtedly be present in an excellent way in Absolute Sight.

8

CHAPTER TWO

ABSOLUTE SIGHT ENCOMPASSES ALL MODES [OF SEEING]

Notice, next, that in those who have sight sight varies as a result of the variety of its contractedness. For our sight is conditioned by the affections of the organ [i.e., of the eye] and of the mind. Hence, a given individual looks [upon a given thing] now lovingly and gladly, later sadly and angrily, now as does a child, later as does an adult, and, still later, gravely and as does someone elderly. But Sight that is free from all contractedness—as being the most adequate Measure, and the most true Exemplar, of all acts of seeing⁸—encompasses at one and the same time each and every mode of seeing. For without Absolute Sight there cannot be contracted sight. But Absolute Sight encompasses all modes of seeing—encompasses all modes in such way that it encompasses each mode. And it remains altogether free from all variation. For in Absolute Sight every contracted mode of seeing is present uncontractedly. For all contraction [of sight] is present in Absolute [Sight], because Absolute Sight is the Contraction of contractions. For it is Uncontractible Contraction.⁹ Therefore, most simple Contraction coincides with Absolute [Sight]. Now, without contraction nothing is contracted. Thus, Absolute Sight is present in all seeing, since all contracted sight exists through Absolute Sight and cannot at all exist without it.

9

CHAPTER THREE

THINGS PREDICATED OF GOD DO NOT DIFFER REALLY

Observe, next, that because of God's supreme simplicity whatever things are predicated of Him cannot differ really, even though we apply different words to God in accordance with different forms. But since God is the Absolute Form of all formable forms,¹⁰ He enfolds in Himself the forms of all things. Hence, although we ascribe to God sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, sense, reason, understanding, and other such things, in accordance with the different forms of signification of each word, nevertheless in Him seeing is not other than hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, perceiving, and understanding. And so, the

whole of theology is said to be circular,¹¹ because [any] one of the attributes is affirmed of [any] other. And God's having is His being, His moving is His remaining at rest, His running is His being still—and so on regarding the other attributes. So although on the basis of one form we ascribe to Him moving and on the basis of another form we ascribe to Him remaining-at-rest, nevertheless because He is Absolute Form in which all otherness is oneness and all diversity is identity, there cannot be in Him a diversity of forms; for this diversity, as we conceive it, is not identity itself.

10

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD'S VISION IS SAID TO BE PROVIDENCE, GRACE, AND ETERNAL LIFE

Now, O brother contemplative, draw near to the icon of God and situate yourself first in the east, then in the south, and finally in the west. The icon's gaze looks at you in equal measure in every region and does not desert you no matter where you go. Therefore, a speculative consideration will be occasioned in you, and you will be aroused and will say: O Lord, by a certain sense-experience I now behold, in this image of You, Your providence. For if You do not desert me, who am the least of all men, then You will never desert anyone. You are present to each and every thing—just as *being*, without which things cannot exist, is present to each and every thing. For You who are the Absolute Being of all things¹² are present to each thing as if You were concerned about no other thing at all. (Consequently, there is no thing which does not prefer its own being to everything else and does not prefer its own mode of being to all the modes of being of other things;¹³ and each thing so cherishes its own being that it would let the being of all other things perish rather than its own.) For You, O Lord, behold each existing thing in such way that no existing thing can conceive that You have any other concern than (1) that this very thing exist in the best manner it can and (2) that all other existing things exist only in order to serve the following end: viz., that this thing upon which you are looking exist in the best way.

11

You, O Lord, do not at all allow me to conceive, by any stretch of the imagination, that You, Lord, love anything other than me more than me, for it is me alone whom Your gaze does not desert. And since where Your eye is present Your love is also present, I experience that You love me, because Your eyes are most attentively upon me, Your lowly servant. O Lord, Your seeing is loving; and just as Your gaze

regards me so attentively that it never turns away from me, so neither does Your love. And since Your love is always with me and is nothing other, Lord, than You Yourself, who love me, You Yourself are always with me, O Lord. You do not desert me, Lord; You safe-guard me on all sides because You most carefully watch over me. Your Being, O Lord, does not forsake my being, for I exist insofar as You are with me. And since Your seeing is Your being, I exist because You look upon me. And if You were to withdraw Your countenance from me, I would not at all continue to exist.

- 12** But I know that Your gaze is that maximal goodness which cannot fail to impart itself to whatever is capable of receiving it. Therefore, You can never forsake me,¹⁴ as long as I am capable of receiving You. Hence, I must see to it that, as best I can, I be made more and more capable of receiving You. But I know that the capability which conduces to union is only likeness; but incapability results from unlikeness. Therefore, if by every possible means I make myself like unto Your goodness, then according to my degree of likeness thereto I will be capable of receiving truth. O Lord, You have given me being; and my being is such that it can make itself more and more capable of receiving Your grace and goodness. And this power, which I have from You and by virtue of which I possess a living image of Your omnipotent power, is free will. Through free will I can either increase or decrease my capability for receiving Your grace. I can increase it through conformity, when I endeavor to be good because You are good, when I endeavor to be just because You are just, when I endeavor to be merciful because You are merciful, when my every endeavor is turned only toward You because Your every endeavor is turned toward me, when I look most attentively only unto You (never turning the eyes of my mind away) because You embrace me with a steadfast look, and when I turn my love only toward You because You, who are Love,¹⁵ are turned only toward me.
- 13** And what is my life, O Lord, except that embrace by which the sweetness of Your love embraces me so lovingly? I love my life supremely because You are the sweetness thereof. I presently contemplate eternal life in a mirror, an icon, a symbolism,¹⁶ because eternal life is only Your blessed gaze, by which You never cease looking upon me most lovingly—even to the point of beholding the intimate recesses of my soul. And Your seeing is only Your enlivening, only Your continually instilling Your most sweet love and, by instilling, inflaming me

with love for You. In inflaming me You feed me, and in feeding me You intensify my desires. In intensifying my desires You give me to drink of the dew of joy, and in giving me to drink You cause a fountain of life to well up in me. In so causing, You cause to increase and to be preserved. You impart Your immortality. You offer the unfading glory of Your celestial, most lofty, and most great kingdom. You make me a partaker of that heritage which is the Son's alone, and You bestow upon me eternal happiness. [Your seeing is all of the foregoing,] wherein is the source of whatever delights can be desired. Not only can nothing better than this be imagined by any man or angel but also nothing better can exist by any mode of being. For this source is the absolute maximality (which cannot be greater) of all rational desire.

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CHAPTER FIVE

[GOD'S] SEEING IS HIS TASTING, SEEKING, SHOWING MERCY, AND WORKING

O how greatly manifold is that sweetness of Yours which You have reserved for those who fear You!¹⁷ For it is an uncountable treasure of most joyous joy. For to taste of Your sweetness is to apprehend the sweetness of all delights—to apprehend it in its own Beginning and by experiential contact. It is to attain, in Your wisdom, to the Form of all desirable things. Therefore, to see Absolute Form, which is the Form of all [forms], is no other than mentally to taste of You, who are God; for You are the Sweetness of being and of life and of understanding.

15

O Lord, when You look upon me with an eye of graciousness, what is Your seeing, other than Your being seen by me? In seeing me, You who are *deus absconditus*¹⁸ give Yourself to be seen by me. No one can see You except insofar as You grant that You be seen. To see You is not other than that You see the one who sees You. By means of this icon of You, O Lord, I see how favorably disposed You are to show Your face to all who seek You. For You never close Your eyes; You never turn [them] away. And although I turn away from You when I completely turn to something else, You do not on this account change Your eyes or Your gaze. If You do not look upon me with an eye of grace, it is my fault, because I am separated from You through my turning away and through my turning toward something else, which I prefer to You. Notwithstanding, You still do not turn altogether away from me, but Your mercy follows me in case at sometime I might wish to

turn back to You in order to be capable of receiving Your grace. For the reason that You do not look upon me is that I do not look unto You but reject and despise You.

16 O Infinite Graciousness, how unhappy is every sinner who forsakes You, the Stream of life, and seeks You not in Yourself but in that which in itself is nothing and would have remained nothing had You not called it forth from nothing. How foolish is he who seeks You, who are Goodness, and while seeking You departs from You and turns away his eyes. For everyone who seeks only the good, and everyone who seeks the good and departs from You departs from that which he seeks.¹⁹ Therefore, every sinner strays from You and goes farther away. But when he turns back to You, You straightway come forth to meet him; and, before he beholds You, You cast Your eyes of mercy upon him with fatherly affection. Your showing mercy is nothing other than Your seeing. Hence, wherever any man goes Your mercy follows him for as long as he is alive, just as Your gaze, too, does not desert anyone. Therefore, as long as a man lives You do not cease to follow him and to urge him, with sweet and inward admonition, to cease from error and to turn unto You in order to live happily.

17 You, O Lord, are the companion for my journey; wherever I go Your eyes are always upon me. But Your seeing is Your moving. Therefore, You are moved with me; and You never cease moving as long as I am moved. If I am stationary, You are with me; if I ascend, You ascend; if I descend, You descend; in whatever direction I turn, You are present. And You do not desert me in time of tribulation. As often as I call upon You, You are nearby; for to call upon You is to turn toward You. You cannot be absent from him who turns toward You, nor can anyone turn toward You unless first You are present. You are present before I turn toward You; for unless You were present and unless You aroused me, I would be altogether ignorant of You. And how would I turn toward You, of whom I would be ignorant?

18 You, then, are my God, who sees all things; and Your seeing is Your working. Therefore, You work all things. Not, then, to us, O Lord, do I sing everlasting glory—not to us but to Your great name,²⁰ which is *Theos*.²¹ For I have nothing which You do not give me; and I could not retain that which You have given unless You conserved it. Hence, You supply me with all things; You are the mighty and gracious Lord, who gives all things; You are the Minister, who supplies all things; You are the one who provides, the one who cares, the one who conserves.

And by means of Your one most simple viewing You, who are blessed forever, work all these things

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CHAPTER SIX

[OUR] VISION OF [GOD'S] FACE

O Lord my God, the longer I behold Your Face, the more acutely You seem to me to cast the acute gaze of Your eyes upon me. Now, Your gaze causes me to reflect upon the following: that the reason this image of Your Face is depicted in the foregoing perceptible way is that a face could not have been painted without color and that color does not exist apart from quantity. But the invisible Truth of Your Face I see not with the bodily eyes which look at this icon of You but with mental and intellectual eyes. This Truth is signified by this contracted shadow-like image.²² But Your true Face is free of all contraction. For it is neither quantitative nor qualitative nor temporal nor spatial. For it is Absolute Form, which is also the Face of faces. Therefore, when I consider that this Face is the Truth of, and the most adequate Measure of, all faces.²³ I become astounded. For the Face which is the Truth of all faces is not quantitative; hence, it is not greater or lesser than any face. Because it is neither greater nor lesser, it is equal to each and every face; and yet, it is not equal to any face, because it is not quantitative but is absolute and superexalted. It is, therefore, Truth, or Equality, that is free from all quantity. In this way, then, O Lord, I apprehend that Your Face precedes every formable face and is the Exemplar and Truth of all faces—and that all faces are images of Your Face, which cannot be contracted and cannot be participated in. Therefore, every face that can look upon Your Face sees nothing that is *other* than itself or *different* from itself, because it sees its own Truth. But Exemplar-Truth cannot be other or different; instead, these characteristics befall the image, by virtue of the fact that it is not the Exemplar.

20

Therefore, just as while I look from the east at this depicted face it seems likewise to look eastwardly at me, and just as while [I look at it] from the west or from the south it [seems] likewise [to look westwardly or southwardly at me], so the [depicted] face seems turned toward me regardless of how I change my face. In a similar way, Your Face is turned toward every face that looks unto You. Your gaze, O Lord, is Your Face. Accordingly, whoever looks unto You with a loving face will find only Your Face looking lovingly upon him. And the greater his endeavor to look more lovingly unto You, the more loving he will

likewise find Your Face to be. Whoever looks angrily unto You will find Your Face likewise to display anger. Whoever looks unto You joyfully will find Your Face likewise to be joyous, just as is the face of him who is looking unto You. For just as the bodily eye, in looking through a red glass, judges as red whatever it sees, and as green whatever it sees if looking through a green glass, so each mental eye, cloaked with contraction and passion, judges You who are the object of the mind, according to the nature of the contraction and the passion. A man can judge only in a human way. For example, when a man ascribes a face to You, he does not seek it outside the human species; for his judgment is contracted within human nature and does not, in judging, go beyond the passion that belongs to this contractedness. Similarly, if a lion were to ascribe to You a face, he would judge it to be only lionlike; an ox [would judge it to be only] oxlike; and an eagle [would judge it to be only] eaglelike.

21 O Lord, how admirable is Your Face! If a youth wished to conceive it, he would envision it as youthful; if an adult [wished to conceive it, he would envision it as] adult; and someone elderly [would envision it as] elderly. Who could conceive of this unique, most true, and most adequate Exemplar of all faces?—the Exemplar of each and every face and, yet, so perfectly the Exemplar of each that, as it were, it is not the Exemplar of any other. He would have to pass beyond all the forms and figures of all formable faces. And how could he conceive it to be a *face*, when he would transcend all faces and all likenesses and figures of all faces, as well as all concepts which can be made of a face and all color, adornment, and beauty of all faces? Therefore, as regards whoever sets out to see Your Face: as long as he conceives of something, he is far removed from Your Face. For every concept of face is less than Your Face, O Lord; and all beauty that can be conceived is less than the beauty of Your Face. All faces *have* beauty; but they are not beauty itself. But Your Face, O Lord, has beauty, and this having is being. Hence, Your Face is Absolute Beauty, which is the Form that gives being to every beautiful form. O Face exceedingly lovely! All the things which have received the gift of looking thereupon do not suffice for admiring its beauty.

22 In all faces the Face of faces is seen in a veiled and symbolic manner. But it is not seen in an unveiled manner as long as the seeker does not enter, above all faces, into a certain secret and hidden silence wherein there is no knowledge or concept of a face. For this obscuring-

mist, haze, darkness, or ignorance into which the one seeking Your Face enters when he passes beyond all knowledge and conception is that beneath which Your Face can be found only in a veiled manner.²⁴ Yet, the obscuring mist reveals that Your Face is there, above everything beveling. By comparison, when our eye seeks to see the sun's light, which is the sun's face, it first looks at it in a veiled manner in the stars and in colors and in all participants in the sun's light. But when our eye strives to view the sun's light in an unveiled manner, it passes beyond all visible light, because all such light is less than the light it seeks.²⁵ But since it seeks to see a light which it cannot see, it knows that as long as it sees something, this is not the thing it is seeking. Therefore, it must pass beyond all visible light. So if one has to pass beyond all light, the place into which he enters will have to be devoid of visible light; and so, for the eye, it will be darkness. Now, while he is amid that darkness, which is an obscuring mist: if he knows that he is within an obscuring mist, he knows that he has approached unto the face of the sun. For that obscuring mist arises in his eye as a result of the excellence of the light of the sun. Therefore, the more dense he knows the obscuring mist to be, the more truly he attains, within that mist, unto the invisible light. I see, O Lord, that in this way and in no other the inaccessible light and beauty and splendor of Your Face can be approached unveiledly.

23

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT THE FRUIT OF [OUR] VISION OF [GODS] FACE IS
AND HOW THIS FRUIT WILL BE OBTAINED

O Lord, that sweetness by which You now feed my soul is so great that [my soul] is somehow aided by means of what it experiences in this world and by means of those most agreeable likenesses which You inspire. For example, since You, O Lord, are the Power, or Beginning, from which all things derive and since Your Face is the Power and Beginning from which all faces are that which they are, I turn toward this large and tall nut tree, whose Beginning I seek to see. And with the sensible eye I see that it is large, spacious, colored, laden with branches, with leaves, and with nuts. Then with the mind's eye I see that this tree existed in its seed not in the manner in which I here behold it but potentially. I consider attentively this seed's admirable power, wherein were present the whole of this tree, all its nuts, the entire seminal

power of the nuts, and, in the seminal power of the nuts, all [the derivative] trees. And I discern that this power is never at any time fully unfoldable by the motion of the heavens. Yet, the seed's power, though not [fully] unfoldable, is nevertheless contracted, because [the seed] has power only with respect to *this* species of nuts. Hence, although in the seed I see the tree, nevertheless [I see it] only in a contracted power.

