

APPENDIX ONE

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TRACTATUS DE MYSTICA THEOLOGIA

(Excerpts)

Part Two, Chapter 15

*How through a knowledge of God there can be formed
—from consideration of the fact that God is all in all—
an act of love which remains when the knowledge ceases.*

From the aforesaid [considerations] the intellect can form an exceedingly exalted knowledgeable idea [*cognitio*] of God—an idea, first of all, of how it is that all things are present in God. And in this way the intellect can rise upwards unto a knowledge [*cognitio*] of God, who in Himself is most simple, even though all things are present in Him. And when the intellect sees Him, it sees all things in Him; nevertheless, He infinitely surpasses all things and is unqualifiedly free of all things. And by means of such knowledge—as by means of one foot’s having been planted (viz., the foot of the intellect)—[that foot] can, draw after it the other foot, viz., the affections, by means of their love for God. And [the soul] can locate that [second foot] far more distantly, highly, perfectly, and firmly in God by means of its actual love. And it can do this repeatedly until, at length, the foot of love can remain fixed [out in front] when the foot of the intellect halts.¹ And this [topic] is principally my intended focal-point in this present section.

In accordance with the meaning of Blessed Dionysius [we may proceed] in a manner similar [to that of the foregoing illustration—proceed] on the basis of the fact (1) that God is all in all and (2) that all things are affirmed of Him and (3) that He is Being for all existing things and is Life for all living things and, in general, is all things and, nevertheless, (4) is nothing of all things by way of composition or inherence but (5) is super-elevated and super-exalted above all things. Hence, [Dionysius] reflects [as follows]: I know most assuredly *that* You exist and that You are all things and that I cannot know more than that You are exalted above all things. However, You are to be loved maximally *because* You are so great and so good that You cannot be known. And, thereafter, a man can leave behind all things and

can direct his intellect toward God alone, who is all things. And, again, he can in this way, through knowledge, first plant down the foot of the intellect in God and afterwards, through actual love, move forward the foot of the affections and plant it down more sublimely in God. And because God is all things in such a way that He is infinitely above all things, [the soul can], at length, totally cease from [acts of] knowing and can very perfectly cling to God by means of actual love, in the absence of any actual knowledge. And this is my principal point: [viz.,] that the mind is united to God through actual love that has been engendered by a preceding knowledge but that remainsⁿ¹ when [all] actual knowledge ceases.

Butⁿ² Blessed Gregory seems to address this point, in saying: “When we love the supernal and heavenly things of which we have heard, we already know the things loved, because the love itself is knowledge. Therefore, He made known to them all things² because, untransformed by earthly desires, they were fervent with flames of supreme love.”³ Here [Gregory] seems to mean that love remains subsequently to knowledge, although, according to him, that very love is also knowledge. For by means of moderate and imperfect knowledge someone can rise upwards unto perfect love of God; from this love there sometimes follows more perfect knowledge, from which, in turn, there follows more perfect love. And it is not denied [by Gregory] that love can remain after all knowledge (at least, knowledge properly so called) has, at length, ceased.

Blessed Augustine, in his Sermon 89 on [the Gospel of] John also speaks of this mode [of ascent] when he says: “What is altogether unknown is not loved. But when there is loved that which to some small extent is known, then by means of that love it comes about that [what is known] is known better and more fully.”⁴ And in this way *love has to induce knowledge until the love becomes so perfect that intellectual knowledge will be unable to follow it*,⁵ because of its imperfection in this present lifetime. At that point love enters-in where knowledge and intellect remain outside; and later the mind is conveyed beyond itself through love and through super-intellectual knowledge.

Lord Bonaventure, the Seraphic Doctor, in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, posits another mode [of ascent]—one quite subtle and not penetrable by all men. By means of it the mind, ascendingⁿ³ through six stages unto the aforementioned perfect knowledge of God, can enter, at length, into an obscuring-mist, by means of a seventh stage.

First of all, [he says] that God is known through vestiges from creatures; secondly, [he says] that the mind views God in the vestiges (something that occurs more loftily and perfectly [than at the first stage]). Thirdly, the mind beholds God by means of the image of Him that is impressed on the powers of the soul. Fourthly, [Bonaventure speaks] of the mode of knowing God in the image-of-Him that has been re-formedⁿ⁴ by [God's] free gift. Fifthly, [he speaks] of the mode of knowing God through His primary name, which is "Being" (in accordance with the verse: "I am I-Who-Am"⁶). Sixthly, [Bonaventure speaks] of the mode of knowing the Blessed Trinity through a name for it—in particular, through the name "good," by means of which a trinity of persons is expressed. For the good is diffusive of itself; and, for this reason, Christ stated in the Gospel: "No one is good except the one God,⁷ i.e., except God alone."⁸ By means of the first two modes God is known through those things that are outside of us, viz., creatures; by means of the second two modes He is known more excellently, and subsequently loved more excellently, through those things that are within us; by means of the last two modes He is known still more perfectly through those things that are above us.

Moreover, the aforementioned Doctor [of the Church, viz., Bonaventure,] proceeds quite subtly and basically and briefly, and he later posits a seventh stage by means of which the mind enters into an obscuring-mist through knowing and loving super-intellectually, super-affectionally; and, among other things, he says the following: "In the course of this passing over (if it is perfect) the mind must, after its entire ascent through the aforementioned modes of knowing, be united with God in accordance with a super-mental union. [This uniting occurs] when the mind, withdrawing from all things and, subsequently, taking leave even of itself, is united to the super-resplendent rays in which there is a most divine knowledge of God through ignorance and where all operations of the intellect are left behind and where the summit of the affections is, as a whole, transferred unto, and transformed into, God. And this [occurrence] is something mystical and most secret, and no one is acquainted with it except him who receives it;⁹ and no one receives it except him who desires it. And no one desires it except one whom the fire of the Holy Spirit (whom Christ sent to the earth) inwardly inflames. And so, the Apostle declares that this mystical wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit. For [our human] nature can accomplish nothing to this end, and industry can accomplish only a small amount. Little is to be ascribed to investigation, where-

as much is to be ascribed to unction; little is to be ascribed to the tongue, whereas much is to be ascribed to inner joy. Little is to be ascribed to words—oral and written—whereas all is to be ascribed to the gift of God and to the Holy Spirit. Little or nothing is to be attributed to the creature. Everything is to be attributed to Creating Being (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)—while we say, with Blessed Dionysius, in regard to the Holy Trinity: ‘O Super-essential and Super-divine Trinity, etc., lead us unto that knowledge.’ ”¹⁰ & ¹¹ Here the aforementioned Scholastic Doctor [viz., Bonaventure] agrees with the other Fathers that, in knowing God, one must halt every operation of the intellect. Bonaventure has taught about this operation—taught in terms of very excellent stages, [viz.,] the six aforementioned stages. And we must keep clinging totally to God by means of the summit of our affections—keep clinging until He deigns to come and to infuse the rays of Hisⁿ⁵ knowledge and the fire and fervor of His love super-intellectually and super-affectionally [into our souls]. By means of these [infused gifts] *God is known through perfect ignorance as concerns the intellect; yet, He is loved and known very perfectly in a super-intellectual and super-affectional way.*

Part Two, Chapter 16

Secondly, when knowledge ceases, an act of love for God can be formed from a consideration of the manner in which all things are denied of God.

According to Blessed Dionysius the second mode of arriving at perfect love of God after all actual knowledge has ceased is through the negating of all things regarding God. Thus, for example, [we may say] that God is not stone, not man, not angel,ⁿ⁶ not intellect, not divinity, not deity, not oneness. And Dionysius states that God is more suitably praised by means of this [negating] mode. God is praised because one arrives at the aforementioned love of Him; indeed, the praise is agreeable and acceptable to Him only when He is loved perfectly. Therefore, we are not to understand [this approach] in such a way that all of the aforementioned things are *merely* denied of God. Rather, [it is to be understood] in such a way that, no matter what we conceive or understand regarding God by means of such [terms], He is always infinitely more than we can conceive. For example, God is not stone; i.e., He is not such that He is perfectly known by means of the concept that is formed of Him from a stone considered as a vestige of

God. Similarly, God is not divinity, not deity, not trinity, not oneness, and so on, in only the way in which we in this lifetime conceive Him [not to be]; for we conceive, understand, and know in part and very imperfectly, through a glass darkly.¹² And in accordance with such imperfection the aforemade [negative] statements are true; however, God is infinitely more perfect than is our concept [of Him].

Therefore, when our mind finds that it knows [God] very imperfectly (because God is, in infinite measure, more perfectly knowable and is totally and perfectly incomprehensible by any creature), it leaves behind all knowledge and extends its affection upwards toward perfect love of God, whom it cannot know as perfectly [as it loves]. Thus, *because He is not all-knowable but is all-desirable* (as in the Canticles the bride proclaims¹³), *the mind endeavors wholly to love Him whom it cannot wholly know*. And in this way habituating itself through sighs of love and through love's fervent desirings, the mind can, at length, with the help of grace, abide in its love of God, after all actual knowledge has ceased.

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Part Two, Chapter 21

*It is shown to be possible for the mind to rise up
unto love of God—[to do so] apart from actual knowledge.*

Now, to many it seems *difficult* and to many [others] it seems *impossible* that the mind can rise up unto love of God by the sole means of a predisposing-tendency [*habitus*]—whether infused or acquired—without any actual guiding-knowledge. Nevertheless, Hugh of Balmaⁿ⁷ attempts to prove this [view] through many arguments. For [contrary to Hugh] many [people] say that that love is knowledge. Others say that it has knowledge attached to it—knowledge properly so called yet not reflective knowledge, because (on account of the intense actual love) the mind does not understand and is not aware that it knows, even though together with the love there is knowledge. But probably one can maintain defensibly that *a mind well habituated in the love of God—[habituated] through knowledge that guides in a preceding manner—can, at length, rise up, whenever it wills to, unto actual love of God [and can do so] without actual (and properly-called)ⁿ⁸ knowledge-of-God, whether preceding knowledge or accompanying knowledge.*¹⁴

Now, the foregoing [opinion] is seen to be in accordance with

the view of Dionysius and his commentators and of Hugh of Balma, if [their writings] are rightly and carefully examined throughout. And [the foregoing rising upwards] can occur in the following manner: While a man is reflecting on whatsoever goods other than God, he can suddenly, through a predisposing-tendency, leave behind all things and *can rise upwards unto actual love of God, without his actually reflecting on God or actually entertaining a knowledge of God*. For the will is a higher power that can, by means of its predisposing-tendency, engage in an act that is customary for it and that is quite natural and quite fitting for it; [and it can do so] apart from its advice-giving intellect or its advice-giving reason. For, in a comparable way, a blind man can, by virtue of familiarity, conduct himself to a place that he has never seen; he [can do so] without being led by his guide but out of a predisposing-tendency acquired because of the fact that previously he was frequently led to this place by his guide.

But from the foregoing [considerations] it does not follow that if a predisposing-tendency is present, then the will is always in a state of actually willing [one and the same thing] no matter whether the man is asleep or awake. For subsequently to actual knowledge of something other [than itself] the will can out of habit turn away from that thing as *known* and can love it as a thing that has become *customary* for it. And [this fact] is not surprising, for (as the Doctors [of the Church] commonly and correctly say) the will can activate itself for a simple apprehending of an object apart from any prior judgment on the part of reason (as happened in the case of our first parents); and it can activate itself to will or not to will, to love or to hate, even in the absence of a predisposing-tendency (whether acquired or infused) for willing or not willing the thing in question. If so, then how much the more the will—being in possession of actual guiding-knowledge of some thing—can rise up, through a predisposing-tendency, or tendencies (whether infused or acquired), unto an act of love for God, unto a love for Him to whom the will is also naturally inclined! Why is it surprising if the predisposing-tendency and the natural inclination for a close knowledge of the other thing replace the simple actual-knowledge of [that] object?

