

**Sermon XI: Verbum Caro Factum Est**

(“The Word was made flesh ....”)<sup>1</sup>

[December 25, 1431; preached in Koblenz]

[1] “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” John 1.

On this day a very glorious festive solemnity—[festive] for both men and angels—rightly illumines the whole world with the brightness of joy and with the radiant splendor of devout rejoicing. [This is the solemn occasion] on which the King of Heaven, our God—who, having been made a man and having been indued with the instruments of our flesh—was seen on our earth ..., etc. Let the heavens be glad! For just as they were formed by the Word, so today they are to be restored by the Word. Let the earth rejoice! For today it produced fruit, and the Word of the Lord came forth in order to water the earth and cause it to flourish. Let the mountains sing His praise! For today the Lord has comforted his people.<sup>2</sup> How many things [should praise Him]? Let all created things rise up, with greatest joy, in praise of God. For the Creator has united to Himself a creature; and the creature was made the End and the Expectation and the highest Exaltation of all creatures, because he was made God. Furthermore, let us most wretched sinners lift up our devotion [unto God] because our Savior is placed in a manger in the presence of cows and donkeys, in the presence of the able, the clever, the strong, and the simple. He was made visible in order that through our love of visible things we might all be drawn unto Him. Therefore, in order to see this Word with the eye of the intellect, let us by means of our devotion and prayer go over to Bethlehem, the house of the bread of this life,<sup>3</sup> imploring that it show to us the Begotten Word—[show Him] through the Word of this sermon. And with a pious mind let each [of us] say, in saluting the Virgin [Mary] in her sanctuary: “Ave, Maria ...,” etc.

[2] “The Word was made flesh ...,” etc.

It would be better for me, who am most untalented and less discerning than others, to remain silent about the very lofty, very deep, and incomprehensible begottenness and birth of the Son of God. Nevertheless, I will say a few things—subject to the correcting judgment of all—in order that we may be refected somewhat by the nourishing food of the divine word. My sermon will be about three topics successively:<sup>4</sup> first, about the Word and His eternal begottenness; secondly—because He

was made flesh—[I will speak] about this same Word’s temporal, super-marvelous birth; and because He dwelt among us, I will speak, thirdly, of the way in which He can be born in us spiritually. This three-fold nativity is signified by means of today’s three masses. The first [mass is held] in the midst of darkness—[the darkness] of human capability with respect to the incomprehensible divinity [of Christ]. The second [mass is held] at dawn and has a portion of brightness and a portion of darkness, with respect to the divine nature and the human nature [of Christ]. The third [mass is held] in broad daylight, because only in bright and very pure hearts is Christ born-through-grace in the present and born-through-glory in the future. And those who are thus enlightened show, by means of [their received] grace, light to the world; and in the future they will gleam by means of [their received] glory.

### PART ONE

#### *The Word and His Eternal Begottenness*

[3] On the first [topic I will speak only] very briefly. Because “*verbum*” [“word”] is derived from the verb “*verbas, -are*,” (which means “to produce a word”),<sup>5</sup> the meaning of “Word” in the case of God includes [the idea of] a *begetting production*, in accordance with the [verse] “My heart has uttered a good word.”<sup>6</sup> Now, this divine nativity is the proceeding of an intellectual Word from God the Father. For God is the Intellectual Beginning of every creature—[a Beginning] that acts through Intellect and Will. For “He did all things whatsoever He willed [to do],” etc.<sup>7</sup> “He spoke, and they were made,” etc.<sup>8</sup> And so, it is necessary that in Him there be a mental, intellectual Word, by means of which He understands Himself and other things. And because “word” is said relatively to another, viz., relatively to one uttering the word (*verberantis*), a word is derived from the one from whom it is produced by speaking. It is distinguished from him really, because nothing proceeds from itself, nothing begets itself, according to Augustine in *De Trinitate* I.<sup>9</sup> As is known, this Word proceeds not from a creature. Therefore, it proceeds from God. But [it does] not [proceed] from the divine essence, because such an essence is not really distinct from the Son, since each Person [of the Trinity] is the [divine] essence. Hence, [the Son, or Word] proceeds from God the Father.<sup>10</sup>

The Word proceeds from God. Here “God” is taken in a personal sense to stand for “person” and not for “essence.” However, in God this Divine Word cannot be an accidental feature—as in us and in

angels [a word is something accidental].<sup>11</sup> For on account of God's immutability and simplicity, there is no accident in Him. Nor is there any created substance adding [to Him anything] intrinsically as form—nor in any way [adding] extrinsically. This [addition would be] incompatible with the divine perfection and is impossible. Inasmuch as every created thing is finite, it cannot represent the Infinite, as the Word of God represents both God and all created things. And so, [the Word] is an uncreated, infinite thing that is God. Hence, the Word, which is in God (who is the Beginning of all things), *is* God. And because there is [only] one God, [the Word] is not *really and essentially* distinct from God, although [the Word] *is personally and really* distinct from the Father.

[4] Every essential distinction is a real distinction, but not vice versa. According to the doctors [of the Church] a *formal*, or *modal*, *distinction* occurs when something is affirmed of *a* but is denied of *b*, although there is not denied of *b* that it is one and the same thing as *a*. In this way, the divine essence is distinct from each Person [of the Trinity], because there is affirmed of a given Person something that is not affirmed of the essence. {For example, “The Father begets” is true, but “The Essence begets” is not true. Etc. ([See] *On the Supreme Trinity*, [the section entitled] “We condemn . . .,” where [you may read] about this [point].)<sup>12</sup>} However, each Person is no less the divine essence, and vice versa. A *real distinction* occurs when one of the things is denied to be the other. This [real distinction occurs] in two different ways: On the one hand, [the two things] may agree in some respect. For example, in God there is a *real personal distinction*, because although the Father is not the Son, nevertheless the Father is some [essential] thing that the Son is, since each is the one God. The Father and the Son are something one, even though [qua] Father and [qua] Son they are not identical. On the other hand, a real distinction can also be an *essential distinction*. For example, each Person and His essence is distinct from creatures.

The first [distinction, viz., formal distinction,] is a weak distinction. The second [distinction, viz., a real, personal distinction,] is a stronger distinction. The third [distinction, viz., a real, essential distinction,] is the strongest distinction. In God there are only formal and personal distinctions, for in God the several things (viz., the three Persons, who are three things) are one essence. Of these [three] it is not the case that the one depends on the other—as a part depends upon the whole or as a form depends upon its subject or as that which is sup-

ported by another depends on that which supports it.

[5] And because this Divine Word is *infinite in its essential perfection* (because it is God) and *infinite in representing* (because it represents altogether universally but nevertheless altogether perfectly—[represents] more so than do all created and creatable things [or] all mental and vocal words): therefore, we must affirm that only one, unique Word is present in God. The Word represents, in a primary way, the divine essence; for the primary object of the divine understanding is God. With regard to this meaning John says, “And the Word was with (*apud*) God,”<sup>13</sup> even as we are accustomed to say “His contemplation is of (*apud*) Himself” (that is, God is the object of His own contemplation, or of His own Concept)—as when we say, “His imagining is of (*apud*) this or that thing,” etc. Now, God cannot be conveyed beyond Himself through ecstasy (as happens in the case of a man or an angel); nor by contemplating can He direct His attention to something else more than to Himself. Instead, being in need of no one outside Himself, He directs His attention to Himself<sup>14</sup> through contemplation and enjoyment; and He is happily at rest in infinite delight.

Nonetheless, in a secondary sense this very Word most perfectly represents all creatures. The Ideas and Exemplar-Forms of creatures are present in the Divine Mind, which is the Cause of all things. [They are present] in the way in which there is actually<sup>15</sup> present in the mind of an artisan every form of the artifact that he is going to make. And in this way, whatsoever was made [by God] was, eternally, life in the Word<sup>16</sup>—i.e., [was life] not in a real way but in an intellectual way. Indeed, among the gradations of life, intellectual life holds the highest place.

[6] Hence, this Word is called “the Image of the Invisible God.”<sup>17</sup> For this Word is rightly a certain Mental Expression in which, as in an Image or a Natural Likeness, God understands Himself. [The Word] is called, for the same reason, the Splendor of God the Father’s glory,<sup>18</sup> the Image of God the Father’s substance,<sup>19</sup> the Brightness of the Eternal Light.<sup>20</sup> For like intellectual light and a certain conceptual image and an immaterial brightness, the Word radiates intellectually from the light of God the Father. Moreover, with respect to creatures [the Word] is called the Exemplar-Form, inasmuch as in it all creatures have been shining forth from eternity. [The Word, or Son] is called God’s Art, inasmuch as God works through Him. He is called God’s Law, inasmuch as God judges in and through Him. He is called the Appearance, or Inner-appearance, of things, inasmuch as in Him all

things are naked and open.<sup>21</sup> He is called the Truth of God, inasmuch as in Him are present all true things, which God truly apprehends. He is the Splendor of holy souls, inasmuch as through Him the light of grace and of glory is infused into holy souls. And so, it is evident that the Word, [or Son], proceeds from God the Father after the fashion of [an act of] understanding and after the fashion of a natural likeness and the fashion of a mental image.

[7] Now, as for every individual substance that is alive with an intellectual life or a perceptual life and that proceeds from an individual substance that is [also] alive with an intellectual or a perceptual life—[proceeds] by means of a natural likeness that is at least a likeness of species or the likeness of a close (or very close) genus and in accordance with a numerical identity of essence, or nature: let it be called the son of that from which it proceeds. In conformity with the most proper manner of speaking, it is evident that the Word of God is called the Son of God. Hence the procession of the Word is said to be like that of a son. This same Word is spoken of by the Prophet: “The Lord said to me: You are my son. Today (i.e., in eternity, where there is never a yesterday or a tomorrow) I have begotten You.”<sup>22</sup> For God speaks (*verbat*) and understands always, because He is Pure Actuality;<sup>23</sup> for He exists as always actual. Hence, He is always Word, etc. At the end of Isaias [we read]: “Shall not I, who make others to bring forth children, myself bring forth?”<sup>24</sup> From this Father and this Son there proceeds the Holy Spirit after the fashion of [an act of] willing. [For this procession occurs] in the way in which our mind by means of its word breathes forth its love, or volition—since, in our case, nothing is [intentionally] willed unless it is known.<sup>25</sup>

## NOTES TO SERMON XI

1. John 1:14.
2. Isaias (Isaiah) 49:13.
3. Luke 2:15. The word “bethlehem” means *place of food, house of bread*.
4. Nicholas’s sermon is incomplete. Topics two and three remain undeveloped.
5. Nicholas here writes “verbas, -are”. At 7:13 he uses the word “verbat”. He seems to regard “verbare” as a verb that means *to utter a word or words*. However, at 3:16 he also uses the genitive form of the verb “verberare”; accordingly, the Paris edition of Cusa’s sermons (Vol. II, f. 43<sup>v</sup>) transforms “verbare” into “verberare”.
6. Psalms 44:2 (45:1).
7. Psalms 113B:3 (115:3). Psalms 134:6 (135:6).
8. Psalms 32:9 (33:9).
9. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, 1, 1 (*PL* 42:820).
10. The word “proceed” is here being used in a general sense that indicates begottenness. Its use does not conflict with the traditional statement that the Son *is begotten* from the Father, whereas the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son.
  11. “... is something accidental”: i.e., is something incidental, is not of or from our substance, is not something substantial (in the Aristotelian sense).
  12. Pope Gregory IX, *De Summa Trinitate et Fide Catholica*, Book I, Title 1, Chap. 2 [Vol. II, column 6 in Aemilius Friedberg, editor, *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1881)].
  13. John 1:1.
  14. See Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 33-36 regarding how God thinks Himself and *thereby* thinks all things.
  15. Here (at 5:27) I am construing “actu vel habitu” as a pleonasm.
  16. John 1:3-4.
  17. Colossians 1:15.
  18. Hebrews 1:3.
  19. Hebrews 1:3.
  20. Wisdom 7:26.
  21. Hebrews 4:13.
  22. Psalms 2:7. Not an exact quotation. Medieval theologians often considered the Psalmist, David, to be a prophet. And they grouped the Book of Psalms with the Books of the Prophets.
  23. This is a Thomistic-Aristotelian point.
  24. Isaias (Isaiah) 66:9.
  25. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV, 27, 50 (*PL* 42:1097).

## Sermon XII: Jesum Quaeritis

(“ You seek Jesus ....”)<sup>1</sup>

[April 20, 1432; preached in Koblenz]

[1] “ You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has arisen; He is not here.” [This text is found] at the end of Mark and in today’s Gospel-reading.

Yesterday and the day before yesterday our pious Mother, the Church, lamented her dead Spouse. “Her harp was turned into mourning and her organ into the voice of those who weep.”<sup>2</sup> But on this day those devout women who were still tearfully seeking Him in the place where they [had] laid Him—[seeking Him] in order to anoint His crucified body—heard from the angel (1) that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified and (2) that He had arisen and was not in that place. And their sorrow was turned into joy, because their beloved Deceased One was once again alive, because He who was lost was [now] found.

[2] O the holy women who, being so troubled, sought Jesus Himself very early on the first day of the week!<sup>3</sup> (For it was not permitted on the Sabbath.) [They sought Him] as soon as the opportunity presented itself—[sought] Him with faith formed by love and with affection directed directly toward Christ! They knew by the testimony of the angel that Jesus, the Son of Mary, is the Savior, inasmuch as in His name every knee is bowed—[the knees] of those in Heaven, those on earth, and those beneath the earth.<sup>4</sup> And there is no salvation in and through any other.<sup>5</sup> [They sought] Him, that is, who was [very] recently crucified most contemptibly between thieves. O those blessed women, who merited to be the first to hear that the Savior had arisen! What else was [knowing] this than to know the goal of the Incarnation! For just as the Virgin Mary, having been instructed by the word of the angel first learned that the Incarnate Word was in her womb: so these women merited to be the first to learn, from the angel, of the goal of the entire Incarnation, viz., the Resurrection. For through the Resurrection human nature obtained the glorious beauty that the Incarnate Word principally was intending [for it to have] by His having become human. For [those women] were able to say: “Truly, the Lord has arisen. Hallelujah!”<sup>6</sup> O the enormous joy! For the life of our beloved Crucified One has reflourished. “This is the day that the Lord

has made; let us rejoice and be glad therein.”<sup>7</sup>

[3] Therefore, in order that together with these women we may be remade—[remade] in spiritual joy—by the triumphant Crucified One, who on this present day is sought but is not found on earth, let us raise the mellifluous voice of our heart in angelic salutation. [Let us do so] in order that from what is to be said we, with mortified flesh, may be raised in resurrection—[raised] through [the aid of our] now-consolated Mother [Mary] (who because of her Son’s death was recently afflicted with very grievous empathetic suffering<sup>8</sup>). For now she is the Mother of all consolation. Etc.

[4] I will speak of three things successively. [I will speak], first, of how Christ was sought by these women; and for this purpose, the Gospel will there be cited *for the common people*. In particular, [I will mention the theme] that to seek Jesus is to seek Him as the Crucified One. Secondly, [I will speak] of Christ’s resurrection. And there [I will speak]—especially *for the [more] capable*—about the gifts of the glorified body and about the mystical resurrection in the case of those of us who have been crucified with Him.<sup>9</sup> Thirdly, [I will speak of the fact] that Christ was not found alive in the earth, [or grave]—even as life is not present in interred individuals. (As long as Christ’s body was dead it remained in the earth, or in the stone [tomb].) Rather, [He was found alive] when He raised up [His body] alive by re-assuming His soul.<sup>10</sup> And this [part of the sermon is] *for those who are [more] contemplative*.