24 Next, I reflect upon the entire seminal power of all the trees of various species—a power that is contracted to each species. And in the seeds I see the trees in potency. If, then, I wish to see the Absolute Power of all the powers of such seeds (this Absolute Power is the Power that is also the Beginning and that gives power to all seeds), I must pass beyond all seminal power that can be known and conceived and must enter into that ignorance wherein remains no seminal power or seminal force at all. Thereupon I will find amid obscuring mist a most stupendous Power, accessible by no conceivable power. It is the Beginning, which gives being to every power, whether seminal or non-seminal. This absolute and superexalted Power gives to each seminal power the power whereby it enfolds a tree potentially, together with [enfolding] all that is required for a sensible tree and all that follows from the being of a tree. Accordingly, this Beginning and Cause has within itself—*qua* Cause, and in an absolute and enfolded manner—whatever it gives to the effect. In this way I see that this Power is the Face, or Exemplar, of every arboreal species and of each tree. In this [Power] I see this nut tree not as in its own contracted seminal potency but as in the Cause and Maker of that seminal power. And so, I see that this tree is a certain unfolding of the seed's power and that the seed is a certain unfolding of Omnipotent Power.

25 Moreover, I see that in the seed the tree is not a tree but is the seminal power, and the seminal power is that from which the tree is unfolded, so that in the tree there can be present only what proceeds from the seed's power. Similarly, in its own Cause, which is the Power of powers, the seminal power is not seminal power but is Absolute Power. And so, in You my God the tree is You Yourself my God; and in You it is the Truth and Exemplar of itself. Likewise, too, in You the seed of the tree is the Truth and Exemplar of itself. Of both the tree and the seed You, O God, are the Truth and Exemplar. And that seminal power, which is contracted, is the natural power of the species; it is contracted to the species and is present in the species as a contracted beginning. But You, my God, are Absolute Power and, hence, the Nature of all natures.

- 26 0 God, You have led me to the place where I see Your Absolute Face to be (1) the natural Face of every nature, (2) the Face which is the Absolute Being of all being, (3) the Art and Knowledge of everything knowable. So whoever merits to see Your Face sees all things plainly, and nothing remains hidden from him. He who has You, 0 Lord, knows and has all things. He who sees You has all things, for no one sees You except him who has You. No one can approach unto You, because You are unapproachable. Therefore, no one will apprehend You unless You give Yourself to him. How will I have You, 0 Lord?— I who am not worthy to appear in Your presence. How will my prayer reach You who are altogether unapproachable? How will I entreat You? For what is more absurd than to ask that You, who are all in all, give Yourself to me? How will You give Yourself to me unless You likewise give to me the sky and the earth and everything in them? Indeed, how will You give Yourself to me unless You also give me to myself? And while I am quietly reflecting in this manner, You, 0 Lord, answer me in my heart with the words: "Be your own and I will be yours."
- 27 0 Lord, Sweet Agreeableness of all sweetness, You have placed within my freedom my being my own if I will to. Hence, unless I am my own You are not mine. For [if You were mine when I did not will to be my own], You would be coercing my freedom, since You can be mine only if I too am mine. And because You have placed this matter within my freedom, You do not coerce me; rather, You await my choosing to be my own. This matter is up to me, then, not up to You, 0 Lord, who do not constrict Your maximum goodness but most generously shed it on all who are able to receive it. But You, 0 Lord, are Your goodness.
- 28 Yet, how will I be my own unless You, 0 Lord, teach me how? But You teach me that the senses should obey reason and that reason should govern. Therefore, when the senses serve reason, I am my own. But reason has no one to direct it except You, 0 Lord, who are the Word and the Rational Principle (*ratio*) of rational principles. Hence, I now see the following: if I hearken unto Your Word, which does not cease to speak within me and which continually shines forth in my reason, I shall be my own—free and not a servant of sin—and You will be mine and will grant me to see Your Face and then I shall be saved.²⁶ May You, therefore, be blessed in Your gifts, 0 God—You, who alone are able to comfort and encourage my soul, so that it may hope to attain unto You and to enjoy You as being its own gift and as being the infi-

nite treasure of all delights.

29

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOD'S VISION IS LOVING, CAUSING, READING, AND THE HAVING WITHIN ITSELF OF ALL THINGS

My heart is not at rest, O Lord, because Your love has inflamed it with such desire that only in You alone can it find rest.²⁷ I began to pray the Lord's Prayer, and You inspired me to attend to how it is that You are our father. Your loving is Your seeing. Your paternity is the seeing which paternally embraces us all, for we say "Our Father." For You are father of each and all alike. For [in praying the prayer] each confesses that You are "Our Father." Your paternal love comprehends each and every son. For the Father loves all sons in such way that He loves each son, because He is father of all in such way that He is father of each. He loves each son in such way that each son conceives himself to be preferred over all others.

30

If, then, You are father and are our father, we are, accordingly. Your sons. But paternal love precedes filial love. As long as we, Your sons, look unto You as sons, You do not cease to look upon us as father. Thus, You will be our paternal provider, showing paternal concern for us. Your seeing is Your providence. But if we, Your sons, renounce You who are our father, we cease being Your sons. And in that case we are not sons who are free and who are under our own power, but we depart to a distant region, separating ourselves from You; and thereupon we undergo harsh servitude to a ruler who is an adversary to You our God. But You, Father, who allow us (on account of the freedom conceded to us because we are the sons of You who are freedom itself) to depart and to waste our freedom and our best substance in accordance with the corrupt desires of the senses: You do not, for all that, altogether desert us. Rather, continually showing concern for us, You are present to us, and You speak within us and call upon us to return unto You. And You are always ready to look upon us with Your earlier paternal eye if we turn back and turn unto You. O gracious God, look upon me, who, remorseful, now turn back from wretched servitude—swinelike in its slimy filth, and in which servitude I was famishing—in order somehow to be fed in Your house.²⁸ Feed me by Your gaze, O Lord. And teach me how it is that Your gaze sees all sight that sees, every object that can be seen, and every act of seeing, as well as all power to see, all power to be seen, and every actual seeing that arises from both. Since Your see-

ing is causing, You who cause all things see all things.

31 Teach me, O Lord, how it is that by a single viewing You discern all things individually and at once. When I open a book, for reading, I see the whole page confusedly. And if I want to discern the individual letters, syllables, and words, I have to turn to each individually and successively. And only successively can I read one letter after another, one word after another, [one] passage after another. But You, O Lord, behold at once the entire page, and You read it without taking any time. Now, if two of us men read the same thing, one more quickly and the other more slowly, You read with both of us; and You seem to read in time, because You read with us who are reading. But above time You see and read all things at once; for Your seeing is Your reading. Simultaneously—from eternity and beyond all passing of time—You have viewed all books that have been written and that can be written, and You have read them at once; but You also now read them successively, in accompaniment of all who are reading them. You do not read one thing in eternity and another thing in time, in accompaniment of those who are reading. Rather, You read [one and] the same thing—doing so in [one and] the same manner, because You are not mutable, since You are fixed eternity. But since eternity does not desert time, it seems to be moved with time, even though in eternity motion is rest.²⁹

32 O Lord, You see and You have eyes. Therefore, You are an eye, because Your having is being. Accordingly, You behold within Yourself all things. For if in *me* sight were the eye—as is the case with You my God—then I would view within myself all things. For the eye is like a mirror; and a mirror, however small, figuratively receives into itself a large mountain and all that is on the surface of the mountain. And in a similar way the visible forms of all things are in the mirroring eye. Nevertheless, by means of the mirroring eye our sight sees only and particularly that to which it turns; for the power of the eye can be determined by the object only in a particular way. Consequently, it does not see all the things which are captured in the mirror of the eye. But since Your sight *is* an eye, i.e., a living mirror, it sees within itself all things. Indeed, because it is the Cause of all visible things, it embraces and sees all things in the Cause and Rational Principle of all things, viz., in itself. Your eye, O Lord, proceeds to all things without turning. The reason our eye turns toward an object is that our sight sees from an angle of a certain magnitude. But the angle of Your eye, O God, is not of a certain magnitude but is infinite. Moreover, the angle of Your eye is a

circle—or better, an infinite sphere—because Your sight is an eye of sphericity and of infinite perfection.³⁰ Therefore, Your sight sees—roundabout and above and below—all things at once.

- 33 To all who examine it, my God, how admirable is Your sight, which is *theos*!³¹ How beautiful and lovable it is to all who love You! How terrifying it is to all who forsake You, O Lord my God! For by Your vision, O Lord, You enliven every spirit, You gladden all who are made glad, and You dispel all sorrow. Look, then, mercifully upon me, and my soul shall be saved.

34 CHAPTER NINE

[GOD'S VISION] IS BOTH UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR;
AND WHAT THE WAY TO SEEING GOD IS

Since You behold at once each and every one [of us]—even as is befigured by this painted image that I look upon—I am amazed, O Lord, at how in Your visual power the universal coincides with the singular. But I take note of the following: that because seek [to understand] Your vision in terms of my own visual power, my imagination does not grasp how this [coincidence] can occur; since Your vision is not contracted to a sensible organ, as is mine, I am deceived in my judgment.

- 35 Your sight, O Lord, is Your essence. If, then, I consider human nature, which is simple and singular in all men, I find it in each and every man. And although in itself it is not in the east or the west or the south or the north, nevertheless in men who are in the east it is in the east, and in men who are in the west it is in the west. And likewise: although neither motion nor rest belong to the essence of humanity, nevertheless at one and the same time humanity is moved with men who move, it rests with men who are resting, and it remains stationary with men who are stationary. For humanity does not desert men, whether they are moved or are not moved, whether they are sleeping or resting. Hence, human nature, which is contracted and which does not exist apart from human beings,³² is such that it is present to one man as much as to another; yet, it is so completely present to one man that, as it were, it is not present to any other. If so, then in a much higher way [the case is parallel regarding] Uncontracted Humanity,³³ which is the Exemplar and Idea of the contracted human nature and which exists as the Form of, and Truth of, the form of the contracted humanity. For Uncontracted Humanity can never desert the humanity that is contracted in individual human beings. For it is the Form which gives

being to that formal nature [viz., to contracted humanity]. Without this Form, then, the specific form cannot exist, since it does not exist through itself. For the specific form derives from the Form which exists through itself and prior to which there is no other form. Therefore, that Form which gives specific being is Absolute Form; and You are this Form, O God—You, who are Former of heaven and earth and all things.³⁴

36 Therefore, when I view contracted humanity and, by means of it, view Absolute Humanity (viz., by seeing in the contracted the Absolute, as in an effect the cause is seen and in an image the truth and exemplar is seen), You appear to me, my God, as the Exemplar of all men and as Human Nature per se, i.e., as Absolute Human Nature. But likewise, when with regard to all species I turn to [consider] the Form of forms: in all these species You appear to me as the Idea and Exemplar. And because You are the absolute and most simple Exemplar, You are not composed of many exemplars, but You are one most simple infinite Exemplar, so that You are the truest and most adequate Exemplar of each and every thing that can be formed.³⁵ Therefore, You are the Essence of essences,³⁶ giving to contracted essences that they be that which they are. Apart from You, then, O Lord, nothing can exist.³⁷

37 If, then, Your essence penetrates all things, then so too does Your sight, which is Your essence. Therefore, Just as none of all existing things can escape from its own being, so neither [can it escape] from Your essence, which gives to all things their essential being. Consequently, no [existing thing can escape from] Your sight, either. Thus, You see each and every thing at once, O Lord. And You are moved with all that is moved, and You remain stationary with all that is stationary.³⁸ And because there are some things which are moved while others remain stationary, You O Lord, at once, are both moved and stationary; at once You both advance and are at rest. For if, in different things, being moved and being-at-rest occur contractedly and at the same time, and if nothing can exist apart from You, then neither motion nor rest exists apart from You. O Lord, You are present at one and the same time to all these things, and You are present as a whole to each [of them].³⁹ Nevertheless, You are not moved and You are not at rest, because You are superexalted and are free from all these things, which can be conceived or named. Therefore, You are stationary and You advance, and likewise You are neither stationary nor do You advance. This very point is illustrated for me by this painted face. For if I am moved, its gaze

appears to be moved, since it does not desert me. If, while I am moving, someone else who is looking at the face remains stationary, then the [face's] gaze does not desert him either but remains stationary with him. However, a Face that is free from these conditions cannot properly be characterized as stationary and as moved; for [such a Face] exists beyond all rest and motion, in most simple and most absolute Infinity. Indeed, motion and rest and opposition and whatever can be spoken of or conceived are subsequent to this Infinity.

38 Hence, I experience the necessity for me to enter into obscuring mist and to admit the coincidence of opposites,⁴⁰ beyond all capacity of reason, and to seek truth where impossibility appears. And when—beyond that [rational capacity] and beyond every most lofty intellectual ascent, as well—I come to that which is unknown to every intellect and which every intellect judges to be very far removed from the truth, *there* You are present, my God, You who are Absolute Necessity. And the darker and more impossible that obscuring haze of impossibility is known to be, the more truly the Necessity shines forth and the less veiledly it draws near and is present.

39 I thank You, my God, for disclosing to me that there is no other way of approaching You than this way which seems to all men, including the most learned philosophers, altogether inaccessible and impossible.⁴¹ For You have shown me that You cannot be seen elsewhere than where impossibility appears and stands in the way. And You, O Lord, who are the Nourishment of the full-grown,⁴² have encouraged me to do violence to myself, because impossibility coincides with necessity. And I have found the abode wherein You dwell unveiledly—an abode surrounded by the coincidence of contradictories. And [this coincidence] is the wall of Paradise, wherein You dwell. The gate of this wall is guarded by a most lofty rational spirit; unless this spirit is vanquished the entrance will not be accessible. Therefore, on the *other* side of the coincidence of contradictories You can be seen—but not at all on this side. If, then, O Lord, in Your sight impossibility is necessity, then there is nothing which Your sight does not see.

40

CHAPTER TEN

GOD IS SEEN BEYOND THE COINCIDENCE OF CONTRADICTORIES,
AND HIS SEEING IS HIS BEING

I stand before the image of Your Face, my God—an image which I behold with sensible eyes. And I attempt to view with inner eyes the

truth which is pointed to by the painting. And it occurs to me, O Lord, that Your gaze speaks; for Your speaking is none other than Your seeing. And because Your seeing and Your speaking are synonymous—since they do not differ really in You, who are Absolute Simplicity—I experience clearly that You see each and every thing at once. For when I preach, I speak at one and the same time to the church assembled as a congregation and to each individual present in the church. I speak one word, and in this one word I speak to each individual. That which the church is to me, this the whole world and each creature that exists or can exist is to You, O Lord. In like manner, then, You speak to each thing, and You see the things to which You speak. O Lord, who are the supreme consolation of those who place their hope in You, You inspire me to praise You on the basis of [an illustration regarding] myself. For You have given me one face, just as You willed to, and it is seen singularly and at once by all to whom I preach. And so, my one face is seen by each individual, and my simple sermon is wholly heard by each. But [only] successively and not at once can I individually hear all who speak. Nor can I see all individually at once, but [only] successively. Yet, if in me there were such great power that being heard coincided with hearing, and likewise being seen coincided with seeing, and speaking with hearing—as is the case with You, O Lord, who are supreme power—then I would hear and see each and every one at once. And just as I would speak to each at once, so also in the same moment when I would be speaking, I would be seeing and hearing the responses of each and all.