I make the above statements in order to defend the words and writings of many men. These writings seem contrary to the written works of the philosophers and of the Scholastic teachers; but by the present means they can be made harmonious [with them] and can be defended. For in this present work I do not intend to contradict any-

one but rather (to the extent that God grants) to harmonize those who seem to contradict one another. For they all agree, I believe, on the following [point: viz.,] that (conformably with the general law) in the absence of any actual knowledge of anything whatsoever, the will is not motivated toward any act, whether an induced act or a free act. Those who defend the aforementioned love do not deny this claim; rather, [they assert that] if actual knowledge is had about some thing, then a love of that same thing can continueⁿ⁹ when the actual knowledge of this very thing ceases. And, furthermore, [they maintain that] if actual knowledge is had of some [one] thing, then the will can—through a perfect predisposing-tendency (whether acquired or infused) and in accordance with the aforesaid manner—rise up unto the love of another thing, without [having] an actual knowledge of this second thing.

Moreover, Hugh of Balma states that the knowledge that comes from faith suffices. Hereby he seems to mean that the predisposing-tendency on the part of faith suffices, because there is some actual guiding-knowledge on the part of faith. And in this way, then, all [writers] can, it seems, be brought into harmony as regards this [point]. Nevertheless, let whomever this harmonizing does not please repudiate it for as long as he cares to;ⁿ¹⁰ but let him know the following: As long as he battles and disputes with words, he will never draw near to the aforesaid love but will always distance himself all the farther [therefrom]. I think that each individual, if he loves some thing intensely and from a strong predisposing-tendency or a strong natural inclination, experiences in his own instance [that] suddenly (even if he is studiously reflecting on other things) he is moved by a certain motion of affection, desire, or love for the thing that he loves—is moved even when he has not been actually reflecting in advance about that thing. Hence, the holy Egyptian Fathers, moved by this [consideration], taught [us] to remove inordinate desires in order to avoid a flux of thoughts. For example, the great Abbot John speaks as follows: “We must beware lest any inordinate desire, any distorted inclination, or [any] desire that is vain and is not from God fix in our heart its roots, from which there continuously sprout up vain and useless thoughts that ravish our mind.”¹⁵

From the foregoing it seems to be the case that when the mind wills with great effort to reflect on good things, then the roots of affections and of inordinate desires beget other thoughts—even thoughts that are in opposition to the deliberative will. Likewise, (1) when the

will is habituated through a perfectly infused predisposing-tendency of love (or even through an already acquired predisposing-tendency of love) and, furthermore, (2) when the moral sense (*synderesis*), by means of a strong natural inclination, is inclined unto love of God, and also (3) when the will has an already-acquired predisposing-tendency: [it seems] that then the will—when the intellect actually understands or knows some other things besides God—can suddenly activate itself (because of the aforementioned predisposing tendencies and natural inclinations) through an act of love for God. *At that moment [the soul] does not have actual guiding-knowledge of God or even accompanying-knowledge of God*, though perhaps it has a knowledge-of-God that follows upon such a love, as Blessed Gregory seems to mean in the authoritative passage alluded to earlier.¹⁶ Moreover, the words of Blessed Augustine seem to tend, to some extent, in this direction.¹⁷ For it isⁿ¹¹ certain that the intellect, in order to form any intellectual representation, need not view a new and special image. Rather, once one actual intellectual representation is formed from an image, the intellect can by means of predisposing-tendencies for the intelligible objects (which are called *species intelligibiles* [i.e., intelligible representations]) activate many other noble and perfect inclinations. Likewise, the will, knowing some thing by means of the intellect, can—(1) through an intellectual predisposing-tendency for another thing and (2) through a predisposing-tendency (viz., love) infused into the will and also (3) through an acquired predisposing-tendency and (4) through the moral sense's natural inclination for the love of such a thing—rise up suddenly unto a perfect love of this very thing. And according to Blessed Dionysius¹⁸ this [occurrence] seems to be a rising upwards ignorantly.

As best I can, I have tried to persuade [the reader] that the following is possible to occur: [viz.,] that *actual love can remain without there being actual accompanying knowledge of the thing which is then actually loved*. For I know that many erudite men either do not grasp this [fact] or else even ridicule it as being impossible from the point of view of general law. And [their outlook] is not surprising, because (except for sins and for inordinate affections for creatures) nothing seems so greatlyⁿ¹² to prevent the aforementioned perfect love as does (1) much erudite learning (*scientia*) and (2) many predisposing tendencies associated with this learning and (3) many image-based intellectual representations, which always occupy a place in one's mind, with the result that the mind does not rise upwards

unto the aforesaid love. And it is not possible for these [critics] to cast off, and leave behind, such forms of knowledge, which spring impulsively from predisposing tendencies and [mental] representations, because habituation is a second nature. And hence, too, Blessed Dionysius forbade Timothy to impart this [mystical] knowledge to such men. However, a little old woman—or a very simple villager—who is full of love-for-God and of good affections and who is already habituated and who has tasted God's gift, would affirm the aforesaid [points]. Likewise, there are found writings of such [learned] men on this [topic] and also writings of those who do not know letters. [These latter men] did not know howⁿ¹³ to write [these things] by themselves; rather, they articulated *viva voce* to others their own experiential partaking.

Part Four, Chapter 9

Whether Mystical Theology Is Love or Knowledge or Both.

From the foregoing [considerations] one can infer, to some extent, in what mystical theology consists; and [from them] the differences among the many [views] can be made harmonious. For just as the happiness of eternal life (1) consists *objectively* in God, who is Infinite Good, and (2) consists *formally* in seeing and enjoying, whichⁿ¹⁴ are acts inherent to the soul (as all men commonly say) by which the soul is formally happy, and (3) consists *dispositively* in meritorious acts: so in some such manner the differences among the many [views] must here be understood. For example, mystical theology is said to consist in the supreme act of love, [i.e.,] in *synderesis*,¹⁹ according to some men; for that act of love is the highest disposition and is necessary on man's part immediately prior to the union in which God infuses love and knowledge. But *formally* and *properly* [mystical theology] consists in acts infused by God: viz., the act of knowing and the act of loving. If they are the same act in number, then it is easy to understand all [the views in a harmonious way], because mystical theology, in the proper sense of the word, would be that very act which is both love and knowledge. And so, some men say that mystical theology is a most divine knowledge of God through ignorance. Others say that it is experiential affection, or experiential love—[a point] that is also true, since one and the same act is both love and knowledge.

But if those acts are different from each other and really dis-

tinct—yet so united that they are regarded as a single act—then mystical theology, properly speaking, would consist in that experiential and super-intellectual knowledge by which God is known in an obscuring-mist, i.e., known through an absence of all intellectual knowledge but known, nonetheless, through knowledge infused by God into the mind at the time of the union-of-love with Him. And this [occurrence] could be either something implied or something formal as regards mystical theology. On the other hand, if mystical theology be taken as both acts at one and the same time, as [occurs] at times when it is taken to be wisdom, there would not be much difference [between the acts]. And so, some men, with an eye to the one act, say that mystical theology is knowledge; others, with an eye to the other act, say that mystical theology is love. And thus, too, Dionysius posits two definitions.²⁰

Moreover, the expositors of Blessed Dionysius are seen to speak, jointly and in last analysis, as if mystical theology were properly construed as knowledge;²¹ ⁿ¹⁵ for this [mode of discourse] properly benefits systematized learning [*scientia*]. Hence, the Commentator of Vercelli²² states that according to Blessed Dionysius the mind is united to God by means of a vacating of all knowledge, i.e., by means of a love that is effectiveⁿ¹⁶ of all [true] knowledge. And Blessed Dionysius says that [mystical theology] “is a most divine knowledge of God that occurs through ignorance, in accordance with a super-mental uniting.”²³ And [Robert] of Lincoln²⁴ speaks as follows at the outset of his Chap. 4: “... for the ascent is into an obscuring-mist, where God truly dwells and where, together with God, there is most hidden discourse and mystical theology, which is especially the seeing and knowing that God is invisible and incomprehensible.” And so, [mystical theology] would consist—properly and chiefly and formally—in a knowledge of God by which God would be known through experience to be unknowable and incomprehensible; and this [experiencing and knowing would occur] after the cessation of intellectual [concerns], and, thus, [it would occur] through ignorance as concerns the intellect and intellectual acts of knowing. And, thus, the object of mystical theology would be God Himself, known experientially in this way. However, in a broad sense, and less properly speaking, other forms of knowledge—including revelations and conceptual forms of knowledge—can also be called mystical theology. These follow after such knowledge and love and such presence of God both in the image [of God in man]²⁵ and also in the powers of the soul. I will speak

more particularly about these matters in the last section,²⁶ [where I speak] about the effects that follow from [mystical] union.

From what has been said, it can be evident, first, that mystical theology is not present in the blessed in Heaven. For “mystical theology” indicates an imperfect and hidden, or obscure, mode-of-knowing in comparison with the seeing that occurs in Heaven—[a kind of knowing] that does not characterize the aforesaid [i.e., the blessed in Heaven]. And so, mystical theology is, as it were, a knowing or a seeing that is intermediate between acts of knowing that are done by the intellect in the usual way and acts of knowing that are done by the blessed in Heaven; for [mystical acts of knowing or seeing] are super-intellectual and, yet, are more imperfect than are the cognitive acts that result from the seeing that occurs in Heaven. From what has already been stated it is also plainly evident why, in mystical theology, God is said to be known through ignorance or through a fogging of the intellect. The first reason is that the intellect is completely suspended from all actual knowledge; and so, on the part of the intellect there is an obscuring-mist and ignorance. The second reason has to do with God and is that our mind knows by experience that God dwells in a cloud, i.e., in inaccessible light, because of His excellence and infinity. The third reason is that such knowledge [viz., mystical theology] reaches its goal in an obscuring-mist, viz., in actual ignorance. For when it is over, the mind does not at all know what it has beheld—just as after one has gazed directly into the sun there ensues in the eyes an obscuring-mist and darkness and, afterwards, blackness and various kinds of color. But such a thing does not hold true for the blessed in Heaven. Accordingly [the following] must be imagined with regard to that [mystical] ascent: it is as if a man were elevated away from the earth—elevated, at first, so highly that he could no longer see any perceptible things beneath him. [And it is as if] thereafter he were elevated [more] highly and properly toward the light of the sun, so that he could not see the stars or the heavens or the heavenly bodies or even intelligible objects. Thereafter, there would be shown to him a certain immense and infinite light, which, when he viewed it for a moment, he would realize from the experience that it is altogether incomprehensible (because of its excellence and immensity) and is altogether inaccessible by any creature. And in such a manner God, in elevating the mind away from all perceptibleⁿ¹⁷ and intelligible things, shows [to the mind]—super-intellectually and in the aforescribed way—the immensity of His Light.

Blessed Gregory, in *Moralia* 23,ⁿ¹⁸ gives a different example, when he speaks as follows:²⁷ “If someone were lying in darkness with his eyes closed and suddenly the light of a lantern flashed in front of him, his closed eyes would be struck by the advent of the light, so that they would open. Why is it, then, that the eyes are stimulated if when closed they saw nothing? Nevertheless, that which the closed eyes were able to detect was not anything determinate. For if [the eyes] had seen the whole object perfectly, why would they, once opened, look for what they would see? Similarly, then, when we endeavor to see something of the Incomprehensible Light: by that very ray-of-splendor by which the mind is impacted, the mind both sees, as it were, and is unable to see—even as the closed eye, situated amid darkness sees the impact of the light.”

Blessed Dionysius and his expositors give a further example: viz., if someone with open eyes were placed immediately before the sun, such an individual would, all of a sudden, see nothing. Even though he would be amid maximal light, nevertheless he would fall into darkness because of the magnitude of the light, which he would know to be present—even as happened to Paul, who [on the Damascus road] with open eyes saw nothing, because of the brightness of that light which dazzled him (as is known from Acts 22).²⁸

Part Four, Chapter 10

*In how many senses we speak of an obscuring-mist,
and how it is that God is known in and through an
obscuring-mist and is said to dwell amid it.*

[A.] It is now expedient to elucidate certain obscure terms, the elucidation of which conduces to understanding many passages of Sacred Scripture in which mention is made of that knowledge, on the part of the saints, which is called mystical theology. With regard to this [understanding] it must be known (according to Blessed Dionysius, in *The Divine Names*, Chap. 7)²⁹ that in Sacred Scripture it is the custom to use privative terms for God; nevertheless, [those terms] signify in a way opposite to those [characteristics] which are in God and which are attributes of God. [Dionysius] uses the example that wisdom is proper to God but that, nonetheless, Paul maintains: “That which is foolish with God is wiser than men.”³⁰ And Paul calls the Brightest Light invisible and inaccessible.³¹ Furthermore, Damascene,³² in Book I, Chap. 4, speaks as follows: “There are also certain things said affir-

matively of God. These [statements] have the meaning of super-excellent negation. For example, when [these statements] speak of darkness in God, we do not understand [that He is] darkness; rather, [we understand] (1) that He *is not light* but is above light and (2) that He *is Light*, because He is not darkness.” Moreover, St. Dionysius—in his books, especially in his *Mystical Theology*—proceeds generally by means of this mode of discourse about God. And Sacred Scripture, too, [proceeds in this way] in many places—as when it says that God dwells in a cloud³³ and that an obscuring-mist is beneath His feet³⁴ and that He has made darkness His hiding place.³⁵

[B.] Secondly, we must note that such privative terms are not understood purely privatively and so that they include nothing positively and so that “darkness” signifies only absence-of-light. Rather, “darkness” is understood insofar as sometimes, because of the excellence of the light, it denies any [ordinary] light. (This point will become evident in the explanation of the terms.)