#### PART ONE

##### *On Seeking Jesus as the Crucified One*

###### *(a) Why the Son of God underwent a most bitter death.*

[5] As concerns the first [topic]: The motive of the first sin was (1) the desire for power in regard to one’s excellence (for the Devil had said “You shall be as gods ...”) and was (2) the vice of idle curiosity with regard to understanding truth (whence the Devil added “... knowing good and evil”). The transgression-of-the-commandment (viz., the eating from the forbidden tree) followed upon these two [faults]. Because of this sin God became a man in order to save all of us who descend from Adam the transgressor. For this sin had such a very great Redeemer! Hence, although the human race could have been set free by the infinite and eternal God—[set free] solely by the directive of God’s eternal and infinite will, which nothing can resist, nevertheless



it pleased His infinite goodness to descend for the sake of us human beings and our salvation.<sup>11</sup> For no other means was so suitable for the Restorer [and] for the one who was restorable [viz., man,] and for the process of restoration. And in order to show that in Him [viz., the Son of God] there was unsurpassable patience, wondrous humility, [and] measureless love, He became, for our sakes, obedient even unto death—the death on the Cross<sup>12</sup>—which was the most despicable and bitter death of all deaths. And so, for our salvation He suffered with a most generalized suffering, not only with respect to His human nature but also in accordance with all the major members of His body. And although He could not experience any suffering with respect to His divine nature, He suffered with respect to every power of His soul—[suffered] with most acute suffering. For not only did He feel pain insofar as He suffered because of His wounds, but also He felt empathetic pain insofar as He suffered empathetically because of our wrongdoings. Moreover, He suffered with a most shameful suffering because of the yoke of the Cross and the company of thieves, with whom He was numbered. He suffered a murderous suffering because of the separation of His soul from His body—although the union of each with the deity was preserved.

[6] The Source of our restoration has restored us, *with freedom of choice preserved*. Hence, by His very effective example He summoned us to come to the highest peak of the virtues, even as is His example of enduring death—yea, a most painful death—for the sake of justice and obedience to God. What, then, could motivate us more than does the very great kindness of the Supreme Son of God, who laid down His own life for us<sup>13</sup> not because of our merits but in spite of our many intervening demerits. And He is shown to be all the greater, the more grave and base are the things that He undergoes for us. By His example, we are summoned to love Him and to imitate Him.

Moreover, *while preserving God's honor*, He restored us by offering satisfaction-making obedience, [thereby] repaying the honor due to God.<sup>14</sup> The honor taken away from God, through pride and disobedience with respect to a matter in which man is under obligation, is restored through humility and obedience with regard to this same matter. [But it is a matter] to which Christ is not at all under obligation, inasmuch as qua God He is equal to the Father and qua man is innocent and not at all bound to die. When He emptied Himself, He became obedient even to the point of death;<sup>15</sup> by offering a pleasing sacrifice for the perfect propitiating of God, He paid to God [the honor] which

He Himself had not taken away.

And, thirdly, with *the orderliness of the universe being preserved*, He made restoration through a most suitable remedy by treating opposites with their opposites. For man sinned through an act of pride, because he willed to be as wise as God. He sinned by delighting in the [forbidden] fruit. He was inclined toward lust [and] was haughty with presumptiveness. He infected the human race and removed [from it] immortality. Hence, first of all, God became a man; secondly, [the God-man] suffered on the wooden Cross by means of a most generalized suffering on account of the general infection [of sin]. By means of very bitter suffering, [He sought to] remedy lust; by means of very shameful suffering [He sought to] remedy presumptiveness.

Moreover, because a generality of corruption had infected every part of our body and every power of our soul, Christ likewise suffered in the higher part of reason (by which He delighted supremely in God); and He suffered very intensely as regards that [part] which, on account of its association [with the body], is more lowly in nature. For Christ was [both] pilgrim and attainer. The pain of the flesh was most intense because of the evenness, and liveliness, of His physical constitution. And, in His mind, the pain was very intense because of His supreme love for God and His supreme graciousness toward His neighbor. And although the soul was separated from the body, nevertheless the deity remained united to them both. However, for three days the man [Jesus] was not alive. And, thus, it is evident how in the case of Christ's death, death was swallowed up by victory.<sup>16</sup> In dying, Christ destroyed our death; and in arising, He restored our life.

Now, I have set forth these [points] prefatorily in order that we may know whom these very devout women sought—viz., Jesus, who was crucified.

(b) *The descent of Jesus's soul to those in Hell,  
and at what time He resurrected them from the dead.*

[7] Now, [I will turn] to the Gospel account. Because Christ earnestly desired the redemption of all those who are incorporated into Him by faith, His soul, when He died, immediately descended unto Hell. (His divinity was united to this soul.) And, thus, Christ descended unto Hell and remained in the tomb, because the divinity remained inseparably united also to His body. And so, He descended unto the Fathers, in order to reform even Hell (for He is the Lord of those who are in Hell) and to lead out those who were captives.<sup>17</sup> O enormous joy! What do

you think the saints who were held in Limbo were shouting? Nothing other than: “You have come, O Desirable One, whom we in darkness were awaiting! O One who put death to death, You who have enlivened us with a glorious beauty!”<sup>18</sup> Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”<sup>19</sup>

How great was the joyous proclamation on the part of the Prophets, because they saw God’s prophesied Salvation! How great was the joy of the Patriarchs, because they discerned that in His seed they are redeemed and all nations are blessed! But although this joy was present in Hell, it did not extend to the lower part of Hell, where there neither was nor will be any redemption. Nor does it extend to the place of those who have departed [from this life] with original sin, because after this life grace is not given to anyone who has not obtained it here.<sup>20</sup> And those who were in Purgatory rejoiced over their salvation; and (as is the opinion of most [theologians]) they were led out [of Purgatory] together with those who were in Limbo [and] who, according to Augustine (in [Book] XII of his *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*) were not tormented.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, while Christ’s soul was present with the Fathers, who at that moment obtained full happiness, His body remained in the tomb.

[8] And on the day of burial Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, viz., the mother of Joseph (according to [Nicholas] Lyra),<sup>22</sup> were sitting facing the tomb.<sup>23</sup> Now, the women, viz., Mary Magdalene [and] Salome, and Mary [the mother] of James, bought aromatic spices (on the day of His death or else after the evening of the Sabbath, when the Sabbath was finished, because it was not permitted [to buy and sell] on the Sabbath), in order, when they came, to anoint Jesus after the Sabbath was over.<sup>24</sup> And they came in the early morning; they flocked together in order to accomplish their purpose; and because the place [of the tomb] was not within the [city] walls, the sun began to rise before they came to the burial place. But (according to the Gospel of John)<sup>25</sup> Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning, when it was still dark, and found the stone already rolled away. And she ran and told it to Simon and to John. Etc. And we do not there read that she saw an angel on that occasion.

But according to Matthew,<sup>26</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary bought aromatic spices (possibly in the evening after the Sabbath was over) in order to anoint Jesus. And after the evening, but before daybreak, Christ arose early in the morning. And according to St. Jerome<sup>27</sup> [the women] came to the tomb at the time the sun began to

rise. And there was an earthquake ...,<sup>28</sup> etc., and the angel of the Lord came down ..., etc. And according to Luke<sup>29</sup> there came on the first day of the week those women who had accompanied Christ from Galilee. [They came] very early, at daybreak, carrying aromatic spices which they had prepared; and they found the stone rolled away; and two men stood there in shining garments ..., etc. According to the Gospel of John,<sup>30</sup> Mary Magdalene remained outside the tomb weeping, after the disciples departed from the tomb to their own homes. And while weeping, she bent forward and looked into the tomb and saw two angels in white [garments] seated there. Etc.

[9] All of the following events are of deepest [symbolism and] mystery: first, Mary Magdalene's coming to the tomb when there was still darkness; secondly, her coming with the other Mary and finding an angel. (Now, the other Mary was perhaps Mary [the wife] of Cleophas,<sup>31</sup> who stood beside her at the Cross. Or [possibly it was] Mary [the mother of] Joseph (according to [Nicholas] Lyra),<sup>32</sup> which Mary was sitting with her facing the tomb. And according to Saint Jerome, as the *Scholastic History* tells,<sup>33</sup> etc., [Mary Magdalene] came at dawn. And in-between there came Peter and John—i.e., (according to a homily of St. Gregory's)<sup>34</sup> the Church of the Gentiles and the Synagogue. And the Synagogue, symbolized by John,<sup>35</sup> ran quite quickly; but the Church-of-the-Gentiles, signified by Peter, entered the tomb first; and thereafter entered John; for, in the end, there will be one shepherd and one sheepfold.<sup>36</sup>

[10] And while Mary Magdalene was thus standing there [looking into the tomb], and while Mary [the wife] of Cleophas (or Mary [the mother] of Joseph/Joses<sup>37</sup>) was outside [the tomb], the angel descended from Heaven and sat at her right hand. For after Mary, amid darkness, first found the tomb empty: she recurred, in her sorrow, to the Old and the New Testaments—[i.e.,] to the Church and the Synagogue. And because she found that Christ ought thus to suffer and to rise, she welcomed her companion who had seen Christ die—viz., Mary [the wife] of Cleophas, [who was] the sister of the glorious Virgin Mother and/or [the mother of] Joseph/Joses—and she stood meditating on the death of her Beloved. And in order fully to experience the bitterness of His death, she [now] had a companion and eyewitness who was able to arouse her both as regards the pains of the crucifixion and as regards the suffering of the [Virgin] Mother and [the Mother's] compassion for her Son. Therefore, while those two very holy women were standing there, there descended into their hearts the

divine light of the Resurrection—[light] sent into their hearts by the angel. And the angel spoke, consoling their hearts regarding that sorrow: “Be not afraid! Him whom you seek, O Followers of Christ, [is not here] ...,” etc.

Now, after Mary [the wife] of Cleophas had received consolation by seeing the Lord’s angel, who was consoling them, perhaps she immediately ran and reported [the happenings] to Mary Salome (who was her sister)<sup>38</sup> and to Mary [the mother] of James; [for] they too were ready with ointments. And perhaps she went to console the very majestic Mother of Christ, the sister of her own mother.<sup>39</sup> And when these three thus assembled, they courageously entered the Lord’s tomb; and they saw an angel, clothed with a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were astonished. The angel said: “Be not afraid! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has arisen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But depart and say to His disciples and to Peter that He goes ahead [of you] into Galilee. There you will see Him, as He told you.” And the women, departing, fled from the tomb, because fear had seized them. The other women [also] fled.

[11] Now, Mary, who came by herself before daylight, was not fearful. But she stood and wept. While, then, weeping, she bent forward and looked into the tomb.<sup>40</sup> And she saw two angels in white sitting (one at the head, the other at the feet) where the body of Jesus had been laid. Accordingly, they said<sup>41</sup> to her: “Woman, why do you weep?” She replied to them: “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” After she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her: “Woman, why do you weep? Whom are you seeking?” She, thinking that it was the gardener, said to Him: “Sir, if you have taken Him, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her: “Mary.” She, turning, said to Him: “Rabboni” ..., etc.

(c) *A dialogue is composed concerning our seeking,  
together with Mary Magdalene, Jesus and His resurrection.*

[12] Now, in order that we may to some extent grasp the sweetness of this mystery and may arouse ourselves at the dawn of this very high feast, let us address Mary Magdalene, who is full of sorrow and love and compassion. And let us say: “Tell us, Mary. Why did you seat yourself with Mary [the mother of] Joseph facing the tomb?”

*Mary*: “I did not want to desert in death my heart’s Treasure, Him whom unbelievers have taken away from me [and] whom I have always greatly loved. So because I was the most sorrowful and the most sadly distressed of all women,<sup>42</sup> I was sitting there in order at least to see the place where they had buried my Beloved. I was not permitted to approach more closely, and so I was sitting opposite the tomb. Being very sorrowful, I desired to be restored, at least from afar, by the fragrance<sup>43</sup> of my Savior—I who was not able to draw nearer. At that time, I, the most unhappy of all [beings], was not alive. For I had witnessed the heart of my Beloved, in whom my life dwelt, pierced by a spear. How, then, could there survive in me a spirit of any courage? Deprived of strength, I prostrated myself on the ground, in order that the residue of my life’s spirit might be taken from me and that I might be buried with my Beloved—I who was prevented from approaching the body, with which I chose to bind myself inseparably.

[13] “But my Beloved—who was now established in peace since the Sabbath had already arrived, who was not dead in my breast but was more alive because He died for me and in my sight—said: ‘Arise, make haste, my Love.’<sup>44</sup> You see that the place of my burial is surrounded by guards. You are waiting in vain. The garden is closed. [But] do not despair. You shall not lose me.’ And I [said]: ‘O the nature of this consolation, Lord! And because I see the Fount of Life—You, the Lord—to be signaled by, and sealed up by, this large stone, I shall believe [that] no one will remove You from this [tomb]. Therefore, before I am prohibited because of the [coming of] the Sabbath, I will go in order to prepare ointments and to cleanse Your very sacred body with tears; and I will anoint it, now dead, as [I anointed it], once alive. O Fount of Life, help me to find some vital remedy to apply to Your body. For in a certain way I, my miserable self, was the occasion of Your death—[was the occasion] at the first anointing, when Judas, [later] distraught as a result of his deed, purposed to betray You. O most gracious Jesus, what could have happened more infelicitously for me (who merited to be saved by You) than that moment when for my sake you were delivered up unto death traitorously by Judas! You who alone can do all things, grant [that I] may find an ointment contrary to Judas’s, so that [Your body] will become enlivened with the life of the living. With these thoughts, sweet Jesus, I take leave of You. That is, I take leave in body, not in mind, by means of which I rest buried with You. I depart, I say, quite quickly, so that the guards will also leave. If they see no one, then they too will decide to go away. And, thereupon,

I shall return straightway.’”

[14] “Tell [us], O Mary: What did you do in the meantime?”

“Assuredly, I gathered a remedy of pure nard-oil, the true fragrance of love, into the clear alabaster vessel of my heart. And I closed it with a tight seal, so that it not lose its fragrance but be more strongly disseminated within itself through a continuous circle of glowing, fragrant vapor throughout the entire holy Sabbath—after the fashion of my Beloved, who is inclosed in the tomb. [I have collected this fragrant oil] to the end that if, perchance, an opportunity of approaching [the tomb] is offered me, I may very quickly spread the very warm remedy over the rent and wounded body and may wrap all of myself, alive and warm, around the dead body. [I would do so] in order that the vital spirit—the immortal soul—of my Beloved might be enticed to return and to re-enliven [that] fragrant, glistening body—a body warmed by the pressing-close of my body and bathed by my tears.

[15] “Accordingly, after the Sabbath had ended, I hastened [to the tomb] as quickly as I could. For I was not sleeping, but my heart was ever awake. As a woman alone, I was not afraid of the soldiers who were assigned as guards; nor was I, in the darkness of night, terrified of the place of Calvary, to be dreaded because of the corpses of the dead. Rather, although it was dark, I came with ointment to the tomb. And while I was coming to the tomb, I said to myself: ‘O how auspicious a day [it would be] if what I wanted were to happen to me: viz., that my Spouse could awaken in my arms.’ What will I say when I arrive? Assuredly, I will speak to Him with [the words of] David and the Prophets.<sup>45</sup> At length, He will hearken—He who comes, as the Ancients have foretold, from Heaven to earth at the insistent plea of the Fathers: ‘Send, O Lord, Him whom You are going to send.’<sup>46</sup>

“What, then? If the Word was made flesh for the salvation of His people, and if at the lament, prayer, and insistent plea of the sons of Adam He descended from Heaven, then it will be possible for me, I hope, to beseech Him by means of very acceptable prayers and very devout tears. Because He loves me, [it will be possible to beseech Him] who stayed long enough in Hell to console those [there] and to save them by means of [the gift of] supreme happiness (which they have now obtained)—[beseech Him] that His soul (which is united to His deity) return to His body (which [also] is united to His deity). This [return] will, I hope, be much easier for the infinite deity (which is united to both [His body and His soul]) than was the Incarnation—although for this same deity not only is nothing impossible but also

nothing is even difficult.

“And I will remind Him that through the Prophet He spoke the psalm: ‘I will extol You, O Lord, because You have upheld me until the end.’<sup>47</sup> (In this psalm [Christ] speaks, assuredly, of His resurrection.) And I will say: ‘Rise up, my glory; rise up, psaltery and harp.’<sup>48</sup> Take [with you] swiftly the spoils of Hell.<sup>49</sup> And rise up, O Light of my eyes.’<sup>50</sup> And if You died because of me, O Lord, and do not deign to hear my prayer, then look unto Your mother and Your brothers, and rise up on account of their groan and their plight. Who doubts what is written about You?: ‘I will arise at daybreak.’<sup>51</sup> Therefore, I have hastened anticipatorily to arouse You, so that (according to the prophecy of Osee)<sup>52</sup> Your going forth may be prepared as the morning light.