- 41 Hence, at the door of the coincidence of opposites, guarded by the angel stationed at the entrance of Paradise,⁴³ I begin to see You, O Lord. For You are present where speaking, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, reasoning, knowing, and understanding are the same and where seeing coincides with being seen, hearing with being heard, tasting with being tasted, touching with being touched, speaking with hearing, and creating with speaking. If I were to see just as I am seeable, I would not be a creature. And if You, O God, were not to see just as You are seeable, You would not be God Almighty. You are seeable by all creatures,⁴⁴ and You see all creatures. For in that You see all creatures You are seen by all creatures. For otherwise creatures could not exist, since they exist by means of Your seeing. But if they were not to see You, who see [them], they would not receive being from You. The being of a creature is, alike, Your seeing and Your being seen.

- 42 By Your Word You speak to all existing things, and You summon into being nonexistent things. Therefore, You summon them in order that they may hear You; and when they hear You, they exist. Therefore, when You speak, You speak to all; and all the things to which You speak hear You. You speak to the earth, and You summon it to [become] human nature; and the earth hears You, and its hearing is its becoming man. You speak to *nothing* as if it were something, and You summon nothing to [become] something; and nothing hears You, because that which was nothing becomes something. O Infinite Power, Your conceiving is Your speaking. You conceive the sky and the sky is as You conceive it. You conceive the earth and the earth is as You conceive it. While You conceive, You see and speak and work and whatever else can be said.
- 43 But You are wonderful, my God! You speak once, and You conceive once. How is it, then, that all things do not exist at the same time but that many exist successively? How is it that from the one Concept there are so many different things? You enlighten me, who am situated at the threshold of the door; for Your Concept is most simple eternity itself. Now, *posterior* to most simple eternity no thing can possibly be made. Therefore, infinite duration, which is eternity itself, encompasses all succession. Therefore, everything which appears to us in a succession is not at all posterior to Your Concept, which is eternity. For Your one Concept, which is also Your Word, enfolds each and every thing. Your eternal Word cannot be multiple or different or variable or changeable, because it is simple eternity. In this way I see, O Lord, that posterior to Your Concept there is not anything; rather, all things exist because You conceive [them]. Now, You conceive in eternity. But in eternity succession is—without succession—eternity itself, i.e., Your Word itself, O Lord God. Any given thing that appears to us in time was not conceived by You *before* it existed. For in eternity, in which You conceive, all temporal succession coincides in [one and] the same *now* of eternity. Therefore, where the future and the past coincide with the present, nothing is past or future.
- 44 But the reason that [only] in this world [do] things exist according to earlier and later is that You did not conceive mundane things *before* they existed. For if You had earlier conceived them, they would have existed earlier. Now, if *earlier* and *later* can occur in someone's concept, so that he conceives first one thing and then another, this concept is not omnipotent. (By comparison, that eye which sees first one thing

and then another is not omnipotent.) So because You are God Almighty, You dwell in Paradise on the inner side of the wall. Now, the wall is the coincidence where *later* coincides with *earlier*, where *end* coincides with *beginning*, where *alpha* and *omega* are the same. So, [in eternity], things exist always, because You command that they exist; but they do not exist earlier, because You do not command earlier. Now, when I read that Adam existed so many years ago and that a man like Adam was born today, the following seems impossible: (1) that Adam existed then because then You willed [his existence]; (2) that, likewise, [the other man] was born today because now You willed [his birth]; and (3) that, nevertheless, You did not will Adam to exist before [You willed the existence of] the man born today. But that which seems impossible is necessity itself. For *now* and *then* are posterior to Your Word. And so, to one who approaches unto You, *now* and *then* appear in coincidence in the wall which surrounds the place where You dwell. For now and then coincide in the circle of the wall of Paradise. But You, my God, who are Absolute Eternity, exist and speak beyond *now* and *then*.

45

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IN GOD WE SEE SUCCESSION WITHOUT SUCCESSION

I experience Your goodness, my God. Not only does it not spurn me, a wretched sinner, but it even nourishes me sweetly with a certain longing. With regard to Your mental Word or Concept's oneness and its variation, successively, in appearances, You have inspired a likeness that is pleasing to me. For the simple concept of a most perfect clock guides me, so that I may more wisely be caught up unto a vision of Your Concept and Word. For the simple concept of a clock enfolds all temporal succession. Now, let it be that the clock is the concept. Then, although we hear the sounding of the sixth hour before that of the seventh, nevertheless the [sounding of the] seventh is heard only when the concept gives the command. And in the concept the sixth hour does not occur before the seventh or the eighth; rather, in the unitary concept of the clock no hour is earlier or later than another, although the clock never sounds the hour except when the concept gives the command. And when we hear the sounding of the sixth hour, it is true to say that six sounds at that moment because the master's concept so wills it.

46

Now, because in God's Concept the clock is the Concept, we see to

some small extent how the following are true: (1) that succession is present in the clock without there being succession in the Word, or Concept; (2) that in this most simple Concept are enfolded all movements and sounds and whatever we experience as in succession; (3) that whatever occurs successively does not in any way pass outside the Concept but is the unfolding of the Concept, so that the Concept gives being to each [successive thing]; (4) that the reason [each event] was nothing before it occurred is that it was not conceived *before* it existed. So, let the concept of a clock be, as it were, eternity itself. Then, in the clock, movement is succession. Therefore, eternity enfolds and unfolds succession; for the Concept of a clock—a Concept which is eternity—both enfolds and unfolds all things.

47 Blessed be You, O Lord my God, who feed and nurture me with the milk of likenesses, until such time as You grant more solid food.⁴⁵ O Lord God, guide me unto Yourself by these pathways. For unless You guide, I cannot stay on the pathway—on account of the frailty both of my corruptible nature and of the earthen vessel that I carry about.⁴⁶ Trusting in Your help, O Lord, I turn once again in order to find You beyond the wall of the coincidence of enfolding and unfolding. And when at one and the same time I go in and out through the door of Your Word and Concept, I find most sweet nourishment. When I find You to be a power that enfolds all things, I go in. When I find You to be a power that unfolds, I go out. When I find You to be a power that both enfolds and unfolds, I both go in and go out. From creatures I go in unto You, who are Creator—go in from the effects unto the Cause. I go out from You, who are Creator—go out from the Cause unto the effects. I both go in and go out when I see that going out is going in and that, likewise, going in is going out. (By comparison, he who counts unfolds and enfolds, alike: he unfolds the power of oneness, and he enfolds number in oneness.) For creation's going out from You is creation's going in unto You; and unfolding is enfolding. And when I see You-who-are-God in Paradise,⁴⁷ which this wall of the coincidence of opposites surrounds, I see that You neither enfold nor unfold—whether separately or collectively. For both separating and conjoining are the wall of coincidence, beyond which You dwell, free from whatever can be either spoken of or thought of.

48

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHERE THE INVISIBLE IS SEEN THE UNCREATED IS CREATED

Earlier,⁴⁸ O Lord, You appeared to me as invisible by every creature since You are an infinite and hidden God. Infinity, however, is incomprehensible by every mode of comprehending. Later,⁴⁹ You appeared to me as visible by all [creatures] because a thing exists insofar as You see it, and it would not exist actually unless it saw You. For Your seeing gives being, because [Your seeing] is Your essence. Thus, my God, You are both invisible and visible: You are invisible as You are [in Yourself]; You are visible in accordance with the existence of creatures, which exist insofar as they see You. You, then, my invisible God, are seen by all [creatures]. In all sight You are seen by every perceiver. You who are invisible, who are free from everything visible, and who are superexalted unto infinity are seen in everything visible and in every act of seeing.

49 I must, then, O Lord, pass beyond the wall of invisible seeing, on the inner side of which You dwell. But [this] wall is both everything and nothing. For You, who seem as if You were both all things and nothing of all things, dwell on the inner side of that high wall, which no intelligence can scale by its own power. At times, You appear to me [in such way] that I think You see all things in Yourself as would a living mirror in which all things shined forth. But because Your seeing is knowing, it occurs to me that You do not see all things in Yourself as would a living mirror; for, if You did, Your knowledge would derive from things. Hereupon, You appear to me to see all things in Yourself as would a power in viewing itself. For example, if the power of the seed of a tree were to view itself, it would see within itself a tree in potency; for the power of the seed is potentially a tree. But then it occurs to me that You do not see Yourself and—in Yourself—all things as would a power. For to see a tree in the potency of a power is different from the seeing by which the tree is seen in actuality. And then I find that Your infinite power is beyond the power of a mirror and of a seed and is beyond the coincidence of radiating and reflecting and, likewise, of causing and being caused. [And I find] that Your absolute power is absolute seeing, which is perfection itself and is above every mode of seeing. For Your seeing, which is Your essence, my God, is, without modality, all [these] modes, which display the perfection of sight.⁵⁰

50 But grant, most gracious Lord, that a lowly creature continue to speak to You. Your seeing is Your creating; and You do not see anything other than Yourself but are Your own object, for You are (1) the perceiver, (2) that which is perceived, and (3) the act of perceiving. If so,

then how is it that You create things that are other than Yourself? For You seem to create Yourself, even as You see Yourself. But You comfort me, Life of my spirit. For although the wall of absurdity (viz., the wall of the coincidence of creating with being created) stands in the way, as if creating could not possibly coincide with being created (since to admit this coinciding would seemingly be to affirm that something exists before it exists; for when it creates, it *is*—and yet *is not*, because it is created), nevertheless this wall is not an obstacle. For Your creating is Your being. Moreover, Your creating and, likewise, being created are not other than Your imparting Your being to all things, so that in all things You are all things,⁵¹ while nevertheless remaining free of them all. For to summon nonexistent things into being is to impart being to nothing. Hence, Your summoning is creating, and Your imparting is being created. And beyond this coincidence of creating with being created You, O absolute and infinite God, are neither creating nor creatable, although all things are that which they are because You exist.

51 O Depth of riches, how incomprehensible You are!⁵² As long as I conceive of a creating creator, I am still on this side of the wall of Paradise. Similarly, as long as I conceive of a creatable creator, I have not yet entered in but am at the wall. But when I see You to be Absolute Infinity, to which belongs neither the name "creating creator" nor the name "creatable creator," then I begin to behold You unveiledly and to enter unto the source⁵³ of delights. For You are not at all something such that it can be spoken of or conceived but are absolutely and infinitely exalted above all such things. Therefore, although without You nothing is made or can be made, You are not creator but are infinitely more than creator.⁵⁴ To You be praise and glory forever and ever.

52

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GOD IS SEEN TO BE ABSOLUTE INFINITY

O Lord God, Helper of those who seek You, I see You in the garden⁵⁵ of Paradise, and I do not know what I see, because I see no visible thing. I know only the following: viz., that I know that I do not know—and never can know—what I see. Moreover, I do not know how to name You, because I do not know what You are. And if someone tells me that You are named by this or that name, then by virtue of the fact that he names, I know that [this] is not Your name. For the limit of every mode of signification that belongs to names is the wall beyond

which I see You. And if anyone expresses any concept whereby [allegedly] You can be conceived, I know that this concept is not a concept of You; for every concept reaches its limit at the wall of Paradise. Moreover, if anyone expresses any likeness and maintains that You are to be conceived in accordance with it, I know as well that this likeness is not a likeness of You. Similarly, if anyone recounts his understanding of You, intending to offer a means for Your being understood, he is still far away from You. For You are separated by a very high wall from all these [modes of apprehending]. For [this] wall separates from You whatever can be spoken of or thought of, because You are free from all the things that can be captured by any concept. Hence, when I am very highly elevated, I see that You are Infinity. Consequently, You are not approachable, not comprehensible, not nameable, not manifold, and not visible.

53 And so, one who ascends unto You must ascend beyond every limit and every end and [everything] bounded. But how will he attain unto You, who are the End at which he aims,⁵⁶ if he is supposed to ascend beyond [every] end? Does not he who ascends beyond ends enter into what is indeterminate and confused and so, with respect to the intellect, into ignorance and darkness, which are characteristic of intellectual confusion? Therefore, the intellect must become ignorant and must be situated in a shadow if it wishes to see You. But how, my God, is the intellect in ignorance? Is it not with respect to learned ignorance? Therefore, O God, You who are Infinity cannot be approached except by him whose intellect is ignorance—i.e., whose intellect knows that it is ignorant of You. How can the intellect apprehend You, who are Infinity? The intellect knows that it is ignorant and that You cannot be apprehended because You are Infinity. For to understand Infinity is to comprehend the Incomprehensible. The intellect knows that it is ignorant of You, because it knows that You can be known only if the unknowable is known, the unseeable seen, and the unapproachable approached.

54 You, my God, are Absolute Infinity, which I see to be an Infinite End. But I cannot apprehend how it is that an end is an End without an end. You, O God, are Your own end, because You *are* whatever You *have*. If You have an end, You are an end. Therefore, You are an Infinite End, because You are Your own end, since Your end is Your essence. The essence of end is not limited by, or ended in, something other than end but by and in itself. Therefore, the End which is its own

end is infinite; and every end which is not its own end is a finite end. Because, O Lord, You are the End that delimits all things, You are an End of which there is no end; and thus You are an End without an end—i.e., an Infinite End. This [fact] escapes all reasoning, for it implies a contradiction. Therefore, when I assert the existence of the Infinite, I admit that darkness is light, that ignorance is knowledge, and that the impossible is the necessary. And because we admit that there is an end of the finite, necessarily we admit the Infinite—i.e., the Final End, or End without an end. But we cannot fail to admit that there are finite beings. So we cannot fail to admit that there is the Infinite. Hence, we admit the coincidence-of-contradictories, above which the Infinite exists.

55 But this coincidence is Contradiction without contradiction, just as it is End without an end. O Lord, You tell me that just as in oneness otherness is present without otherness, because [in oneness otherness is] oneness, so in Infinity contradiction is present without contradiction, because [in Infinity contradiction is] Infinity. Infinity is simplicity; contradiction does not exist apart from otherness. But in simplicity otherness is present without otherness, because [in simplicity otherness is] simplicity itself. For whatever is predicated of absolute simplicity coincides with absolute simplicity, because in absolute simplicity having is being. The oppositeness of opposites is oppositeness without oppositeness, just as the End of finite things is an End without an end. You, then, O God, are the Oppositeness of opposites,⁵⁷ because You are infinite. And because You are infinite, You are Infinity. In Infinity the oppositeness of opposites is present without oppositeness.

56 Lord my God, Strength of the frail, I see that You are Infinity itself. And so, there is not anything that is other than You or different from You or opposed to You. For Infinity is not compatible with otherness, because there is not anything outside it, since it is Infinity. For Absolute Infinity includes and encompasses all things. And so, if there were "Infinity" and something else outside it, there would be neither Infinity nor anything else. For Infinity cannot be either greater or lesser. Therefore, there is not anything outside it. For unless it included all being in itself, it would not be Infinity. But if Infinity did not exist, then *end* would also not exist. And in that case, what is *other* and *different* would also not exist, for they cannot exist without the otherness of ends and of limits. So if the Infinite is removed, nothing remains. Therefore, Infinity exists and enfolds all things; and no thing can exist

outside it. Hence, nothing is other than it or different from it. Therefore, Infinity is all things in such way that it is none of them.⁵⁸ No name can befit it. For every name can have a contrary; but to unnameable Infinity nothing can be contrary. Moreover, Infinity is not a whole, to which a part is opposed; nor can Infinity be a part. Furthermore, Infinity is neither great nor small; nor is it any of all the things which—whether in heaven or on earth—can be named, Infinity is beyond all these things. It is not greater than, lesser than, or equal to, anything else.