[C.] Thirdly, we must know that “obscuring-mist” is understood in many [different] ways. [1.] First, it is construed as indicating the soul insofar as the soul is void of all knowledge (both intellectual and perceptual) but through love clings to God in *synderesis*, which according to some [writers] is both love and knowledge, though not intellectual knowledge. Sometimes, too, [“obscuring mist”] is construed as indicating that act-of-love that is called an obscuring-mist because it is without the light of intellectual knowledge. And this is the first and lowest stage of entering into an obscuring-mist or of the soul’s existing amid an obscuring-mist. [2.] In a second way “obscuring-mist” signifies the soul insofar as it (1) is completely free from all its own acts and from [its own], aforementioned, [acts of] love but (2) has, through union [with God], quite excellent acts infused by God into its image [of God].³⁶ Furthermore, “obscuring-mist” is taken to indicate such acts sometimes separately and sometimes conjointly, because according to some [writers] there is but a single act, which is both knowledge of God and love of God. And, accordingly, [the soul] is called an obscuring-mist or is said to be present amid an obscuring-mist because among its powers it has no act of its own, although it has quite excellent acts infused by God. “Obscuring-mist” signifies these acts, and it connotes a privation of the soul’s own acts. Moreover, these [infused] acts are called an obscuring-mist because by means of them one knows experientially that God dwells in an obscuring-mist, i.e., in such excellent light that He cannot be known. Or

again, they are called obscuring-mist with respect to intellectual knowing, which cannot attain knowledge in accordance with the [intellectual] acts. Hence, when the acts cease, the soul remains in the darkness and obscuring-mist of ignorance about the things that appeared during the union.

[3.] Thirdly, “obscuring-mist” is construed as indicating the essence-of-the-divinity, which is the object of the aforementioned cognitive acts. The essence is called obscuring-mist or darkness because it is light inaccessible and incomprehensible and, thus, is infinitely above light and infinitely above darkness. And so, on account of the excellence and infinite super-excellence of the Divine Light, it is called obscuring-mist or darkness; and God is said (when [in Latin] we speak intransitively) to dwell (*inhabitare*) amidst an obscuring-mist because He *is* Obscuring-Mist and Darkness. That is, He is so greatly Light that no creature can comprehend it;³⁷ and so, He remains for all creatures an obscuring-mist and darkness, as far as their knowledge is concerned. [This fact] is not surprising; for since every creature can know God only in a finite mode and since God alone knows Himself totally and infinitely, then that which the creature knows [of God] is as nothing in comparison with that which He does not know concerning God. And so, God is rightly said to remain an Obscuring-Mist or Darkness, because there is no comparative relation of the infinite to the finite.³⁸ And so, principally, the knowledge that in this life can be had of God is called obscuring-mist; and God is said to be an Obscuring-Mist and Darkness because He is known very imperfectly in comparison with what He is in and of Himself, viz., Infinite Light.

Now, although all the saints in Heaven—indeed, even the soul of Christ—know God only in a finite mode and are wondrously amazed at His incomprehensibility and at the inaccessibility of His infinite Light, nevertheless in Heaven they are not said to know through an obscuring-mist, nor is God then called by them an obscuring-mist or darkness: (1) For they have knowledge in the proportion that befits their perfection. (But nothing is said to be lacking to a thing when [that thing] attains the perfection that is proper to it.) (2) Another reason is that in Heaven the saints’ knowledge continues unendingly without defect and mutability; but in this present life, even if God is seen clearly, the knowledge [of God] is imperfect, and it vanishes quickly, and an obscuring-mist remains in the mind.

Regarding the aforesaid darkness and obscuring-mist—both in the present life and in the future life—the Prophet aptly stated: “Per-

haps, I said, darkness shall cover me.”³⁹ [It is] as if he were saying: “Divine Darkness will not cover me but will enlighten me, because in the present life [it will be] “my enlightenment in my pleasures”⁴⁰ and as night in comparison with day. For however much a man is enlightened in the present life and however much he is fed with the pleasures of love, nevertheless in comparison with the enlightenment and the delights in Heaven the former are as night in comparison with the mid-day. And lest anyone believe that this night is from God [the Prophet] adds: “... because my darkness will not be a darkness from You,” who are Immense Light, but will be from me, who am incapable; and “within me night shall be illumined as day.”⁴¹ That is, Your Light—with respect to itself, as being the daytime of eternal life—can illumine my darkness, but I am not capable [of receiving Your Light]. However, after this lifetime darkness will be turned into day; and no one (i.e., no human being) will be there qua man existing in darkness, because then all men will be as are the angels of God, and they are then to be called angels rather than men. For then they will know as they are known;⁴² and so, however much a man knows God in this lifetime, nevertheless [he knows] amid darkness and an obscuring-mist. [This fact is] not surprising, because this is how so great a Prophet knew [Him]. And John spoke of this darkness and light when he said: “The light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it,”⁴³ because of the light’s excellence and inaccessibility.⁴⁴

And just as I have now explained with regard to [the meaning of] “obscuring-mist” and “darkness”: one can similarly understand such similar terms as “cloud,” “fog,” “ignorance,” “blindness,” “night.”

NOTES TO APPENDIX ONE

N. B. The translation made in Appendix One was made from Codex Latinus Monacensis (Munich, Bavarian Staatsbibliothek) 18.587 (abbreviated in these notes as *M*). I have also examined on site Latin ms. Monacensis 5.828 (abbreviated herein as *N*). I have used microfilms of Latin ms. 262 (abbreviated herein as *G*) of the library at the University of Graz, Austria, and of Latin ms. 387 (abbreviated herein as *B*) of the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest (previously of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest). In order to assist the reader, who will probably not possess microfilms or photocopies of these mss., I refer also to the printed edition that is edited by Karl Jellowschek, Jeanne Barbet, and Francis Ruello. (See **n1** below.)

1. When the foot of the intellect halts, the foot of the affections is already stretched forth far more distantly ahead of it.

n1. Manuscripts *MN* have, in the passage that corresponds to p. 149, line 12 of the printed edition of the Latin text, “moventem”. I am reading “manentem” in accordance with Manuscripts *BG*. The expression “printed edition of the Latin text” refers to the two-volume text edited by Karl Jellowschek, Jeanne Barbet, and Francis Ruello under the title “*Nicolas Kempf: Tractatus de Mystica Theologia*” [series: *Analecta Cartusiana* 9; series edited by James Hogg], Salzburg, 1973.

2. John 15:15.

n2. Here, in the passage that corresponds to p. 149, line 13 of the printed edition of the Latin text, I am reading “sed” (rather than “ad”), in accordance with *M*.

3. Gregory the Great, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Book II, Homily 27.4.1562 (*PL* 76: 1207A).

n3. Here, in the passage that corresponds to p.150, lines16-17 of the printed edition of the Latin text, I am following *M*, which has “ascendendo”, not “ascendendi”, as does the printed edition.

4. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium* 96.4 (*PL* 35:1876). See also *De Trinitate* X.1.1 (*PL* 42:972).

n4. Here, in the passage that corresponds to p. 151, line 2 of the printed edition of the Latin text, I am reading “reformata” with *B* and with the printed edition.

5. The italics here and elsewhere are mine.

n5. Ms. *M*: sue [=suae] ex sui correctum.

6. Exodus 3:14.

n6. Here the printed edition of the Latin text wrongly omits “nec angelus”. See that edition’s p. 154, line 7.

7. Mark 10:18.

n7. Ms. *M* has “Hugo de Palma” (not “Balma”) here and elsewhere.

8. Luke 18:19.

n8. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 172, lines 14-15 of the printed

edition of the Latin text, I am reading “proprie dicta” with ms. *B* and with the printed edition.

9. Cf. Apocalypse 2:17 (Revelation 2:17).

n9. Re ms. *M*: continuare in continuari (ri *supra lin.*) mutat *M*. See p. 174, lines 13-14 of the printed edition of the Latin text.

10. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Chap. 7, Section 4-5.

n10. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 174, line 2-from-bottom of the printed edition of the Latin text, the printed edition’s word “velet” should be corrected to “velit” (=M).

11. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Mystica Theologia* 1.1 (PG 3:998A).

n11. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 176, line 3 of the printed edition of the Latin text, *M* or *M*₂ transposes “est enim” into “enim est”, something that the printed edition should indicate but does not.

12. I Corinthians 13:12.

n12. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 176, line 2-from-bottom of the printed edition of the Latin text, the printed edition has “tam”; but it should have “tantum”, which *MNG* all have. (This section is missing from *B*.)

13. Cantic of Canticles 5:16 (Song of Songs 5:16): “He is all lovely.”

n13. Here, in the passage that corresponds to p. 177, line 3-from-bottom of the printed edition of the Latin text, the printed edition should have “sciverunt” and not “scriverunt”.

14. Here, as also elsewhere, Kempf echoes Hugh of Balma’s (and Pseudo-Dionysius’s) ideas. Italics are mine (here and elsewhere).

n14. [Re ms. *M*]: que [=quae]: *ex qui corr. M aut M*₂ [printed edition of the Latin text: p. 288, line 7].

15. This passage is found in Rufinus of Aquileia’s *Historia Monachorum* I.126 (PL 21:396A).

n15. [Re ms. *M*] aut: *ex et supra lin. corr. M*₂. [See printed edition of the Latin text: p. 289, line 6-from-bottom.]

16. See, above, Part Two, Chap. 15.

n16. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 289, line 3-from-bottom of the printed edition of the Latin text, I am reading “dilectionem effectivam”. *MNGB* have “dilectionem”, and *BG* have “effectivam”. See Thomas Gallus’s paraphrase of Dionysius at *Dionysiaca* I, p. 710, Section 578, where Gallus translates as follows: “... per unionem dilectionis (quae effectiva est verae cognitionis) ...”.

17. A possible reference, given in the Barbet-Ruello edition, is Augustine’s *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32.18 (PL 42:507).

n17. sensibilibus: *ex sensibus corr. (bili supra lin.) M*₂.

18. Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia* (*Dionysiaca* I, 567-568).

n18. Here, in the passage corresponding to p. 292, line 4 of the printed edition of the Latin text, *MN* wrongly have “24”, which the printed edition should mention in the critical apparatus.

19. “Synderesis” is a term that Gerson uses to indicate the highest of the affective powers in man. Others use it also to indicate the faculty associated with the intuition of moral principles and with conscience.

20. *De Theologia Mystica* (*Dionysiaca* I, 578. Thomas Gallus’s paraphrase on p. 710). *De Divinis Nominibus* (*Dionysiaca* I, 406).

