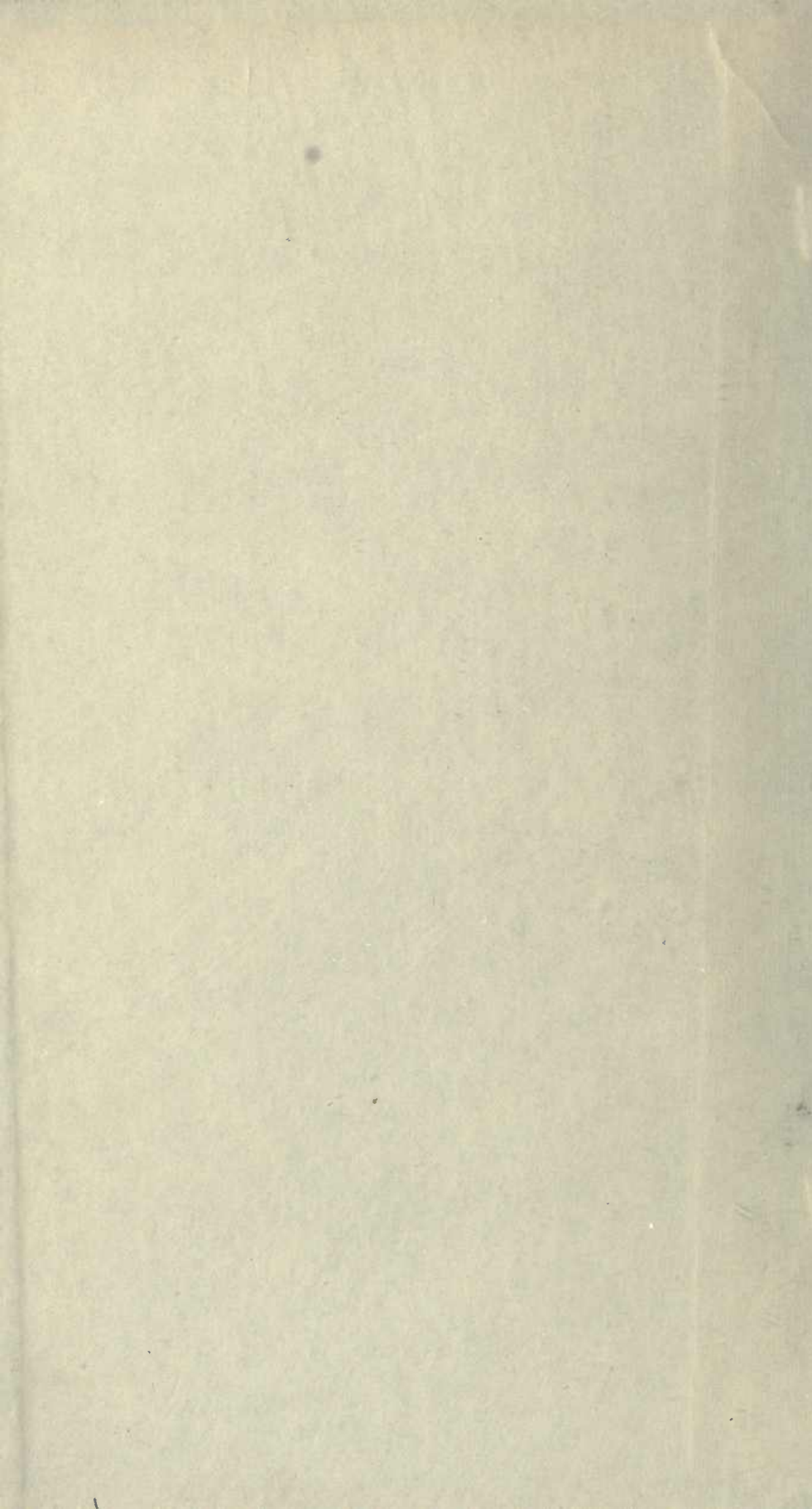
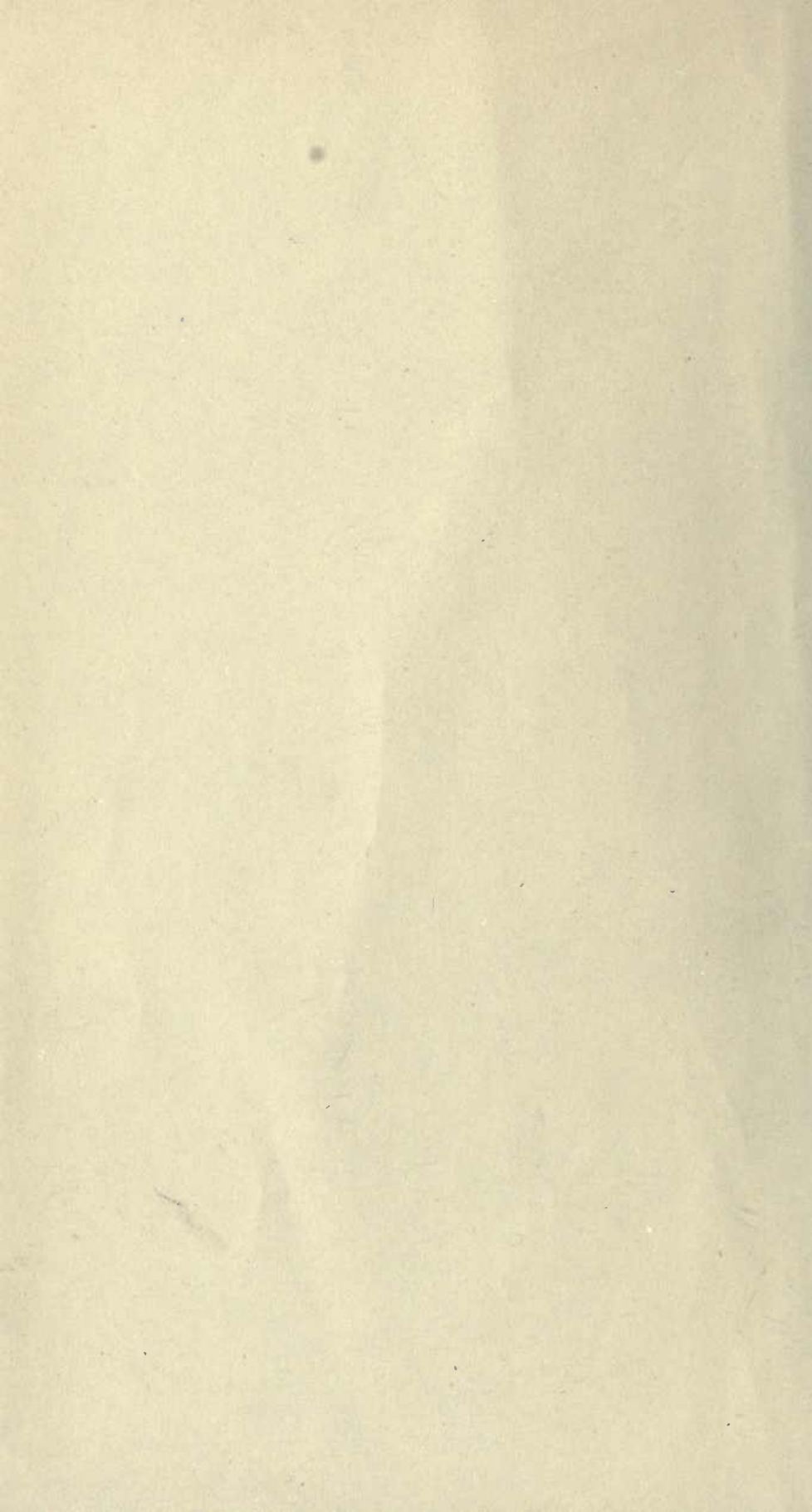




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WOODBROOKE STUDIES

VOL. VII

PUBLISHED FOR THE TRUSTEES OF  
THE WOODBROOKE SETTLEMENT, SELLY OAK, BIRMINGHAM  
BY  
W. HEFFER & SONS LIMITED  
CAMBRIDGE

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# WOODBROOKE STUDIES

CHRISTIAN DOCUMENTS IN SYRIAC, ARABIC, AND  
GARSHŪNĪ, EDITED AND TRANSLATED WITH A  
CRITICAL APPARATUS

BY

A. MINGANA

VOLUME VII

EARLY CHRISTIAN MYSTICS

CAMBRIDGE

W. HEFFER & SONS LIMITED

1934

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The present volume is the seventh in the series of the *Woodbrooke Studies*, the contents of which are drawn from manuscripts in my collection. The works which it exhibits and reproduces in facsimile are culled from manuscript Mingana Syriac 601, of which no other copy seems to exist in any European library. As the first volume of the Catalogue of my collection, embracing the Syriac and Garshūni manuscripts, was published in 1933, all further references in the *Woodbrooke Studies* concerning the above collection, will be to the pages of this Catalogue.<sup>1</sup>

This volume contains early mystical works written by monks or abbots of monasteries situated in Lower Mesopotamia, at the time when their country was overrun by Arab tribes from the Hijāz, helped by Christian Arab tribes of South Syria and Mesopotamia.

A point that can hardly be over-emphasised is that the Islamic mysticism, which passes under the name of Sūfism, is wholly based on the teaching and practices of the Christian monks and ascetes who inhabited the numerous monasteries strewn in the way of Arab warriors, in their pursuit of the defeated Byzantine and Persian armies after the battles of Yarmūk and Kādīsīyah respectively. Indeed there is hardly any important point in Islamic mysticism which has not been borrowed from the main body of earlier Christian mystical thought. Many aspects of this statement receive ample corroboration in the works found in the present volume. A thorough comparative study of this subject is still a desideratum.

In the translation part of the book the works have not been edited according to the order in which they are placed in the manuscript, but according to their length and importance : the

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, Vol. I., Syriac and Garshūni Manuscripts, pp. 1-1256.



Syriac texts, however, have been edited according to the order in which they are found in the manuscript, and to facilitate the task of the student, the corresponding numbers of the folios of the manuscript have been placed on the margins of the translation.

It is once more my pleasing duty to express my gratitude to Mr. Edward Cadbury, without whose generosity there would have been no *Woodbrooke Studies*. A word of thanks is also due to the Aberdeen University Press, for the excellence of their work, shown in this as in previous volumes, and to my secretary, Miss N. K. Garnett, for the pains she has taken in the production of this volume.

A. MINGANA.

SELLY OAK COLLEGES LIBRARY,  
BIRMINGHAM,

24th November, 1933.

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## I.

### MYSTICAL WORKS OF SIMON OF ṬAIBŪTHEH.

#### PREFATORY NOTE.

IN the following pages I give the text and the translation of a medico-mystical work by the East Syrian writer Simon of Ṭaibūtheh.<sup>1</sup> All the sources for his life and his lost works are analysed by Baumstark in his *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, pp. 209-210. Mingana, Syr. 601,<sup>2</sup> contains his only works that have escaped the vicissitudes of the political upheavals which, more than once, shook to its foundations the edifice of Eastern Christianity. He lived in the time of the Patriarch Ḥenanīsho' I, and seems to have died about A.D. 680. No other copy of the present work seems to be found in any European library.

Special importance attaches to the author's mystical writings from the fact that he was a physician, who endeavoured to explain scientifically the different faculties of the soul in their relation to the body and to the performance of the various exercises of asceticism. His sayings on this subject were quoted with respect by the mystical authors who followed him, and his teaching exercised some indirect influence on the development of Muslim Ṣūfism, which, as shown by Wensinck<sup>3</sup> and Margaret Smith,<sup>4</sup> closely imitated the mystical

<sup>1</sup> This epithet of "Ṭaibūtheh" means "of His grace." It was apparently given to the author because he had emphasised in his work the importance of the grace of God, and the fact that everything that he had acquired was by "His grace." On p. 29, he says: "After all this burning through the labours, one single small passion will melt us like wax, if grace does not keep us, as it is by the grace of God that we are what we are."

<sup>2</sup> For a description of this MS. see *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, Vol. i, pp. 1146-1153.

<sup>3</sup> *Book of the Dove*, pp. xxii-cx.

<sup>4</sup> *Studies in Early Mysticism*.

development of the Eastern Churches, chiefly that of the Syrian Church with its Monophysite, Diophysite and Monothelite schools of thought. He was, to our knowledge, the only mystical writer who had been brought up in the school of the old masters of medical science, Hippocrates and Galen, and who had acquired the knowledge of healing both the body and the soul.

The author divides knowledge in general into six parts, the first of which he calls "first natural knowledge," which meant the knowledge acquired by means of scientific investigations, either in good or in evil things.<sup>1</sup> In the latter case it is called "unnatural knowledge," and is what the Greek mystics called "defective knowledge" and, by implication, "error" or "ignorance" (*ἄγνοια*), as no true knowledge was believed to deviate from the path of truth that led to God; if it did, it ceased to be true knowledge, and was consequently false knowledge, or ignorance. The second division of knowledge is the one called "second natural knowledge," which deals only with good things, in a moral and ethical sphere. The third kind of knowledge is the one which he styles "intelligible knowledge" or "theory," and it embraces the spiritual side of the corporeal natures. In it we see all the material creatures in the light of the spiritual function which they perform in the order of the creation. When this knowledge embraces the functions performed by the uncorporeal natures, it is called "spiritual theory," and it mostly deals with the functions performed by the angels or the spiritual beings of the creation. This constitutes the fourth knowledge; while the fifth knowledge is that which deals with the next world, in which we contemplate the one nature of the Godhead with its three Persons. The sixth division of knowledge is called "no-knowledge," and implies a kind of super-knowledge, which by becoming far advanced in its elevated and exalted state merges in the grace and the knowledge of God, is swallowed up in it and loses its identity.

In the mystical sphere, knowledge is divided by him, as by all other Christian Neo-Platonists, into "theory" and "practice," and he illustrates the meaning of this division by a reference to

<sup>1</sup> This knowledge is also called "second natural knowledge of *learning*," a definition embracing both its character and the source from which it is derived.



the two distinct parts of the greatest of all commandments—"Love God," says he, is concerned with the theoretical knowledge, and "Love thy neighbour" with the practical knowledge. These two aspects of knowledge tend to the ultimate aim of all knowledge, which is the knowledge of God, in accordance with the Hellenistic doctrine: "τοῦτο μόνον σωτήριον ἀνθρώπῳ ἐστίν, ἡ γνῶσις τοῦ θεοῦ."<sup>1</sup>

According to the author, knowledge is acquired by the combination of the senses of the body with the faculties of the soul. The faculties of the soul by which knowledge is acquired are the power of imagery, the memory and the intelligence. The seat of the power of imagery is in the fore-part of the brain, that of the intelligence in the middle part, and that of the memory in the back part. As to the senses, they have their seat in the nerves which come out of the brain, and which account for the movements and the feelings of our body. The nerves contain also the "animal spirit" spoken of by the ancients. This spirit embraces both the motor power and the sensory power which we possess, and was, according to Galen, a refinement, by the brain, of the "vital spirit" which was formed in the heart, and which was itself a refinement of the "natural spirit" which arose in the liver. This spirit was in the form of a fluid, or more precisely a vapour that was carried with the venous blood to the ventricles of the heart, where it received a process of subtilisation or refinement and was sent in this state to the brain. The function of the brain itself was to impart a further subtilisation to this vapour, and to send it through the nerves to all parts of the body. In this way the delicate working of the natural human soul was explained, and it was this natural human soul that was the instrument of the natural human knowledge spoken of above.

The order of the above faculties of the soul appears to have been logical: first the image of the object of knowledge is formed in the brain; then the brain submits the image thus formed to its natural function of understanding it and grasping its identity; lastly, the faculty of memory causes the image which has been

<sup>1</sup> Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Mysterienreligionen*, p. 113.

impressed on the brain and understood by it, to possess a lasting effect.

The faculties of the soul were naturally believed to be capable of receiving injury in the performance of their respective duties. This happened, according to our author, through the thickness and dullness of the natural and vital spirit that was formed in the liver and in the heart, as a result of indigestion. When the vapour of this spirit reached the brain in that thick and impure state, it impaired the right function of the brain in its three different workings of imagining, understanding and memorising. The importance of the stomach for the clearness of the brain is often emphasised. Two other causes of the bad working of the brain are also mentioned, and are : concussion of, and a tumour in, the brain.

According to him also, the organs of the will in man are the nerves and the muscles ; the centre of the nerves is the brain, while the centre of the arteries is the heart, and that of the veins is the liver. This vital rôle given to the liver, as being the centre of the veins, goes back to Galen.

The seats of the impulses, emotions or affections with which our natural soul is endowed are given as follows : the seat of feeling is in the brain, that of discernment in the heart, that of passion in the stomach, that of desire in the kidneys, and that of wrath in the liver.

The heart was credited with possessing more importance than we are disposed to give to it in our days. Its physical composition is given fairly accurately : " The heart is composed of solid flesh and nervous matter, and is the seat of the natural heat that is in us, and from it heat emanates as from a fountain. It has two ventricles, one on the right side and the other on the left. The right ventricle receives the blood from the liver, purifies it and sends it out so purified to the brain and to the rest of the body ; while the left ventricle is the seat of the animal spirit, and it subtilises that spirit and sends it to the lobes of the brain, where rationality is created, together with memory and understanding."

In the mental and ethical spheres the heart was given as the seat of the mind and of the discernment, and was credited with receiving " all the good and evil which the senses collect from outside " ;



it was believed that the heart was "not able to disregard what it had received, but passed it to the mind and to the thoughts to feed on, because the natural mind is the spring of the heart." The author states also in this connection that the heart "stamps the thoughts and the passions that come to it with comprehension, as with its own seals, either for good or for evil." This is the reason why the heart had to be guarded with great care: "It is from it that emanate life and death, according to the sentence of our Lord: 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts . . . which defile a man'." This guard that had to be kept over the heart is discussed fully by the Greek mystics, and is called by them "Guard of the heart" (*φυλακὴ καρδίας*), or "Guard of the spirit" (*φυλακὴ νοός*), as the heart and the spirit were interchangeable with them.<sup>1</sup>

There is no need here to dilate on the mystical aspect of the author's doctrine, as it is clearly set forth by him in his book. Mysticism is an expansion of the human soul in which all men interested in the spiritual side of the world often meet as on common ground. Their aim, which is love of God and union with Him, is identical, and the only difference which characterises them is found in the performance of the various exercises, whether spiritual or corporeal, which lead to that love and union. The performance of these exercises assumes in our author some aspects which are somewhat peculiar to him, although many of them may be paralleled in the works of other mystics, whether Eastern or Western.

It would be useful to remark that the author makes no mention in his book of sacraments and of justification through them. He often refers to the spiritual qualities inherent in the created things, and to how these qualities are grasped by our intelligence and perceived by our mind, through the "divinity that is in us," but nowhere does he consider them as sacraments or sacred objects which, after the benediction of a priest, acquire in themselves the power of imparting spiritual benefits to the soul.

The mystical development of a monk is divided by him into

<sup>1</sup> See on this question Lot-Borodine, "Doctrines de la Déification dans l'Eglise Grecque," in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1933, pp. 8-55.

seven stages. The first is that of the novitiate, in which a blind obedience is ordered to spiritual leaders, and the last is the state of the contemplation of God in which one is "engulfed in the divine love, and becomes conscious of the working of the grace in him in a mysterious way that is above words." The intermediate stages deal with the means to attain a perfect love of God, and embrace both the mental and the bodily exercises through which a monk was believed to proceed by degrees in the work of his salvation.

The author devotes a special section to what he calls "the ascents" of the spiritual exercises. These ascents, which remind us of the *Scala Paradisi* of John Climacus, are three in number, and are meant to apply to the condition of all pious men in the pursuit of their goal. The first ascent is that of the beginner, "who is in his first exodus from Egypt, and who consequently follows a path that is broad and restful, and is not conscious of the snares and pitfalls that lie before him." When he sets out on his long journey, he becomes conscious of all these snares and pitfalls, and not having made any preparations to overcome them, he either "retraces his steps from fear, and is devoured by wolves, or sits by the ford and looks and laughs at those who have reached the second ascent." This second ascent is that of those who are in the middle of the stream, where the strong current tosses them hither and thither, and where, as the author puts it, "they are met by mountains, sea, land, sultry and freezing winds of all types, darkness, dejectedness and grief." The last ascent is that of the "Illuminated" who have reached the summit of the ladder and the harbour of peace and security.

The author lays stress in many places on the fact that to perform our spiritual exercises in a satisfactory way we are in need of a sound soul in a sound body, or of the *mens sana in corpore sano* of the mediæval western mystics. "Without the true balance of the body the true balance of the knowledge of the soul cannot exist." "As the fruits are not protected without the leaves, but both are in need of their mutual help, so also the body is in need of the soul and the soul of the body." "When your body has amended itself, give it with prudence a little rest,



lest it should harass you and disturb you, and you should fall into perplexity."

In a memorable passage the author writes about the passions and our deliverance from them, as follows: "The passions cannot be overcome in their own domain. If we fight against them without knowledge, they will harden themselves all the more against us. We do not ask for the passions to be destroyed, but only that we may be delivered from them." In another passage he says: "Virtues as well as passions are born of the desire. . . . Passions are changed into virtues and virtues into passions by the will which receives them."

The author warns his readers of the dangers that accompany the intense and unbalanced concentration of the mind on spiritual things: "The heart may, from its intense desire, either give substance in its imagination to things which in reality have no existence . . . or it may be intoxicated with self-esteem . . . or it may fall into insanity, or be assailed by different diseases of anæmia; and its body will then become emaciated to no purpose."

The author is emphatic that true perfection cannot exist without a sincere love for our fellow-men; "Any man who abstains from food and wine, but in whom are hidden rancour and evil thoughts against his neighbour, is the instrument of Satan." "The soul which bears abundant clusters of fruit is the one which has driven out of itself anything that says: 'This man is good, and that man is bad; this man is just, and that man is a sinner.' . . . The barren soul is the one which judges its neighbour as being good or evil." . . . "When the grace visits us, the light of the love of our fellow-men, which is shed on the mirror of our heart, is such that we do not see in the world any sinners or evil men; but when we are under the influence of the demons, we are so much in the darkness of wrath that we do not see a single good or upright man in the world. . . . When the mind has completely shut its eyes not to notice the weaknesses of our neighbour, the heart is rejuvenated in God." . . . "Do not believe that you have prayed in a pure way as long as the young plant of wrathfulness, even in the remembrance of one person, is found within you."



A few remarkable sayings of the author may be quoted here :

“ If you love the perfect solitude of the angelic exercise (of monachism), beware of the vain aberrations of the thoughts, which incite the soul to think too highly of itself ; because it is the one who has tested himself who is wise.”

“ Consider, O discerning man, that you are the image of God and the bond of all the creation, both of the heavenly and of the terrestrial beings, and whenever you bend your head to worship and glorify God, all the creations, both heavenly and terrestrial, bow their heads with you and in you, to worship God ; and whenever you do not worship and glorify Him, all the creations grieve over you and turn against you, and you fall from grace.”

“ That man knows the truth who has tried it in himself by experience, and has not acquired it from hearsay and reading.”

“ As the senses rejuvenate the heart, so also the realms of the remembrances and the thoughts on which the mind feeds . . . rejuvenate the brain for good or evil. A good shepherd grazes his thoughts in the pastures of the Books and in the meditation upon good things, in consequence of which the soul is filled with perfect light and joy ; while the ignorant shepherd grazes his thought in the remembrance of the wickedness of his neighbour, in consequence of which the soul is filled with envy, darkness and the maliciousness of anger.”

“ The desire of knowing the truth belongs to every soul, including that of the publicans and harlots, because it is implanted in the nature of creation.”

“ The food of the true knowledge is a voluntary freedom which is divested of all fear and of all subjection to any forms of error. It is born of self-contempt, magnanimity, joy of heart, peace of mind, universal love and affection to all without distinction.”

“ True learning is the door of the spiritual exercises, as it is in the love of learning that the mind is intoxicated in the spiritual theory and it is in the delight in reading that it goes deep down into the meaning and collects itself away from distraction, and thus burning with the love of knowledge, forgets itself, and is

not even conscious whether it is hungry or satisfied. Learning is the tutor of knowledge, and as the palate is never tired of changes of taste, so the soul is never tired of the changes of the food of theories."

"Prayer is the inner vision which is illuminated by the Spirit, and which contemplates inwardly the good implanted in the heart. Prayer is the quietness which sings incessant glory in the language of the angels."

"The following is a true sign that the soul is making progress in our Lord: if divine sweetness waxes strong in the soul even when bitter trials and tribulations . . . multiply to the point of despair, in order to remove the virtues from the soul."

"All peace and consolation which a tongue is able to describe to others is imperfect: a mind learns and teaches another mind in silence. . . . Let it be known to you that great unprofitableness comes to the writers of the truth from their mental attainments, if they are not induced to them by love."

It would be useful here to draw attention to the fact that some statements found in the present work are erroneously ascribed to Isaac of Nineveh. On p. 57, our author writes: "There is no difference between the one who kills his son with honey and the one who kills him with a knife." An identical sentence is found in Isaac of Nineveh.<sup>1</sup> On p. 59 the author narrates a story of a young man harassed by demons, who sought the advice of Saint Rabban Sapor, the spiritual Father of the author. The same anecdote is found in the works ascribed to Isaac, but in this case it is fathered on an unnamed old man.<sup>2</sup> I have no doubt that in both cases our present author is the source for the compiler of the works of Isaac. An additional note on this point in the Prefatory Note to the next treatise will corroborate the statement that the last part of the works of Isaac, as edited by Bedjan, is a compilation of mystical writings from various sources, about a fourth of which are spurious, and alien to the ways of thinking of their supposed author.

<sup>1</sup> *Mar Isaacus Ninivita, de Perfectione Religiosa* (edit. Bedjan), p. 206. An English translation of the major part of the works of Isaac as edited by Bedjan was published in 1923 by A. J. Wensinck: *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-388.



## TRANSLATION.

163a *With the assistance of the Trinity, Lord of the worlds, I will write (extracts) from the book of Mar Simon of Taibūtheh, the spiritual philosopher and the head of the theorists.*<sup>1</sup>

*First, on the Fact that the Labours of the Body and of the Soul are of a Dual but United Character.*

What is the aim of all our trouble in having prepared and in preparing now a collection of adequate reasons, but to enable the reader to think and to understand through all of them<sup>2</sup> that we are and have been created a dual but united nature; and that our spiritual exercise is also dual but united, since it is performed by the senses of the body and by the faculties of the soul, jointly and fully? Indeed, as the leaves of labours which unfold themselves joyfully are useless, apart from the fruits of the knowledge of the Spirit of which the blessed Paul wrote<sup>3</sup>; and as the fruits are not protected without the leaves,  
163b but both of them are in need of their mutual help—so also the body is in need of the soul and the soul of the body.

*From Saint Dionysius,<sup>4</sup> with a Commentary by the Author.*

The knowledge of theory is implanted in nature, and is divided according to the order or character of the things which it embraces. A part of this knowledge is revealed by, and constituted of, reasoning and the construction of logical sentences, and a part of it is apprehended not by words<sup>5</sup> but through the inward silence of the mind. A part of it extends towards visible natures, and another part rises towards natures which are above the natural vision. Indeed a part of it embraces the spiritual powers who accompany the visible natures and make their influence felt in them, and

<sup>1</sup> Men versed in "theory," which is defined by the author as "the intelligible vision of the eyes of the soul," see p. 50. I shall maintain this technical word throughout the book. I shall use also "intelligible" in the Neo-Platonic and philosophical sense of "capable of being apprehended by the understanding only, and not through the senses."

<sup>2</sup> Text repeats "reasons."

<sup>3</sup> Gal. v. 22.

<sup>4</sup> The Areopagite. This section is, however, more an original composition by the author than a commentary on the Areopagite.

<sup>5</sup> Join the two words in the text.

another part deals with the sciences which later reached from without the natures of the rational beings, by their own will. A part of it, like a rare flower, lifts itself up, according to the permission given to it, and rises through all the circles which we have described,<sup>1</sup> towards the sublime ray of the hidden Godhead.

From this it follows that there are many kinds of spiritual theories, which increase in number according to the different beings which knowledge embraces. While the soul is instructed through these theories in various ways, they themselves approach one another, join with one another and ascend to the height. The soul is moulded by them until it reaches the one and only First Being, who is the end of all the varieties of knowledge. 164a This latter becomes then no-knowledge, or rather a knowledge that is higher than all knowledge, as it has reached the divine knowledge of the hidden Godhead,<sup>2</sup> which is higher than all understanding. In this way, after a man has comprehended the power of all natures, he will have comprehended this one thing : that the hidden Essence is incomprehensible.

The knowledge of these visible and material natures is called by the Fathers "the first impulse of the natural free-will," and the knowledge that follows it is called by them "the second natural impulse"; and because the former is gathered through the power of these visible natures, sometimes they call it "learning," and sometimes they consider it as belonging to various aspects of knowledge, such as Geometry, Mathematics,<sup>3</sup> Astrology and Astronomy. They call the knowledge of the essences of the rational and spiritual beings, in a precise way, "spiritual theory" and "divine knowledge"; and they apply the expression "divine theory" to the inward vision of the mind which extends, as much as it can, by grace, through an image—which in reality is no true image—towards the incomprehensible ray of the hidden Godhead; but they call it also figuratively "divine Word."

<sup>1</sup> This evidently refers to an earlier chapter of the book of the author which the copyist has omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Note how *īthūtha* means both *essence*, and *Godhead*.

<sup>3</sup> Text *Kaldāyūtha* which generally means "Astrology" or the science of the Chaldeans.



From this they define "theory" as being also the Economy of the revelation of His grace to us, because it is through the Economy of His grace that He released us from the swaddling clothes of the tangible darkness of the bodily covering of substances and natures, and brought us to the intelligible knowledge  
 164*b* of the theory of the spiritual powers, which is hidden and works in everything; and we thus became high above the senses, and perceivers of the hidden secrets of the mind. Our Lord calls in His teaching this single theory of the Holy Trinity—from which also emanates the knowledge of the Economy of our Redeemer—"Kingdom of God," when He says: "The Kingdom of God is within you" and is not acquired through observances. "Neither shall they say 'Lo, it is here,' or 'Lo, it is there,'"<sup>1</sup> that is to say, it is not above and circumscribed in any one place, but is within you in the hidden image and intelligible likeness of the mind, which is, as much as it can be, the intelligible image and likeness of its Creator; as it is in it that His Kingdom which is within us is revealed and known, because of the high quality of its purity and clearness, and of its eager and continual desire for the love of its Maker.

The Kingdom of Heaven is, therefore, the knowledge of the sublime spiritual theory of the intelligible natures of the heavenly hosts. Even those (men) who are at the full height of perfection, are called "poor in spirit," but they (the angels) come down to the ignorant and the poor in knowledge, so that they may raise them to the knowledge of the truth.

He<sup>2</sup> calls the holy angels "the intelligences and the minds that are above Heaven"; and the Providence of God for us, which is implanted in us and which works in an uncircumscribed way in the nature of the whole creation, he calls "the divinity that is in us."<sup>3</sup> And whenever he makes mention of the Highest Divinity,<sup>4</sup> he refers to the hidden Essence which is higher than  
 165*a* all essences, natures, intelligences and minds; the Oneness that is higher than all intelligence and which can never be comprehended by any mind or intelligence, and which is high above all words or sentences; the Being who is in no way derived from

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Pat. Gr.* iii, 956.

<sup>3</sup> The Areopagite.

<sup>4</sup> *Cf. Lat. summa deitas.*



any of the existing beings, and who, although He be the cause of all existence, yet remains as He is, high above all natures, words and faculties. May He rather speak of Himself in a precise and intelligible way, through the sacred Books, as is congruous to His grace, and may He grant us His grace in the understandings<sup>1</sup> and in the theory of the intermediums<sup>2</sup> through which the adorable Divinity is revealed !

Because of this, not only is that First Good<sup>3</sup> not associated with created beings, but while it remains steadfastly as it is, its rays that are high above other rays shine on each one of these beings, as befits their goodness and in the measure of their limited brightness. It draws upward every nature through the hidden desire that is implanted in every nature, and draws still more the rational beings to its incomprehensible knowledge and to the participation in its image, in so far as such participation is possible ; it draws even more especially the divine intelligences which expand towards the love of the limited light that fits their nature, while enlightening them inwardly so that they may praise all the heavenly essences in a humble silence, and while infusing them with ardour so that they may expand and unite, as much as possible, with the Principle of all principles, as it is in it that "we live and move and have our being."<sup>4</sup>

The holy Fathers have divided the intelligible life and the spiritual exercise in God into two parts : the practical fulfilment of the commandments, and the knowledge of the theory of every 165b created being. The sentence : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" refers to the spiritual theory, while the sentence : "and thy neighbour as thyself"<sup>5</sup> is meant to apply to the practical fulfilment of the commandments. As to the exercises through which a man exerts himself, is instructed and rises gradually till he reaches a spiritual state, they are three : passibility or impassibility, purification and holiness. The first exercise consists in that a man should feel the stirring of conscience within himself, turn away from the works of sin,

<sup>1</sup> See on "Understanding" the special section on p. 50. It is defined as "the examiner of theory."

<sup>2</sup> I.e., the existing beings.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lat. *summum bonum*.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxii. 37, 39.

and commence with penitence, beginning immediately and without delay with sighs and bitter weeping over his past life and conduct. The second consists in that a man should begin after this with the labours of discernment<sup>1</sup> in the fulfilment of the commandments, with energy and fervour; and after he has, by the help of the divine grace, fulfilled the commandments and conquered the passions in the measure of his power and his zeal, he will be in a state of righteousness, power and holiness: righteousness of nature, and power against the passions through the fulfilment of the commandments. As to holiness, it is the purity which is sanctified by the word of the Lord through the revelation of the Spirit.

From now he will begin to enter the spiritual theory which is high above nature, through the purity of the soul and the revelation of the spiritual knowledge. Through the spiritual theory he will see in his mind spiritually all the visible things which are seen by others materially. And inwardly in his mind  
 166a and in his thoughts, he will survey all the present creation and the worlds that have passed or are still standing; the years of the world with all the happenings that occurred in it, and the men with their wealth and their power; the revelations of the benefits which were bestowed on the Fathers, and the retributory judgments that took place generation after generation, together with all the various vicissitudes which the affairs of the creation undergo. All these things which a wise man (of the world) sees materially, he strives to investigate in his mind spiritually, through the spiritual theory. He does not see the different plants like an agriculturalist, nor the medicinal roots like a physician, but everything that he sees with his material eyes he secretly contemplates in his mind through the spiritual theory. In this way the mind is taught and instructed to look inwardly at the spiritual natures, towards the secret power that is hidden in everything and works in everything in an incomprehensible way.

Through these teachings and exertions the mind is so much exercised and illuminated that it is not able to see a material object without immediately seeing, in its own<sup>2</sup> theory, the divine

<sup>1</sup> See p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Text "of the mind."



Providence which is hidden in it and works secretly in it. The mind is thus taught to meditate secretly and inwardly upon the uncorporeal beings who are above, and to look, through its own <sup>1</sup> theory and in an immaterial way, at their hierarchies, their ranks, their faculties, and the unspeakable modulations of their glorifications, and to imitate them by the help of God in the measure of its power.

It is through the true knowledge and through the theory of the divine teachings which are described in the sacred Books in different ways and by various appellations concerning the Godhead, that a mind rises from its passibility in the earthly things and <sup>166b</sup> draws itself upwards. Immediately after the mind has been illuminated and risen upwards, it becomes conscious of the rays of impassibility, and desires all the more earnestly to be drawn towards a divine light which has no image and towards a divine knowledge which transcends all intelligence. Divine grace will then dwell in that impassibility, and (the mind) will be conscious of the sublime and endless mysteries which are poured out by the Father and Source of all the lights, which shine mercifully on us in the likeness of His hidden goodness ; and (the mind) will be impressed by them, as much as it can bear, with the image of the glory of goodness, in the measure of the eagerness of its desire and of its growth in the spiritual exercises. It will then avow immediately that it understands that everything is vanity when compared with one thing : the Highest Divinity.

“The divinity that is in us” of which this saint speaks <sup>2</sup> is the divine Providence which holds all, deifies all, perfects all, illuminates all, and which by its perfect goodness penetrates all, sustains all, and infuses all with the desire of uniting with the Highest Divinity ; it is higher than all, as it is above and higher than all who delight in their association with it. Indeed this divinity which is in us and which is the Providence of the Highest Divinity towards us, is implanted in the foundation of all creation and works in it in an infinite way, as it is written : “In Him we live and move and have our being.” A description of Him is also disseminated dimly in the sacred Books and divine

<sup>1</sup> Text “ of the mind.”

<sup>2</sup> *Pat. Gr.* iii, 956.

167a teachings. He was aware before the foundations of the world <sup>1</sup> of the appearance of our Redeemer, through which all the veils of darkness that were spread over the corporeal heart of Israel would be lifted, when He said : " The days will come when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, as the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; because God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit " <sup>2</sup> and without the intervention of any intermediary ; as our mouth towards God is our heart, and our heart towards men is our word.

God is called in the sacred Books : good, love, knowledge, wise, just, light, ray, brightness, word, life, etc., so that our name may be joined with His and enhanced by His, and so that we may desire the love of the One who loved us and came down from the height of His goodness to the lowliness of our humility, in order to raise us from earthliness to spirituality by uniting the divinity that is in us with the Highest Divinity. He did this in order that through His humility He might give us, by grace, confidence to understand and know our deification, our formation in His likeness, and the image of God in which we were created at the beginning through the divinity that is in us, with regard to the Highest and Essential Divinity which is hidden from, and higher than, all mind. Indeed He implanted in every nature of intelligible as well as visible and soulless beings something of that Good which is higher than all good and higher than all essence, and which is the Highest Divinity with regard to the divinity that is 167b in us,<sup>3</sup> so that through the good that is implanted in every nature we might desire and long for the love of the Good One who is above all good, and so that through the ray emanating from Him we might, through the desire that we possess towards the Supreme Good, long for the Light that is above all light and the Good that is above all good.

In the same way as this visible sun, in spite of the fact that every nature is remote from it and all natures long for it, works equally in everything without distinction, while far and remote from everything ; and ripens, sweetens and illuminates every-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. xxv. 34, etc.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 21-24.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. " of the divinity that is in us."



thing, reaches everything and is desired by everything, even while being at a distance from everything—so also and to a greater degree the Good One who is above all good and the Highest Divinity that is above the divinity that is in us, dwells in everything in an uncircumscribed way and in a way that far transcends words and thought, in spite of the fact that He is remote from everything ; and every nature desires Him and longs for Him through the goodness which works in it and which induces it<sup>1</sup> to long for the Highest Divinity. Indeed, “ Divinity ” is only applied to the Divine Essence, in which is hidden a mystery : that of God and of the man from us, who is called (God) honorifically.<sup>2</sup>

*On the Division of the Stages.*<sup>3</sup>

The first struggle is that of the novitiate, and in it we have to evince simple obedience in all that we are ordered to do. The second is that of the change in our habits, qualities, manners and ways of conduct, and the gradual progress from an undisciplined nature to a disciplined nature. The third is that of the fight against the passions through the fulfilment of the commandments, so that the heart may be made contrite, humble and pure. The<sup>168a</sup> fourth consists in that a man should relinquish perplexity and begin with the labours of discernment, so that together with the bodily labours the mind should think and endeavour to understand the hidden powers which work in the natures of the created beings, and examine the meanings of the sacred Books, in order that its eyes may be opened therefrom and become conscious of the wisdom, providence and loving-care of God in all the creation. The fifth consists in the mind thinking of the theory of the high and uncorporeal (beings) ; the sixth consists in that the mind should contemplate and be wonderstruck by the mystery of the adorable Godhead ; while in the seventh the mind becomes worthy of the working of the grace in a mysterious way that is above words, and sometimes it is engulfed in the divine love. Let it be known to you that we must be consumed

<sup>1</sup> Read the pronoun in Masc.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is complicated, but its sense seems to be clear.

<sup>3</sup> Of the spiritual life.

with the love of every exercise which we undertake, as only after having been consumed with its ardour can we taste the pleasure that is hidden in it. If we are not so consumed, we shall not taste the sweetness hidden in it. From this we understand that we cannot free ourselves from any passion in which our heart delights, and with the love of which it is bound, even with thousands of stratagems of labours and tens of thousands of prayers of tears. The same thing applies to our love of (spiritual) exercises.

Gregory, the brother of Basil,<sup>1</sup> wrote that thoughts<sup>2</sup> spring from our reins, where also passion has its source, and they rise like vapour until they reach the heart which is the companion of the brain. And it is the heart that stamps them with comprehension, as with its own seals, either for good or for evil.<sup>3</sup> Let us therefore guard our heart with great care, as it is from it that emanate life and death, according to the sentence of our Lord: "Out of the heart proceed," etc.<sup>4</sup>

168b A zealous follower of our Lord, who ate honey after having endured his trials,<sup>5</sup> said: "What is the meaning of shedding, with songs and hymns, pearls of tears on joyful leaves?" What is needed here is care and discernment in keeping a watch over the defence<sup>6</sup> of the heart and the despoiling thoughts, to remove the (bad) seals, to discern the evil things which are to come and to destroy them in the peace (of your mind), and to keep without injury the edifice of the heart which is the abode of Christ,<sup>7</sup> so that perchance its blossom, which is the promise of the fruit, may be seen in it.

If you love the perfect solitude of the angelic exercise,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "Gregory of Basil." The doctrine of Gregory Nyssen about the heart is found in his *De hominis opificio* (*Pat. Gr.* xliv, 246-249).

<sup>2</sup> "Thoughts" in this work often mean "evil thoughts."

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "to the right or to the left."

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xv. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Note this verb, which is often used in the text in this sense.

<sup>6</sup> With early mystics the heart had to be guarded with special care, and as long as that care lasted it was called the "period of the guard." See the "Prefatory note."

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Nyssen, (*Pat. Gr.* xliv, 895) states that the heart is the abode of God. This long sentence is not found *verbatim* in the printed works of Gregory Nyssen.

<sup>8</sup> Of monachism.



beware of the vain aberrations of the thoughts which incite the soul to think too highly of itself, because it is the one who has tested himself who is wise. Indeed pride has caused many to fall away from this exercise, and they have in this way been injured in their mind. Beware especially of the evil exercises,<sup>1</sup> which resemble the true exercises as tares resemble wheat. If you love true knowledge, I will show you a way to it : direct your aim exclusively towards one object, and even if you live and dwell with many, separate yourself from all and do not tie yourself to a man or to a thing without necessity. Do not seek worldly gains, and even spurn sometimes your coat and your tunic, and your soul will then become like that of the Shunammite woman spoken of by the Abbot Isaiah. The Fathers order us not to mix with many until we are thoroughly tinged with good, and the power of solitude has dwelt in us : "And Thou, O Lord, shalt make me live alone in solitude,"<sup>2</sup> until the perplexity of <sup>169a</sup> dejectedness has passed away and the consolation of the grace has reigned.

The sign of the coming of the grace is when the outer senses and the inner passions are at rest, and the impulses of the spirit are astir and the hidden consolation holds sway, and your eye is too pure to look at evil, and you are able to eat of the fruits of the trees of the paradise of the Church freely and without fear of displeasure from the face of God.<sup>3</sup> You will then become fully the salt and the light spoken of in the Gospel to all those who come in contact with you ; and the fruits of the Spirit of which the blessed Apostle spoke will be seen in you ; and the angels of light will now and then come near you and fill you with joy, peace, consolation, and the revelations of the mysteries of knowledge. If, however, you have given room to negligence and dejectedness, and if your fervour has cooled, sit alone with yourself and your soul, collect your thoughts and consider deeply the cause of your negligence, whence it started, and who is the one who has made you to desist from your spiritual intercourse. If there is room for amendment, amend with understanding ;

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " exercises of the left."

<sup>2</sup> Ps. iv. 8 (Peshiṭta Version).

<sup>3</sup> Gen. iii. 10 *seq.*



and if there is need for cutting, cut immediately and pitilessly : your salvation is at stake.

If you cannot advise yourself and there is no adviser at hand from among the followers of our Lord, retrace your steps and climb up to the beginning of the path from which you started. Perform a second Passover with bitter herbs, and think of Mary with her former fornication and of Israel with his former Jacobism.<sup>1</sup> Torment the rough man (in yourself) with bitter herbs, and give him the Book upon which to meditate. Prescribe for him, with 169b the bitter herbs of the Passover, the canon of the prayers of Saint Evagrius, and he will stir with fervour in a short time. You will then become conscious of the truth, and you will ascend to the exercise from which you fell ; and you will see in your second ascent the inns which you passed in your first ascent. But alas ! if there is no foundation for the inner truth, that is to say, if the heart inclines to evil. The Fathers give also the warning that you must not have intercourse with those of your fellow-monks who are not your co-workers in theory and in mind, in the field of your thought, because they will hinder you from your course, and your fervour will cool ; and they will not be blamed because they are walking towards Heaven in the same exercise, but in a different path ; they will however impede you from your own course, because of the change in your path.