[16] “But I, being exceedingly unhappy, was thinking of many things that I wanted to speak into His ears by way of lament in order to evoke His graciousness and power, so that He would come alive again. [He is the one] who gave the eagle the power to renew its youth<sup>53</sup> and gave the lion the power to arouse its cub by its roar and gave the phoenix life from burnt ashes. And [I was thinking] of the potter, who from the clay of a weak vessel made another vessel;<sup>54</sup> and [I was thinking] of Jonas, who emerged unharmed from the belly of a whale; and of the grain of wheat that fell into the soil and bore fruit;<sup>55</sup> and of the stag that received horns again; and of Samson, who carried away the gates;<sup>56</sup> and of Joseph, who was led out of prison, who became established as master of all<sup>57</sup> Egypt.<sup>58</sup> While [thinking of these things], I approached [the tomb] and saw that the stone had been set aside. And at that point what grief could be thought to be similar [to mine], when all my hope was thwarted?<sup>59</sup> For I believed that my Beloved had been taken away by unbelievers. I did not find Him whom my soul was seeking.<sup>60</sup> I said: ‘O most wretched of all women, although it is still dark, you have come too late, because those who took away the Lord came even earlier. O irreparable neglectfulness! Why did you go away from the buried treasure, which now someone else has dug up and taken away from you?’<sup>61</sup>

[17] “And while I was saying these things with no small amount of lamenting, I understood that I could not proceed, because my Christ, who had been taken away, could not be found by me at this time, because I was seeking [Him] unworthily. For in me was still the darkness of unbelief in the Resurrection. Nor did the writings of the Old and the New Testament fully satisfy me. However, I ran immediately to Peter—the head of the Apostles and of the Church, who loved Christ



more than did the others<sup>62</sup>—to see whether he could help me look. I also went to John, whom Christ loved with a unique love,<sup>63</sup> to see whether, perhaps, Christ had disclosed to him at the [Last] Supper the meaning of the Old Testament scriptures, so that with his help I could find my Beloved. They ran [toward the tomb] immediately. And John was younger than Peter; but Peter entered [the tomb] first and, thereafter, John. And they saw that I had spoken the truth. And although in both the Old and the New Testament there were many very clear passages to the effect that He had to arise, nevertheless Peter and John had not yet understood [them].

[18] “And I, Mary Magdalene, remained [at the tomb] when [Peter and John] went back to their own matters. And, as it happened, during that interval there arrived Mary [the wife] of Cleophas (who stood beneath the Cross with the Mother of the Lord)—or [perhaps] Mary [the mother] of Joseph/Joses<sup>64</sup>—so that she (in accordance with the etymology of her name) enlightened me as regarded the gathering of the others. And, lo, day began to break and the light of dawn began to be seen, so that after a great shaking of the earth darkness was expelled from my heart. For a dark, enclosed place is not easily enlightened unless the locks are opened and put aside and unless existing impediments to the light are removed by a strong moving-force. For although with respect to Christ’s *human nature* I was doubtlessly aglow, having lovingly spent a long time in His very agreeable and very virtuous way of life, nevertheless in my darkened earth I had not yet grasped the mysteries of so great a *divinity*. And so, a strong earthquake occurred in the thickness of the earth-of-my-intellect, so that [its clods] would be parted and broken up for the sake of the enlightenment that my Beloved was preparing for me. And after the earthquake had occurred in me especially as a result of my recalling of Christ’s very bitter suffering, which we [women] saw at the very end [of His life and] which we began to consider earnestly while standing together: behold the angel-of-the-Lord (who had come down from Heaven and rolled away the stone, whose face was [as brilliant] as lightening and whose garments were [white] as snow, who terrified the guards, so that they became as dead men) sat on the stone and said to us ‘Be not afraid. I know whom you are seeking. For [you are seeking] Jesus, who was crucified for man’s salvation [and] whom you now remember. He has arisen ...,’” etc.

(While the angel was thus speaking to the women, other women arrived—viz., Mary Salome and Mary [the mother] of James, etc., as [indicated] previously.)

[19] “When you, Mary, looked inside and saw the place where your Beloved was laid, tell us what you said.”

*Mary*: “I said: ‘My God, why have You forsaken me at the end? I never left you. I wanted to die with you, but You did not want it. Cause me to die at Your tomb, O Lord, so that at least I may always be found to be there where you were repositied. I look roundabout, O Lord, and there is no one to console me. I do not look for angels, O Lord, but for You, the Creator of angels. Why do you send me creatures to console [me], for I seek and love only You? It cannot be the case that You do not love those who love You. [But] how is it that You love me, O Lord, if You only afflict me? I do not seek beautiful spirits and ministering spirits but seek the Lord. This [help from creatures] is no consolation, O Lord.’”

[20] There [appeared] now, to Mary Magdalene, two angels. And take note of the following: First of all, when there was only affection—i.e., when by herself Mary hastened [toward the tomb] in darkness—she did not see an angel. Secondly, when with the recalling of [Christ’s] suffering and with the affection of love [for Him] she stood [at the foot of the Cross] with Mary [the wife] of Cleophas: [then] she saw an angel. But when she sought [Christ] with the intellect, the affection, the memory, and all her powers, then in the company of the women who had come from Galilee (according to Luke), she found *two* angels. But these [two] angels she also saw when she was by herself at the tomb, when she bent forward so lovingly [and] when she so scrutinizingly sought, with all her visual power, to see at least traces of her Beloved.

And the angels said to her: “We know whom you now have been seeking, because you seek Jesus, the Savior. Do you seek that once beautiful and lovely Nazarene—[lovely] more than the sons of men<sup>65</sup>—whom the Jews so vilely treated on the previous day by covering His shining face and the eyes through which the ray of divine wisdom was gleaming? [The Jews treated Him] as if He were a thief and a robber. They lacerated His holy face with wounding slaps; [and] they crowned the King of glory with thorns; and they mocked Him by kneeling down; they bound His very noble hands with bonds as in the case of a robber. He was treated very vilely and was bound, was defiled in His pleasing face by the spittle and the defilements of the worst of the Jews. There was a livid discoloration of His cheeks as a result of the blows from the slaps and from the shedding of tears. He appeared like a leper. All of His five senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch,

smell—were shamefully polluted. He was beaten [and] was reckoned among robbers. He died by a very bitter death on the Cross, with every kind of torment preceding it—[torments] from within and without, because of compassion for His blessed mother and for all those who would undergo future punishments for His sake, etc. No living person will be able to detail His countless punishments, which He underwent in mind and in body. After His burial He remained entombed here for three days. Do you seek Him, Mary?”

*Mary*: “I have been looking and looking for Him Himself, my Soul and my Life—[Him] who is wounded and dead. But, wretched me, I find Him nowhere. For they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where<sup>66</sup> they have laid Him. And looking roundabout, [I do not find Him].” Etc.

[21] “O Mary, when, from behind, you saw him whom you thought to be the gardener and [to whom] you said (in the common language of the Syrians) ‘Sir, if you have taken Him away . . .,’ etc.: whom did you think Him to be?”<sup>67</sup>

*Mary*: “Wretched me, I thought that every living being could not fail to see and to know my very great distress and grief . . .,” etc.

“But when He answered you ‘O Woman, why do you weep?’ where were your ears that you did not recognize your Lord?” etc.

*Mary*: “His disposition was other than was once that of my Lord. For He was disposed in a far different way—in accordance with the humanity of a mortal—after having suffered many things. And my enormous longing did not allow me to pay close attention, except when [doing so] was pleasing. And, hence, I said: ‘If you have taken [Him] away . . .,’” etc.

[22] “And when He said to you ‘Mary,’ why did you [then] recognize [Him]?”

*Mary*: “At that point my Beloved infused into me the light of consolation and of grace, so that I who was blind would see and understand and notice that He who called me by name knew me—and so that I would then take a closer look at the one who uttered [my name]. Thereupon, He immediately illumined me with His ray in order that I would see Him whom I, being blind, had been seeking for a time. For in seeking, I was inflamed when I did not find Him. He permitted my desire to become inflamed in order that I would seek Him more diligently and would find Him with greater delight. Then I fell to the earth, understanding that by divine ordination the following had to happen: that the Incarnate Word, my Lord, would die for the salvation of the

human race and would descend unto Hell for the human race's restoration and would rise up with a glorified, incorruptible body, according to the Scriptures. [He would do so] in order in Glory [i.e., in Heaven] to bestow blessedness, of body and soul, on the redeemed, whom He raised from the dead. He preceded them as being the High Priest who passed through the heavens," etc.<sup>68</sup>

[23] "O Mary, how great was your joy at that moment?" Etc.

*Mary*: "[It was] exceedingly great, when I found more abundantly my Immortal Life, [viz., Jesus], over whom death will no longer have dominion,<sup>69</sup> [and] when I saw [this] most victorious Triumpher over death and Hell, Him who is my sole desire—[saw Him] in a body glorified with four [glorious] endowments.<sup>70</sup> Thereupon, I rightly said: 'This is the day that the Lord has made . . .,' etc.<sup>71</sup> On this day full restoration of human nature was accomplished, etc. O sweet Apostolic commandment! The Lord commanded me to announce [His resurrection] to the Apostles. O how great a grace He conferred on me (1) that I could be the first to announce to them this excellent glad-tiding, (2) that I could cause [them] to sing, throughout all the quarters of Jerusalem, 'Alleluia' to the Lord God.

"He did not command me to announce [His resurrection] to His most glorious Virgin Mother. Doubtlessly, just as by unique faith she was buried with Christ, so too she arose with Christ.<sup>72</sup> As by steadfast faith and clear understanding she clung to her Son in His death, so too [she was with Him] in His resurrection. And so, she knew [of the Resurrection]. And, as was right, no other messenger than her Son was worthy to make known [to her] this glad-tiding.

"I proclaimed [it]! I ran hither and thither! I made known the things I had seen. I interpreted the Scriptures as to why it was so. Yet, the hard hearts of the disciples doubted, so that greater faith in the Resurrection was given to them later."<sup>73</sup>

[24] (However, lest [Christ's] very certain manifestation be prolonged unduly, He manifested Himself five times on the day of Resurrection: to Mary Magdalene, to the women [at the tomb],<sup>74</sup> to Peter,<sup>75</sup> to those en route to Emmaus,<sup>76</sup> to the disciples behind closed doors.<sup>77</sup> And from the day of Resurrection unto the Ascension He appeared five [more] times, etc.)

## PART TWO

### *The Endowments of Christ's Glorious Body*

[25] Secondly, we must speak about the glorified body of Christ and

about its endowments. Christ truly died and truly arose. According to the view of St. Thomas [Aquinas<sup>78</sup> this resurrection occurred] on the Lord's Day, in between midnight and dawn (in conformity with a harmonization—as in the *Ecclesiastical History*<sup>79</sup>—of the Scriptural passages, which are varied). On the basis of this fact [let us ask] about the kind of body Christ had when, after the Resurrection, the glory of His soul began to flow abundantly into His body, so that it became glorious by virtue of the following four endowments: viz., impassibility, subtlety, agility, and splendor. In I Corinthians 15 Paul [speaks of] these [endowments]. In particular, he speaks of whatsoever holy body of anyone: through death the body is sown in corruption; it shall arise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it shall arise in glory; it is sown in weakness; it shall arise in power; it is sown a natural body; it shall arise a spiritual body.<sup>80</sup> By “incorruption” [Paul] understands in that passage *impassibility*; by “glory” [he understands] *splendor*; by “power,” *agility*; by “spiritual being,” *subtlety*. And we are hopeful that the Lord will transform the bodies-of-our-lowliness, in conformity with the body of His splendor,<sup>81</sup> so that just as He who is the First-fruits of those who sleep<sup>82</sup> received on this day a glorious body, so too we will one day receive a glorious body. Therefore, [because of this hope] it would be delightful to experience [this reality].

### PART THREE

*The Resurrection of Christ. How We Must Seek  
Life by means of the Spiritual and Sacramental Food  
of This Paschal Lamb.*

[26] Thirdly, because He arose and is not here, we must understand how it is that the crucified Christ, arising from the dead, was not found on earth. And [we must understand] that for this reason everyone who seeks Him who has risen from the dead must, if he seeks to find Him, first carry his own cross by mortifying himself with Christ. According to Paul in Colossians 3 [a man does this] (1) by walking along the pathway of patience, humility, and love, (2) by exercising the active life in works of mercy and, thereafter, by contemplating, (3) by resting in the tomb with Christ and later arising with Him, and (4) by relishing not things on earth but things in Heaven, where Christ is.<sup>83</sup> For if we desire to be members of Christ,<sup>84</sup> who is now immortal, we must be without sin and live without sin. For on account of sin we die, and we cease being immortal members [of Christ]. For if oftentimes we have fallen

into death through our sin, we must arise on this present day with Christ, and we must seek life in what is distributed at the spiritual and sacramental meal of the Paschal Lamb.

And just as Christ, who arose from the dead, sits amid the Father's glory, so too let us walk in newness of life. Having put off the mortal human nature of corruptible oldness, let us put on a new human nature.<sup>85</sup> And having dispelled darkness, let us put on weapons of light; [let us do so] especially on this day that the Lord is said specially to have made; for it is a victorious day and is triumphant, jubilant, joyous, free of labor, and rewarding. Let us exult and rejoice with spiritual joy together with the angels whose seats are renewed [and] with the Fathers, who were led from the bonds of Hell—rejoice with beautifully sounding citharas, especially if we know how to seek, with fervor, Heavenly things. And may the Heavenly things taste sweet to us, with an inner relish. And let us walk in newness of life, having cast aside our former way of life.

[27] Now, [to begin with], Christ arose powerfully. For He was not resuscitated by another living man (as the child was raised by Elias)<sup>86</sup> or by someone dead (e.g., the bones of Eliseus).<sup>87</sup> Rather, just as on the Cross He had the power of giving up His soul, with a shout, so He had the power of taking it up again. And in this way He raised Himself on the third day. Now, it is not the case that in order to accomplish this [arising] he opened the tomb or the seals impressed upon the stone by the guards. (The stone was placed in order to close off the [entrance] of the tomb.) Rather, as He went out supernaturally from His mother's womb, closed up by the seal of [virginal] modesty,<sup>88</sup> so too He went forth [from the tomb] not weakly but powerfully, bringing His body back into submission, etc.

[28] Secondly, by being seen He showed that He had really arisen .... "See my hands and my feet."<sup>89</sup> And although the splendor of His glorified body is ten times brighter than the sun, it does not injure the eye, as does the sun, but it perfects the eye. Secondly, *through being touched* [He showed that He had arisen] .... "Touch and see."<sup>90</sup> Thirdly, *through taste* [He showed Himself to be risen]. For He ate with His disciples, although the food that was eaten and swallowed was not turned into the nature of His body but was vaporized, even as water is vaporized. Likewise, too, *our* spiritual resurrection ought to be proved through the following: through *seeing*, so that with a pure heart we may contemplate God and His benefits [to us. Moreover, it ought to be proved] through *touch*, in order that we may be intimately united

to Him through the affection of love; through *taste*, in order that by divine sweetness we may be re-created with pleasantness through devotion of mind.

[29] Thirdly, Christ arose manifestly. [This fact] is evident from His showing His scars (John 20),<sup>91</sup> which He ought not to have had after His body was glorified [but] which He willed to retain in order to show forever His triumphant victory and in order to placate the Father on our behalf by showing His wounds. (I John 2: “We have an advocate with the Father.”)<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, [He arose manifestly] in order to demonstrate to us His generosity and the magnitude of His love. He has pierced hands for displaying His generosity. And He invites [us] to *ask* (“Ask and you shall receive,” etc.)<sup>93</sup> He has feet transfixed by a single nail in order to signify the union of friendship, just as friends are joined by one bond of love. He has a side pierced-open, in order that we may draw wisdom from His heart, in which are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, He retained His scars in order on the Judgment Day to put the condemned to silence by saying: “See the wounds inflicted by you and for you. See my opened side; but you have not entered.” Thus, whoever arises with Christ must arise manifestly with stigmatic marks so that he can say with the Apostle in Galatians 6: “I bear in my body the marks of Christ.”<sup>95</sup>

[30] Moreover, the words of our theme-verse<sup>96</sup> can be applied to those who today are sacramentally seeking the Crucified Christ, the sacrificed Paschal Lamb. For He is to be sought by our arising with Him through remembering His crucifixion [and] by our clinging to Heavenly things. And the Immaculate Lamb is to be partaken of by means of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.<sup>97</sup> And our Paschal Lamb is befigured by the Jews’ paschal lamb [and] is to be eaten, by the faithful and by those of one heart, in the House of the Lord, i.e., in the Holy Church.