21. The single English word “knowledge” here translates “*cognitio aut notitia*.”
22. That is, the Abbot of Vercelli, viz., Thomas Gallus. See *Dionysiaca* I, p. 710, Section 578.
23. *De Divinis Nominibus* (*Dionysiaca* I, 406).
24. Robert of Lincoln, i.e., Robert Grosseteste, *De Mystica Theologia*, Chap. 4 (beginning). See *Il Testo del Commento di Roberto Grossatesta al “De Mystica Theologia,” del Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita*, edited by Ulderico Gamba (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1942), pp. 57-58 [Vol. XIV of the series *Orbis Romanus*].
25. See Part Five, Chap. 2 of Kempf’s tractate. See also Part III, Chap. 4, where the image is distinguished from the powers of the soul and from the likeness to God. It is called the noblest and supreme portion of the soul—the portion nearest to God.
26. “... in the last section”: i.e., in Part V, Chap. 1 of his present tractate.
27. Gregory the Great, *Moralia* I.23.19.36 (*PL* 76:272CD).
28. Acts 22:6-11.
29. *Dionysiaca* I, 382.
30. I Corinthians 1:5.
31. I Timothy 6:16.
32. John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa* I.4.128 (*PG* 94:800C).
33. 3 Kings 8:12 (I Kings 8:12).
34. 2 Kings 22:10 (II Samuel 22:10).
35. Psalms 17:12 (18:11).
36. See Part V, Chap. 2 of Kemp’s present tractate.
37. John 1:5.
38. Cf. Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book I, Chap. 3 (opening section).
39. Psalms 138:11 (139:11).
40. Psalms 138:11, Douay Version.
41. Psalms 138:12 (139:12).
42. I Corinthians 13:12.
43. John 1:5.
44. Cf. I Timothy 6:16.

APPENDIX TWO

Reprinted, by permission, from J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1988, 2nd edition), pp. 3-17.

1. *Preliminary Observations.* 1.1. When Pope Nicholas V elevated Nicholas of Cusa to the office of cardinal on December 20, 1448, he did so partly in recognition of Nicholas's service as papal envoy and apostolic legate to the German peoples. For Nicholas's multiple missions between 1438 and 1448 were perceived in Rome as having helped persuade both clergy and nobility that the authority of the papacy exceeded the authority of the Council of Basel. The success of the papal initiatives can be seen in the fact that on February 17, 1448 Frederick III, King of Germany and Archduke of Austria, signed the Concordat of Vienna, therewith acknowledging the supremacy of the Holy See in religious matters.

On January 3, 1449 Nicholas was assigned titular headship of the Church of St. Peter in Chains, at Rome. And on April 26, 1450 he was consecrated Bishop of Brixen,¹ in Tirol. But before assuming vigorous administration of the bishopric, by taking up personal residence there two years later, he once again accepted the role of apostolic legate to the German nation—this time with the commission to renew spiritually the German church. His journey during 1451 and the first quarter of 1452 led him to visit such centers of spirituality as the Benedictine monasteries at Melk and Salzburg, the religious congregations at Deventer, Diepenveen, and Windesheim—in addition to visiting such centers of episcopal power as Trier, Mainz, Cologne, and Aachen. We have no reason to believe that this journey of reform led him, when en route from Salzburg to Munich, to make a detour to the Benedictine abbey at Tegernsee. The Abbey's records² inform us only of a subsequent sojourn, between May 31 and June 2, 1452. With the Tegernsee monks, and in particular with their abbot, Caspar Ayndorfer, Nicholas enjoyed exceptionally cordial relations. He not only valued their counsel³ but even expressed the desire to have a cell prepared for him, since he longed for sacred leisure (*otium sacrum*) amid their company.⁴ The Tegernsee monks, for their part, avidly solicited new works from Nicholas—works which they diligently copied and intently studied. Through their abbot and their prior they posed such

questions as “whether apart from intellectual knowledge, and even apart from prevenient or accompanying knowledge—whether only by means of affection or of the highest capability of the mind (a capability which many call *synderesis*)—the devout soul can attain unto God . . .”⁵ This question was crucial to the concerns of the Tegernsee community because, quintessentially, it was a question about the proper understanding of *theologia mystica* and of the pathway toward union with God. The soul that truly loves God desires to be united with Him. And mystical theology, as derived from Pseudo-Dionysius,⁶ taught that mystical union occurs not merely through the will’s loving God but also through the intellect’s seeing God. Yet, this seeing is likewise a not-seeing, since that which is beheld is too resplendent to be observed. One beholds the place where God dwells but does not behold God in Himself.⁷

By the middle of the fifteenth century there was still no agreement regarding just what mystical theology was, through usually it was thought to consist of a configuration of some of the following tenets, variously interpreted: (1) In man the highest degree of perfection is in the spirit, or mind, or intellect (*spiritus vel mens vel intelligentia*). (2) God is approached by the cognitive power of the intellect most truly when He is approached *via negationis*. For since God is not, except in a symbolic sense, *like* anything whose nature the intellect can conceive, the intellect can more truly ascertain what God is not than it can descry what He is; but because He is not like *anything* the intellect either knows or conceives, He seems closer to nothing than to something. (3) Just as in accordance with the *via negationis* the intellect must become released from all imaginative and conceptual restraints, so in accordance with the *via devotionis* it must become released from the distorting strictures of sin. (4) This latter form of purification is communicated through divine grace, which enables the human response of faith and love, so that the greater the faith and love, the closer the soul approaches unto God. (5) When the soul, thus enabled, ascends beyond all that is sensible, rational, and intelligible, it enters into the darkness of unknowability and inconceivability—a darkness that Dionysius alluded to as *irrationalis et amens*.⁸ (6) Herein it awaits, with keen expectancy and ardent longing, the vision of the glorious God, whose super-brilliance incomparably exceeds the splendor of the sun. And just as no sensible eyes can peer directly into the blinding sun, so, *a fortiori*, no intellectual eyes can behold God as He is in Himself: the beblinding Divine Light is seen only un-

seeably. (7) This vision occurs in rapture (*raptus*), accompanied by ecstasy (*extasis*). (8) These, together, conduce unto happiness (*felicitas*) and rest (*quietas*). (9) And happiness and rest are more fully attained the more fully the soul is united with God. (10) Momentary mystical union in this lifetime is but a foretaste of the fuller beatific union in the heavenly state—a union so close that it can be spoken of as a transformation, an absorption, a deification, even though it falls short of an identity.

1.2. John Gerson,⁹ in his *De Mystica Theologia*, cites a number of alternative descriptions of mystical theology:¹⁰

- Mystical theology is the soul's stretching forth unto God through loving desire.
- Mystical theology is anagogic movement (i.e., upward movement leading unto God) through fervent and pure love.
- Mystical theology is experiential knowledge-of-God acquired through the embrace of uniting love.
- Mystical theology is wisdom, i.e., appetizing knowledge of God, acquired when through love the highest summit of the affective power of the rational [soul] is united unto God.¹¹
- Mystical theology is experiential knowledge-of-God acquired through a union-of-spiritual-affection with God.¹²

Gerson also includes the well-known formula: “*Theologia mistica est irrationalis et amens, et stulta sapientia ...*”¹³ Obviously, all of the foregoing descriptions, which Gerson regards as mutually compatible, require explication. What is meant, after all, by “*stulta sapientia*”? Just how closely uniting is the embrace of uniting love (*amoris unitivi complexus*)? And is the *supremus apex potentiae rationalis* to be identified with what Meister Eckhart and others had referred to as the *scintilla animae*? Gerson, to his lasting credit, attempted to answer such questions by distinguishing different forms of love and different kinds of knowing,¹⁴ by sketching different theories regarding the *transformatio animae in deum*.¹⁵ Gerson was intent upon drawing a clear distinction between *theologia mystica* and *theologia speculativa*. The latter, he said, originates from the intellectual power of the rational soul, whereas the former arises out of the rational soul's affective power. The latter takes as its object what is true, the former what is good.¹⁶

Speculative theology makes use of rational considerations that conform to philosophical studies such as physics, metaphysics, logic, and grammar, and therefore it requires scholastic training; mystical theology, by contrast, requires only that the soul acquire moral virtue and that it be perfected in its love for the good.¹⁷ Therefore, mystical theology, though involving some kind of knowledge, does not require formal training and study; hence, it is accessible to believers who are unschooled as well as to those who are erudite. Indeed, through faith, hope, and love, thinks Gerson, the unschooled can arrive at mystical union more quickly than can the scholastic theologians.¹⁸ Moreover, scholastic, or speculative, theology cannot be perfected in anyone apart from mystical theology, though someone's being perfected in mystical theology does not require his being perfected in speculative theology as well.¹⁹

One kind of knowledge *is*, however, requisite to mystical theology:²⁰ viz., the knowledge that God is totally lovable—a knowledge that can be obtained from faith and revelation.²¹ Gerson cites approvingly Augustine's words "*invisa diligere possumus, incognita nequaquam*": "We are able to love things that are unseen, but we cannot at all love things that are unknown."²² When Gerson goes as far as to speak of mystical theology as "*Suprema atque perfectissima notitia*" ("supreme and most perfect knowledge"),²³ he has in mind the kind of acquainting knowledge that derives from religious experience.²⁴ And experiential knowledge of God, he believes, is attained more by means of penitent love than by means of intellectual ferreting.²⁵ Through love the rational soul is united with God—a union that Gerson is willing to call "*experimentalis Dei cognitio seu notitia vel perceptio*," and even "*theologia mystica*."²⁶ Mystical theology, then, is not theology in the sense of being a series, or a system, of theological propositions. Rather, for Gerson, it is theology in a twofold sense: primarily in the sense of being a knowledge of God, where the word "knowledge" has reference to the soul's *experiencing* the unitive embrace of the one whom it *recognizes* to be incomparably desirable—and secondarily in the sense of being instruction about what this experience of God is²⁷ and about how it is attainable. Gerson's descriptions of *theologia mystica* reflect these two senses. For sometimes he speaks of "the loving union, of which mystical theology is seen to consist" ("*per predictam amorosam unionem, in qua mistica theologia consistere videtur ...*"),²⁸ and sometimes he speaks of "the loving union of the mind with God—a union which occurs through

mystical theology” (“*amorosa unio mentis cum Deo, que fit per theologiam mysticam ...*”).²⁹ If mystical theology is *theology* because it is an experiential knowledge of God through a loving union, then it is *mystical* because this union is a transforming spiritual union³⁰ in which the soul, having become cognitively and affectionally detached from the world, is longingly and lovingly conscious only of God.³¹

Gerson depicts two routes toward mystical union of the human soul with God: the *via purae intelligentiae* and the *via devotionis*.³² Regarding the first route, Gerson’s statements are not fully consistent (though interpreters³³ sometimes talk as if they were). In the latter part of his *De Mystica Theologia* he writes: “Mystical theology is ecstatic love which is subsequent to our spirit’s understanding—an understanding which, to be sure, is free of images, which becloud. Accordingly, whoever wills to devote himself to mystical theology must endeavor to attain unto this pure understanding. Otherwise, how would he attain unto the [state of] love that follows thereupon?”³⁴ But in his later work *Collectorium super Magnificat* he takes an altogether different position: “experiential perception of God does not require either a preceding or a succeeding acquaintance in terms of pure understanding.”³⁵ Aside from this discrepancy, together with other attending ones, Gerson’s views appear not unharmonious.³⁶ Three things, he himself seems to believe,³⁷ are conditions of the soul’s mystical union with God, whether this union be sought *via purae intelligentiae* or whether it be sought *via devotionis*: there must be (1) longing for God, (2) removal of hindrances to union, and (3) earnest solicitation of God’s good pleasure. The soul’s longing is to be stimulated through heightened recognition of God’s beauty and value; hindrances are to be removed through the soul’s confessing its failing and torpor; and solicitation is to be made through importunate and ardent prayer.