If you are in need of knowledge, true knowledge is disseminated in the Books, and the Books are to be read with understanding and discernment. We know that if the eyes of our mind are opened, every word contains a volume ; and if we meditate on them with prayers, their meaning will be revealed to us. When we read in the books of the Fathers, and find the place where they write on the exercises of the knowledge of the truth, let us not deceive ourselves and believe that in reading the words alone we shall understand them through a natural knowledge, and that we shall immediately penetrate the secrets of their spiritual exercise. Indeed they had themselves endured tribulations a long time previously ; had crucified themselves with labours 170a for the sake of Christ ; had purified their heart from all impurity

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, state of Jacob before his call, and before he was named Israel.

of flesh and blood, and the joy-inspiring ray of the Spirit had shone on them ; they had seen the holy of holies in which Christ dwells ; had been united with Him in the fullness of hope, and had lived with Him in the earnest of the beatitudes of the light which is promised to the saints in the next world. Like merciful people they wrote and left us the signs by means of which they walked and discovered the treasure of life. And we, people afflicted with dejectedness, when we read their books, make ourselves an image that resembles theirs, from the letters and signs that we find in them, and contend that this is the truth of what the Fathers say.<sup>1</sup>

The mysterious symbols of the prophets proclaimed and announced the coming of Christ our Lord, His conception, birth and growth ; but when our Saviour appeared, all the Books, the symbols and the signs, were seen in the light of the truth of His divinity. If before the appearance of Christ a man had spoken to the Scribes and the Pharisees—that is to say to those among them who later accepted the Faith—of the full doctrine of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they would have called him a madman and a pagan. In the same way, if a man speaks to us—who are endowed only with a natural soul <sup>2</sup>—of the treasure of life and of the hidden mysteries of the Fathers, we will laugh at him and will with justice call him a madman and a Messalian,<sup>3</sup> who has fallen away from the truth, as the blessed Apostle wrote also, as follows : “ The natural man is not able to receive the spiritual things, for they are foolishness unto him.” <sup>4</sup> Woe unto us ! Of what grace have we deprived ourselves by our will !

When you have devoted yourself to repentance, the day in which you do not encounter tribulation, do not consider it a complete day ; and the day in which you do not sit for an hour alone with yourself and your soul and examine the things in which you have stumbled and fallen, and then amend yourself, do not consider it as belonging to the number of the days of your life. Woe unto the man who does not weep, is not assailed by affliction, and does not wipe off his sins while there is yet time for repentance, as in the next world he will have to wipe them off forcibly

<sup>1</sup> Read in singular.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.*, belonging to the ancient heresy of Messalianism.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.



with the billows of fire, until he has paid the last farthing, which is the smallest imperfection !

Anyone who neglects prayer and believes that there is another door to repentance, is a nest for the demons. Anyone who does not persevere in the reading of the Books, and wanders in distraction, will not even know when he sins. Anyone who abstains from food and wine, but in whom are hidden rancour and evil thoughts against his neighbour, is the instrument of Satan. Consider well the verse : "Thou sittest and thinkest evil of thy brother,"<sup>1</sup> because this undermines all the edifice of the great tower of perfection, even if you have reached in it the summit of summits. Indeed the evil that is contemplated in the thought hardens the heart, and a hard heart is an iron gate for the one who is enduring trials, but a humble heart opens spontaneously by grace, as it happened to Peter.

A freedom which is not preceded by the subjection of the will is but a servitude to the passions. Anyone who does not strive to subject the passions by his will, and who falls and rises with them, will not become the master of his passions. Anyone who at the beginning does not possess the fervour which  
171a is without knowledge, will not attain the work of knowledge. Anyone who at the beginning is not perturbed in his fervour and is not scoffed at by the ignorant, will not attain this second fervour. Anyone who does not become a child with regard to the spiritual exercise, will not attain the fullness of a perfect man in Christ. The Holy Spirit ordered and arranged these stages in the growth of our inner man, in the same way as the stages in the growth of our outer man. The former are attained by will, and the latter by nature.

Anyone who possesses the great virtues of fast, vigil and asceticism, but lacks a guard to his heart and his tongue, labours in vain. Indeed if you put all the labours of penitence on one side of the scale, the other side containing the above guard will outweigh it, since Christ laid the axe of the commandments unto the root<sup>2</sup> of the thoughts of the heart, and Moses unto the root of outward works. If you guard your eyes and your ears

<sup>1</sup> Ps. l. 20. (Peshitta).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. iii. 10.



so that foul water does not penetrate the purity of your soul, you will not sin with your tongue.

He labours in vain who voluntarily keeps vigils in services and prayers, while his thoughts are fixed on other affairs ; and blessed is the one who is where he prays and performs his service. Blessed is the one who has possessed the theory of the Books, and has meditated upon them with understanding. Blessed is the soul which has eaten the bread of the angels from the table of God. Blessed is the one who continually does good to a passible man, as from this the light of new life will shine upon him. Woe unto the one who has times of ease, who panders <sup>1716</sup> to his body <sup>1</sup> and despises the exertions of penitence, as he will weep when he wakes up, and will seek the times of ease and will not find them. The manure and the water (for the growth) of penitence are tribulations, afflictions and trials, while its death is love of gain, of honour and of ease. Any passion into which a discerning man has fallen and from which he has risen, if it comes again to knock at his door, he will immediately recognise the sound of its knock.

Consider, O discerning man, that you are the image of God and the bond of all the creation, both of the heavenly and of the terrestrial beings, and whenever you bend your head to worship and glorify God, all the creations, both heavenly and terrestrial, bow their heads with you and in you to worship God ; and whenever you do not worship and glorify Him, all the creations grieve over you and turn against you, and you fall from grace.

The master-key <sup>2</sup> that opens the door to all virtues is a contrite heart, broken by repentance ; it is born of the tribulations of poverty, aloofness from acquaintances and non-reliance on those who care for us ; and also of the fact that one is accused and convicted of a thing of which he has no knowledge, and that while in a position to exonerate himself from injustice, he receives this injustice readily and with a true joy. Then contrite tears will flow abundantly in season and out of season, like a rivulet. If you assume these things intelligibly in your mind and meditate upon them in the time of your labours, your re- <sup>172a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " whose body helps him."

<sup>2</sup> Note the use of this word.

penitance and your sorrow, they will cause your tears to flow.<sup>1</sup> Affluence is the iniquitous vice which implies lack of faith in God, which destroys any remaining virtue, opens the door to sin and nurtures vices. All the labours of virtues are not able to place a monk where poverty, aloofness and voluntary humility can place him.

The aim of the exercise of knowledge consists in that a monk should know how to keep watch over his body and his exercise, with discernment, so that he may not be handicapped, fall and be deprived of the power to follow his companions. Anyone wishing to begin with the mental exercise has first to weigh the measure, the growth and the capability of the mind, and whether he<sup>2</sup> has worked and prospered in the bodily exercises, and then begin ; because you see clearly that the mental exercises are born of the bodily exercises, that the inner pleasures are born of the outer tribulations, and that the joy and comfort of the soul are born of the tribulation and grief for the sake of God. In short, the inner peace is born of the outward labours, and every inner joy which does not emanate from labours is an illusion. If our tongue does not cease from the recitation of the Psalms and the Odes of the Spirit in season and out of season, the Evil One will have no opportunity to throw his fiery darts<sup>3</sup> at us.

The soul which bears abundant clusters of fruit is the one which has divested itself of anxiety, uncertainty and dejectedness and put on calm, peace and joy in God ; has shut the door of  
172b perturbing thoughts, and opened the door of love to all men ; has watched continually, night and day, at the door of its heart ; has driven out of itself anything that says : " This man is good and that man is bad ; this man is just and that man is a sinner " ; has sat on the high throne of its heart, and contemplated its armies and its helpers who are the mind, the intelligence, the intellect, the knowledge and the discernment ;<sup>4</sup> and has ordered and pacified them with meekness so that none of them should snarl with wrath, envy or wickedness, and that the mind should not be obscured by the thick clouds of perplexity. On the other hand the barren soul is the one which is clad in rancour, anxiety,

<sup>1</sup> Read in plural.

<sup>2</sup> Or : it.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eph. vi. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Put in the text the letter *Dalath* at the beginning of " discernment."



perplexity, distress, dejectedness and perturbation, and which judges its neighbour as being good or evil.

The foundation of all the exercise of monachism is the endurance of difficulties, as this endurance causes the exercise to grow and reach the state of perfection, and sets before it the ladder that leads up to Heaven.

If you fear distraction, cut off from yourself the thought that has accumulated from the laxity of exercises, and close the avenues of the senses which usher good and evil to the heart, as the heart is the harbour of all the good and evil which the senses collect from outside ; and it is not able to disregard what it has received, but passes it to the mind and to the thoughts to feed on, because the (natural) <sup>1</sup> mind is the spring of the heart, and cannot rest from the usual distractions. If, therefore, you love the light of the intelligence which emanates from the collecting of your thoughts, first cut off from yourself evil thought, by the endurance 173a of difficulties, and then exercise and accustom your mind for a long time to the spiritual food, in the meditation of the Odes of the Spirit, and in the contemplation of the hymns, the theory and the understanding of the Books ; and bind it with the love of spiritual teaching.

As long as you are in the state of watchfulness, instruct it in the meditation upon divine things, so that when it flees against its will from the routine of the recitation (of your prayers) it may by necessity wander in the spiritual things in which it was trained. Bonds to the soul, are the habits which a man has contracted either for good or for evil. So far as the mind is concerned, it is the temple of the Holy Trinity ; and as the latter is incomprehensible, so also is its temple. Indeed, the mind is keener and sharper than lightning, and cannot be afflicted by the recitation of the prayers ; it will surely remain continually with us in the time of prayer, if it has matter for its food.

It is not a great thing to do for perfection, to be afflicted in the recitation of our prayers ; a much greater thing for us is to meditate always on divine and immaterial things and on the spiritual powers which are hidden and work in this world, be-

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, not the intellectual or spiritual mind, but the mind that has its seat in the heart.



cause to think in the time of prayer of material things is unholy. If you are in doubt concerning these things, when you are about to fall asleep throw sweet spices of prayers, psalms and spiritual theory on the censer of your heart, and meditate upon them while you are half asleep. When you wake you will feel the happiness that has wafted through your soul all the night : " Let  
173b my prayer be before Thee as incense " ;<sup>1</sup> and you will also be freed from evil dreams.

An old man was asked : " To what the monachism of the ancients and ours might be likened " ; and he answered : " There was a wealthy wise man who wished to possess valuable musk, and not finding the true article of his choice, he traversed mountains, sea and land, and repaired to China, and presented gifts to the king of that country to persuade him ; and the king allowed him to cut the musk with his own hands. And he returned and gave it to his children who, little by little, introduced false matter into it, adulterated it and handed it down to their descendants,<sup>2</sup> until the false matter was left instead of the true musk, in which no odour and no perfume was left. In this way the ancient Fathers desired the truth, trod on life and death, experienced all tribulations, endured all trials, delivered themselves to spiritual sacrifice, implored Christ with sorrow and tears until they obtained the gift of the grace, were found worthy of the spiritual knowledge, became the temple of God, wrought miracles and became conscious of the mystery of the revelations. The mystery, however, deteriorated<sup>3</sup> little by little in its transmission, until we alone remained, who have only the name and the garb."

The time for theory and for practice is not identical, although these two accompany and help each other ; and there is a time more fitting for theory and a time more convenient for practice. In the same way as the thoughts of the summer, of the winter,  
174a of the autumn, of the spring, of the time of joy and of the time of grief and restlessness, of the time of illness and of good health, and of the time of abundance and plenty, etc., are not the same, so also the benefits and the evils of this world and of our Lord's

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxli. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. " to one another."

<sup>3</sup> Or " was handed down," if we read *Ithyabbal*.

world are different. Those belonging to our Lord are bitter and then sweet, dark and then bright, sad and then joyful, while those belonging to the world are sweet and then bitter, bright and then dark, joyful and then sad.

That man knows the truth who has tried it in himself by experience, and has not acquired it from hearsay and reading.<sup>1</sup> Instead of roaming in search of what is outside you, enter and see what is within you, and learn who is the one who receives from you the thing which you hand to him, and to whom you will return after years and ask it of him again, and he will immediately grant your request. Consider who is the one who will receive, and who is the honest man who will return to you in a twinkling of the eye, according to your wish, what you gave to him ; and who is the one who will give and then demand back ; and which are the archives to which your deposit is entrusted ; and then glorify the Creator because knowledge is hidden *from* us and *in* us in an incomprehensible way.

When the mind has been illuminated, it will, in the beginning, dislike simple reading, and will cherish deep meanings, difficult reading and questioning ; but when it becomes conscious of serenity it will begin to pursue peace of heart, while seeking the possessions of freedom, which are sincerity, simplicity of knowledge, and humility of mind. It will treat also with affection simple reading ; and if at times it is compelled to leave what is its own and affect crooked ways and knotty meanings, the soul <sup>174b</sup> will be tormented by languor and dejectedness, and afflicted with grief and sorrow.

### *On the Ascents of the Spiritual Exercises.*

There are three ascents in this (spiritual) exercise, which is so wonderful even to the holy angels, but the first and the last ascents resemble each other in some ways. The last is that of perfection, worthy of which is the Illuminated man <sup>2</sup> who has

<sup>1</sup> Change the *Dalath* into *Wāw*.

<sup>2</sup> Text *Yaddu'thāna*, which literally means "expert," but in the language of the mystics generally refers to that class of mystics called "Initiated," in Arabic العارفون and in Greek γνωστικοί. Cf. Wensinck's *Book of the Dove*, p. 139.



traversed mountains and hills, sea and land ; who has been tormented by sultry and freezing winds ; who has reached the harbour of peace, and rested on the plain of serenity. As to the young novice, since it is his first exodus from Egypt, he follows the path of the plain of Egypt, which is broad and restful ; and he is not even conscious that exertions and trials, snares and pitfalls of sea and land, lie before him. When he goes forward and becomes conscious of all these, he either retraces his steps from fear, and is devoured by wolves, or sits by the ford and looks and laughs at those who have reached the middle of their ascent, and who for the sake of the fear of God are tormented by severe trials ; or else he stirs himself and joins them in their exertions.

When the giants who are devotedly labouring in exercises reach the middle of their ascent, they are met by mountains, sea, land, sultry and freezing winds of all types, darkness, dejectedness and grief without comfort, together with the rest of the fourteen impediments about which the Abbot Isaiah wrote, and which face those who walk in the path of virtues. They very seldom  
 175a lift their head and breathe a little the air of freedom, but nevertheless they receive enough comfort to begin again their labours with joy. In them is fulfilled the sentence : " They mount up to the Heaven and they go down again to the depths,"<sup>1</sup> from the impetuosity of their fervour in divine things. When they meet with the two other categories,<sup>2</sup> they do not distinguish between them, but throw blame equally on them and rebuke and reprove them as if they were lazy, idle and feeble. They do not understand the spiritual Man<sup>3</sup> who by grace has crossed these billows and waves further than they have done, and reached the harbour of peace ; who looks at them with the light of His mind, and knows where they have reached, what they are about to encounter after these billows, where they will be harassed, and where they will rest ; who judges whether they are labouring rightly or heading in the wrong direction, to their perdition ; and to whom everything on sea and land is clear. The majority of them die here from the grief of joy, because the joy of the natural<sup>4</sup> people is grief to them ; or they are tortured and con-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cvii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Allusion to Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Those who are in the first and the last ascent.

<sup>4</sup> Contrary to " spiritual," in the Biblical senses.

sumed by trials, and the angels carry them to the bosom of Abraham ; or they give up the struggle, repent and retrace their steps ; or they are left in one of the fertile islands which are found in the course of this ascent. A few of them, however, manage to extricate themselves with difficulty, if they humble themselves and draw nigh to that spiritual Man who has passed through all these impediments in person. The few of them who, here and there and from generation to generation, have humbled themselves and extricated themselves, are so much filled with grace and illuminated with the revelations of the Spirit, like the great Moses, that they do not see materially the material nature <sup>175b</sup> of this world, but they see only spiritually the power of their Maker, which is hidden and works in them.

*The Beatitudes of the Ascents.*

Blessed is the one who has traversed the sea and the land of labours, crossed (them) and reached the harbour of impassibility, and penetrated the plains of serenity, because while still in this world his soul dwells in the next.

Blessed is the one who, in going out of Egypt, was not afraid of tribulations and trials, but headed straight for the harbour of life, because, if he is saved, he will become a god among men, and if he dies in his tribulations, the angels will conduct him to the bosom of Abraham.

Blessed is the one who, in secluding himself in the furnace of the cell, has not spared the fire and the wood of labours, and has heated the clay until it has fallen to pieces and crumbled away, and then having been moistened again has condensed and become pottery. Do not forget, O reader, that there is no clay that becomes pottery through the exercises of mortality, till the general resurrection, because that clay is but earth ; and that after all this burning through the labours, one single small passion will melt us like wax, if grace does not keep us, as it is by the grace of God that we are what we are.

Blessed is the one who has kindled within himself his own lamp by the light of grace, and has seen spiritually his consort shining by the sides of the house of his heart like a glorious vine, and the thoughts, his children, round about the table of



176a his heart ;<sup>1</sup> who has ordered, with joy of heart, his mind, the censer, to go and perfume them and pour upon them the perfumed oil of love, peace, joy and comfort, and if he has felt an alien love trying to penetrate into him, he has chased it from the heritage of the saints, the children of light, with a gentle rebuke ; and who has been blessed with peace three times, and has glorified three times without fear.<sup>2</sup> It is such a one in whom the will of the Father has been done in earth as in Heaven.

Blessed is the mind which has become the beholder of the spiritual hosts, who work in the natures and affairs of the creation.

Blessed is the one who has felt within himself the actions and the workings of the grace upon him.

Blessed is the one who, although not having felt in his own experience the happiness of this working, yet by knowledge, theory and understanding which he has obtained from reading, is able to search and learn about this working which affects those who have been purified.

*On the Withdrawal of Grace that comes to us from Error.*

When a man falls away from the truth, at the beginning, and sinks into negligence, and the grace wishes to raise him up, the following things happen to him : the man despises himself and becomes small in his own eyes, and his soul loses its self-esteem ; and he becomes also perplexed, as if every one were looking down on him. He will then lose the inner comfort, thinking that even those who loved him, despise him, scorn him and turn away from him. If, however, he becomes con-  
176b scious of his negligence, rises up and amends himself, grace will come upon him, and he will revert to his inner comfort ; but if he does not become conscious of his negligence, or if, when he does become conscious, he tramples on his conscience in his pride, the grace will little by little neglect him, and his stumbling and the withdrawal of divine help from him will increase, until he falls into despair. That will then happen to him in reality which he had previously only thought would happen to him,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Allusion to the Trinity in the angelic hymn of the vision of Isaiah.

because he will lose both the inward and the outward comfort through the above withdrawal of divine help.

Every slip that occurs to us has its origin either in our negligence, or in our false suppositions, or in our scorning of our neighbours, or in our love of glory, or in our envy, or in our desire to assert our will, or in our natural inclination, or in our hatred. In all these, however, the grace does not neglect us, and we do not fall into reprehensible slips, unless we tread on the voice of conscience and do not amend ourselves, as the Abbot Isaiah wrote in his demonstration, which is : " Every slip has its origin in error, and the withdrawal of the grace from us will be in the measure of our negligence. Sometimes we are punished, terrified, frightened, injured and left in darkness ; and sometimes grace, progress, exhortations and inner comfort are bestowed upon us, exactly as a nurse acts towards a child."

*On the Taste of Heaven and of the Torment.*

He who has of his own free will been tormented and afflicted in the exercise, and has fallen and risen in his struggle against the passions, and at the end mercy has come upon him, and he has been found worthy, by grace, of a portion of the divine gift, and has thus been slightly conscious of the air of freedom, and has tasted divine sweetness in a mysterious way<sup>1</sup>—if it happens that through the error of negligence this gift is taken from him, and by divine grace he returns back to the servitude of the pas- 177a  
sions, and to the scourge and severe afflictions of the observances ; and if from the thrusts of his conscience he retraces his steps with good will, and implores Christ with repentance, with tears of grief, and with a prayer of contrition and sorrow, to return to him, by His mercy, the gift which he has lost, like the blessed David who lost in error and found in penitence—any man to whom these things happen has tasted in his person, while still in this world, the happiness of Heaven and the torment of Hell ; and until divine mercy comes upon Hell,<sup>2</sup> he will be tormented without his knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> Or " in mystery."

<sup>2</sup> Evidently the author does not believe in the eternity of the torments of Hell.



*The Remedy of Penitence.*

If you have fallen away from the truth and become negligent, and your zeal has cooled, subject your body, bring it to your inner self, crush it with asceticism, cut off from it all vision of passion, wean it from all hearing and speech, and force upon it holy ejaculations and well-defined prayers; estrange your soul from all remembrances of thoughts, and never cease to meditate upon the Books and to pray and accustom your body to sit in pains and to perform its service and pray in darkness. If you are wise it will, through repentance, return in a short time to its former state. Woe unto you, however, if you have no strong foundation for your inner truth! And when it has amended itself, give it with prudence a little rest, lest it should harass you and disturb you, and you should fall into perplexity. Indeed the peace of the soul and of the thoughts will not reign unless the body is in a position to bear both the possession and the lack of labours and rests, that is to say, both hunger and satiety, which 177b is more than what nature desires.

Without the true balance of the body the true balance of the knowledge of the soul cannot exist; <sup>1</sup> and the serenity of the soul, complete freedom from the passions, the working of the grace, and the continual remembrance of the next world which is stamped on our heart, cannot exist with an over-healthy body (as compared with the soul).<sup>2</sup>

As a babe is fed with milk as long as it is young, and is not given a full diet lest it should die; and as after it has attained healthily the different stages of its growth, and its senses and its stomach have become accustomed to the full diet, it is not brought back by any stratagem to the milk of its babyhood, lest it should weaken and die of hunger—in this same way I understand the spiritual exercise. If you become worthy, by grace, to tie the chain of the virtues of your heart to the corners of the “simple altar”<sup>3</sup> of Heaven, and if through the error of ignorance or negligence and such like, a link of the chain of the virtues is broken

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “Mens sana in corpore sano.”

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Nyssen also states that the obesity of the body impedes the normal working of the soul (*Pat. Gr.* xlv, 51 and xlvi, 406-407).

<sup>3</sup> About this altar see p. 41.

in the middle, you will labour in vain until you return and place yourself again in the right direction with regard to the truth.

*On Habits and Passions.*

The habits and the passions enter the soul with ease and readiness, but they do not leave it except after exertions, troubles and labour, because after a lapse of time they become second nature to a man. The habit is the treasurer of the will and of <sup>178a</sup> nature, and keeps as a precious deposit anything that is handed over to it, and defends its rights tenaciously ; and it will not lose the deposit of the will even if that deposit has lost its meaning. When the will strives to change the habit that has been firmly fixed in the soul, it sometimes wins a victory and sometimes suffers a defeat, while the passions and the habits strangle the soul from one side and the reason and discernment from the other, since each of them wants its own. Indeed, it seldom happens that even the successful ones can break a peg with a peg. In this way the passions also cannot be overcome in their own domain. If we fight against them without knowledge, they will harden themselves all the more against us.

We do not ask for the passions to be destroyed, but only that we may be delivered from them ; because when they harden themselves greatly, we become like defeated people, and strive in our turn to find means of placing ourselves above them. As to resting completely from our fight against the passions, there is no possibility for it as long as they are woven with our flesh and blood. They can, however, become somewhat restful, and this happens through the growth of the spiritual exercise, while we pass with success from labour to labour, from exercise to exercise, from evil things to good things, from knowledge to knowledge, from theory to theory, and from understandings to higher and loftier understandings. In this way it happens that the passions and the thoughts may be partially pacified.

The door from which the passions enter into righteous men is the perturbation of the imagination, and immediately after the imagination, the mind also becomes perturbed, and then the intelligence is clouded and the conscience blinded. And the <sup>178b</sup> passions penetrate the wretched soul, and give it to drink the



dregs of anger <sup>1</sup> with which it becomes intoxicated. When it has become intoxicated with passions, either it delights and acquiesces in these passions, or it becomes morose and quarrelsome, and prepares itself for anger ; and then the house of your heart is obscured from the right understanding of the truth. As long as the mind and the imagination are peaceful and well guarded, the demons will have no opportunity to open the door to the passions by their stratagems, and to disturb the serenity of the soul. It is indeed written : " Keep watch perseveringly over your imagination and you will not be troubled by temptation, but if you relinquish your watch you will have to endure the consequences."

*A Remedy for the Darkness of the Mind.*

The darkness spread on the surface of the mind is driven out by the intensity of the love of learning, and by the exercises. The act of performing the commandments, together with fasts, vigils and asceticism, pierce also the thickness of the stomach and the dullness of the organs which transmit light from the brain to the heart. When the body has thus been subjected by true exercises, the grace will drive out the darkness that may have lingered. The initiated man whose soul has been embittered by the darkness, the dejectedness and the distraction of the mind caused by the furnace of the stomach and the dullness of the organs, will not only abstain from fully feeding the stomach, but will also consume dry bread and salt sparingly, so that in addition to the opening of the channels that transmit light from the mind  
179a to the heart, the dust also which through the senses of the body settles on the wings of the brain may be wiped off, according to the word of the Fathers. We remove outward occurrences from our senses in order that our inner faculties may be purified and yield fruit to God, as it is by removing outward occurrences from

<sup>1</sup> Some mystics define " anger " *theoretically* as the power which protects a man from slackness and " corruption " in his exercises (*Book of the Dove*, pp. cxxx-cxxxi), or *practically* the state in which such slackness and corruption flourish. The first meaning denotes " zeal, fervour," and the second the passion of " wrath." See below the section on " The Faculties of our Inner Man," p. 45, and on " The Faculties of the Soul," p. 49 ; also *Dādīsho'*, p. 114.

our senses that the mind becomes a god-man to a heart that has faith.

As the senses rejuvenate the heart, so also the realms of the remembrances and the thoughts on which the mind feeds in its different aspects, rejuvenate the brain for good or evil. A good shepherd grazes his thoughts in the pastures of the Books and in the meditation upon good things, in consequence of which the soul is filled with perfect light and joy ; while the ignorant shepherd grazes his thought in the remembrance of the wickedness of his neighbour, in consequence of which the soul is filled with envy, darkness and the maliciousness of anger. We learn the truth of all these things from experience : when the grace visits us, the light of the love of our fellow-men which is shed on the mirror of our heart is such that we do not see in the world any sinners or evil men ; but when we are under the influence of the demons we are so much in the darkness <sup>1</sup> of wrath that we do not see a single good and upright man in the world. When we are intoxicated with suspicion, passions rise in us as from sleep, to act ; but when the mind has completely shut its eyes not to notice the weaknesses of our neighbour, the heart is rejuvenated in God. A monk who crucifies himself to the world in the full knowledge of favourable prospects, who secludes himself from human intercourse, and is tormented in the furnace of the cell—1796 the Lord is his comforter and consoler ; and as long as he satisfies his needs with the little things that are at hand, he will be served by angels.

### *On the Fruits of Seclusion.*

The more the pursuit of our spiritual exercises relaxes, the more intense will become the heat of the furnace of the stomach, which will require greater diversity of diet. And when the channels of the stomach are filled up and the organs which lead the light from the brain to the heart are blocked, the heart will be overspread with darkness, all the house will be filled with smoke, the limbs will suffer numbness, dejectedness will reign, the mind will be perturbed, the soul will darken, the discernment will become blind, knowledge will be hampered, judgment will

<sup>1</sup> Correct text to *hashkīnan*.



be perplexed, (evil) thoughts will be set free, the remembrance of good things will be deleted from the heart, and the passions—the children of darkness—will receive fuel for their fire, will dance with joy, and applaud.

Immediately the bonds of solitude fall on the senses through seclusion, the heart will become contrite, the mind will humble itself, the (evil) thoughts will evanesce, the stomach will contract, the impetuosity of mental perplexity will be calmed, the great pillar on which all the (worldly) house was leaning will fall down, all the limbs will be pacified and will experience rest from their disturbed state, and the mind will not be different from that of the passengers of a ship that has set sail on a long voyage, who have suddenly suffered a catastrophe and have despaired of ever again doing any work or of seeing their beloved ones.

180a In a man who has persevered a long time in seclusion and experienced the fruits of solitude in abandoning every outward remembrance, the intelligence will be renewed in divine things ; the heart will expand ; the thoughts will experience peace ; the mind and memory will be illuminated, the former in the communion of prayer and the latter in the meditation of the Books ; the soul will be filled with joy, and will jubilate with a new song ; the natural inclination will be directed towards virtues ; the imagination will tend towards good things ; knowledge will be enlightened ; discernment will be enhanced ; fervour will reign ; the sleep of the nights will evanesce ; the (evil) thoughts will be destroyed ; the passions will be set at rest ; the songs of the Spirit will become sweeter, in season and out of season ; the Evil One will be severely warned that henceforth happiness will reign, whereupon he will begin to cause disturbance secretly and maliciously ; but then the heart will be roused and the mind will be stirred and will unconsciously steal away and resort to prayer, in sorrow, humility and tears. Then the Evil One will become bold, and the man also will become bold in his flight towards Christ, and will, with silence, fix his vision, his hope and his life on the Cross. And the Evil One will then change his tactics with abjection, like a culprit ; but the mind will notice the snare of pride, and the heart will be contrite, and the streams

of tears will break forth ; and the Evil One will vanish, weaken and become deaf and dumb, and the very remembrance of him will quickly disappear and be swallowed up in the awe-inspiring Judgment of the future ; and the man will implore divine grace and help, and mercy will be poured on him immediately with loving-kindness and pity, and sweet perfume will waft around him ; his limbs will expand, and his heart will be renewed, completely changed and filled alternately with grief and joy, while partaking of a diet the weakening character of which is lasting. If the mind and the senses are well guarded, the heart will be renewed and become a source of light.

*On Watchfulness.*

Allow me, I pray you, O discerning Brother, to give you some 1806 advice from my own experience : after you have left your solitude, guard yourself from distraction lest your labour be in vain, as it is only in the seven weeks following your solitude that the grace will give you a foretaste of the happiness of the labours and tribulations which you endured in it with so much self-exertion. If you are watchful you will be grateful for this grace, but if you are distracted it will be considered by you as of no account. Let it be known also to you that if at the end of your seven weeks you do not erect an enclosure against all external things, whether good or bad, for the vineyard of your heart in which you worked and laboured in the affliction of solitude with so intense a perplexity, you will not taste its fruit in the time of peace.

Remember that it is not during the time in which people work in the vineyard that the latter yields the fruits of joy, but that a long time elapses between these labours and their fruits. Immediately the blossom appears in the vineyard, many keepers watch over it, collect from it the tares of passions, prop it from all sides, and constantly water it with the living water which is the reading of light-giving (Books), the spiritual meditation and the remembrance of divine things ; and set up a spiky enclosure round it. And then little by little the soul grows in holy knowledge, and the heart is confirmed with hope and inner consolation, and the faith is renewed in the Spirit, and the man possesses the confidence of children (in their father), and becomes a new man in the renewal of his mind.



O discerning man, who have become worthy of mercy, acquire longanimity and be not impatient, because although grace has  
 181a begun to give you its foretaste of mysteries and to attract you to itself through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and although the fruits of the Spirit have begun to burst forth and form in your mind, yet this, according to the saying of the Fathers, is only the consolation granted to those who are not initiated,<sup>1</sup> so that the mind should take courage and proceed speedily towards the goal of the higher contemplation of Jesus Christ. Remember that there is a considerable interval between the time in which the fruits are seen and the time in which they ripen in love and are perfected in the Spirit, and that the accidents to them are numerous and varied. Lo, you received a long time ago the earnest of the future benefits, and your faith in the truth of the promises which our Lord gave in His gospel was confirmed by deeds ; persevere, therefore, in your mind ; take breath with hope, and contemplate with discernment the different workings of the fine weather and the diseases suddenly coming to you from right and left, till the fruit of your heart ripens in the Spirit and is perfected in divine love. Watch, day and night, at the door of your heart, and guard your deposit from robbers, from sultry and freezing winds, from hail, from diseases and from lack of self-confidence.<sup>2</sup> Do not relax in your watchfulness, lest you should lose your deposit and then repent. The enemies are indeed numerous, and generally capture us under the pretext of virtues ; do not therefore expect, as some wise men inconsiderately pretend, that a complete security is quickly attained.

*On the Spiritual Learning and How it is Acquired.*

Fie upon that love of natural knowledge which adorns itself with the desire for new inventions, and which in its eagerness  
 181b for learning works and lives in happiness, and thus deceives even the children of light, in advising them that we must, together with the labours of penitence, the fulfilment of the commandments

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "to the simple."

<sup>2</sup> On fol. 187b, the same Syriac expression which literally means "self-contempt" is used in a good sense.

and the pursuit of the state of impassibility, exert ourselves greatly in particular readings, which the spiritual exercises encourage, in order that we may, through the teaching of science, reap help from the mysteries hidden in the books of the Fathers, and in order that by means of the channel of learning we may move from knowledge to knowledge ; but the knowledge which is composed of, or falls under, letters and words, is the second natural knowledge of learning,<sup>1</sup> used by the Greek philosophers and wise men, and from the time of Solomon to that of Christ no one has used it without passions, as the passions are the instrument of the wisdom of the world. Even the Books which were written through the Spirit were not able to express with ink the happiness that was infused in the heart of the prophets, apostles and Fathers ; they rather expressed the mystery of the fear of God which the above men received secretly through the Spirit and handed down openly for the instruction of the world. And then little by little the unsound teaching was changed by the light of the healthy teaching of the gospel of the truth of Christ, and the world was then renewed.

As the knowledge of honey draws us near the delight of its taste, so also the knowledge of the teaching of the wisdom of the world precedes the knowledge of the spiritual teaching of the Books, which itself precedes the mysteries of the grace, and each of them helps the other in the study and exertion of labours. Indeed the knowledge which grows by study and diminishes by 182a idleness, is the teaching of the (natural) soul, but it is the key to the mysteries of God which are hidden in the universe. The true knowledge is the mystery of the grace, and works more effectively in the pure and does not fall under the construction of letters and words, as it dwells in, and is extended and spread over, the soul, and infuses a kind of happiness to the heart. It is even more delightful to those who are half-asleep,<sup>2</sup> in whom it works still more intensely as long as they persevere in prayer and in the contemplation of divine things.

If it is contended that from a collection of words of the Books a meaning is inferred in which it is found that the Books are self-

<sup>1</sup> On this knowledge cf. above, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 26.



contradictory, it should be stated that the Divine Books are not self-contradictory. Indeed some of their <sup>1</sup> words establish the truth that is inherent in them, and some others confirm lofty spiritual subjects, while others refute <sup>2</sup> the objections that are raised against them. Some of them are written with the aim of confuting something, and some others act as an introduction to  
 182b what is about to be written later. It is for this reason that to an unintelligent reader, who is not able to harmonise the sense of the words, and to other ignorant people like him, the Books appear to contradict and confute each other. This happens also in the spiritual exercises ; if the man who is exerting himself to acquire virtues is not able to harmonise his labours with his goal, he beats the air like a physician whose aim is not to heal, and who consequently brings not help but injury to the sick.

If you wish to compare the truth which we strive to attain here with the truth of the next world, not only knowledge, but also the spiritual exercises, will be hampered, because the flow of the mind will be hindered and balked by repentance and intense bewilderment. It is for this reason that it is written : "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>3</sup> The heart which loves learning ; the desire of which has been swallowed up in the love of new things ; the aim of which is good ; the conception of which has been trained for a long time to graze against its will on the mysteries of the Spirit which are hidden in the Books, and to meditate upon the glories of God, the high attainments of the saints and the life of the next world ; the faith of which has been kindled by the promises of Christ, and intoxicated with joy and enraptured in lofty things ; to which the high mysteries of knowledge are revealed ; which proceeds with long strides towards sublime things—this heart becomes either too full of lofty things to look down upon mean things, or experiences repulsion in looking on the abject things of nature, and is only intoxicated in the divine beauties that are hidden in them. The above benefits may be accompanied by the following evils : the  
 183a heart may, from its intense desire, either give substance in its

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats " of the Books."

<sup>2</sup> Read *shārōye*.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xx. 21.

imagination to things which in reality have no existence, as the holy Abbot Mark wrote—and it will then be deprived of the spacious pavilion of the saints—or it may be intoxicated with self-esteem, and the grace will neglect it, and it will then become entangled in myriads of temptations ; or it may fall into insanity, or be assailed by different diseases of anæmia, and its body will then become emaciated to no purpose. “ You have become insane, O Paul, and too much learning has brought this insanity upon you ! ” <sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the love of high things, the heart of a man is raised up from the world and proceeds with long strides towards sublime things, and if (the man) is perfected by grace towards the true goal, he will acquire a mind dead (to the world) and a heart that is contrite and merciful.

If you desire the air of freedom spoken of by the Fathers, choose for yourself the subjection involved in the work of fulfilling the commandments, rather than raise yourself up above the passions. Cast over all your senses and faculties, forcibly and against their will, the bridle of the fear of God, of modesty and of watchfulness. Even if our Lord grants you myriads of times freedom (from work), you choose willingly for yourself to work in the vineyards of your soul <sup>2</sup> until our Lord frees you by force from the tyrants who are inside you and sends you a guard that can strike terror into the robbers from within and the highwaymen from without. If you become worthy of the pavilion of the saints, have courage and do not make a breach in your watchfulness, but resort to lamentation as a remedy. It is written : “ No man who looks back is fit for the Kingdom of 1836 Heaven.” <sup>3</sup>

*On the Work of the Three Intelligible Altars Spoken of by the Fathers.*

The holy Fathers have handed down to us (the doctrine of) the work of the three altars, which contain the mysteries of Friday, Saturday and Sunday.<sup>4</sup> Two of them are complex, and

<sup>1</sup> This sentence appears to be a quotation from the Abbot Mark.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. “ person,” or personality.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Allusion to the Mass said on these days.



the other one is simple and not complex. The complex ones lead us to the simple one, as the letters of the alphabet (lead to the knowledge of reading). The first is the knowledge of works, from which, as they tell us, emanates the fulfilment of the commandments, so that through this fulfilment of the commandments we may purify the passible part of the soul from passions, and turn it from unnaturalness to naturalness, and render it fit to receive the truth. The second altar is the knowledge of theory, which the Fathers call the mental exercise, and it is the key to the mysteries of God that are hidden in the natures of the created beings, and work in all the creation, whether intelligible or visible. It is through it that the intelligible part of the soul is illuminated and the eyes of the mind are opened by the teaching of the Books. It is also through it that when we meditate upon the spiritual understandings, the hidden mysteries are revealed to us ; and it is by it that the faith in the hope of the promises is confirmed.

The third altar is the knowledge of hope, and in it, through the fullness of the knowledge of hope, we draw nigh unto the living altar who is Christ our hope and our God ; and as Jesus, who is from us, was united to God the Word inseparably and for ever, so also the mind is united to Christ without any intermediary and for ever ; and it is on this altar that a man <sup>1</sup> sanctifies, glorifies and praises at all times ; and it is through it that he lives, 184a moves, feeds, sleeps, and does everything without interruption.

What shall we say now about the contention that "the knowledge of works" has generally drawn under its hard domination all (human) nature, when every one of those who promised to perform virtues with much hardship—and they are believed to be the spiritual philosophers—has been drawn to the happiness of "the knowledge of theory" in the measure of his merit ? Indeed, every path in which the mind wishes to walk, in order to enter with singleness of purpose the simple altar, is strewn with myriads of different varieties of the knowledge of the theories of the spiritual teachings, which are adorned and made to blossom with all ecclesiastical beauties. In it <sup>2</sup> is found the interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> Or "the mind."

<sup>2</sup> In the knowledge of theory.

tion of the mysteries and the parables of the Books. In it is found the explanation of the mysteries of the adorable Economy. In it are found the interpretation of the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the distinctions in the unity (of God). In it we learn the diverse character of the knowledge of the angelic exercise of solitude. In it the soul is delivered from the distraction of vain things, and withdraws itself from captivity to the meditation in which it <sup>1</sup> rejoices in happiness, and becomes conscious of the working of the grace in it, and is kindled as with fire, and tastes in a supernatural way the mysteries of the Spirit. Because of the accuracy of its truth, all the Catholic Church holds fast to it. What is even more remarkable is that in the short time in which we work in it for the truth, it imparts to us to such an extent the flavour of the mysteries of the Spirit, and kindles and animates also our inexperience with such a desire, that we wish to remain always near the truth which is hidden in it. The continual meditation which it contains fills the heart with joy and inward consolation, and we become entranced in its happiness to such an extent that even in the time of prayer the mind is not able to ab- 184b stain from meditating upon it. We shall then offer by ourselves, on our Simple Altar, which is Jesus Christ our Lord and our God, not the offerings that emanate from others but the offerings that grow through the Spirit in a detached mind ; and through Him we offer by ourselves to the Father, who sent Him, our own spices, which are the fruits of our prayers.

These things, if our Lord helps our weakness and your prayers assist us, we will explain in these chapters, and little by little throughout the book,<sup>2</sup> in the measure of the grace vouchsafed to us. We shall demonstrate clearly that our complex nature is not able to work in any one of them alone, through any one of its faculties, for a long time without transition from one to the other. Indeed, even Christ who became a model to us in all the time of His Economy in the flesh, and also the Apostles and the Fathers, as we learn from Holy Writ, all worked sometimes in this one and sometimes in another one, as necessity required and as a complex nature was able to bear. Anyone,

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats "soul."

<sup>2</sup> All this part of the book has not been preserved by the copyist.



therefore, who strives against the truth and preaches impassibility,<sup>1</sup> as long as we are woven with changeable flesh and blood, is an alien to the truth of the Faith of the Catholic Church. Praise be to God, whom we implore to render us worthy, by the grace of His mercy and His abundant loving-kindness, to be united to His Christ. Amen.

The monk who, before quelling the impetuosity of his passions, brings into his imagination the high exploits of the saints, does service to the passions of his desire and not to the truth. Indeed the desire of knowing the truth belongs to every soul, 185a including that of the publicans and harlots, because it is implanted in the nature of creation. To learn the truth and to teach the truth is the work of the soul, because the heart is the storehouse of the soul, the haven of the senses and the food of the desire ; but to put into practice in ourselves the truth which we know and teach is impossible without coercion, exertions, prayers and the working of the grace. The aim for which we perform virtues is to the mind what the target is to the arrows ; the faith takes in this the place of the light, and the mind the place of the man who throws the arrows, and the exercises the place of the arrows which either hit or do not hit the target.

The mouth to which no one can give the lie has testified that the aim of a Christian is the Cross : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness for the salvation of the people, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up for the salvation of our life, that whosoever believeth in Him should not be confounded." <sup>2</sup> The labour of a Christian consists in that he should believe without doubt that the Cross of Jesus is the righteousness of all, that He takes away the sin of all, that He is the Saviour of all, and that without Him our human race is, after five thousand years, too weak to have justification in the natural and written law. We have been justified by grace through faith in the name of Christ. Righteousness and sin are found in all religions ; this is established by the tradition which those who belong to these religions received, without more investigation on their part, from their fathers.

<sup>1</sup> This is against the doctrine of the Messalians.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 14-15.

But the righteousness of a Christian is his salvation : faith in Christ our Redeemer, as it is " in Him that we live, move and have our being." <sup>1</sup> By the light of the sun we see the truth of things ; and by the light of faith we see the truth of the spiritual understandings, past and future, the glories of the next world and the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. What the light of the sun is to the eyes of the body, the light of faith is to the knowledge of the soul.

The truth of our angelic exercise of solitude consists in that we should not change our intercourse with God for the intercourse with men, nor the remembrance of God for the remembrance of the affairs of the world, nor the meditation on the spiritual understandings for the understandings of the creatures. The union with Christ consists in that your communion, your meditation and your remembrance should never be emptied of God. The light of the mind of every soul is the source of understandings, which is also found among created beings ; but the light of faith is a gift of Christ which sanctifies the soul and imparts to it the mystical vision of the Spirit. May glory be to God, and may He render us worthy of the spiritual vision ! Amen.