57 But when I consider that Infinity is not greater or lesser than any positable thing, I say that it is the Measure of all things, because it is neither greater nor lesser. And in this way I conceive it to be Equality of being. But such Equality is Infinity. And so, it is not equality in the way in which what is unequal is opposed to equality. Rather, in Equality inequality is Equality. For in Infinity inequality is present without inequality, because [in Infinity inequality is] Infinity. Similarly, in Infinity Equality is Infinity. Infinite Equality is an End without an end. Hence, although it is neither greater nor lesser, nevertheless it is not on this account equality in the way in which contracted equality is apprehended to be. Rather, it is Infinite Equality, which does not admit of more or less. And so, it is not more nearly equal to one thing than to another but is equal to one thing in such way that it is equal to all—and is equal to all in such way that it is equal to none. For the Infinite is not contractible but remains absolute. If the Infinite were contractible away from Infinity,⁵⁹ it would not be the Infinite. Therefore, the Infinite is not contractible to equality with the finite, although it is not unequal to anything. For how could inequality befit the Infinite, which *more* and *less* do not befit? Therefore, the Infinite is not greater than or lesser than or unequal to any given thing. Yet, it is not on this account equal to the finite, because it is infinitely above everything finite. And because it is infinitely above everything finite—i.e., because it exists per se—the Infinite is altogether absolute and uncontractible.

58 O how exalted You are above all things, O Lord! And at the same time how lowly You are because You are present in all things! If Infinity were contractible to something nameable (such as a line or a surface or a species), it would attract to itself that to which it would be contracted. And so, for the Infinite to be contractible implies a contradiction, because the Infinite would not be contracted but would attract. For example, if I say that the Infinite is contracted to a line (as when I

speak of an infinite line), then the line is attracted into the Infinite. For the line stops being a line when it does not have quantity and an end. An infinite line is not a line; rather, in Infinity a line is Infinity. And just as nothing can be added to the Infinite, so the Infinite cannot be contracted to anything so that it would become other than the Infinite. Infinite goodness is not goodness but is Infinity. Infinite quantity is not quantity but is Infinity. And so on.

- 59 You, O God, are great, and there is no end of Your greatness. And so, I see that You are the Immeasurable Measure of all things, even as You are the Infinite End of all things. Therefore, O Lord, because You are infinite You are without beginning and end. You are Beginning without a beginning and End without an end. You are Beginning without an end and End without a beginning. You are Beginning in such way that You are End—and End in such way that You are Beginning. And You are neither Beginning nor End but, above beginning and end, are Absolute Infinity, blessed forever.

60

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

GOD ENFOLDS, WITHOUT OTHERNESS, ALL THINGS

From the infinity of Your mercy, O Lord, I see that You are all-encompassing Infinity. Therefore, there is not anything outside You. But in You no thing is *other* than You. You teach me, O Lord, that otherness, which is not present in You, does not, and cannot, exist even in itself. Moreover, otherness, which is not present in You, does not make one creature to be other than another, even though one creature is not another creature. For the sky is not the earth, even though it is true that the sky is the sky and the earth the earth. If, then, I seek otherness, which is not present either within You or outside You, where shall I find it? And if it does not exist, how is the earth another creature than the sky? For without otherness this [difference] cannot be conceived.

- 61 But You speak within me, O Lord, and You say that there is not a positive beginning of otherness; and so otherness does not exist. For how could otherness exist without a beginning, unless it itself were Beginning and Infinity? But otherness is not the Beginning of being. For otherness derives its name from not-being. For because one thing is *not* another thing, it is called *another*. Therefore, otherness cannot be the Beginning of being, because it derives its name from not-being. And it does not have a *beginning* of being, since it derives from not-being. Therefore, it is not the case that otherness is something.

- 62 But the reason the sky is not the earth is that the sky is not Infinity itself, which encompasses all being. Hence, because Infinity is Absolute Infinity, the result is that one thing cannot be another thing. By comparison, the essence of Socrates encompasses the whole of Socratic being.⁶⁰ In the simple Socratic being there is no otherness or difference. For the being of Socrates is the individual oneness of whatever is present in Socrates, so that the being of all that is in Socrates is enfolded in this one being—i.e., in the individual simplicity, wherein there is nothing other or different. But in this one being all the things that have Socratic being are present and enfolded, and apart from it they neither exist nor can exist—although with this [qualification]: in this most simple being the eye is not the ear, the head is not the heart, sight is not hearing, and the senses are not reason. These differences do not result from any beginning of otherness. Rather, when most simple Socratic being is posited, the result is that the head is not the feet, because the head is not most simple Socratic being. Hence, the head's being does not encompass the whole of Socratic being. And in this manner I see, by Your illumination, O Lord, that because simple Socratic being is altogether incommunicable to, and uncontractible to, the being of any member, the being of one member is not the being of the other. But the simple Socratic being is the being of all the members of Socrates; in it the complete variety-of-being and otherness-of-being that happens to the members is a simple oneness—even as in the form of a whole the plurality of the forms of the *parts* is a oneness.
- 63 In some such way [as the foregoing,] O God, Your being—which is, absolutely, the being of Infinity—is related to all existing things. Now, by "absolutely" I mean "as the Absolute Form-of-being of all contracted forms." Thus, if the hand of Socrates were separated from Socrates, then in spite of its no longer being Socrates' hand after the amputation, it would nevertheless continue on, in a certain respect, as the being of a corpse. This [point] holds true because of the fact that the form of Socrates, which gives being, does not give *being* in an unqualified sense but gives *contracted being*, viz., Socratic being. The hand's being is separable from the Socratic being, and it continues on, though under another form. But if the hand were once separated from altogether uncontracted being, which is infinite and absolute, it would altogether cease to exist, because it would be separated from all being.
- 64 Lord my God—who generously manifest Yourself to me to the extent of my capability to receive—I thank You that You are Infinity

itself, enfolding the being of all things by a most simple power, which would not be infinite were it not infinitely unified. For power that is unified is stronger. Therefore, a power that is so unified that it cannot be more greatly unified is infinite and omnipotent. O God, You are omnipotent, because You are Absolute Simplicity, which is Absolute Infinity.

65

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ACTUAL INFINITY IS A ONENESS IN WHICH IMAGE IS TRUTH

Continue to sustain Your servant, who surely is foolish except insofar as You grant that he speak to You, his God. In this [icon's] painted face I see an image of Infinity. For the gaze is not confined to an object or a place, and so it is infinite. For it is turned as much toward one beholder of the face as toward another. And although in itself the gaze of this face is infinite, nevertheless it seems to be limited by any given onlooker. For it looks so fixedly upon whoever looks unto it that it seems to look only upon him and not upon anything else. Therefore, O Lord, You seem to me as if You were absolute and infinite possibility-to-be that is formable and determinable by every form; for we say that the formable possibility of matter is infinite, because it will never be fully determined. But You reply within me, O Infinite Light, that Absolute Possibility is Infinity itself, which is beyond the wall of the coincidence in which the possibility-to-be-made coincides with the possibility-to-make and in which possibility coincides with actuality. Although prime matter is in potency to an infinite number of forms, nevertheless it cannot have them actually. Rather, the potency is determined by one form; and if this form is removed, the potency is determined by another form. Therefore, if matter's possibility-to-be coincided with actuality, matter would be possibility in such way that it would be actuality; and just as it would be in potency to an infinite number of forms, so it would be actually formed by an infinity of forms. But Infinity, as it exists actually, is without otherness; and it cannot exist without existing as oneness. Therefore, there cannot be, actually, an infinite number of forms. Instead, Actual Infinity is oneness.

66

You, then, O God, who are Infinity itself, are the one God Himself, in whom I see that all possibility-to-be exists actually.⁶¹ For possibility which is free from all possibility that is contracted to prime matter or to any passive potency whatsoever is Absolute Being. For whatever exists in Infinite Being is most simple Infinite Being. Thus, in Infinite

Being the possibility-to-be-all-things is Infinite Being itself. Likewise, in Infinite Being actually-being-all-things is Infinite Being itself. Therefore, in You my God absolute possibility-to-be and absolute actual being are only You my Infinite God. You, my God, are all possibility-to-be. The possibility-to-be of prime matter is not absolute possibility, and so it is not convertible with absolute actuality. Therefore, prime matter is not actually that which it can be, as are You O God. The possibility-to-be of prime matter is material and, thus, is contracted and not absolute. Likewise, sensible or rational possibility-to-be is contracted. But altogether uncontracted possibility coincides with the altogether Absolute, i.e., with the Infinite.

- 67** Therefore, my God, when You seem to me as if You were formable prime matter, because You receive the form of each one who looks unto You, You elevate me, so that I discern the following: viz., that the one who looks unto You does not bestow form upon You; rather, he beholds himself in You, because he receives from You that which he is. And so, that which You seem to receive from the one who looks unto You—this You bestow, as if You were a living Mirror-of- eternity, which is the Form of forms. When someone looks into this Mirror, he sees his own form in the Form of forms, which the Mirror is. And he judges the form seen in the Mirror to be the image of his own form, because such would be the case with regard to a polished material mirror. However, the contrary thereof is true, because in the Mirror of eternity that which he sees is not an image but is the Truth, of which the beholder is the image. Therefore, in You, my God, the image is the Truth and Exemplar of each and every thing that exists or can exist.
- 68** You, O God, worthy of admiration by every mind, You who are Light sometimes seem as if You were a shadow. For when I see that in accordance with my changing, Your icon's gaze seems to be changed and that Your countenance seems to be changed because I am changed, You seem to me as if You were a shadow which follows the changing of the one who is walking. But because I am a living shadow and You are the Truth, I judge from the changing of the shadow that the Truth is changed. Therefore, O my God, You are shadow in such way that You are Truth; You are the image of me and of each one in such way that You are Exemplar.
- 69** Lord God, Enlightener of hearts, my face is a true face; for You, who are Truth, have given it to me. My face is also an image; for it is not Truth itself but is the image of Absolute Truth. Therefore, in my

conception I enfold my face's truth and image; and I see that with regard to my face the image coincides with the facial truth, so that my face is true insofar as it is an image. And subsequently You show me, O Lord, that with respect to the changing of my face Your Face is changed and unchanged, alike: it is changed because it does not desert the truth of my face; it is unchanged because it does not follow the changing of the image. Hence, just as Your Face does not desert the truth of my face, so also it does not follow the changing of the changeable image. For Absolute Truth is Unchangeability. The truth of my face is mutable, because it is truth in such way that it is image; but [the Truth of] Your [Face] is immutable, because it is image in such way that it is Truth. Absolute Truth cannot desert the truth of my face. For if Absolute Truth deserted it, then my face, which is a mutable truth, could not continue to exist. Thus, O God, on account of Your infinite goodness⁶² You seem to be mutable, because You do not desert mutable creatures; but because You are Absolute Goodness, You are not mutable, since You do not follow mutability.

70 O my God, deepest Depth, You who do not desert creatures and, at the same time, do not follow them! O inexplicable Graciousness, to him who looks unto You You give Yourself as if You received being from him;⁶³ and You conform Yourself to him, in order that the more You appear to be like him, the more he will love You. For we cannot hate ourselves.⁶⁴ Hence, we love that which shares in and accompanies our being; and we embrace our likeness, because we are shown ourselves in an image, and we love ourselves therein. O God, from the humility of Your infinite goodness You manifest Yourself as if You were our creature, in order thus to draw us unto Yourself. For You draw us unto Yourself by every possible means of drawing by which a free rational creature can be drawn. And in You, O God, being created coincides with creating.⁶⁵ For the likeness which seems to be created by me is the Truth which creates me, so that in this way, at least, I apprehend how closely I ought to be bound to You, since, in You, being loved coincides with loving. For if in You who are my likeness I ought to love myself, then I am exceedingly bound to do so when I see that You love me as Your creature and image. How can a father not love a son who is son in such way that he is a father? And if someone who is both a son with a good reputation and a father with knowledge is quite lovable, then are not You exceedingly lovable who surpass a son in repute and a father in knowledge? You, O God, willed that filial love be established in repute; and You will to be reputed as one who is of closer likeness than

a son and to be known as one who is more intimate than a father. For You are love that enfolds both filial and paternal love. May You, then, my most sweet Love, my God, be blessed forever.

71

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

UNLESS GOD WERE INFINITE, HE WOULD NOT BE THE END OF DESIRE

Fire does not cease from its flame and neither does the burning love which is directed toward You, O God. You are the Form of everything desirable; You are the Truth which is desired in every desire. Hence, because from Your mellifluous gift I have begun to taste of Your incomprehensible sweetness, which becomes more pleasing to me the more infinite it appears to be, I see the following: that the reason You, O God, are unknown to all creatures is so that amid this most sacred fragrance creatures may be more content, as if [they were situated] amid a countless and inexhaustible treasure. For one who finds a treasure of such kind that he knows it to be altogether uncountable and infinite is filled with much greater joy than is one who finds a countable and finite treasure. Hence, this most sacred ignorance of Your greatness is a most delectable feast for my intellect—especially since I find such a treasure in my own field,⁶⁶ so that it is a treasure which belongs to me.

72

O Fount of riches! You *will* both to be comprehended by my possessing You and to remain incomprehensible and infinite. For You are a treasure of delights, whose termination no one can desire. How could the appetite desire to cease being? For whether the will desires to exist or not to exist, the appetite cannot cease from desiring but is directed toward infinity. You descend, O Lord, in order to be comprehended;⁶⁷ and You remain uncountable and infinite. And unless You remained infinite, You would not be the End of desire.⁶⁸ You, then, continue to be infinite in order to be the End of all desire.⁶⁹ For intellectual desire does not aim at that which can be greater and more desirable but at that which cannot be greater and more desirable. Now, everything that is less than infinite can be greater. Therefore, the End of desire is infinite.

73

You, then, O God, are Infinity itself, which alone I desire in every desire. I can approach unto a knowledge of Your Infinity no more closely than to know that Your Infinity is infinite.⁷⁰ Therefore, the more incomprehensible I comprehend You-my-God to be, the more I attain unto You, because the more I attain the End of my desire. Therefore, I cast aside anything occurring to me that purports to show that You are

comprehensible, because it misleads me. My desire, wherein You shine forth, leads me to You, because it casts aside all finite and comprehensible things. For in these things it cannot find rest; for it is led unto You by You Yourself. But You are Beginning without a beginning and End without an end. Therefore, my desire is led by the Eternal Beginning—from which it has the fact that it is desire—unto the End without an end. And this End is infinite.

74 I, an insignificant human being, would not be content with You my God if I knew You to be comprehensible. The reason is that I am led by You unto You Yourself, who are incomprehensible and infinite. Lord my God, I see You by means of a certain mental rapture. For if the capacity of sight is not filled up by seeing nor that of the ear by hearing, then even less that of the intellect by understanding. Therefore, it is not the case that that which the intellect understands is that which fully satisfies the intellect, i.e., is the intellect's end. On the other hand, that which the intellect does not at all understand cannot fully satisfy it, either. Rather, [it is fully satisfied] only [by] that which it understands by not understanding. For an intelligible object that is known by the intellect does not fully satisfy the intellect—and neither does an intelligible object that is not at all known by the intellect. Rather, the intellect can be fully satisfied only by an intelligible object which it knows to be so intelligible that this object can never fully be understood. By comparison, a man who has an insatiable hunger is not fully satisfied by a snack which he can eat. Nor is he fully satisfied by food that does not reach him but only by food which does reach him and, though eaten continually, can never all be eaten up, since it is such that it is not diminished by being eaten, since it is infinite.⁷¹

75

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GOD CAN BE SEEN PERFECTLY ONLY AS TRIUNE

O Lord, You have manifested Yourself to me as so lovable⁷² that You cannot be more lovable. For You are infinitely lovable, my God. Therefore, except by one whose love is infinite You can never be loved by anyone as You are lovable. For unless there were someone who loved infinitely, You would not be infinitely lovable.⁷³ For Your lovability, which is the ability to be loved infinitely, exists because there is the ability to love infinitely. From the ability to love infinitely and the ability to be loved infinitely there arises the infinite union of the love of the

infinite loving one and of the infinite lovable one. But the infinite is not multiple. You, then, my God, who are Love, are Loving Love, Lovable Love, and the Union of Loving Love and Lovable Love.