[31] [I will now speak] about the instituting of this blessed sacrament in the discourse at the Lord’s Supper. For our Restorative Beginning [viz., Christ] left for us medicines and sacraments through which (1) to regenerate us (e.g., [the sacrament of] baptism), (2) to confirm and augment us once regenerated (e.g., [the sacrament of] confirmation), (3) to nourish us once confirmed (e.g., the [sacrament of] the Eucharist). Now, the nourishment—with respect to its being freely given—is observed (1) through the preservation of devotion-to-God (something that is exercised by the *offering of a sacrifice*), (2) through the preservation of love-for-one’s-neighbor (something that is

exercised through the *communion of the one sacrament*), (3) by the preserving of inner-delight (something that occurs through *refecting on the provision for the way*).<sup>98</sup> The foregoing things are present in this sacrament in accordance with what befits the period of grace, the pilgrim-state, and our capability. In accordance with the period of [grace], the sacrifice ought to be pure and full; but there is no [such] sacrifice except the sacrifice offered on the Cross. Hence, in the sacrament Christ is present not only symbolically but also really.

Moreover, [the sacrifice] ought [not only] to symbolize love and communion but also to inflame [us] to love one another and to unite, maximally, our members to the one Head, from whom—through the *diffusive, unitive, and transformative* force of love—mutual love remains in us. Hence, in this sacrament there is contained the true<sup>99</sup> Body<sup>100</sup> of Christ and His immaculate flesh—[contained] as *diffusing* itself to us, uniting us to one another, and *transforming* us into itself by means of most fervent love. Through this love [Christ] sacrificed Himself for us and made payment for us and is present with us unto the end of the world. Moreover, because of the veil of symbolism and because of the merit of faith, ‘seeing in a clear manner’ does not befit the pilgrim-state. Nor is it fitting to touch Christ’s flesh with one’s teeth—because of our dread of raw flesh<sup>101</sup> and because of the immortality of His body after the Resurrection. And so, [the Body] was handed down hidden by very sacred symbolisms and by congruent and expressive likenesses—[handed down to us], in particular, under [the symbolism of] many-grained wheaten bread and of wine from grapes, etc.

[32] Regarding this sacrament the following must be believed ..., etc. (Consider further the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper.) Christ as a whole is contained under each form [of the Eucharist], after the consecration—[contained] totally, not in a delimited way but sacramentally. And it is necessary to know that if the priestly office and the intention of the consecrator come together with the prescribed utterance of words over the appropriate material, then true Christ (Body, Soul, and God, because these are indivisible) is present as a whole in each [of the two] element[s]. But He is hidden from all the senses, in order that faith may have merit. And in order that He not be detected, the accidents have their entire operation just as before, etc.

[33] One must not come to [the Eucharist] only for consuming the sacrament, for he who comes [only] for this purpose eats judgment to himself.<sup>102</sup> Rather, one must come for [the partaking of] the reality of the sacrament (*viz.*, the spiritual food) through faith and love. And



one must come to the reality and the sacrament (viz., the mystical Body of Christ). The reality of the sacrament is the real Body-of-Christ, which is apprehended by means of the spiritual food. Now, as long as a man is in the flesh he needs life-sustaining refection that refects the whole man.<sup>103</sup> (This refection occurs only in [spiritual refection on] the Incarnate Word. The Word of life is the refection of the spirit; the Incarnate Word is the refection of man, etc.) Therefore, every day we must eat spiritually, and be nourished lovingly, by this agreeable, vital refection in which [He who is] the Way, the Truth, and the Life<sup>104</sup> is present. One cannot have life otherwise than by living by means of this spiritual food. And this [partaking] occurs not in regard to the leaven of iniquity, etc., but in regard to the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth<sup>105</sup> [and] by means of spiritual teeth (viz., the intellect, the memory, and the affection), with which this food is gently chewed and swallowed. Thus, a man is digested into Christ, because He is the food of grown men; He transforms into Himself one who eats worthily of Him.<sup>106</sup> All who are to be incorporated into Christ must be present without mortal [sin], although the partaking of the sacrament removes venial [sins]. One must come to the sacramental [partaking] by way of spiritual [partaking], so that being now incorporated into Christ, one is nourished and one grows.

[34] But how a man is made spiritually Christlike through contemplating Christ's divinity in pure and sincere faith that is formed [by love]—this [topic] I will leave aside for now. Secondly, through the recalling of Christ's suffering one ought to elevate himself upwards after the fashion of Mary Magdalene, etc. And next [I will speak] of the wondrous love that Christ displays for us by means of this sacrament, in which He left Himself in food in a wondrous manner when going to cross over from the world. [This was] the most wondrous of all His wonders. Moreover, a man ought to elevate himself by pure faith, in contrast to all the idly curious, who seek examples and signs, etc. For whatever we cannot understand and eat intellectually, we ought to burn up, in accordance with the precept; i.e., we ought to burn it up by means of the Holy Spirit and to believe it lovingly.

[35] And [we ought] to contemplate how it is that the substance of the bread is converted into the Body of Christ, so that in this way a man is transformed into God by the efficacy of God's love. Secondly, we [ought to contemplate] the fact that [in the transubstantiated Eucharistic elements] the accidents do not exist by the power of their natural subject. From this fact you may infer that your will ought in all

respects to depend on the Divine will, through which alone it exists. Thirdly, [we ought to consider] the fact that just as [in the Eucharist] the accidents indicate bread but, nevertheless, bread is not present (because the substance has been transubstantiated), so through the forcefulness of love let your affection be so transformed that there is only the outward manifestation of the human nature together with the presence of the deity [into which you are transformed].

[36] We must contemplate the fact that when this [Eucharistic] meal is approached: then, first of all, the one who approaches it in a worthy manner knows that he will obtain (1) immortal life from Christ's immortal, glorified Body, (2) life-giving grace from Christ's Soul, and (3) life-sustaining glory from the deity that is united to Christ's Body and Soul. And according to Exodus 16 one who comes to the food of this Lamb in order to place into his vessel as much manna as a gomor<sup>107</sup> contains must have a new vessel, completely purged of oldness—[a vessel] in which there is no spot of uncleanness. And thereupon you will find, in this most delectable bread, every delight. [This bread] contains every remedy ..., etc. And according to the commandment<sup>108</sup> one ought to eat the lamb with one's loins girded ([i.e.,] with the intent of curbing evil desires) and with one's feet having shoes on them ([i.e.,] with a heart prepared for eagerly following the pathway of God's commandments<sup>109</sup>) [and] with our feet protected, so that we not bump them against a stone or on the thorns and the thistles of this world<sup>110</sup>); and [we ought to eat it] while having a prop in our hands ([i.e.,] while having divine aid [and] not relying on ourselves presumptuously), and while considering to eat the salt from the lettuce of the fields ([i.e.,] while considering our Lord's suffering, combined with the bitterness of our penance). [And we are commanded] to eat hastily ([i.e.,] with great desire and ardor and with sensory devotion, if [such devotion] can be had. Otherwise, the intention not to sin suffices, etc.<sup>111</sup>

## NOTES TO SERMON XII

1. Mark 16:6. I have left aside the question mark in the title because it appears neither in the Scripture-verse nor in the mss. *C* and *V<sub>1</sub>* nor in the Paris edition.
2. Cf. Job 30:31.
3. Mark 16:2 and 16:9.
4. Philippians 2:10.
5. Acts 4:12.
6. Cf. Luke 24:34.
7. Psalms 117:24 (118:24).
8. See, below, the last part of the section marked by margin-number 5.
9. Galatians 2:20.
10. Cf. John 10:18.
11. Cf. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* I, 12.
12. Philippians 2:8.
13. I John 3:16.
14. This theme is taken from Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*.
15. Philippians 2:7-8.
16. I Corinthians 15:54.
17. This view corresponds to the Apostles' Creed. See also Acts 2:31. Matthew 27:50-53. Ephesians 4:8-10.
18. Cf. Osee (Hosea) 13:14.
19. Matthew 21:9.
20. This idea belongs thoroughly to the Christian tradition, which does not assume that those who die in unbelief will ever have a further opportunity for salvation.
21. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, XII, 33, 63-64 (*PL* 34:481-482).
22. Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla*, re Matthew 27:56. [*Biblia Sacra cum Glossa Interlineari, Ordinaria, et Nicolai Lyrani Postilla, eiusdemque Moralitatibus, Burgensis Additionibus, et Thoringi Replicis* (Venice, 1588 (Vol. 5)), p. 86<sup>b</sup>. Regarding the Scriptural words (in Matthew 27:56) "... et Maria Jacobi et Joseph mater ..." Lyra comments: "Ista erat soror Mariae, matris Christi." And regarding the words "... et mater filiorum Zebedaei" he writes: "Et mater filiorum Zebedai, scilicet Iacobi et Iohannis."
23. Matthew 27:61.
24. Mark 16:1-2.
25. John 20:1.
26. Matthew 28:1.
27. Jerome, *Epistle* 120, "Ad Hedibiam," Chaps. 3-4 (*PL* 22:987).
28. Matthew 28:2.
29. Luke 24:1-4. See also Matthew 27:55.
30. John 20:10-11.
31. John 19:25.
32. See the reference in n. 22 above.
33. See the reference in n. 27 above and the one in n. 79 below.
34. Gregory the Great, *XL Homiliae in Evangelia*, 22, 2-3 (*PL* 76:1175B-D).

35. Here (at 9:14) I am supplying an omission in the Heidelberg edition of the Latin text. After “significata” in line 14 there should be added the words: “citius cucurrit sed ecclesia gentilium per Petrum significata ....”

36. John 10:16.

37. Note Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:47, both of which mention Mary, the mother of James and of Joseph (i.e., Joses).

38. Here (at 10:24) neither *C* nor *V<sub>1</sub>* has “Matris”, which here I have deleted. (In *C* something is deleted in-line and above-line.) At 10:27 *C* omits “matris”, which is supplied, above the line, by *C\**; *V<sub>1</sub>* has “matris”.

39. This passage (10:24-25) is not consistent with the earlier one (10:9-10) where the Virgin Mary is identified as the sister of Mary Cleophas. It can be made consistent by omitting the present sentence’s last words—viz., “the sister of her own mother”—as does ms. *U<sub>2</sub>*.

40. This passage and the one that immediately follows it are taken from John 20:11-16.

41. Here and elsewhere the Latin text, which is quoted from John 20, uses the historical present-tense, which I am translating by the simple past-tense.

42. One would expect Nicholas to say that of all women the Virgin Mary was the most distressed because of her Son’s death. But, instead, Nicholas here represents Mary Magdalene as perceiving herself as suffering even more.

43. Here (at 12:15) I am reading “fragrantia” (as does also the Paris edition) in place of “flagrantia”.

44. Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 2:10.

45. These words come two paragraphs below.

46. Exodus 4:13.

47. Psalms 29:2 (30:1).

48. Psalms 56:9 (57:8).

49. Isaias (Isaiah) 8:1.

50. Psalms 37:11 (38:10).

51. Psalms 56:9 (57:8).

52. Osee (Hosea) 6:3.

53. Psalms 102:5 (103:5).

54. Cf. 9:21.

55. John 12:24-25.

56. Judges 16:3.

57. Here (at 16:12) I am reading, with the Paris edition, “totius” in place of “tonsus”.

58. Genesis 41 ff.

59. See n. 42 above.

60. Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 3:1.

61. Cf. Matthew 13:44.

62. John 21:15-17.

63. John 21:20.

64. The Joseph referred to here is not the husband of the Virgin Mary. The King James Bible calls him *Joses*. Interpreters are not agreed on the identities of the different Marys who are referred to in the Gospels. A note on p. 235 of the Heidelberg Academy’s edition of the Latin text of this present sermon points to a tradition in

accordance with which the Virgin Mary and Mary the wife of Cleophas (i.e., Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joseph/Joses) and Mary Salome (i.e., Mary the mother of James the Elder) are all sisters. Certain other commentators identify with each other Mary Salome and Mary the mother of James and Joses. Still others regard Mary the mother of James and Joses as the sister-in-law of the Virgin Mary.

65. Psalms 44:3 (45:2).
66. Here (at 20:46) I am reading “ubi” in place of “ut”. Mss. *C* and *V*<sub>1</sub> have “ubi”.
67. Mary’s response to this question appears to be a non-sequitur, indicating that the manuscript-tradition at this point is corrupt.
68. Hebrews 4:14.
69. Romans 6:9.
70. Regarding the four endowments, see PART TWO below.
71. Psalms 117:24 (118:24).
72. Cf. Romans 6:4.
73. Cf. Mark 16:14.
74. Luke 24:10.
75. Luke 24:12.
76. Luke 24:13-32.
77. John 20:19.
78. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 82-85.
79. Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica in Evangelia*, Chap. 185 (*PL* 198:1636D - 1638A).
80. I Corinthians 15:42-44.
81. Philippians 3:21.
82. I Corinthians 15:20.
83. Colossians 3:1-2.
84. I Corinthians 6:15.
85. Cf. Ephesians 4:22-24. Colossians 3:9-10.
86. III Kings (I Kings) 17:21-23. Elias is Elijah.
87. IV Kings (II Kings) 13:20-21. Eliseus is Elisha.
88. That is, He was closed in by the intact hymen of the Virgin Mary.
89. Luke 24:39 (not Luke 23, as Nicholas incorrectly writes).
90. Luke 24:39 (not Luke 23, as Nicholas incorrectly writes).
91. John 20:25-28.
92. I John 2:1.
93. Matthew 7:7:8.
94. Colossians 2:3.
95. Galatians 6:17.
96. Mark 16:6.
97. I Corinthians 5:8.
98. Each of these three points alludes to the Eucharist.
99. Here (at 31:24) I am reading “verum” in place of “unum”.
100. When the word “body” refers to the real presence of Christ’s mystical Body in the Eucharistic sacrament, I capitalize the word.
101. Here (at 31:33) I am reading “cruditatis” in place of “crudelitatis”, which the mss. have, as does also the Paris edition.

102. I Corinthians 11:29.
103. Re *totus homo*, note Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 37, verse 8 (*PL* 36:402).
104. John 14:6.
105. I Corinthians 5:8.
106. Cf. Augustine, *Confessiones*, VII, 10,16 (*PL* 32:742).
107. A gomor is an ancient Hebrew quantitative measure. Exodus 16:32-33.
108. Exodus 12:11.
109. Psalms 118:32 (119:32).
110. Here (at 36:19) I am reading, with *C* and *V<sub>j</sub>*, “saeculi” in place of “saeculo”.
111. I here omit translating the last section of the text of this sermon. That section is but a sketch of what has already been said; it has no importance—not even as showing the points that Nicholas regards as salient.

### **Sermon XIII: Et Apertum Est Templum**

(“ And the Temple was opened ....”)<sup>1</sup>

[August 15, 1432; feast-day of the assumption of Mary;  
preached in Koblenz]

[1] “ And the Temple of the Lord was opened in Heaven; and the Ark of His Testament was seen in His Temple. And there were lightnings and voices and an earthquake and great hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: [viz.,] a woman clothed with the sun and [having] the moon beneath her feet and [having] on her head a crown of twelve stars ....”<sup>2</sup>

These words are set forth, in general, regarding the Mother Church and, in particular, regarding the very foremost member of the Church, viz., the glorious Virgin Mary. [2] With respect to the first, general theme [of the foregoing Scripture-verse], it is stated that the Temple-of-the-Lord—i.e., Christ (in whom is the dwelling-place of divinity)—was opened in Heaven; i.e., He was made manifest within the entire world at the time of His birth. Furthermore, this Temple was also opened on the Altar of the Cross, when the soldier pierced Christ’s side with his spear, so that from the side of the sleeping Second Adam<sup>3</sup> there would be formed Eve, the holy Mother Church. For this holy Mother Church was formed by the blood of redemption, and by the water of regeneration, from His side. And then after the Temple was opened, the Ark of His Testament was seen, viz., the holy Mother Church, which is like Noah’s Ark, which kept everyone [inside] alive. And the Ark of the Testament preserves within itself the Tables of the Law, manna, and Aaron’s rod;<sup>4</sup> i.e., it has the Law, the sacraments, and the keys that are invested with power.<sup>5</sup> The rod symbolizes power; Aaron symbolizes the priesthood. Therefore, in the Church there is priestly power, even as in the Ark [of the Testament] there is [Aaron’s] rod. Therefore, he who is not subject to the rod of Aaron is not within the Ark of the Church. And then there were lightnings of good examples by means of the gleam of the honorable way of life of the holy martyrs of the Early Church. And there were voices of divine praise and of lofty proclamation; and there was an earthquake of fear and of compunction; and there was the hail of harsh reproof.