To be sure, such longing, such arousal of the soul, such ardent prayer is possible only for believers. And yet, reminds Gerson: during their lifetimes on earth believers will not attain unto a union which is so close that it will be an immediate and, as it were, face-to-face experiencing of God; for this state of knowing is reserved for the future life.³⁸ Moreover, in the present lifetime only a relatively small number of believers will be able to follow the *via purae intelligentiae* and to motivate their longing by contemplating the fact that God transcends not only all the beauty of all finite things but also all other characteristics of these things as well. Intrinsic to this kind of con-

templation is a mode of *negatio*, or *abnegatio*,³⁹ that involves an intellectual turning away from created things in order to be directed more fully toward the Creator Himself. To this end the mind must abandon, or transcend, its sensible and intellectual operations; but it must ascend even higher by abandoning, or transcending, its very self.⁴⁰ The mind begins to detach itself from *its sensible operation* by recognizing that God is not like any actual material object. It begins to abandon *its intellectual operation* by recognizing that God is not like any conceivable finite being, whether this conceivable being is actually existent or is non-existent. Finally, the mind begins to abandon *its very self* by detaching itself, insofar as possible,⁴¹ from the awareness of everything except God.⁴² Metaphorically speaking, the soul at this point will have entered into divine darkness—the darkness wherein dwells *deus absconditus*. Insofar as humanly possible the soul will have directed its thought and its affections⁴³ away from the world, away from itself, and upward toward God. At this point it will be dead to the world, which will hold no attraction, no value for it; it will be alive only unto the Creator,⁴⁴ whose unitive embrace it will expectantly and contemplatively be awaiting. In accordance with God's good pleasure, the deeply yearning, upward-mounting, silently imploring soul may be rewarded with the ecstatic experience of superinfused love and of rapturous union.⁴⁵ And yet, this union will not be of such intimacy that the soul will see God clearly and unveiledly, since God does not choose to present Himself directly and immediately to rapt believers in this lifetime.⁴⁶

During the moment of ecstatic union the mind will be aware of the unitive bond between itself and God—will be aware of itself only in relation to God. Without this awareness, or knowledge, the mystical encounter could not rightly be called an experience.⁴⁷ When in *De Mystica Theologia* and *Super Magnificat* Gerson asserts that experiential knowledge of God does not occur through negation and remotion alone, that the *via superexcellantiae* is also required,⁴⁸ he does so in order to preserve the legitimacy of the soul's belief that God is more excellent than—not less excellent than—our highest conceptions of goodness, love, beauty, and whatever else is valuable. For it is precisely this belief which motivates the soul in its desire to be united with God. The state of pure, or purified, understanding (*pura intelligentia*)—the state that characterizes the highest stage of the *via abnegationis* when the intellect is free from images and concepts of everything creaturely, prior to the soul's experience of ecstatic unitive

love—is not attainable by the simple and unlearned (*simplici et rusticis*), who are incapable of the abstractive contemplation that is required. And yet, these simple believers are not excluded from mystical theology, which, as Dionysius himself had said, is common to Christians.⁴⁹ In order to take account of this group, who also are required to believe with most devout faith that there exists a Good than which a greater cannot be *thought* (where *thinking* is construed as encompassing *sensing, imagining, inferring, and understanding*),⁵⁰ Gerson introduces his second route, the *via devotionis*.⁵¹ Through faith and love, he explains, the soul of the simple, fervent believer can attain unto the same heights as the soul of the erudite—i.e., can attain unto ecstasy and can do so without the precondition of intellectual detachment. For through the edifying quality of his devout love the simple believer can become released from attachment to the world in order to soar upward unto the Beauty of the Lord. Thus, the *via devotionis* has its own mode of *abnegatio*—of dying to the world and to the self.

According to Gerson both the *via devotionis* and the *via purae intelligentiae* require love for God,⁵² just as both require some positive conception of God, whether obtained from Scripture or from a combining, philosophically, of the *via abnegationis* and the *via superexcellantiae*.⁵³ Through the presence of love both routes lead to the possibility of the rapture which Gerson terms *extasis*.⁵⁴ But—keeps insisting Gerson—the *via devotionis* more readily leads to mystical union than does any pathway that requires an initial erudition.⁵⁵ His example of a typical ascent by faith is instructive. The simple believer may begin by considering the sacrament of the Eucharist and by believing through faith that during the celebration thereof the true and living Body of Christ is present. He can then proceed from this belief to meditating upon the deeds performed by Christ during His earthly ministry. This meditating can conduce to even greater devotion by stimulating holy and humble affection. Moreover, the power of the Holy Spirit can purify the believer's devotional affection by turning it at that time toward loving no object the love of which would interfere with loving God. Thereafter, the believer can turn toward a holy and faith-filled consideration of the mystical Body of Christ, i.e., of the redeemed souls in Paradise and of those other souls which are yet to be redeemed. Finally, he can elevate his meditative devotion unto God alone, separating off every created lovable thing—separating them off not by means of reason or of understanding but by means of

sincere love and by means of the mystery of devout faith, by which he believes the following: that his God is that than which nothing greater or more noble can be conceived or loved—that his God is all-desirable.⁵⁶ Gerson admits that the erudite can know all of these points more clearly than can the simple believer; but he denies that the erudite can know them more truly and more sublimely.⁵⁷ Furthermore, he denies that they can know them in such way as to be elevated more readily unto mystical union or in such way as to dispense with the precondition of love.

All in all, then, Gerson's conception of *theologia mystica* attempts to harmonize the two motifs of love and knowledge. For on the one hand, his conception includes the view that love is the root of all the affections,⁵⁸ together with including the view that it is more perfect than faith.⁵⁹ And on the other hand, his conception embraces the doctrine that mystical union-of-love does not occur apart from some kind of prevenient and accompanying knowledge, as well as embracing the doctrine that, in general, the *via purae intelligentiae* must be supplemented by the *via superexcellantiae*. Both during and after his lifetime Gerson was accused of not having done justice either to the motif of love or to the motif of knowledge. The followers of Ruysbroeck were convinced that Gerson had never experienced ecstatic love, so that his teachings thereabout were bound to be misguided—a judgment confirmed, in their minds, by his attack upon their master. Perhaps it was with these disciples in mind that Gerson defended his authority to write about *experimentalis cognitio dei* even in the absence of an experience of mystical union.⁶⁰ Yet, perhaps it was the absence of such an experience that led him to take account, theologically, of the “inner experience ... of blessed union” (“*experientia intrinseca ... beatae unionis*”),⁶¹ where the experience of union with God was now understood as non-ecstatic experience fostered through the more usual pathways of faith-filled devotion.

If Gerson gave offense with his statement that oftentimes affection is greater where knowledge is minimal and that therefore no special knowledge other than the “knowledge of faith” is needed for mystical theology,⁶² he was nonetheless not dismissive of erudition. Indeed, he argued that the doctrinal tradition of mystical theology (*doctrinalis traditio theologiae mysticae*) intersects with Scholastic theology and is not different or separate from it, as it is also not different or separate from true philosophy.⁶³ And yet, he was attacked on the alleged ground that he himself had betrayed the doctrinal tradition of

mystical theology by veering from the teachings of the Great Dionysius.⁶⁴ One of the most instructive of such attacks came years after his death and is an indirect tribute to his great stature, as well as being a sign of his continuing influence. For the critic, Vincent of Aggsbach, one-time prior of the Carthusian Monastery at Aggsbach, Austria, did not hesitate to admit: “Gerson has a name next to the names of the great men on earth. And he has written many things which are transmitted everywhere. To these places faith is brought because of his celebrated reputation, especially among the learned.”⁶⁵

1.3. In 1453 Vincent wrote a treatise in which he roundly denounced Gerson’s treatment of mystical theology.⁶⁶ He admitted to having previously held Gerson’s writings in esteem and to having transcribed many of them. But after having studied these works more carefully, he found them objectionable. To begin with, he objects to Gerson’s definitions of *mystical theology*, all of which he regards as too general and too vague—as leaving aside much that is essential.⁶⁷ Accordingly, infers Vincent, they do not clarify the practice of mystical theology but serve only to obfuscate it. Equally problematical in Vincent’s eyes are other of Gerson’s statements which, though not definitions, also display ignorance of what mystical theology is. Gerson states, for example, that love and mystical theology and perfect prayer either are the same thing or else presuppose one another.⁶⁸ But he seems to understand “perfect prayer” in the sense of verbal or mental or intellectual prayer—none of which modes, indicates Vincent, are identical with mystical theology. For these modes do not transcend all conceptualizing of God, whereas mystical theology teaches that just such transcendence is required. Hence, mystical theology could rightly be called prayer only in the sense of being non-intellectual, or *super-intellectual*, prayer—something which would better be termed *adoratio*.⁶⁹

Vincent’s first complaint overlaps with his second: Gerson goes wrong by teaching that an intellectual knowledge of God must guide and accompany the devout love that attains unto mystical union.⁷⁰ By contrast, continues Vincent, Dionysius and such true followers of his as Hugh of Balma taught that the soul is to elevate itself upward toward God through the power of love, assisted by the intellect’s becoming ignorant, by its ceasing to conceptualize not only creatures (a point Gerson concedes) but also God or any of His persons (a point Gerson does not concede). For whoever conceptualizes God cannot do

so otherwise than in terms of goodness, truth, being, oneness, and eternity. He thus thinks of Him delimitedly, as being *this* rather than *that*.⁷¹ (Precisely because every positive conception is delimiting, Dionysius taught that God is to be approached beyond all intellectual understanding.⁷²) “And although this practice [of mystical theology] is difficult for many people (and, indeed, impossible for some), it is, in my opinion, very easy for a mind that is disposed thereto. If I had love (which, alas, I do not experience myself to have), then I would be sweetly and fervently aglow. I would hope that the breaking free from, or the abandoning of, images and concepts, etc., would not prove a great hindrance to me. But this art requires men of temperate passion, men of tranquil and modest spirit, men aglow with sweet love. It does not admit men who are involved in many tasks, men who are concerned with fleshly desires, men who are proud, ambitious, insincere, hypocritical, curious (who attempt to approach [solely] for the sake of the experience)”⁷³ From Vincent’s point of view the *via devotionis* becomes vitalized when it is taken in conjunction with the *via purae intelligentiae*. Gerson emphasized the independence of the two because of his fears regarding the capability of the simple religious believer. But in order to accommodate the simple believer he ends up with what Vincent regards as a distorted account of mystical theology.

Furthermore, Gerson makes a third mistake, thinks Vincent. By refusing to acknowledge that the *via purae intelligentiae* is essential to mystical theology—by insisting that some positive conception of God must accompany the soul’s detachment from the world and from its own self—Gerson associates himself with Scholastic theology, which looked askance at Dionysius’s talk about the need to approach God *irrationaliter et amentaliter*. Indeed, Gerson keeps trying, though in vain, to harmonize mystical theology with Scholastic theology and philosophy:

The same reverend doctor [i.e., Gerson], with much concern and with many words, endeavored, in different works, to harmonize mystical theology with Scholastic theology and with the philosophers. I believe that this harmony is scarcely more useful than if the same thing were made by a cobbler and by a painter (the former making a shoe of leather and the latter making it of colors) and the agreement and differences between these objects were cleverly sought. Scholastic theology is the reading, study, and understanding of Sacred Scripture—of both the Old and the New Testaments. Mystical theology is a form, or an act, of devotion or is a unique mode of the mind’s extension unto God⁷⁴

Vincent sees Gerson as undermining the Dionysian tradition by attempting to *de-radicalize* it, to *de-mystify* it. Symptomatic of this attempt is Gerson's misconstrual of Dionysius's reference to "the unlearned" (*indocti*). For although Gerson takes this to indicate those who live evilly, clearly Dionysius was referring to those who "are attached to existing things, who believe that there is not anything super-substantially above existing things, and who suppose themselves to know, by means of the knowledge that conforms to themselves, Him who has made darkness His hiding place." ⁷⁵ Because of Gerson's predilection for Scholasticism, his theology—unlike Hugh of Balma's—is mixed with curious, subtle, and irrelevant considerations, accuses Vincent. It draws, for example, upon Aristotle's doctrine of the potencies of the soul. But, assails Vincent, the whole of *De Anima*—indeed, the whole of philosophy—has little importance for mystical theology; otherwise—and here Vincent turns Gerson's argument back upon itself—simple believers would not be capable of attaining unto mystical theology.⁷⁶

A fourth accusation charges Gerson with contradicting himself⁷⁷ when in *Super Magnificat* he writes that mystical union presupposes *charitas* but in *Elucidatio Scolastica Mysticae Theologiae* states that super-infused love remains without *charitas*.⁷⁸ In other instances, admits Vincent, Gerson may simply be changing his mind rather than contradicting himself. Thus, whereas in *De 12 Industriis* he seems to hold the opinion that mystical theology does not preclude an intellectual knowledge of God,⁷⁹ in *Anagogicum de Verbo et Hymno Gloriam* he rejects this opinion.⁸⁰ However, in both of these instances, charges Vincent, Gerson opposes himself to the "expositors of Blessed Dionysius," thereby not only breaking with the tradition but, in one of the cases, even miscasting it through false interpretation.⁸¹

Finally, Vincent purports to come to the source of Gerson's errors:⁸² viz., his mistaken identification of mystical theology with contemplation⁸³—an identification even more patently erroneous than the identification with prayer. Contemplation, after all, takes its name from contemplating, or seeing; but mystical theology is called mystical because it has to do with hiddenness.⁸⁴ And between sight and concealment (i.e., between seeing and not-seeing) there is not identity. Moreover, the activity of the advance stages of contemplation requires a union of an intellectual component and an affective component. By contrast, the exercise of mystical theology is said by Vincent to consist only of affection. Gerson himself, argues Vincent, concedes that

there are many differences between contemplation and mystical theology, for in *De 12 Industriis* he acknowledges that through love the believer who is little trained in metaphysics can successfully turn away from images.⁸⁵ In the end, Vincent reaffirms the radical character of mystical theology: unlike contemplation—which is the elevation of the mind unto God, an elevation guided and accompanied by reflection—mystical theology is a *bedarkened* elevation of the mind unto God, *without any guiding or accompanying reflections*.⁸⁶

Vincent's critique serves to exhibit the context within which the controversy over mystical theology had developed. The monks at Aggsbach, Salzburg, Melk, Tegernsee, and other affiliate monasteries were puzzled over how rightly to construe the relationship between love and knowledge, over whether an immediate, "face-to-face" vision of God was possible during their lifetimes, over what steps were prerequisite to this vision. What was meant by the soul's "transcending itself"? What was meant by "super-intellectual prayer," by "pure understanding," "pure devotion," "experiential knowledge of God," "entering into darkness with Moses," "being raptured unto the third heaven with Paul"? To monastic communities these were questions that seemed to be vital.