*On the Faculties of Our Inner Man and their Working.*

If you prevail over gluttony, win a victory over passion and anger, remove from yourself vain intercourse (with worldly affairs), subject your senses in solitude, and call upon grace to help you, you will penetrate within yourself and reach your inner man, and through your continual intercourse within yourself you will examine and learn also the faculties of your inner man, which are : mind, intelligence, imagination, thoughts, rationality, knowledge, discernment, judgment, understanding and memory. From your constant intercourse with them you will learn their names from their actions, and you will know which of them is eye, and how it sees ; which of them is ear, and how it hears ; which of them is mouth, and how it speaks ; which of them is nose, and how it smells ; and which of them is hand, and how it grasps ; with the rest of the faculties which become clear

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii 28.



to us by our constant thought of them. When you cut yourself away from the outside things and have communion, constantly and with understanding, with the things that are within, the eye of the intelligence will be illuminated within you and you will actually be conscious of the prophecy of the blessed David : " The soul, thy consort, shall be as a glorious vine by the sides of the house of thy heart, and thy children, which are the serene thoughts, shall be like an olive plant round about the table of thy mind ; " <sup>1</sup> and you will praise and glorify the Creator in that the knowledge which is from us and with us is hidden in the knowledge within us. If you become illuminated to a greater degree, you will see how the desire and anger, which are the powers of the soul and the helpers <sup>2</sup> of nature, change from naturalness to unnaturalness, become truculent and fight each other to their mutual detriment, and instead of the help that is due from them to the soul and to nature, they by their mutual struggle bring perversion and perdition upon both of these. You will then be amazed and astonished at the perversion unnaturally effected in the darkness of the passions, in the innermost part of nature.

1866 If you free yourself from inward and outward lassitude and if peace and joy hold sway within you, Christ will reign in you and you will be the child of grace in the inner vision of the mind. When the waters are quiet and clear, the dolphins fly ; and when the mind is quiet and clear, it will bring forth joy and the light of the next world. If you have communion with God in the quiet of prayer, God will have communion with you in the light ; and if you criticise and judge your neighbour, Satan will assail you with dejectedness. In the time in which you criticise and judge your neighbour, know that the demon of anger is not far from you. The life of the soul is that state in which the heart is at peace from all disquiet, and in which an all-suffusing love reigns in you. The one whose eye is pure sees no evil. The spiritual philosophy spoken of by the Fathers consists in enduring the things that come upon us from outside without anger, and in destroying the things that stir up from inside us without

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Put the word in the plural.

disquiet, and in receiving both of them without murmur, in thankfulness. In short, listen to this : if your inner man, after all labours, knowledge and theory, is not simple, meek and pure ; if the spring of your heart is not quiet, serene and bright ; and if your outer senses are not resting in peace, do not be anxious lest troubled water should penetrate the purity of your soul : you will not inherit a thing that does not belong to you.

A great and glorious treasure which has no likeness in the creation is hidden within you, O man ! And if you had been conscious of it, even if by accident only, you would have cried with the prophet : “ I will not give sleep to mine eyes or slumber to my 187a life, until I find out a place for this divine treasure that is hidden in me ! ” <sup>1</sup> Glory be to Thee, glory be to Thee, glory be to Thee, O merciful God, who hast <sup>2</sup> hidden in this earthy clay and in this dust of the earth—a substance which constantly loosens and dissolves—an ineffable beauty and treasure that has no equal in Heaven or in Earth ! Had you known, O monk, what beauty is hidden in you, you would not have bestowed blessing on the great ones of this world, but you would have changed night for day in your pursuit of the treasure that is hidden in you ! Had you felt, O my beloved, the divine sweetness on which the saints feed, you would have cried with the blessed Paul : “ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I but Christ liveth in me ; <sup>3</sup> and the pains, sufferings, trials, tribulations of this present time are not worthy of the gift of the grace.” <sup>4</sup>

*On the Natural Knowledge, The Knowledge that is Outside Nature, and the Knowledge that is above Nature.*

The natural knowledge which is implanted in the nature of our creation is the one which grows and is illuminated by good <sup>5</sup> things, and it is also the one which, inclining towards evil things <sup>6</sup> becomes entangled, through the works which are outside nature, in the passions of the material world ; in its anger it will then resemble the rapacious animals, and in its lust the beasts, and in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. cxxxii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Change the vowels of the verb in the text to 2nd pers. instead of 3rd fem.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rom. viii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Text : “ things of the right hand.”

<sup>6</sup> Text : “ towards the left.”



its rage and evil temper the harmful reptiles, and in its restless-  
 187b ness <sup>1</sup> the winged creatures : this knowledge is then called " the  
 knowledge that is outside nature." <sup>2</sup> The same (natural know-  
 ledge) is also the one which is conscious of the rational char-  
 acter that it possesses, and by its will makes use of the affairs  
 of the world in the measure of its need ; and when it flees from  
 idolatry, and does with understanding the good things that are  
 inscribed in its heart, and orders with justice worship to the  
 Maker of the Heaven and of the Earth, as Noah, Abraham and  
 Job did, it is then called by the Fathers " the second natural  
 knowledge."

It is also the one which becomes clear, illuminated and  
 spiritual, and contemplates in an intelligible way the spiritual  
 powers who accompany the lower corporeal natures and work  
 in them and in the hidden actor that acts in them. It is then  
 called " the intelligible knowledge found in the lower corporeal  
 natures." When it becomes pure and shining, it contemplates,  
 by means of theory, the spiritual and uncorporeal natures and  
 the performance of their service. It is then called " the spiritual  
 theory concerning the spiritual beings who are above." When it  
 has attained a high degree of penetration and been raised by  
 grace, and mercy has been poured upon it, its theory becomes  
 conscious of the hidden power of the adorable Essence of the  
 Holy Trinity. It is then called " the knowledge of the truth of  
 the next world." The same kind of knowledge is sometimes  
 swallowed up in grace, in a way that is above nature, and it be-  
 comes no-knowledge, because it is higher than knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

### *On the Food of the True Knowledge.*

The food of the true knowledge is a voluntary freedom which  
 188a is divested of all fear and of all subjection to any forms of error.  
 It is born of self-contempt, magnanimity, joy of heart, peace of  
 mind, universal love and affection to all without distinction.  
 As to its drink, it consists of a continuous remembrance of the

<sup>1</sup> Note the use of the word *kuṭṭā'a* in the sense of *restlessness*, instead of *lassitude* or *dejectedness* which it generally has.

<sup>2</sup> It is this knowledge that the author has called in another passage " un-  
 naturalness," see pp. 42 and 50.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. above, p. 11.

mercies of God and of His grace for all and for us ; and of a mind persevering in reading and meditating upon the spiritual power found in the (created) natures, and in the glories of the next world. As to its fruits, they are purity of soul, rectitude of mind, the vision of the intelligence, consciousness of the working of the grace, the resurrection of the soul, and the pre-vision of (the future) life as through a mirror. As to its darkness, it consists in dissimulation, love of praise and honour, anxiety of the heart, perturbation of the soul, wickedness of the passions, and ill-feeling and envy towards our neighbour. As to its death, it consists in lasting rancour, anger and wrath, which harbour ill-will.

### *On the Food of the Soul.*

The food of the soul is the change from evil things to good things, and its light is the knowledge of the truth, and its resurrection is its rising from knowledge to knowledge, from theory to theory, and from understanding to understanding. Through its modifications and changes from one thing to another it is instructed, drilled and illuminated until it is perfected by love. Indeed this food takes a long time to cook with the wood of labours, temptations, afflictions and trials, until it amends itself from the false dress of error, withdraws itself from every material thing, 1886 directs its vision above, puts its trust in Christ, and rests in the peaceful harbour of perpetual love and consolation that emanates from the knowledge of the truth. In spite of this, it will not be freed from the sultry and freezing winds which blow suddenly, and from the unavoidable happenings and accidents, etc.

### *On the Faculties of the Soul.*

The soul has two active faculties : the rational and the animal. The animal faculty is found also among irrational beings, while the rational faculty is only found in rational beings, and consists of mind, intellect, judgment, thoughts and discernment. The animal faculty consists of desire and anger. The desire is stirred by senses, and senses are stirred by the union of an outer stimulus with the inner faculties, while anger is stirred by desire. If there are no faculties and no stimuli the senses will not be active, and if the senses are not active the desire will



not be active ; and if the desire is not active, anger will not be active. And until desire and anger are quelled and brought back from their state of unnaturalness, so as to act in a natural way, the rational faculties will not act and will not leave the work of evil and proceed by degrees, and rise through the revelations of the knowledge of divine things.

### *What is Theory ?*

Theory is the intelligible vision of the eyes of the soul. As the corporeal eyes have sight to distinguish the visible natures and happenings of the creation, so also the eyes of the soul possess a spiritual vision through which they distinguish the hidden actions and the inner powers which work in the invisible and  
189a intelligible natures, and in the mysteries of the Books. As it is not the mere vision of the eyes of the body that is praiseworthy, but the character of its vision, in that it sees and distinguishes the ways, the quality and the quantity of the natures and happenings which it perceives ; so also it is not <sup>1</sup> the mere theory of the vision of the eyes of the soul that is praiseworthy, but the character of its vision, in that it sees, examines and discerns the intelligible powers and the hidden mysteries. As the outer vision is dependent on circumstances for its light and darkness, so also the vision of theory has its light in impassibility and faith ; as to its darkness, it consists in desire and anger, which act in an unnatural way. Every vision is in need both of the light of the different kinds of knowledge, and of understanding.

### *What is Understanding ?*

Understanding is the examiner of theory. Everything that theory finds it offers to understanding, and understanding, according to its skill in the work that theory has presented to it, examines it, scrutinises it and tests it. It is written : " A perfect rest is a twin of wisdom, and labour is a twin to a constant course of understanding." All the varieties of knowledge, learning and theory, together with the senses, are the instruments of understanding, judgment and discernment, while understanding and discernment are the instruments of the natural knowledge ;

<sup>1</sup> Change *lwāth* into the neg. *lā*.

and the second natural knowledge of the natural soul is the instrument of the first knowledge of the nature of our creation. In it 189b the rough ground becomes smooth, and the difficult ground plain, and it finds peace and rest in one single knowledge of truth, which is above knowledge. Mark, the solitary, testifies that "the knowledge of truth is the light of the soul."

*On Prayer and on the Meaning of Communion with God.*

The end of all perfection for mutable men is that a man should become intoxicated with communion with God, and have a mind rapt from the world in such a way that he no longer knows himself. Indeed his mind has been swallowed up in the intelligible things, which are only understood by the comprehension of the intellect. This begins while one is still a novice, from a continual communion with God, which takes place in the meditation of the mind during prayer. The communion with God consists in thanks and gratitude offered to God in the inwardness of the mind, with a simple faith which has no doubt—as follows: in an extasy in the depth of the revelation of the mysteries which are both hidden and revealed in all the creation, and which are inscribed in the Books and in the promises of the Spirit, past and future; in a high theory concerning the hidden nature of God and His Providence, and His working in everything; in a deep understanding of the different kinds of elements, humours powers, natures, genera and various species found in the creation; in the rapturous admiration of the various natural qualities of colours, forms, manners and habits which every nature received from the Creator at the time when its creation was fashioned, and which have been kept and handed down without change, according to the character of each nature, in the six thousand years<sup>1</sup> of the course of the life of the world; in the constant contemplation of the complete humility of Christ our Redeemer, His incarnation, His admirable Economy which took place on our 190a behalf, and the secret help which comes to us from the fulfilment of His holy commandments; in the contemplation of the ascen-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, p. 44, where the author counts 5000 years from the creation of man. Does he then believe that the world was created 1000 years before man was fashioned?



sion of our First-fruits <sup>1</sup> and our Hostage, who is worshipped and confessed side by side with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the unity of the Word from the Father and in the duality of the natures and persons in one single *Prosopon* of the Son ; and in the contemplation of our death, resurrection and intelligible renewal which takes place in this world, partially, in mystery and as an earnest, but in the general resurrection, wholly.

This communion of the inward prayer of the mind begins when (the saints) have been tormented and emaciated by aceticism, and have experienced the mysteries of impassibility through the working of the Spirit. This (communion) is better and higher than the lofty theory of the mind of those who have been instructed and illuminated by the teaching of the holy Books and have become, through the sharpness of their mind, the perceivers of the mysteries of knowledge, while passions are still remaining in their soul. Indeed these are not able to be conscious of the new mysteries, and to taste the divine sweetness, in the time of prayer ; this can only happen to those who have been purified from passions and become worthy of the two great exercises (of the mind and of the body), like those early Fathers, the pillars of the Church, who emaciated themselves with labours and prayers, and offered themselves as a sacrifice for the sake of the true Faith.

Let this also be known to you, that it is not every one who labours and works, even successfully, in the exercises of the truth in the House of God, that becomes worthy of the communion of the mysteries of God in inward prayer, but it is the one who by his will renounces all existing and visible things ; who desires freedom in the fervour of his heart and in his thoughts, words 1906 and deeds ; who, with humility, delivers himself up to reading with understanding ; who questions the Fathers and learns from them and from their books ; who is found to be a leader and a spiritual Father of his time, not straying from the truth but preparing his mind to receive the truth ; who labours, exerts himself and endures with thankfulness the trials and the injuries that assail him ; who casts away from him with self-contempt high opinions of himself ; who sets his hope and his vision day

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 23.

and night on the Cross, so that perchance he may be found worthy, by grace, of the communion of the inward prayer of the mind, and of becoming conscious of the mysteries of God through the revelation of knowledge.

*On the Things that Happen to those whose Mind becomes Conscious of the Mysteries of the Next World.*

That which happens in the case of a man who comes here from China or from India ; who goes in and out with many people, gives and takes, eats and converses with many others ; who performs his acts in person, and is seen here by all, but in his mind and his thoughts he is in his own country and among his own countrymen ; whose ways of conduct resemble those of his own country, although he makes use superficially of the manners and ways of conduct of those with whom he is now living ; to whom the manners and the ways of conduct of those with whom he is living are not acceptable, nor his to them ; who does not know how to live with them, nor they with him ; who, if he happens to meet with a man of his own country and his own tongue, rejoices and sees in his vision his own countrymen—the same thing happens to the man who becomes conscious of the mysteries of the next world : his mind is enraptured, and in 191a his manners and in his thoughts he is an alien to the acts and ways of conduct of the world where he sojourns. When a man has reached this stage, he forgets himself, and is envied or scoffed at and mocked by many. He should watch with great apprehension over his heart, resorting with fear to self-contempt, simplicity and ignorance, as he does not know whether he is going to be defeated to-day or to-morrow, either by the tempter or by his own senses, or through the falls of his neighbours. He should also deliver up his soul at every moment to the grace, and unite himself with Christ in hope and confidence, while shutting his mouth so as not to reveal the mystery of the trust that God has confided to him.

*On the Growth of the Exercises.*

When you wish to know the degree of your growth in the exercises, do this : allow and permit deliberately your mind and



your thought several times to go and graze at their will in the distraction of their ordinary life, without any interference on your part, and then suddenly thrust yourself upon them vehemently and unawares, and hear, examine and scrutinise with discernment what they are thinking and meditating. If you find them meditating on the theory of the Books and on the discourse of the Fathers upon spiritual exercises, know that you are following the path of the exercises of the truth, and that ultimately you will reach peace ; if they are thinking of immaterial things, and of the glories of the next world, know that they are nearing the harbour of impassibility ; if they are rapt in the love of God and are intoxicated by it, and swallowed up in the living mystery, and  
 191b meditating upon the theory of the Holy Trinity, and immediately after the mind becomes concentrated on this subject, sighs and tears become frequent—know that they have penetrated the plain of peace ; and if they are meditating with concentration on their reading and on the prayers in which they were previously persevering, know that the time is near in which they will be freed from distraction. If, however, you go and find your mind buying and selling, and roving in different countries, and feeding on the things that are outside your exercises, or communing with friends or foes, endeavouring to bring harm or gain, good or evil to your neighbour, know that the labours of affliction . . . the Fathers . . .<sup>1</sup> If you are wise and watchful you will be able to learn the nature of the work of your exercises, whether godly or ungodly, from the thoughts that come to you, and from your dreams.

*On the Exercises that are Outside Knowledge.*

Anyone who has left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, but has not reached the land of promise, nor the consolation that emanates from the fountains and palm-trees of Elim,<sup>2</sup> but roams in the desert and feeds without knowledge on the manna of the grace, will rightly murmur and wish for the onions and the garlic of Egypt. If the first impulse (of our mind) consists in the impetuosity of our nature, and the second in the fight against the passions, which are full of perplexity, tumult and affliction ;

<sup>1</sup> A few words seem to be missing here.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Exod. xv. 27.

and if the fruits of the Spirit, which are rest, quietness and peace, constitute the spiritual consolation—let us understand, we also, the difference in the times of the growth of the stages and the ascents<sup>1</sup> of our exercises, and also the time of our reaching the truth found in this angelic exercise of solitude, and let us not rove<sup>192a</sup> continually in the desert, feeding without personal merit on the manna of the grace, and with no hope of the peaceful harbour of the land of promise.

### *On Voluntary Labours.*

He who chooses rest for himself in the times of labours and weeping, will with justice weep and mourn in the time of joy. He who is glorified in the time of lowliness and afflictions, will with justice be blamed and dishonoured in the time of honour. He who becomes negligent and sleeps in the time of sowing, will suffer in full measure in the time of the sheaves of joy. He who has not toiled and grown leaves<sup>2</sup> for the protection of the fruits, or who has by a stratagem shown<sup>3</sup> an artificial blossom instead of the true fruit, his deception will be in vain, and will be exposed in the time of the harvest. He who has not taken the risk of a personal danger to go to China and India with goods for trading, and notwithstanding this, goods of those countries are seen in his possession, will with justice be called a thief. He who, while divested of the garments of the spiritual wedding, goes to the wedding of the saints in borrowed garments, and places on his head the crown of glory, and drinks old wine, will with justice be exposed and dishonoured when he becomes intoxicated.

It is written : “ The penitence that is joined with pleasures and the righteousness that is joined with honours do not purify sins, but the contrary, for the labours of youth are the crowns of old age.” The fruits of a tree divested of the leaves of labours, even if these fruits are shown forth abundantly, will perish in the time of the sultry and freezing winds. If you<sup>4</sup> therefore grow leaves together with fruits, and at the end do away with the

<sup>1</sup> See for these two words, pp. 17, 27, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, done good works. See p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> The word *yassid* seems to be corrupt. The meaning of this sentence is problematical.

<sup>4</sup> The change of pronouns is due to the author.



leaves, your fruits will be injured ; because as long as the passions  
 192b work with impetuosity, there is no time to grow blossoms, and  
 as long as the conscience accuses, there is no joy from the fruits.  
 As long as the ornaments of your house are artificial, you will not  
 be able to rest from watchfulness ; and as long as the watchmen  
 within you are those of coercion, you will have no confidence.  
 Indeed the enemies wax strong according to the impetuosity of  
 the passions, and the battle rages in the measure of the fight  
 of the enemies. Wherever there is disagreement leading to  
 a fight, peace is absent ; and wherever peace is absent, there is  
 neither joy nor consolation ; and wherever there is neither  
 quietness of heart nor peace of mind, that sanctuary will not  
 be the temple of God, because the dwelling-place of God has  
 been called " peace " by the prophet.<sup>1</sup>

*On the Ascent of the Exercise which takes place by our Will and by  
 Grace, and on Falling away from it.*

As it happens that in the performance of the labours of  
 penitence we mount up by the degrees of the stages in a day-to-day  
 growth, and not suddenly, from the depth of passions and sin  
 to the height of virtues ; so also when we neglect virtues and de-  
 liver ourselves up to distraction, dejectedness and laxity, we walk  
 back downwards by our own will, by the degrees of day-to-day  
 negligence, as we mounted up, and not suddenly, so that because  
 of the slowness of our stumbling—by the degrees of negligence  
 in which we are coming down—we do not even feel our descent.  
 We think that although we are not making progress upwards  
 yet we are standing our ground firmly, and the wealth of the  
 divine exercise which we possess is thus guarded ; and a little  
 193a while after we carefully begin with the performance of labours  
 as formerly, unmindful that the Providence of God, which helps  
 our weakness, comes after the freedom of the will, and that His  
 just judgment is pronounced after the exercises which we perform  
 by our actions ; and that it is in the measure of our negligence  
 or our zeal that we pass the degrees through which we ascend or  
 descend. Indeed, grace comes after the freedom of the will,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Job v. 24.

<sup>2</sup> This doctrine of the author serves to illustrate the controversy between  
 Thomists and Molinists.

and it is in the time of our zeal that it brings help to our weakness, and in the time of our negligence that it withdraws from us. It comes to our help in the measure of our longing for it, and does not forcibly coerce our free-will ; and according to the teaching of the Fathers, the grace does not leave us till the victory or defeat of our last breath ; we go then to where we had wished and laboured to prepare a place for ourselves : either to the Kingdom of Heaven or to the torment.

*On the Different Kinds of Prayer.*

It is written that idleness begets a multitude of evils, and that a monk who is not praying is idle. The Fathers teach that as long as a man is doing the work of God, he is praying. I agree that this is what is meant by a continual prayer, but it is not the complete kind. As to the perfect people, because their mind has become pacified and renewed in the Spirit, and their intelligence has been swallowed up in divine love, they have become the dwelling-place of God in the inward vision of the mind.

Prayer does not consist in learning, in knowledge or in words, but in an emptiness of the mind and a peaceful and rational intelligence, which is collected and quietened by the stillness of 1936 the faculties and of the senses,<sup>1</sup> resulting in a complete destruction of the thoughts and a complete rejection of all cares. Singleness of purpose is also useful in the time of prayer, so that we may commune with God in it<sup>2</sup> without a cloud and without any intermediary, whether that which is hindering us from it is a thought of evil or a contemplation of good. There is no difference between the one who kills his son with honey and the one who kills him with a knife.

If you desire prayer, remove from the wings of your mind all the affairs of the world, together with its cares and glory, and grasp with your hands your pet children who are the good or evil thoughts. In the time of prayer, leave in an intelligible abyss all that is and is not, and ascend in your mind naked towards the Cross, and pass over to the next world. Begin your prayer

<sup>1</sup> A similar definition of prayer is attributed by Barhebraeus to Isaac of Nineveh. See his *Ethicon*, p. 14 (edit. Bedjan), and Wensinck's *Book of the Dove*, p. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Text repeats "prayer."



while empty of everything, so that perchance you may be able to recite a serene prayer. As long as you look at a worldly affair with pain, and at a human figure with hatred, do not think that you have been purified from within, and that you are in a position to pray with singleness of purpose ; because the soul will not shine in prayer before it has been purified. Do not believe that you have prayed in a pure way as long as the young plant of wrathfulness, even in the remembrance of one person, is found within you.

A prayer of love is a fountain the water of which never ceases to flow, and it waters the soul with peace and joy. Prayer becomes a gift of God when the spring of the heart is kindled with the fire of love and with the wood of mental labours ; when the  
 194a mind is consumed with meditation on good things ; when the growth of prayer assumes strength, and the theory is illuminated ; when the young plant of prayer shines with the fullness of peace and joy, and sheds perfume spontaneously. A true prayer which emanates from a pure mind touches the heart so strongly that sighs and tears of joy jet forth spontaneously, and the soul expands towards God : blessed be the soul which has tasted its gladness !

A prayer in which the body is not labouring through the heart, nor the heart through the mind, with intelligence and discernment, collected together in a deep sorrow which grieves in God ; and a prayer which crosses the heart in a superficial way only, let it be known to you that it is an embryo that is not yet fully grown. If while you are praying your mind drags you towards another act to be performed after your prayer, you are not yet praying with singleness of purpose.

Prayer is the inner vision which is illuminated by the Spirit, and which contemplates inwardly the good implanted in the heart. Prayer is the quietness which sings incessant glory in the language of the angels. As to the " seed " of prayer, spoken of by the Fathers, it refers to the knowledge which is implanted in the nature of our creation, and in which dwells the Kingdom of God that is in us. The " ear " of prayer (of which they spoke) refers to the growth of the different kinds of understanding through which the mind ascends to the knowledge of the Maker. Furthermore, the " blade " of prayer refers to the food which is

collected from the two altars <sup>1</sup> within the circumference of which the mind grows, is drilled, and ascends towards the one simple altar, which consists in the intelligible renewal of the saints. This happens after the mind has been drilled and perfected in its essence, has died and lived again mysteriously, and, while still in this world, has, as an earnest, tasted partially the future happiness which, when it has been freed from the thickness of the body, it will taste fully.

Men perform in this world all prayer and supplication, together with virtues, for the sake of the good of this world, in fear of the torments of Hell, and for the sake of the happiness which is prepared for the righteous in the next world. As to the true monks, they perform all their prayers, supplications and labours of penitence, together with the virtues which they practise before their purification, in order to be freed from the passions, and in order to be worthy of purity, and be sanctified by the Word of God, and receive effectively the working of the Spirit. The prayer which follows purification consists in the righteousness of the mind, peace of the heart, quietness of the intelligence, serenity of the thoughts, theory of the next world, inward consolation, communion with God, and a mind which is associated with God in the revelation of His mysteries. The whole course of the true monks consists in that they should be delivered from the second natural knowledge of the natural soul, and be worthy of their pristine righteousness. The incessant prayer of perfection about which Saint Basil wrote, consists in that whenever a man meets with an affair or a happening of this world, or sees, hears and remembers all the good and evil things which are done in it,<sup>2</sup> he should offer praise to God. 195a

*Question asked of Saint Rabban Sapor.*<sup>3</sup>

A Brother narrated as follows: "I repaired once to Saint Rabban Sapor, and said to him, sighing: "Pray over me, O Father, because the temptation of the demons is tormenting me." He looked at me carefully and said to me: "You are a child, my son, and God will not allow you to be tempted by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Text repeats "the creation."

<sup>3</sup> The spiritual father of the author.



the demons." And I answered : " I am a child, but on account of my sins I have an old man's fight." And he said : " Then God wishes to make you wise." And I answered : " Woe unto me ! In what a way am I being made wise ! I am tasting death every day ! " And he said to me : " Be quiet, my son ! God loves you and wishes to bestow a gift upon you. For thirty years severe fights of the demons have assailed me, and for twenty years God did not bring me any deliverance. It was only in the twenty-fifth year that a little rest came to me, and at the end of the thirty years grace visited me to such an extent that now when I rise for prayer I become conscious of myself in the recitation of a single *Marmītha*,<sup>1</sup> and I glorify without fatigue in my extasy in God. Perfection, however, consists, according to the words of the divine Paul, in that every man should esteem his neighbour better than himself,<sup>2</sup> while walking without weariness in the path trodden for us by our holy Fathers ; and the Lord will help our weakness.' "

*On the Fact that Man was Created in the True Image of God.*

There is within the heart an intelligible mirror, glorious and  
 1956 ineffable, fashioned by the Creator of the natures from the power of all the visible and intelligible natures of the creation, for the high honour of His image and for the dwelling of His invisible essence. He made it the bond, the link and the perfection of all natures. It is called by the Fathers : " The beauty of our personality," in which dwells the spirit of the adoption of children,<sup>3</sup> which we have received from the holy baptism and upon which shines the light of grace. Anyone who has purified this mirror, which is possessed of so many beauties, from the stain and the dirt of the sinful passions, and has renewed it and returned it to the pristine righteousness of the nature of its creation, will see all the spiritual powers who accompany the natures and the affairs of this world, whether they be far or near, through the sublime rays that emanate from it, as if they were set in array before his eyes ; and will contemplate them without any darkness, by means of the inner power of the Holy Spirit, which dwells and works

<sup>1</sup> A division of the Psalter consisting of about three Psalms.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Eph. i. 5, etc.

in it. Because the natures and affairs of this world are joined together and perfected by this mirror, when <sup>1</sup> the grace comes down upon the pure souls of the saints, it is on it that it lights and shines. Indeed it shines by the coming down of the grace on it to such an extent that it surpasses in an immeasurable way <sup>2</sup> the light of the sun on an external mirror ; and the soul becomes dazzled and bewildered by its beauty, and perceives the new light of grace through the light of its impassibility ; and the mind becomes conscious of the past and future mysteries, sees through its light “ as through a glass, darkly ” <sup>3</sup> the light of the next world, becomes conscious of the inheritance of the saints, tastes the delight of the revelations of the mysteries of God, rests and lives <sup>196a</sup> in peace incessantly, <sup>4</sup> forgets its pain and tribulation, rejoices in its <sup>5</sup> hope and glorifies its Giver with inward silence : “ He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High,” <sup>6</sup> and “ In Thy light shall we see light.” <sup>7</sup>

### *On Mysteries and Symbols.*

As it was ordered that no sound of beating, of striking or of pickaxe should be heard in the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, <sup>8</sup> so also in the sanctuary of the Lord, which is we who are rational beings, when grace dwells fully in us, there should exist in the sea of the mind neither the violent agitation of labours nor the winds of suspicion brought about by our passing judgments either favourable or unfavourable <sup>9</sup> on our neighbour ; nor the impetuosity of the billows of the thoughts which disturb the peace of the mind, as in our former state of disunion ; nor the fear of the enemies, the dread of the passions and the falling away from the truth ; because Christ has made to reign fully and in all, through the complete peace of the mind, that peace of the heart which, in the inward vision, is at rest from all agitation ; all these things have been alluded to or described by the holy Fathers.

Neither is the mind in a position to reveal, nor has paper been

<sup>1</sup> Remove the *Wāw*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Or *His*.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings vi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. “ by one in a thousand.”

<sup>4</sup> In the text the verb *abra* seems to be corrupt.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. xci. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Lit. “ suspicions of yea and nay.”



able to receive, the power of the perfection of the truth : only the good God, who granted it freely, and also the unprofitable servants, mentioned in the Gospel,<sup>1</sup> who became worthy of it by grace, are cognisant of it.

All peace and consolation which a tongue is able to describe to others is imperfect : a mind learns and teaches another mind in silence. A man of God is alone capable to deal with a man of 1966 learning. Let it be known to you that a great unprofitableness comes to the writers of the truth from their mental attainments, if they are not induced to them by love, because it is not everything which penetrates the mind that is capable of being transmuted into thought, nor is everything which is transmuted into thought in harmony with the intelligence ; nor is it everything which is in harmony with the intelligence that mind and discernment can accept and put in practice, nor everything which the mind knows, that understanding and comprehension are in a position to praise and hand over to the senses. It is known, therefore, that it is only the dregs of the truth that come out in action, while the gladness of the joy and of the consolation of the truth remain in the inward silence of the mind. Anyone who recites in prayer the Psalms that are composed through the Spirit, is sanctified by the word of God, as by consecrated vestments, which sanctify anyone who draws nigh unto them. That the Evil One will then be spurred and roused to fight, has been known, through the spiritual revelation, to have happened three times to a saint.

### *On the Mind.*

It is natural to the mind that when it is consumed deeply with too much love for a thing, and also when habits have been acquired, and conscience has been trodden underfoot and will has acquiesced, its discernment becomes blind and its knowledge is obfuscated with regard to anything that is contrary to the object of its love. It will then see and not discern, hear and not understand, speak foolishly and not perceive it. The heart will truly harden, discernment will become blind, and knowledge will be confused, because the faculties of discernment, understanding

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke xvii. 10.

and comprehension are joined in the heart with the love of the object, whether good or evil, which has been loved and has 197a been fixed in the mind. When, therefore, the mind is immersed in divine things, and meditates upon them ardently, it becomes blind to human things ; and when it is caught in earthly things, it becomes blind to divine things. As to those who are at the middle stage, they rove in their state of transition, but should correct their weaknesses with repentance in the furnace of penitence.

*On the Seat<sup>1</sup> of the Powers.*

The seat of feeling is in the brain, that of discernment in the heart, that of passion in the stomach, that of desire in the kidneys, and that of wrath in the liver.

*On the Natural Powers.*

The natural powers are seven in number, four of which serve and three of which are served. Those which serve are : the attractive power, which is cold ; <sup>2</sup> the astringent power, which is dry ; the laxative power, which is hot ; and the repulsive power, which is damp. These powers are also possessed singly. As to the powers that are served, they are the generating power, the growing power, and the feeding power.

*On the Workings of the Natural Soul.*

The vital workings of the natural soul are : the power of imagery,<sup>3</sup> the memory, and the understanding. The seat of the power of imagery is in the fore-part of the brain, and that of understanding in the middle part of the brain, while that of memory is in the back part of the brain. When injury affects the fore-part of the brain, which is the seat of the power of imagery, men <sup>4</sup> see false representations and images of all kinds, according to the 197b colour of the humour from which the injury emanates. When the middle part, which is the seat of understanding, is injured, they do not distinguish the things that are useful and necessary

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " union." The author is speaking here of the powers of the natural soul.

<sup>2</sup> Allusion to the ancient medicine with its humours of the body.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. " phantasy."

<sup>4</sup> Text has " they."



for our use from those which do us harm. And when the back part of the brain, which is the seat of memory, is injured, they do not remember anything said or done by them.

*On the Defect of Lack of Memory.*

The defect of lack of memory and understanding, and of the thickness of the brain and intelligence, springs from the animal spirit <sup>1</sup> that is formed in the ventricles of the heart, when it thickens and is not subtilised owing to indigestion ; or from bad food which gives rise to a bad chyme, which is neither pure nor subtile nor clear, and is sent to the lobes of the brain while impure, thick and undigested ; or from an injury to the brain itself, when it receives a concussion or a swelling, or when it is obstructed either through damp or through too great a supply (of blood).

*On the Workings of the Senses.*

The working, the movements and the feeling of the five principal senses have their seat and their action in the nerves that come out of the brain ; and they account for the movements and the feeling which we possess. As to the animal spirit found in the nerves, it has two powers : the motor power and the sensory power. In this way, if there is obstruction in the nerves, feeling is atrophied, while the power of movement functions ;  
 198a and if there is rigidity in the nerves, the power of movement is atrophied, while feeling remains ; and when there is excessive dampness or dryness,<sup>2</sup> both feeling and movement are atrophied, but feeling is in need of a little spirit <sup>3</sup> only (in order to function).

*The Principal Organs.*

The principal organs are the brain, the heart, the liver, and the testicles. The organs of respiration are the brain, the

<sup>1</sup> The " animal spirit " was in Galen's view a higher form of the " natural spirit " and of the " vital spirit." The natural spirit consisted of subtle vapours that came with the blood from the liver to the heart, and there, mixing with the air of the respiratory organs, were changed into " vital spirits " ; these in their turn were carried to the brain and there changed into " animal spirits " and distributed to all parts of the body by the nerves.

<sup>2</sup> Dampness and dryness are used here in connection with the doctrine of the humours of the body.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., the animal spirit.

heart and the lungs, and the organs of the will are the nerves and the muscles. The centre of the nerves is the brain, while the centre of the arteries is the heart, and the centre of the veins is the liver.

*On the Structure of the Heart and its Working.*

The heart is composed of solid flesh and nervous matter. It is the seat of the natural heat that is in us, and from it heat emanates as from a fountain; and the shape of the heart resembles a fire that is broad below but tapering above, and it mounts up like a flame. The heart has two ventricles, one on the right side and the other on the left. The right ventricle receives the blood from the liver, purifies it, and sends it out so purified to the brain and to the rest of the body; while the left ventricle is the seat of the animal spirit, and it subtilises that spirit and sends it to the lobes of the brain where rationality is created, together with memory and understanding.

The heart is situated in the trunk, above the diaphragm and within the vertebrae, and it inclines towards the lungs,<sup>1</sup> and next to it are the lungs<sup>2</sup> which act like cooling bellows. As to the thin head of the heart, which resembles a flame of fire, it is not placed vertically, lest it should send out the power of its heat and thus overheat the brain and impair its health, because the humour of the brain by nature affects cold; but the thin head of the heart inclines to the left, towards the lungs, so that the heat of the heart may mix with the cold of the lungs, the loins and the black bile. The mind and the discernment which are in the heart, and the rationality and understanding which are in the brain, are impaired when the animal spirit which is in the heart thickens in consequence of indigestion or from any other bad chymification.

If a swelling takes place in the parts that compose the heart, or if they are affected by ill-health, or if an arrow reaches the side of the heart, or its solid substance, the man pines away and dies. But if the wound reaches the right ventricle, he dies from the spurting of blood. If it reaches the left ventricle

<sup>1</sup> The word means either "lungs" or "kidneys."

<sup>2</sup> The word used here means exclusively "lungs."



the man dies <sup>1</sup> immediately from exhaustion. There is no principal organ in the body from which death occurs as quickly, through an injury that may come to it, as the heart.

This is the heart, and these are its workings and the wonderful beauties found in it.

When the tables of the heart <sup>2</sup> are inscribed with good, by the labours connected with the fulfilment of the commandments, or with the victory over the passions and with the knowledge of the divine things, it radiates light, peace and life. But when they are inscribed with evil, it radiates tumult, perturbation, darkness and the error of ignorance, through its care  
199a for the desires of this world. It is through the latter that the heart is injured and darkened, and through the former that the mind, the memory and the understanding are purified and illuminated.

The heart itself is the sense of senses, and it has eleven links, which are called living and divine. According to the sentence of our Lord it is from them that good and evil things come out by our will.<sup>3</sup> When sleep begins to come, the lungs spread little by little towards the heart, and cover those eleven links, one after another. First of all drowsiness takes place, and then, when all the heart has been covered by the lungs, the senses cease from the work of their service, and rest.

As the darkness of the night comes upon the light of the day, so conceive you the darkness of the error of ignorance which, through negligence, holds sway over the light of knowledge found in the nature of our creation.

*The Signs, the Promises and the Mysteries of the Exercises.*

The following is the sign that a monk is progressing in the Lord: his heart is contrite in asceticism and humble in grief over small sins previously committed. Respect <sup>4</sup> and modesty even with regard to the lowly and the weak reign over him; his heart is artless and simple, even when bearing the fruits of the Spirit. His face is illuminated and joyful in his love

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "they die."

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 3, and Gregory Nyssen, *Pat. Gr.* xliv, 1075.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. xv. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. "fear of."

towards all, and he communes with everybody as if everybody were good. Do not, however, rely on your righteousness, although the grace has come upon you and your passions are partially quelled, because your nature inclines easily towards 199b good or evil.

I should also make it known to your love that virtues as well as passions are born of desire. If there is no desire, there are neither virtues nor passions. Passions are changed into virtues and virtues into passions by the will, which acquiesces in them. The soul which has set its face to the performance of virtues has in prospect a great fight with the passions, and will have no peace before it has partially subjected the passions. The material of the passions diminishes in its fight, in the measure in which the senses rest from action. The action of the senses diminishes, the passions are subjected, the soul wins a victory and progresses in virtues, as long as the monk perseveres in solitude. The following is a true sign that the soul is making progress in our Lord : if divine sweetness waxes strong in the soul even when bitter trials and tribulations, together with scoffing and mocking by many, even by friends and neighbours, multiply to the point of despair, in order to remove the virtues from the soul.

*The Rebuke of my Soul which Loves Vain Things.*

Woe unto me, and glory to my God ! To what an extent God loves me, and to what an extent I hate my soul ! God created me rational and free, bestowed the knowledge of good and evil upon me, and revealed to me the reward of my freedom, but I wilfully chose vain servitude instead of freedom. While I am clad in an outer garb that is alien to the world, lo, I wilfully 200a work in the dire servitude of the children of the world. If I had completely forsaken the world when I left it for this angelic life, its vain deeds would not have tossed me like the billows of the sea, because as there is no communion between light and darkness, so also the righteousness of the followers of our Lord is not accomplished concomitantly with worldly deeds.

What shall I do ! I hate evil deeds, but I zealously perform them ; I love good things, but I do evil things ; I have zeal



for the things which I hate, but I am infused with languor towards my personal salvation ;<sup>1</sup> I hate the passions, but I embrace them ; in my garb I am a stranger to the world, but I keep trust with the world ; I am stronger than it, but I am bound with the snares of its passions ; I am meek, but it teaches me harshness ; I have not learned its craft, but it requires it of me. When I think that I go forwards, I walk backwards. Come ye and laugh at a so-called successful man, who is entangled in cobwebs and works in dire servitude ! Come ye and laugh at a rational being who, unmindful of the promises that he has made to himself, is working backwards ! Come ye and weep over a free man who has wilfully subjected his freedom to his enemies ! Come ye and marvel at a merchant who trades with a purse which has holes in it ! Shame on me, that while victory is placed in my hand, I run towards my defeat ! The world shows me a beautiful flower, 2006 but it makes my hands grasp thorns. It places tempting bait in my mouth, but casts a snare round my neck. Why do I not flee from it while I am aware of all these snares ? Then it would not be in a position to defeat me in any of them. What is worse is that I do not notice the unclean wounds that are in me, while I behold the small scratches that are in others. The foul pus of my wounds is not distasteful to me, but I recoil from the sweat of others. The beam which is in my eyes is not too heavy for me, but I strive to amend the mote of others ;<sup>2</sup> while I am sensible that the same difficulties may assail the righteous and the sinners, and that it is God who judges both the just and the unjust. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth, and he will reach the hands of his master to make him stand in his own time."<sup>3</sup> You, O blessed one, strive even more than is in your power to flee from the vanities of this world, and to acquire upright habits and good qualities. Run towards repentance with good-will, and remember your first and last falls ; and pray for me !

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "gain."<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 3.<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 4.

*Here ends (the work) of Mar Simon of Taibūtheh, the initiated <sup>1</sup> monk. Glory be to the one divine nature which is confessed and professed in the three glorious persons, who are equal and cannot be disjoined and separated—of the Father, who is the cause, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, who are as effects from a cause—with whose assistance we began and with whose help we ended—now, always and for ever and ever. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "gnostic."



## II.

### A TREATISE ON SOLITUDE,

BY DĀDĪSHO' ẸATRĀYA.

#### PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following pages contain the text and the translation of a work on "Solitude," by the East Syrian mystic writer, Dādīsho' Ẹatrāya, who was a monk in the monastery of Rab-Kinnārē, in the Ẹaṭar district of the Persian Gulf. He seems to have flourished towards the end of the seventh century, and to have died about 690. All that is known of him and his work, with the exception of the present dissertation, is found in Baumstark's *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, pp. 226-227. The text here reproduced in facsimile is that of the above Mingana Syriac 601, of which no other copy seems to be found in any European library.

The work deals with the different aspects of solitude, and from it we learn that the early mystics attached great importance to silence or retreat, which they had divided into different stages or degrees, according to the length of time during which a monk lived in his cell. There was a solitude of seven days, or one week only, and a solitude which lasted seven weeks, both of which seem to have been closely connected with the sacred number seven, in its different ramifications. Both the solitude of one week and that of seven weeks were practised by monks who led a cenobitic or communal life in the monasteries. At a given time of his novitiate, a young Brother was allowed to leave the community, and seclude himself in a cell either inside or outside the monastery, and the present work teaches us how, when and by whom this solitude was undertaken.

The author also dilates on those who devoted their whole life to the practice of solitude, and whom he divides into three

distinct classes : the itinerant solitaires, who went from monastery to monastery and lived in special cells outside the communal life of the Brothers ; the Fathers of the Desert, who led an eremitical life by themselves in the deserts and wastes, but who occasionally came back for short periods to the monasteries and lived with their fellow-men ; and finally the anchorites, who lived " far from all human intercourse."

The devout believers known in antiquity as " Sons of the Pact," who led an ascetic life near towns and villages, were apparently found also in the author's time ; he may possibly have been the last writer to mention them, as they were replaced from the fifth and sixth centuries onwards by monks who followed the Egyptian or Pachomian monasticism, with its definite rules and regulations dealing with the communal life in monasteries.

The main theme of the present work is the exposition of the spiritual exercises performed by the class of solitaires who embraced the solitude of the seven days or that of the seven weeks. These exercises were divided into two distinct parts, dealing with both mind and body. The bodily exercises comprised vigils, fasts and canonical prayers, while the exercises of the mind embraced meditation, contemplation of God and of His saints. The continual and undisturbed practice of these two exercises resulted in the two forms of spiritual elevation which the author calls " pure prayer " and " mystical prayer."

In his prayers a monk was ordered to apply to himself every sentence or Psalm in which there is mention of sorrow or penitence, as in this way, the author tells us, " sleep will not overcome you nor will distraction harass you ; the demon will not frighten you and the Devil will not overpower you ; and during your prayers and your recitation of the Psalms your mind will be illuminated with understanding and strengthened by hope, and (you) will shed sweet tears mingled with joy and love. . . . In this way, through the continual and daily labours which you experience in your solitude, you will dwell in the mighty refuge of Christ, which leads to the house of God."