[3] Also, expound on the persecution of the Church—how after the Temple was opened and the great Ark was seen, there followed persecution. [The persecution was] against the Ark that was composed of different kinds of wood, i.e., of [ different] believers in Christ. [ The

persecution occurred] through all the punitive and injurious modes symbolised by lightnings, thundering voices, tremblings of the earth, and a hail-storm. Notwithstanding, there appeared in heaven a great sign of the universal faith of the Catholic Church. For the Church was like a pious and compassionate woman, bearing great fruit, clothed with the sun of justice,<sup>6</sup> being unhindered by the aforementioned afflictions—[a woman] treading under foot the moon of the earthly impermanence [and] having on her head a crown-of-victory that is decorated roundabout with the twelve brightly-shining, fixed, incorruptible stars of the [twelve] articles of faith. Etc.

[4] Also, by *head* understand the *beginning* of the Early Church. And by *moon*, which is under her feet, understand the *last period* of the Church. [The Church] was first crowned with the twelve stars of the twelve Apostles, and [the crown] was on the head. And through the [statement that] the beginning of the Church had its head crowned, understand [that] the state of the Early Church [is being referred to]. And through [the phrase] “its feet on the moon,” understand the present state [of the Church]. If we turn to the anatomy of the head, we will find that all the powers-of-senses and all the nerves originate there. And they convey to the lower members the power of sensing and of moving. [The head] has seven outlets,<sup>7</sup> which are instruments of the senses; it has hard, smooth bones; and it has the full substance of the brain; it has but few strands of flesh and has smooth hairs. [Similarly, the Church] has seven virtues as instruments supported by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit<sup>8</sup>—[gifts given as] remedies for the vices. [These virtues are] (1) the hard bones of very fixed steadfastness, (2) the ample marrow of meekness and (3) of mercy, (4) the reduced flesh of carnality and of lust, (5) the outer, smooth hairs of an honorable mode of life, (6) the nerves of friendship, and (7) the powers of sensory discrimination. Of such kind ought to be all the leaders and rulers, ([for] they are the heads). For granted that the leader ought manifestly to exhibit hardness, even as the bones of the head are hard, nevertheless he [should] have, within him, the marrow of piety and mercy. For in him there ought to be a sense of insightfulness and of discernment and of prudence, etc. These [traits], too, are symbolized by the Ark, which was gilded over inside and out and which contained the Table of the Law (i.e., justice and prudence!), the rod of reproof, and the manna of pleasantness and of compassion and of piety.

[5] At this time the Church has, as it were, its feet on the moon. The feet are the affections; and just as the feet are always on the



ground, [so] the affections are earthly and on the moon nearest to the earth. Therefore, nowadays the Church is, alas, at the lowest gradation, just as a foot is of little nobility. Although [the foot] has in itself the same life as does the whole body and although it is nourished by the same spirit, nevertheless it is not clothed with the sun of justice,<sup>9</sup> [or] with the sun of prudence, or with the splendor of life. Rather, [it is clothed with] the hide of bestiality [and] of ignorance, miring itself in the clay of covetousness and of lust, clinging to the earth through greed, being unsteady, relying on the moon, etc. As regards the nature of the moon and its unsteadiness and its influence and its approach to the sun and its eclipse, etc.—it is known that our sins are opposed to God, etc.

[6] Accordingly, if we wish to preserve ourselves, and reform ourselves, in the Ark and the Church, then we, who are the feet, must walk in the way of equality and of justice. And we must accept the inflow-of-moving-and-of-sensing from the things that are above us and from those who have preceded us in holiness. And we must direct our lunar spirit toward joining with the sun, so that, by means of the conjoining that occurs, our spirit is moved all the way to the full-moon of eternal glory. And furthermore: because walking must be done carefully,<sup>10</sup> you must pay attention to how you walk. It is not the case that the footprints of others are always to be followed—like an ape that has closed its eyes. Because of the fact that the thief closed his eyes, he lost the money. But good pathways must be visualized, lest one fall when he thinks himself to stand.<sup>11</sup> O Man, see ...,” etc.<sup>12</sup> Fortune affords various pathways ..., etc.<sup>13</sup>

[7] Therefore, one must run by way of the paths of the Commandments<sup>14</sup> and of obedience. And one must not despise the key that is invested with the power of the Church. Moreover, you must not despise unjust things [that are done to you]; for they are meritorious for you [to endure]; but they are punitive for him who commands [them to be done]. If a charge which your superior levels against you is not just, then your merit is greater because of your obedience [to God]. And consider—[seeing that] throughout your lifetime you will find yourself to have transgressed—what you merit. And take your transgressions as an accusation against you. Therefore, consider the good of obedience, and do not despise it.

Take an example of patience and obedience from Christ, who—also being obedient, (even unto death)<sup>15</sup> —always taught obedience. ([The Scribes and the Pharisees sat] on the Chair of Moses ..., etc.)<sup>16</sup>

Because of disobedience a curse descended upon the human race. (Genesis 3: “Cursed is the earth with regard to your work.”<sup>17</sup> And He blessed Simon, i.e., Obedience: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona” (Matthew 16)).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, be not disobedient, because obedience yields great profits with little expenditure of effort. For obedience is like a merchant’s ship<sup>19</sup> that continues ever onwards and leads to profits. Nonetheless, one who obeys is tranquil .... And it is like a horseman who is resting [in his saddle] but is nevertheless advancing. (“To my company of horsemen I have likened you, my Love.”)<sup>20</sup> And God remains present with those who are obedient. (And Christ entered Bethany, i.e., the House of obedience, etc.) Where there is obedience, there there is love for God. Love for God makes a man pliable and obedient, as fire makes wax pliable. And note the following: If you wish to know in whom love for God is present, look unto his obedience; for obedience is better than sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

### NOTES TO *SERMON XIII*

1. Apocalypse (Revelation) 11:19.
2. Apocalypse (Revelation) 11:19 - 12:1.
3. I Corinthians 15:45.
4. Hebrews 9:4.
5. Matthew 16:19.
6. Malachias (Malachi) 4:2.
7. The seven outlets are the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, and the mouth.
8. Isaias (Isaiah) 11:2-3. The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, courage, knowledge, piety, and fear-of-God.
9. See n. 6 above.
10. Ephesians 5:12.
11. I Corinthians 10:12.
12. *Carmina Medii Aevi Posterioris Latina* II/5 (entry number 33592), edited by Hans Walter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1967:

“Vir videas, quid tunc facias, cum magnus habebis;  
Prospicias, ne despicias, quem ledere queris,  
Et caveas, ne forte ruas, cum stare videris:  
Dat varias fortuna vias, non ergo mireris.”

(“See, O Man, what to do when you are esteemed great.  
Look circumspectly upon—do not underestimate—him whom  
you are seeking to injure.  
And beware lest you fall when you seem to be standing.  
Fortune affords various pathways; so do not be  
caught unawares.”)
13. See n. 12 above.
14. Psalms 118:32 (119:32).
15. Philippians 2:8.
16. Cf. Matthew 23:2. Note also Matthew 23:3: “All things, therefore, whatsoever [the Scribes and the Pharisees] shall say to you, observe and do; but do not do according to their works. For they say, but they do not do.”
17. Genesis 3:17.
18. Matthew 16:17.
19. Proverbs 31:14.
20. Canticle of Canticles 1:8 (Song of Solomon 1:9).
21. I Kings (I Samuel) 15:22.

### Sermon XIV: Signum Magnum

(“A great sign ....”)<sup>1</sup>

[August 15, 1432; feast-day of the assumption of Mary;  
preached in Koblenz]

[1] “A great sign ....,” etc.

[This verse may be expounded] either as regards the life of the Virgin or as regards Glory or as regards the Church Militant.

As regards the life of the Virgin the following [may be said]: A great sign appeared in heaven (i.e., in the loftiness of the Church Militant): [viz.,] a woman clothed with the sun (i.e., existing in the contemplation of the divine light). She had the feet of her affections treading on the moon. With her active life she was touching earthly things; and on her head she had a special crown of 12 stars, the twelve privileges. Now, for expounding this [theme], I introduce the Gospel-text in a mystical sense. In accordance with this sense life was manifestly present in [the Virgin] Mary in a twofold way: [there was] the active life of Martha and the contemplative life of [Mary] Magdalene.<sup>2</sup> The active life pursues *just* works diligently, etc. [I will speak about] the way in which the active [life] befit [the Virgin] Mary, who was busy ...., etc. To begin with, [I will speak of] the way in which she received [the annunciation, of] the way in which she was with child, etc. And in this regard she supremely worked works of mercy—works ordered gradationally in five ways. The contemplative [life is present] when someone by prolonged [mental] exercise, etc., and (according to Gregory)<sup>3</sup> when cares are trodden under foot, etc., and (according to Bernard)<sup>4</sup> when the flesh is mortified, etc. And (according to Hugh)<sup>5</sup> [this life] has three gradations: it purifies, it enlightens, it perfects, etc.

[2] And, first of all, in accordance with the Gospel-verse, three things are necessary [for the contemplative life]: *leisure* (she was sitting) and *being at His feet* and *listening to His word*.<sup>6</sup> And six additional things [are necessary]: the exercise of the active [life], aloneness, humility, purity of heart, fervor of love, and steadfastness of mind. [Here are some] more things: first, a considering of creatures, by apprehending three things (according to Hugh):<sup>7</sup> Grandeur, Wisdom, and Goodness—by inference from [created things’] magnitude, loveliness, and usefulness. Secondly, [the contemplative life requires] one’s knowledge of himself through gradations of descent and ascent, etc.

The quality of contemplation is varied in three ways: by enlargement of mind, by exaltation of mind, and by renunciation. That in a supreme way the most blessed Virgin had this life [of contemplation] is recognized from her grace and from the twelve privileges of her crown of twelve stars and from the way in which, through this contemplation, she approached death and from the kind of [earthly end she had].<sup>8</sup>

This [is the end of] the First Part.

[3] The Second Part is (a) about her glorification and (b) about what Glory and the light of Glory are and (c) about the way in which in Glory she obtained halos and a station above all the angels and (d) about our contemplating her assumption.

This [will be dealt with] secondly.

[4] Thirdly comes the third exposition, which deals with the Church [Militant], etc.

## NOTES TO *SERMON XIV*

1. Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:1. This Sermon and Sermon XV are variant *sketches* of Sermon XIII, which itself is but a longer sketch. Presumably these three drafts were the basis for homilies delivered in German at three different services on Sunday, August 15, 1432.
2. Luke 10:38-42.
3. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Ezechielem*, II, 2, 8 (PL 76:953B).
4. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones de Sanctis*, "In Assumptione Beatae Virginis Mariae," *Sermo* 2, n. 3 (PL 183:418). Bernard quotes the Apostle Paul: I Corinthians 9:26-27 and Romans 6:12.
5. Hugh of St. Victor, *Expositio in Hierarchiam Coelestem*, IV (PL 175:998B). See also Hugh of Balma, Prologue to his *De Theologia Mystica*, translated by J. Hopkins (Minneapolis: Banning, 2002).
6. Luke 10:39.
7. Hugh of St. Victor, *Eruditio Didascalica*, VII, 1 (PL 176:811C - 813A).
8. See, above, n. 86 of Sermon VIII.

**Sermon XV: Et Apertum Est Templum**

(“And the Temple was opened ....”)

[August 15, 1432; feast-day of the assumption of Mary;  
preached in Koblenz]

[1] “And the Temple of the Lord was opened in Heaven; and the Ark of His Testament was seen in His Temple. And there were lightnings ...,” etc.<sup>1</sup>

[This text] deals, *first of all*, with the very glorious Virgin Mary and her life and her assumption; [it deals], *secondly*, with the Church Militant and with its station and course; *thirdly*, [it deals] with the union of the [Church] Militant with the [Church] Triumphant. [This union occurs] through the military ascent of the [Church] Militant and through its victorious transformation into the [Church] Triumphant.

[2] Let us begin as follows: The Temple of the Lord (i.e., the humanity of Christ) was opened and made manifest to the heavens (i.e., to the world). And in that Temple-of-the-humanity the Ark of the Testament (i.e., the divinity [of Christ]) was seen by faith and understanding. Thereafter, many wonders occurred in terms of miracles that displayed the Temple [i.e., the humanity] and the Ark [i.e., the divinity]. There occurred lightnings (through the [miraculous] restoring of sight to the blind)<sup>2</sup> and voices (because of the dumb who spoke)<sup>3</sup> and hail ..., etc. Hence, in the heavens there appeared a great sign of faith and of the Church—[a sign] more wondrous than any signs seen hitherto and greater, even, than any signs previously told of. For a woman, viz., the Blessed Virgin, was clothed with the sun of very sublime and very holy contemplation. She had the moon of the active life beneath her feet. She was crowned with twelve stars, etc. (i.e., with twelve prerogatives), that were steadfast and resplendent, etc.

And as an introduction to this [topic] let the Gospel-text be taken in hand, etc.

[3] Secondly, [the second theme] is commented on as above [i.e., as in Sermon XIII].

[4] Thirdly, [as regards the third theme, the following idea] is set forth [by the Scriptural-passage]: The Temple of the Lord was opened on the Cross, and the Ark of the Testament was seen in the Temple; and there were lightnings and voices and an earthquake and a hail-storm, etc. And these occurred in the ambience of the Church Militant. Then,

at length, there appeared a great sign. For this Holy Woman, viz., the Church, was elevated (subsequently to all the tribulations) above the moon—yea, rather, even treading on the moon—unto the sun. And her garment was the Sun of justice,<sup>4</sup> [i.e.,] Christ; and she was crowned with a crown of twelve stars, which are the twelve Heavenly joys of Glory.

[5] With the foregoing [events] there agrees that which is written in the Canticles: “Who is she who ascends as the morning rising, who is as beautiful as the sun, as excellent as the moon, as frightening as an army set in array?”<sup>5</sup> On this present solemn feast-day Mary is rightly called *the morning rising*. For nothing [symbolically] announces to the whole world the joy of the forthcoming Sun [i.e., Christ] as much as does the daybreak, which announces the imminent arrival of the sun; [and] no brightness (apart from the brightness of the Sun that is Christ) [announces the coming of its sun] as much as does [the brightness] of daybreak. And daybreak is the very light of the sun, by means of which the sun is known—even as the light-of-Glory, which is attained on this feast-day, is the glorious arising Queen.

[6] But who is this woman who is as beautiful as the sun, as excellent as the moon? Surely, it is the Mother Church, which is nourished by the Divine Solar Spirit. She is the bride-without-blemish<sup>6</sup> who bears in herself the likeness of her Bridegroom [and] who is as excellent as the moon, to which the sun imparts all [the moon’s] light. But who is that woman who is as frightening as the army set in array? Surely, she is the frightening army of the holy Church Militant, which, with a certain formidable and astute ordering, sets in array its battle-lines and military-camps so as to conquer its threefold enemy<sup>78</sup> so that its victory might be over death and so that it might be transformed into the [Church] Triumphant, etc.



## NOTES TO *SERMON XV*

1. Apocalypse (Revelation) 11:19. See n. 1 of Sermon XIV.
2. Matthew 12:22. Luke 7:21. John 9:1-7.
3. Mark 7:37 and 9:16-26.
4. Malachias (Malachi) 4:2.
5. Not an exact quotation. Canticle of Canticles 6:9 (Song of Solomon 6:10).
6. Ephesians 5:27.
7. I John 2:16. Each believer wars against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

**Sermon XVI: Gloria in Excelsis Deo**

(“Glory to God in the highest.”)

[December 25, 1432 (?); preached perhaps in Koblenz]

[1] “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.”<sup>1</sup>

This song, beneficial to us and most pleasing to God, was sung by the mouths of angels to the Newborn at the beginning, after the birth of Christ was announced to the shepherds watching over their flock. It is of such great and deep mystery that neither I nor, indeed, anyone else, past or future, will suffice for explaining its sacred truths. For glory is always [due] to the eternal and unchangeable Most Glorious God. For He is the Beginning, existing before all creatures; [He is the One] through whom, in whom, and unto whom all things are.<sup>2</sup> With Him in the beginning was always the Word; and in the beginning the Word was God Himself.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, [glory is due Him] because all things were made by Him and because whatever was made was Life in Him before it was created. And the Life was the Light of men, because the entire illumination of the being, the life, and the truth [of created things] proceeds from this Living Fount, although darkness does not comprehend [this Light].