76 In You my God I see Loving Love. And from the fact that I see in You Loving Love, I see in You Lovable Love. And because I see in You Loving Love and Lovable Love, I see the Union of each Love. And this is not other than what I see with regard to Your Absolute Oneness,⁷⁴ wherein I see Uniting Oneness, Uniteable Oneness, and the Union of each. But whatever I see in You, this You are, my God. Therefore, You are that Infinite Love which without the Loving and the Lovable and the Union of each cannot be seen by me as natural and perfect love. For how can I conceive of most perfect and most natural love apart from the loving one and the lovable one and the union of each? For in the case of contracted love I experience that it is of the essence of perfect love that love be loving and lovable and the union of each. But that which is of the essence of perfect contracted love cannot be absent from Absolute Love, from which contracted love has whatever perfection it has.

77 Now, the simpler love is, the more perfect it is. But You, my God, are most perfect and most simple Love. Therefore, You are the most perfect, most simple, and most natural essence of love, Hence, in You, who are Love, what loves is not one thing, what is lovable another thing, and the union of each a third thing; rather, they are the same thing: viz., You Yourself, my God. Therefore, because in You what is lovable coincides with what is loving, and being loved coincides with loving, the union of [this] coincidence is an essential union. For in You nothing is present which is not Your essence itself. Therefore, those things which appear to me to be three—viz., the Loving, the Lovable, and the Union—are the absolute, most simple essence. Therefore, they are not three but one. Your essence, my God, which appears to me to be most simple and most one, is not most natural and most perfect apart from the aforementioned three. Therefore, Your essence is trine. And yet, there are not three things in it, because it is most simple. Therefore, the plurality of the aforementioned three is a plurality in such way that it is a oneness; and the oneness is oneness in such way that it is a plurality. The plurality of the three is a plurality without plural number. For plural number cannot be simple oneness, because it is more than one number. Therefore, there is not a numerical distinction of the three,⁷⁵ because a numerical distinction would be an essential

distinction (for number is distinguished from number in an essential way). Now, because the oneness is trine, it is not the oneness characteristic of a single number; for the oneness of a single number is not trine.

78 O most wonderful God, who are neither singular in number nor plural in number but—beyond all plurality and singularity—are one-in-three and three-in-one! I see, then, my God, that plurality coincides with singularity at the wall of the Paradise within which You dwell; and I see that You dwell ever so remotely beyond [this wall]. Teach me, O Lord, how I can conceive to be possible that which I see to be necessary.⁷⁶ For the following appears to me to be an impossibility: viz., that the plurality of the three (without which I cannot conceive You to be perfect and natural love) is a plurality without number—as if someone were to say "one, one, one." He says "one" three times. He does not say "three" but "one"—and this "one" three times. However, he cannot say "one" three times without three; and yet, he does not say "three". For when he says "one" three times, he repeats the same thing and does not number. For to number is to alter one. But to repeat one and the same thing three times is to plurify apart from number. Hence, the plurality which I see in You my God is otherness without otherness, because it is otherness which is identity. For when I see that the Loving is not the Lovable and that the Union is neither the Loving nor the Lovable, then it is not in the following manner that I see the Loving not to be the Lovable: viz., as if the Loving were one thing and the Lovable another thing. Rather, I see that the distinction between the Loving and the Lovable occurs on the inner side of the wall of the coincidence of oneness and otherness. Hence, this distinction—which is inside the wall of coincidence, where the distinct and the 'indistinct coincide—precedes all comprehensible otherness and diversity. For the wall is the limit of the power of every intellect, although the eye looks beyond the wall into Paradise. But that which the eye sees, it can neither speak of nor understand. For it is the eye's secret love and hidden treasure,⁷⁷ which, having been found, remains hidden. For it is found on the inner side of the wall of the coincidence of the hidden and the manifest.

79 But I cannot be drawn away from the sweetness of [this] vision without in some way proceeding to apply to myself the revelation of the distinction between the loving, the lovable, and their union. For the most sweet savoring of this revelation somehow seems to be savorable in advance by means of a befiguring. For in this [befiguring] manner,

O Lord, You grant that I see love in myself, because I see myself loving. And because I see myself loving myself, I see myself as lovable and I see myself to be a most natural union of each. I am loving; I am lovable; I am the union [of each]. Therefore, the love, without which there could not be any of the three, is one. I who love am one; and I who am lovable am this same one; and I who am the union arising from the love by which I love myself am this same one. I am one and not three. Therefore, suppose my love were my essence, as is the case with You my God. Then, in the oneness of my essence there would be the plurality of the aforementioned three; and in the trinity of the aforementioned three there would be the oneness of my essence. And all [three] would be in my essence contractedly, in the manner in which I see them all to be in You truly and absolutely. So then, the loving love would not be either the lovable love or the union [of each]. And this [fact] I experience by means of the following practical example. As a result of the loving love which I extend outside myself toward an object other than myself—extend as toward a lovable object external to my essence—there occurs a union by which I am bound to that object as much as I have the power to be. [However,] this object is not bound to me by this union, because it does not love me. Hence, although I love it, so that my loving love extends itself unto it, nevertheless my loving love is not accompanied by my lovable love. For I do not become lovable to the other, since the other is not concerned about me, even though I exceedingly love the other. (For example, sometimes a son is unconcerned about his mother, who loves him most tenderly.) And so, I experience loving love to be neither lovable love nor the union [of each]; indeed, I see that the loving is distinguished from the lovable and from the union. This distinction is not present in the essence of love, because I cannot love either myself or something other than myself without love. Thus, love is of the essence of the three; and thus I see that the essence of the aforementioned three is most simple, even though the three are distinguished among themselves.

80 O Lord, by means of a likeness I have expressed a kind of foretasting of Your nature. But indulge, O Merciful One, my attempt to depict the undepictable taste of Your sweetness. For if the sweetness of an unknown fruit remains undepictable by every picture and image, as well as inexpressible by every word, then who am I, a wretched sinner, to attempt to portray You who are unportrayable and to depict as visible You who are invisible? [Who am I] to presume to make tasty that infinite and altogether inexpressible sweetness of Yours? As yet, I have

not deserved to taste of it. And by the things I express I render it small rather than great. But so great is Your goodness, O my God, that You even permit the blind to speak of the Light and to sing the praises of Him of whom they do not and cannot know anything unless it is revealed to them. But the revelation falls short of the savoring. The ear of faith does not attain unto Your tastable sweetness. But You, O God, have revealed to me the following: that the ear has not heard and that there has not descended into the heart of man the infinity of Your sweetness, which You have prepared for those who love You. This point was revealed to us by Your great apostle Paul, who, beyond the wall of coincidence, was caught up into Paradise.⁷⁸ *There* alone can You who are the Fount of delights be seen unveiledly. Trusting in Your infinite goodness, I endeavored to become the subject of a rapture,⁷⁹ in order to see You who are invisible and who are the revealed but unrevealable vision. But You, not I, know how far I got. And Your grace is sufficient for me.⁸⁰ By it You make me certain that You are incomprehensible, and by it You raise me up in the firm hope that through Your guidance I will attain unto enjoyment of You.

81

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UNLESS GOD WERE TRINE, THERE WOULD NOT BE HAPPINESS⁸¹

O Lord, would that all who by Your gift have obtained mental eyes would open them and, with me, would recognize that You, O Jealous God,⁸² cannot hate anything, because You are Loving Love! For every lovable⁸³ thing is loved by You in Yourself, who are a Lovable God, enfolding all lovable things. Thus, from this consideration all [rational beings] may see, with me, by what covenant or union You are united to all things. O Loving God, You love all things in such way that You love each thing. You shed abroad Your love upon all [rational beings]. Yet, many do not love You, preferring to You something other than You. But if lovable love were not distinct from loving love, then (1) You would be so lovable by all that they would not be able to love anything except You and (2) all rational spirits would be constrained to love You. But You, my God, are so noble that You will that whether or not to love You be [placed] within the freedom of rational souls. Accordingly, Your loving is not [necessarily] followed by Your being loved. Therefore, my God, You are united to all by a union of love, because You shed abroad Your love upon all Your creatures; yet, not every rational spirit

is united to You, for not every such spirit directs its love unto Your Lovability but directs it unto something else, to which it is united.

82 You have betrothed every rational soul through Your loving love. But not every betrothed soul loves You, her Betrothed; rather, in most cases a soul loves someone else, to whom she clings. But how could Your betrothed, the human soul, attain her end, my God, unless You were lovable, so that thus, by loving You who are lovable, she could attain unto a most happy union? Who, then, can deny that You who are God are trine?—when he sees that unless You were three and one, You would not be either a noble or a natural and perfect God, nor would the spirit of free choice exist, nor could he himself attain unto the enjoyment of You and unto his own happiness. For since You are Intellect-that-understands, Intellect-that-is-understandable, and the Union of both, created intellect can attain in You—its understandable God—union with You and happiness. Similarly: since You are Lovable Love, the created will that loves can attain, in You its lovable God, union and happiness. For he who receives You, who are God and are rational, receivable Light, can arrive at such a close union with You that he will be united to You as a son to his father. By Your illumination I see, O Lord, that a rational nature can attain unto union with You only because You are lovable and understandable. Hence, human nature is not uniteable to You *qua loving* God, for You are not in this respect its object; rather, it is uniteable to You *qua its own lovable* God, since the lovable is the object of the loving. In like manner, too, what is understandable is the object of the intellect. Now, we call that which is the object [of the intellect] *truth*. Therefore, my God, since You are understandable Truth, the created intellect can be united to You.⁸⁴

83 And in the foregoing manner I see that rational human nature is uniteable only to Your understandable and lovable divine nature and that a man who receives You, His receivable God, passes over into a union which, because of its closeness, can be given the name *sonship*. For we know of no closer union than that of sonship.⁸⁵ But if this bond of union is a maximum bond, than which there cannot be a greater bond (this will necessarily be the case because You, O Lovable God, cannot be more greatly loved by man), then this union will reach the point of most perfect sonship, so that this sonship will be the perfection that enfolds all possible sonship, whereby all sons will attain unto their ultimate happiness and perfection. In this loftiest Son⁸⁶ sonship is present as artistry is present in a master or as light is present in the sun;

but sonship is in other sons as artistry is in [the master's] students or as light is in the stars.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

JESUS IS THE UNION OF GOD AND MAN;

I give ineffable thanks to You-my-God, Life and Light of my soul. For I now see the faith which the Catholic church holds by revelation of the Apostles: viz., that You who are God who is loving beget from Yourself God who is lovable, and that You who are God begotten and lovable are the Absolute Mediator. For through You there exists whatever does and can exist. For You who are God who wills and loves enfold all things in Yourself, who are God who is lovable. For whatever is willed or conceived by You who are God who wills is enfolded in You who are God who is lovable. For nothing whatsoever can exist unless You will that it exist. Therefore, in Your Lovable Concept all things have the cause of, or reason for, their being. And the sole cause of all things is that it pleases You [that all be] thus. The one who loves is pleased, *qua* one who loves, only by what is lovable.⁸⁷ You, then, who are God who is lovable are the Son of God the Loving Father. For the Father's entire pleasure is in You.⁸⁸ So all creatable being is enfolded in You who are God who is lovable. Therefore, since from You who are God who is loving there exists God who is lovable—as a son exists from a father—then in that You are God the loving Father of God Your lovable Son, you are Father of all existing things. For Your Concept is Your Son, and all things exist in Him.⁸⁹

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And the Union of You and Your Concept is an activity and a working that arises, wherein is present the activity and unfolding of all things. Therefore, just as from You who are God who loves there is begotten God who is lovable (this begottenness is a conceiving), so from You who are God who loves and from the lovable Concept begotten from You there proceeds the Activity of You and of Your Concept. And this Activity is a uniting Union—is God who unites You and Your Concept (just as the act of loving unites in love the one who loves and that which is lovable). And this Union is called *spirit*. For spirit is as motion, which proceeds from a mover and the movable. Hence, motion is the unfolding of the mover's concept. Therefore, all things are unfolded in You who are God the Holy Spirit, even as they are conceived in You who are God the Son.

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Therefore, because You, O God, thus enlighten me, I see that in You

who are God-the-Son of God-the-Father all things are present as in their Rational Principle (*ratio*), Concept, Cause, or Exemplar. And [I see] that the Son is the Medium of all things, because He is the Rational Principle [of all things]. For by the medium of Reason (*ratio*) and Wisdom You who are God the Father work all things. And Spirit, or Motion, puts the concept of Reason into effect, just as we witness that a chest in the mind of an artisan is put into effect by the medium of the moving force in his hands. I see, then, my God, that Your Son is the uniting Medium of all things, so that all things may find rest in You by the medium of Your Son. And I see that Blessed Jesus, the son of man, was most closely united to Your Son and that only by the mediation of Your Son, who is Absolute Mediator, could the son of man be united to You who are God the Father. Is there anyone who, upon quite carefully considering these [truths], is not most highly caught up in rapture? For You, my God, disclose to wretched me such a hidden [truth as this] in order that I may recognize the following: (1) that a man cannot understand You who are Father except in Your Son, who is the Understandable One and the Mediator, and (2) that to understand You is to be united to You. Therefore, man can be united to You through Your Son, who is the uniting Medium. And the human nature that is the most closely united to You—in whichever man this uniting occur—cannot be more closely united to the Medium than it is. For it cannot be immediately united to You. Therefore, it is maximally united to the Medium and yet does not become the Medium. Hence, although the human nature cannot become the Medium (since it cannot be immediately united to You), nevertheless it is joined to the Absolute Medium in such way that nothing can mediate between the human nature and Your Son, who is the Absolute Medium. For if something could mediate between the human nature and the Absolute Medium,⁹⁰ then the human nature would not be most closely united to You.

- 87 O good Jesus, I see that in You the human nature is joined most closely to God the Father by means of the exceedingly close union by which it is joined to God the Son, who is Absolute Mediator. Therefore, in You, Jesus, the human sonship (for You are son of man) is most closely united to the Divine Sonship. Hence, You are rightly called *Son of God and of man*, since in You nothing mediates between son of man and Son of God. In Absolute Sonship, which the Son of God is, all sonship is enfolded; and to Absolute Sonship Your human sonship, O Jesus, is supremely united. Therefore, Your human sonship exists in the Divine Sonship not only in an enfolded manner but also as the attract-

ed in the attracting, the united in the uniting, and the substantified in the substantifying. Therefore, in You, O Jesus, separation of the son of man from the Son of God is not possible.⁹¹ For separability results from the fact that a union could have been greater. But where a union cannot be greater, there can be no mediation. Hence, where nothing can mediate between the things united, separation will have no place. Now, where the united does not exist in the uniting, the union is not the closest. Greater is the union where the united exists in the uniting than where the united exists separately. For separation is a remoteness from maximum union. Thus, in You, my Jesus, I see that the human sonship, by which You are son of man, exists in the Divine Sonship, by which You are Son of God—even as in a maximum union the united exists in the uniting. To You, O God, be glory forever.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

HOW JESUS IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE UNITING
OF THE DIVINE NATURE AND THE HUMAN NATURE

You show me, O Light Unfailing, that the maximum union by which, in my Jesus, the human nature is united to Your divine nature is not in any way like an infinite union. For the Union by which You, God the Father, are united to God Your Son is God the Holy Spirit. And so, it is an infinite Union, for it attains unto an absolute and essential identity. But this is not the case when the human nature is united to the divine nature. For the human nature cannot pass over into essential union with the divine nature,⁹² even as the finite cannot be infinitely united to the Infinite. For the finite would pass over into an identity with the Infinite and thus would cease to be finite, since *infinite* would be predicated truly of it. Therefore, the union by which the human nature is united to the divine nature is only the attraction—in the highest degree—of the human nature to the divine nature, so that the human nature, *qua* human nature, cannot be attracted more highly. Therefore, the union of Jesus's human nature, *qua* human, to the divine nature is maximal, because it cannot be greater. But it is not maximal and infinite in an unqualified sense, as is the Divine Union.⁹³

89

Therefore, in You, O Jesus, who are the son of man, I see, through the kindness of Your grace, the Son of God; and in You, the Son of God, I see the Father. Now, in You, the son of man, I see the Son of God because You are son of man in such way that You are Son of God. And in the attracted finite nature I see the attracting infinite nature. In the

Absolute Son I see the Absolute Father, for a son cannot be seen as son unless the father is seen. In You, Jesus, I see the Divine Sonship, which is the Truth of all sonship; and, likewise, [I see] the closest human sonship, which is the closest image of Absolute Sonship. Therefore, just as an image between which and its exemplar a more perfect image cannot mediate exists most closely in the truth of which it is the image, so Your human nature, I see, exists in the divine nature. Therefore, in Your human nature I see whatever I also see in Your divine nature. But all this, which in the divine nature is the Divine Truth, I see to be in the human nature in a human way. Whatever I see to exist in a human way in You, Jesus, is a likeness of the divine nature. But the likeness is joined to its Exemplar⁹⁴ without a medium, so that with respect to human, or rational, nature there can neither be nor be thought to be a greater likeness.