It will not be out of place here to remark that the author speaks on two different occasions of that spiritual experience



of divine illumination known as the "Inner Light." "Learn," says he, "the labours of the mind through which you attain the purity of heart which sees God in the revelation of the light." And again: "The man who does not cut off from himself all worldly memories and remembrances will not see in himself the holy light of his mind, nor will the divine light of the glory of Christ shine in his soul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." This doctrine of the "Inner Light" is a cardinal point in Muslim mysticism where it is called *النور الباطن* *inner light* or *نور البصيرة* *light of vision*.<sup>1</sup> The same "light" is known to some early Greek mystics as *Ἑλλαμψις*<sup>2</sup> or *Φωτισμός*.<sup>3</sup> The "illumination" so often spoken of by our present mystics refers to the same subject. Both "illumination" and "inner light" are also emphasised in the previous work by Simon of Ṭaibūtheh.

The author dilates also on the perfect state of divine contemplation in which the soul ceases to be impressed by worldly passions or demoniacal temptations. This ancient doctrine of the impassibility of the soul, mind and heart is similar to the more modern notion of "Quietism." In the state of impassibility a man "is impervious to temptations, as he has received his crown and is remote from all thought."

A word should be said about the virtues which were called "non-virtues," and which I have translated by "super-virtues." It is stated that these virtues are "neither accomplished through the body nor performed through the soul, but are bestowed by grace through the power of the Holy Spirit before the mind thinks of them." They were supposed to produce the following effects: "A spiritual impulse which incessantly stirs the impulses of the soul with the ardour of the perfect love of God, and the sight of the light and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit."

The monks who embraced the above-mentioned solitudes of one week or of seven weeks were, according to the author, in need of three things: good intention, the performance of

<sup>1</sup> Ghazālī's *Ihyā'*, vol. i, pp. 64, 108, 274 (edit Cairo, 1282 A. H.).

<sup>2</sup> John Climacus, *Scala*, pp. 309, 336 (edit. Roderus).

<sup>3</sup> Evagrius in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, iii, 9, 4 (§ 1).

their services in the cell in undisturbed silence, and a leader. Good intention is defined as consisting in that "a man should live in solitude only for the sake of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, never thinking or hoping in his mind to receive the reward of his labours. . . . All his aim should be to be worthy of the perfect love of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His spiritual vision." The object of the performance of the services in the cell was to keep the solitary in constant occupation, so that he might not be a target for lassitude or for the mental disturbance caused by the excitement of his passions. The solitary was not allowed to speak to anyone except to his leader, who was at liberty to commune with him and advise him from the aperture of his cell.

In rising from his sleep, the solitary kissed twice the Crucifix that was hanging in his cell, until "his heart was stirred and burned in the love of Christ." He then genuflected before the Crucifix and said: "I begin to speak before Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Help me, O God our Saviour, so that I may love Thee and keep Thy commandments; purge away my sins and deliver me from mine enemies for Thy name's sake."

The ancient mystics do not seem to have been very scrupulous in their use of Biblical quotations. In reciting verses of the Psalms, and in referring to Evangelical pericopes, they used to add to them whole sentences in order to make them more applicable to the religious experience of their solitude. The reader will find ample illustration of this point in the present work. We will only quote the following example from Psalm cxxv. 1-2, and Psalm xxxii. 10: "They that trust in the Lord through the power of their fervour, like Mount Zion will not be shaken by the fight of the demons, but will abide for ever in their solitude, because, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord Christ is round about His people, who are the solitaires in solitude. He that trusteth in the Lord through the power of his natural fervour inside his cell, in solitude, the mercy of the Holy Spirit shall compass him about, while bestowing upon him the victory over all his enemies, the passions and the demons."

A word must be said about the frequent mention of the



“demons” that one finds in the works of early mystics. In imitation of the writers of the sacred Books, they believed that many phenomena occurring in the natural and spiritual world were due to the action of the evil spirits, one of whom was on the left-hand side of every man. These demons made their existence felt through all sorts of apparitions and wicked insinuations or unholy suggestions. This action of the evil spirits was to some extent weakened by the guardian angel who stood on the right-hand side of the believer.

It is useful to draw attention here to a long extract culled by the author from the lost work of Theodore of Mopsuestia, “On Priesthood.” There is also a quotation from the work of Theodore, “On the Sacraments,” which I published in the sixth volume of the *Woodbrooke Studies*. It is gratifying to note that this quotation accords verbatim with the text which I edited and translated. A third quotation from Theodore is from his book, “On Perfection,” of the contents of which the author gives a short summary; and a fourth quotation deals with his Commentary on Acts xx. 7.

Attention should also be drawn to a striking case of literary unscrupulousness. In 1908 I ventured to remark that West Syrian writers were in the habit of bringing to their ecclesiastical fold many East Syrian authors, such as John of Phenek, one of the most implacable enemies of Monophysitism.<sup>1</sup> In the present case, not only have West Syrian copyists placed in the list of their ecclesiastical writers a staunch Nestorian like Isaac of Nineveh, but have also placed under his name, after having re-baptised him to their creed, a whole treatise written by an East Syrian or Nestorian author.

In 1909 the late Paul Bedjan published under the name of Isaac of Nineveh<sup>2</sup> a section of the first part of the work which I am editing and translating in the following pages. In comparing the two texts, it is interesting to observe how the Jacobite copyists have modified the sentences in which a Nestorian author

<sup>1</sup> See my edition of this writer in my *Sources Syriacques*, ii, pp. 2-4 of the Introduction. Cf. my *Narsai Homilies and Carmina*, ii, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Mar Isaacus Ninivita, de Perfectione Religiosa*. The present section is not translated by Wensinck in his work mentioned above, p. 9.

is clearly mentioned, or a Nestorian doctrine is expressly defined, or the writings of a Nestorian author are plainly quoted. Thus, on page 79, our author speaks of Mar Babai the Great, and of the work which he wrote for the novices. Seeing that Mar Babai was a Nestorian, the Jacobite copyist substituted for his name that of the Great Macarius, the Egyptian, but left in his text the statement concerning the "book for the novices," not realising that Macarius never wrote such a book.<sup>1</sup>

On page 79, our author states that the monks formerly spent all the night of Sunday in the recitation of Psalms and in the reading of the works of the blessed Theodore, the Interpreter. The Jacobite copyist struck out the name of Theodore, and changed the sentence into: "the works of the blessed interpreters."<sup>2</sup>

On page 93, our author writes: "and if possible do not read anything else on a Sunday except the works written by the blessed Theodore, the Interpreter, and the rest of the orthodox Doctors, on the honour and greatness of the body and blood of Christ." Here the Jacobite copyist simply changed "Theodore" into "Cyril," overlooking the fact that the epithet "Interpreter" which follows refers exclusively to Theodore, and that Cyril never wrote a work on the subject under consideration.<sup>3</sup>

On page 94, our author quotes Theodore on the interpretation of Acts xx. 7, as follows: "The blessed Interpreter, in revealing the power of the meaning of this verse, wrote as follows," etc. The Jacobite copyist, not knowing, as stated above, that the epithet "Interpreter" referred exclusively to Theodore, left the sentence as it was, and gave the whole quotation as coming from Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>4</sup>

On pages 94-95 our author quotes another long passage from the work of Theodore on the Sacraments, which, as stated above, agrees *verbatim* with the text which I edited and translated in the sixth volume of the *Woodbrooke Studies*. The Jacobite copyist, again ignoring the fact that the epithet "Interpreter" referred to Theodore, preserved all this extract, and was audacious enough to imply that it emanated from Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. 604 of Bedjan's text.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 605.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 625.



Finally, on page 95 our author quotes a whole chapter from the work of Theodore, entitled "The Book on Priesthood." The Jacobite copyist substitutes, as usual, the name of Cyril for that of Theodore, and in this way ascribes to the celebrated Bishop of Alexandria a work which he never wrote.<sup>1</sup>

Another point which our Jacobite writers seem to have overlooked in their dealings with the present treatise on the Solitude of the Seven Weeks, is that the author has in view the various periods of seven weeks into which the ecclesiastical year of the Nestorians is divided. Indeed Dādīsho' wrote his treatise as an explanation to one series of these seven weeks found in the East Syrian breviary. As the Jacobite ecclesiastical year has no such periods of seven weeks, the Jacobite authors who unscrupulously selected this treatise and placed it under the name of an author whom they had already rebaptised as a Jacobite, were probably not aware that this fact itself convicted them of deliberate inaccuracy.

#### TRANSLATION.

36 *With the assistance of our Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to write useful discourses on the solitude of the Seven Weeks ; on how the solitary has to exert himself ; on the kind of observances of which he is in need, and on the importance of solitude—composed by the holy Rabban Mar Dādīsho' Ḳaṭrāya, the solitary and the reliable spiritual philosopher,<sup>2</sup> from the monastery of Rab-Kinnārē. Help me, our Lord, with Thy mercy, and bring my work to completion in peace. Amen.*

Because a request was made to me by your love, O my Brother and my beloved, to write to you, according to your wish, on a few admonitions and observances congruous to the  
4a man who wishes to keep the solitude of the Seven Weeks, I

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 626-627 of Bedjan's text.

<sup>2</sup> Text *yaddū'thāna*, which generally refers to the class of mystics known as "the initiated." See above, p. 27. For the sake of uniformity I will retain in the following pages (as I did in the previous work) the rendering "initiated" although the Syriac word is more correctly to be translated by "expert."

will, in order to comply with your wish and fulfil your desire, write to you a few things, with the help of your prayer and according to the weakness of my knowledge.

Before anything else you should know that the whole framework of the spiritual exercise of the Christians is characterised by various distinctions. Indeed Christ our Lord knew the weakness of human nature and was aware of the complexity of the will of the Christians, in that not all of them were willing or in a position to tread the arduous and difficult path of perfection, and to strive diligently, arduously and zealously to reach, through pain of the body and sweat of the soul, the goal set before them by our Lord Jesus Christ. This goal consists in that they should love Him wholeheartedly in the work of observing His life-giving commandments till death, in the same way as our Lord Himself loved them wholeheartedly and made manifest to them His love in all the sufferings which He endured for them and all the trials which He bore on their behalf till His ignominious death on the Cross. It is for this reason that He dealt with them in His sublime mercy, and spread before them many roads and different paths, so that anyone finding himself unable to walk in one road because of its difficulties might walk in another because of its ease, and anyone finding himself unwilling or unable to walk in and follow one, because of its hardness and strenuousness, might walk in and follow another because<sup>46</sup> of its smoothness and evenness, in order that no Christian, believing in Christ, might be deprived of the happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven which He granted to them through His passion, His death and the shedding of His blood for them, and that all Christians might enter into the Kingdom and rejoice in it with our Lord.

Every one will have his reward and his happiness in the measure of his love for our Lord, and in the measure of his keeping of His commandments. Our Lord said: "In my Father's house are many mansions,"<sup>1</sup> and His Apostle said: "For as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also it will happen at the resurrection of the dead."<sup>2</sup> There are,

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 41-42.



therefore, many who embrace the spiritual exercises of Christianity, but one is higher and more virtuous and perfect than another.

Indeed the work of good Christian laymen is one thing, and the work of the *Sons of the Pact*,<sup>1</sup> another. Another thing is also the work of those who are called monks, who do not marry, and do not eat meat ; who wear a humble garb, and whose tonsure is smaller than that of the anchorites, but larger than that of the laymen ; who perform all the Hours ; who sow the fields of the monasteries, and reap ; who receive and serve with eagerness all travellers, men and women of all conditions, as their monasteries are built on the highways : this is the work of those who are called monks.

Further, one thing is the work of the young solitaries<sup>2</sup> who  
5a live a cenobitic life in monasteries, and another the work of the solitaries who live in their own cells and keep the short solitude of week-days. Another thing is also the work of the solitaries who keep the solitude of the Seven Obligatory Weeks, that is to say, of the Seven Weeks of the Fast of our Lord,<sup>3</sup> of the Fast of the Apostles, and of the Fast of the Prophets.<sup>4</sup> Different from the above are the exercise and the regulations of the solitaries who lead an eremitical life, by themselves, in the deserts and wastes, outside the communal life of monks ; and different again are the exercise and the regulations of the itinerant solitaries, like those twelve who are mentioned in the book of the Abbot Isaiah, and like those seven wandering and itinerant (monks) who repaired once to the Abbot Sisoës, who was dwelling in a cave at Clysma. Different also from the above is the high, arduous and perfect exercise of the solitaries known as anchorites (who live far from all human intercourse).

It is time now to speak of the various distinctions in the spiritual exercises of the Christians, because every one of them requires a separate discourse to demonstrate its exact character.

<sup>1</sup> The *Sons of the Pact* were early ascetics who often lived a communal life near towns and villages.

<sup>2</sup> The word "solitary" as will be seen below, refers to any monk who lives alone for a period of time.

<sup>3</sup> Lent.

<sup>4</sup> Allusion to the East Syrian Ecclesiastical Year, in which there are seven weeks called "of the Apostles," and seven "of the Prophets" (Elijah), etc.

I shall write to you as you requested me, on the solitude of the Seven Obligatory Weeks, in short terms only, so that I may not spoil one good thing by a super-abundance of it, and discourage your zeal. In this way you will be enabled to please God in the delightful exercises of solitude.

I will first answer the request which you made: "Why have not Mar Bābai and the Fathers of his time in their writings been seen to order and induce the Brothers <sup>1</sup> to keep the solitude <sup>5b</sup> of the Seven Weeks?" and later I will say a few words on the benefit that accrues from the silence and the solitude of these Seven Weeks.

Let it be known to you, O beloved Brother, that if our time had been the time in which lived Mar Bābai the Great and the rest of his fellow-saints, the brother-novices would have been in little need of their seclusion during the Seven Obligatory Weeks. At that time, as we learn from the book which he wrote for the novices, a Brother living in his cell did not go out of it in the middle of the week till Sunday, nor did any of the Brothers go to his fellow-monk in the middle of the week. On a Saturday they went out of their cells in the evening and came to the community while fasting, and because the Brothers received Communion on a Saturday evening throughout the year, in the winter as well as in the summer, immediately after the Fathers and the Brothers went out of their cells, they all assembled in the monastery in order to hear the public reading; and if anyone neglected to do this, he was severely punished. Later they rose for the Evening Service, partook of the body and blood of our Lord, and went to the refectory. Immediately after they had left the refectory, they began the last Vespers. They spent all the night of Sunday in prayer, and never slept, but passed all the night in the recitation of holy psalms, in praise of God, in prayers, and in the reading of the works of the blessed <sup>6a</sup> Theodore, the Interpreter, and of the Fathers of the desert.<sup>2</sup>

The Brothers were much enlightened by the Fathers, from the many questions they were asked, and neither the demons nor any extraneous causes could find occasion to tempt the

<sup>1</sup> In the case of monks I prefer the use of the word "Brothers" with a capital B to that of "brethren."

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "solitary Fathers."



Brothers who were weak, half-hearted and luke-warm in their observances, and make them stumble with their tongues in quarrels and disputes, or in calumnies and defamation, or in the worldly news and the insipid and dull stories which are wont to disturb the hearing of the Brothers who are virtuous, strict in their observances and zealous. Whenever there was a Brother who suffered in his cell, in the middle of the week, from weariness, fatigue, dejectedness and languor, as soon as he came to the assembly of the Brothers, and noticed the marvellous labours of the Fathers, and all the observances<sup>1</sup> of the rest of the Brothers, he was kindled like fire with spiritual ardour, and went back to his cell well provisioned and well helped for the labours and the work of all the week, on account of the things that he had seen and heard.

Because of all these benefits which their souls used to reap from their gathering together on the blessed day of Sunday, the novices did not feel much the seclusion of the Seven Weeks. In our time, however, which is devoid of virtues and in which zeal has subsided and love vanished, and we have fallen short of observances, when we go out to the assembly, the measure<sup>6b</sup> of our empty, idle and insipid speech is greater than our service, our prayer and our reading; and if there are any amongst us who keep the observances, their observances of the whole week vanish when they go out, through the idle talk which they hear from those who have hardened themselves in this bad habit, through weakness and persistent infidelity to their observances. For this reason it is necessary that those who strive after the welfare of their souls and are eager for the love of our Lord and the fulfilment of His delightful and life-giving commandments, should continue assiduously in solitude, every one according to his capacity.

At the beginning, a man should accustom himself to the solitude of a single week only, and never go out of his cell in the middle of the week, nor allow anybody to go to him; and, if possible, no one should speak to him even from the aperture

<sup>1</sup> The word *netūrta* refers to the state of being on one's guard spoken of in the previous treatise. I have sometimes rendered it by "observances" as above, and sometimes by "watchfulness."

of his cell, until he has inured himself against the trials which come upon him from the demons and the passions that beset the solitude of the week-days, and until all the spiritual understandings and divine consolations are granted to him by the grace (of God), according to the requirements of the order of his short solitude of these week-days. He will later go up gradually to the solitude which is higher than this, and which is that of the Obligatory Seven Weeks. At the end, if he is capable and willing, he will be perfected by the complete and perpetual solitude of all his life, according to the will of our Lord.

If a man who is keeping the short solitude of the week-days, and labouring in this solitude during all the year to keep watch over his senses and his thoughts in the measure of his power and capacity—because God does not require of a man more than his capacity—happens to go out to the assembly of the congregation on a Sunday, and notices that not only is he not progressing in his observances, in his labours and in the love of retreat in his cell, but on more than one occasion he is falling short of his state of watchfulness in consequence of what he sees and hears ; and the sounds of his voice reverberate in the air ; and he is attracted by all sorts of happenings, either profitable or not ; and becomes accustomed to negligence and to the state of unwatchfulness in which a man hates his cell, and this weakness induces him to go in and out, and to eat, drink, talk and speak—let him run with zeal to his cell and embrace with a joyful heart the solitude of the Obligatory Seven Weeks.

The solitude of which Saint Evagrius spoke when he said that “solitude is good and acceptable, etc., but let him who is unable to meet the abysses of evil thoughts take care not to be injured in his mind ” refers neither to the solitude that takes place in the communal life of the Brothers, nor to that of the week-days, nor to that of the Seven Weeks, nor even to the solitude imposed by some monks upon themselves in the monasteries, but it refers to the solitude which is kept in the desert and remote wastes. This solitude does not benefit everybody, but only those perfect <sup>1</sup> people who have been seasoned with

<sup>1</sup> Lit. “ people who have been salted.”



the salt of knowledge, who have abundantly acquired the love of solitude and endowed themselves with great endurance.

There are three great and mighty fights which specially beset a lonely life in the desert : a great fear at night, a severe  
 7b and cruel weariness in the daytime, and the mental deception caused by the demons. If these three fights occur to a man in the desert, and if he be ignorant, devoid of love for our Lord, not endowed with much endurance, and lacking a leader, his mind will easily be injured. The severity of these fights does not accompany those who live in the middle of the assembly of the Brothers, and who never cherish solitude, whether it be the short solitude of the week-days,<sup>1</sup> or the middle solitude of the Seven Weeks, or that complete solitude which is imposed on themselves by some Brothers who live in monasteries. If those (fights) happen to be of a mild character, a leader is sufficient to defeat and overcome them with the help of God. The blessed Evagrius, therefore, said : " If a Brother does not profit by solitude, let him revert to the discipline of the community." He did not mean that if a man does not profit by the solitude practised in the monastery by many Brothers, whether it be the solitude of the Seven Weeks or the complete solitude of seclusion, let him revert to a cenobitic life, or let him undertake the solitude of the week-days. He only taught that if a man is unable to endure the severity of the fights which take place in the solitude outside the monastery, let him go back immediately to the monastery, and undertake there either the solitude of the Seven Weeks or the complete solitude.

The Brother, however, is only to resort to solitude under the order of the leader of his congregation, and with the advice of his spiritual Fathers and the prayers of his Brothers. If they are not willing to allow him this at the beginning, let him  
 8a not desist from his desire and abandon it, but let him pray God with repentance and tears that, if it should be helpful to him, He may inspire the leader of the congregation to give him the required permission, and may induce his spiritual Fathers and Brothers to rejoice in his solitude and to encourage him and pray

<sup>1</sup> Text, " Sundays."

for him. If he does this with faith and humility, God will answer his prayer and fulfil his desire. It is indeed not good that any prayer addressed by a man to our Lord or to His saints should be answered quickly, but it is fitting that he should work for it in a proper way and then that it should be answered; and let him not think that because it has not been answered immediately, God is not willing to grant his request.

The man who embraces solitude, especially the solitude of the Seven Weeks, is before anything else in need of three things, which are: good intention, the performance of his spiritual services in his cell in an undisturbed silence, and a leader. A Brother is in dire need of these three things, and if he is unable to perform his service and canonical (prayer) in the cell without curtailment, because hindered by the weakness of his body or the dejectedness of his soul from performing them,<sup>1</sup> let him at least be careful not to abandon his good intention and his leader,<sup>2</sup> because these two things neither the weakness of the body nor the dejectedness of the soul can injure, hurt or hamper.

Good intention is especially required of a solitary because without it all the work of perfection will be counted as vainly performed and without reward. As a high tower which is erected on a crooked foundation falls down with ease, so also the tower of the exercise of perfection, the aim of which is not straight,<sup>8b</sup> will easily incline and fall. Good intention consists in this, that a man should live in solitude only for the sake of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, never thinking or expecting in his mind to receive the reward of his labours in any worldly thing, either in the sphere of bodily rest or of material reward, promotion in leadership or honour, praise or evanescent glory. He should not even wish, desire and pray that our Lord should grant him, as a reward of his labours, to perform miracles and wonders or any of the gifts of the Spirit, on account of which he might be known and honoured by men. All his aim and intention should be to be worthy of the perfect love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His spiritual vision, like a virgin princess

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " these canons."

<sup>2</sup> Read *mehadyāneh*.



betrothed to a king, who does not look to, and desire anything from, the wealth of her betrothed, but only the sight of him, his love and his company. This is the good and praiseworthy intention which a solitary ought to possess in his cell in connection with the laudable exercise of solitude.

The solitary is in need also of performing his (canonical) services of solitude, as these keep him from the injury of the demons his enemies. The Abbot Isaiah said : " Do not despise  
9a your services, in order not to fall into the hands of your enemies."

Through these very services his soul is strengthened, his mind is illuminated, and what is due to him is granted to him, like stipends to the soldiers of a king. The Abbot Mark said : " When we fulfil the commandments and perform our services, we receive what is due to us from the Lord," that is to say, if we do not despise the fulfilment of our services and our canonical prayers of solitude, but perform these services in the measure of our power, capacity and knowledge, spiritual understandings, divine consolations and victory over passions and demons will be daily granted to us.

The young solitary in seclusion is also in dire need of a leader who will visit him on special occasions and speak to him from the aperture of his cell, of the necessary things, and advise him about the things which he is to perform.

There are two severe fights that assail the young solitary who sits in solitude. The first is excessive dejectedness, and the second the kindling of the passions by the demons. These two things are contrary to each other, and in both of them he is in need of an old and experienced man who will console him, comfort him in case he is troubled with dejectedness, and teach him, admonish him and reprove him in case the demons have made him fall through their kindling of the passions. This is the reason why Saint Ephrem says somewhere : " The path will not be smoothed before us without a leader, who is established by God for those who wish to proceed to Him." Indeed, numerous are the hindrances engendered by mental deception to perplex the man who strives to extricate himself from its snares !

As to your question whether a novice who is keeping the

solitude of the Seven Weeks is obliged to observe the canonical 96 prayers on Sundays, and whether he ought to go out of his cell in order to receive the Holy Sacrament secretly, and whether it befits him to converse from the aperture (of his cell) with those who come to greet him, and to speak with his servant <sup>1</sup> and induce him to read for him a chapter of the Book, or to do similar things—let it be known to you that some of the canons of solitude, as enacted by the Fathers, are absolute and never to be broken, and some others have been enacted so that they may be observed by every one according to his knowledge and capacity. I will, however, write to you about this according to my judgment. I agree with the aim of the Fathers in what they have said about solitude, and from what I have myself known and experienced I believe that the novice who is undertaking the solitude of the Seven Weeks should never go out of the door of his cell, even one step, from the beginning of his solitude till its end, and should never converse with anybody, whether high or low, whether from among the inmates or from outsiders, even with his own pupil. He should converse with his teacher and his leader, and this also only once in the whole time of the Seven Weeks, or twice if very necessary. If, however, a man is unable to observe all this strictly, let him measure his solitude according to his capacity, power and knowledge, and God, who looks at his good intention, will accept his exertions, even if his ability and his knowledge are deficient.

Hear now the reason why the Fathers do not allow a secluded 10a Brother to converse with anybody. The Brother who secludes himself from the communal assembly of the Brothers, and desires solitude, does not intend only to inflict on himself bodily hardships with fasts, vigils, abstinence, recitation of psalms, frequent genuflections, sleeping on the bare ground, and similar hardships. All these things are indeed performed by all those who keep the solitude of week-days only, and even by ordinary zealous people who lead a cenobitic life. So far as a Brother who desires solitude is concerned, his aim and the advantages which he should strive to gain from his solitude are the following :

<sup>1</sup> The servant often mentioned in this treatise was a pupil attached to a monk living in seclusion, in order to learn from him the exercises of asceticism.



1. Weeping over his past sins and mourning over his daily imperfections. The two anchorites whom the great Abbot Macarius visited said to him : " If you are not able to be like us, sit in your cell and weep over your sins."

2. Hardening himself against the temptations of the demons. The Abbot Antony said to Paulé the Simple, his pupil : " Sit in solitude in order to harden yourself against the temptations of the demons."

3. Knowledge of himself, that is to say, that he should make himself aware of his ungodly inclinations. John, the Prophet and the Seer of the Thebaid, said : " No one is able to know himself except in solitude."

106 4. Continuous remembrance of God, and rejection of all other memories. The Abbot Macarius, the Egyptian, said : " It is imperative that the one who undertakes the exercise of solitude should never think of anyone while sitting in his cell."

5. Struggling against passions and demons. John the Great, the Seer of the Thebaid, said : " Spiritual wisdom is the great pillar of the man of God, and this wisdom is not seen and possessed outside the endurance that comes from struggles, and this happens when a man embraces solitude and the trial of fights and temptations."

6. Purity of heart. Evagrius, the greatest of all the Initiated, said : " Purity of heart is possessed by the rejection, in solitude, of all thoughts of visible things."

7. Peace of mind. The venerable, white-haired Abbot Isaiah said : " Peace begets peace."

8. Pure prayer.<sup>1</sup> The Abbot Mark, the spiritual philosopher, said : " If you have ever conquered the fortified place of pure prayer,<sup>2</sup> do not accept the material knowledge that is inspired by the enemy, so that you may not lose the higher knowledge. It is better that you should pierce him with the arrows of prayer while he is fettered in the solitude of the lower sphere, than that he should be given time to prepare booty to himself by striving to distract us <sup>3</sup> from our prayer against him."

<sup>1</sup> There is below a special section on "pure prayer" and another on "spiritual prayer."

<sup>2</sup> The new paragraph used here in the text is erroneous.

<sup>3</sup> The change of pronouns is due to the author.

In showing the character and the number of the divine gifts that are daily bestowed on a solitary who endures his solitude, he also said : " Let him begin with work." What is this work ? : 11a solitude, rejection of evil thoughts, and continuous prayer. When we progress by stages in this way, we find not only hope in God, but true faith, pure love, forgetting of evil things, affection towards our Brothers, abstinence, patience, inner knowledge, deliverance from temptations, spiritual gifts, gratefulness of heart, tears of compunction, endurance of the trials that assail us, guileless forgiveness of our neighbour, knowledge of the spiritual commandments, perception of the justice of God, visitation of the Holy Spirit, and gift of the spiritual treasures. All these gifts are bestowed on the solitaries who live in seclusion, through solitude and prayer ; and a man desires solitude for the acquisition of all these benefits. The man who does not cut off from himself all memories and all remembrances, and does not refuse all intercourse with men, and live incessantly in solitude with good intention and love of hardships, will not recall his early sins, nor will he see his daily imperfections ; will not know his evil inclinations, nor will he understand the promptings of the demons ; will not prepare himself for the fight against the passions and the demons, nor will he attain purity of heart ; will not possess pure prayer, nor will he be worthy of spiritual prayer ; will not see in himself the holy light of his mind,<sup>1</sup> nor will the 11b divine light of the glory of Christ shine in his soul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

All these gifts and benefits have never been given and will never be given outside the cell and solitude, but all those who love solitude and endure its trials will receive them without diminution. Even if there are people who have left the world, to whom the last set of the above benefits have not been given, from fear that they might be affected by pride and lose everything, or for some other reasons unknown to us, they will never be deprived of the first set of these benefits, and they will even fully enjoy the last set of benefits in the Kingdom of Heaven, because of their love for our Lord, and the tribulations which,

<sup>1</sup> On the doctrine of the " Inner Light," see *Prefatory Note*.



for His love, they had endured in their solitude. They will reach as far as purity of heart, pure prayer, and perception of God, if they persist in their solitude, and this even if for some unknown reasons spiritual prayer is not granted to them, and they are not rendered worthy of the mystery of the revelations of Christ.

It is for this reason that our blessed Fathers warn us in their books that a man who lives in solitude should not converse with another man, except in case of illness and necessity. Indeed, if a man is unable to dominate the senses of his body, and especially his sight, his hearing, and his tongue, he will  
 12a not find peace for his soul. The Abbot Mark said : " The mind cannot be at peace if the body is not," and John the Seer said : " He should deprive himself of seeing, hearing, and of the other senses, which are the fetters of the mind." Indeed, what profit can accrue from seclusion and solitude to a novice who does not accustom himself to quell the senses of his body, but speaks with his tongue to his servant, or to other Brothers, sees them with his eyes, and listens to their words with his ears? Or how can he appreciate the savour of the sweetness of solitude, except after having previously tasted its bitterness? And how can he taste this sweetness, if he has not previously perceived the bitterness and languor of dejectedness? The person who lives in seclusion does not make room for dejectedness to assail him if he lets in his servant, asks him questions, and converses with him and with those who wish to see him from the aperture of his cell, and in this case there will not be even room for the severe fight of the passions and the terrors of the nights. Every one's fights and the benefits bestowed upon him are measured by the degree of his solitude, seclusion and observances.

I say all this with an eye fixed on accuracy, but our blessed Fathers, with an eye fixed on the weakness of individual solitaries, permitted that every one should conduct himself, according to his power, knowledge and zeal, and according to the grace bestowed upon him. The only condition imposed is that he should  
 12b be in solitude and seclusion, because a solitary who is not in seclusion and solitude is not a solitary. A solitary who leaves his cell, his silence, his solitude and his seclusion, and goes

out indiscriminately whenever he wishes, for eating, drinking and conversing with others, if with one only, is not a solitary, but one of two ; if with two, he should be called not a solitary, but one of three ; and if with many, he should be called not a solitary, but one of many.

A man is a true solitary, and is so called, when he lives alone by himself, with the Only Begotten Son of God, who by grace made him worthy of the honour of His name. He prays God night and day, with compunction and tears, to pardon him, to purify and forgive his sins by His grace, and grant him the power of the Holy Spirit, so that he may be perfected in His love, and be enabled to fulfil His commandments. In case he has not been granted the tears of grace, and in case he is devoid of the tears of repentance, the suffering of his heart and the repentance of his soul will take the place of the tears. Let him not desist, shrink and rest from solitude, prayer and supplication, until he feels secretly, through the voice <sup>1</sup> of hope, that his sins have been forgiven, that the spark of the fire of the love of Christ has caught in his heart, that he has received power to fulfil His commandments and been strengthened against his passions, that his thoughts have been pacified, and the unruly urges of his body been quenched, that the demons have been put to shame, and he has thoroughly assimilated the joy of <sup>13a</sup> the face of his Lord and the sweetness of the victory of His right hand.<sup>2</sup> This is a solitary, and this is the aim of eremitism.

If anyone is not able to do this, from lack of faith, or from any other weakness, the blessed Mark, in reproving his perplexity, said that even if he possessed true self-knowledge and were progressing in the measure of his power, it would be better for him if he were to plead lack of true self-knowledge, rather than to plead temptation (of the demons) and ignorance as the source of his misery and languor.

But you, O my beloved, if you are not able at one time to keep a strict solitude, because your sitting for it is only at its beginning, and if you are in need of speaking to your servant, speak to him from the aperture of your cell, and exhort him

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " persuasion."

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xvi. 11 (Peshitta).



strongly not to converse with you about anything that would injure you, nor to reveal to you any news of the world, nor any of the happenings of the monastery; and if you wish to see the Fathers who come from outside and who are desirous to meet you, see them from your aperture, converse with them with circumspection, and ask their prayers for your safe-keeping. As to the inmates of your monastery, you should not see them until your Seven Weeks have expired, with the exception of your leader, guide or Father Superior, who might wish to see you.

136 In the day-time of Sundays, recite your statutory prayers as usual, as long as you are a beginner, until such known time as the cell itself can teach you everything according to the words of the Fathers: the time in which, as the Abbot Isaiah said, you reach the period of changes. In the night-time of Sundays, recite the two "Prayers of the Sittings,"<sup>1</sup> like others, and perform the remaining part of your statutory prayers and your service according to the solitude of the week-days. If you never see anyone nor converse with anyone during the whole of the Seven Weeks, and if you perceive that solitude is better for your mind, do not go out to receive the Holy Communion until the end of the solitude of the Seven Weeks. If, however, you converse with others, and thus do not live in complete solitude, go out of your cell on the night of Saturday, a little before the bell of the Night Service, and receive the Communion from the Sacrament that has been consecrated on Friday,<sup>2</sup> and return to your cell while not conversing with anyone, not even with the sacristan.

In case you are living in perfect solitude, and wish never to go out of your cell until the end of the Seven Weeks, not even for the sake of receiving the life-giving Communion, spend the whole night and day of Sunday in your cell, in humble and contrite thoughts, and refrain from eating a portion of your food in honour of the remembrance of the body and blood of our Lord. If, however, you are not able to set aside a portion

<sup>1</sup> Title of prayers found in the East Syrian breviary. They are so called because recited in a sitting posture.

<sup>2</sup> In the ancient Church the Mass was said on Sundays and Fridays.

of your usual food, because your body is weak, set aside something in your mind, that is to say, sorrow and repentance, and say to yourself: "I am a sinner and a delinquent. In the same way as when a man commits a sin, Ecclesiastical Law forbids him<sup>1</sup> to have access to the participation in the Holy Mysteries<sup>14a</sup> for a well-defined time, according to the measure of his sin, until he has reconciled himself to God through repentance, and then he is allowed to receive the life-giving Sacrament—so also is the case with me, who have kindled the wrath of God by my prevarications and my numerous misdeeds. I will sit in my cell during the whole period of the solitude of the Seven Weeks, and turn away from human intercourse and from outside affairs, in the measure of the power which I have to remember my sins and to weep over my misdeeds. I will continue in solitude in my cell, in order to weep over my sins and reconcile myself to my Lord with my tears. And at the end of the Seven Weeks, when my time in the furnace of my repentance is completed, then the grace of Christ our Lord will render me worthy of participation in His body and His blood, and of the sight of, and intercourse with, His saints. Indeed, our Lord said: 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs'<sup>2</sup> like me, and because I am a dog and not a son, it is not meet that whenever the sons of our Lord delight and rejoice in the Communion of His table, I also should eat and delight, but, in company with well-known masters, I will eat sometimes of the crumbs of my Lord and live. And as He forbids me . . .<sup>3</sup> and from the delight of His table, so also He forbids me the sight of the holy Fathers, His children, and the blessed Brothers, till the full completion of the Seven Weeks. According to the canons and regulations that have come down to us from early times, from the holy Fathers, a man who undertakes the solitude<sup>14b</sup> of the Seven Weeks is never to go out of his cell or to see or converse with anyone till the end of these Seven Weeks."

Make use, during all the time of your seclusion, of these humble and lowly thoughts and of this penitent mind and repentant soul, especially during all the day and night of the

<sup>1</sup> Read *leh* for *lakh*.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> A lacuna of one line in the manuscript.



holy Sunday. You should not turn away your mind from the remembrance and the honour due to the Holy Mysteries, and from the spiritual intercourse with our Lord's saints and Brothers, because you are in your body removed from Communion, and from performing all the obligations of Sunday in the company of your Fathers and Brothers who are outside. Discern the body and the blood of our Lord,<sup>1</sup> as the blessed Apostle Paul warned us, and think of the Holy Sacrament all the night and day of Sunday, with great love and much fear, and endeavour more than on week-days to purify your heart from thoughts of passions, urges of the demons, and worldly remembrances. Strive also and endeavour to possess in your soul the perfect love, full of extasy, towards the Holy Mysteries, which was possessed in his soul by that anchorite, worthy of all blessings, who for forty years ate the pith of reeds ; at the end of forty years, in which he had not eaten or seen bread, it happened  
15a that he saw bread, after all this interval, carried by some men who were crossing the desert. Because of the boundless love which his soul possessed towards the Holy Sacrament, he used to run in his thought and enter the sanctuary every Sunday, and contemplate earnestly with the eye of his mind the body and the blood of Christ our Lord, which were placed on the altar, and to delight in them spiritually, like angels of Heaven ; and because he was manifesting all this love, honour and awe towards the Holy Mysteries, while in body he was away from them, immediately after he had seen bread, which in its nature resembles the holy bread that is placed on the altar, his great joy made his soul throb in the remembrance of the body and blood of our Lord, and he exclaimed and said loudly : " Glory be to Thee, O our Lord Jesus Christ, because after forty years Thou hast made me worthy to see the bread which by nature resembles the bread that the priests offer on Thy holy altar, and which, through the prayers and the benedictions of the priests and through the descent of Thy Spirit upon it, becomes truly Thy body and gives remission of sins and imparts eternal life to those who receive it."

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 29.

Remember also the desire and love possessed by the blessed Saint Hebīsha, whose history is written in the "Book of the God-Lovers." When Bishop Theodoret repaired to him, he did not permit him to enter his cell, except after repeated requests, and said to him: "Since you have insisted on coming into my cell against my regulations, make me partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then the Bishop ordered the altar vestments to be brought in, and prepared for the Mass. He used a deacon in lieu of an altar, and he placed on his hands the paten and the chalice, and began to consecrate the Holy Mysteries. As to the saint himself, he was filled with spiritual joy, and believed that he was contemplating Heaven, and exclaimed: "I have never experienced such a joy!"

O my beloved, after you have experienced and known the kind of love, awe and honour possessed by the anchorites and those men who live in seclusion, towards the body and blood of our Lord, imitate them also, and live in this thought especially during all the night and day of the holy Sunday, and if possible do not read anything else on a Sunday except the works written by the blessed Theodore, the Interpreter, and the rest of the orthodox Doctors, on the honour and greatness of the body and blood of Christ. Before anything else, read on a Sunday the sixth chapter of the book of John the Evangelist. You will there notice that our Lord said: "I am the bread which came down from Heaven: and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world."<sup>1</sup> "For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."<sup>2</sup> And I will raise him up at the last day, etc."<sup>3</sup> 16a

Recite also the verses uttered by our Lord and found in the other Evangelists: "This is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins, and this is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins."<sup>4</sup> Meditate also on the things written by the blessed Paul on the awe, honour and greatness due to the body and the blood of our Lord: "The bread

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvi. 26, 28; 1 Cor. xi. 24.



which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"<sup>1</sup> "He that eateth the body of the Lord and drinketh His cup unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, because he has not discerned the body and the blood of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> "Let a man therefore examine himself and then eat of this bread and drink of this cup."<sup>3</sup> "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do remember the Lord's death till He come."<sup>4</sup>

With this, remember also what is written in the book of the Acts of the Apostles: "And upon the first day of the week, when they came together to break bread."<sup>5</sup> The blessed Interpreter,<sup>6</sup> in revealing the power of the meaning of this verse, wrote as follows: "On every Sunday we commemorate the festival of the resurrection of our Lord, and what the blessed  
 166 Luke said, 'Upon the first day of the week they came together to break bread' means that they came together, according to the requirements of Sunday, which is the commemoration of the resurrection of our Lord, in order to perform the Mysteries, the completion of which is the commemoration of the death of our Lord, which took place for the resurrection of all and the abolition of death, as the Apostle said also: 'As often as ye eat of this bread, etc.' It is with justice that the blessed Apostles singled out this day specially to perform the Mysteries, as in it the resurrection of our Lord took place for the abolition of death. He said: 'When they came together to break bread' because although they dealt with many other things, such as scripture reading and words of admonition, he confined himself to the act of performing the Mysteries, because this act is higher than all of them, and confirms all of them, as it is the sign and the remembrance of the benefits which were made manifest to us by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Read also the words written by the blessed Interpreter in his work, "Commentary on the Sacrament," out of which we cull the following: "The body and the blood of our Lord,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xx. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> *I.e.*, Theodore of Mopsuestia.

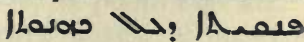
and the grace of the Holy Spirit that is vouchsafed unto us therefrom, will strengthen us in doing good works, and invigorate our minds, while driving away from us ungodly thoughts, and quenching (the fire of) our sins . . . when we ask this of Him in repentance and sorrow."<sup>1</sup> "As we take food for the sustenance of our body, so we partake of the Holy Sacrament for the sustenance of our hope."<sup>2</sup>

If you truly desire that the fear, affection and love of the greatness of the Holy Mysteries should be fixed in your heart, 17a and that their delightful and awe-inspiring remembrance should be found in your soul as a treasure of life, and if you desire also to acquire grief over your sins, read carefully and with understanding—on all the Sundays of your solitude of the Seven Weeks, while you are humbly sitting face to face with the adorable Cross<sup>3</sup>—the second discourse of the "Book on Priesthood"<sup>4</sup> written by the Blessed Interpreter, a chapter of which is as follows: "At what time will the one who, in spite of having done all those things which were commanded, ought to count himself among the unprofitable (servants),<sup>5</sup> according to the words of our Lord, ever dare to look at the Holy Mysteries, or draw nigh unto them, let alone eat and drink the exalted nature which is united with the divine nature, which is sitting at the right-hand of God, which is high above all created things, which lives in Heaven and dwells in the resplendent light, the sight of which the eyes of men are not able to bear?<sup>6</sup> When the blessed Paul received a small fraction of the ray of that light—in the measure of what his sight was able to bear—his pupils received an injury which would have been without remedy, had he not been found worthy of being healed by God. How much more intensely will shine over all the earth the light which will be seen at the end, when

<sup>1</sup> This quotation is found in my edition of this work of Theodore of Mopsuestia in *Woodbrooke Studies*, Vol. vi, p. 117 of the translation, and p. 259 of the text.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Evidently each cell was provided with a Cross.

<sup>4</sup> This "Book on Priesthood" by Theodore of Mopsuestia is now lost, and the present quotation from it is therefore of some importance. The book is mentioned by 'Abdisho' in his catalogue as:  (Assemani, *Bib. Orient.* iii, 33).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Luke xvii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. vi. 16.



17b Christ our Lord shall appear from Heaven ! It will make the sun look like darkness, by the power of its radiance—that sun on which we should not be able to look if God did not give us strength to do it. How then would it not be bold on our part to look at Him, and how would it not be dangerous to draw nigh unto Him ? As to the fact of eating Him and drinking Him, it would be the idea of mad people and of those who are smitten with the incurable disease of insanity, if we believed that we could reach Him through our own worth, had not our merciful Lord God given us the power to do so. The body which He assumed from us, and which is so high and sublime, He made it so by uniting it to Himself for our benefit, when He raised us and made us sit with Him in Heaven in Christ,<sup>1</sup> as the Apostle said, so that we might be glorified in Him and reign with Him,<sup>2</sup> after having been fashioned like unto His glorious body.<sup>3</sup> He assumed therefore this (man) for us and for our benefit, and before everything else He prepared Him to die, and He became not only high above us but also above all creation, through resurrection, and He gave Him to us to eat and drink, in His ineffable mercy, and promised to those who eat and drink Him not punishment, but life everlasting.”

The blessed Interpreter wrote these words, with some others which are found in the same discourse, and which are the life 18a of the Christians and the hope of the penitent. Read them, meditate upon them, and learn them by heart, and whenever the remembrance of the Holy Mysteries comes to your mind, fix the sight of your mind towards the altar, and cry with sorrow mixed with love, and say thus : “ My soul thirsteth for Thee, O living God.<sup>4</sup> When shall the Seven Weeks end, and shall I come and see Thy face ? My soul thirsteth for Thee, and my flesh longeth for Thee,<sup>5</sup> to see Thy power in my soul and Thy glory in my flesh, from Thy body and Thy blood, since I derive from them forgiveness for my sins, a remedy for my passions, victory over my enemies, the power of the Spirit for the accomplishment of Thy will and the fulfilment of Thy com-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xlii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 1.

mandments, good hope for Thy kingdom, and perfect happiness in Thy love."