[2] Is not glory always [due] to Him (who on different occasions and in many different ways spoke in times past through the Prophets<sup>4</sup> and through witnesses and, lastly, through John) inasmuch as He is the Life of the living [and] is He from whom comes every good? But glory in the highest [is due] to Him now because last of all<sup>5</sup> the Word was made flesh,<sup>6</sup> and [God] spoke to us through His Son. What very sublime and super-wondrous and unprecedented gladness! For on the earth of human nature—where by the envy of the Devil,<sup>7</sup> [and] through the fall of our first parents, death and sin and enmity and war were always found—the angels now sing out: “Peace to men of good will.” For the Word made flesh has dwelt among us, and His place was made in peace.<sup>8</sup>

[3] How is it that this was done—except because of the fact that mercy and truth have met each other.<sup>9</sup> (They were at odds with each other because of man’s sin and God’s law.) Moreover, they have kissed each other in peace and in justice.<sup>10</sup> Who [can] conceive of such enormous things? Who will declare the generation<sup>11</sup> of this King of

Peace<sup>12</sup> who on this [feast-]day entered the world? And who will disclose such great, super-wondrous mysteries? [It will] not [be] a man, because man is a finite creature, is grass and a flower of the field.<sup>13</sup> Hence, since we need divine assistance in proportion to our weakness, let us recur, with a very devout mind, to the Mother of our Savior—[the Mother] of Life and of Truth—so that we may merit to have, for our contemplation of so great a mystery, some of her salvific sweetness.

*PART ONE*

*The Three Masses of This Feast,  
and the Threefold Birth of Christ*

[4] “Glory [to God in the highest,]” etc.<sup>14</sup>

If with a vigilant mind anyone will reflect on all the things that have (by the ordinance of the holy Mother Church) been ordained for the offices of this present festival: then, to the extent that a man is permitted to know [it], he will arrive at the very lofty contemplation of salvation, rest, and happiness—[the objects] of all our knowledge [and] investigation. Now, the first Gospel-text—for the nocturnal mass—has to do with the description of a man, viz., Caesar Augustus. The second [text]—for the mass at sunrise—has to do with the angel’s declaration. And the third [text]—for the mass which is sung once the sun has arisen above the entire hemisphere—is about the Word, which was with God in the beginning. Man’s intellect is darkened and nocturnal; an angel’s intellect is bright like daybreak; the Divine Intellect is like the sun itself, since it illumines every man coming into this world.<sup>15</sup> The task of man’s [intellect] is to describe the world. The task of angels is to announce the Savior, whom all super-celestial powers glorify in Heaven and whom on earth all men of peace glorify. The graciousness of the Savior consists in His manifesting Himself to the world.

[5] Now, in the darkness-of-night (which symbolizes the human intellect) our Savior, who is Divine and human, was born and was placed in a manger as grass is placed before oxen and asses. Therefore, let us seek—as best we can, if not as strong oxen then at least like the simple asses—to taste mentally of this food of angels. Now, the mass that is celebrated around midnight symbolizes our Savior’s eternal begottenness, which is incomprehensible because of its darkness. The second mass, at sunrise, symbolizes His temporal birth, which is more comprehensible, as regards His humanity. And the third [mass sym-

bolizes] the spiritual [birth] that is obtained in the present through grace and in the future through glory. Accordingly, let us who are seated around the crib of our Savior at night contemplate these three [births] as best we can.

Indeed, as fully as we can, let us for the sake of the intellectuals consider the eternal begottenness of the Son of God. Next, for the sake of ordinary [believers let us consider] the temporal [birth of Jesus]. And, lastly, for the sake of contemplatives [let us consider His] spiritual [birth in us].

## PART TWO

### *The Son's Eternal Begottenness.*

#### *Here His Temporal Begottenness Is Merely Touched Upon*

[6] And although the eternal begottenness is not comprehensible [to us] on this pilgrims' pathway, nevertheless in whatsoever measure we can contemplate it, let us elevate ourselves. For the highest perfection of our intellect consists in this [elevated contemplating]. For we who are on this pilgrims' pathway ought to seek or to hope for nothing other than to arrive at a clear knowledge of this [doctrine] in the Heavenly state. It must be known, therefore, that the birth of the Son of God is nothing other than the intellectual proceeding of the Word from God the Father—or nothing other than the bringing forth of the Divine Word. For Blessed God is the Intellectual Beginning of every creature, [and] He acts through Intellect and Will. (For He did all that He willed to ..., etc.<sup>16</sup> He spoke, [and it was done] ..., etc.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is necessary that there be in Him an Intellectual, or a Mental, Word in and through whom He understand Himself and other things.

Now, it is of [the essence] of a word that it be the word of someone other than itself, for it is spoken of as the word, respectively, of the one who utters it; i.e., [it is the word of the one] by whom it is uttered. That is, it is produced by being spoken. Therefore, the Divine Word proceeds from someone from whom [this Word] is, assuredly, really distinguished, by virtue of the fact that nothing proceeds from itself (according to Augustine, in his *De Trinitate*).<sup>18</sup> But [the Word] does not proceed from a creature; therefore, He proceeds from God. He does not proceed from the Divine Essence, since the Essence is not distinguished really from the Son; for each [Divine] Person *is* the Divine Essence. Hence, when we say “The Word proceeds from God,”<sup>19</sup> “God” ought to be construed personally—[ought to be taken] not for the Essence but rather for the Person, viz., of the Father.

[7] Moreover, because of God's simplicity and immutability, His Word cannot be an accident<sup>20</sup> of the Divine Mind, as occurs with us and with angels. Nor can His Word be, as it were, a created substance added intrinsically to Him as form or added in some way extrinsically. For all these [alternatives] are inconsistent with the Divine Perfection—especially since every created thing is finite and cannot represent, [in a non-symbolical way], the Infinite. Therefore, since God understands both Himself and all things in and through His Word, it follows that the Word is a thing uncreated and infinite; and this can only be God. And because there is only one God, the Word is not distinguished essentially and really from God, although the Word is distinguished personally, in a real way, from the Father.

[8] Every essential distinction is real but not vice versa. And the Divine Essence is each of the Persons, and vice versa. Nevertheless, there agrees with the Persons something that does not agree with the Essence (viz., spiration, begetting, etc.). Therefore, it is conceded that in some way the Essence is formally distinguished from the Persons, etc. And, thus, in God distinctions are formal and personal. And it is true to say that the several things in God—viz., the three Persons—are one Essence. [9] Now, this Word is infinite in essential perfection, because He is God. And He is infinite in representing, because He represents very universally, yet very perfectly and very determinately. He represents better than all other mental and vocal words—created and creatable—can represent. (He represents) in the way that super-optimally befits divine knowing. It follows that there is only one Word, which primarily represents God, i.e., [represents] the Divine Essence. For the primary object of the Divine Intellect is God Himself. John seems to speak in accordance with this sense, [when he says]: “The Word was with God”—[says it] in the way in which one is accustomed to say “His contemplation is of himself” (i.e., “He is the object of his own contemplation, or conceptualization”).

[10] The next birth is that by means of which that wonderful Only-Begotten of God, and First-born of Mary, proceeded on this day as Bridegroom from His chamber.<sup>21</sup> (On this day He proceeded) into this world of grief and sorrow—proceeded as King of Peace [and] (in accordance with the prophecy of Ezechiel) with the gates of the most holy Tabernacle closed.<sup>22</sup> [He was born] in Bethlehem of Juda,<sup>23</sup> the City of David—[a topic] on which I shall speak in another sermon, where [the theme of] this birth of our Savior will be introduced. And because the aforesaid things are exceedingly lofty (for they are about

the Word who from the beginning was with God and was God and who assumed—by means of a wondrous union and for our salvation—a human nature): there was rightly said [by the angels], “Glory to God in the highest.”

*PART THREE*

*Christ’s Spiritual Birth in Those of Peace*

[11] As regards the third, spiritual birth of Christ in us: it must be said that the Word-made-flesh dwelt among men, to whom (in accordance with the theme of good will) peace was given. Moreover, we must know that such a daily “spiritual birth”—which the invisible mission of the Son of God is accustomed to be called—is nothing other than the procession of the Word, or of Begotten Wisdom, from God the Father unto the minds of rational creatures for the purpose of graciously illuminating spiritual creatures. For although the Word of God, i.e., Divine Wisdom, is present everywhere and is present in each rational creature through [that creature’s] essence (for the Trinity as a whole and at once stretches from end to end mightily and disposes of all things agreeably), nevertheless the Word is not present everywhere through freely given light. Accordingly, when such divine light arises in a bedarkened mind or when more light arises in a less illuminated mind, the Son of God is fittingly said to be born. Although this work is, in fact, done by the Trinity as a whole (since the works of the Trinity are indivisible), nevertheless it is, without doubt, rightly ascribed to the Son, inasmuch as He is the Image of God, the Word of God, and the Wisdom of God, and the Radiance of eternal light.<sup>24</sup> It is [the nature] of a word to illumine the mind; it is [the nature] of wisdom to make wise; and it is [the nature] of an immaterial image to liken, and to refashion, each one’s mind to that of which it is the image; and it is [the nature] of radiance to make the mind bright. Hence, of the Word of God it is written: [Wisdom] conveys itself into holy souls and makes [of them] friends and prophets.<sup>25</sup>

[12] And through such a spiritual birth nothing is acquired by the Son of God; rather, those in whom He is born are made sons of God through grace (in the present) and through glory (in the future). Contained in the Gospel is the [statement] that in the following way [Christ] gave us power to become sons of God: not by being reborn by the will of the flesh or by blood but by being reborn from God by the in-breathing [of the Holy Spirit].<sup>26</sup> And this fact is that of which that wise man says, “Send forth that Wisdom . . .” etc.<sup>27</sup> For after the fashion of

the sun, that Wisdom causes three things in a man; for it (1) illumines and brightens, (2) it warms, and, at length, (3) it makes fruitful. [13] But in what way are we to obtain this brightness and warmth, and fruit? Let us, for the time being, go over to Bethlehem . . . , etc.<sup>28</sup> Now, the pathways of the Lord are peaceable. (Proverbs 3: “All her pathways are peaceable.”)<sup>29</sup> Therefore, he who wishes to come to Bethlehem (i.e., to the House of Bread) in order that Jesus may be born in him, must be peaceable and of good will. For the new angelic declaration on earth is the following: “Peace to men of good will,” etc.

[14] And so, whenever Christ came to meet the Apostles He said: “Peace be with you.” And wherever the Apostles wanted Christ to be born as a result of their preaching, [and] into whatever house they entered, they said: “Peace be to this house.”<sup>30</sup> And Paul, after having announced his joy over the nearness of Christ, said: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding . . . ,” etc.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, if you want Christ to be born in you, have peace, which consists of *conformity*, *humility*, and *tranquility*. For he who *conforms* his own will to the Divine Will is at peace. (Job 9: “Who will resist Him and have peace?”)<sup>32</sup> Presumably, the answer would be: “No one.”) Next, *humility* conduces to peace in such a way that without humility there is no peace. [Among us] it is commonly said that “two fatheads in one sack do not tolerate each other.” (Ephesians 4: “Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”)<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, *tranquility* of mind aids the good of peace. Just as no one can be at ease in a thorny place, so a restless heart cannot have true peace. (“In peace—in that very thing—I will sleep . . . ,” etc.)<sup>34</sup>

He who wishes to be peaceful must observe these things—namely the things that have been said. [15] And [one who wishes to be peaceful] must keep himself from a *defiled peace*, which is the concordance of many things unto an evil end. ([This is a peace such] as Pilate had with Herod.)<sup>35</sup> And, according to the Psalmist, [a defiled peace] is called a peace among sinners.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, [one must keep himself] from a *feigned peace*—the kind of peace that characterized Judas, the Betrayer. The Psalmist [writes]: “They speak peace with their neighbor . . . ,” etc.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, [one who wishes to be peaceful must keep himself] from a *disordered peace*, [which occurs] when the superior obeys the inferior. Such a peace is worse than is war. Adam had such a peace with Eve, his wife, since *he* obeyed *her*.

Moreover, [one who wishes to be peaceful must safeguard himself], because in Scripture war is found to be fourfold: (1) war between

the flesh and the spirit ([a war] which penance pacifies); (2) war between man and God (which justice pacifies); (3) war between angels and men (which the Son's incarnation has pacified); (4) war between a man and his neighbor (which long-suffering pacifies).

[16] Now, he who thus is peaceful and has a house adorned with peace can approach Bethlehem, and in him our peaceable Savior will immediately be born spiritually. Therefore, let us upwardly direct our loving contemplation toward the birth of Christ, in order that when with a pious and peaceful mind we recall His super-wondrous birth, we may experience illumination, warmth, and fruitfulness.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENT

[17] Chancellor Gerson states [in his work] *On Mystical Theology*, Chapter 2: "Faith, it seems to me, is peace in and through believing."<sup>38</sup> Hence, when a man no longer seeks to apprehend by means of rational considerations, and when he has peace with respect to the authority of the one who speaks and when he is obedient, then there is peacefulness by means of his believing. But since every sin has its origin from presumption, Christ comes in order to remove all presumption that is innate to us as a result of our first parent, who willed because of his presumptuousness to be like God and, like God, to know good and evil, and who did not will to obey, in order through obeying to be able to eat of the Tree of Life. Hence, in order to recommend to us obedience, [God the Son] became a man and emptied Himself<sup>39</sup> so as to show us two things: viz., (1) how it is that obedience and humility are so pleasing to God that He sent His Son into the world and (2) that the Son Himself was obedient in this regard. Although the Son was in the form of God ...,<sup>40</sup> etc., He became a man in order to obey the Father; indeed, He became obedient to the Father even unto death—even unto death on the Cross.<sup>41</sup> Nothing baser than this kind [of death] could have occurred—[occurred] in order for man to learn in this way that he must be obedient and in order that he would know how it is that through obedience humanity, having the peacefulness that comes from faith, ascends unto the Divinity. For the humanity of Christ crossed over into the person of the Word, because Christ came into the world in order to do the will of the Father.<sup>42</sup> And so, from the peacefulness that comes from faith we have the learning of truth and the experiencing of obedience's usefulness against presumption.



## NOTES TO *SERMON XVI*

1. Luke 2:14.
2. Romans 11:36. Colossians 1:16.
3. This sentence and the subsequent ones are adapted from John 1:1-5.
4. Hebrews 1:1.
5. Hebrews 1:1-2.
6. John 1:14.
7. Wisdom 2:24.
8. Psalms 75:3 (76:2).
9. Psalms 84:11 (85:10).
10. Cf. Psalms 84:11 (85:10).
11. Isaias (Isaiah) 53:8.
12. Cf. Hebrews 7:2.
13. Isaias (Isaiah) 40:6.
14. Luke 2:14.
15. John 1:9.
16. Psalms 113:3B (115:3).
17. Psalms 32:9 (33:9).
18. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, 1, 1 (*PL* 42:820).
19. Although the usual Orthodox way of speaking states that the Son is *begotten* of the Father, whereas the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son, Nicholas is not here veering from Orthodoxy. For like others before him, he regards being begotten as a kind of proceeding. See my article "Verständnis und Bedeutung des Dreieinen Gottes bei Nikolaus von Kues," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, 28 (2003), 135-164.
  20. "... cannot be an accident": i.e., cannot be an incidental feature of the Divine Mind.
    21. Cf. Psalms 18:6 (19:5).
    22. Ezechiel (Ezekiel) 44:2.
    23. Matthew 2:1. In Sermon XVII Nicholas speaks of Jesus's temporal birth.
    24. Wisdom 7:26.
    25. Wisdom 7:27.
    26. John 1:12-13.
    27. Not an exact quotation. Wisdom 9:10.
    28. Luke 2:15.
    29. Proverbs 3:17 (not Proverbs 4, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text).
    30. Luke 10:5.
    31. Philippians 4:7.
    32. Job 9:4.
    33. Ephesians 4:3 (not Ephesians 3, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text).
    34. Psalms 4:9 (4:8).
    35. Luke 23:12.
    36. Psalms 72:3 (73:3).

37. Psalms 27:3 (28:3): "... who speak peace with their neighbor; but evils are in their hearts."

38. Jean Gerson, *De Mystica Theologia Practica*, Consideratio I [See Vol. VIII, p. 19 in Palémon Glorieux, editor, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Desclée and Cie, 1971)].

39. Philippians 2:7.

40. Philippians 2:6.

41. Philippians 2:8.

42. Matthew 26:39. John 6:38.

**Sermon XVII: Gloria in Excelsis Deo**

(“Glory to God in the highest.”)<sup>1</sup>

[December 25, 1432 (?); preached perhaps in Koblenz]

[1] “Glory [to God in the highest,]” etc.