90 I see Your rational human spirit to be united most closely to the Divine Spirit, which is Absolute Reason; and in like manner [I see] Your human intellect—and in Your intellect, Jesus, all things—[to be united] to the divine intellect. For You, O Jesus, understand all things according as You are God, and this understanding is Your being all things;⁹⁵ You understand all things according as You are a man, and this understanding is Your being the likeness of all things. For a thing is understood by a man only by means of a likeness. A stone is not present in the human intellect as it is present in its cause or its own rational principle but as it is present in its image and likeness. Therefore, in You, Jesus, human understanding is united to divine understanding as a most perfect image is united to its truth and exemplar—as if I were to consider in the mind of an artisan the ideal form of a chest and the image of a most perfect chest made by the master artisan in accordance with his idea⁹⁶ As, then, the ideal form is the truth of the image and is united to it (as truth to image) in the one master, so in You, Jesus, Master of masters, I see that the Absolute Idea of all things and the resembling image of these things are likewise most closely united.

91 I see You, O good Jesus, on the inner side of the wall of Paradise, since Your intellect is both truth and image. And You are God and, likewise, creature—infinite and, likewise, finite. You cannot possibly be seen on this side of the wall. For You are the uniting of the creating divine nature and the created human nature. But I see the following difference between Your human intellect and the intellect of any other man: viz., that no other man knows all that can be known by men; for

no other man's intellect is so conjoined to the Exemplar of all things (as a likeness is conjoined to its truth) that it could not be more closely conjoined and could not be made more actual. And so, it is not the case that another man's intellect understands so many things that it could not understand many more by closer access to the Exemplar of all things, from which every actually existing thing has its actuality. But Your intellect *actually* understands all that can be understood by man, because in You the human nature is most perfect and is most closely conjoined to its Exemplar. Indeed, on account of this union Your human intellect excels every other created intellect with respect to its perfection of understanding.⁹⁷ Therefore, all rational spirits are far beneath You; and You, Jesus, are the Teacher and Light of them all. You are the Perfection and Fullness of them all; and through You, as through a mediator, they approach unto Absolute Truth. For You are the Way unto the Truth and, likewise, are Truth itself. You are the Way unto the life of the intellect and, likewise, are Life itself. You are the Fragrance of the food of delight and, likewise, are the delighting Flavor. Therefore, most sweet Jesus, may You be blessed forever.

92

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WITHOUT JESUS HAPPINESS IS NOT POSSIBLE

O Jesus, End⁹⁸ of the universe, in whom every creature finds rest, as in the Finality of perfection! You are altogether unknown to all the wise of this world,⁹⁹ because we affirm of You most true contradictories. For You are Creator and likewise creature, the Attracting and likewise the attracted, the Infinite and likewise the finite. To believe that this is possible is foolishness, say [the wise of this world]. Hence, they flee from Your name; and they do not receive Your light, by which You have enlightened us. But although they consider themselves wise, they will remain forever foolish, ignorant, and blind.¹⁰⁰ But were they to believe that You are the Christ, God and man, and were they to accept and ponder the words of the Gospel, as [words] of so great a Teacher, then they would come to see the following most clearly: that in comparison to the light hidden in the Gospel in the simplicity of Your words, all else is in every respect ignorance and deepest darkness. Therefore, only humble believers obtain this enlivening and most pleasing revelation. For as in manna, so in Your most sacred Gospel, which is food from Heaven, there is hidden all desired sweetness—which can be tasted

only by one who believes and partakes. But if anyone believes and accepts, he will most truly find that You descended from Heaven and that You alone are the Teacher of truth.

93 O good Jesus, You are the Tree of Life in the Paradise of delights. For no one can be nourished by the desirable Life except from Your fruit. You, O Jesus, are the food forbidden to all the sons of Adam,¹⁰¹ who, expelled from Paradise, seek in the earth, wherein they labor, their means of life. Therefore, if any man hopes to taste of the food of life within the Paradise of delights, he must put off the old man of presumption and put on the new man of humility,¹⁰² who conforms to You. The nature of the new man and of the old man is one nature. But in the old Adam this nature is fleshly, whereas in You, the new Adam, it is spiritual; for in You, Jesus, it is united to God, who is spirit. Therefore, just as every man is united to You, Jesus, by the human nature common to himself and to You, so every man need also be united to You in one spirit, so that in this way he can—in his nature, which is common to You, Jesus—approach unto God the Father, who is in Paradise. Therefore, to see God the Father and You who are Jesus, His Son, is to be present in Paradise and in everlasting glory. For if any man is situated outside of Paradise, he cannot have such a vision, since neither God the Father nor You, Jesus, dwell outside of Paradise.

94 Therefore, everyone who has attained unto happiness is united to You, O Jesus, as a member [of the body] is united to its head. No one can come to the Father unless he is drawn by the Father.¹⁰³ The Father has attracted Your humanity, O Jesus, through His Son; and through You, Jesus, the Father attracts all men. Therefore, O Jesus, just as Your humanity is united to the Son of God-the-Father, as to the Medium through which the Father attracted it, so the humanity of each man is united to You, Jesus, as to the one Medium through which the Father attracts all men. Therefore, You, Jesus, are the one without whom no one can possibly attain unto happiness. You, Jesus, are the Revelation of the Father.¹⁰⁴ For the Father is invisible to all men; He is visible only to You, His Son, and, subsequent to You, to one who will merit to see Him through You and by Your revelation. Therefore, You unite everyone who is happy; and everyone who is happy exists in You, as the united exists in the uniting. None of the wise of this world can obtain true happiness, since they are ignorant of You. No one can see anyone happy, except inside Paradise with You, Jesus. Contradictories are predicated truly of anyone happy, even as of You, Jesus; for one who is

happy is united to You in rational nature and in one spirit. For everyone of happy spirit exists in Your spirit, as the enlivened in the enlivening. Every happy spirit sees the invisible God and is united, in You, Jesus, to the unapproachable and immortal God. And thus, in You, the finite is united to the Infinite and Ununiteable; and the Incomprehensible is apprehended with eternal enjoyment, which is a most joyous and ever-inexhaustible happiness. Have mercy, O Jesus; have mercy. Grant that I may see You unveiledly, and my soul shall be saved.¹⁰⁵

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

HOW JESUS SEES AND HOW HE WORKED

The eye of the mind cannot get enough of seeing You, O Jesus, because You are the fulfillment of all mental beauty. And by means of this icon I will conjecture about Your exceedingly marvelous and amazing gaze, O Superblessed Jesus. For while You, Jesus, walked amid this sensible world, You used fleshly eyes that were like ours. For with these eyes You perceived in no other way than do we men: viz., one thing and another. For in Your eyes there was a certain spirit, which was the form of the organ—as is the sensible soul in the body of an animal. In this spirit there was a noble discriminating power through which, O Lord, You saw distinctly and discretely *this* object to be colored in this way and *that* object to be colored in another way. And still more deeply: on the basis of the poses of the face and eyes of the men upon whom You looked, You were a true judge of the passions of the soul—viz., of anger, of joy, and of sorrow. And more subtly still: from merely a few signs You comprehended that which lay hidden in a man's mind. For whatever is conceived in the mind is signaled in some way in the face (and especially in the eyes), since the face is the messenger of the heart. For in all these judgments You attained much more truly unto the inner recesses of the soul than does any created spirit. For from some one sign, be it ever so small, You saw a man's entire conception, even as from a few words those with discernment foresee the whole, lengthy preconceived sermon that is to be unfolded. And when those who are very learned look briefly at a book, they recount the intent of the author as if they had read the entire book. With regard to this kind of vision, O Jesus, You excelled all the perfection, swiftness, and acuteness of all past, present, and future men.

96

And this seeing, which was not accomplished without fleshly eyes, was human; nevertheless, it was amazing and wonderful. For if there

are men who through long and meticulous examination read the mind of a writer beneath what to them are newly devised characters and previously unseen signs, You, O Jesus, saw everything beneath every sign and figure! If at times we read of there having been a man who, from whatever signals of the eye, discerned the thought of the one who queried him [about it]—discerned it even if the questioner was mentally singing a certain meter—then You, Jesus, better than all others, discerned every concept from every signaling movement of the eyes. I saw a deaf woman who from observing the movement of her daughter's lips understood everything as if she had heard it. If from a long period of familiarization this [kind of communication] is thus possible among the deaf and the mute and among the religious who speak to one another through signs, then by means of the slightest movements and signs, as well as by movements and signs invisible to us, You, Jesus (who as Teacher of teachers knew *actually* everything that *can be* known), more perfectly made a true judgment about the heart and its concept. But to this most perfect, though finite, human vision of Yours—a vision contracted to a [bodily] organ—there was united absolute and infinite Vision. Indeed, through this Vision You, *qua* God, saw each and every thing—things absent as well as things present, things past as well as things future. Therefore, O Jesus, with Your human eye You saw the visible accidents; but with Your absolute, divine gaze You saw the substance of things. Except for You, O Jesus, no one constituted of flesh has ever seen the substance of things or the quiddity of things. You alone have seen most truly the soul and the spirit and whatever else is in man. For just as in man the intellectual power is united to the seeing power that is animal (so that a man not only *sees* as an animal but also *discerns* and *judges* as a man),¹⁰⁶ so in You, Jesus, Absolute Sight is united to the human intellectual power, which, in [man's] animal sight, is [the power of] discernment. In man the seeing power that is animal exists not in itself but in the rational soul, as in the form of the whole soul. Similarly, in You, Jesus, the intellectual seeing power exists not in itself but in the absolute seeing power.

- 97 O wonderful is Your sight, sweetest Jesus! Occasionally, we have the experience of glimpsing a passer-by. Yet, because we were not intent upon discerning who he was, we do not know, when asked, the name of this known passer-by, though we know that someone did pass by. Therefore, we saw him in an animal way; but we did not see him in a human way, because we did not use our discriminating power. From this example we ascertain that even though the natures of these powers

are united in the one form of man, nevertheless they remain distinct and have distinct functions. So then, I see that in You, Jesus, who are one, the human intellectual nature is united, in a certain similar way, to the divine nature and that You did very many things as a man and likewise did many marvelous and superhuman things as God. O most gracious Jesus, I see that the intellectual nature, in contrast to the sensible nature, is free from, and not at all limited to, or restricted to, bodily organs, as is the sensible nature (e.g., the sensible seeing power is restricted to the eye). But the divine power is incomparably more elevated and unrestricted than is the intellectual power. For the human intellect, in order to be actualized, needs images. But images cannot exist without the senses; and the senses do not exist without a body. Consequently, the power of the human intellect is contracted and small and is in need of the aforementioned things. But the divine intellect is Necessity itself and does not depend on or need anything. Instead, all else needs it and cannot exist without it.

- 98 I will consider more closely how the power of inference which, by reasoning discursively, makes inferences and investigates is distinct from the power of inference which judges and understands. For we see that a dog makes inferences and seeks out his master and recognizes him and responds to his call.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, in the nature of animality this [power of] inference is present in the degree¹⁰⁸ of perfection of the canine species. There are still other animals who have a keener [power of] inference, in accordance with their more perfect species. And in man [the power of] inference approaches very closely to the intellectual power, so that it is the highest degree of perfection of sensible power and the lowest degree of [perfection of] intellectual [power]. Therefore, sensible animal power has many—indeed, countless—degrees of perfection below the level of intellectual [power], as the species of animals make obvious to us. For there is no species that does not receive unto itself its own degree of perfection. Moreover, each species has a range of gradations, and within this range we see that individuals of a species participate in that species in varying degrees. Similarly, intellectual nature has countless degrees [of perfection] below the level of the divine [nature]. Hence, just as in the intellectual [nature] there are enfolded all the gradations of sensible perfection, so in the divine [nature are enfolded] all the gradations of intellectual perfection—and thus all the gradations of sensible perfection and of the perfection of all things.

99 And so in You, my Jesus, I see all perfection. For since You are the most perfect man, I see that in You the intellect is united to the rational power, or power of inference, which is the highest degree of sensible power. And in this way I see that the intellect is present in reason, as in its own location, so that the intellect is located in a place as a candle [is located] in a room, illumining the room and all the walls and the entire building—according, nevertheless, to its greater or lesser degree of distance [from them]. Next, I see that to the intellect, in its highest degree, the Divine Word is united,¹⁰⁹ and that Your intellect is the place where the Word is received (even as we know by reference to ourselves that the intellect is the place where the word of a teacher is received)—as if the light of the sun were joined to the aforementioned candle, for the Word of God enlightens the intellect, just as the light of the sun illumines the earth. Therefore, I see that in You my Jesus the sensible life is illumined by the intellectual light, that the intellectual life is both an illumining and an illumined light, and that the divine life is only an illumining light. For in Your intellectual light I see the Fount of light, viz., the Word of God, which is the Truth that enlightens every intellect. Therefore, You alone are the highest of all creatures, because You are creature in such way that You are the Blessed Creator.

100

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

HOW JESUS DIED EVEN THOUGH HIS UNION WITH LIFE REMAINED

O Jesus, most delectable Food for the mind, when I behold You on the inner side of the wall of Paradise, You appear to me to be wonderful. For You are the humanified Word of God; and You are the deified man. (1) Nevertheless, You are not "composed," as it were, of God and man.¹¹⁰ Between components a comparative relation is necessary; without it there can be no composition. But there is no comparative relation of the finite to the Infinite.¹¹¹ (2) Furthermore, You are not the coincidence of creature and Creator in the way in which a coincidence causes one thing to be another thing. For the human nature is not divine, nor vice versa. For the divine nature is not changeable or alterable into another nature, since it is Eternity itself. Nor would any nature on account of its union to the divine nature pass over into *another* nature (as when an image is united to its truth). For in the case of that passing over, the nature could [rightly be said] to recede from otherness but could not [rightly] be said to be altered, because it would be united to its own Truth, which is Unalterability itself. (3) O most sweet

Jesus, You cannot be said, either, to be the uniting medium between the divine nature and the human nature, since between the two natures there cannot be posited a middle nature that participates in both. For the divine nature cannot be participated in, because it is completely and absolutely most simple. Moreover, in such case, Blessed Jesus, You would not be either God or man.

101 But I see You, Lord Jesus, to be, beyond all understanding, one person (*suppositum*),¹¹² because You are one Christ. I [see this] in the way in which I see Your human soul to be one—in which soul, as in each man's, I see there to have been a corruptible sensible nature and [see this nature] to exist in an incorruptible intellectual nature. But Your soul was not *composed* of the corruptible and the incorruptible; nor did the sensible [nature] *coincide* with the intellectual [nature]. Yet, I see that the intellectual soul is united to the body by a sensible power that enlivens the body. And when the intellectual soul would cease enlivening the body, without being separated from the body, then the man [Jesus] would be dead, because His life would have ceased. Nevertheless, His body would not be separated from life, since the intellect is the life of the body.¹¹³ By comparison, suppose that a man were to seek intently to discern by means of sight someone approaching him. And suppose that he were seized by other thoughts and that his attention subsequently ceased with regard to his seeking, though his eyes were no less directed toward the on-comer. In this case his eye would not be separated from his soul, although it would be separated from the discerning attention of his soul. However, if when seized [by other thoughts] he not only ceased enlivening [the eye] with the power of discernment but also ceased enlivening [it] with the power of sensation, then the eye would be dead, because it would not be enlivened. Nevertheless, it would not on this account be separated from the intellectual form, which is the form that gives being—just as a withered hand remains united to the form that unites the whole body.