I have brought to your memory these things out of many, for the honour of the Holy Mysteries. Although you are deprived of participation in them during the whole time of your Seven Weeks, because of the regulations imposed on you by your solitude, your mind should not be at rest from their delightful and awe-inspiring remembrance, especially on Sundays. If you observe and do these things, your solitude in all the days of your Seven Weeks will be in sorrow, repentance, vigilance and love of labours, and when at the end of the Seven Weeks you go out to the assembly (of the Brothers), in order to receive the Holy Mysteries with our Lord's saints, a divine joy, which has no equal among created things, and to which creation offers no parallel in 186 its sweet savour, will shine in your soul from the Communion of His body and His blood.

Let it be also known to you that our Initiated Fathers did not impose, in a general way, clear and strict regulations concerning bodily exertions on the different categories of Brothers who live in solitude, but they allowed every one to work according to his power, capacity, health of body, country and time, under the advice and order of the teachers and leaders with whom he lived.<sup>1</sup>

That most illustrious of all the Initiated, John, the Seer of the Thebaid, said: "We must consider solitude the greatest of all exercises," not that we should undertake it through fasting, interminable vigils and great tribulations that are not ordered by law, but that in it we should give ourselves up to exertions of the mind during all the time of the <sup>2</sup> Seven Weeks. Read this treatise of his, in which he also said: "Continuous solitude, which is accompanied by exercises of the mind, will not prove deficient nor fail to lead a man into the safe harbour of salvation and happiness."

There are two virtues which embrace all others, and by which and in which all the mental exercise is performed and accomplished. From them a man acquires purity of heart,

<sup>1</sup> Here ends Bedjan's text.

<sup>2</sup> Text "your."



and they are also required by the regulations of the exercise of solitude. They are : incessant prayer without distraction, and quick stifling of the thoughts of passion and the urges of the demons immediately they appear, stir and move in the heart.

These are the two virtues and the two exertions in which all the  
19a labours of the mind and all the virtues of the soul are embodied.

They engender two benefits, and give birth to two divine gifts, in which <sup>1</sup> all the gifts of the Spirit are included. The Abbot Isaiah calls them "super-virtues," <sup>2</sup> because they are higher than virtues, as they are neither accomplished through the body nor performed through the soul, but are bestowed by grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, before the mind thinks of them.<sup>3</sup> They produce the following effects : a spiritual impulse which incessantly stirs the impulses of the soul with the ardour of the perfect love of God ; and the sight of the light and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed written : "He that loveth Me and keepeth My commandments"—not only in the labours of the body but also in the exertions of the mind—"I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."<sup>4</sup> That is to say, "I will make him delight continuously in My love and render him worthy to see My light and My glory, with the eyes of his mind, while in nothing will he be injured or suffer loss from the fact that he has not seen Me in the flesh. I will make him also delight in this in the day of the resurrection, when he shall see Me coming from Heaven."

O Brother, if you love the life of solitude, whether it be  
19b complete or partial, if your mind is illuminated, and the movements of your soul are sharp and keen to notice the impulses of passions which are born in you from the remembrance of your former sins, and to contemplate the happenings which, in the words of the Abbot Isaiah, Saint Evagrius and the rest of the Fathers, emanate from the urges of the demons, which are called "demoniacal passions," and which have no power over you except in so far as they remind you of sin and incite and urge you to the impulses of the body that accompany it,

<sup>1</sup> Read *lehai* for *lehon*.

<sup>3</sup> Text repeats "non-virtues."

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "non-virtues."

<sup>4</sup> John xiv. 21.

as it happens in the obscene and passionate remembrance of a woman, or in the remembrance of a Brother who has caused you pain, with the rest of the remembrances that stir passions—strive to learn to struggle and fight against them. John, the solitary, said: "There is no knowledge higher than that one should know his passions, fight against them, and subject them to the sovereignty of his will." Indeed from this fight a man quickly possesses purity of heart, and sees God. Whenever you have intercourse with a solitary who is laborious and one of the Initiated, converse with him untiringly about the purity of heart in which and through which our Lord promised that man will see God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."<sup>1</sup>

If you truly love the life of solitude, you should desire purity of heart more than anything else, and direct to it all your aim and your course. Enquire, learn, read and understand what is this purity of heart, and whence it is acquired, and which <sup>20a</sup> passions engender which passions, and by what labours and exertions a man is able to overcome them in the length of the time of his solitude. Abbot Isaiah said: "From the time you have overcome every temptation as it came, till the time in which you are granted the spiritual discernment through which you may perceive clearly, distinctly and surely the urges of the demons which arise from the thoughts of passion, let the following be the sign through which you will distinguish and know them during all the time of your novitiate: whenever you are diligent and zealous in the services and regulations of your solitude, and not much distracted, and in spite of that, evil thoughts are set in motion in you, know truly <sup>2</sup> that these are not the thoughts of the passions, but urges of the demons, because the thoughts of the passions, which emanate from former habits, do not arise in a man who is diligent in his spiritual work; and if they arise, they quickly vanish, on account of his diligence and zeal in his work and his hatred of them. As to the urges which are caused by the thoughts inspired by the demons, as long as the mind of a man is vigilant, illuminated and diligent

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Read *lā* for *lam*.



in the work of righteousness, and especially in the recitation of the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, or the words of any prayer which he himself might compose and incessantly recite, whether in eating, drinking, sitting, lying down or walking—these  
 206 exertions, this vigilance and these prayers incite the demons more and more to rivalry against him, as they fear that he will forge a weapon against them. This is the reason why they repeatedly and constantly tempt him with their urges, and inspire him with their evil thoughts, that perchance he may show lassitude in his exertion and weariness in his work. The recitation of the Psalms, of the Lord's Prayer, or of any prayers which a man might compose by himself, in order to magnify God for the greatness of His glory, and offer thanksgiving for the benefits which He has granted or promised, and through which the solitary implores and asks for mercy, healing and salvation—these three methods of prayer act like three keen, sharp and poisoned arrows against the demons, whom they kill and slaughter mercilessly.

If you wander in your thoughts, and neglect also to perform your services and your regulations of solitude, your thoughts of passion spring up more frequently in your heart, and exercise stronger compulsion on you than the urges of the demons. Side by side with your knowledge of your passions, with your fight against the urges of the demons, with the destruction of sinful thoughts, and with your diligence in acquiring purity of heart, sincerity of intention and an uncontaminated state of the soul, exert yourself mainly to possess, through your great love and special exertions of your mind, an incessant and undisturbed prayer, because all the exercises of the mind which the regulations of solitude require are, as I said, included in an incessant prayer and the destruction of evil thoughts. Under no circumstance is  
 21a a man, wilfully and from weakness, to long for sinful passions which arise from his thoughts and come upon him through<sup>1</sup> the severity of his fight and the gravity of his struggle, but he should imbue himself with hatred against them, so that the exercise of solitude may be made sweet to him and dejectedness may not

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "except from."

infuse languor into him. If you strive to possess these two things, namely an incessant and undisturbed prayer and purity of thought, you will possess at the same time all the good exercise of the mind. First exert your body and your soul in an incessant prayer, even before the appointed time, and then you will render yourself worthy of this incessant prayer, even if your mind is not composed ; but if you do not exert your body and your soul in the measure of your capacity, always, everywhere and in all your actions, the gift of incessant prayer will not be granted to you, in case your mind is not composed owing to your being still a novice. If you do not accustom yourself to overcoming the thoughts of the demons and passions, you will not be granted peace of mind from wandering thoughts, because these two virtues, in which all the good exercise of the mind is included and confined, are knit together, mutually compose each other and are joined with each other. As the nature of the body is one thing, and the nature of the soul another thing, but through their union with each other they are one nature, in such a way that their action is not completed without their mutual union and participation, so also, although prayer and purity of thought are different things, yet from the union and participation of both <sup>216</sup> of them one exercise results, which is called by our Fathers "the exercise of the mind," and each one of them is in need of the other for its completion, as the Abbot Mark said : "Good intention is found through prayer, and prayer through good intention, and each one of them is by nature in need of the other."

Accustom, therefore, and coerce yourself, and cause your mind to concentrate on the service of the Psalms, especially the Night Service, so that it<sup>1</sup> may experience the sense of the spiritual joy which the Spirit has mingled with His Psalms. If you become worthy of this, the life of solitude will not be tiresome to you.

Let it be also known to you that the man who, in his seclusion, only inflicts on himself exertions of the body, is not exercising himself in his mind, which is consequently distracted and dissipated ; but he who exerts himself in his mind is not

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats "your mind."



able to neglect the exertions of his body, because the exertion of his mind does not allow him to be at rest. This is the reason why the exercise of the mind is great, laborious and tiresome, and therefore the greatness of its joy is commensurate with the greatness of its exertion. If you impose on yourself the exertion of the body and of the mind, do not reach the stage of lassitude, and do not force these two exertions of the mind and of the body on yourself in a higher measure than your power, your knowledge and the state of your being still a novice will permit, but embrace the exercise of the mind by degrees.

- 22a Have a teacher and a leader to teach you how not to listen in your heart to the thoughts of the demons. Your Father, Abbot Isaiah, admonishes, comforts and incites you to the exercises of the mind, in saying to you as follows: "You, O my son, flee from the desires of your heart, which fight against you, and the help of our Lord will subject all your enemies to you." He said this because, being deprived in your solitude of all the dissipation of affairs, and removed from the intercourse of men, and being in constant communion with your Lord in the fulfilment of His commandments, the demons envy you and incite you to the urges of passions, so that they may rob you of the love of our Lord, of the spiritual consolation and of the reward which is prepared for you on account of your solitude and exertions.

Do what I am going to tell you: whenever the demons stir in your heart a thought of passion, wrath, vainglory, or any other sinful feeling, do not yield to them, do not move with them, and do not allow them to enter into your heart and make it feel worldly pleasure, but while quickly remembering the delight prepared for you by our Lord, spit on that evanescent pleasure, and close the eyes of your mind, so that it may not look at that demoniacal thought. Coerce your soul to flee from sin, however much its pleasure attracts you, and move in your thought towards your Lord, and implore His help, which will give you victory. When God sees your good will, that for the sake of enjoying

- 22b His love you do not wish even in your thought to enjoy the pleasure of sin, He will immediately give a sign to the holy angel who accompanies you, to drive away all the demons who

fight against you with their sinful urges, like chaff before a strong wind.<sup>1</sup>

In revealing<sup>2</sup> the greatness of the help which our Lord extends to you, he<sup>3</sup> quotes the scripture, and says: "With Thee I will break in pieces the weapons of war,<sup>4</sup> and with Thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider, and with Thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; with Thee also I will break in pieces the young men and the maids, and with Thee will I break in pieces the shepherd and his flock; with Thee I will break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke, and with Thee will I break in pieces the captain and the ruler."<sup>5</sup> The Abbot Isaiah made use of so many words in order to show the greatness of the help of our Lord to you.

He had previously said to you, at the beginning of his discourse: "Flee from the desires of your heart," that is to say, only coerce yourself gently, and show to the demons your hatred of their temptations and your love for our Lord, and immediately our Lord will drive out the demons from you, destroy their temptations in your heart, illuminate your mind, and fill your soul with peace, security and consolation from His grace. Well therefore did the Abbot Isaiah add and say: "I will punish Babylon according to its deeds."<sup>6</sup> The force of the meaning<sup>23a</sup> of this verse is indeed great, and bestows immense consolation upon the solitary who is in solitude, during all the time of his fights against the passions and the demons. He teaches you this, and like a General he urges you, comforts you and cries to you, saying: "Do not be in fear, O solitary who love solitude and who fight to the death<sup>7</sup> in the struggle of righteousness against sin, for the sake of the love of your Lord! The time of your struggle will not last long, because, after a known period of years, of whatever duration it may be, and after your good will and your true love to your Lord have been tested in the trial of your struggles and fights against His enemies, not only will He extend, as always, His help for your victory whenever the demons fight against you, but when the period of your fight

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Abbot Isaiah.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah li. 20-23.

<sup>2</sup> Delete the pronoun *ant*.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. "Thou wilt break with me."

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah li. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Lit. "till the blood."



comes to an end, He will completely drive the demons from you and extinguish their urges from your heart. Instead of the numerous evil thoughts that they were bestirring in you at the time of your fight, He will fill your soul with numerous spiritual visions, so that your mind will fully rejoice in divine thoughts, which are : meditation on the greatness of the divine nature, contemplation of the glorious Trinity, the continuous and unbroken help of the love of Christ and of the light of the divine glory which dwells in Him in Heaven, meditation on the sublime  
 23b hierarchies of the holy angels, cogitation on paradise and on the souls of the departed just, the glorious apparition of our Lord from Heaven, the ascension of the saints into Heaven and their happiness with our Lord, with many similar things, which it is not easy to enumerate and describe. It is by these and similar spiritual understandings that the mind of the solitary who is in solitude is constantly stirred, with an ineffable joy, at the end of the long time of his struggles, and it is a reward such as this that he will receive, as an earnest, in exchange for all the numerous evil and demoniacal thoughts through which he was formerly tormented in his struggles against them." This is the meaning of the sentence : " I will punish Babylon according to its deeds," as given by the Abbot Isaiah. Similar to it in meaning is the sentence uttered by the Abbot Mark : " The mind of the one who is undergoing his time of struggle is closed to everything, and does not rest until the Lord has destroyed the seed of Babylon."

If you desire solitude, O Brother, and wish to possess the purity of heart through which one sees God, do not show lassitude in the war <sup>1</sup> which you have trained yourself to wage against the passions and the demons, but whatever may be the wounds which you will receive on your face in all the time of your fight, do not weaken and turn your back, nor flee and leave your cell like a defeated man. With patience and strong  
 24a hope, look for the victory which will be granted to you by our Lord in that very solitude of yours, at the end of your struggle. You will not even feel then that He was with you at the time

<sup>1</sup> Remove the *Wāw*.

of your struggle, so numerous will be the delights and joys which will come upon you. Do not be like the ignorant and the weak who at one time fight, smite, and strike down (their enemy), rejoice and are illuminated, while sitting in solitude, and at another time, abandon the fight and are defeated, smitten, struck down, sorrowful and in darkness, and so give up their solitude and leave their cells ; but endure all the happenings that come upon you in all the time of your fight, while at one time you get the upper hand over the demons, and at another time they get the upper hand over you, and while at one time you strike them down and at another time they strike you down, until God, who will witness your endurance, shall grant you victory over your enemies, and crown you with spiritual knowledge.

The struggle against evil thoughts which come in the time of solitude occurs in this way : when a man begins with the exercise of the mind and with the struggle against the passions in his life of solitude, the years of which are measured by the degree of his diligence and exertion, the fights against him are multiplied and accentuated day by day and from time to time, as he goes forward, till he reaches purity of heart. A short time before reaching purity of heart, his fights become intensified slightly above the average, and his struggles become more severe, <sup>24b</sup> and if the solitary endures them in his fight in his seclusion, and does not yield, he will begin to find rest gradually. In this way he will always obtain assistance from the divine help, so that whenever the demons come to him and fight against him, with their filthy temptations, immediately he calls upon our Lord for help, He will answer and help him, and not allow the demons to prolong their struggle against him, as formerly, but they will be driven away quickly and sternly from the abode of the monk, through the working of the holy angel who accompanies him by permission of God. His mind will then remain in peace and quiet, either when he recites the Psalms or when he prays, reads, and contemplates God and His gifts.

After a short time the demons will not be allowed to fight even mildly against him with their (inner) temptations, but only with the fights of the senses of touch and sight. This we learn from the history of the two brothers who became perfect in



three years, and to whom Macarius of Alexandria, the Abbot of the Monastery of Scete, repaired. He prayed God, who revealed to him their spiritual exercise, and the measure (of their perfection), and he saw by night both of them beginning their prayer, and noticed also the demons settling like flies on the eyes and the mouth of the younger brother, and an angel of God with unsheathed sword walking round him and forbidding the demons to inflict any injury on him. From this vision the Abbot  
 25a Macarius understood that the demons were still fighting against the younger brother with their temptations, but that he was greatly helped on account of his gallant fight, by order of God and through the working of the angel. The demons, however, did not dare to draw near his elder brother, because of the purity of heart and the impassibility which he possessed.<sup>1</sup>

The Abbot Isaiah said that impassibility is impervious to temptations,<sup>2</sup> as it has received its crown and is remote from all thought. The impassibility spoken of by the Fathers is not that complete impassibility which is granted at the resurrection, but imperviousness of the soul to the weakness of temporary passions. Saint Evagrius explains impassibility and defines it as follows: "Impassibility is a radiant goodness of the rational soul, and is constituted of chastity and humility," and he adds: "If you desire pure prayer, keep yourself from anger, and if you love chastity, cut off a part of your food." After writing some more words, he added again: "and then will the impassibility of the heart shine on you, and you will see in your prayer a mind that will glow like a star." And he further says: "The impassibility of the mind is the height of the intelligible things on which the light of the Holy Trinity shines in the time of prayer." We have learned these things from the books of the  
 25b Fathers and from the living words that came out of the mouth of holy, perfect and divine men. May God make us worthy to follow in their steps by His abundant grace, and to be perfect like them in the love of God, through their prayers! Amen.

Those who are not versed in the Books, whose thoughts are not illuminated, whose inner senses are not sharp and keen

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the doctrine of Quietism.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. " fights."

in knowledge, but have a certain simplicity mixed with their constitution, whose heart is guileless, and who are not skilled in words and in learning, and wish to please God in the delightful exercises of solitude—let them not fear the fights of the demons, nor dread their temptations, because every man has to endure according to his capacity, and is tempted by the fights of the evil thoughts and phantasies of the demons in the measure of what is helpful to him. No extraneous burden is ever thrown on a man beyond what his power, knowledge and spiritual development can bear. If a man will only implant in his heart the love of his Creator, and live in solitude and serve Christ our Lord in the things that please and satisfy His Lordship, the very love of his Lord will keep and guard him from all the legions of the demons, and will delight his heart, illuminate his soul and help him to attain all the perfection of righteousness. Who among the solitary Fathers was more unlearned and simple than the blessed Paulé the Simple, the disciple of Saint Antony? He was indeed so simple that he was surnamed by all “The Simple.” He was also ignorant, and in no way versed in the Scriptures; but in spite of all this, the Abbot Antony was in a position to take for him the place of the solitude of the cell; <sup>26a</sup> and because the Abbot Antony was cognisant of the power of solitude, and to what height of the divine love it may raise not only the wise, the expert and the intelligent, but also the ignorant, the simple and the unlearned, and because also the same Abbot Antony was aware that in spite of all the sublimity of the works of Paulé, he would not be able to possess any divine gifts apart from those he would be in a position to possess from solitude, he said to him: <sup>1</sup> “Go and sit alone in solitude, so that you may receive the trial of the demons.” <sup>2</sup> He included implicitly in this single sentence all the high things that a man possesses from solitude.

Let no man therefore excuse himself and say: “I am ignorant, simple, unlearned and devoid of knowledge, and consequently not able to embrace solitude,” but let him blame his own self, and this will be enough rebuke for his lack of

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats “Paulé.”

<sup>2</sup> These words are found in the *Paradise of the Fathers*, i, 127 (edition Budge).



faith in the future benefit, and his want of love for our Lord. The blessed Mark rebukes also, as I said, men of this category, and says : " Anyone who, from lack of faith or from another weakness, is unable to embrace solitude, to pray always and to be tried for the sake of our Lord, let him learn the truth and advance in the measure of his capacity, while blaming the accident of his birth." You see that he considers anyone who does not love the seclusion of his cell, to be lacking in faith and vigour, and orders him to humble and rebuke himself for his lack of faith. If this is not the case, why is it that Paulé the Simple and the blessed and holy Macedonius, the Barley-Eater, whose life is written in the " Book of the Lovers of God," lived in silence and pleased God in their solitude, while he shrinks from the same silence and is afraid of the same solitude, except because he believes less than they did in the promises of our Lord and loves Him less ardently ? This Macedonius knew nothing, neither how to read or write, nor any worldly wisdom, and was extraordinarily simple, unlearned and ignorant, and although so constituted the historian wrote of him that he lived for many years alone on the summit of a hill, without a roof over his head, and offered to God fervent prayers full of perfect love of God. Now, however, that the ardour of the love of God has cooled, we have completely despised solitude, and have consequently been deprived of its spiritual consolations. We do not wish to learn the greatness of the exercise of solitude, either from Holy Writ or from the writings of the Doctors of the Church, or from the teaching of the lives of the Fathers of the desert. Indeed the Books of the Old and the New Testaments teach us a great deal about the exercise of solitude, and place the crowns of beatitudes on the head of those who love it. The Prophet Jeremiah cries : " It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth and to sit alone and keep silence." <sup>1</sup> Our Lord also ordered and warned us in the Gospel : " Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and your necessary things shall be added unto you." <sup>2</sup> The Kingdom of God and His righteousness cannot, however, be sought and possessed outside solitude and prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

To this the two elect and Initiated men, our illustrious Fathers, Saint Evagrius and the Abbot Mark, bear witness. The blessed Evagrius says as follows: "The Kingdom of God is the spiritual knowledge of the glorious Trinity, and is only comprehended in the measure of the power of the mind; as it is higher than the imperishable nature of the mind." He also said: "The Kingdom of Heaven consists in the impassibility of the soul with the theory<sup>1</sup> of existing things." You see that the Kingdom of God and His righteousness cannot be sought and possessed outside the exercise of solitude. As to the Abbot Mark, when a schoolman<sup>2</sup> was blaming him, and asking why he and his disciples sat in solitude and did not go out to the world and occupy themselves with things of the body, as to neglect work was contrary to human nature, he taught and said: "They perform in solitude the work<sup>3</sup> that our Lord ordered for His Church." And when the schoolman wished to know the nature of the work which our Lord has ordered, he said to him: "We must seek the Kingdom of God, which is within us, in solitude and prayer. Our Lord promised to 276 satisfy the needs of those who do these things." From the explanation of these two Initiated, Evagrius and Mark, it is clear that a man cannot seek the Kingdom of Heaven as our Lord ordered, without the exercise of solitude.

The blessed Apostle, in following our Lord, commanded also the solitaries to keep an unbroken solitude, by saying: "Let the solitaries keep silence within themselves and devote themselves to works of righteousness."<sup>4</sup> The blessed Theodore, the Interpreter, in explaining the force of the meaning of this sentence, wrote at some length many things about it in his "Book on Perfection."<sup>5</sup> In it he taught, admonished and warned the solitaries to be assiduous in solitude, and confirmed his words

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to the old division of mysticism into two distinct parts, called "theory" or "speculation," and "practice" or "practical knowledge." See above pp. 2 and 13, and *Book of the Dove*, pp. 140 and 142.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "scholasticus."

<sup>3</sup> Read 'ebādha for 'abda.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 1. Cor. xiv. 30, 1. Tim. ii. 2, and Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> This book, which is mentioned by 'Abdisho' in his catalogue (*Assemani, Bibl. Orient.* iii. 33) is now lost, and it is interesting to have this short summary of some of its contents.



by testimonies from the Books of the Prophets, from the Gospels and from the Pauline Epistles. Anyone who reads with care this book on the perfection of solitaries will easily learn the things said by the Interpreter about solitude, and how much he rebukes and reproves the solitaries who are distracted by worldly works outside it.<sup>1</sup>

That the exercise of solitude was much esteemed and loved, not only by the Fathers of the desert,<sup>2</sup> but also by the great Doctors of the Church, is known not only from the "Book  
28a on Perfection" of the Interpreter, but also from the words written by Saint Basil and John Chrysostom. Saint Basil calls the Brothers who are in seclusion not only righteous, illustrious and perfect solitaries, but calls them also great martyrs. After having instructed his brother Gregory in all the great virtues which constitute and form the glorious crown of the perfection of eremitism, and after having ordered him to follow them, know them, experience them and be perfected by them, he wrote to him, with a desire to demonstrate that without solitude, silence and seclusion, he could not be crowned with them, as follows: "Your enclosure, if you wish it, is the field of all these spiritual victories, and the battleground in which these crowns are woven." This means that as those who weave crowns of flowers are outside the enclosure of gardens and orchards, and carefully gather the flowers and weave the crowns, so also you cannot gather the flowers of virtues and weave from them crowns of righteousness for yourself, if you do not live in solitude and erect an outer enclosure to your cell, exerting yourself continuously in the labours which please God, and for which your soul is crowned. This is the meaning of the sentence: "Your enclosure, if you wish it, is the field of all these spiritual victories." As to the addition, "and the battle-  
28b ground in which these crowns are woven," it means that as the athletes who fight before a king do not fight outside the ring that is fixed for them, and as, if the foot of any of them stumbles outside the ring, they are not crowned according to the rules of the fight, so also it is not possible for a monk to fight and

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats "solitude."

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "solitary Fathers."

be crowned outside the ring of his cell; unless he lives in solitude in his cell, and erects for himself a wall like the ring of the athlete, and fights and struggles with the passions and the demons, he will not be crowned with the crown of divine knowledge by the Lawgiver, Christ our Lord, the Heavenly King. The Spirit of the Psalms says: "Thou settest a glorious crown on his head."<sup>1</sup> The blessed Basil adds here, and says: "Solitude and seclusion from human intercourse contemplate these meanings with ease, and envisage these findings without difficulty."

Why should I mention only the holy Books of the Old and New Testaments, the Doctors of the holy Church and the Fathers of the desert, who everywhere order, teach and induce the solitaries to adopt the sublime exercises of solitude, while the philosophers who lived before the coming of our Lord in the flesh, and who acted well upon the dictates of natural wisdom, taught also about solitude and silence in high and sublime terms? One of these taught and said as follows: "Of all the books which I have read and the labours in which I have exercised myself in my thorough study of wisdom, I have not<sup>29a</sup> found a better choice than that a man should rest from all work and abstain from all human intercourse, because its crown is hidden from the knowledge of vain talkers." These words are true, and forceful are their meanings. And well did the Abbot Antony add to them: "It is truly impossible that distracted and vain talkers should know and feel fully the sublime knowledge that is reached by a man who is in solitude<sup>2</sup> and silence, after he has fought his battle."<sup>3</sup>

Another philosopher, in teaching that a man who loves solitude should not only live in solitude and keep silence, but also fight against his evil thoughts and bridle his passions, in order to attain purity of heart quickly and be a temple of wisdom, says: "A soul which has bridled the tongue of the body with silence, and which stretches with its faculties towards a man with admonition, the symmetrical harmony of its speech is better than that of the poet Homer." Another philosopher, in teaching

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Read *shalya* for *shilya*.

<sup>3</sup> Read *agoneh* for *agonah*.



that wise men must despise all the passions and beauties of this world, and form themselves into the beauties of God through solitude and the contemplation of wisdom, says : " God is to us a law which does not suffer changes in its constitution, and He made us, who are rational, changeable, so that our changes should always rise to the *summum bonum*. And the *summum* 29b *bonum* consists in that we should despise all perishable beauties in our desire for the beauty of our Maker, and reject all corruptible wealth in our contemplation of the wealth of His knowledge, and tread underfoot all evanescent glories in our expectation of the glory which is prepared by Him for those who have accomplished His will in wisdom, in the time of their sojourn on the earth."

These few things have been written out of many, from Holy Writ, from the Doctors of the Church, the Fathers of the desert and non-Christian philosophers, about the utility that accrues from solitude. The heads of the monasteries, together with the Fathers and the Brothers who are living in solitude, should not hinder, therefore, their Sons and Brothers from satisfying their praiseworthy desire, nor is the one who wishes to please our Lord in the exercises of the love of solitude to desist from fulfilling his wish because of his youth, or ignorance, or the weakness of his body. Indeed in ancient times our holy Fathers permitted the life of solitude to all categories and orders of people : men and women, old men and young men, wise and ignorant. Not only the wise men and coryphæi of the Initiated, Mark and Evagrius, lived in solitude, but also Paulé the Simple and Macedonius the Barley-Eater, who were ignorant, simple and unlearned men ; not only old men like the Abbot Macarius and the like lived in solitude, but also those two 30a children-martyrs who reached perfection in three years ; not only old and experienced women lived in solitude, such as Mother Sarah, Mother Melania and the like, but also the Alexandrian girl who imprisoned herself in a tomb, who knew no other thing except the recitation of Psalms, and who did not admit to herself her servant even at the time of her illness, and so died alone ; and the Fathers entered and found her body withered. Who is the man, considering himself a man, who,

because of lassitude, fear or any other cause, would be afraid of, or shrink from, living in solitude in a monastery, in company with many, if he remembers that young girl who imprisoned herself in the grave of the dead in the desert, and who was deprived of the consolation of books and of intercourse with human beings ?

If any Brother desires to please our Lord in the delightful exercise of the love of solitude, let him put his trust in the promises of Christ, our hope ; let him kindle himself with His love ; let him begin to live in solitude, sure of His hope and confident of His grace ; and let him not fear anything. Lo, the Spirit of the Psalms comforts and encourages him, saying : "Do not be afraid, O solitary who sit in solitude in the hope of your Lord : as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord Christ is round about you."<sup>1</sup> And again, "He that trusteth in the Lord, the mercy of the Holy Spirit shall compass him about."<sup>2</sup> And again : "The company of the angels of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."<sup>3</sup> And again, "With each one of us is <sup>306</sup> an angel who follows us, accompanies us, guards us, delivers us, prays for us, illuminates our mind and fills it with spiritual visions, and comforts us in secret."<sup>4</sup> The solitary who lives in solitude by himself, and is surrounded by the Lord and compassed about by the mercy of the Spirit, and around whom a company of the angels encampeth, and who is guarded and comforted by his own angel, whom shall he fear ? Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, the giver of solitude, and blessed be the solitary who has adopted it, loved it, and embraced it ; who has endured its initial trials and delighted in its final joys ; who has fought its initial battles, and been crowned with its final crowns !

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxiv. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ps. xci. 11-12.

THE END.



BY THE SAME SAINT MAR DĀDĪSHO'.

*I will now give the explanation of, and the reason for, the following sentence, uttered by the Fathers : " Many run after solitude, but in reality few remain in it."*

The Creator imparted three powers to every rational being, for the work of righteousness: knowledge, love, fervour.<sup>1</sup> Through the power of knowledge we know God and love the Creator and righteousness, and through fervour we wax wrathful against the passions and the demons, and against all those who  
31a hinder us from the love of our Creator and from the work of righteousness. The Creator fixed these three powers in the nature of rational beings for the work of righteousness. He did not do so, however, in a way that would force and compel them, but in a way that is rational and leaves them free from compulsion. If we wish, we commit evil things through them. Natural love has no reward and is not known to the hidden beauty of the will, except through voluntary love. God has surrounded righteousness with labour, so that through it the will of those rational beings who show their love towards their Creator in the arduous and laborious work of righteousness might be made manifest, as well as that of those who neglect His love and the accomplishment of His will through their exertions, because of their love of pleasure and their weakness. This is the reason why the Creator implanted in the nature of the body many passions which incline the soul towards sin if it should prove neglectful, and which crown it and render it victorious if it should prove assiduous in its fight against them, by means of the three powers which I mentioned above.

The first reason why many embrace solitude but do not remain in it till the end is this: many, noticing how sublime is the work of righteousness, how high is its praise, and delightful its work, and that it can be attained through solitude,  
31b eagerly embrace this solitude, merely from the desire of natural

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " anger." See *Book of the Dove*, p. cxxx.

love implanted in their nature, while they do not bring in with them any voluntary love, which shows itself in the love of hardships. They do not understand that the natural love of righteousness is not sufficient to fight and to struggle with the body and its passions, and with the world and its attractions, without mixing also with itself the voluntary love, that is to say, the love of exertions and tribulations, in which the work of righteousness is perfected, as through the tool of a craft. This is the reason why they eagerly embrace solitude, but, not toiling in it as they should, they cease their work through lassitude, abandon their arduous solitude, and go out for the enjoyment of pleasures. This is the first reason why, according to the words of the Fathers, many embrace solitude but do not endure it till the end.

The second reason is lack of knowledge in those who embrace solitude. They did not learn previously, from those who had acquired experience, the multiplicity of the fights and tribulations which befall the solitaries in their solitude, from the demons and from the passions, nor how they had to fight and never to abandon solitude or resort to flight, whatever wounds they received in their faces, till they had won their victory and their laurels.

The first cause why men abandon solitude is, therefore, that they have only the natural love of righteousness, while they do not bring in with them the love of voluntary labours,<sup>32a</sup> and the second is lack of knowledge of what they have to bear.<sup>1</sup> These will not endure till the end, because solitude is not performed without voluntary labours. Nor will they endure who bring in with them only the voluntary love of fasts and vigils and the rest of the voluntary labours, but do not bring in with them the love of compulsory and accidental labours, that is to say, the tribulations that arise from the fights of the passions and of the demons. This is the second reason why, in the words of our Fathers, the solitary does not endure his solitude.

The third reason why a man does not endure his solitude is the weakness of the natural fervour of the soul, which emanates

<sup>1</sup> The author reverses the order of these two causes.



from the languour and pusillanimity of a weak will. Inasmuch as the first reason why a solitary does not endure his solitude is the weakness of the power of love, and the second reason is the weakness of the power of knowledge, so also the third reason is the weakness of the power of fervour. Because the solitary is not strengthened by the power of his fervour in his confidence in God and in his zeal against the passions and the demons, when the struggle of the combat is intensified against him he relinquishes it and flees.

As the awe-inspiring health of love is a constant and burning ardour in the love of Christ and in the love of righteousness, 32b and as the awe-inspiring health of knowledge is a constant contemplation of God and meditation on righteousness, so also the awe-inspiring health of fervour is a strong hope in God and strength against the passions and the demons. It is for this reason that the blessed Evagrius, in discussing the attributes of these three powers, when enjoying their good health, says: "Anyone whose mind is at all times with God, whose zeal is full of His remembrance, and whose whole desire is extended towards Him, has it in him not to fear those tyrannical adversaries who prowl round his body." The power of fervour he calls here "mind," and the power of love "desire."

Those who embrace solitude only through the natural love of righteousness will, therefore, not endure till the end. Nor will they endure till the end who bring in also with them the love of voluntary labours only, nor will they endure who bring in with them, together with the love of voluntary labours, the love of statutory labours, because they will not meet the struggles of solitude with zeal, by the power of their fervour; they will not endure, because although the power of their love and that of their knowledge are healthy, yet because the power of their fervour is weak they will not endure in solitude till the end. This is the third reason why the solitary does not endure his solitude till the end.

33a It is necessary for the solitaries who love solitude first to learn and to know how many powers the Creator has implanted in their souls for the work of righteousness, and the attributes of each one of them. They should know that the following

are the attributes <sup>1</sup> of love : zeal, affection, desire, happiness, spiritual emotion, joy in God, delight in righteousness, longing for its fulfilment and eagerness in the expectation of its reward, with many similar things which comfort the solitary in silence, and lighten for him the burden both of voluntary and of statutory labours.

The attributes of knowledge are : true faith, contemplation of God, constant direction of the mind towards our Lord Jesus Christ, spiritual understandings, meditation on righteousness, the remembrance of the mercies which God gave or promised to us, recollection of former sins and daily imperfections, reflection on the knowledge of the passions and the virtues, and self-improvement, together with the remembrance of the hour of death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven, Paradise, and similar things. These are the things that enlighten a monk who lives in solitude, render him wise, fill his soul with the light of knowledge, cut off from him all injurious thoughts and remembrances, and make solitude desirable for him.

As to the attributes of fervour, they are : hope in God <sup>33b</sup> and confidence in Him, strength against the passions, fortitude against the demons, endurance of fights, patience in tribulations, firmness in the struggle, refusal to own defeat in labours,<sup>2</sup> with many other things which accompany the power of the fervour of the soul. These are the attributes which empower the mind to overcome Goliath and put to flight the armies of the Philistines from it. This is the reason why the sacred Books and the Fathers teach us in many places fortitude and courage, and the rest of the attributes which the Creator implanted in the power of the fervour of our soul. As to the Books, it is written : "They that trust in the Lord through the power of their fervour, like Mount Zion will not be shaken by the fight of the demons, but will abide for ever in their solitude, because, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> so the Lord Christ is round about His people, who are the solitaries in solitude."<sup>4</sup> And again : "He that trusteth in the Lord through the power of his natural

<sup>1</sup> Read in plural.

<sup>2</sup> The new paragraph used by the copyist in the text is erroneous.

<sup>3</sup> Remove the *Baith*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ps. cxxv. 1-2.



fervour inside his cell in solitude, the mercy of the Holy Spirit shall compass him about, while bestowing upon him the victory over all his enemies, the passions and the demons.”<sup>1</sup>

Our Fathers also teach us concerning the fortitude and courage which the Creator has implanted in the power of the fervour of the soul, for the work of perfection. The Abbot  
 34a Isaiah said: “Fortitude and courage are, after God, the best help to the soul.” And the blessed Mark said: “When the mind is strengthened by the Lord through the power of its fervour, it turns away the soul from the passions in which it was previously caught.” And Saint Evagrius said: “When you are strengthened against the passions through the power of your fervour, do not vaunt yourself.” The rest of the Fathers teach us also concerning these three powers which the Creator implanted in us, and concerning their attributes. It follows that anyone who embraces solitude, and brings in with him the love of voluntary labours, together with the love of tribulations that occur accidentally, and who, in the time of the battle, meets the wicked demons with the ardour of his love, the vision of his knowledge and the fortitude of his fervour, “he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war, and he shall cry and prevail against his enemies,<sup>2</sup> the passions and the demons.” He shall conquer them, kill them and destroy them, by the mighty power of Christ, our hope, and shall then end his course in piety, being crowned with the crown of righteousness.

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*On Admonition and on Evil Passions which destroy Pure Prayer.*

The solitary who has only begun to live in solitude must know before anything else that, from the time he embraces solitude till the time he reaches the pure prayer, through which his passions are healed and his sins forgiven, through which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. xxxii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xlii. 13.

he acquires purity of heart, exercise of the mind and contemplation of God, and through which he becomes worthy of the<sup>34b</sup> spiritual exercise—four passions fight against him more than all other passions. They hinder a man from pure prayer, and impede the solitary who is in solitude from acquiring perfection quickly. They are: gluttony, excessive<sup>1</sup> sleep, anger, vainglory. Two of them are passions of the body, and two are passions of the soul. It is through these passions that all other<sup>2</sup> passions are also defeated and destroyed. Indeed when a man has overcome vainglory, he also overcomes pride, and when he has overcome his belly, his sleep and vainglory,<sup>3</sup> he also overcomes fornication. As to the love of money, because it belongs to the domain of the well-being of the body, it does not fight against anyone who has conquered his belly and is endowed with generosity. Nor does discontent torment the man who has overcome his passions, as discontent is born of the love of pleasures; nor does dejectedness fight against the man who has fought courageously and conquered his passions, as it is a weakness of the passible soul.

It is because of this that our Initiated Fathers combined and included all other passions in the four passions which we have described above, and warned us to fight against them with watchfulness and zeal, as by overcoming these four passions we win also the battles against the remaining passions, and<sup>35a</sup> become worthy of pure prayer, and our heart becomes pure, and we see God, our helper, according to the words of Christ our Lord.<sup>4</sup> It is of these four passions that the solitary must think every day, and it is towards them that he must always turn his mind. If possible, he must write them on the wall of his cell, in front of him, so that they may not be obliterated from his mind through the false insinuation of the demons; and whenever this false insinuation or the weakness of his nature cause him to relax and stumble through any of them, let him moan over his soul, weep, sigh, strike his face, and tear out the hair of his beard or of his head, until he has accustomed himself to overcome them. After he has conquered these four

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "especially," but see below.

<sup>3</sup> "Vainglory" here seems to be misplaced.

<sup>2</sup> Text repeats "other."

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 8.



passions with the help of our Lord, and through his own watchfulness and zeal, he will enter into the first harbour and resting-place of pure prayer and undisturbed singing, because there are many harbours that are placed and arranged in the path of the solitary in the intelligible sea of the turmoils of the passions and of the evil spirits.

*On Pure Prayer.*

Pure, undisturbed and quiet prayer is accomplished, performed, constituted and kept by four virtues, and is diminished, tarnished, destroyed and hindered by four passions. The four  
35b virtues are : fasts, vigils, meekness and humility—two of which belong to the soul and two to the body. As to the destroying passions, they are : gluttony, excessive sleep, anger and vain-glory, as I said before. The two heads of the solitaries and of the Illuminated, the blessed Mark and the blessed Evagrius, teach us clearly concerning the four virtues which constitute pure prayer, and through which the solitary overcomes the passions and the demons. The blessed Mark instructs us about them in one of his chapters, and says : “ He who is desirous of discerning and crossing the intelligible sea of the passions and the demons, as Moses and the Israelites discerned the Red Sea, let him possess longanimity, let him humble himself, resort to vigils and persevere in asceticism. Without these four virtues, even if a thing forces itself into his heart he will not be able to discern it.” And he adds : “ Solitude becomes profitable when it has abstained from evil things. If he gets divine help in prayer for these four virtues, there will be none quicker than he in the pursuit of perfect health.” And he further says : “ The mind cannot be at rest if the body is not, nor can it make a breach in the stronghold<sup>1</sup> of these four virtues without solitude and prayer.” He calls longanimity “ meekness,” because in another passage he shows that these two virtues are identical, by saying : “ A longanimous man is very wise ; ” and again : “ He who is meek in our Lord is wiser than all the wise men.” He thus refers wisdom to both longanimity  
36a and meekness, as if they were implicitly one.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. “ enclosure.”

These two virtues of the soul which constitute pure prayer, that is to say, meekness and humility, are those that were taught by our Lord : " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." <sup>1</sup> Rest of the soul and pure prayer are, therefore, truly acquired through these two virtues, according to the words of our Lord, when the two other virtues concerning the body, namely, fasting and vigils, are joined with them, according to the true verdict of our Lord : " This kind of passions and demons goeth not out but by fasting and prayer," <sup>2</sup> the power and the beauty of which is especially perceived in vigils. As to the fourth virtue which the Abbot Mark calls " austeritv " and " asceticism," he is wont to refer by this word to fasting : " If one fasts one is less tempted." This word bears the same meaning in some other chapters of his book, as when he says : " The austere and ascetic man turns away from gluttony." From this it is clear that the Abbot Mark calls everywhere the virtue of fasting and moderation in food " austeritv " and " asceticism ." These are the four <sup>36b</sup> virtues, two of them dealing with the soul and two with the body, through which the pure prayer of the first harbour of peace is accomplished ; it is on them that the solitary has to meditate every day, and it is them that he has to strive and pray to possess, until he has acquired them.

It is necessary also to know that all the exercise of solitude is knit and woven of three virtues : faith that comes from hearing, and hope, and love, through which personal faith is made manifest. From the time a man goes to his cell and begins the exercises of faith, that is to say, the bodily exertions, till the time he reaches the exercise of hope, or the exercise of the mind, which is the contemplation of God, he labours and fights, through the four aforesaid virtues, against the four passions which tarnish pure prayer and impede and hinder him from reaching the contemplation of God which constitutes the exercise of hope. The virtues of which I spoke above are : <sup>3</sup> fasting, vigils,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> In the text, the heading of the next section is inserted here.



humility and meekness ; and the passions contrary to them are : gluttony, excessive sleep, vainglory and anger.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE SAME SAINT MAR DĀDĪSHO'.

*On the three Commandments which comprise all other Commandments, and which constitute Spiritual Prayer.*

From the time a man <sup>2</sup> begins the useful exercise of hope in God, till he has reached the exercise of love, which is the exercise of the spirit, in which the personal faith is made manifest for the spiritual vision <sup>3</sup> of our Lord, he labours and exercises himself in three great and all-embracing commandments, which are : incessant and undisturbed prayer, quick rejection of evil thoughts from the beginning of their rising in his heart, and endurance of all afflictions and all temptations which come upon him in his solitude, from passions, demons and men. After the solitary has been rendered perfect and blameless in this  
43a exercise of hope, or exercise of the mind, which is the contemplation of our Lord, he rises and enters into the exercise of love, which is the spiritual exercise, and in which are shown and sublimated all the fruits of the Spirit, which the Apostle has enumerated.<sup>4</sup> The chief among them are the following three : foretasted joy in the love of Christ our Lord and in the love of His Father ; complete meekness, and personal faith, which is the spiritual vision of our Lord and of the heavenly benefits, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. " I bow my knees and pray for you," says the blessed Paul, " that you may be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that Christ may dwell in your inner man by faith, and in your hearts by love and all humility of mind." <sup>5</sup>

These are the four virtues which constitute the prayer of

<sup>1</sup> What follows in the manuscript on ff. 36b-37a is repeated from ff. 42b-43a. A leaf in the original manuscript appears to have been misplaced and written twice. In the translation I have translated ff. 42b-56a, but omitted the letter of Dādsiho' to Abkosh on ff. 37b-42b (middle).