Secondly,<sup>2</sup> we must consider, chiefly, the temporal birth of the eternal Word of God. And in this regard two things are to be considered: viz., the reason for the Incarnation and the manner of the Incarnation.

*PART ONE*

*The Reason for the Incarnation*

[2] As concerns the reason for [the Incarnation], we must first of all consider the fact that, from the beginning, man was created for the following ends: viz., in order to serve and to obey God; secondly, in order thereby to come to the eternal Kingdom. And man was given the commandment not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, since otherwise he would utterly die. [But] man sinned. [Man’s] cause was argued before the Law-Giver. Charges were adduced against man by Justice and Truth; and Mercy and Peace argued on behalf [of man].<sup>3</sup> First, Justice argued against man that God is a just Judge and that for this reason it was decreed that [man, if he ate of the Tree,] ought utterly to die, etc. Therefore, [he deserves death], etc. On man’s behalf Mercy contended that by means of this same Justice the Eternal Source of human beings created man for salvation and that because of man’s weakness He often made known the law of mercy and that He ought to be merciful, etc.

Truth adduced a counter-argument; Peace responded, etc. And subsequent to the reply (which is stated elsewhere), Peace adduced the graciousness of the Creator-Lord. [And Peace mentioned] that from the beginning [God] had predestined many men and from the beginning had established His Church as His bride and had adorned her in various ways as a Paradise. And He had placed the Tree of life in the middle [of Paradise], where the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil was. And in Paradise He had consecrated the great [marital] sacrament of the perpetual union-of-Adam-and-Eve, befiguring [the union] of the Church and the Savior. [And Peace mentioned] that, from the beginning, the Church derived from Adam, who befigured Christ, and that

Adam was composed of bone and flesh, i.e., of Christ's predestined Church. And in this greatest sacrament there were symbolized (according to Paul in [his letter] to the Ephesians) the sons of adoption and the joint-heirs with Christ,<sup>4</sup> who is the First-born, the true King, and the eternal Heir. And [Peace mentioned] that at different times and in many ways [God] had spoken about this fact through the Fathers [and] the Prophets<sup>5</sup>—[spoken] in shadows, figures, and signs. And [Peace said] that the whole of Scripture endeavored to express, in various ways, this sole truth about the Savior, the Son, the Heir, the Head, the First-born of every creature.<sup>6</sup> And [Peace spoke] of the concordant and harmonious gradations of all the things that have flowed forth from the Creator through the Son: they will all be returned unto the Creator in a certain super-wondrous way. Moreover, [Peace argued] that (according to Ambrose<sup>7</sup> and others and according to all the holy truths) angelic and human rational creatures would, for their ultimate salvation, be united only to this same [Son] in a oneness of Body.

[3] Therefore, seeing that all men have need of a Healing Physician—especially with regard to rest and love for God (by means of which love God ordained unto Himself all things thus created), then lest there be said in vain and meaninglessly all those written things which Paul (especially in Ephesians) expounds very enthusiastically, the Holy Trinity took under advisement these accusations. And Eternal Truth itself—persuaded by Mercy and Peace—came down in order that, having thought of a mode of satisfying eternal Justice, man, who sinned, might be set free. Now, not an angel but a man sinned against God, who is infinite and eternal—[sinned] in that he believed the Devil and not God. [The man] wanted to be equal to the Supreme Being—[equal] not in terms of believing but in terms of knowing. ([He sinned] by means of this crime of *lèse majesté*; by means of an original condemnation this crime passed to the man's descendants.) Therefore, the remedy of satisfaction for so great an offense could not be found by finite and delimited man.

The verdict was rendered that the Lord of infinite graciousness, of justice, of truth, and of mercy and of peace—the Creator, the Word of God—would assume human flesh, would descend from Heaven, would assume a humanity, would make satisfaction, and, having pacified Justice, would lead man back to his Heavenly Home.

And today is the most holy solemn feast of this super-wonderful [re-]uniting.

## PART TWO

*How It Is That the Eternal Word Was Born in Time*

[4] Let us examine briefly the arrangement by which this birth was accomplished. And we must become aware that the birth is twofold: viz., in the Virgin and from the Virgin. As regards the former, it is said: “The man is born in her, and the Most High Himself has founded her.”<sup>8</sup> That is, [this occurred] when, with the power of the Most High over-shadowing her and with the Holy Spirit supervening,<sup>9</sup> the Word was made flesh.<sup>10</sup> Assuredly, it is not the case that [the Word] was transformed into flesh or vice versa. Nor was [the Word brought] into a certain confused mingling with flesh. Nor was [the Word] made fleshly by assuming flesh into a oneness of person. Nor was [the Word] made animal flesh without a rational soul, as individual heretics have individually thought. Rather, the Word was made flesh, i.e., was made a complete human being (including a rational soul) with two natures and one person—not with [only] one nature or with two persons, as certain heretics have claimed. Rather, then, the Word assumed flesh, i.e., a humanity. For “flesh” is understood to mean *man*—as in the following passages: “All flesh is grass”<sup>11</sup> and “All flesh will come unto You.”<sup>12</sup>

[5] Hence, all at once [and] not as in the case of others who are in time, the Word was made flesh from the very pure blood of virginal flesh—[was made] a complete human being consisting of a rational soul and a human body. For according to the prophecy of Jeremias<sup>13</sup> a virgin all at once encompassed a complete human being, consisting of a soul and a body. In the case of [all] others, this [ensoulment] does not happen, unless the body is older and larger in size.<sup>14</sup> O such great perfection and manliness at the outset of conception! For with respect to His spirit and the higher part of His soul, [Jesus] was a Discerner: by means of a beatific vision He beheld the divine essence and all things—present, past, and future—shining forth in the Divine Word. Already at that time, that most sacred soul was elevated only unto God. It was thinking thoughts of peace;<sup>15</sup> it was full of fixed-dispositions for all virtues, graces, and fields of knowledge. It had within itself all the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom.<sup>16</sup> But as regards the lower part of the soul, viz., the sensibility, He was made like us<sup>17</sup> and was found, in His fixed-disposition, to be like a human being.<sup>18</sup> Thus, He could experience pain and sorrow and could, with us, drink from the torrent of present afflictions<sup>19</sup> and could learn from the things He was going

to suffer,<sup>20</sup> and could suffer with his brethren in all respects<sup>21</sup> —as is written in Hebrews. The following points are to be reflected upon: how at that time He sanctified this Tabernacle,<sup>22</sup> viz., the Blessed Virgin—[sanctified it] abundantly and filled it with inexplicable grace and gladness. “Exult and praise, O Habitation!”<sup>23</sup> Etc. Reflect on how it is that she was the Mother of [Him who is] God and a human being—contrary to [the teachings of] the heretics. Etc.

[6] For in Christ there are not two hypostases, but there is [only] one.<sup>24</sup> And in Christ the hypostatic union of the human nature and the divine nature is so great that the human hypostasis passes into the divine hypostasis but the two natures remain distinct in the oneness of the divine hypostasis. For although the humanity of Christ is purely a creature, it is not a person—i.e., not a hypostasis—and not (properly speaking) a human being. For “a human being” is the designation for a person. For person, or hypostasis, exists and subsists *per se* in such a way that it does not depend—as a part depends on the whole or as a form depends on an object or something else—on anything that supports it through some power and that supplies its personhood and hypostaticness. In short, [person] does not depend on any thing that supports it by means of some power-of-existence other than the person’s own.

Two of these three modes<sup>25</sup> are found in natural objects, and the third mode is found only in Christ. (Moreover, every *person* is an *hypostasis*, but not vice versa. “Rational hypostasis,” qua signifying *per se*, signifies person.) For in the third way human nature, although it remains in Christ, is so intimately united to the Word that it does not obtain the form of hypostaticness but transfers all such hypostaticness unto the divinity. And because when the Word assumed His humanity, He did not lose His personhood (but, rather, the assumed human nature lost its personhood), the Word is not properly said to have assumed a man, since the Word did not assume the hypostasis of a man. Rather, [the Word is said to have assumed] a humanity, [i.e., a human nature]. And if at some time we read that the Word assumed a *man* [*homo*], the word “man” (*homo*) ought to be taken to stand for a *human nature*, which was assumed by Christ from the beginning and which never existed in and of itself. Therefore, in Christ there was a unique hypostasis—i.e., [only] one person—and there was, unconfusedly, a divine nature and a human nature, and there was the Word, born before all ages,<sup>26</sup> and born today in time, etc.

[7] It is not the case that Christ is composed of the Word and a man. For, in that case, since no whole is its own part: the Word of God

(who is Christ, as we read in today's Gospel of John) would not be Deity or God; and, by like reasoning, neither the human nature nor Christ would exist from eternity but, instead, would be a recent<sup>27</sup> God; and no such hypostasis ought to be believed to have existed from eternity. Do not let the following statement be an obstacle: "Just as the rational soul and the flesh . . .," etc.<sup>28</sup> For an exact analogy is not [thereby] being expressed. Rather [that statement] means that just as a human person subsists in a twofold nature of body and soul, so the person of Christ subsists in the twin substance of the divinity and the humanity.

[8] But we ought to grant that Christ is composed of a body and a soul; for He is a man of like species with us,<sup>29</sup> who are composed in this way. Yet, this labeling befits the divine hypostasis only because of a communication of idioms, i.e., by reason of the union [of the divine nature] with the human nature. For this holy union is so wondrous, profound, and intimate that the divine nature which remains in Christ imparts the hypostasis and, by reason of the hypostasis, or person, applies to itself every name, or idiom, that befits the assumed human nature. For example, [there is said of the divine nature that] it is a man, is the Son of man; [and to the divine nature are ascribed] actions, undergoings, and change. These terms are intended to apply to the human nature in particular, according as the human nature<sup>30</sup> is the designated being. Conversely, names and idioms that befit the divine hypostasis are, by reason of the same union, said, in truest faith, of the human being, who is God. Still, the divine and the human idioms do not befit Christ in the same way. For things divine are said of Him *per se* and unqualifiedly, whereas things human are said of Him not *per se* but *in a certain respect*, viz., by reason of His human nature. Hence, it is evident that Christ and His blessed humanity [i.e., His human nature] are not in the same way said to be composed of a rational soul and a body. For because of the communication of idioms Christ is said *in a certain respect* [to be thus composed], whereas the humanity [i.e., His human nature] is said to be composed *per se* [of a body and a rational soul].

[9] From this fact there originate the following marvelous expressions which faith asserts: viz., that the Immortal One dies, that the Invisible One is seen on earth, that God, who is not changed, is weary from the journey,<sup>31</sup> that the Impassible One is crucified, and that the One who is begotten from eternity is born today, etc. And similarly [compatible are the statements] that the embodied Man [viz., Christ] is everywhere, that the temporal Man is eternal, that the weak Man is omnipotent, etc. Indeed, that [hypostatic] union is so super-wondrous

that we say that Christ, the Son of God, descended unto Hell when He died. But because of the separation of His soul from His body it was not true to say that [at that time] He was a man; [yet, it was true to say this] because the union of the Divine Word with the body and the soul was never dissolved. Indeed, by the same reasoning, Christ both lay in the tomb and descended unto Hell. And, at that time, Christ was reigning everywhere in Heaven and on earth in accordance with His divine nature. This is the super-wondrous union which no one apprehends except by faith [and] which Adam tried to apprehend through knowing and, as a result, fell, etc.

[10] But although these very deep divine mysteries—hidden from the beginning in God [but] now revealed at the end of the ages<sup>32</sup>—are altogether incomprehensible, nevertheless they are not unbelievable.<sup>33</sup> For His testimonies are made exceedingly believable.<sup>34</sup> Previously, He declared these things in the writings of peoples and of princes<sup>35</sup> (i.e., of the just and of the Patriarchs)—[declared them] in figures and symbols and in various proclamations of His holy prophets, who are from the beginning.<sup>36</sup> He reveals all these things to us through evangelists, apostles, and teachers<sup>37</sup> and through shepherds whom He found watching over their flock.<sup>38</sup> And in order that they might behold these wondrous things, He brought them to Bethlehem, etc.

[11] From these things, we know already that Christ was the smallest human being who there ever was.<sup>39</sup> [This statement is true] because from the instant of His conception He was a complete human being and because He was in the womb longer than any other human being and because He received more nourishment from His mother than do others [from theirs], since He was in the womb longer and began to grow from a smaller size. And thus He was joined in a more kindred way to His mother than are all others [to their mothers], because such [a joining] arises from consubstantiality, of which Christ had from Mary more [than do all others from their mothers]. Moreover, very great joy redounded to Mary from the Savior, etc. Christ did not bring His body from Heaven into the Virgin, as the heretic Mani claimed. Nor did the Word assume only flesh, without a rational soul, as Arius claimed. Nor did He assume only a perceptive soul without an intellectual soul, as Apollinaris claimed. Let the heretic Nestorius—who claimed that there are two persons in Christ—keep silent. And likewise [let] Eutyches [remain silent], who claimed that just as there is one person [in Christ] so there is [only] one nature.



## NOTES TO *SERMON XVII*

1. Luke 2:14.
2. This sermon addresses the second of the three themes proposed—in the previous sermon—for the three masses.
3. See Sermon I for a further exposition of this court-case.
4. Ephesians 1:5 and 3:6. Romans 8:17.
5. Hebrews 1:1.
6. “... the First-born of every creature”: Colossians 1:15.
7. Ambrose, *Epistola*, 76: *Ad Irenaeum*, n. 11-13 (*PL* 16:1317-1318).
8. Psalms 86:5 (87:5).
9. Luke 1:35.
10. John 1:14.
11. Isaias (Isaiah) 40:6.
12. Psalms 64:3 (65:2).
13. Jeremias (Jeremiah) 31:22.
14. Normally, that is, the soul is not present with the body until “quickening,” which comes at a later stage of pregnancy, rather than at conception.
15. Jeremias (Jeremiah) 29:11.
16. Colossians 2:3.
17. Philippians 2:7.
18. Philippians 2:8.
19. Psalms 109:7 (110:7).
20. Hebrews 5:8.
21. Cf. Hebrews 4:15.
22. Psalms 45:5 (46:4).
23. Isaias (Isaiah) 12:6.
24. The English word “hypostasis” translates the Latin word “suppositum,” which itself translates the Greek word “ὑπόστασις”. The hypostatic union is the union of Christ’s two natures—divine and human—into one person, i.e., one hypostasis.
25. The three modes are not distinguished clearly by Nicholas. Presumably, they are (1) the mode whereby a being has one person and one nature (as is the case with human beings), (2) the mode whereby a being has no person but has one nature (as is the case with non-human animals), and (3) the mode whereby a being has one person and two natures (as is the case only with Christ).
26. “... born before all ages”: See the Creed of Constantinople (381).
27. “... a recent God”: Note Psalms 80:10 (81:9).
28. See the so-called Athanasian Creed: “Nam sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo, ita Deus et homo unus est Christus.” (“Just as the rational soul and the body are one man, so God and a human nature (*homo*) are one Christ.”)
29. Philippians 2:7.
30. Here (at 8:16) I am reading “natura” in place of “nata”—as does *p*.
31. John 4:6.
32. Colossians 1:26.
33. This passage is important for assessing Nicholas’s understanding of the relationship between faith and reason.

34. Psalms 92:5 (93:5).
35. Psalms 86:6 (87:6).
36. Luke 1:70.
37. Ephesians 4:11.
38. Luke 2:8.
39. Cf. Sermon XXII (35:7), where Christ is called *maximus homo*, in contrast to His here being called *minimus homo*.

**Sermon XVIII: Afferte Domino**

(“Bring to the Lord [glory and honor] ....”)<sup>1</sup>

[January 6, 1433(?); feast-day of the Lord’s epiphany;<sup>2</sup>  
preached somewhere in the diocese of Trier]

[1] “Bring to the Lord glory and honor; bring to the Lord glory to His name. Adore the Lord in His holy court.” Psalms 28.

Recently, on the day of [our Lord’s] birth we heard at length—after our Savior’s genealogy and His eternal and His temporal births were elucidated a bit—how this Word manifested Himself to the nearby Jewish shepherds. Therefore, today, let us consider how it is that we Gentiles, [coming] from afar with gifts, merit to be led by the divine light unto the Savior. And because He Himself is the Lord, and the Great King, over all the earth, whose name is forever blessed, whom all His intellectual spirits adore: we must bring to Him, as Lord, glory and honor; for He is our Father, who is in Heaven. And let us bring glory to His name, which is hallowed; and let us adore Him in His holy court, so that He may give us His Kingdom. To these ends He has given us the instruction by the Holy Spirit through David: “Bring ....” etc.