102 There are men who know how to retract their enlivening spirit and who appear dead and insentient, as Blessed Augustine recounts.¹¹⁴ For in this case the intellectual nature would remain united to the body, which, indeed, would not be a body under another form than previously but rather would have the same form and would remain the same body. And the enlivening power would not cease to exist but would remain in union with the intellectual nature, even though this power would not extend itself, actually, unto the body. I see that this man

would be truly dead, because he would lack enlivening life; for death is the lack of enlivening life. But nevertheless, this dead body would not be separated from its life, which is its soul. In this way I see, most merciful Jesus, that Absolute Life, which is God, is inseparably united to Your human intellect and, by means of Your intellect, to Your body. For this union is such that it cannot be greater. Therefore, a separable union is far inferior to a union which cannot be greater. Therefore, it never was true and never will be true that the divine nature is separated from Your human [nature]; and, thus, it is never separated, either, from Your soul or from Your body, which are necessary constituents of human nature. And nevertheless, it is most true that Your soul ceased enlivening Your body and that You truly underwent death and that, nevertheless, You were never separated from true Life.

103 That priest whom Augustine tells of had a power to withdraw vitality from his body by attracting it into his soul—as if the candle illuminating the room¹¹⁵ were alive and, without being removed from the room, were to attract to the center of its flame the rays by which it illumined the room. (This attracting is only the candle's ceasing to radiate.) If so, then what wonder if You, Jesus, since You are most free Living Light, had the power to send forth and to withdraw Your enlivening soul? When You willed to withdraw it [from the body], You underwent death; and when You willed to send it forth [into the body], You arose by Your own power. Now, when the intellectual nature enlivens, or animates, the body, it is called the human soul; and when the human intellect ceases to enliven [the body], the soul is said to be withdrawn. For when the intellect ceases its function of enlivening and when, accordingly, it separates itself from the body, it is not therefore separated in an unqualified sense.

104 You inspire these [thoughts], O Jesus, so that You may reveal Yourself to most unworthy me, insofar as I am capable of receiving [this revelation], and so that in You I may contemplate the following: that mortal human nature put on immortality in order that in You all men, who are of this same human nature, can attain unto resurrection and divine life. Therefore, what is sweeter, what more delightful than to know that in You, Jesus—who alone are all-powerful and who give most generously and do not reproach¹¹⁶—all things are present in our nature? O inexpressible Graciousness and Mercy! You, O God, who are goodness itself,¹¹⁷ were not able to satisfy Your infinite mercy and generosity without giving us Yourself. This [giving] could not be done

more suitably and more conducively to our receiving than by Your assuming our nature, given that we could not approach unto Yours. And so, You came to us; and You are named Jesus, the Ever-blessed Savior.

105

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

JESUS IS THE WORD OF LIFE

By Your gift, assuredly best and greatest, I contemplate You my Jesus preaching the words of life¹¹⁸ and generously sowing the divine seed in the hearts of those who hear.¹¹⁹ And I see that those who did not perceive the things that are of the Spirit go away,¹²⁰ whereas those who have already begun to taste of the sweetness of the learning that enlivens the soul remain as disciples. Peter, that leader and head of the Apostles, confessed on behalf of all Your disciples that You, Jesus, had the words of life;¹²¹ and he marveled that those who were seeking life went away from You. Paul, in a rapture,¹²² heard from You, Jesus, the words of life; and thereafter neither persecution nor sword nor bodily hunger was able to separate him from You.¹²³ None of all those who have tasted the words of life were ever able to forsake You. Who can separate a bear from honey after it has tasted honey's sweetness? How great the sweetness of Truth, which furnishes a most delectable life, beyond all corporeal sweetness! For it is Absolute Sweetness; hence, it remains all that is desired by any sense of taste. What is stronger than the Love from which whatever is lovable¹²⁴ has the fact that it is loved? If at times the bond of contracted love is so great that the fear of death cannot sever it, then of what sort is the bond of that tasted Love from which all love derives? I am not at all surprised, O Jesus, at the punishing cruelty which is esteemed as nothing by these soldiers of Yours, to whom You have given Yourself as a foretaste of life. O Jesus, my Love, You have sown the seed of life in the field of those who believe; and You have irrigated it with the testimony of Your blood. By Your bodily death You showed that truth is the life of the rational spirit. The seed has grown in good earth and has brought forth fruit.

106

Disclose to me, O Lord, how it is that my soul is the breath of life with respect to a body (into which it breathes, and infuses, life) but with respect to You who are God is not life but, as it were, a "potency for life." Because You cannot fail to grant our petitions if they are made in most earnest faith, You infuse into me [the following disclosure]: in a boy there is a soul which has an actualized vegetative power, for the boy grows. This soul also has an actualized sensible power, for the boy

senses. It also has an imaginative power, though not yet actualized. Moreover, it has a rational power, whose actuality is still more distant. And it has, as well, an intellectual power, though in quite remote potency. So we find that the one soul is actual first with respect to its lower powers and later with respect to its higher powers, so that a man is animal before he is spiritual. Similarly, we find that there is in the interior of the earth a certain mineral power—which can also be called a spirit—and that this spirit is potentially the source of stone or potentially the source of salt; and there is another spirit that is [potentially] the source of metal. And, [as we find], there are various such spirits, in accordance with the variety of stones, salts, and metals. Nevertheless, [we know] that there is a single spirit of the source of gold. As a result of the influence of the sun or the heavens this spirit is more and more purified until at last it is fashioned into gold which is such that it is not corruptible by any other element. And in this gold a great degree of incorruptible celestial light shines forth. For the gold becomes quite like the corporeal light of the sun.

- 107** We find a similar thing regarding the vegetative spirit and the sensible spirit. For in man the sensible [spirit] makes itself quite like the motive and influencing celestial power; and under the influence of the heavens it becomes successively increased—to the point where it is posited in perfect actuality. But it is educed from the potency of the body; and so, its perfection ceases when the body's perfection, on which it depends, fails. Next, there is the intellectual spirit, which, with regard to its actual perfection, does not depend on the body but is united to the body by the medium of the sensible power. Because this spirit does not depend on the body, it is not subject to the influence of the heavenly bodies and does not depend on the sensible spirit. Likewise, it does not depend on the motive power of the heavens; yet, just as the movers of the celestial orbits are subject to the First Mover,¹²⁵ so too is this mover, which is the intellect. But because the intellect is united to the body through the medium of the sensible [power], it is not perfected apart from the senses. For whatever comes to it proceeds to it from the sensible world through the medium of the senses. Hence, there cannot be in the intellect anything which is such that it was not first in the senses.¹²⁶ But the purer and more perfect the senses and the clearer the imagination and the better the power of rational inference, the quicker will be the intellect, since it will be less hampered in its intellectual operations.

108 But the intellect is nourished by the Word of Life—under whose influence it is placed, as are the movers of the orbits. However, [the intellect and these movers] are perfected in different ways, just as also the spirits which are subject to the influences of the heavens are perfected in different ways. Moreover, the intellect is perfected by the sensible spirit only accidentally, just as an image does not perfect but serves as a stimulus for seeking out the exemplar's truth. For example, an image of the Crucified One does not inspire devotion but stimulates the memory, in order that devotion may be inspired. And since the intellectual spirit is not constrained by the influence of the heavens but is altogether free, it is not perfected unless it subjects itself by faith to the influence of the Word of God. (By comparison, a free student, who is under his own guidance, is not perfected unless he subjects himself by faith to the word of a teacher; for he needs to trust and hearken unto a teacher.¹²⁷) Now, through the Word of God the intellect is perfected and grows and is made progressively more capable of receiving the Word and progressively more conformed, and similar, to the Word. And this perfection, which comes in this way from the Word, from which the intellect has being, is not a corruptible perfection but is God-like—just as the perfection of gold is not corruptible but is like the heavens. But every intellect needs to subject itself by faith to the Word of God and to listen most attentively to the inner teaching of the Supreme Teacher. And by hearkening unto what the Lord says in His Word, the intellect will be perfected. Wherefore You, O Jesus, sole Teacher,¹²⁸ proclaimed that faith is necessary for anyone coming unto the Fount of life. And You disclosed that the infusing of divine power is proportional to the degree of faith.

109 O Christ, our Savior, You taught only two things: faith and love. Through faith the intellect approaches unto the Word; through love it is united therewith. The closer the intellect approaches, the more it is increased in power; and the more it loves [the Word], the more it is fashioned in the Word's light. But the Word of God is within the intellect, which need not search outside itself. For it will find the Word within, and it will be able to approach the Word by faith. And through prayer the intellect will be able to obtain the capability of approaching more closely. For the Word will increase the [intellect's] faith by imparting its own light. I thank You, Jesus, because I have arrived at this [discernment] by means of Your light. For by means of Your light, O Light of my life, I see that You who are the Word infuse life to all believers and perfect all who love You. What teaching was ever more

concise and more effective than Yours, good Jesus? You urge us only to believe, and You command us only to love. What is easier than to believe God?¹²⁹ What is sweeter than to love Him? How pleasant a yoke is Your yoke, and how light is Your burden, O sole Teacher!¹³⁰ To those who heed this teaching You promise all that is desired. For Your teaching is not difficult for one who believes¹³¹ and is not refusable for one who loves. Such are the promises which You make to Your disciples. And these promises are most true, because You are Truth, which can make only true promises. Indeed, You promise only Yourself, who are the Perfection of everything perfectible. To You be praise, to You be glory, to You be thanksgiving forever and ever.

110

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

JESUS IS THE CONSUMMATION

But what, O Lord, is that which You send forth into the spirit of the man whom You perfect? Is it not Your good Spirit, which is fully and actually the Power of all powers and the Perfection of all perfect things, since it is that which works all things? The power of the sun descends into the vegetative spirit and moves it, so that it is perfected; and by the most pleasing and most natural warming from the celestial heat, good fruit is produced by means of a good tree. Similarly, O God, Your Spirit comes into the intellectual spirit of a good man and warms the potential power by the heat of divine love, so that the intellectual spirit is perfected and so that there is produced fruit that is most pleasing to the Spirit. We observe, O Lord, that Your simple Spirit, infinite in power, is received in multiple ways. For it is received in one way in an intellectual spirit in which it produces the spirit of prophecy; it is received in another way in an intellectual spirit in which it produces a skilled interpreter; and in another intellectual spirit it imparts knowledge; and so on, in different ways in different spirits. For the Spirit's gifts are various; and they are perfections of the intellectual spirit, just as [one and] the same solar heat perfects various fruits in various trees.

111

O Lord, I see that Your Spirit cannot be lacking to any spirit, because it is the Spirit of spirits and the Motion of motions; and it fills the whole world.¹³² But whatever things do not have an intellectual spirit Your Spirit governs by means of the intellectual nature that moves the heavens—and by means of the motion of the heavens Your Spirit governs whatever things are subject to their motion. But in the case of the intellectual nature Your Spirit has reserved exclusively for

itself the governance and ordering. For it has betrothed this nature, in which it chooses to rest as in a house of lodging and a heaven of truth. For nowhere other than in the intellectual nature can Truth itself be received. You, O Lord, who work all things for Your own sake, created this whole world on account of the intellectual nature. [You created] as if You were a Painter who mixes different colors in order, at length, to be able to paint Himself—to the end that He may have an image of Himself wherein He Himself may take delight and His artistry may find rest. Although the Divine Painter is one and is not multipliable, He can nevertheless be multiplied in the way in which this is possible: viz., in a very close likeness.¹³³ However, He makes many figures, because the likeness of His infinite power can be unfolded in the most perfect way only in many figures. And *all* intellectual spirits are useful to *each* [intellectual] spirit. Now, unless they were countless, You, O Infinite God, could not be known in the best way possible. For each intellectual spirit sees in You-my-God something [without] which the others—unless it were revealed to them—could not in the best possible manner attain unto You-their-God. Full of love, the spirits reveal to one another their respective secrets; and, as a result, their knowledge of the one who is loved and their desire for Him is increased; and the sweetness of their joy is aflame.

112 O Lord God, without Your Son, Jesus—whom You anointed more than his fellow-men¹³⁴ and who is the Christ¹³⁵—You would not yet have brought about the completion of Your work.¹³⁶ In His intellect the perfection of creatable nature finds rest. For He is the ultimate and most perfect unmultipliable Likeness of God.¹³⁷ And there can be only one such supreme [Likeness]. Yet, all other intellectual spirits, by the mediation of this Spirit, are also likenesses. And the more perfect they are, the more like unto this Spirit they are. In this Spirit they all find rest, as in the ultimate perfection of the Image of God. And they have attained unto a likeness of this Image and unto a certain degree of its perfection.

113 Therefore, by Your gift, my God, I have—as an aid for advancing in knowledge of You—this whole visible world and all Scripture and all administering spirits. All things induce me to turn toward You, All Scripture attempts to do nothing other than to disclose You. And all intellectual spirits have no other duty than to seek You and to reveal as much of You as they discover. Above all, You have given me Jesus as Teacher and Way and Life and Truth,¹³⁸ so that nothing at all can be

lacking to me. You comfort me with Your Holy Spirit, through whom You inspire holy desires and the decisions of life. Through a foretaste of the sweetness of a glorious life You draw [me unto Yourself] I so that I may love You, who are infinite good. You enrapture me, in order that I may transcend myself and foresee the glorious place to which You invite me. You show me many exceedingly appetizing repasts that attract me by their most appealing aroma. You permit [me] to see the treasure of riches, of life, of joy, and of beauty. You disclose, in nature as well as by art, the Fount from which flows everything desirable. You keep nothing secret. You do not hide the source of love, of peace, and of rest. To wretched me, whom You created from nothing, You offer all things.

- 114** Why, then, do I delay? Why do I not hasten to the fragrance of the ointments of my Christ? Why do I not enter into the joy of my Lord?¹³⁹ What holds me back? If ignorance of You, O Lord, as well as the empty delight characteristic of the sensible world has held me back, it shall do so no longer. For since You grant me to will, O Lord, I will to forsake the things of this world, because the world wills to forsake me. I hasten toward the goal; I have almost finished the course; I anticipate being finished with it, because I aspire to the crown.¹⁴⁰ Draw me, O Lord, because no one can come unto You unless he be drawn by You.¹⁴¹ [Draw me] so that, being drawn, I may be freed from this world and be joined unto You, the Absolute God, in an eternity of glorious life. Amen.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Ap.* *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. II, edited by Raymond Klibansky; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1932)*
- DC* *De Coniecturis (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. III, edited by Joseph Koch and Karl Bormann; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1972).*
- DD* *De Dato Patris Lurninum (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. IV (Opuscula I), edited by Paul Wilpert; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1959).*
- DI* *De Docta Ignorantia (Latin-German edition: Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung, published by Felix Meiner Verlag. **Book I** (Vol. 264a), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 3rd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1979. **Book II** (Vol. 264b), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 2nd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1977. **Book III** (Vol. 264c), Latin text edited by Raymond Klibansky, introduction and translation by Hans G. Senger, 1977).*
- DP* *De Possess (Latin-German edition: Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung, Vol. 285, edited and translated by Renate Steiger; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1973. Latin text reprinted—with J. Hopkins's translation—by the University of Minnesota Press as a component of A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa, 2nd edition, 1980).*
- IL* *De Ignota Litteratura by John Wenck (Latin text edited by J. Hopkins and published in 1981 by The Arthur J. Banning Press as a component of Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Ignota Litteratura, 2nd edition, 1984).*
- MFCG* *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft, edited by Rudolf Haubst. A continuing series published in Mainz, Germany by Matthias-Griinewald Verlag.*
- NA* *Directio Speculantis seu De Non Aliud (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. XIII, edited by Ludwig Baur and Paul Wilpert; published by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1944. Latin text reprinted—with J. Hopkins's English translation—by The Arthur J. Banning Press under the title Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud, 2nd ed., 1983).*
- PL* *Patrologia Latina, edited by J.-P. Migne. Series published in Paris.*
- SHAW* *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse; series published by Carl Winter Verlag.*
- VS* *De Venatione Sapientiae (Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia, Vol. XII, edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger; published in the same*

volume with *De Apice Theoriae* by Felix Meiner Verlag, 1982).