<sup>2</sup> Add *nāsh*.

<sup>3</sup> Read the pronoun in masc.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gal. v. 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iii. 14-16.

the mind, and these are the three great and all-embracing commandments which constitute spiritual prayer.

*Further on the Same Subject.*

If a Brother novice who enters his cell to live in solitude has a good intention and loves God, but is not keen and enlightened in his thoughts, so as to be able to learn, know and continually concentrate on the commandments and the passions which we described above, and in consequence of his untrained mind and simple heart, becomes distracted and is enticed by every thought that strikes him, in such a way that he is assailed by dejectedness and weariness, and leaves his solitude and goes out of his cell—let him harass his body in the measure of his <sup>436</sup> capacity, with bodily exertions : vigils, fasts, canonical prayers, and the rest of the bodily exercises, especially the reading of the books of the Fathers of the desert. In case his mind is unable to think of God, of His commandments, and of the fight against the demons, let him <sup>1</sup> remember continually in his cell the benefits which God has lavished on him, and in this way offer to Him the love that is due to Him. Even animals without reason love and are obedient to those who do good to them. If a simple Brother remembers continually the love of our Lord for him, this remembrance will take the place of the exercise of the mind for him ; and will guard him from the passions, deliver him from the demons, grant him the spiritual fervour to long always for our Lord, and be captivated by the sweet thought of His love ; and will bestow upon him the gift of endurance and the silent retreat of his cell. There is nothing higher, more sublime and more profitable in all the exercises of solitude and all the spiritual remembrances than the continual remembrance of the love of God and the love of Christ towards us.

If the solitaries continually strive after this remembrance, and are not hindered by the treacherous demons, all of them <sup>2</sup> will be able to endure their solitude, not only the zealous and enlightened Brothers among them, but also those Brothers who are simple and half-hearted in their exertions. The evil demons

<sup>1</sup> Read *āp* for *āpen*.

<sup>2</sup> Text repeats " solitaries."



44a fight not only against the exerting and subtile exercise of the mind, but also against the simple remembrance of the love of God towards us, because they know that through this remembrance a man acquires the habit of being bound with the thought of the love of our Lord, and endeavours to return to Him a love that is due to His love. If, while exerting yourself in the remembrance of the love of our Lord towards you, you are hindered by the fights of the demons, because, in the words of the Abbot Macarius, "this remembrance is their death and their condemnation, when the mind is constantly meditating and contemplating the love and the remembrance of God"—if, I say, you are assailed by lassitude when recalling the love of our Lord and the remembrance of His benefits to you, extend your thought and let it wander in the remembrance of all the saints from Abel, the Just, to the last of them. After your thought has been illuminated and strengthened by the remembrance of the virtues of each of them, and<sup>1</sup> has been raised from their remembrance to the love of our Lord, relinquish the remembrance of the saints, and bind your thought with the remembrance of the love of our Lord towards you; and when you are assailed by lassitude in the remembrance of our Lord, bring your thought down to the remembrance of the love of the saints towards our Lord, and how much they laboured and suffered for His love. Imitate them, you also, in the measure of your capacity, after the model of that Alexandrian Sister,<sup>2</sup> worthy of beatitudes, who imprisoned herself in a grave. When this blessed Sister was asked by Mother Melania how it was that she was not suffering from weariness in that narrow seclusion, she answered and said to her: "I am not suffering from weariness because, after reciting the Psalms of the Spirit and sitting to spin linen, I remember in my thought all the saints who pleased our Lord. When I look at Simon Cephas crucified upside down for the sake of the love of Christ; at Paul beheaded and his blood shed as a drink-offering before Christ; at James, the brother of our Lord, who, because he proclaimed

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats "your thought."

<sup>2</sup> The name of this Alexandrian sister was Alexandria. The story is found in a somewhat different form in the *Paradise of the Fathers*, i, 95-96.

that Christ was sitting at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, and would be coming on the clouds of Heaven, for our judgment, was thrown from the roof of the Temple, and his head was battered with a fuller's mallet ; and at the rest of the Apostles and martyrs who were crowned for the sake of the love of Christ, in all sorts of torments—I think that if our Lord made manifest His love to us in His death on the Cross, and if the Apostles and martyrs made manifest their love to our Lord in all sorts of torments and deaths, I do not consider myself doing a great thing when I lead a sinless life in seclusion, for the love of Christ."

Meditate and contemplate, O simple Brother, the arduous meditation and the profitable contemplation, useful to simple Brothers, which is written by Saint Evagrius in the discourse which he composed on the utility of solitude. It begins as follows: "It is written in Jeremiah that thou shalt not take thee a wife,"<sup>1</sup> and it proceeds: "We have placed before you the virtues that are congruous to solitude ; listen therefore to what our love orders you : sit in your cell, collect your thoughts, remember the day of your death, look at the mortality of your body, think of its corruption, be grieved therefrom, despise the relative unimportance of your labours, be meek<sup>45a</sup> and zealous in order to be able to endure them with the goodwill of solitude, do not weaken in your resolution but think of all those who are now in Sheol, with other things that I have mentioned concerning our standing before the tribunal of Christ, and the torments of Hell in company with the demons and the wicked, and concerning the happiness with God, Christ and the holy angels. You will indeed profit<sup>2</sup> by the remembrance of death, judgment and Hell. Weep, sigh and flee from sin, in order not to be tormented with sinners. Rejoice, jubilate and delight in the remembrance of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the happiness with our Lord and His saints, and exert yourself and endeavour to become worthy of these benefits, taking special care never to forget these things while you are in solitude in your cell."

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xvi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Add the pronoun *ant*.



Let it be known to you, my Brother, that when you sit with good intention in your cell and endure your solitude, spurning the pleasures of the body and worldly glory, and suffering the tribulations that assail you in your cell, for the love of God and the desire of His benefits—because of this good and pure intention all things will be granted to you, whether they be those which give joy or pain, rest or tribulation. They will be granted to you by a sign of the will of God, through the intermediary of the holy angel who accompanies you and guards you by order of God, during all the time you are in your cell. When, owing to the severity of your fight, you weaken  
45b in your resolution, so as to leave your cell and seek consolation and comfort from intercourse with men and from food and drink, all the things that happen to you, from the time you leave your cell till the time you return to it, happen to you, owing to the withdrawal of God's help from you, through the intermediary of the demon that accompanies you and troubles you. I shall expand and explain my discourse to you, so that you may understand these things clearly, and acquire gain from their knowledge.

All your exercise of solitude in your cell is divided into two parts: things done by you, and things done to you. The items of the first part include the following three considerations: asking forgiveness for your sins and healing for your passions; asking for help and power for the fulfilment of the commandments; and imploring salvation and deliverance from temptations and demons. As to the things that are done to you by our Lord, through the angel, they are also divided into three parts: power to fight, help for victory, and the withdrawal of God's help leading to your defeat.

I will write now on each of these considerations, and illustrate them, because a knowledge of them is indispensable. It is indeed hardly possible that a man should, without a knowledge of them, endure in solitude till his death. When you sit in your cell and ask forgiveness for your sins and your daily imperfections, it will undoubtedly be granted to you, for true is the promise of our Lord who said: "Ask and it shall be given unto you." When also you seek His help in your prayer,

for your victory against the passions and for the fulfilment of the commandments, it will truly be given unto you, as faithful are the words of our Lord who said : " Seek and ye shall find." When also you knock at the door of His mercy to ask of Him <sup>46a</sup> salvation and deliverance from demons and temptations, it will be granted to you without doubt, in accordance with the truth of His words and His unshakable promise : " Knock and it shall be opened unto you." These and similar things are required of you and performed by you, and are granted and given by God to you, if you endure in your cell, both in your rest and in your affliction, in your joy and in your tribulation. They will be given to you in part daily, and in full at the right time, if you endure your solitude and do not yield to weariness and dejectedness. From the time when, because of dejectedness and weariness, or because of flimsy and unnecessary motives, you go out of your cell <sup>1</sup> in search of recreation and the intercourse of men, till the time when you return to your cell and begin your exercise, all things that are done by you or happen to you—such as recreation, intercourse, food and drink, laughter, hearing of the news of the world and its battles, calumny, slander and the like—are due to the two following causes : the weakness of your will, and the action of the demon who is accompanying and following you. If, however, you persevere in your cell, all things done and performed by you will be done and performed by the grace of our Lord, and God will rejoice in them, and the angel who is accompanying you will profit by them and glorify God because of them. How can your angel not profit by what is done by you in your cell, and not glorify and magnify God because of your work, when he sees you, who are clad in a mortal and perishable body, being pierced from all sides <sup>46b</sup> with darts by innumerable afflictions and tribulations, and suffering from many fights of the demons, while you fast, keep vigils, recite Psalms, pray, and make use of genuflections and prostrations? Indeed he will sigh and weep over your sins, and ask for mercy from your Lord and our Heavenly Father. In the same way as the old men and the Fathers of the desert

<sup>1</sup> Read the word in the singular.



rejoice, reap great <sup>1</sup> benefit for their souls, glorify God and add to their own exertions and labours, when they see young men persevering in their solitude and exerting themselves for our Lord—so also do the holy angels who accompany each one of us rejoice when they see us sitting in our cells with good intention, exerting ourselves for the sake of our Lord in our voluntary labours, and enduring with joy for the sake of His name the tribulations that come upon us from the passions and the demons.

What I said to you above to the effect that the things done to you in your cell by our Lord are divided into three parts, namely, power to fight, help for victory, and the withdrawal of God's help leading to your defeat, is true: when you are persevering in your solitude and striving in the service of your Lord, sometimes a divine sign orders the angel to extend to you help in your struggle against the passion that is fighting against you, and the demon that is attacking you, while you are neither defeating the passion nor being defeated by it, but are all the day tormented in your struggle, so that your love towards God may be tested, and your good will towards our Lord and your good intention with which you have undertaken your solitude may be made manifest to the angel who is accompanying you, <sup>47a</sup> and to the demon who is tormenting you, and so that you may feel your love towards your Lord and rejoice in your mind. This is the cause of your torment. At some other times the divine sign orders the angel to invigorate and strengthen your mind for victory against the passion which torments you and the demon who struggles against you, so that immediately he draws nigh unto you, you may rebuke him with courage, through the divine power which is granted to you, and so that he may flee forthwith from you, while you are in no wise tempted by the weariness of the fight. This is done to you in order that you may rejoice and delight in your victory, and feel in your soul that the help of the angel is encompassing you, and that you are not left alone. In this way you are given courage for some other struggles of the future, and are armed powerfully against them,

and given hope of victory. This is the cause of your victory. At some other times the divine sign orders your angel to relax somewhat his hold upon you, so that you fall, in the same way as a father relaxes his hold upon his young child, when he teaches him how to walk at the beginning, so that he falls for his own benefit. This happens to you through divine Providence, by order of God and the will of the angel, and not from your wickedness or weakness, or the powerful onslaught of the demons ; and it happens for two reasons, as the Abbot Macarius said : " We are often left to ourselves, so that we may know our weakness, and that we are human beings." And again : " They inflict on us many wounds, so that our skill in our craft may be tested." These are the causes of your fall in your cell, as described by the Abbot Macarius, while you persevere in your cell and do not wander outside it nor seek human consolation. 47b

The Abbot Isaiah said : " There are pitfalls in the path of virtues," and Saint Evagrius said : " Let us not weary, lose hope and leave our cell, when at the beginning we do not feel strong enough ever to defeat sin, noticing as we do that in our struggle we often defeat it, but it <sup>1</sup> often also defeats us." If a man does not weaken in his resolution and give way to pusillanimity, but always calls for divine help to assist him, and if he has no doubt in his mind that he ever neglected to perform anything which he was able to perform, he will be given power and help to prevail against the neck of the enemies.<sup>2</sup> This, however, is subordinated to the fact that when the soul is assailed by torments, it should not own defeat and flee from them <sup>3</sup> and resort to pleasures, that is to say, that when a solitary is engaged in a fight, and is being tormented, he should not leave his cell in search of rest, consolation and recreation. Even if, by permission of God, he should stumble and commit an imperfection, he must persevere in his cell and deliver his soul to the holy angel who accompanies him and directs him, in accordance with the order of his Lord ; and even in case he is not given power to fight, he should not leave his cell, which thing he must never do, according to the words of the Fathers,

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats " sin."

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, put them under the yoke.

<sup>3</sup> Text repeats " torments."



either when he is winning a victory or when, through the withdrawal of God's help, he falls and suffers defeat.

As long as you persevere in your cell, for the sake of the name of Christ, and continue in the fulfilment of His commandments, rejoice, if possible, in your defeat as much as in your victory, as both of them are arranged (by God) for your spiritual gain ; but if you weaken, suffer defeat, and leave your  
 48a cell, even if you should raise up the dead, let not your heart rejoice. As it happens in the case of the soldier of a king, who, whether he strikes or is stricken, whether he makes others fall or falls himself, whether he wins a victory or suffers defeat, as long as he is in the fighting line, all these things are a glory to him, and bring him a crown ; but if he should yield to weariness, show pusillanimity, and leave the fighting line, even if he does many good things, he will be condemned to death—so also is the case of the solitary who perseveres in his cell, in his fight against the passions and the demons : whether he wins a victory or suffers defeat, whether he falls or stands, all these things will bring him a glorious crown ; if, however, he should yield to weariness, show pusillanimity, and leave his cell, all the things that he has done, even if considered virtuous, will be counted to him for condemnation and rebuke ; and he will consequently become a trampling-ground for the demons, with whom his part will also be.

That at some appointed times you may leave your cell by order and permission of the Fathers, and perform an act, and then return quickly to your cell after having performed it, is a meritorious<sup>1</sup> order from which you will acquire much power for your sitting in solitude in your cell ; but that you should desire to perform an act outside your cell without permission,<sup>2</sup> owing to weariness or in consequence of the fights of the demons, is counted to you as defeat, involving retribution.

*We will write a few Admonitions by Mar Dādīsho'.*

Because the blessed David wrote his Psalms<sup>3</sup> in a kind of poetical language, I will write to you also a few exhortations

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " spiritual."

<sup>2</sup> Lit. " from your own self."

<sup>3</sup> Lit. " illuminations " or " commentaries."

in a metrical style, for your greater benefit, so that in the time of your joy you may read them and induce your soul to please<sup>48b</sup> its bridegroom, and that in the time of your lassitude you may recite them and dispel your languor. I will begin with poverty, which is the beginning of the path of righteousness, and will end with your ascension into Heaven, and your life with our Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven, as this is the end of all your exertions and your rewards :

Divest yourself of everything for the sake of your Lord, and be poor for the sake of His wealth.

Fast every day for Him, and keep frequent vigils at His door.

Recite His Psalms before Him, implore Him and pray to Him.

Stand on your feet before Him, and bind your hands in His service.

Weep, shed tears on your cheeks, and beat your breast for Him.

Repent, sigh over your sins, and implore grace and mercy.

Show penitence and sorrow over your prevarications, and ask for the forgiveness of His loving kindness.

Bend your back in numerous and repeated prostrations, and sing before Him the sweet songs of the Holy Spirit.

Bow your forehead to your knees in frequent and long genuflections, and beat your head against the ground before His Cross with repeated prostrations.

Recite before Him with understanding the Psalms of the Holy Spirit, and pronounce before Him thoughtfully the prayer which our Lord taught us.

Collect your thoughts, and think only of your Lord.

Keep your senses in your dwelling, and your thoughts in your cell.

Fast in the evening, and do not practise gluttony in your food.

Restrict your food somewhat, and your passion will be restricted somewhat.

Restrict your sleep somewhat, and your dreams will be re-<sup>49a</sup>stricted somewhat.



Restrict your speech somewhat, and your wrath will be restricted somewhat.

Restrict your worldly affairs somewhat, and your cares will be restricted somewhat.

Sleep on the ground on your mat, with a Psalm in your mouth, and until you are overcome by sleep let your thought concentrate on our Lord.

Exert yourself and labour with your hands, so that a poor man may enjoy your bread.

Do not despise reading, and do not neglect meditation.

Love long solitude, but cling to the solitude of understanding.

Do not wander outside your cell in the flesh, nor inside in your thoughts.

Beware of your tongue, O my Son, lest it should bring reproach and shame upon you !

Humble yourself like your Lord, so that you may be exalted like Him.

Lower yourself like Him, so that you may be the companion of His glory.

Be a servant to your Fathers, Brothers and fellow-workers, in the same way as Jesus our Lord was the servant of His servants and His disciples, in order that He may deliver you from the servitude of sin and the demons, and that you may participate in His lordship and His kingdom.

Keep the commandments of Christ, so that your heart may rejoice in His joy, and your soul may delight in His love, and your mind may be illuminated by His knowledge.

"The statutes of the Lord are right," says the Spirit of the Psalms, "and rejoice the hearts of those who keep them faithfully. The commandment of the Lord is pure, and enlightens the eyes of the mind,"<sup>1</sup> which shall rejoice in the love of God and be illuminated with the light of grace. Love your Brothers as yourself, and your Lord more than yourself,<sup>2</sup> as 496 Jesus our Lord taught us in His gospel full of life.

Be good and meek, merciful and compassionate, and possess peace and quietness, gentleness and humility.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. xxii. 37.

Believe in God the Father, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Trust in Him, cling to His love, and believe and confirm His promises.

Have pity on your neighbour, and forgive the trespasses of your Brothers.

Love pains and lowliness, and you will possess rest and glory.

Love chastity of the body, and cherish purity of heart, so that your mind may see God<sup>1</sup> and that you may inherit the glory of Christ.

Show fortitude in your trials, and endurance in your pains and torments.

Do not go out of your cell till Sunday. I beseech you for love's sake, do not go out of it in the middle of the week : I implore once more your love not to go out of it in the middle of the week, so that the power of solitude may dwell in you and your heart may rejoice in its joy.

Beware of the boiling passion, and of the dejectedness caused by the demon.

Labour with understanding, and exert yourself thoughtfully.

Do not diminish your labour, nor add to it more than you can bear, lest you should vaunt yourself or suffer from lassitude, and flee from your cell.

Shake off from you the impurity of the passion, and spit on the demon of fornication.

Do not wax wrathful against your Brother, and do not show anger against your fellow-man, but wax wrathful against Satan, who hates you, and your Brother with you.

Do not fear the terrors of the demons, the children of darkness,<sup>2</sup> and do not dread the dejectedness that assails you in day-50a time.

Do not dread the evil spirit of insolence and blasphemy, but throw at him a stone from the sling—verses from the Psalms : " Let your blasphemy return upon your own head, O evil one and blasphemous demon, and let your iniquity, wickedness and blasphemy come down upon your own pate " <sup>3</sup> May

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. " nights."

<sup>3</sup> Ps. vii. 16.



the wicked, insolent and blasphemous demons be cursed, and may Jesus our Lord be blessed, and may I, His servant, rejoice in Him !

Beware of vainglory and of the sweetness of its temptations, lest your labour be vain, and your only gain a purse with holes in it.

Beware of avarice which gives rise to a hard-hearted life, so that you may not fall into its traps and be entangled in its snares.<sup>1</sup>

Beware especially of discontent and of the sadness that renders one a prey to the lion,<sup>2</sup> lest it should tear your exercise to pieces and drive you out ignominiously from your cell.

Do not give room to the demon of dejectedness and weariness, lest it should drive you out of your cell and laugh and scoff at you.

Weep before our gentle Lord, and shed penitent tears, in order that He may answer you, give you joy, and deliver you from dejectedness.

Be careful not to vaunt yourself above your Brother, or think of and dwell on his imperfections, or pollute your tongue with slander against your neighbour, or lend your ears to those who speak evil of their brethren, or despise in your thought your Brothers and fellow-workers, lest you be delivered into the hands of the demons, who will mock you and tread upon you.

Beware also of despondence, a cruel and dire temptation,<sup>3</sup> lest it should lead you out of your cell and drag you down into the pit of perdition.

506 Reveal your thoughts, your fights and your temptations to your Fathers, so that your soul may be delivered by their prayers and enlightened by their advices, and so that it <sup>4</sup> may rejoice in their sight and be comforted by their words. If you follow their advice and conform with their admonitions, you will gain victory over the passions and the demons, and serenity will reign over you.

<sup>1</sup> Read in the fem. *hē*.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "the sadness of the lion's mouth," cf. Ps. xxii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "struggle."

<sup>4</sup> Text repeats "your soul."

Hearken to what the holy and spiritual Fathers say, and to the way in which they infuse hope into you and fill your heart with comfort: "The life of solitude of a Brother in his cell is like a prison in which he remembers Christ always and does the will of His Lordship." In this is fulfilled the saying written in His gospel: "I was in prison and ye came unto me"<sup>1</sup> and visited me.

Take heed and think well, O Brother, be wise and trust that God the Father dwells with you, and Christ accompanies you, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies your cell.

Blessed will you be, O Brother, when you stand in the judgment hall at the right hand of our Lord, Lord of glory, Jesus the heavenly King, who will pronounce to you before the angels and the saints His words full of life, which will infuse gladness into your heart: "Come, ye blessed of the Father, for I was in prison in your cell, and ye came unto me. Ascend therefore with me into Heaven and dwell with me in the heavenly Kingdom."

51a

I have written to you, O my beloved in the Lord, these exhortations in a metrical style, so that you may read them, recite them and learn them by heart in the time of your joy, and so that you may sing them to mournful melodies in the time of lassitude, when the demons afflict you with their fights, and may forget your affliction, and so that your soul may rejoice in your hope. Keep these commandments with care, during all the week in which you remain in your cell.

When the communal bell sounds and calls you to go to the monastery, for the honour which is due to the holy day of Sunday, and for the sake of receiving the life-giving Sacrament—a little before this bell sounds, put your affairs in order, close your doors, and sit for about an hour and think within yourself how to keep both your outer and your inner senses from the stains of sin, which you may encounter on your way and in the monastery, till you return to your cell. When the bell has sounded, quickly and immediately stir your soul with the ardour of love and awe, and fall upon your knees and genu-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 36.



flect before the Crucifix, recite the Lord's Prayer with understanding and concentration, and say thus : " Our Lord and our Father, which art in Heaven, make us worthy to sanctify, magnify and exalt Thy name continuously and without distraction, night and day ; make us worthy, by Thy grace, of Thy Kingdom and of Thy sight, of Thy love and of the love of Thy Son and Thy Spirit, in earth as in Heaven. Give us this day our daily  
516 bread, and forgive us our sins and trespasses by Thy mercy, and give us strength to love one another in accordance with Thy command and Thy will, and lead us not into temptation without Thy help, but deliver us from the demons by Thy grace, for Thine is the power to give us Thy kingdom, the strength of Thy Spirit, and the praise through which we are enabled to magnify Thee in Heaven and in earth : Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen."

After this, rise from your knees, embrace and kiss our Lord on His Cross, and then immediately perform ten prostrations, and believe and trust what I am about to tell you : As your sight perceives the light of the Crucifix and your lips feel also its heat when the sun shines on it and you pray to it and kiss it, although the sun itself is in the sky and the Crucifix is on the wall, so also, and in a greater measure, although the man <sup>1</sup> of our Lord Christ in the flesh sits in Heaven on the throne of majesty, according to the preaching of the blessed Paul,<sup>2</sup> yet His power, His glory, His working and His dominion are in the Cross ; and you kiss our Lord Himself and embrace Him with love, as it is written : " Who is like unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who dwelleth on high and beholdeth the depth " <sup>3</sup>—in Heaven and in the Cross ?

After having gone out and closed the outer door of your cell, remain awhile before the door and lift your eyes, your thoughts and your hands towards Heaven, and pray thus : " O our Lord Jesus Christ, set a watch over my mouth and a watch over my lips, so that my heart may not incline to any evil thing, and so that I may not practise wicked works." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I translate the text literally. Cf. II. Cor. v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. viii. 1, and xii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxiii. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxli. 3-4.

Then make the sign of the holy <sup>1</sup> Cross on yourself and over <sup>52a</sup> the path which you are following, and proceed in your way till you reach the monastery, while reciting quietly and silently the Psalm: "Incline, O Lord, Thine ear unto me and hear me." <sup>2</sup> Accustom yourself not to look beyond your path, either to the right or to the left, more than the length of a cubit, or at most two, and become during all the night and day of the holy Sunday a good example to those who see you in your humble posture in the service, in your vigilance in prayer and in your silence at table. Take a good example to yourself from all the virtues of your Fathers and Brothers, and if any of them has an imperfection do not see it, nor judge it.

Immediately after having returned in peace to your cell, fall down and genuflect before the Crucifix, and recite the Lord's Prayer, as we have described above. Recite also words of thankfulness of your own composition, and offer thanks to God for His having guarded you and delivered you from sins, shortcomings and temptations, and brought you in peace and joy of heart to your cell. If in your solitude you persevere in these labours, and if you practise these exertions and do not yield to dejectedness, your mind will be uplifted in the three periods of your life, which are: the labours of your novitiate, the struggle of your middle life and the crown of your old age, and you will be rendered, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, worthy of the joy of the cell, the rest of Paradise and the delight of Heaven.

Persevere, therefore, always in solitude in your cell, until the power of this solitude dwells in you and you enjoy its fruits. Do not follow a youthful Brother like yourself, who will distract <sup>52b</sup> you and take you round from monastery to monastery, from village to village and from country to country, and make you lose your life; nor follow a Brother who speaks evil of your Brothers before you; nor one who will cause you to abandon your solitude, the performance of the service of your Hours and your canonical prayers. Rather repair constantly to the door of the cell of a self-exerting and illuminated old man who loves solitude,

<sup>1</sup> Text *Mar*. Note the use of *Mar* (Saint) for the Cross.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xvii. 6.



so that he may teach you some of his ways and so that you may follow in his steps and imitate him. Do not neglect, O my son, to perform the service of the seven Hours prescribed, through the will of the Holy Spirit, by the Ecumenic Council of the three hundred and eighteen holy Fathers.<sup>1</sup> You should especially exert yourself and labour in the service and the prayer of midnight, as all the benefits will be granted to you from it. Indeed, all the spiritual gifts and various benefits which were granted to the holy Fathers were bestowed upon them by God, the bountiful giver of gifts, through vigils and night services.

When the Lord calls you, as the Abbot Isaiah said, through the working of the angel who accompanies you in order to keep you and instruct you, rise immediately with alertness and zest, genuflect before the Crucifix and recite the Lord's Prayer. Then rise upon your feet and embrace and kiss the Crucifix with a feeling of repentance and love. While embracing it, say thus: "Glory be to Thee, O our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who wast crucified for us! In Thee we find deliverance  
 53a from the demons, in Thy blood we have forgiveness of sins, and in Thy wounds we are delivered from passions." Then kiss our Lord on His Cross, twice on the nails of His right foot and twice on the nails of His left foot, and say at each kiss: "Let me <sup>2</sup> be healed with Thy wounds," until your heart is stirred and burns in His love. Genuflect again before the Crucifix and stand in the middle (of your cell), not leaning on a staff like the old, nor on the wall like the weak, but standing erect on both your feet. I know some Brothers who, when they stand on their feet in their vigils in their cells, tie together both the toes of their feet with a linen string, and in this way they stand with alertness and zest. Stand therefore, you also, with alertness and zest; make the sign of the Cross on your mouth with the Crucifix; begin and say thus: "I begin to speak before Thee, O our Lord Jesus Christ, and I am earth and dust, dung and dirt, a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Council of Nicea.

<sup>2</sup> Read in singular in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxii. 6.

Then raise your voice with the spiritual cry of your mind, and recite the following prayer : " Help me, O God our Saviour, so that I may love Thee and keep Thy commandments. Purge away my sins and deliver me from mine enemies for Thy name's sake,<sup>1</sup> by the prayer of Thine angels and Thy saints," until you reach the measure of the old men, who have laboured in prayer, who at the end of every Psalm recite the Doxology and a prayer, and who hardly recite ten Psalms in the long vigils of midnight and onwards, on account of the wonders that happen<sup>53b</sup> to them through the divine grace : weeping, tears, sighs, spiritual visions, divine consolations and revelations of the Spirit. As long as you are a novice and young, recite the Doxology and the prayer which we described above, with a mournful voice at the end of every *marmītha*,<sup>2</sup> and at the end of the *shubbāha*<sup>3</sup> of every third *marmītha*. Then look in your prayer at our Lord on the Cross and say thus : " Help me, O God our Saviour, so that I may love Thee and keep Thy commandments. Purge away my sins and deliver me from mine enemies, for Thy name's sake, by the prayer of the holy angel who guards me." Take refuge only in prayers to your angel at the end of each Doxology,<sup>4</sup> till your service comes to an end, and have strong faith that as all things that happened to the Israelites through divine Providence, happened by the intermediary of the angel Michael, so also all things that happen to you from the time of your birth till that of your death and even of your resurrection, are accomplished through your holy guardian angel. For this reason you owe him honour and a love mixed with awe, and you ought to take refuge in prayers to him and not to cause him pain by your weakness.

When therefore you stand in prayer in your cell during the time of your vigils, look at your lowliness and at the greatness of our Lord on the Cross. Look also in your mind at the angel who is at your right hand and at the demon who is standing at your left hand, and so think spiritually of the meaning of every<sup>54a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. lxxix. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Division of the Psalter, comprising about three Psalms.

<sup>3</sup> Ejaculatory prayer of the Service Book.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. "shubbāha," as above.



word that comes out of your mouth, and do not allow distraction to prevail upon you. In reciting the Psalm : " O God, deliver me out of the hand of the wicked and out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man,"<sup>1</sup> when you say " O God," look towards our Lord on the Cross ; when you say " deliver me " look at yourself and towards the holy angel who is standing at your right hand, and through whom you are being delivered ; and when you say " out of the hand of the wicked and of the unrighteous and cruel man," look in your thought at the wicked demon who is standing at your left hand and who hates you and fights against you. Furthermore, when you recite " Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt, and let them be clothed with shame that magnify themselves against me,"<sup>2</sup> turn your sight towards the demon. . . .<sup>3</sup> When you recite " let them shout for joy and be glad that favour my victory " <sup>4</sup> look in your thought at the holy angel who helps you, and at his holy brother-angels who often repair to him in order to honour him and to express their joy in your exercises. And when you recite " Let them say continually that the Lord is great who had pleasure in the  
54b peace of His servant,"<sup>5</sup> look also in your mind at our Lord on the Cross. And when you recite " Let the demons be cursed, but mayest Thou, O Lord, be blessed, and may I, Thy servant, rejoice in Thee,"<sup>6</sup> in saying " Let them be cursed " look at the demons ; in saying " mayest Thou be blessed " look at our Lord ; and in saying " Thy servant " think of yourself and of your angel. And if the demon waxes wrathful and terrifies you with his visions and frightens you with his temptations, be not afraid, excited and disturbed, but look at our Lord on the Cross, and have trust and confidence in the holy angel who is standing at your right hand to help you and guard you. In this way your fear will immediately vanish and you will be filled with joy. Act in this way when you pray at the end of each Doxology.

When you cry to our Lord in your prayer, " Help me, O

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> A lacuna of more than one line in the manuscript.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. cix. 28.

God, our Saviour, so that I may love Thee and keep Thy commandments ; purge away my sins and deliver me from mine enemies for Thy name's sake," in pronouncing "Help me, O God," look at our Lord ; in pronouncing "purge away my sins and deliver me," at yourself ; in pronouncing "from mine enemies," at the demon who is standing at your left hand ; and in pronouncing "by the prayers of the holy angel who guards me," at your guardian angel who is standing at your right hand. Apply to yourself every word or Psalm in which there is mention of sorrow or penitence ; and pray, implore, grieve and ask for mercy, as if it were you who had sinned. In reciting the Psalms and praying in this way, sleep will not overcome you, nor will distraction harass you ; the demon will not frighten you, and the Devil will not overpower you. And during your prayer and your recitation of the Psalms, your intelligence will be illuminated with understanding and strength-<sup>55a</sup> ened by hope, and will shed sweet tears mingled with joy and love. At the end of your service you will rejoice in God with a joy that has no parallel in creation, like a man possessing the treasure of life in his soul, and through your joy, in your vigils, your recitation of the Psalms and your prayer, the labour of the canonical Hours of the day will be lightened for you. In this way, through the continual and daily labours which you experience in your solitude, you will dwell in the mighty refuge of Christ, which leads to the House of God.

Side by side with the labours which you experience in your body, learn also little by little the labours of the mind through which you attain the purity of heart which sees God in the revelation of the Light.<sup>1</sup> As long as you were leading a cenobitic life, your enemy was fighting against you chiefly with words and deeds, but henceforth he will fight against you with evil thoughts rather than words and deeds. If you wish, you will win complete victory over him, by the power of Christ our Lord, the giver of your victory. Examine, therefore, your soul, and do not be distracted by the spectacle of this world, the beauty of which vanishes. Do not have consideration for, nor inter-

<sup>1</sup> On this "Light" see *Prefatory Note*.



course with, anyone who loves this world, as death is near, which 55b will carry you away wherever it finds you. Come, let us ask grace of the Lord of grace. Woe to us if we leave this world without the good works that please God! Truly woe unto us if we leave this world without them, and have nothing in the next! Truly woe and woe unto us if Christ disowns us by saying: "I know you not. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!"<sup>1</sup> Many will say to me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, have we not worn sackcloth in Thy name, and in Thy name eaten the bread of vagrancy?' And then will I profess unto them: 'I know you not, O men lacking in exercises!'"<sup>2</sup> Let us therefore implore God to give us a mind that is awe-struck in Him, an intelligence that is moved by the wonder of His Lordship, a thought that meditates on the Passion of His humility, and a heart<sup>3</sup> that is tinged with the grief of sorrow. If you are deprived of the remembrance of all these thoughts, you will be deserving of all tears, as you are an ascetic in name only.

Woe unto you, O wretched man, who have been, by your will, like a dead man who is without feeling, and who does not see truth, nor hear reality, nor understand meanings! Woe unto you, O wretched man! Who will weep over your death, while you are dead to true life? Woe unto you, O miserable man! Who is able to mourn your life? O unhappy man, who have lost everything, shed tears over your sins! Lo, the end has come, and the hour in which we arise from our sleep has arrived! O unhappy man, lo, the hour of your death has struck, and you will leave everything in this world, empty-handed and possessing nothing! O my beloved, believe me because I am truly telling you the truth, and am not lying: no confidence or trust can be put in any visible things, neither in men and their property, nor in the world and its possessions, as "Every man walketh in a vain show, and vanisheth away like vapour."<sup>4</sup>

Lo, we have drawn before you, in short terms, O my beloved, a picture and image which we took from the sacred

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "mind."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xxxix. 7.

Books, for the right course of your true life, and we have shown you its different categories and ways, and the rewards placed before you by divine justice at the end of the course of the two ways. In this you will be enabled to retrace your steps quickly from the course of the broad way that leadeth unto Hell<sup>1</sup> and unto eternal torments, and to strive eagerly to enter the strait gate and follow laboriously this narrow way and thus reach the goal set before you by Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> to whom, in conjunction with His Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, honour, worship and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "Sheol."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. vii. 14.





### III.

## MYSTICAL TREATISES BY 'ABDĪSHO' ḤAZZĀYA.

### PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following pages give the text and the translation of some mystical treatises by 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya (*i.e.*, the Seer). The epithet *Ḥazzāya* is not found in the heading of the present treatises, but is clearly written in the heading of a previous treatise in the same manuscript. This epithet renders precarious any attempt to identify him with the Patriarch 'Abdīsho' i, bar 'Akré, who died in A.D. 986<sup>1</sup> or with 'Abdīsho' the Monk, who, according to the historian 'Amr, lived in A.D. 938 in the monastery of St. Joseph, near Balad.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the fact that the latter wrote, according to the Catalogue of 'Abdīsho',<sup>3</sup> a parentical and ascetical homily, there is no ground whatever for identifying him with our 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya, who indeed seems to have lived a century or two earlier, and should thus be placed in the phalanx of the mystical writers who flourished from the seventh to the ninth centuries in the districts situated on both banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. His style is pure, and more archaic than that used by the authors of the tenth century.

We may state with confidence that this 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya is the brother of Joseph Ḥazzāya, who, according to the *Book of Chastity*, wrote under the name of his brother 'Abdīsho'. The

<sup>1</sup> Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, p. 239. In the *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, Vol. I, pp. 1158 and 1175, I inadvertently referred to 'Abdīsho' II, who died in 1090, for works which were more probably written by 'Abdīsho' I, who died in 986. Both Barhebraeus (*Chron. Eccl.* iii, 251) and the Catalogue of 'Abdīsho' (No. 134) attribute works to the first (and not to the second) Patriarch of this name. The above two references in my Catalogue should, therefore, be corrected accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> *De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria*, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Assemani, *Bibl. Orient.* 31, 191.



statement of the *Book of Chastity* is as follows: "Saint Joseph Ḥazzāya, who is 'Abdīsho'. . . . And he (Joseph Ḥazzāya) had a carnal brother named 'Abdīsho', who, having come from Nimrod, his town, received baptism and became a monk. And from that time he wrote all his books under the name of his brother 'Abdīsho'." <sup>1</sup> We may remark about this interchange of the names of Joseph Ḥazzāya and 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya, that the former did not write under his brother's name until after the latter had become a monk and lived with his brother in the monastery of Maragna. The statement of the *Book of Chastity* is explicit on this point. All the books, therefore, that are placed under the name of Joseph Ḥazzāya were written by him before his brother became a monk, and all those which are placed under the name of his brother 'Abdīsho' were composed after his brother had become a monk. In the manuscript Mingana Syriac 601, from which the treatises of this volume are drawn, there are some works appearing under the name of Joseph Ḥazzāya, and some under 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya, and from the above quoted statement of the *Book of Chastity* we infer that the former treatises were written before the latter. Two sections of the work which we are editing and translating in the following pages are also found in Mingana Syriac 47 (ff. 248b-252a) where they are attributed to 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya.<sup>2</sup>

For this identification of 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya with Joseph Ḥazzāya, additional and decisive evidence is given by the manuscript of Seert, No. 79 (now lost), where in the title of a mystical work 'Abdīsho' Ḥazzāya is given as the author, as follows: "*The Book of Questions and Answers*, written by Mar 'Abdīsho', monk of monks, Ḥazzāya and Illuminated," while in the colophon the same work is ascribed to Joseph Ḥazzāya, in the following terms: "Here end the five maimré in question and answer by Rabban Joseph Ḥazzāya."<sup>3</sup> A long extract from this *Book of Questions and Answers* is preserved in the present treatise (pp. 165-168).

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Chastity*, p. 511 (edit. Bedjan).

<sup>2</sup> *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, Vol. i, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> A. Scher's *Catalogue des manuscrits Syriaques et Arabes . . . de Seert*, p. 59.

'Abdīsho' Hazzāya flourished in the seventh century and may have died about A.D. 690.

The present treatise deals with the following mystical points :

(1) With the "spiritual theory which in the time of prayer draws the mind above the emotion of the senses," and with the "fiery impulse" which affects the soul of the mystic who has attained the state of perfection. In the words of the author, this fiery impulse sometimes clothes a man with fire, from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, to such an extent that when he looks at himself he cannot see any material body, but only the fire with which he is clad. This impulse "stretches in the soul," which then exhales sweet odour. Immediately after having smelt this odour, the soul rises from mortality to life, and leaves darkness for light. It changes also the order of its nature to an image that is above its nature, and the fiery impulse renders it impassible, while causing the mind to become intoxicated as with strong wine, and enraptured in its sweet odour. The author speaks also of this fiery impulse as being the spiritual key which opens before the mind the inner door of the heart, and makes manifest to it the spiritual abode in which dwells Christ our Lord in the inwardness of our heart.

(2) With the prayer of the mind in the "sphere of serenity." The author maintains that there is no material image left to the vision of the mind which has reached the sphere that is above that of serenity. He speaks also in this section of the nature of the spiritual visions of the mind in the "sphere of purity," which is below that of serenity.

(3) With the nature of the working of the impulses that appear in the mind, in the time of prayer. The author discusses which of them are material and which are immaterial.

(4) With the sign whereby we know that it is the Spirit of God, and not the demon, that is working in us and inspiring us.

The author shows evidence of much originality and some deep thinking. A few passages in his treatise may be paralleled with some written by Simon of Ṭaibūtheh, but this similarity may be explained by the fortuitous encounter on a common ground with which one so often meets in the works of mystical writers. Like Simon, he lays stress on the inward vision which



comes to the Illuminated, and like him he dilates on the necessity of the love of God and of our fellow-men. The following sentence will suffice to illustrate this point: "When you remember your fellow-men your heart is kindled with the power of the working of the Spirit in you as with fire, and from this, goodness and kindness are born in your heart, so that you do not utter an unkind thing to any man, nor does your thought think evil of anyone, but you do good to all men, both in your thought and in your deed."

#### TRANSLATION.

BY THE SAME MAR 'ABDĪSHO'.

143b *On the spiritual theory which in the time of prayer draws the mind above the emotion of the senses and above the thoughts and the understandings of the material things; and on the fiery impulse which transforms the soul to its likeness, whenever theory draws the mind to itself.*

Those whom the grace of God has rendered prosperous; who have worked successfully in the labours of virtue; who have purified the mansion of their heart from evil desires, passion, envy, anger, calumny, and pride which is the mother and the educator of all evils; who have possessed purity of soul and serenity of mind; who, for the sake of their love for Christ our Lord, have for a long time become holy temples to the Most High God, the King of all the worlds, according to the words of the prophet who says: "You are the temples of the Lord if you beautify before Him your paths and your works<sup>1</sup>;" to whom the power of the treasure of life which is found within them has been revealed, namely the Holy Spirit which they received from the holy baptism, in their second birth; whose mind has possessed the holy vision which penetrates the height and the depth of all the natures, whether corporeal or intelligible—whenever they draw nigh unto prayer and unto divine service in order to do the spiritual priestly service in the inward holy of holies, a fiery impulse stretches in their soul, which exhales

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. vi. 16; Ezek. xxxvii. 26-27; etc.

sweet odour, the perfume of which is ineffable. When the soul which has been found worthy of it smells it, it rises from mortality to life, leaves darkness for light, and draws nigh from ignorance to the knowledge of truth, from doubt to certainty, from the vision of corporeal things to that of intelligible things, and from the perplexity of the distraction of this world to the consciousness of the next world. The soul will also change the order of its nature to an image that is above its nature, and from being up till then passible in its thoughts it will, through that fiery impulse, draw nigh in these thoughts unto impassibility. The mind will also become intoxicated and enraptured, as with strong wine, in the vision of that fiery impulse through which it will undergo a change in the exquisite odour of that holy smell.

The fiery impulse of which I speak is, therefore, a spiritual key which opens before the mind the inner door of the heart, and makes manifest to it the spiritual abode in which dwells Christ our Lord within us and in the inwardness of our heart, according to the words of the divine Paul, who said, in exhorting us to the knowledge of this sublime gift: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove<sup>1</sup> your own selves. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"<sup>2</sup> Indeed, wherever the Lord Christ dwells, there also is His Spirit, as the Apostle Paul says,<sup>3</sup> and wherever is the Spirit of the Lord, there also is freedom from passions; and wherever there is freedom from passions, there the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>144b</sup> together with security, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, will reign.<sup>4</sup> A man will not know then how to control his senses from the intensity of the joy and the jubilation of the heart. Indeed no man is able to endure the working of this fiery impulse. Immediately, therefore, this fiery impulse expands in the soul, a man falls to the ground and eats the dust that is on it, as if it were bread, from the ardour of divine love and the intensity and burning of its heat. Blessed is the son of man who has been found worthy of this divine visitation, and the son of the flesh who has imparted to the palate of his mind something of the sweetness of the delight of that fiery impulse—a sweetness

<sup>1</sup> Read *nassaw*.