1.4. When Nicholas of Cusa assumed active administration of the diocese of Brixen in April 1452, he was already esteemed as cardinal and reformer—but also as the author of some eighteen treatises and dialogues, not to mention an even larger number of sermons. His masterly and powerful *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440) had firmly secured his reputation as an important thinker—though a controversial one. John Wenck, of course, had denounced the treatise of 1440 as heretical and had labeled Nicholas a pseudo-prophet,⁸⁷ just as Vincent of Aggsbach later accused him of resisting the Holy Spirit and of teaching a strange, new doctrine.⁸⁸ Vincent grouped Nicholas with Gerson and Marquard Sprenger and impugned all three collectively. Each member of this erring trinity, he maintained, taught the same grave falsehood: viz., that acquainting-knowledge of God *preceded* rather than *succeeded* the experience of loving-union.⁸⁹ And yet, Vincent still esteemed Nicholas highly enough to refer to him as "a man great in body, great in mind, great in knowledge, great in eloquence, great in benefices, great in wealth, elevated in honors"⁹⁰—as someone whose work⁹¹ was of value for the *via illuminativa*, even if not for the *via unitiva*.⁹² That such a man as Nicholas would be consulted by the

monks of Tegernsee seems only natural—especially given his vigorous rebuttal of Wenck in *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (1449) and his exultation of unschooled wisdom in *Idiota de Sapientia* (1450). His tribute to this kind of wisdom seems to have something in common with Gerson's respect for the simple religious believer. And we know, in fact, that Nicholas was acquainted both with Gerson's *Theologia Mystica Speculativa* and with his *Theologia Mystica Practica*.⁹³

In two letters to the abbot and monks at Tegernsee—the two that sought to answer queries about the teachings of Dionysius—Nicholas displays agreement with ideas from Gerson and with ideas from Dionysius.⁹⁴ Mystical theology, he explains in the later of the two letters and in the fashion of Dionysius, must go beyond not only the *via positiva* but also the *via negativa*.⁹⁵ It goes beyond the former by realizing that the soul's encounter with any positively conceived being would be an encounter, at best, with only a semblance of God—perhaps even with the angel Satan, who can transform himself into an angel of light.⁹⁶ It goes beyond the latter by realizing that what is altogether unknown is neither loved nor discovered—and that even if such an unknown thing were “discovered,” i.e., encountered, it would not be recognized.⁹⁷ According to mystical theology, maintains Nicholas, the soul rises upward unto God not by altogether suspending the operation of the intellect (*non relinquendo intellectum*), as Vincent would have us believe; rather, the intellect itself must discern that the soul is entering into the density and darkness where contradictions coincide. In the letter written a year earlier⁹⁸ Nicholas gave a different answer to a different question—a question about the relationship between mystical theology, love, and knowledge. In mystical theology, he answered in a manner reminiscent of Gerson, knowledge must accompany love. For whatever is loved is loved under the aspect of the good—i.e., is loved as being a good. So if the soul did not deem God to be a good, it would not love Him; and if it loves Him, it deems Him a good. This judging, or deeming, is the intellectual, or “cognitive,” component that is necessary for love. And yet, though the loving soul apprehends God to be a good, it understands the nature of this good only *aenigmatische*, and not as it is in itself.⁹⁹ Like Gerson, Nicholas sometimes, as here, uses the word “knowledge” (“*cognitio*”) where what he means in the context is “conception” (“*conceptio*”).¹⁰⁰ In accordance with this broad usage of “*cognitio*” and in agreement with his teaching in *De Docta Ignorantia*, he is claiming, unlike Gerson, that our concept of good has only a *symbol-*

ic meaning insofar as it is used to refer to God.

The foregoing two letters of September 22, 1452 and September 14, 1453 testify to the fact that Nicholas's reflections on mystical theology were an extension of his doctrine of learned ignorance.¹⁰¹ In the second of these letters he discloses his intention to expand a section of *De Theologiis Complementis* (i.e., *Complementum Theologicum*) into a separate treatise that deals with mystical theology and that makes use of an omnivoyant portrait. This separate work could only have been *De Visione Dei*. Three considerations warrant the presumption that it was finished before the end of the year: (1) In the letter of September 14, 1453 Nicholas indicates that he is eager to complete it—a statement which suggests that completion is not far off.¹⁰² (2) Codex Latinus Gissensis 695 contains as *explicit* the words “*Finivit Brixne 1453. 8 Novembris. Nycolaus cardinalis*”.¹⁰³ And (3) Letter 8, from Abbot Caspar of Tegernsee, indicates that he, Caspar, has received a copy of *De Visione Dei*. Although we do not know the exact date of Caspar's letter, we know that it must have been written a considerable time before February 12, 1454—the date of Nicholas's reply thereto.¹⁰⁴ Given the usual intervals required for the exchange of correspondence, we may judge reliably that Nicholas was finished with *De Visione Dei* by the end of 1453. And taking seriously the *explicit* of Giessen 695, we may infer that Nicholas completed it before November 8. Indeed, it was probably among the “*aliqua*” to which he referred in a letter dated October 23, 1453: “Regarding the items about which I wrote on a previous occasion: you will have some of them (*aliqua*) soon. I was planning to send them now, but they have not yet been copied.”¹⁰⁵

NOTES TO APPENDIX TWO

1. The former Austrian city of Brixen is today the Italian city of Bressanone.
2. Edmond Vansteenberghé, *Autour de la Docte Ignorance. Une controverse sur la Théologie mystique au XV^e siècle* [Vol. 14 of *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1915)], p. 108n. Cited hereafter as “Vansteenberghé, *Autour*”. {N.B. Ludwig Baur’s and Josef Koch’s corrections for Vansteenberghé’s edition: pp. 107-110 of Koch’s *Cusanus-Texte. IV. Briefwechsel des Nikolaus von Cues. Erste Sammlung*, [in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1944 (Jahrgang 1942/43)]. My quotations and translations from Vansteenberghé’s edition include the corrections made by Baur and Koch.} Also see Josef Koch, *Nikolaus von Cues und seine Umwelt. Untersuchungen zu Cusanus-Texte. IV. Briefe. Erste Sammlung* [in *Sitzungsberichte, op. cit.*, 1948 (Jahrgang 1944/48)], pp. 111-152]. Erich Meuthen, *Nikolaus von Cues 1401-1464. Skizze einer Biographie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 4th edition, 1979), pp. 85-86.
3. Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, pp. 126 and 129. (In Letter 11 Nicholas accepts the counsel of Bernard, Prior at Tegernsee; and in Letter 14 he indicates that he is counting on the arrival of the Tegernsee delegation that visited the nunnery at Sonnenberg.)
4. *Ibid.*, p. 122 (Letter 9).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 110 (Letter 3, from Caspar to Nicholas, Sept. 22, 1452): “Est autem hec quaestio utrum anima devota sine intellectus cognitione, vel etiam sine cogitatione previa vel concomitante, solo affectu seu per mentis apicem quam vocant synderesim Deum attingere possit, et in ipsum immediate moveri aut ferri.”
6. Hereafter Pseudo-Dionysius will be referred to without the prefix “Pseudo.” Nicholas, like his contemporaries, believed that the author of *De Caelestis Hierarchia, De Nominibus Divinis, De Mystica Theologia*, etc., was Dionysius the Areopagite, converted in Athens by St. Paul (Acts 17:34). In fact, however, these works did not appear until the beginning of the sixth century and are the product of an unknown writer who assumed Dionysius’s name.
7. Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia*, Chap. 1, Sec. 3 [*Dionysiaca* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie), Vol. I (1937), p. 575].
8. Dionysius, *De Nominibus Divinis*, Chap. 7, Sec. 1 (*Dionysiaca, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 386).
9. John Gerson (1363-1429) became Chancellor of the University of Paris in 1395.
10. “Theologia mistica est extensio animi in Deum per amoris desiderium.” “Theologia mistica est motio anagogica, hoc est sursum ductiva in Deum, per amorem fervidum et purum.” “Theologia mistica est cognitio experimentalis habita de Deo per amoris unitivi complexum.” “Theologia mistica est sapientia, id est sapida notitia habita de Deo, dum ei supremus apex affective potentie rationalis per amorem coniungitur et unitur.” “Mistica theologia est cognitio experimentalis habita de Deo per coniunctionem affectus spiritualis cum eodem”
11. The foregoing quotations are translated from Gerson’s 28th consideration in his *De Mystica Theologia. Tractatus Primus Speculativus*, edited by André Combes [in his *Ioannis Carlerii de Gerson de Mystica Theologia*] (Lucani, Italy: Thesaurus

Mundi, 1958), p. 72. According to Combes [*Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson* (Paris: J. Vrin, Vol. I, 1945), p. 566] the *Tractatus Primus Speculativus* dates from 1402-1403 and formed Gerson's lectures during that academic year. The *Tractatus Secundus Practicus* was finished in 1407. Both parts were published in 1408 as a complete work. Combes' publication of 1958 also includes Gerson's *Annotatio doctorum aliquorum qui de contemplatione locuti sunt* (1402-1403) and his *Elucidatio Scolastica Theologiae Mysticae* (1424). The entire volume will be referred to hereafter as "Combes". And the following abbreviations will be used: "*Mys. Theol. Spec.*," "*Mys. Theol. Prac.*," and "*Elucidatio Scolastica.*"

12. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 43rd consideration (Combes, p. 117). Also note Gerson's *Collectorium super Magnificat*, 7th tractate [in Vol. 8 (1971) of Gerson's *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée et Cie), p. 308]: "Multi multa locuti sunt, et nos multotiens iam inter multos, de et super verbis Dionysii dum tractat de mystica theologia et divina sapientia christianorum. Dixerunt aliqui quod consistit haec theologia in abnegatione omnium a Deo; alii quod in affectu et dilectione; nonnulli quod in intelligentiae puritate; alii quod in mentis ad Deum collectione vel unione; alii quod in devotione seu mentis elevatione; alii quod in raptu vel extasi vel mentis alienatione." The *Oeuvres complètes* will be cited hereafter as "Glorieux". The abbreviated title "*Super Magnificat*" will also be used.

13. Latin quoted from Gerson's *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 28th consideration (Combes, pp. 72-73). "Mystical theology is irrational, mindless, foolish wisdom ..." See n. 8 above. Cf. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 43rd consideration (Combes, p. 117, lines 9-10 from top).

14. Gerson, opening section of *Elucidatio Scolastica* (Combes, p. 222).

15. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 41st consideration (Combes, pp. 105-112).

16. Gerson, *ibid.*, 29th consideration (Combes, pp. 73-74).

17. Gerson, *ibid.*, 29th and 30th considerations (Combes, pp. 74 and 77).

18. Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 9th consideration (Combes, p. 229). Cf. *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 316, lines 8-9).

19. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 30th consideration (Combes, p. 79).