The abbreviations for the books of the Bible are the standard ones.

PRAENOTANDA

1. In the Interpretive Study commas and periods are occasionally placed outside of quotation marks in order to emphasize that they are not included in what is being cited or mentioned.
2. In the Notes to the Interpretive Study longer Latin passages that stand by themselves are not italicized.
3. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. Many of these translations are taken verbatim from my previous works; sometimes, however, italics are added or various emendations made. E.g., most translations of Anselm are taken from *Anselm of Canterbury: Volumes I-III* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1974-76). These volumes contain, in translation, Anselm's complete treatises, and they are more literal and more accurate than the earlier Harper and Row Torchbooks *Truth, Freedom, and Evil* and *Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption*, which should no longer be regarded.
4. The present bibliography is supplementary to the bibliographies contained in my previous works *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* and *Nicholas of Cusa on Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia*. Accordingly, not all the entries in the present bibliography are directly relevant to the present topics and themes; and some entries that are directly relevant occur in the earlier bibliographies. Moreover, practical considerations necessitated keeping short the number of entries under "Select Related Works." See also the bibliography in my *Nicholas of Cusa's De Pace Fidei and Cribratio Alkorani*.
5. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):
 - A. Heidelberg Academy edition of the *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia: De Concordantia Catholica; Sermones; De Coniecturis; De Deo Abscondito; De Quaerendo Deum; De Filiatione Dei; De Dato Patris Luminum; Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus; De Genesi; Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae; Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis; De Pace Fidei; De Li Non Aliud* (Banning reprint); *De Venatione Sapientiae; Compendium; De Apice Theoriae*.
 - B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Meiner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia; De Beryllo; De Possess* (Minnesota reprint).
 - C. Paris edition (1514) of the *Opera Cusana: Complementum Theologicum, De Aequalitate, De Principio* (=Paris edition, Vol. II, Part I, fol. 7^r-11^v).
 - D. Strasburg edition (1488) of the *Opera Cusana* as edited by Paul Wilpert and

republished by W. de Gruyter (Berlin, 1967, 2 vols.): *Cribratio Alkoran, De Ludo Globi*.

- E. My edition of the Latin text of *De Visione Dei* as found in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*.

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

NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION

1. The reference is to the self-portrait of Roger van der Weyden (1400-1464) in his *Examples of Justice*.
2. These considerations are presented in Chapters 1-3 respectively.
3. Literally: "With regard to the icon-of-God's sight nothing can be apparent that is not truer with regard to God's true sight."
4. Cf. Chapter 15 of Anselm of Canterbury's *Proslogion*.
5. Note DVD 5 (18:2-3); 8 (33:1); and NA 23 (104:12-14).
6. "Free" translates both "*abstractus*" and "*absolutus*". N.B.: Although abstract sight is *absolutus ab his conditionibus*, it is distinguished by Nicholas from Absolute Sight, which is God. At the beginning of Chapter 2 Nicholas further explains that in human beings sight is conditioned by the dispositions (*passiones*) of the body and the affections (*passiones*) of the mind. Cf. *De Ludo Globi* I (26:1-6), Strasburg edition, reprinted in two volumes by de Gruyter, 1967, under the title *Nikolaus von Kues: Werke*, edited by Paul Wilpert.
7. Nicholas later makes clear that God, who is infinite, is not Sight—even as He is also not Goodness (Chapter 13). But just as, in accordance with the *via negativa*, He is called Goodness, so Nicholas here calls Him Sight, as well. Note DVD 12 (51:8-9).
8. DI I, 16 (46:9-12). DP 13:11-12. DVD 6 (19:13-15); 9 (36).
9. In calling God the "Contraction [i.e., the Contractedness] of contractions," "Uncontractible Contraction," and "most simple Contraction" Nicholas does not mean to imply that either God or His Sight is contracted. These are *modi loquendi*. Indeed, just a few lines earlier Nicholas spoke of God's Sight as "free from all contractedness" (8:7); and in Chapter 13 (57:12-13) he goes on to state flatly that the Infinite is not contractible. Also note DVD 6 (19: 10-11).
10. DI I, 23 (70:23-24). DD 2 (98). Ap. 8-9 and 26.
11. DI I, 21 (66:3-8).
12. DI I, 8 (22:7-8); 1, 23 (73:3); 11, 2 (98:6). Ap. 17:17-18.
13. DI II, 2 (104:10-20); 11, 5 (121:1-7). DD 1 (93:4-11). DVD 15 (70:4-5); 17 (79:5-7).
14. Heb. 13:5.
15. I John 4:8.
16. I Cor. 13:12.

17. Ps. 30:20 (31:19).
18. Isa. 45:15. *DP* 74:2 1.
19. In the corresponding Latin text for this English sentence (16:5-7) I regard "*igitur*" as a mistake on Nicholas's part. Hence, I render the text as if Nicholas had written "*enim*".
20. Ps. 113B:1 (115: 1).
21. Note *DVD* 1 (6:6). *NA* 23 (104:12-14).
22. Literally: ". . . by the contracted shadow here."
23. See the references in n. 8 above.
24. *DI* III, 11 (245-246).
25. *Ap.* 2:16-22.
26. Ps. 79:20 (80:19).
27. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, opening sentence.
28. Luke 15:16-17.
29. *DP* 18-19.
30. Cf. *De Ludo Globi* II (84), Strasburg ed. *DI* II, 11 (157:23-26). Note the title of *DI* I, 23.
31. See the references in n. 5 above.
32. *DI* II, 6 (125:2-5; 12-13).
33. "Uncontracted Humanity," "Absolute Humanity," and "Human Nature per se" are names for God. They are *modi loquendi*, since Nicholas does not believe that God is Humanity in any sense that can be conceived by us. See notes 7 and 9 above.
34. *Ap.* 26:3-6.
35. *De Mente* 5 (65:13-14). See the references in n. 8 above.
36. *DI* I, 16 (45:4). *Ap.* 33:21-22.
37. *DI* II, 3 (110:4-6).
38. *DP* 21.
39. *DP* 21.
40. *DVD* 10. Note the title of *DI* I, 22.
41. *DVD* 21 (92: 4-5). Also note *Complementum Theologicum* 12 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 99^r, lines 22-24).
42. Heb. 5:14. In the remainder of the Latin sentence—specifically at 39:6-7I take the future tense of "*coincidere*" to express a present meaning.
43. Gen. 3:24.
44. Cf. the discussion in Chapter 12. Also note *Complementum Theologicum* 14 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 100^v, lines 11-13).
45. Heb. 5:12.
46. II Cor. 4:7.
47. The beginning of Chapter 13 makes clear what kind of "seeing" this is. Also note *Complementum Theologicum* 2 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 93, lines 18-21).
48. Chapter 5. See n. 18 above.
49. Chapter 10.
50. This English sentence is a correct translation of the corresponding Latin text (49:17-19). Skeptics are referred to *Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar*, 3rd ed. (London: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 149, Remark Ic. Cf. the syntax in *DVD* 16 (74:5-6). Cf. *DI* II, 11 (156:26-27) with II, 12 (162:16-17).
51. This view belongs to earlier medieval philosophy as well. Cf. Anselm of Can-

terbury, *Monologion* 14 and 23. The formula "in all things You are all things" is from I Cor. 15:28 but is mediated to Nicholas from Pseudo-Dionysius. Note *NA* 14 (59:9). *DP* 74:6. *DI* 111, 4 (206:12).

52. Rom. 11:33.

53. In the corresponding Latin text (51:6) "*ortum*" is from "*ortus,-us*". (Cf. 13:14.) At 52:3 "*horto*" is from "*hortus,-i*"; I have added the "*h*" for clarity. As for God's being a creatable Creator, see *Complementum Theologicum* 14 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 100^v, lines 16-19). N. B.: In DVD17(80:17) God is called *fons deliciarum*.

54. See n. 7 above.

55. See n. 53 above.

56. "End" ("*finis*") here has the sense of *goal*; but in the next paragraph it has more the sense of limit.

57. *NA* 19 (89:13-14).

58. *DI* I, 16 (43:15-16). *Ap.* 31:25-27.

59. With regard to the idiom "*contrahibile a*" note *DC* II, 16 (170:11-14) and *Complementum Theologicum* 12 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 99^v, lines 23-26).

60. *DD* 2 (100:13-20).

61. *DI* I, 5 (14:11-12). *DP* 14.

62. In Chapter 13 (58:11) Nicholas states that infinite goodness is not goodness but is Infinity. [Cf. *Complementum Theologicum* 12 (Paris ed., Vol. II, fol. 99^v, lines 20-22).] Nevertheless, he continues to refer to God as Absolute Goodness—a *modus loquendi* associated with his conviction that God is not less than goodness.

63. *DVD* 6 (20:14-19); 15 (67:1-2).

64. See the references in n. 13 above.

65. *DVD* 12 (50:14-16).

66. Matt. 13:44. Nicholas also uses the example of an inexhaustible treasure at the end of *De Beryllo* (Latin-German edition, edited by Karl Bormann, 1977), Chapter 31.

67. See n. 63 above.

68. "End" ("*Finis*") here has the sense of *goal*, more than of *limit*.

69. This point is made in reference to the Incarnation. The incarnated Son of God continues to be infinite.

70. Nicholas does not hesitate to predicate "infinite" of "Infinity".

71. *DI* III, 12 (25 9).

72. As this chapter makes clear, "*amabilis*" means "able to be loved." But Nicholas, like the Ancients, tends to regard only certain kinds of things as able to be loved by us. Human nature is not able, for example, to love the ugly (*qua ugly*). What is able to be loved by human nature is what has worth or value. Hence, "*amabilis*" has the connotation of being worthy of love. Cf. *DI* III, 12 (255:5-8).

73. Nicholas is not here drawing the mistaken inference that nothing could be lovable (i.e., able to be loved) unless someone actually loved it. Rather, he is discussing the Trinity; and he goes on to indicate in the next sentence that the Son (Infinite Lovability) exists from the Father (Infinite Loving) and could neither exist nor be infinite apart from the Father. Cf. *DI* I, 20 (59). *De Mente* 11 (95:6-14).

74. *DI* I, 5 (14:9-12).

75. *DI* I, 19 (57: 10-11). *DP* 46:1-6. Contrast Anselm of Canterbury, *De Incarnatione Verbi* 2 (Schmitt Latin text, p. 13, lines 17-2 1).

76. *DVD* 9 (38:7-9).

77. Matt. 13:44.

78. I Cor. 2:9. II Cor. 12:3-4.

79. See Edmond Vansteenbergh's *Autour de la Docte Ignorance. Une controverse sur la Théologie mystique au XV^e siècle* [Vol. 14 of *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1915)], p. 113, lines 4-7, where Nicholas appears to be declaring—in his letter to the abbot of the Monastery at Tegernsee—that he has not yet had any mystical experience.

80. II Cor. 12:9.

81. See Chapter 21.

82. Ex. 34:14.

83. See n. 72 above.

84. God is understandable only to Himself. But just as in seeking truth the intellect (whether wittingly or unwittingly) is seeking God, who is Truth, so in understanding any truth the intellect aims to understand Truth itself, which is beyond all finite comprehension. Thus, the union of Jesus's human intellect with the divine nature is not a *cognitive* union—i.e., is not a union in which the human intellect acquires either knowledge, or a correct concept, of what God is in Himself. In Chapter 19 Nicholas makes clear that human nature can understand God the Father only in God the Son and can understand God the Son only in Jesus.

85. This statement reflects the values of Nicholas's day. But it is also a consequence of his orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

86. Viz., Jesus.

87. See n. 72 above.

88. Mark 1: 11.

89. *DP* 38:11-12.

90. Cf. *DI* III, 7 (225:15-17).

91. *DI* III, 7 (224).

92. *DI* III, 2 (194:7).

93. Cf. *DI* III, 12 (261:6-17).

94. Jesus's divine nature is the Exemplar; thus, Jesus is the Medium. Cf. the previous chapter.

At 89:16 - 90:1 I have repunctuated my Latin text to read: "... nec esse nec cogitari potest in natura humana seu rationali. Video spiritum rationalem humanum" Previously, I regarded the punctuation in the Paris edition as being the more perceptive.

95. *DI* II, 3 (108:8-11).

96. I. e., in accordance with the ideal form.

97. *DI* III, 4 (206).

98. I. e., End in the sense of *Goal*.

99. *DVD* 9 (39:1-5).

100. I Cor. 1:20-21.

101. Cf. Gen. 3:22-24.

102. Eph. 4:22-24.

103. John 6:44.

104. John 1: 18. John 14:8-9.

105. Ps. 79:20 (80:19).

106. *De Mente*, Chapter 5.

107. *Ap.* 14:25 - 15:2.

108. In this chapter "*gradus*" is translated by both "degree" and "gradation".
109. *DI* III, 4 (206). *DVD* 20 (9 1).
110. *DI* III, 2 (194).
111. *DI* I, 3 (9:4-5); 11, 2 (102:4-5). *Ap.* 32:7-8.
112. Cf. the use of "*suppositum*" at *DI* III, 8 (228:1-3). Also note Sermon 17 ("*Gloria in excelsis Deo*"), *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. XVI, Fascicle 3, ed. Rudolf Haubst and Martin Bodewig, 1977, Sections 6-7 (pp. 274-276). Sermon 19 ("*Verbum caro factum est*"), *Ibid.*, Sec. 9 (p. 297).
113. *DI* III, 7 (224).
114. *City of God* 14.24.2 (*PL* 41:433).
115. *DVD* 22 (99).
116. James 1:5.
117. See n. 7 above.
118. John 6:64 (6:63).
119. Mark 4:14-20.
120. I Cor. 2:14.
121. John 6:68-69 (6:67-68).
122. II Cor. 12:2-4.
123. II Cor. 12:10. Rom. 8:38-39.
124. See n. 72 above.
125. The First Mover is God.
126. This well-known slogan was also Thomas Aquinas's. Cf. Nicholas's use of it in his sermon *Spiritus autem Paracletus* (Paris ed., Vol. II, f. 104^r, lines 3 and 4 from the bottom).
127. Cf. p. 48, lines 6-12 of *Das Vermächtnis des Nikolaus von Kues. Der Brief an Nikolaus Albergati nebst der Predigt in Montoliveto (1463)*, ed. and trans. by Gerda von Bredow (*SHAW*, 1955).
128. Matt. 23: 10.
129. On the distinction between believing God (*deo credere*) and believing in God (*in deum credere*) see Sermon 4 ("*Fides autem catholica*"), *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. XVI, Fascicle 1, ed. Rudolf Haubst, Martin Bodewig, and Werner Krämer, 1970, Sec. 25 (p. 67).
130. Matt. 11:29-30.
131. Cf. p. 50, line 3 of *Das Vermächtnis des Nikolaus von Kues, op. cit.*, *SHAW* 1955. Cf. Nicholas's use of "*astruebat*" at *DI* I, 7 (18:8).
132. Wisdom 1:7.
133. *DI* II, 2 (99 and 104). *DD* 2 (99).
134. Hebrews 1:9.
135. Christ—i.e., the Anointed One.
136. *DVD* 22 (99).
137. Col. 1: 15.
138. John 14:6.
139. Matt. 25:21.
140. II Tim. 4:7-8.
141. John 6:44.

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