<sup>3</sup> Add some such word as *āmar*.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rom. viii. 9 *seq.*



which is experienced by the faculties of the soul through the mercy of the grace of Christ our Lord. In case this state lasts a while, spiritual theory will shine in the soul, like a luminous cloud, on the vision and the understanding of the past and future worlds: and the light of its vision will cause the face of the intelligence<sup>1</sup> to shine like that of the son of Amram<sup>2</sup> on the summit of the mountain, and will draw the mind<sup>1</sup> to itself from the sight and the understandings of all types of (material) knowledge; and the mind will have no other feeling but that of its vision and its understanding.

The heart of a man will be filled with the holy light of the vision of this theory to such an extent that the mind will not even perceive and distinguish itself, because all the faculties  
 145a of its spiritual nature will at that time become absorbed in it.

There will be neither thought of anything, nor any consciousness and remembrance, nor any impulses and inward movements, but only extasy in God and an ineffable rapture. Blessed is the man who has been found worthy of this gift, the workings of which cannot be expressed with a corporeal tongue. Indeed, there will then be made manifest mysteries and revelations which only a mind can receive spiritually from a mind, because having no power over them a corporeal tongue is not able to express them.<sup>3</sup>

The Fathers say that it is through the vision of this holy theory that a man is worthy to penetrate the spiritual sphere, as the visitation of this vision of theory becomes to the man the boundary line of his natural soul and the sphere of perfection. Below this visitation is, therefore, the sphere of the natural soul, in which sacrifices and prayers are offered, and above it is the sphere of perfection, in which neither sacrifices nor prayers are offered, but the mysteries and the revelations of the next world are made manifest to the spiritual mind. The following is a true sign and manifestation from which, in becoming conscious of it, a man will understand that he has for some time reached the sphere of the true natural soul: as long as your

<sup>1</sup> The author makes use here sometimes of the word *hawna* and sometimes of the word *mad'a*, the exact meaning of which cannot always be expressed in English. About these two different "minds," see Simon of Taibütheh, in the first treatise of this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Moses.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Simon of Taibütheh, p. 62.

mind has not attained the vision of this theory, understand in your soul that you are below the sphere of serenity in your exercise, and strive with all your might against evil thoughts, and acquire vigil, fast, prayer, reading and meditation upon divine Books, from which you will be enabled to rise to the sphere of serenity. 145b It is indeed from the order of his corporeal state that a man rises to purity, and from purity he elevates himself to the order of the natural soul ; and from the natural soul to the consciousness and vision of this wonderful visitation ; and from this vision to his entry into the sphere of perfection, in order to do the priestly service in the innermost holy of holies, in which is the true High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> There are there no two lights, no two images, and no two feelings, but one light, one feeling and one image, namely the glorious vision of our Redeemer. May He by His grace render worthy all who are from His flesh and His bones, of the delight of these sublime mysteries, here in a mysterious way and in the next world in true reality ! Amen.

#### BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*On the prayer which comes to the mind in the sphere of serenity ; and against those who pretend that there is a material image and likeness to the vision of the mind which has reached the sphere that is above that of serenity ; and on the nature of the vision of the mind in the sphere of purity ; and on how, when it has reached the sphere of serenity, God has no image or likeness.*

That our vision of God is above all images and likenesses, we have explained in the previous chapter which dealt with the spiritual theory which, through the (divine) visitation, comes to the mind between the state of serenity and that of perfection. I deemed it advisable to write now on the nature and order of the prayer which comes to the mind in the sphere of serenity. 146a

When mind has attained the state of serenity, it has no time in which it does not pray, but there is a method for its prayer that is distinguished from the prayer which it recites

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heb. iv. 14 ; ix. 24-25 ; etc.



in the sphere of purity. The true prayer which mind recites in the sphere of serenity is formed of the understandings of the holy Books ; and of the mysteries and revelations that are found in the theory of the material bodies, which constantly set the mind in bewilderment and rapture in the depth of the wisdom of the Lord of all, which is hidden in them, and which draws the mind to itself, away from all things performed in the body, for the pleasure of the will of God, as the Apostle said : " He determined the times by His order, and set bounds to the habitation of men." <sup>1</sup> In addition to this, he said : " They will seek and search for God, and will find him in His creatures ; " and again : " The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen through things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." <sup>2</sup>

There is, as I said once, a single method of mental prayer in the sphere of serenity. As there are in that sublime sphere neither prayers nor sacrifices, and as it is free from the tumult of passions and of supplications and entreaties concerning former transgressions, there is in it not even a remembrance of the corporeal exercises which are performed in the sphere of purity, and the remembrance of which constantly stirs in the mind.

1466 All these and similar things cease from the mind in the sphere of serenity, and their remembrance is lacking in the emotion of the mind, which is stirred at all times with things that are higher and more sublime, in the extasy of the creation of God the All-Wise.

As I said above, there is one single method of mental prayer when it has risen to the sphere of serenity, and it consists in the sweet vision and contemplation of the spiritual knowledge that is hidden and concealed in the universe. As the blessed Moses, when he stood in the cloud six days—which constitute the number of days in which the world was made by the wise Creator—had no definite prayer, but only spiritual vision and contemplation of the creatures of God, the Lord of all, together with communion and intercourse with the greatness of that high and sublime Being whose name is holy and whose dwelling-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 19-20.

place is holy<sup>1</sup>—so also the mind that has attained serenity, through the successful performance of its divine exercise, has there no other vision and contemplation of anything but only the sweet vision of the creatures of God, the wise Maker. This is the meaning of the saying of the prophet: "Man did eat angels' food,"<sup>2</sup> that is to say, the spiritual understanding which is hidden and concealed in the works of God, and which is felt and known only to the pure mind that has reached serenity. The mind is filled in that sphere with an unending joy and an ineffable jubilation; and peace and security reign over the 147a faculties and the different parts of the soul; and man acquires true love and affection towards all men, while suffering with them and sorrowing with them in their great loss through the (ephemeral) pleasure which arises in the emotion of the passions.

Because there are many who contend, against their best judgment,<sup>3</sup> that in the sphere of serenity there are prayers, sacrifices, sighs and supplications for former transgressions, while not knowing what they are saying nor for what they are contending, I wish to show clearly how and in what order prayers, entreaties and supplications for former transgressions are recited, and in what place the remembrance of these transgressions is stirred in the soul, which they drive<sup>4</sup> to the labours of penitence. When a man leaves this world in the high thought of the fear of God, and draws nigh unto this holy order of monasticism, and begins to walk in the path of virtue, and his foot treads for some time in the stages of the corporeal state—he begins to dig and lay a foundation for his exercises, which consist in continual exertions of all kinds, performed through the body. This is due to the fact that the remembrance of the previous transgressions which he has committed stir in him continually, and he is not able to relinquish and neglect the physical labours which are performed in the body, in order to please God. Even the fire of the natural faculties<sup>5</sup> is kindled 147b there within himself, and the more it becomes intensified in his heart, the more will he increase his labours, enlarge his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 27; Ps. lxvii. 5; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Read in fem. *wam'irān*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "against their faces."

<sup>5</sup> Read *zaw'é* for *zar'é*.



charities and nurture his virtues in various ways : in his mercy towards the poor and the wretched, in his pity for the needy, in his sorrow for those who are afflicted and in pain, in his reception of strangers, in his washing of the feet of the weary, in his visits to the sick, in his service to the sufferers, and other similar virtues. He will endeavour and exert himself to fulfil all the commandments which our Lord enunciated in the Gospel to those who were on His right hand : “ I was sick and ye visited me, naked and ye clothed me, a stranger and ye took me in, in prison and ye came unto me,” etc.<sup>1</sup> These should be acquired little by little by the man who has begun to walk in this holy path. Through these and some other things which have been omitted by us, the soul is purified of its passions, namely the passion of the body, and anger, its helper. When the soul has been delivered from these passions—which will then not stir within it as previously nor work in it in a retrograde way, causing it to do evil, but will work in a natural way—it<sup>2</sup> will become in the future a fountain for divine prayers, entreaties and supplications, from which it will acquire purity. After it has been purified and has remained for some time in its natural order, it will appear always  
 148a in the blue colour of the heavens, and its prayers will mount to the height like fiery perfumes which purify and cleanse the soul, in the same way as iron cast into the fire is cleansed by it of all impurity. The soul will then be purified by its own prayers,<sup>3</sup> which draw it near the sphere of serenity, through the working of the natural faculties which act in it. In the sphere of serenity all the faculties which produce prayer are idle, as I showed above, because the soul has no remembrance of a single previous transgression, for which to show diligence concerning prayers and supplications. There is there only a peace that passes all understanding,<sup>4</sup> and quietness dwells in all the faculties of the soul and of the mind, which has no remembrance of anything, but only extasy in the wisdom of God, which is hidden in the natures and affairs of the creation. The understanding of the judgment and providence of God will also shine constantly in the soul, and draw it to itself<sup>5</sup> like a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 35-36.<sup>3</sup> Read in plur. *şelawāthāh*.<sup>2</sup> Text repeats “ soul.”<sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 7.<sup>5</sup> Read *lewāthēh*.

magnetic stone which attracts small pieces of iron to itself, and it will not allow it to revert to prayer or to do any other act, but will always draw it in extasy towards the mercy of God, Lord of all. In an extasy and rapture in such things, all the faculties which produce prayers are idle, and become quiescent. Indeed prayers are recited by a man either for the sake of previous weaknesses into which he had fallen ; or for the sake of an illness of the body ; or for the sake of supplying some of his deficiencies ; or for the sake of his deliverance from his <sup>1</sup> passions, which are constantly stirred in him and prick him with their goads ; <sup>2</sup> 148b or for the sake of freedom and deliverance from the tyrannical demons who fight against us, or from other afflictions which inflict injury on us ; or for the sake of obtaining a benefit ; or for similar reasons, on all of which we need not dwell. We offer a prayer to God in order that He may grant us salvation and deliverance from the above evils,<sup>3</sup> and vouchsafe unto us the assistance of His mercy, in order that we may be found without stain before Him. In short, it is for these things and on account of their remembrance that prayer is offered by us to God.

A saint said : " Offerings and sacrifices are offered where sin is committed." When, therefore, the mind has attained for some time the sphere of serenity, and has been delivered from the urge of passions and freed from the working of sin, the remembrance <sup>4</sup> of all the aforesaid things will vanish from it, as this sphere of serenity is above the sphere of passions and of their stirring. The mind has there only one kind of prayer, which concerns the conversion of men who hold to error, in order that they may turn away from iniquity to virtue and from ignorance to the knowledge of the truth. It has no other prayer apart from this, but only vision and contemplation of the manifold wisdom of God,<sup>5</sup> which is hidden in the created natures. I am not speaking here of the partial, but of the complete serenity ; as there is a partial serenity and also a complete one, in which 149a mind is hidden in the cloud of crystal light, in a way similar to

<sup>1</sup> Read *dileh*.

<sup>2</sup> Probably read '*uḡsaiḥōn*.'

<sup>3</sup> Lit. from them.

<sup>4</sup> Read in plur. '*uḥdānaihain*.'

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Eph. iii. 10.



that experienced for six days by the stammering son of Amram, the beloved of God, on the summit of the mountain.

Whenever mind reaches the state of true serenity, it is at all times invested with theory, in the image of a crystal light, which is the sphere in which are seen in their nature the spiritual beings, whose modulations are a burning and consuming fire. This is indeed the sphere in which the spiritual natures glorify spiritually, in their triune glorification, the hidden and unknown Being, who dwells in a glorious light which no man can approach,<sup>1</sup> as the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, said: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the splendour of His glory filled His temple. Above Him stood the Seraphim; each one had six wings, and incessantly flew and fluttered, and one cried unto another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!'"<sup>2</sup>

From the above sphere of serenity, the mind rises to the sphere of spirituality, where its vision has neither image nor likeness, because it is invested all in all with a single vision of light, to which nothing can be likened. There are, however, people who, not knowing what they are saying, ignorantly imagine and pretend that above the sphere of serenity the vision of the  
 1496 mind has an image and a likeness. How can this ever be, while the mind does not know and does not distinguish its own self from the glory of that light which has no image and in which its spirituality is swallowed up? If this be true, how can the above people say that there is an image and a likeness to the vision of the mind in the sphere that is above that of serenity? God also has no image and likeness, although in the Books there are given to Him likenesses through which He made manifest His revelations and showed us His nature. All these, however, are outside the nature of His Essence, because this nature of His Essence resembles neither fire, nor the light of the sun, nor air, nor any of the remaining elements and matters that are derived from them. The nature of His Essence is indeed higher than all likenesses, images and representations of our creation, because His nature is so much finer than fire, light and air,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Is. vi. 1-3.

that in comparison with the glorious nature of the Lord of all they are opaque<sup>1</sup> and heavy bodies. He has, therefore, no image in any visible thing of our nature. In this same way will the mind become the image of God, when it has reached the sphere of perfection and the high stage of spirituality.

All prayer bears in itself the image of its prototype,<sup>2</sup> and as God has no prototype, He has neither image nor likeness. In this same way is also the mind—His image—when it has<sup>150a</sup> reached the sphere of perfection. It will have there no image and no likeness, either to itself or to its vision. Indeed, when its spirituality is swallowed up in the hidden glory of the theory of the Holy Trinity, no one is able to distinguish there its nature from that holy Light, nor does it possess any likenesses or images. All those who have been found worthy, by the grace of God, to penetrate that sphere of perfection, will understand what I say, and will comprehend that everything that I have uttered is true, without any falsehood. No one knows this from books and from hearing, but only from his own experience.

In short, the mind will have there no other vision but the glorious vision of our Saviour, which is high above the senses and high above corporeal likenesses and images. The same thing is taught by that most illustrious saint Mar Isaac,<sup>3</sup> who says: "All those who believe that in this world the vision of our Saviour can be had in any other way but in theory, are similar to those who say that the happiness of the Kingdom of the next world is material, and that there are in it material food and corporeal bodies." And he adds after this, saying: "Both categories of men have strayed from the truth, because the brothers of Christ<sup>4</sup> will be like Him, and when Christ our Lord reveals Himself in the mind of the saints, in the sphere that is above that of serenity, His glorious vision has no material image or likeness."

Blessed is, my brethren, the one who has been found worthy

<sup>1</sup> Read *'ebaya* for *guebaya*.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, of the thing prayed for.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac of Nineveh, the well-known mystical writer. I failed to find this quotation in the edition of his works by Bedjan, to which a reference has been made on pp. 9 and 74-76.

<sup>4</sup> Some such word as "Christ" seems to be needed here.



150b to see Christ our Lord in this vision which I have described, and who is dead to the world and to all its joys. The vision of our Saviour in which He is now after His resurrection from the dead, is ineffable and incomprehensible to the mind of men. Why shall I say of men, when this vision is inexplicable and incomprehensible even to the spiritual natures, who indeed are unable to understand and contemplate the wonderful and incomparable glory in which our Lord rose from the grave? If, therefore, the eyes of the holy angels are dazzled by His glory, so that they are unable to comprehend His greatness, can any man say that our mind, we children of men, is able to imagine and to picture to itself the sublime and ineffable glory with which our Lord was invested at His resurrection from the dead?

It follows from this that mind is not possessed, in the sphere of spirituality, of any vision of theory, whether it be of the corporeal or incorporeal beings, or of divine Judgment and Providence. The understanding of no existing being will then stir in the mind, apart from the vision of our Redeemer, which strikes with awe all the spiritual natures. Truly, my brethren, I shall not be uttering a falsehood if I say that whenever the remembrance of that glorious vision comes to my mind, all the faculties of my body and of my soul are swallowed up in an ineffable extasy, and not a single thought is stirred in my soul but that of my rapture in Him. If such a thing happens to weak and imperfect men like myself, from the mere remembrance  
 151a of His greatness, what can we say of strong and perfect men, who rejoice at all times in the glorious vision of our Redeemer, except what I stated above? Indeed, as in the wonderful words of the holy angels, no thought is stirred of anything belonging to this world, apart from the remembrance and the vision of our Lord, so also is the case with the pure mind which is above the sphere of serenity, and which has no vision or remembrance of anything apart from the vision of our Redeemer and His sweet contemplation. Furthermore, as there are no material likenesses and images in the worlds of the intelligible and invisible hosts, but their world is spiritual—they being themselves spiritual—so also the vision of the pure mind which is

in the sphere of spirituality is not possessed of a material image and likeness. Indeed, when mind reaches that sphere, it will become like them, and with them it will sanctify and magnify the glorious Essence. As in the next world there will be no likeness and no image of anything belonging to our world, because it will be high above all its likenesses, images and representations, so also the vision of a spiritual man has no likeness and no image of anything pertaining to this world, because the vision of the mind is there an earnest of the next world, and all things that are there made manifest to it belong to the next world.

The Apostle said also : " For now we see through a glass, <sup>151b</sup> in a riddle, the earnest of the glory of the resurrection, but then face to face, when we shall have received resurrection in reality." <sup>1</sup> He said also : " Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." <sup>2</sup> It is evident from all these words uttered by the blessed Apostle, that in the sphere of its spirituality, mind has no material image and likeness. If the hope of the watchful monks reaches no farther than the state in which the vision of their mind, in the sphere of spirituality, does not rise above material likenesses and images, they are the most unhappy of all men. This, however, is not so, but the contrary is the case ; that is to say, we monks expect and hope that in the sphere of spirituality we shall see a thing that in its greatness is high above the senses of the body and the faculties of the soul.

In accordance with the above demonstration, which the Apostle wrote for our enlightenment and our teaching, to the effect that we must not limit the course of our mind to material things, nor turn away from the things which are invisible and now expected only by hope,<sup>3</sup> I say and I repeat that if all our knowledge, in this world,<sup>4</sup> of Christ our Lord and of His glorious vision, which appears in our heart, were to reach only the stage of a material likeness, Christ would have died in vain, and His coming to our world would not have profited us anything, and His passion and death on our behalf would have been nothing.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Heb. xi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. " now."



He did indeed appear in material likenesses and images to the  
 152<sub>a</sub> ancient Patriarchs and prophets, but now He does not appear  
 in this way to His saints. Now that Christ our Lord has ap-  
 peared in the flesh, which He took from us for the salvation and  
 the renewal of all rational beings, the method of His apparitions  
 to us and to the invisible hosts has undergone a change. Indeed,  
 He does not appear to us in material images, as He did to the  
 ancients, but only in a glorious vision that is high above material  
 images and likenesses.

We say that we see light in the sphere of spirituality, but  
 this light is not like our material light. We say also that we  
 have there a spiritual food, but that food is not like the one  
 we have here ; we say further that our mind will perceive there  
 the sound of the glorification of the spiritual hosts, and that it  
 will there have speech and conversation, but that speech does  
 not resemble the one which we hold with one another. The  
 sound that is heard there by our mind is so fine that our senses  
 are not able to receive it, and a corporeal tongue is not able  
 to utter and describe that which is made manifest there to the  
 mind, whether it be made through our sense of vision or through  
 that of hearing.

The Apostle wrote also, in the third person, the following  
 words on this subject, in his exhortation to the Corinthians.  
 “ Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God  
 knoweth how he was caught up into Paradise, and heard un-  
 speakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” <sup>1</sup>  
 He showed clearly in these words that the things which are  
 revealed to the mind, in the sphere of perfection, cannot be  
 152<sub>b</sub> expressed <sup>2</sup> by the material tongue. Since, in the testimony  
 of the divine Apostle, a man cannot judge whether he be in the  
 body or out of the body, there are no mysteries and revelations  
 appearing to the mind, above the sphere of serenity, that a tongue  
 can express with material words, as in the case of the other  
 revelations which appear in the state below that of serenity.  
 If mind cannot express with words the mysteries and revelations  
 which are made manifest there, how can many people imagine

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Read in fem. *athyān*.

and say that, in the sphere that is above that of serenity, the vision of the mind and the fine sounds of the glorification of the spiritual beings which are heard there, have an image? Indeed, as God has no image, as I stated above, so also nothing that is revealed there to the mind has an image of any kind, because all material things, likenesses, images and numbers are found below the state of serenity. It follows from this that however much the mind which is below the state of serenity strives to raise its vision above material things and images, it will not be able to do it. Even fights and struggles are in this sphere, and it is in it that they have the opportunity of harassing the mind. Images and likenesses come also to the vision of the mind as long as its work is in this sphere, but in the sphere which is above that of serenity, it is higher than all likenesses, images, material things and numbers. There are there also neither demon nor evil occurrences, but only righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Anyone who contends against this is unknowingly inclining 153a to error, and has never read the books of the spiritual Fathers, nor has he experienced this state in himself, nor is he aware of the nature of the state of serenity, nor of the state that is above it; nay, he is not even aware of the state of purity and that of impurity, but is talking against his best judgment <sup>1</sup> and in ignorance of the nature of any of these stages. This so-called wise man does not know that it is in the shape of the rungs of a ladder that are placed the stages to which the mind clings and gradually ascends in its course, until it reaches the top of the ladder on which the Lord is sitting.

The serenity of the mind is like a true seal and stamp, because as long as a man is below the stage of serenity the stamp is not impressed on the book of his virtues. Indeed, sometimes he works with God like a hireling, and expects every day the payment of the reward due to his labours; and sometimes he is like a slave who looks for his deliverance and his manumission from slavery. A contrary thing happens when a man reaches this sphere of serenity, as he is then delivered from the

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "against his face."



appellation of either slave or hireling ; is inscribed in the adoption of children ;<sup>1</sup> becomes the heir of God and joint heir of Jesus Christ, and consequently ceases to work with God like a slave and a hireling, but works like a son with his father ; is stamped  
 153b with the seal of the Spirit ; is set over the treasures of his Father ; all fear and dread are taken away from him ; and he acquires the confidence of children, whereby he calls God " Father." Indeed the Apostle wrote to the Romans who had believed in our Lord : " Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry ' Abba, Father ! ' The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." <sup>2</sup>

Some time, therefore, after (a man) has risen to the sphere of serenity, and been inscribed in the adoption of sons, he will participate with God in the revelation of His mysteries, and will in consequence see and hear everything there in a spiritual way, and his service and the glorification of his song will always be joined with those of the spiritual beings. Blessed is the man who has been found worthy of this gift and of this confidence, and seen this glorious vision with the eyes of his mind, and heard with the ears of his heart the fine sound which, from the state of serenity, is revealed to a spiritual man.

Believe me truly, O brethren, when I say unto you that whenever the mind hears the sound of the spiritual beings with its intelligible ears, all its work is performed high above the senses of the body and of its<sup>3</sup> own faculties, which become silent and restful, as in sleep, through the happiness which it receives from the glorification of the spiritual beings. Even if the body  
 154a is asleep, these faculties of the mind have no rest on account of their service with the spiritual beings. This is the reason why night and day are alike to the mind which has been found worthy of this gift, by the grace of our Lord, to whom be glory from all the rational beings, whom He created, and by so doing associated in His glory both the celestial and the terrestrial beings ! Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gal. iv. 5 ; Eph. i. 5 ; etc.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> Text repeats " mind."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

*On the working of the impulses that appear in the mind in the time of prayer : which of them are material and which are immaterial, and which of them are uncircumscribed and have no form.*

In the time of prayer the soul resembles a ship standing in the middle of the sea, and the mind stands over the ship like a captain, and the impulses direct the ship like the winds. As all the winds that blow are not propitious for the sailing of the ship, so also all the impulses that are stirred in the soul in the time of prayer are not propitious for its sailing, the aim of which is to reach a harbour that is safe from billows. Some of them are propitious and some of them are not. Indeed some of them impress the soul with a kind of material construction and form, and are contrary to the sailing of the ship of the captain, the mind, towards the harbour for which his will is making ; and some of the impulses which are stirred in the soul in the time <sup>1</sup> of prayer are immaterial, and they are the soft breezes which bring the ship of the soul above the billows, towards a harbour which is replete with great rest.

There are other impulses which in the time of prayer appear with brightness, and which are called uncircumscribed. They <sup>154b</sup> are neither material nor immaterial, but uncircumscribed, as I said above, as all the immaterial impulses are not always uncircumscribed. Indeed the holy angels and the nature of our soul are immaterial, but not necessarily uncircumscribed. They are immaterial but circumscribed, as there is one Being only who is uncircumscribed, and all the impulses that are referred to Him are likewise uncircumscribed, as the prophet said : " His understanding is infinite." <sup>2</sup>

The material impulses are all the understandings which are stirred in the soul through the intermediary of the senses of the body. These material impulses are harmful to the course of the soul in the time of prayer. Although generally they bring gain, yet in the time of prayer they bring loss to the soul, because

<sup>1</sup> Add here the word *dab-'iddan*.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxlvii. 5.



in the time of prayer it is only the immaterial impulses that should direct the soul to those that are uncircumscribed.

As to these immaterial impulses, they are an inward spiritual knowledge that is hidden in the natures of the creation, and an extatic understanding concerning the uncorporeal theory ; they are also those which emanate from the theory concerning the judgment of the divine providence. All these impulses appear in the time of prayer and are immaterial. Whenever they show themselves in the mind <sup>1</sup> in the time of prayer, they sweeten its palate like honeycomb, and kindle all the powers of the soul and the body by their heat. Tears without number  
 155a flow from the eyes of a man through the stirring of these impulses in his mind, not from grief or sorrow for his sins, but rather from his joy and happiness and from his extasy in the creating power, the grace and the providence of God for all : how His mercy for us children of men is abundant ; how our ingratitude to Him is great ; how He brought us into existence and into a righteous estate while we were not existing, and not able to exist, in spite of the fact that before He created us He was aware of our ingratitude and weakness ; how when we sinned and incited His wrath in our choice of evil deeds, He, through His fatherly love, did not withdraw from us the gifts of His providence and care for us ; how when our nature reached a state of despair He sent His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, and delivered Him unto the torments of death on our behalf, so that He might save us who were stained with sin ; how He tasted gall and vinegar for us in order to neutralise in us the poison of the serpent who had killed us in Eden ; how after all the impieties and blasphemies which we perpetrated against Him, He, by His ineffable mercy, prepared for us another world full of good things, and bestowed upon us the gift of the resurrection through which we rise from the passions of passibility and become incorruptible, immortal, unchangeable, impassible and without needs, so that at all time we rise up with Him in the understanding of His mysteries and His glorious vision.  
 155b In the remembrance of all these things, the impulses

<sup>1</sup> See on " mind " above, note 1, p. 150.

of the mind extend from the sphere of the material things towards the uncircumscribed impulses, which consist in the extasy about the next world and in the vision of the theory of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, when the vision of the mind is mingled with the light of the glorious Trinity, its impulses become also uncircumscribed. Not one of the Seers or of the Illuminated would then be able to distinguish the identity of the mind from the vision of that glorious light of the Holy Trinity, because all the hidden mansions of the heart will be filled with that sublime light in which there is neither image nor form nor likenesses nor material constructions nor numbers nor colours. The light which is not distinguished by any likenesses or images is a single light in a single vision. I would also tell you that at that time there are neither different impulses nor different thoughts nor different contemplations, but one single extasy which is higher than all contemplations, impulses and thoughts, and which is the earnest of the future benefits which are prepared, through the intermediary of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the human race, that is to say, for all the rational beings, from the abundance of the grace of the adorable Father who created us and caused us to participate in the knowledge of His glory, while we were not yet in existence, in order that we might become, like Him, immortal, and delight in His glory. May He, by His grace, render all of us worthy of His glorious vision, here as an earnest and there in reality ! Amen.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR, FROM HIS "BOOK OF QUESTIONS." <sup>1</sup>

*On how the Spirit which works in us is known, in what His power is revealed, and what is the sign by which the Spirit makes manifest His working in us.*

The first sign of the effective working of the Spirit is when the love of God burns in the heart of a man like fire. From this are born in his heart the hatred and the complete renunciation

<sup>1</sup> This book which till the time of the world war, 1914-1918, was preserved in the library of Seert, and given the No. 79, is now lost, with the exception of the present section.



of the world, and the love of solitude and asceticism, which is the mother and educator of all virtues.

The second sign through which you will feel, O Brother, that the Spirit which you received from baptism is working in you, consists in true humility being born in your soul. I am not alluding to the humility of the body but to the true humility of the soul, which induces a man to consider himself dust and ashes, a worm and no man,<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding the great and wonderful things done to him by the Spirit who dwells in him. All men are also in his eyes great and holy, and there is no one who in his mind is good or bad, just or unjust. It is from humility that peace, meekness and endurance of tribulations are born in the soul.

1566 The third sign of the working of the Spirit in you consists in the kindness which represents within you the image of God, through which, when your thought extends to all men, tears flow from your eyes like fountains of water, as if all men were dwelling in your heart, and you affectionately embrace them and kiss them, while you pour your kindness on all. When you remember them your heart is kindled with the power of the working of the Spirit in you as with fire, and from this, goodness and kindness are born in your heart, so that you do not utter an unkind thing to any man, nor does your thought think evil of anyone, but you do good to all men, both in your thought and in your deed.

The fourth sign from which you will know that the Spirit is working in you consists in true love, which does not leave in your thought any other remembrance but the remembrance of God alone, which is the spiritual key through which the inner door of the heart is opened, in which is hidden Christ our Lord, whose dwelling-place is spiritual and broad,<sup>2</sup> and whose vision is a light that is ineffable. It is from this love that is engendered the faith, which sees the hidden things which the mind is not allowed to confide to parchment, and which the Apostle called "the substance of things hoped for,"<sup>3</sup> which are not known

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> A similar sentence is found on p. 149, l. 12.

to the eyes of the flesh but are known clearly to the eyes of the mind, in the inward abode of the heart.

The fifth sign of the working in you of the Spirit which 157a you received in baptism consists in the illuminated vision of your mind, which is seen in the firmament of your heart like the sapphire sky. It is this vision that receives the light of the Holy Trinity, and it is this sign that leads you to the vision of the material natures from which you rise again to the knowledge of the intelligible natures. From the latter you will then ascend to the revelations and the mysteries of the divine judgment and providence. It is this gradual ascent that raises you up and makes you participate in the holy light of the vision of Christ our Lord. From this glorious and holy vision you will fall into extasy over that broad world, the benefits of which are ineffable. From this extasy you will derive a flow of spiritual speech and the knowledge of both worlds: of the one that has passed and the one that shall pass, and also a consciousness of the mysteries of future things, together with a holy smell and taste; the fine sounds of the spiritual intelligences: joy, jubilation, exultation, glorification, songs, hymns and odes of magnification; communion with the spiritual hierarchies; vision of the souls of the saints; sight of Paradise; eating from its tree of life, and intercourse with the saints who dwell in it, together with other ineffable things.

The above are the signs, which if you find in yourself, you will know that the Holy Spirit, which you received from the holy baptism, is working in you.

157b

*Question.* What is the difference between the personal and the material images,<sup>1</sup> which passions accompany them, and by what are these images destroyed in their fight against the labouring mind?

In the *Book of the Heads*<sup>2</sup> I indeed wrote on these two kinds of images, but I did not distinguish between them.

<sup>1</sup> These terms are explained by the author below. The word which I translate by "material" means literally "pertaining to idols." The personal images refer to the high sphere of celestial hierarchies, while the material images embrace all corporeal beings.

<sup>2</sup> This book of the author is also lost.



(*The answer of*) *the monk*. There is a great difference between the personal and the material images ; the latter <sup>1</sup> are engendered by the thoughts of fornication, and the former by the thoughts of vainglory. The personal images, which emanate from vainglory, are those which are formed by the demons in the image of angels, who are seen as if they possessed either a human form, or wings of birds, or other representations which resemble a column of light or the orb of the sun. When these images, which, as I said, emanate <sup>2</sup> from vainglory and from pride, fight <sup>3</sup> against the soul, the latter has to resort to humility, and to consider itself as dust, ashes and dregs of all the creation ; and to possess obedience, endurance of tribulations, and self-contempt ; and also to consider that a man should not think too highly of himself. Through these things (the above images) will vanish from the sight of a labouring mind, as chaff before the wind.<sup>4</sup>

As to the material images, they are engendered by the thoughts  
 158a of fornication and by dejectedness <sup>5</sup> and anger. Through them the demons form before the labouring (mind) pictures of idols, and representations of women whom it did not know ; even images of animals are formed before the mind, together with images of stones and mountains. These material images are also seen—as they have been seen by some Fathers—as formed of a double material nature, that is to say, of an image of a man and an image of an animal combined. All such images are called “material images,” and are driven from the sight of the labouring mind by fast, vigil, prostrations and a continual mental prayer. I may say, in short, that all thought which forms in the heart an image having the personal representation of a (spiritual) being, is called a personal image, and all thoughts which are scattered through the mind and which have no image of a (spiritual) being are called material images. This is the difference between personal and material images, and these are the remedies for the healing of each one of them. It is seen that vainglory, pride and self-esteem form and constitute to a large extent the personal images.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. “some of them.”

<sup>3</sup> Read the verb in fem.

<sup>2</sup> Read in fem. *hawyān*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ps. xxxv. 5, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Lit. “grief.”

THE LETTER OF THE SAME MAR 'ABDĪSHO' TO ONE OF HIS  
FRIENDS, ON THE WORKINGS OF THE GRACE.

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has revealed the mysteries of His love in our heart, and made manifest the meaning of His grace in our mind !

I heard of you, O man of God, from beloved brethren who came to us, that you entertain a great affection for me ; and 158b I inferred from the reading of your letter that this is so. From this good testimony about yourself, I wished to join my love to your love, and to write to you concerning the things which you asked of my humble self.

Let it be known to you, O my lord, that some of the visions which you had are true, and some of them are a false appearance, full of the deceit of the falsehood of error ; and because your domicile is remote from me,<sup>1</sup> and your coming to me is not easy, I wish to write to you in a letter concerning the vision of these workings.

Concerning what you said : " I stand sometimes and examine my soul, and notice that no thought, either of righteousness or otherwise, is stirring in it : the mind is swallowed up in it,<sup>2</sup> without any workings and without even venturing to stammer glorifications. Nothing but complete rest reigns over all the faculties of the body and of the soul, in such a way that the mind<sup>3</sup> does not reap any satisfaction either from reading or from reciting the Psalms, but only receives an inward food on which the body also feeds."—As long as the mind is in this state, O Brother, the condition in which it is found is better than all the other conditions of the divine visitation which occur to the soul. The Illuminated say that in this condition food is given inwardly to the mind by the Spirit, on which the body also feeds without any need of its ordinary food. Indeed, the baptism with which the mind is baptised in this condition is similar to that with which the blessed Moses 159a was baptised in Mount Sinai.<sup>4</sup> As long as you remain in this

<sup>1</sup> Read *lwāthi*.

<sup>2</sup> Read in fem. *minnāh*.

<sup>3</sup> Lit. "it."

<sup>4</sup> Note the use of the word "baptism" in its spiritual and not material sense.



condition, do not wish for reading or for the recitation of the Psalms, but only keep your mind in purity, that is to say, never leave your quietude ; and if possible, as long as your mind remains in this condition, do not commune with any man ; and if practicable do not hear even the voices of birds, but enter your innermost cell, close all doors and endeavour to respond to what is being done to you.

When this condition has passed away from you, it will be followed by the condition of the " workings of understandings." Here beware of the demon of distraction. As long as understandings are stirred in the mind, keep the quietude and the regulations of the first condition ; but if the mind begins to wander after understandings that are outside it, and to represent images to itself and to form its own understandings, relinquish the regulations (of the first condition) and resort immediately to the recitation of Psalms, reading, and prostrations before the Crucifix ; rise with strength and power, and do not allow the mind to go out of the inner door of the heart, so that it may not lose its life in the distraction of its thoughts.

If the mind is kept away from the distraction of the thoughts, this condition of " understandings " will be followed by another condition, which is that of the love of the recitation of the Psalms and of reading. The furnace of the recitation of the Psalms and of reading will then be kindled in the heart to such an extent  
1596 that if possible, even when a man is sitting at the table in order to partake of his food, the mind will be occupied inwardly with the recitation of the Psalms and with reading. The working of the demon of vainglory, however, accompanies this condition. Examine therefore and see, when you recite the Psalms and read, whether you are reciting them for the sake of the love of God, or whether in this recitation other images are formed, for the sake of which you perform your recitation and your reading.

This condition of the recitation of the Psalms and of reading is followed, in case the mind is free from the thoughts of vainglory, by another condition, which consists in the flow of tears and in continual prostrations before the Crucifix. These tears are not forced, nor has will any power over them, but the man

sheds these tears only through the fire which kindles the soul within and the body without. This condition of these tears constitutes the boundary between purity and serenity, and it stands above the sphere of purity and below the sphere of serenity, but they (the tears) cause the mind to enter the sphere of serenity.

After the working of these tears, a second working affects the mind, which is that of theories, that is to say, of divine judgment and providence. From the sight of these the soul is imbued with the love of men and with a continual prayer for their conversion. When the mind looks within itself it sees <sup>160a</sup> all of them in the form of the image in which they were created, and in this vision of this condition there is neither just nor unjust, neither bond nor free, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither male nor female, but Christ will be seen all and in all.<sup>1</sup>

This condition is followed by another condition, which is that of impulses stirring and rising in the heart. They are like light mixed with fire. In this condition there is great working (of the Spirit), which takes place in the third and fourth senses.<sup>2</sup> This working is followed by another and a higher condition, in which the working (of the Spirit) only affects the second sense. In it a man hears the voice of a fine sound of glorification, which the faculties of the body and of the soul are unable to bring to the utterance of the material tongue. This condition and this glorification are of the sphere of the next world, and the earnest of the future benefits, because this is the working of that Spirit about whom the blessed Apostle wrote: "He maketh intercession for the saints."<sup>3</sup> In this condition you contemplate the cloud of the intelligible Cherubim, and you hear also their fine voices in which, when they expand, your mind becomes silent and is swallowed up in the light of the high and sublime Theory, like fish in the sea. In this condition the <sup>160b</sup> mind is mingled with the divine visitation which works in it, and both of them become one, because the light of the mind

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> The senses seem to be placed by the author in the following order: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 27.



is not distinguished from the sea in which it swims. In this condition the working of the Spirit only affects the first sense.

This condition is followed by another one, in which a man is clad with fire from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, and when he looks at himself he will not be able to see any material body, but only the fire with which he is clad. This is the condition spoken of by Saint Mar Evagrius, when he distinguishes those with knowledge<sup>1</sup> from those who have no knowledge. He says as follows : " Those who possess now fine spiritual bodies reign in past worlds,<sup>2</sup> and those who are subjected to the labouring body will reign in future worlds." He calls here " fine bodies " the bodies of the saints who have reached the condition which I have described. In order that no one may have any doubt about this, I will adduce<sup>3</sup> another testimony which would confirm him in this belief. The blessed Palladius writes about the Abbot Arsenius as follows : " When he stood in prayer, and the above condition came to him, in which his whole being became like fire, an illuminated man among the brethren came, and from an aperture saw the old man as wholly fire ; and the writer testifies about that Brother that  
161a he was worthy of this sight because having seen the Abbot Arsenius in this condition, he was a seer." <sup>4</sup>

After this condition there is another condition, which cannot be expressed in a letter. Know only that it does take place, and that the following is its sign : in it there are neither two nor three (senses), nor is the fourth (sense) distinguished from the fifth, but one expands and the other diminishes ; and the food of both is identical in this condition. In the above two conditions which I have described, the first and the fifth senses are active, but in the condition that follows the above condition, and which is that of joy, there is also flow of tears. The man does not know what is the reason of this joy ; he only sees it and is conscious of it, but why he sees it he does not know. In this

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " the Initiated."

<sup>2</sup> This sentence seems to imply that these saints have been for some time in Heaven, even when still in this world, while those who have not yet reached the fiery condition are not considered to be in Heaven.

<sup>3</sup> Read *maitaina*.

<sup>4</sup> This story is found in the *Paradise of the Fathers*, ii, 145.

condition the fourth and the third senses are active, because the workings of these two senses accompany one another.

After this condition, the condition of the flow of spiritual speech takes place. In it the second sense is active.

Up to this point we have shown you, in the measure of our capacity, the workings of the grace. We shall speak now, O my beloved, of the false insinuations of the Rebels, which resemble truth. We will first discuss the conditions of the heat of passion. The demon of fornication begins to cause heat to those who are labouring, in this wise: he begins his heat from the head downwards, casting considerable oppression on the head, together with perturbation of the same head, and a great deal of heaviness and dullness of slumber. Before he is able to throw the seed of his wickedness into a man, he insinuates to him that he is in no need of this or that action, or of any reading or recitation of the Psalms. If the man listens to him, he will intensify his heat, so as to cause injury to the brain; and if he does not listen to his advice, but begins the recitation of the Psalms and reading, the demon will come down and kindle his heat round the heart, or in the back in the direction of the heart. The following is the sign of his false insinuation: immediately his heat begins, numbness affects the body, and perturbation of the thoughts of vainglory (obtains) hold of him within, together with understandings of insipid things. Here distraction of thoughts will hold greater sway over the mind, while he (the demon) intensifies also the smell of his false insinuation in this condition. The following is the sign of his smell: the more he wafts his perfume, the more the perturbation of the thoughts reigns in the soul. He takes also his smell from the natures of the creation, because he has a background of an image in them; but for the smell of the grace he has no background of an image from any earthly thing which would fit this sense. In such a case, vigil and prostrations before the Crucifix are required on the part of the workers, until this temptation passes away. <sup>161b</sup>

Then the enemy transfers himself to the limbs of the third order, and begins to kindle his heat therein, together with the thoughts of fornication. (This heat) rises as far as the kidneys. <sup>162a</sup>



The remedy for this temptation is fast, continuous vigil, and abstention from drinking water, together with continual walking, recitation of the Psalms and reading. Furthermore, the man should not sleep while lying down, but in a sitting posture or standing on his feet, as long as this temptation lasts.

Listen now to the other varieties of representations that emanate from the demons. Whenever you notice in your theory a representation of a material fire, be aware and know that it is a snare of the demon, who wishes to entrap you with it to perdition. But you, O diligent worker, fix your gaze within the outward representation, and you will see within it a representation which will manifestly be full of darkness. Immediately the vision of an illuminated man falls on the image that is represented before him, the falsehood of the insinuation (of the demon) will be made manifest. If you see before you something resembling a sphere, it is also a phantasm of the demons. The same is also true if you see the image of a throne or of a chariot, or of horses of fire. All these things, O Brother, are false insinuations of the demons. In short, everything that is seen by you outside yourself and in the form of these images, is a false insinuation of the demons, because the vision of theory  
 162*b* is simple and has no material image, whether it is seen from within or from without. As to the demons, they have no power within you to penetrate there and show the images of their false insinuation. If, however, you see sometimes within you the figure of a sphere <sup>1</sup> or of a star, be not afraid, because even the soul is seen in these representations ; but beware of things that are seen from without. Beware also, O Brother, of another representation which is shown by the demons and which is formed of both light and darkness, because this is the working of the demon of anger. There is also another representation in which the brightness of light predominates, and this is the image of the demon of fornication. Finally there is the representation of the fire, which is that of the demon of pride.

You will distinguish all these, O Brother, from the following

<sup>1</sup> The author is here speaking of the image of a sphere which the man himself forms from within, in contrast to that which is formed by the demons from without.

sign which I will give you : whenever you see one of these representations revealing itself to you, if peace and quietness reign over your thought, know that it is the working of the grace in you, without any falsehood. If, however, when you see these representations, the theory of your soul begins to contract, and your heart is full of affliction, know that this is caused by the demons. This also applies to all the representations which are shown by the demons, and which resemble those which emanate from divine grace to the soul, in the time of prayer.

I have written to you these things, O my beloved, in short terms, in accordance with the request of your love to me.<sup>1</sup> You, O diligent worker, read and understand what has been written to you, and pray for me. Let it be known to you also, O my lord, that if (the above representations) are those of the right hand, we must intensify our prayers and let the earth inspire us with (spiritual) thought ; but if they are of the left hand, we must cry with grief to the One who is able even to raise the dead.

Blessed is the man who has invested himself with that which is within him, and blessed also is the man who has been found worthy to delight in that which is within him ! Whether we know or we do not know, let us consider ourselves ignorant ; and whether we are just or unjust, let us take refuge in the mercy of Christ !

<sup>1</sup> Read *ittab'aith*.





#### IV.

### MYSTICAL TREATISE BY JOSEPH HAZZAYA.

#### PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following pages give the text and the translation of a short mystical treatise by Joseph Hazzāya (*i.e.*, the Seer). There is no need to repeat here what was said in the "Prefatory Note" to the previous author about the identity of Joseph Hazzāya and his brother 'Abdīsho' Hazzāya. All that is known about the life and works of Joseph Hazzāya is well analysed by Baumstark.<sup>1</sup>

The treatise is in the form of a letter from Joseph Hazzāya to one of his friends, and deals with the shortest way in which a man can find God. According to the author, this shortest way is love, and the way to acquire love is through prayer, which may be performed in three different ways. "The first way is through the stirring of the natural emotions, the second is through the influence of the guardian angel, and the third is through the good will which desires virtues. . . . Outside these three emotions, there is no other emotion which is called prayer, because above them there is no prayer, but an extasy which is not called by the wise men the sphere of prayer, but that of an incomparable light."