20. Gerson, *ibid.* (Combes, p. 78).

21. Note Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 11th consideration (Combes, p. 230): "Stare nequit ut theologia mistica sit in hominis mente sine qualicumque Dei cognitione."

22. Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 8th consideration (Combes, p. 229). Gerson borrows this formulation of Augustine's idea from Hugh of Balma's *Mystica Theologia*. N. B. Hugh's response to Augustine.

23. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 30th consideration (Combes, p. 78).

24. Gerson, *ibid.*, 2nd consideration (Combes, p. 10).

25. Gerson, *ibid.*, 28th consideration (Combes, p. 70): "Cognitio Dei per theologiam mysticam melius acquiritur per penitentem affectum, quam per investigantem intellectum ..." N. B.: Gerson uses the term "*intellectus*" in several senses. Sometimes, as in the present instance, it refers to the intellectual generally, in contrast to the affectional; at these times it is not being distinguished from *ratio*, or reason. At other times, however, it is contrasted with, and distinguished from, *ratio*—which is regarded as inferior to *intellectus*; at these times it is often called "*intelligentia simplex*" and is described as "the cognitive power of soul which receives im-

mediately from God a natural light in which and through which—when we grasp terms—first principles are known to be true and altogether certain” *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 10th consideration (Combes, p. 26)]. By contrast, *ratio* is “the cognitive power of soul which deduces conclusions from premises, which derives the non-perceived from the perceived, and which abstracts quiddities—without needing any bodily organ for its own operation” [*ibid.*, 11th consideration (Combes, p. 29)]. Finally, the expressions “*intelligentia simplex*” and “*intelligentia pura*” should not be confused. Gerson uses the former to indicate a faculty—or, perhaps better, an operation—of the rational soul. By contrast he uses the latter to indicate a state of mind that is free of all images and concepts of whatever is other than God; *intelligentia pura* is not *spiritus* but belongs to *spiritus*. The expression “*intelligentia simplex*” occurs, e.g., in *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 10th consideration (Combes, p. 26). The expression “*pura intelligentia*” occurs in *Mys. Theol. Prac.*, 12th consideration (Combes, p. 208); cf. *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 25th consideration (Combes, p. 65, next to last line); this expression also occurs in *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 316, line 4; cf. the expression “*intelligentiae depuratio*” on p. 315, lines 5-6 from bottom).

26. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (cf. Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 311, line 7 with p. 318, lines 12-13). Also note, *ibid.*, pp. 308-309: Relinquitur tandem haec depurata et expolita seu colata theologiae mysticae descriptio, dicendo quod est experimentalis Dei perceptio. Ponitur autem perceptio potius quam cognitio, quia generalis est terminus ad omnem vim mentis, scilicet rationalem, concupiscibilem et irascibilem, vel ad vim apprehensivam et affectivam, quamvis nihil vere videatur percipi quin vis apprehensiva concurrat; alioquin vis affectiva ferri posset in incognitum, quod aliqui nedum concedunt, sed hoc probare contendunt.”

27. E.g., the experience is said to be non-speculative, joyous, ecstatic, uniting, transforming, fulfilling. It is an experience of that which is ineffable and indescribable, except symbolically.

28. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 42nd consideration (Combes, p. 113). Cf. *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 307, lines 5-6). Also note *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 314): “... quemadmodum devotissima mens laicorum simplicium pertingere potest ad experimentalem Dei perceptionem seu theologiam mysticam quae in unione consistit mentis ad Deum”

29. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 41st consideration (Combes, p. 105). Gerson also uses the expression “*theologia mystica*” in several other less common senses, as when he writes: “in anima contemplativa amor et mystica theologia aut oratio perfecta, aut idem sunt aut se invicem presupponunt” [*ibid.*, 43rd consideration (Combes, pp. 116-117)].

30. Gerson, *ibid.*, 41st consideration (Combes, p. 105). See *ibid.* (Combes, p. 107) for the expression “*spiritualis transformatio*.”

31. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 311, lines 2-5).

32. I.e., the pathway of pure understanding and the pathway of devotion. Note *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 315, last paragraph). Also note, *ibid.*, p. 301: “Describitur autem devotio secundum doctores, nominatim Hugonem in suo De oratione: devotio est elevatio mentis in Deum per pium et humilem affectum, fide, spe et caritate subnixum. Nihil hac descriptione verius, nihil lucidius, nihil proposito nostro simplicium documento accommodatius tradi potuerat.”

33. E.g., Johann Schwab, “Gersons mystische Theologie,” Chap. 7 of his *Johannes Gerson. Professor der Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris* (Würzburg, 2 vols., 1858), Vol. I, p. 329. Schwab speaks of a *scheinbarer Widerspruch*.

34. “Posuimus itaque theologiam mysticam esse amorem extaticum, qui consequitur ad intelligentiam ipsius spiritus, que intelligentia utique caret nubibus fantasmatum. Propterea necesse est eum, qui vult mystice theologie se tradere conari ad hanc puram intelligentiam; alioquin amorem inde subsequentem qua ratione compararet?” *Mys. Theol. Prac.*, 12th consideration (Combes, p. 208).

35. *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 316): “Experimentalis Dei perceptio cognitionem intelligentiae purae praecedentem non requirit nec sequentem.” Gerson also calls this form of *perceptio*, or *notitia*, “*theologia mystica*.” N. B. the Latin quotation in n. 26 above.

36. André Combes judges that Gerson radically changed his mind about *theologia mystica*—that after Oct. 1, 1425 he moved closer to Dionysius. Thus, maintains Combes, Gerson abandoned some of his views expressed in *De Mystica Theologia* in favor of the views put forth in *Super Magnificat* and elsewhere. In particular, he is purported to have rejected his earlier view that mystical theology has to do with the operation of an affective faculty. At the same time, continues Combes, Gerson moved closer to Dionysius’s account of mystical theology as a super-mental union. “Sans revenir jamais à ses convictions antérieures, Gerson tient l’expérience mystique pour l’avant-goût de la vision béatifique, lui accorde une grande portée cognitive dans l’ordre intellectuel même, et adopte tous les termes qui signifient non seulement union, mais unité, voire identité.” See A. Combes, *La théologie mystique de Gerson. Profil de son évolution* (cited in the bibliography), Vol. II, pp. 671-672 and 567. N. B. Gerson’s letter to Jean Le Célestin, pp. 259-263 (especially from the bottom of 261 to the end) in Vol. II of Gerson’s *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Palémon Glorieux.

I myself do not deem this change on Gerson’s part to be radical in the way that Combes supposes: “Il serait impossible de concevoir rupture plus profonde, discontinuité plus radicale, contradiction plus consciente et plus formelle. Tout ce qu’a vécu et enseigné, en ce qui touche à l’essence de la théologie mystique, le Gerson de 1402 à 1425, le Gerson de 1425 à 1429 le condamne et le renie” (Combes, *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 671). Yet, even in *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 302) Gerson is still saying such things as: “Certissimum quidem est quod amor omnis cognitionem praesupponit aut unam aut alteram. Habemus ecce tria principaliter in descriptione devotionis. Primo, quod est elevatio mentis in Deum; secundo, quod haec elevatio fit per pium et humilem affectum; tertio, quod hujusmodi affectus debet esse fide, spe et caritate subnixus seu formatus.” Moreover, in *Mys. Theol.*, as much as in *Super Magnificat*, Gerson emphasizes the *via purae intelligentiae* of Dionysius. [See *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th-39th considerations (Combes, pp. 95-102) and *Mys. Theol. Prac.*, 12th consideration (Combes, pp. 208-216). Also note *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 25th consideration (Combes, pp. 64-65).] He regards this route as leading upward unto *mentis excessus* [*Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 39th consideration (Combes, p. 102); cf. *Mys. Theol. Prac.*, 12th consideration (Combes, p. 213)]. Finally, even in *Super Magnificat* [7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 298)] Gerson is still using the term “*synderesis*” [cf. *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 14th consideration (Combes, p. 33)].

37. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 307): “Est ig-

itur commune studium omnium qui de theologia mystica, quae consistit in unione, locuti sunt, inducere ad tria quae requiruntur et sufficiunt, videlicet desiderium divini objecti, remotio impedimenti, imploratio divini beneplaciti. Primum fit insinuando pulchritudinem et valorem; secundum fit aperiendo defectum nostrum et languorem; tertium fit per orationis vehementiam et ardorem. Haec autem tria complectitur ipsa devotio quae est elevatio mentis in Deum sicut in objectum proprium; et hoc per pium et humilem affectum, in quo semper est Deo beneplacitum.”

38. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 309): “Experimentalis perceptio Dei facialis et immediata non habetur hic in via, de lege communi; sed exspectatur pro praemio in gloria consummata.—Conceditur haec ab omnibus, nec oportet probationibus immorari; immo sic concessa est haec propositio ut in errorem aliqui prolapsi sint dicentes quod nec in patria Deus immediate videbitur, sed in theophaniis quibusdam contemperantibus inaccessibilem lucem Dei imbecilli menti.”

39. “*Via abnegationis*” is another name for the *via negativa*. Both *via negativa* and *via superexcellencia* (or *via supereminentia*) belong to the *via purae intelligentiae*, according to Gerson. In contrast to the *via purae intelligentiae* is the *via devotionis*, which has its own kind of *via abnegationis*: viz., the denial-of-the-world referred to by St. Paul as “being crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). However, just as Scripture speaks of our “understanding by faith” (Heb. 11:3) and Anselm speaks of “faith’s certainty” (*Monologion* 64), so too does Gerson [*Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 30th consideration (Combes, p. 78, line 3)]. Accordingly, Gerson sometimes regards the *via devotionis* as a form of *cognoscere* (e.g., *Super Magnificat*, Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 315, last paragraph). Both the *via devotionis* and the *via purae intelligentiae* belong to *theologia mystica* (i.e., the *via purae intelligentiae* does not belong to *theologia speculativa seu scolastica*, which, says Gerson, can never effect mystical union) [*Anagogicum de Verbo et Hymno Gloriam I.8.a* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 543, lines 1-2)].

40. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 310). Cf. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th consideration (Combes, p. 97).

41. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 319): “... quando mens ab omnibus aliis recedens postea etiam seipsam dimittens. Hoc quomodo fieri possit, pluries ostensum est, etiam naturalibus industriis, maxime praesupposita fide summi Dei.”

42. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, pp. 310-311): “Primo deseritur operatio sensitiva, quia non oportet de vegetativa deseratur; secundo operatio intellectiva, secundum omne ens et non ens; et hoc plane accipiendum est de ente vel non ente creato vel creabili, non de ente primo et puro. Tertio deseritur mens ipsa; non utique quin maneat essentialiter in se, alioquin esset et non esset, nisi velimus insanire cum Almarico et similibus haereticis dicentibus mentem contemplativi vel beati perdere suum esse in proprio suo genere et redire in illud esse ideale quod habuit essentialiter in arte divina. Et hoc prorsus esset mentem annihilari, aut nihil omnino posset annihilare Deus. Et hoc aliqui volunt; sed male; quia similiter ipse creare non posset. Quid est igitur mentem seipsam deserere? Hoc est ipsam in actu primo suo essentiali manentem, nullum actum secundum circa seipsam aut circa quodlibet aliud ens praeter Deum exercere ...” Cf. *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th-39th considerations (especially Combes, p. 102, first two lines).

43. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 310): “Necesse est mentem ab omni actu cognitivo vel affectivo circa creaturam omnem, etiam circa seipsam tunc vacare et in

silentio summo esse” Cf. *Analogicum de Verbo et Hymno Gloriam* II.4.d (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 546): “Si fiat inquisitio quid est illa caligo, quid quaeso habent respondere nisi quod est cognitionis privatio et amoris defectio.” *Ibid.*, II.6.c (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 547): “Sic fit tandem ut deficiat a seipsa per cognitionis defectum et suscipiatur a spiritu Christi per dilectionis illapsus.”

44. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 310). Cf. Rom. 6:11.

45. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th consideration (Combes, p. 97). This ecstatic experience is granted by grace. It is not achieved by human efforts alone. *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 319): “Sed quod sequitur prorsus est supernaturale, prorsus gratuitum, ad quod nec natura sufficit nec attingit industria”

46. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 311).

47. Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 6th consideration (Combes, p. 226, first four lines and p. 227). Also note *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 320, last paragraph).

48. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 2nd consideration (Combes, p. 9): “Quis autem diceret quod theologia mistica solam abnegationem consecratur, nihil relinquens de Deo positive cognitum vel expertum?” *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, pp. 312-313): “Experimentalis Dei perceptio non fit per solam abnegationem Sed accipiuntur affirmatio et negatio respectu diversorum quia negatur a Deo quidquid est imperfectionis in creatura, sicut omnis creatura est imperfecta, quantumcumque perfecta sit in suo genere; et ponitur per superexcellenciam affirmatio de Deo. Propterea dicit saepe Dionysius quod Deus non est ens sed superens, superbonus, superdominus et similia.” Also note *Elucidatio Scolastica*, first part of 11th consideration (Combes, pp. 230-231).

49. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 316, lines 3-7).

50. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 314).

51. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, bottom of p. 315 and top of p. 316).

52. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th consideration (Combes, pp. 97-98): “Cum igitur amor sit radix aliarum qualiumcumque affectionum, si ostenderimus quod affectio potius quam cognitio raptum agat, patebit sufficienter quod intendimus.”

53. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, pp. 312-313): “Experimentalis Dei perceptio non fit per solam abnegationem. Ratio: quia pura negatio nihil ponit Quidquid affirmative de Deo dicimus, includit negationem aliquam et e converso negatio relinquit affirmationem, non quidem ad idem et secundum idem et pro eodem; alioquin esset contradictio manifesta; sed accipiuntur affirmatio et negatio respectu diversorum quia negatur a Deo quidquid est imperfectionis in creatura, sicut omnis creatura est imperfecta, quantumcumque perfecta sit in suo genere; et ponitur per superexcellenciam affirmatio de Deo. Propterea dicit saepe Dionysius quod Deus non est ens sed superens, superbonus, superdominus et similia.” Also note the entire succeeding paragraph (on p. 313 of Glorieux).

54. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th consideration (Combes, p. 96): “Porro extasim dicimus speciem quamdam raptus, que fit appropriatius in superiori portione anime rationalis, que spiritus vel mens vel intelligentia nominatur, dum mens ita in suo actu suspensa est quod potentie inferiores cessant ab actibus, sic quod nec ratio nec ymaginatio nec sensus exteriores, ymmo quandoque nec potentie naturales nutritive <et> augmentative et motive possint exire in suas proprias operationes.” Also

note, *ibid.*, 39th consideration (Combes, p. 101): “Raptus mentis supra potentias inferiores fit per affectionis scintillam menti cognatam vel appropriatam, que amor extaticus vel excessus mentis nominatur.”

55. Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 9th consideration (Combes, p. 229). Cf. *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 316, lines 8-9).

56. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, pp. 316-317). Cf. *Anagogicum de Verbo et Hymno Glorie*, II.6.a-c (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 547).

57. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 317).

58. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 36th consideration (Combes, pp. 97-98): “Cum igitur amor sit radix aliarum qualiumcumque affectionum”

59. Gerson, *ibid.*, 28th consideration (Combes, p. 70): “Cognitio Dei per theologiam mysticam melius acquiritur per penitentem affectum, quam per investigantem intellectum, ipsa quoque ceteris paribus eligibilior est et perfectior quam theologia symbolica vel propria <de> qua est contemplatio, sicut dilectio perfectior est cognitione, et voluntas intellectu, et caritas fide.”

60. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 307).

61. Gerson, *ibid.* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 307, lines 31-32).

62. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 30th consideration (Combes, pp. 77-78): “Sed quoniam plerumque venit, etiam in brutis, ut ibi sit maior affectio ubi parum est cognitionis, sequitur quod ad comparandam huius theologie mystice doctrinam non est magna scientia opus, presertim acquisita. Nam cognito ex fide quod Deus est totus desiderabilis, totus amabilis, affectiva portio, si purgata, <si illuminata>, si disposita, si exercitata sit, cur non in illum totaliter desiderabilem et totum amabilem, sine plurimo librorum studio, tota feretur totaque rapietur?”

63. Gerson, *Super Magnificat* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 307): “Superest ostendere quod doctrinalis traditio theologiae mysticae se extendit ad theologiam scolasticam, nec ab eadem diversa est vel seclusa, immo nec a vera philosophia.”

64. I.e., Pseudo-Dionysius. See n. 6 above.

65. Vincent of Aggsbach, in his treatise against Gerson (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 195): “Gerson vero habet nomen iuxta nomen magnorum in terra, et scripsit multa que deferuntur in omnem locum, cui ex fama celebri maxime apud litteratos fides adhibetur.”

66. See Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 189-201. In Codex Latinus Monacensis 19114, Vansteenberghe tells us, this treatise has as title simply “*Tractatus cuiusdam Carthusiensis de Mystica Theologia*.”

67. Vincent of Aggsbach, treatise against Gerson (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 193).

68. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 196-197). Cf. Gerson, *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, 43rd consideration (Combes, bottom of p. 116 and top of p. 117).

69. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 197). Cf. John 4:24, to which Vincent subsequently alludes.

70. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 193). In the exposition above I have reconstructed the order of Vincent’s objections.

71. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 197).

72. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 191).

73. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 197-198).

74. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 195).
75. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 196). Vincent is quoting Dionysius, *De Mystica Theologia*, Chap. 1, Sec. 2 (*Dionysiaca*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 569-570). Cf. II Chron. 6:1 (Old Testament).
76. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 196).
77. Vincent of Aggsbach, *ibid.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 195).
78. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 7th tractate (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 318, lines 30-31). *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 7th consideration (Combes, p. 227, opening lines).
79. When Vincent here (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 198) mentions Gerson's *De 12 Industriis*, he is referring to *Mys. Theol. Prac.* In the present instance he is citing the 12th consideration (Combes, p. 211).
80. Gerson, *Anagogicum de Verbo et Hymno Gloriam III.9.a* (Glorieux, Vol. 8, p. 555, lines 21-25).
81. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 198).
82. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 198, last paragraph). See Gerson's *Mys. Theol. Spec.*, considerations 21-24 and 27.
83. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 199).
84. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 199).
85. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 200). See Gerson's *Mys. Theol. Prac.*, 12th consideration (Combes, p. 213).
86. Vincent of Aggsbach, *op. cit.* (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, pp. 200-201).
87. John Wenck, *De Ignota Litteratura* (1442-1443). Wenck was a professor of theology at the University of Heidelberg. For further details see J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Ignota Litteratura and Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2nd edition 1984).
88. Vincent's letter to John of Weilheim, Dec. 19, 1454 (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 208).
89. *Ibid.*, p. 206 and p. 209, lines 3-4.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 206. Vincent is referring to the work *De Visione Dei*.
92. Vincent here draws upon Hugh of Balma's distinction between *via purgativa*, *via illuminativa*, and *via unitiva*.
93. See Rudolf Haubst, "Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des 'Nicolaus Treverensis' in Codicillus Strassburg 84," *MFCG* 1 (1961), p. 18. See also Nicholas's Sermon 16 ("*Gloria in excelsis Deo*"), *Opera Omnia* XVI, p. 268. Edmond Vansteenberghé, "Quelques lectures de jeunesse de Nicolas de Cues d'après un manuscrit inconnu de sa bibliothèque," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age*, 3 (1928), 275-284. Codex Latinus Strassburg 84 also contains Bonaventura's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*.
94. Nicholas of Cusa, Letters 4 and 5 in Vansteenberghé's *Autour*, pp. 111-117 (especially 112 and 115).
95. See Nicholas, Letter 5 (Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 114). Nicholas declares that Dionysius, in his treatise on mystical theology, was of this same opinion. Cf. Dionysius's *De Mystica Theologia*, Chap. 1, Sec. 2 (*Dionysiaca*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 571-572).
96. II Cor. 11:14. Vansteenberghé, *Autour*, p. 115. Regarding the point made

in the text marked by the present note, Nicholas and Gerson are in disagreement.

97. Letter 5 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 115). Cf. Letter 9 (*Autour*, p. 122): “Nichil enim incognitum amatur.” Also note Letter 16 from Nicholas to Bernard of Waging (*Autour*, pp. 134-135): “Qui attendit Deum esse obiectum anime rationalis, et tam intellectus quam voluntatis, ille ad coincidentias se convertit, et dicit: Deus qui est superbonum et superverum, vis boni et veri, non attingitur uti est, nisi supra omne id quod intelligitur pariter et amatur, quamvis dum nos ad ipsum accedimus non possimus nisi querendo accedere. Querere autem sine intelligere et amare non est. Amamus bonum et querimus quid sit quod amamus, et tamen, ut ait Augustinus, neque quereremus si penitus ignoraremus quia et inventum ignoraremus. Amor igitur boni sine omni boni notitia non est; et notitia sine amore non est.”

98. Letter 4, Sept. 22, 1452 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 111-113). Also see the sermon excerpt (“*Suscepimus deus misericordiam tuam*”) at the bottom of fol. 91^v and the top of 92^r in Vol. II of the Paris edition of Nicholas’s works.

99. Nicholas, Letter 4 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 111-112).

100. Gerson, *Elucidatio Scolastica*, 11th consideration (Combes, p. 231): “Sed aliunde deducitur consideratio presens, notando quod omnis apprehensio vel motio intellectualis, sive de Deo sive de aliis, dici potest cognitio, ymmo et visio per illum modum loquendi quo utimur de sensibus exterioribus, ubi omnis sensatio visio nominatur”

During the penultimate stage of mystical ascent, just prior to the possible experience of union, the soul entertains the concept of God as *Inconceivable Infinity*, according to Nicholas’s version of *theologia mystica*. This conception Nicholas considers to be a “cognitive” element. But during the experience-of-union itself there is, Nicholas professes, a further cognitive element: viz., the soul’s knowledge that it is united with God (whose nature remains, however, unknowable and—positively—inconceivable to it). Mystical experience is never regarded by Nicholas as evidence either establishing or confirming the existence of God. For the degree of belief prerequisite to mystical experience is supposedly so great and so commitment-filled that the idea of regarding the subsequent experience as *evidential* is totally foreign to him. Similarly, he nowhere aims to set forth criteria for distinguishing veridical from non-veridical experience of God. Nor, for that matter, do any of the major mystics—whether speculative or non-speculative—propose “adequate” criteria. Regarding St. Teresa, for example, see George Mavrodes’ important article “Real v. Deceptive Mystical Experiences,” pp. 235-258 of *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Steven Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978).

101. N. B. Letter 4, Sept. 22, 1452 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 112): “Inest igitur in omni tali dilectione qua quis vehitur in Deum, cognitio, licet quid sit id quod diligit ignoret. Est igitur coincidentia sciencie et ignorancie, seu docta ignorancia.” Letter 5, Sept. 14, 1453 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 115-116): “Et michi visum fuit quod tota ista mistica theologia sit intrare ipsam infinitatem absolutam, dicit enim infinitas contradictoriorum coincidentiam, scilicet finem sine fine; et nemo potest Deum mystice videre nisi in caligine coincidentie, que est infinitas.” Also note *Ap.* 19-20 and 24. Note especially *De Visione Dei* 13 (52-53). Cf. Gerson’s use of Dionysius at *Anagoricum de Verbo et Hymno Glorie* I.10.b and II.4.e (Glorieux, Vol. 8, pp. 544 and 546).

In *De Docta Ignorantia* Nicholas was not yet deeply influenced by Dionysius’s

views on mystical theology. This fact is evidenced by Book III, Chap. 11, where a believer's mystical ascent unto God is characterized in less radical terms than it is in Nicholas's *Apologia*, his *De Visione Dei*, his correspondence with the Tegernsee monks, and in his *De Possess. Apologia* 12 indicates that at the time of writing *De Docta Ignorantia* Nicholas had just become familiar with Dionysius's writings. Also testifying to such familiarity is Sermon 20 ("*Nomen eius Jesus*"), delivered on Jan. 1, 1439.

102. Letter 5 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 116): "Nec quiescam quousque perficiam."

103. That is, the copying was finished on this date.

104. Letter 9, Nicholas to Caspar, Feb. 12, 1454 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, pp. 121-122).

105. Letter 7, Nicholas to Caspar, Oct. 23, 1453 (Vansteenberghe, *Autour*, p. 118). This letter intervenes between Nicholas's letter of Sept. 14 and his actual communication of *De Visione Dei* to Caspar.