From the author's sayings, we will quote the following :  
"Continual prayer is the light of the soul, the perfection of all the commandments, and the intelligible Cross, of which our Lord said that anyone who takes it up and follows Him will inherit eternal life."

"It is in the hands of prayer that are placed the keys of the Kingdom, and without it you will not be able to become its heirs."

"There are no robbers in the path of love, no highwaymen, no thieves, no fear, and no darkness."

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, pp. 222-223.



## TRANSLATION.

85*b* *Again the fifth letter of Rabban Joseph to one of his friends, who had asked him to show him in which exercise a man draws nigher unto God than in all other virtues ; and which is the short way in which a man is able to find God more quickly than in all other various ways that bring us near to God.*

Your serenity, O lover of virtues, wrote to us once asking us to show you the way which draws us nigh unto God, and the commandment which we should strive to fulfil more than the other commandments of our Redeemer and our Lord Jesus Christ ; which comprises all His commandments ; and which when a man endeavours to fulfil, he will find the earnest of the future benefits.

The first and the last of all the commandments which God gave to the nature of the rational beings, and through which men and angels draw nigh unto Him<sup>1</sup> is love of God and love of our neighbour. When God wrote the commandments, He first made use of it, saying : " Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord,"<sup>2</sup> and after having commanded him that he should worship one God, beside whom there is no other God, He made manifest to him the nature of the exercise which brings men nigh unto Him, saying : " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the exercise which brings men nigh unto God, and this is the short way in which there are no ascents  
86*a* or descents. Its paths are well measured and its mansions are full of the light and the happiness of the life everlasting. This is the place which no foreign foot has trodden, and the treasure and the wealth of the inhabitants of which have not been stolen by thieves. All those who penetrate into it have no fear in their hearts lest the treasure which they acquired with their own blood should be stolen. All this place is filled with springs of the living water, of which our Lord said : " He that believeth on me shall drink of them always, and out of his heart shall

<sup>1</sup> Text repeats " God."

<sup>2</sup> Deut. vi. 4-5, and Mark xii. 29-31.

flow rivers of the wealth of knowledge which he will give to others to drink." <sup>1</sup>

This is the first and the last way which brings near to God those who wish to be the sons of God, and the joint heirs of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> There are no robbers in this path, no highwaymen, and no thieves lying in wait. There is in it neither fear nor darkness, as the Book said: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."<sup>3</sup> It contains no false images, and there is in it no long course, nor the labour and fatigue of many years, but immediately a man begins to walk in it, he enters and rests in its glorious mansions. Neither the first nor the last comers perceive its bounds, as its mansions are numerous. It is a city that is built to face those who believe in it, and as long as they see this city with its doors open, and in it the King whose face shines with light, they will not wax weary of walking <sup>86b</sup> towards it. The city is built on a height to face those who look at it, and the path which is in it is also cut on a height. We must show you now which is the ladder that takes you up to that height, and causes you to walk in that way of life, and which is the strait gate through which you penetrate into that country of light.

The ladder which takes you up to that holy height is prayer. I do not mean the prayer of the body alone, but that of the body and of the soul. As man is composed of two parts, the body and the soul, so also prayer is not called prayer unless it is of the body and of the soul. There is no sin which is not forgiven through prayer, and no pronouncement of divine punishment which it does not rescind. There is no revelation of which it is not the cause, and there are no mysteries and symbols which it does not explain. / What gave to Hannah a son, the priest Samuel, but prayer? What defeated the Amalekites, and caused Israel to win a resplendent victory, except the hands of Moses outstretched in prayer? What reconciled God to the Children of Israel for their having abandoned His worship and worshipped the calf, but the prayer of the blessed Moses, who prayed and said: "If Thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive it; and if not,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John iv. 14, and vii. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 18.



blot me out of Thy book which Thou hast written." <sup>1</sup> And God answered his prayer, and forgave the sin of the people.

What gave twins in the womb of Rebecca, but the prayer  
87a of Melchizedek, the High Priest of God? What exposed the  
perfidy of Achar <sup>2</sup> but the prayer of Joshua, son of Nun, who  
threw himself down before the Lord from morning till evening;  
and then his prayer opened the door for him, and his request  
was granted, and the curse was removed from Israel? What  
brought down rain in the wheat harvest, and rebuked an un-  
grateful people who had asked for a king, but the prayer of the  
priest Samuel? What forgave the sin of David but prayer on  
sackcloth and ashes? What took away the wrath from Jerusalem,  
and killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the  
camp of the Assyrian, but the prayer of the prophet Isaiah and  
of Hezekiah? What brought the sun backwards, and added to  
the days of the life of Hezekiah, but his prayer, which accom-  
plished this? <sup>3</sup> What revealed to Daniel the hidden things,  
and made manifest to him the future things which have taken  
place and will take place, but the stretching of his hands in prayer  
morning and evening?

What made Zechariah worthy of having a son to proclaim  
the Lamb of God before angels and men, but his prayer inside  
the temple? What locked the gates of Heaven for three years  
and six months, so that no rain should come on the earth; and  
what multiplied the meal in the barrel and increased the oil  
in the cruse, <sup>4</sup> but the prayer and supplication of babes and  
87b sucklings? What rendered the prophetess Anna, daughter of  
Phanuel, worthy of the glorious vision of Christ our Lord,  
but her prayer of eighty-four years inside the temple? What  
delivered Peter from prison and opened before him an iron gate,  
but the prayer which was offered for him by all the blessed  
congregation of the disciples? What showed him the entrance  
of the Gentiles into the household of God, by means of the vessel  
which was shown to him, but his prayer of the ninth hour?  
What brought Cornelius to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as written

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Is. xxxviii. 5, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. vii.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 16.

in the (Book of the) treasure of life, but his continual prayer to God, night and day?

In short, I will say unto you, O my beloved, that there is no man who received a gift from God and became worthy of divine revelations and visions, whether of this world or of the next, without continual prayer. It is in the hands of prayer that are placed the keys of the Kingdom into which you wish to enter, and without it you will not be able to become its heir, and be one of the firstborn whose names are written in the book of life.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed the strait and narrow gate through which the saints enter into Jerusalem which is in Heaven.

Continual prayer is the light of the soul, through which it sees the glorious abode of light, of which I spoke to you above, and which consists in true love towards God and towards our neighbour. Indeed prayer comprises all the commandments,<sup>2</sup> and this is the reason why our Lord ordered it for all time, in saying: "Pray always and faint not,"<sup>2</sup> and "Watch and pray always."<sup>3</sup> He pictured and showed us this in Himself, in going out and continuing all night in prayer to God.<sup>4</sup> As the holy and great Interpreter<sup>5</sup> said also, our Lord was not Himself in need of prayer, but He made manifest to the children of light that they should pray always, in order that the treasure possessed by them might not be stolen by enemies, and that their spiritual wealth might be guarded by their being continually engaged in prayer. And in order to strengthen us to pray unceasingly, He gave us the parable of the widow who knocked constantly at the door of the judge, who did not fail finally to answer her prayers. He said in another place: "Which of you shall have a friend and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves'; though for the sake of his children that friend will be slow in doing this, and will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity will he not rise and give him as many as he needeth?"<sup>6</sup> And our Lord added: "How much more shall

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. xxvi. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Luke vi. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xi. 5-8.



your Father who is in Heaven bestow gifts upon them that ask Him ? ” <sup>1</sup>

Our Lord commanded all these things to those who wish to walk in the path of perfection, which causes us to enter into that city which is love, and which is built in the height of Heaven. I do not refer here to the prayer of appointed Hours and de-  
 886 fined times, but to that perpetual prayer which never ceases. Indeed, there is no time in which a man who is communing with God in prayer does not expand all his thought and his vision towards God. Continual prayer is the perfection of all the commandments, and the intelligible Cross of which our Lord said that anyone who takes it up and follows Him will inherit eternal life with Him.<sup>2</sup> Prayer stands always at the door, knocks and does not go away until it has opened the door of the abode of the Divine Essence, the mistress of the worlds ; and the mind enters, obtains its requests and returns with joy. Our Lord also said that all supplications and all gifts of the Spirit are granted through prayer : “ Ask and it shall be given you ; seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” <sup>3</sup> You see that all gifts are granted to men by God through continual prayer.

I said unto you, O beloved of my soul, that prayer is the key to the heavenly treasury, and that no mind enters before the awe-inspiring Majesty without continual prayer. I do not mean the prayer which emanates from distracted thoughts, but the one which emanates from the exertion of the body and from the pure thoughts of the soul. When the impulses of prayer are stirred in your mind, examine the nature of the workings which act in your heart, because as well as continuity, prayer requires the understanding that springs from knowledge. Indeed, the false images of the enemy are numerous in the  
 89a time of prayer, but if the mind is endowed in the time of prayer with the understanding that springs from knowledge, all these false images will stand below the sphere of prayer, because the holy Power which moves prayer will not allow the mind to look at them.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luke xi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. xvi. 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vii. 7-8.

There are three ways, apart from that of the body, in which prayer can be recited. The first way is through the stirring of the natural emotions, the second is through the influence of the guardian angel, and the third is through the good will which desires virtues. The first emotion of prayer is accompanied by love, and by a heat of the thoughts which burns in the heart like fire ; the second by the working of understandings, together with tears of joy ; and the third by the love of bodily exertions, together with tears which slightly move the thoughts. Outside these three emotions which I have described, there is no other emotion which is called prayer, because above them there is no prayer, but an extasy which is not called by the wise men the sphere of prayer, but that of an incomparable light. Outside these three emotions, any other emotion which is stirred in us destroys pure prayer.

After having described to you the emotions of pure prayer, and distinguished also the workings that accompany each one of them, we shall now describe which of them is accompanied by the working of the enemy. The first emotion is not accompanied by the working of the enemy, because it is of itself a destroyer of all the emotions of the enemy ; nor do the demons<sup>89b</sup> make manifest their evil workings in the third emotion, as they do not greatly envy it. The working of the enemy only accompanies the second emotion, and it is in the likeness of this emotion that the demons show images to the mind in the time of prayer. The prayer which takes place through the influence of the guardian angel fills the soul with quietness and peace of the thoughts ; as to the one which takes place in the soul through the understanding of the working of the demons, it is under the domination of disquiet and distraction of the thoughts.

Examine therefore, O Brother, when you stand up in the time of prayer, which of these four emotions is stirred in your heart. If it is the first, its sign is penitence of the soul, with tears of joy, and the love of God that burns in your heart. The sign for you that you are standing in the second sphere of prayer, is that your mind will be thronged with understandings, the extasy of which enraptures the mind with peace, so that you stand like an intoxicated man ; and tears of joy are also found



in this sphere. The sign that your mind is standing in the third sphere of prayer, is that your prayer is recited wholly by the body ; but in this sphere also tears are found, but these are forced, and so disturb the mind. In case your mind stands  
 90a in the time of prayer in the fourth sphere, which is that of the demons, disquiet and distraction of the thoughts will reign in your soul.

These are the rungs of the ladder through which the mind ascends to the height of Heaven and enters into that true city which consists in the vision of our Redeemer. This is the short way and this is the safe harbour in which is seen God, unto whom you wish to draw nigh. There is no shorter way to God than this, and no shorter cut that brings us more quickly to God than prayer. The prayer of a diligent worker, when recited in the right way, has no time in which it does not unite the mind with God ; and the requirements of prayer are fast, humility, obedience, and continual vigil.

Be diligent in these virtues, in order that you may find prayer, through which you will also find the shortest way to God, which, as I said above, consists in love. This is indeed the true path through which the saints enter the city of life, which is the vision of the light of the Holy Trinity. Lo,<sup>1</sup> I have described to you the way, the ladder and the path, together with the city into which you wish to ascend. It rests now with your wisdom to strive and enter that glorious city, and render yourself worthy of the vision of Christ our Lord, which is the aim of all the paths which bring us nigh unto God, to whom be glory ! May He vouchsafe unto us the power to walk in the way of life, to ascend by means of that ladder, and to inherit the city of life ! Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Read *hā*.

## V.

# MYSTICAL TREATISE BY ABRAHAM BAR DĀSHANDĀD.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

**I**N the following pages I give the text and the translation of a mystical letter from the East Syrian writer Abraham bar Dāshandād to his younger brother John, who had relinquished the cenobitic life of his monastery for the rigours of the eremitical life of the cell. As I pointed out in the "Prefatory Note" to Dādīsho' Ɣaṭrāya, many monks, at a given period of their monastic career, were wont to leave their monastery for the more arduous exercise of solitude.

Very little is known of the life of Abraham bar Dāshandād, apart from the fact that he is nicknamed "the lame," and that he was from Baith-Ṣayyādhé.<sup>1</sup> He flourished between about A.D. 720 and 730. Not the least of his titles to fame is the fact that he was the teacher of the illustrious Patriarch Timothy I and of the Patriarch Isho' bar Nūn. The list of his works is given by Baumstark,<sup>2</sup> according to the Catalogue of 'Abdīsho',<sup>3</sup> with the exception of his controversial work against the Jews, which Baumstark has inadvertently omitted.

The present letter is the only genuine piece that has come down to us from the author,<sup>4</sup> and is a good illustration of the epistolary style used between brothers by early monks. A glimpse of the intellectual capacity of the author may be had

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, pp. 301-302 (edit. Budge), and the note therein.

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> No. 146 of the Catalogue in Assemani.

<sup>4</sup> The authorship of an incomplete commentary on two discourses of the Abbot Mark, preserved in the British Museum Add. 17,270 (p. 482 in Wright's *Catalogue*) is very doubtful.



from the advices that follow the letter, which, whatever may be said for its spiritual simplicity, is characterised by sincerity and deep feeling. The following passages may be quoted here:—

“When you see men left in an abundance of wealth, glory and power, do not look at them with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the soul.”

“No man who confesses a true faith sins, and no man who loves hates.”

“Truth is the measure of love, and works are the knowledge of faith.”

Abraham seems to have been a reader of the mystical works of Simon of Ṭaibūtheh, as there is in the letter a distinct quotation from the above-translated work of Simon. Abraham writes: “Woe unto the man who does not weep here over his life, and who does not wipe off his sins, as he will have to wipe them off there forcibly with the billows of fire.”<sup>1</sup> This sentence is a quotation of the following passage of Simon: “Woe unto the man who does not weep . . . and does not wipe off his sins while there is yet time for repentance, as in the next world he will have to wipe them off forcibly with the billows of fire.”<sup>2</sup>

#### TRANSLATION.

60b *Again the letter which Mar Abraham bar Dāshandād wrote to his brother who had left (the monastery) for the exercise of Eremitism. Help me, O Lord, with Thy power! Amen.*

O my brother, Mar John, I remember you<sup>3</sup> every day, and bless you. May our Lord be with you! Every hour I think of you, and worship God who dwells in you, and pray His grace to keep you. May Christ our Lord dwell in you and fulfil and perfect His grace in you! As I do not cease from your remembrance, even so do not you cease from prayer! May God bless you and render you wise in His holy teaching, and may our Lord guard you in all your paths, and may Christ fulfil in you all the perfection of His will! Amen.

<sup>1</sup> P. 191.

<sup>2</sup> P. 21, where the words used in the text are identical with those used by Abraham.

<sup>3</sup> Delete the second *Tāu*.

O my brother John, we live in a world of error, and if we know that we may err, error will not take us unawares. Beware, O my brother, of negligence, as it is the mother of all error and of our straying away from God ! Beware, O my brother, of (excessive) sleep, and of all satisfaction of the belly, so that you may not forget your Creator and destroy your (spiritual) exercise ! Beware, O my brother, of the excessive use of words, and of the sight of faces, so that you may not lose the peace of your heart and incite to wrath and sorrow the Spirit who dwells in you ! O my beloved, if you wish to attain the whole truth, do not hold any conversation with men, and let all your desire be bound up with Christ !

Silence finds God ; purity sees the living God ; holiness worships God ; the state of watchfulness blesses God ; wisdom <sup>61a</sup> praises God ; humility extols God ; prudence pleases God ; and true love only Christ can make perfect. If you wish to possess eternal life you should implant these in your heart and guard them, as without good exercise and upright habits a man is unable to acquire virtues or be found worthy of being the dwelling-place of God. Silence, solitude, prudence and watchfulness are replete with life, while distraction, dissipation, neglect and intercourse with men are the dwelling-place of all the demons, and of straying and complete separation from God. If, therefore, you love Christ with all your heart, O my beloved, you must become like fire which does not fail to consume those who draw nigh unto it. Think well of this, O my beloved, and care for your salvation ! O my beloved, if you wish to become a solitary, you must be all eyes, like a Cherub. I repeat to you a brotherly warning : if you flee from the company of men, Christ will dwell in you, and your mind will rejoice in God.

I adjure you by God not to neglect your reading, your service and your prayer, so that God may live in you. I beseech you in the name of Christ to keep your body in chastity and your mind in purity, so that your heart may rejoice in God. Let a measure, however, be set to your vigil, and let your fast be in moderation, but let the ardour of your love have no end in its assiduity and watchfulness, till death.

Beware of idleness and of intercourse with men, so that



61b you may not end your days in frivolities and bring down your soul to perdition. Guard your eyes from sight, your ears from hearing and your tongue from speech, so that your heart may rejoice in the truth. Read in silence by yourself, and not before men, so that Christ may impart understanding to you, and your intelligence may not be obscured by conversation.

Listen to the pith of all my words to you: do not allow tears to cease from your eyes nor grief to leave your heart, and do not hold intercourse with men. Death comes of a sudden, takes us unawares, pounces upon us like a thief and does not permit us to repent of our conduct. Beware of the fullness of the stomach, of excessive sleep and of the distraction of the mind, as these separate you from the eternal happiness. Reject dealings with men, as they make you lose your soul, stain your heart, lead astray your body, impair all your senses in the service of God, and engender and beget error.

Love labours, as they will bring you to the spiritual mansion. Love zeal, cherish watchfulness, fear idleness and dread laziness, than which you have no greater hindrance. Be chaste, so that you may shine; and become wise against the causes of your struggles, so that you may not stain your chastity, and so that you may become pure in your exercise and in your mind. Love fasting, and flee from the sight of faces. Keep aloof from others in your body, so that you may be sanctified in your thoughts. Always remember and picture before your eyes the confidence in God, the complete faith in the future hope, and the freedom from fear, which emanate, to the mind, from the chastity of the body and the sanctity of the thoughts.

62a Be careful never to walk in unwatchfulness, or to look with disdain on those who are near you or far from you. Even if all the world perishes—and it is awaiting its dissolution—let not your chastity be stained, however slightly, because it is awaiting Christ. Spurn constantly all tribulations for the sake of possessing chastity, and do not fear a thing that will eventually perish.

O my beloved, keep watch over your life, because death is at hand, and you never know when is its true hour. Be warned, therefore—and lo! I warn you—everything in this

world will perish, and woe unto the man who neglects his exercises, as at the time of his leaving the world he will be exceedingly grieved ! Anyone who will not receive an advice of love will at the end bring regret on himself. Anyone who holds to this world as if it were a true inheritance of happiness, and to its pleasures as if they were true possessions, when he leaves it empty-handed will know how much he has been deceived, on his final journey in which he will be deprived of all of them. Indeed, the love of this world inflicts great injury on us. As to you, O my beloved, who by the grace of Christ have been delivered from the world, and have atrophied <sup>1</sup> your earthly limbs, let not your mouth cease from praise and your tongue from thanksgiving ! Let your heart think of God, and your mind of Christ ! Let your mind offer praise, and your thought glorification ! Do not think of anything but of the <sup>62b</sup> glory of God, and do not possess any other remembrance but that of the love of Christ, and do not have any other companion but the Holy Spirit ! God will be displeased with you if you do not fulfil what I am ordering you. Beware, therefore, O beloved of my soul, keep watch over your exercises, and prosper and progress in them, so that you may attain eternal life. This world passes away like a shadow, and everything that it contains will eventually perish. Woe, therefore, unto the man who is bound up with its love, because when he leaves it empty-handed, he will know to what extent he has been deceived, in his final journey where he will find himself deprived of all that he possessed and loved. As to you, O my beloved, disentangle yourself from the harmful bonds of this temporary sojourn, which is full of injuries and wretchedness, and bind yourself with all your soul, with all your power and with all your mind, to the love of Christ. Everything in this world will cease to exist, and man will have to face the judgment of God.

Keep watch over your soul, O my brother, and let your death be pictured before your eyes, and do not neglect the salvation of your life. Beware of communing with anyone who does not care for the salvation of his life ! For woe will befall him,

<sup>1</sup> Read the verb in the 2nd pers. sing.



and double woe will befall the one who has intercourse with him, as he will dissuade him from communion with Christ, and so cause him to lose his life. Beware, O you who strive after your salvation, of having intercourse with men of loose conduct, who do not place the judgment of God before their eyes, nor remember the end of the world, and to what dissolution it will  
 63a eventually come. You, O my beloved, beware of them with all your power, as they will truly lead your true life in God to perdition, when you mix with them in a conversation that is empty and full of loss. You, O my beloved, become a beautiful mirror to all those who see you, in all the glorious things which please God.

See to it, O my beloved, when you stand before God in prayer, that you collect your thoughts from the empty distraction of this restless world, and say always as follows: "O Christ, whose love has separated the saints from their kith and kin, and from a restful life with their fellowmen, and who hast silenced in them the turmoil of the natural passions before the sweetness of Thy love, grant to me, O Lord, to spurn my life in Thy love, and to find myself dead to all the joys of this world. May Thy love separate me from the world and its conversation. Yea, O Lord, grant to me to spurn my life for the sake of Thy love. Blessed is the one whom Thou hast rendered worthy, O God, to die for Thy love."

See to it, O my beloved, not to have any other thought but of how to despise this world in the love of Christ. O my beloved,<sup>1</sup> burn at all times in the love of Christ, and become all in all a fire that is kindled with His love, while blessing and glorifying His love incessantly. Do not cease from your worship, prostrations, sighs, mourning, supplications, entreaties, prayers and hymns, as long as there is power in you, and you are living in this mortal, perishable and changeable life.

63b O my beloved, discipline your life while you have time, opportunity and power, and help your life as long as the time of changes lasts. Do not exchange the love of Christ for anything that is seen or unseen. This world passes away, and we

<sup>1</sup> Read in sing. in the text.

shall leave it. As the time for this is not far off, let each one of us prepare his provisions for the journey, as long as there is opportunity to amass good provisions. Examine your soul and care for your salvation, because this world is a deceiver and causes a man to lose his life from hour to hour. Think of these things, because you will obtain great gain in their remembrance, and by putting them into practice you will truly inherit everlasting life. You will also live here in great happiness ; indeed, you will live in this happiness even if all the world is in turmoil, because He whom you love stands for ever. Blessed will you be, O my beloved, if you are diligent in the salvation of your life. Adorn yourself with good works and enter into the joy of your Lord. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and inherit everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

Blessed is the one who has continually the image of his death before his eyes, and who prepares for himself provisions that will help him in the next world. Woe unto the man who does not weep here over his life, and who does not wipe off his sins, as he will have to wipe them off there forcibly with the billows of fire.<sup>2</sup> Woe unto the man who has a body and who neglects the labours of penitence, because when the hour of death is near he will be filled with an indescribable grief ! O Lord, deliver me from that grievous hour, by the losing of my <sup>64a</sup> life in this world for Thy love ! Grant me, O Lord, I beseech Thee, to despise my life for the sake of Thy love ! Grant me, O Lord, that my life be lost in the finding of Thy love ! It behoves Thee, O Lord, to grant me to despise my life in Thy love. Grant me, O Lord, to be conscious of Thy love, and not to grieve Thee by the slackness of my exercises. Grant me, O Lord, to wipe off the impurity of sin with my tears ! Grant me, O Thou Lord, to obliterate all intercourse, remembrance, cogitation and thought which does not please Thy love, O Christ of all !

O beloved of my soul, let the recitation of Psalms not cease from your mouth, nor prayer be absent from your heart, nor supplication be at rest from your thoughts, nor entreaty be far

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence is quoted from the work of Simon of Taibütheh. See p. 21.



from your meditations, nor sighs be interrupted in your mind, so that God may have pity on you and bestow His gift on you. O John, examine your soul, and never give a blessing to a thing the end of which is perdition. When you see men left in an abundance of wealth, glory and power, do not look at them with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the soul. Come, you and I, let us go and look at the graves of the dead, and see what each of them took from their possessions, apart from a span of ground! There were among them wise men, kings, potentates, handsome men, eloquent men, well-educated men, men with fine voices and great physical strength. What has  
64b remained of them now? They have become earth. Alas! Alas, for the deceitfulness of this perishable world! Everything in this world will surely perish, and if the body perishes, how will its possessions remain? As to you, O my beloved, depict always in your mind the dissolution of every visible thing, and you will not suffer with the sufferings of the world, nor rejoice with its joys, as it is written: "We do not rejoice in the things which are seen, but in the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."<sup>1</sup>

These things will suffice for your admonition and exhortation. Think of them and meditate upon them, in order that the world may know that you are truly the friend of Christ. The pure children are the children of the Kingdom, and the children of the next world despise everything found in this world, and spit on everything seen in it. Let anyone who wishes to gain a victory over his passions without exertion depict on his heart the remembrance of Dives in Hell, and in what torment he suffers there because of his pleasures here. Beware of intercourse with those who do not love Christ! They are known by the fact that they are not ardent in His love, nor joyful in their affection for Him, and that they do not live always in communion with Him, nor are they zealous in His service.

As to you, O my beloved, be ardent in His love and joyful in your affection for Him! Do not possess any other thing but love of God, in a complete renunciation of this world and of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. iv. 18.

all its possessions, because it is in Him that we live, move and have our being.<sup>1</sup> He is the life of everything, and everything is from Him, everything in Him and everything for Him. It is this One whom you have to love, Him whom you have to honour, Him whom you have to follow, Him to whom you have to pray,<sup>65a</sup> and Him whom you have to possess, as He is the life of all visible and invisible things, and as it is He who created, by a wise sign, all the creation that is above and that is below. I beseech you to possess this One ! I implore you to pray to this One ! I beg you to love this One ! Beware, O my beloved, of neglecting your salvation, as this world will perish, and everything in it will end and perish also. Read continually the sacred Books, which will teach you all that is helpful for your salvation. Strive to possess in yourself an incessant service, a hope in which there is no doubt, a faith which brooks no lassitude, a joyful will and a good intention, an exercise of love and a vigilant mind. Depict always in your mind the remembrance of your departure from this world, and the love of God will be stronger in you than death. If death causes you to relinquish the love of everything, how much more will it befit the love of God to cause you to relinquish the love of everything ! Let us not ask therefore for the love of anything, as the love of everything will cease from us !

Blessed is the one who has not slumbered in all his course, till he has reached the harbour of death, and blessed is the one who pleases his God before he is overtaken by the stern judgment ! It is a great fear to fall into the hands of God if we have transgressed His commandments, and it is a great dread to conduct ourselves before God without circumspection, and it is a dire and reprehensible misery to live in this angelic exercise without sufficient thought and consideration. As to<sup>65b</sup> you, O my beloved, walk before God with humility. I beseech you, O my beloved, be not neglectful of your soul, and do not follow the deceitfulness of this perishable world. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 28.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 26.



When a man passes away, he leaves his possessions behind. At the door of the grave everything ends and fades away. Do not therefore, O my beloved, run after a thing that perishes and causes your soul to perish.

Do not linger in this world, as you are only in it as on a path, which will undoubtedly come to its end. Do not deceive yourself. Where can you flee from death and from judgment? If you please Christ in your works, you will have rest here and happiness there, but if you do not strive to please God, prepare yourself for severe sufferings and pains. Be diligent in reading and prayer. Understand well and continually recite Psalms and prayers. Consider that your soul is truly more precious to you than all the world and all its possessions. Indeed there is nothing higher than the love of God, which is acquired in the denying of oneself and in the renouncing of the world and all its possessions. Blessed is the one who has acquired the love of God in his soul, and blessed is the one who is kindled always with the love of Christ, and blessed is the Brother who spurns everything that is seen, and takes thought for his soul! Everything that  
66a is of the earth will revert to earth, and everything that is of the Spirit will rise upwards, as it is written: "Think of things above and not of things on the earth,"<sup>1</sup> because the earth will perish. You have been called to heavenly things: do not be bound to earthly things. Blessed is the one who pleases God with a pure heart and diligent works.

O my beloved, we shall surely pass away from this world: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."<sup>2</sup> If therefore we return to dust, what will perishable possessions profit us? Beware, O my beloved, lest this world should deceive you, because it is deceitful and does not possess true love, and we cannot put our trust in it for a single day. One day is succeeded by another day, and to-morrow comes and does not remain; and with the days that pass away, our life also passes away in trifles. The day moves and passes away, but the reward of its labour remains. Do not then run after a thing that perishes and causes your life to perish. A man cannot possess the love

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Col. iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 19.

of God if he does not despise this perishable world and spurn its possessions, conscious that his love and attachment for it is not sound, and that the thing in which he puts his trust is deceitful, and has nothing in it that will remain, neither its beauty nor its wealth nor its possessions. Everything passes away, and only the love of God remains.

O Christ, grant me to love Thee more than my life! Let the remembrance of your Lord be in your mind more than your breathing, and see to it that you keep watch over your soul lest a perishable thing should separate you from the love of Christ. Beware of intercourse with worldly men, as they 666 cause you to lose your soul and your body. Let the recitation of your Psalm be with understanding, and let your prayer and your supplication be with a rational sorrow. Let everything which you possess belong to Christ, and let all your remembrances and all your thought be of Christ. O John, care for your soul, because this world will pass away and all that it contains will perish. All the voices and the persons found in this perishable world will pass away, and the iniquitous men and the wicked demons will be put to shame, and the just men will rejoice, and the saints will delight.

Meditate always on the next world, and despise the present temporal world. O my beloved John, hold to the path of life which I am teaching you, and do not neglect it nor leave it, and you will reap from it, myriads of times, pearls and precious stones, from the seed which you have thrown and from your sublime meditation,<sup>1</sup> in virtues, good works and pure thoughts of wisdom; acquire patience and endure in them, and you will delight in the everlasting life. Although the path is a little narrow, you will soon reach the clearing. Do not go back, O my beloved, and knock at the door of the torments through iniquitous deeds, and do not walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction<sup>2</sup> and so inherit the eternal fire and be rejected by your kind Lord, the Saviour of all, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Read in sing.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Matt. vii. 13.



67a *Advices that follow the Letter.*

He who wishes to possess the everlasting life, let him renounce the temporal life. Let us, therefore, give a vision to our soul from the sight of this world that perishes. Let us direct the vision of our thought to the Lord of all, make our soul to profit by the spiritual exercise, and confine ourselves all in all to the love of God.

No man who confesses a true faith sins, and no man who has love hates. As a tree is known by its fruits, so also they who aver that they are Christ's are known by their deeds.<sup>1</sup> Works are not of the promise, unless a man be found in the power of faith till the end.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, what profit does a man gain from a stomach that was full yesterday? For as long as he is hungry for a food suitable to his nature, that fact will afford him no consolation. In the same way, no profit accrues to the soul to-day or to-morrow from things that took place yesterday.

It is said: "Grace will not leave you at every tribulation which assails you."<sup>3</sup> Prostrate yourself, therefore, before God, and take heart, as our Maker is not pleased to see us lost to Him. Do not lower your gaze from Heaven, and do not obliterate the thought of God from your heart, but at all times be ready for your decease and the guerdon of your works. Do not relinquish the holy reading which you have been taught, nor the good teaching which you have learned, but strengthen yourself in the hope of the promises, invigorate yourself with the reward of your works, fear the fire of the torments, and flee from the weeping of Hell.

Remember that you are the son of God and the brother of  
67b the Beloved of the Father; joint heir of the Apostles and co-heir of the martyrs; sharer of the table of the confessors, of the inheritance of the saints, of the couch of the prophets, of the delight of the just, of the glorification of the angels, of the communion of the Seraphim, of the seat of the Cherubim, and of the fate of the Lord Christ; a guest at the wedding of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. vii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. past good works will not bring you the reward promised by God, if in your present state you are a sinner.

<sup>3</sup> Two poetical lines quoted from a Father, possibly St. Ephrem.

Only Begotten ; a companion in the camp of the heavenly hosts ; and a dweller in Jerusalem. If you think of these things, you will not fall a victim to the servants of darkness, you will stand firm in your penitence, and you will not be strangled by unclean thoughts. Consider to what things you have been called, and you will not be disturbed by an idle thought.

Do not look at worldly-wise men who are older than you in years, but look at children who are older than you in the fear of God,<sup>1</sup> and follow them. Do not lend your ear to listen to the words of the poets and to the stories of deceitful men whose teaching does not carry conviction. Draw nigh unto the Books of the fishermen, and you will heal your wounds in the purity of your soul. What would a life that is foreign to God profit us ?<sup>2</sup> Let us therefore pray at all times with sorrow, that grace may shine in our heart. Truth is the measure of love, and works are the knowledge of faith ; but as for the soul which is divested of them, what profit has it gained in putting on Christ ?

Sounds are for ears, and words are for those who will hear them :<sup>3</sup> if the remembrance of the spiritual exercises is absent, it will be like a house built on sand. The soul which keeps this remembrance is conscious of the postulates of the different kinds of humility, but the heart which is devoid of love is like the seed that falls on a rock. The fear of God does not dwell in a man who follows every wind and is a slave to gluttony, as such a man, being undecided concerning his salvation, fills his stomach with all delicacies.

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " Spirit."

<sup>2</sup> Lit. " you."

<sup>3</sup> Lit. " words of hearing."





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۱. افسانہ: افسانہ کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی واقعہ یا ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ افسانہ کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 2. ناول: ناول کہ ایک طویل کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ ناول کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 3. ڈراما: ڈراما کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ ڈراما کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 4. کہانی: کہانی کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ کہانی کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 5. مضمون: مضمون کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ مضمون کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 6. نثر: نثر کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ نثر کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 7. شاعری: شاعری کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ شاعری کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 8. طنز: طنز کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ طنز کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 9. سنجیدگی: سنجیدگی کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ سنجیدگی کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔  
 10. مزاح: مزاح کہ ایک مختصر کہانی ہے۔ اس میں عام طور پر ایک ہی شخصیت کا ذکر ہوتا ہے۔ مزاح کہانی کے ذریعہ زندگی کے مختلف پہلوؤں کو ظاہر کرتا ہے۔



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۱. مقدمه : در این کتاب، ما به بررسی و تحلیل سبک زندگی و فرهنگ ایرانی می‌پردازیم. هدف از این کتاب، آشنایی بیشتر با ارزش‌ها و عادات این ملت است.

۲. فصل اول : تاریخچه سبک زندگی ایرانی. در این فصل، به بررسی تغییرات سبک زندگی از دوران باستان تاکنون می‌پردازیم.

۳. فصل دوم : ارزش‌های اساسی ایرانی. در این فصل، به بررسی ارزش‌هایی مانند احترام به والدین، راستگویی و میزبانی می‌پردازیم.

۴. فصل سوم : عادات و آداب ایرانی. در این فصل، به بررسی عادات و آداب مختلفی مانند پذیرایی از مهمانان و نحوه برگزاری مراسم‌ها می‌پردازیم.

۵. فصل چهارم : سبک زندگی در ایران امروزی. در این فصل، به بررسی تغییرات سبک زندگی در ایران امروزی و تأثیرات مدرنیته می‌پردازیم.

۶. فصل پنجم : نتیجه‌گیری. در این فصل، به جمع‌بندی مطالب و ارائه پیشنهادات می‌پردازیم.

۷. پیوسته : منابع و مراجع. در این بخش، به منابع و مراجع استفاده شده در این کتاب اشاره می‌کنیم.

۸. فهرست مطالب : در این بخش، به فهرست مطالب کتاب اشاره می‌کنیم.

۹. تذکرات : در این بخش، به تذکرات و نکات مهم کتاب اشاره می‌کنیم.

۱۰. مقدمه نویسنده : در این بخش، به مقدمه نویسنده کتاب اشاره می‌کنیم.





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קטן וזאת היא הנקודה הראשונה.

הנה נראה כי המושגים הללו הם חלק מהתפתחות  
החשיבה האנושית. הם מראים כי האדם  
העתיק לא היה יכול להבין את המושגים  
האלו בצורה כזו. הם מראים כי האדם  
העתיק לא היה יכול להבין את המושגים  
האלו בצורה כזו.

### המושגים האלו

המושגים האלו הם חלק מהתפתחות  
החשיבה האנושית. הם מראים כי האדם  
העתיק לא היה יכול להבין את המושגים  
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ २ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ३ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ४ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ५ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ६ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ७ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ८ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ९ ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १० ॥

శ్రీమద్భగవద్గీతా : అధ్యాయములు : పద్యములు

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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

பின்னர்

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کتاب فی الجہاد والفرار





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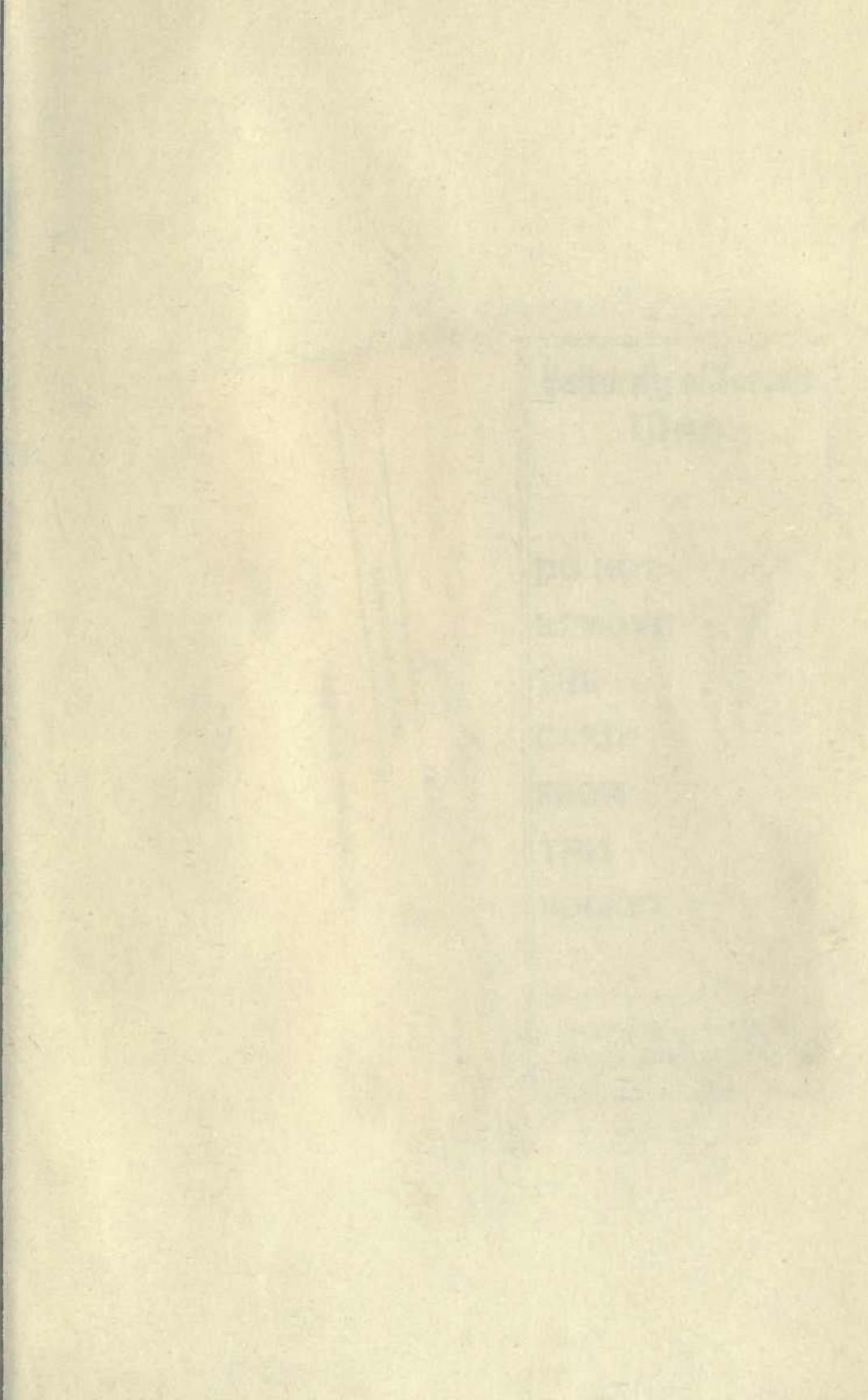




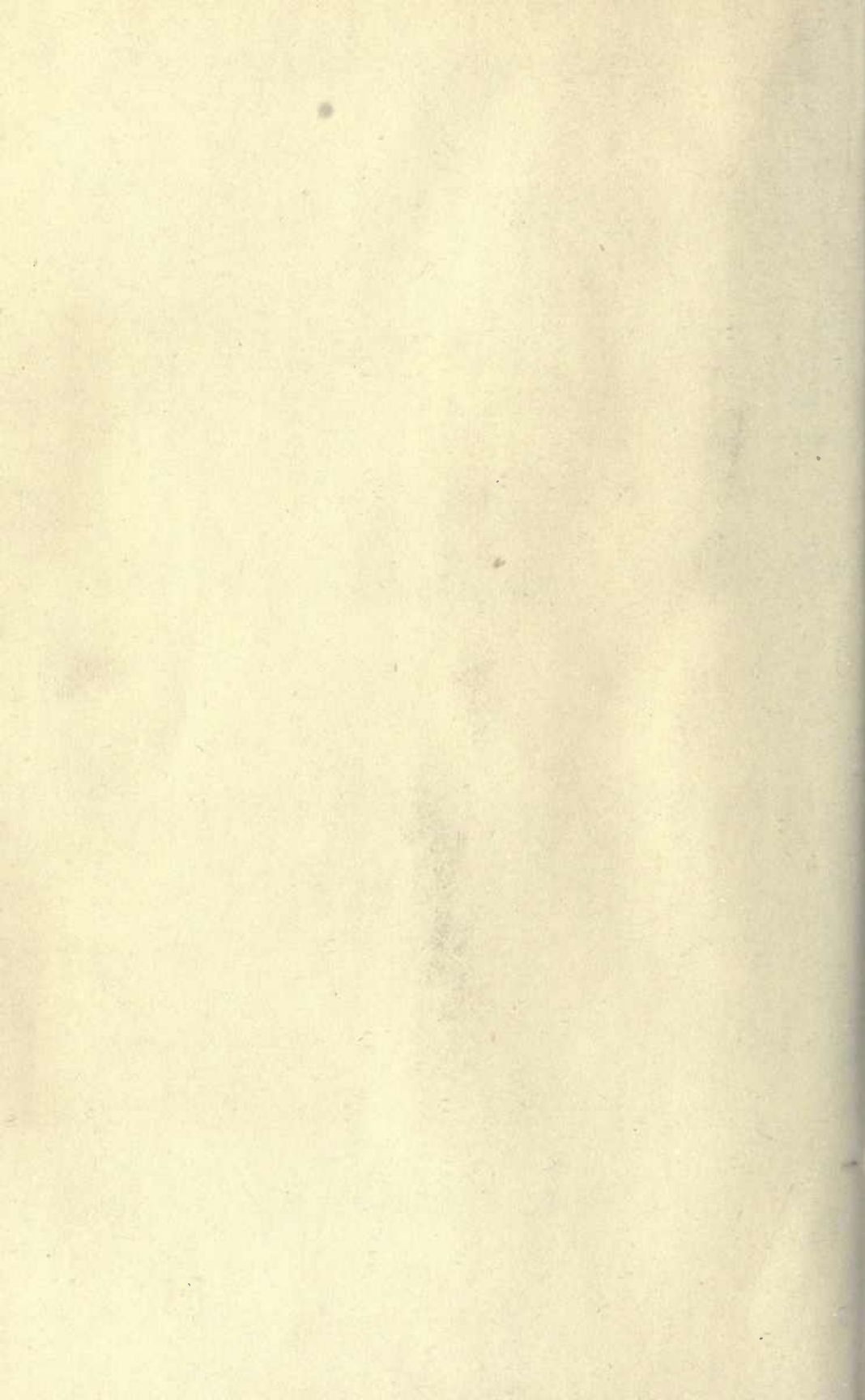
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