[2] “Bring to the Lord ....” etc. The three Magi who came to Christ from the East signify the Church, which from out of paganism is united to Christ. Accordingly, the first part of this epiphany will be, namely, how it is that we, as faithful servants, bring glory and honor to our King, who is now manifest. Secondly, in regard to the theophany of the baptism of Christ (where the Church was united to the Savior through marriage), let us bring glory to that name which was given to Him at circumcision—[given to Him] by divine ordinance and angelic revelation and confirmed on the day of His baptism by the voice of the Father, who said “This is my beloved Son.” For Jesus (meaning “Savior”)<sup>3</sup> is called the Son of God. His is a glorious name, one blessed forever. Thirdly, [let us bring glory to the Lord] in regard to the epiphany at the changing of water into wine; by means of this epiphany the Church, His bride, is elevated unto the intoxicating taste of love.

Let us adore [Him] now by at least contemplating [Him] in His holy court—[contemplating] how Christ, who was recently<sup>4</sup> born among us and circumcised, is presented with gifts and is baptized, and how water is changed into wine.

*PART ONE**The Manifestation of the Acme of All Holiness in Christ.**How It Is That We Ought To Serve Him*

[3] First of all, let an account be set forth of how it is that the Savior, from the beginning, always manifested Himself through the Prophets ever more and more clearly. And the closer the Prophets lived in relation to [the time of] Christ, the more clearly they prophesied and the holier they were (e.g., John the Baptist, etc.). And, thus, immediately after Christ, the very holy Apostles and disciples preached Christ in all the world. And from the beginning of the world unto [the time of] Christ the Church grew successively in holiness—up to [the life of] Christ, the acme of all holiness. And from [the time of] Christ unto the Day of Judgment holiness diminishes, because the Anti-Christ, who is opposed to Christ, is the fount of all wickedness and sin, etc. And [let us contemplate] how it is that on the basis of a lesser manifestation of Christ our fathers wrote, with regard to morals and to life, about the Anti-Christ—[wrote] that at that time his coming was very near. For they saw many evils and saw times that were worse than the times of their fathers (just as each age has complained as regards its own days). And on the basis of this reasoning we infer that the Anti-Christ will come soon, because all things are disposed toward evils; and, furthermore, according to the calculation of some men, the time [of the Anti-Christ] is approaching because (as many [of these men] say) the world is supposed to reach an age of only seven thousand years, etc.

[4] Now, we have recently heard how when Christ was born in Bethlehem He manifested Himself to Jewish shepherds. And you have often heard tell [how He manifested Himself] to pagan kings, etc. And because the pagan Magi, very far removed from Jerusalem, symbolize sinners, and because the Star [of Bethlehem] symbolizes a preacher, I will take up the role of the Star (although I am amid darkness) in order to enlighten and guide you unto the Savior. And just as that Star—created from elements, and corruptible, and unsensing—shows, nonetheless, the Savior: so too, by the word of preaching, the prelate (even one not alive in spirit) [shows the Savior]. But just as a prelate ought to have the characteristics of that Star—viz., ought to go-before, to illumine, to show the way, and to remain there where Christ *is* (indeed, the having of such a prelate is a great joy to the people), so too the people ought to follow the illumination of his teaching, ought to look for it and, at length, ought to find it.

[5] First, then, you ought to know that because Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings, we His servants ought rightly to bring Him glory and honor. For He is “Lord”—the name of power, of jurisdiction, and of authoritativeness—from whom is all power in Heaven and on earth. And “Lord” is the name not only of power but also of equity. He defends the innocent; He punishes wrong-doers through the intermediary of justice. Such is Christ, since (as the Psalmist says) He lifts up the meek.<sup>5</sup> For he who desires to rule follows Christ, etc., and shows his own power over the beasts, as did Noah.<sup>6</sup> {Genesis 9: Let fear of you be upon all the animals (i.e., according to Gregory, [upon all] beasts), etc.}. He who is a plunderer, a robber, an oppressor, he who violates justice (by word, in price charged, or in what he hates), he who receives tributes and does not protect, he who cancels the rights of fathers, he who desires to be feared rather than to be liked, he who in his exactings reckons false appearances for legitimate grounds—he ought to be called a tyrant, not a lord.

But our Lord is not an acceptor of persons;<sup>7</sup> rather, He is a just Creator and Redeemer, a gracious and merciful Father. Although as a gracious Father He chastises us and places us under supervisors and appears intermittently harsh to us, nevertheless [He does] all these things so that we may make progress and may be nourished in the virtues and, at length, may feast with Him at His table. Therefore, we servants ought rightly, as faithful and just servants, to honor this Lord.

[6] There are three kinds of servants. Some who have been born in servitude are *born-again servants* (even as all unbelievers are *not* born-again). There are *purchased servants* (viz., Christian sinners). And there are *hired servants* (as are good Christians who serve willingly, “rejoicing in hope and serving the Lord ...”<sup>8</sup>). If we wish to be good servants, let us not be voracious, drunken, thieving, negligent, idle, lazy, drowsy, opposed to the Lord, presumptuous. ([See] Luke 12, Matthew 24,<sup>9</sup> John 14, II Kings 19, where [you will read] about these things.) Moreover, such servants are like a rhinoceros. Job 39: the rhinoceros will never serve you (which is to say, as it were: such impudent men are like a rhinoceros, which is never subjected to a yoke and is not yoked, by means of any cunning, for the purpose of domestic service).<sup>10</sup> Let us not seek our own profit more than the Lord’s. Let us not carelessly expend entrusted goods. Let us not be demanding in seeking grace from the Lord. Let us believe not that many things are owed to us but that we will have all things because of grace. Let us not be quarrelsome, abusive, contentious, fraudulent, deceitful. (About these [traits see]

Philippians 2, Ecclesiastes 7, Matthew 21, Proverbs 30, IV Kings 21,<sup>11</sup> I Kings 25.)

It is characteristic of persons who are servants to despise their masters. And if they are dealt with kindly, they are accustomed to be haughty toward their masters; but if they are treated harshly, they obey more out of fear; but they do not love more, etc. But let us be good servants who are docile, disposed readily to understand, humble and compliant with regard to obeying, cheerful and consoling, friendly and agreeable when it comes to discussing, manly and courageous for battling the Lord's adversaries, faithful and energetic for distributing the Lord's goods. (About these [topics see] Isaias 52, Luke 12, Isaias 49, I Kings 17, Luke 19.)<sup>12</sup> And so, let us be faithful servants, so that with fear and love we may ever be on guard as concerns the tasks entrusted to us by the Lord, since we are going to give an account ..., etc.<sup>13</sup>

[7] And because it pertains especially to servants to be reverent, we ought to have reverence for our Lord and for all His commandments and for His created image. And, first, our Lord [ought] always to be revered and, secondly, our angel, in whose sight (as says Bernard)<sup>14</sup> you should be ashamed to do what you would not do in man's presence. Let us hold in reverence holy places, which are fearsome (Genesis 28).<sup>15</sup> Likewise, [let us hold] men [in reverence]. I Peter 2: Honor all men ...,<sup>16</sup> etc. Be subject to every human creature for God's sake.<sup>17</sup> And, according to Paul, prefer one another in honor.<sup>18</sup> And we ought especially to honor the image of God in man. If honor is commanded to be shown to the image of the Blessed Virgin, then even more so [it ought to be shown] to the image of the Trinity that is in man. And men are to be honored on account of the angels assigned to watch over them (Matthew 18).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, because of the human nature that is united to the divine nature, servants are not to be despised. Cyprian: In the manner in which you desire that God deal with you, so deal you with your servant.<sup>20</sup> Seneca: Deal in such a way with your inferior as you wish your superior to deal with you.<sup>21</sup> Ecclesiasticus 33:<sup>22</sup> If your servant is faithful, let him be to you as your soul; treat [him] as your brother.

Do not shun sinners, because a sinner can be made holy. Deuteronomy 23: Do not abhor the Edomite, because he is your brother.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, those who are living a good life are especially to be honored, for they are related to God by means of every kind of kinship. Matthew 12: He who shall do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, he is my brother, [my] sister, and [my] mother.<sup>24</sup> Let God be honored

in those who are just, because He dwells within them. Nor are the poor to be despised; for what is done to them is done to God.<sup>25</sup> And although all men are to be honored for God's sake, nevertheless lords and leaders are all the more to be honored.<sup>26</sup> (I Timothy 5).<sup>27</sup> Romans 13: Every soul ..., etc.<sup>28</sup> ([See also] Colossians 3, etc.)<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the youth ought to honor the elderly. Leviticus 19: Rise up before the gray-haired, and honor the person of the aged.<sup>30</sup> I Timothy 5.<sup>31</sup> And Seneca: "An elderly man must be treated quite considerately."<sup>32</sup>

Husbands are to be honored by their wives. I Peter 3: Let wives be subject to their husbands.<sup>33</sup> And in the same passage it is next added: husbands, too, are to honor their wives. Accordingly, the Lord did not form woman from the foot of man but from his rib, lest she be despised. A wife ought to obey her husband as being her head. There ought to be [but] one head in marriage, so that there may be peace. For although there are two hands and two feet in the case of a man, there is only one head. If there were two heads, then there would be discord: one head would want to go to the right, the other to the left, etc.

[8] Parents, both spiritual and fleshly, are to be honored. Exodus 20: Honor your father ..., etc.<sup>34</sup> And such honor ought to be by word and by deed. For never be in such straits that you forget your parents—even as Christ on the Cross commended His mother to John.<sup>35</sup> Even unbelievers have that concern. I Timothy 5: If anyone does not provide for his own and especially for his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.<sup>36</sup> Cranes nurture their parents after they have lost their feathers. And as you do to your parents, so it will be done unto you. [Consider] the example of a certain man who gave all his goods to his son, etc; look at the *Compendium of Vices*, etc.<sup>37</sup> Ecclesiasticus 3: he who honors his father shall have joy in his children; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard.<sup>38</sup> And in the same passage [we read]: he who honors his father shall live a long life. The same place [says]: honor your father, in order that a blessing may come upon you, etc.<sup>39</sup> The father's blessing establishes the houses of the children, but the mother's curse uproots the foundation.<sup>40</sup> [Consider] the example of Cham,<sup>41</sup> who scoffed at his father, and of Absalom, who drove out David,<sup>42</sup> and of the children who mocked Eliseus [i.e., Elisha],<sup>43</sup> etc. Therefore, when we keep these commands regarding honor—[keep them] in every circumstance—then we honor the Lord in Himself and in His possessions. And, together with kings, we bring to Him gold, whereby we recognize Him as the immortal, incorruptible, and all-powerful King. Etc.

[Let all of] this [have been said] at the outset. Etc.

PART TWO

*Theophany; and the Blasphemy That Is the Greatest Sin*

[9] Therefore, bring to this great King above all gods,<sup>44</sup> [this King] who does not cast off His people<sup>45</sup> and in whose hand are all boundaries and who Himself beholds the heights of the mountains<sup>46</sup>—therefore, you kindred people, bring to the Lord glory and honor.<sup>47</sup> For He Himself is the Lord our God, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture, etc.<sup>48</sup> Because it has now been said that we ought to bring to the Lord our God glory and honor, there is rightly added: “Bring glory to His name.” For if we are commanded to magnify the Lord, then likewise we are commanded, for the same reason, to exalt His name.<sup>49</sup> First, let us see who, principally, are the glorifiers and who are not. The glorifiers are those who by formed faith<sup>50</sup> believe on His name. In this way they live with true life, [and] they give glory to Him who lives forever.<sup>51</sup> The non-glorifiers are the evil servants who are cloaked with sins and with the darkness of death. Among these the worst ones, and those who give glory the least, are the very wretched blasphemers. Hence, I will make a few remarks about them.

[10] Now, according to Augustine blasphemy occurs when there is ascribed to God that which does not befit Him or when there is denied to befit Him that which does befit Him or when one usurps that which belongs to God.<sup>52</sup> And [blasphemy] can be considered in a twofold way, because a certain [form of it] is *of the heart*, as in the *Lives of the Fathers*<sup>53</sup> we read about a certain man whom the spirit of blasphemy vexed. [See more] about this in the *Compendium of Vices*.<sup>54</sup> For sometimes blasphemy intrudes on what is being thought of [by us—intrudes] without delight [on our part] and as a result of Satan’s inbreathing or, frequently, as a result of our fear of God’s displeasure. (For example, to a man who is in a dark, desolate place fear brings to mind frightening things, whether he wishes it or not; and the very great love of a mother for her son brings the son [spontaneously] to her mind after he has died.) And [this unwilled phenomenon likewise occurs] whenever the Devil, knowing that revilings displease God, speaks blasphemies [silently] in a man, who hears them; but the blasphemy is the Devil’s, not the man’s. Such blasphemy does not contaminate a man. But let the man say: “O, Satan, keep your blasphemy to yourself ...,” etc., “for it is not pleasing to man.” And so, the remedy is contempt for this kind of blasphemy and our having low-esteem for such



thoughts and our keeping quite busy, etc.

[11] The other [form of blasphemy] is blasphemy *of the mouth*, [occurring] when someone speaks in accordance with the aforementioned three [Augustinian] points, etc. And now I intend to speak especially about blasphemy-of-mouth [that occurs] when someone utters a word that is abusive of God (since he wants to strike back at God) and refers to members that ought not to be mentioned. And this sin is very grave, since the blasphemer has a very evil intent; for [the evil intent] is directed against God, and with his tongue the blasphemer penetratingly abuses God and His mother. Neither the Jews had such a wicked intention, nor do heretics have it; for they believe that they are not in error. But a blasphemer *knows* and *believes* and *does*, etc. And there is no sin which is so pointedly directed against God—not licentiousness or greed, ..., etc.

Secondly, [blasphemy is a sin that is] very grave because man is not much inclined toward this sin; and sin is measured in accordance with the smallness of the inclination. Acts 7: They all stopped up their ears ..., etc.<sup>55</sup> And Matthew 26, etc.<sup>56</sup> Thirdly, [this sin is very grave] because it encompasses more than does any other sin, because [it is aimed directly at] God; and because God is most perfect, one sins most gravely against God. Likewise, fourthly, [the blasphemer sins very gravely] because he offends against Him who is most noble. For a wrong is weighed in relation to the person against whom the wrong is done. And, thus, Thomas holds that [blasphemy] is a sin greater than [the sin of] killing a man<sup>57</sup> ... because the blasphemer sins against a commandment of the First [Mosaic] Tablet; and his doing so is more grave than [is a sin] against a commandment of the Second Tablet.<sup>58</sup> Blasphemy is [aimed] more against the person of God in a spiritual way than in an external way against His body. Fifthly, [the sin of blasphemy] is the greatest malice. Cursing one's father or one's mother is punishable by death; and whoever says to his brother "you fool," is worthy of death in Hell ....<sup>59</sup> If so, then a blasphemer is worthy of both physical and spiritual death.<sup>60</sup> Sixthly, [blasphemy is] of maximal disrespect, because God is despised. ([See] *On Heretics*, [the section] regarding *Vergentis*.)<sup>61</sup> If to curse a king is a capital crime ...,<sup>62</sup> the sentence is all the more applicable to a blasphemer.

[12] Blasphemy against God and blasphemy against the saints are a single wrong-doing that are punished in equal measure because of the union [of the saints] with God. {[See] the *Authentica*, [the section beginning with the words] "That one not be licentious unnatural-

ly...,” etc.<sup>63</sup>) For when the soul is apart from the body, it cannot be harmed, on account of its union [with God]. Such [is said] there.} Likewise, [blasphemy is] the worst thanklessness. God ...<sup>64</sup> has given you a tongue for your very great benefit, [but] you would use it to revile Him. Moreover, this sin [of blasphemy] distinguishes the sons of God from the sons of the Devil, because blasphemy is the language of Hell, etc. Therefore, those who hear these diabolical voices ought to plug up their ears, to utter the name “Jesus,” to kiss the ground, to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross, to strike their chest, and strongly to contend, in private, against [these voices]. Moreover, by means of his blasphemy a most wicked man is recognized, because he has sung the song of the Devil, his father. And because [blasphemy] is so great a sin, all creatures speak ill of a blasphemer, since every creature, except the blasphemer, knows His Creator and praises Him. Therefore, they rightly speak ill of the blasphemer insofar as he is an enemy of God. And because of this [i.e., because he is an enemy] he is punished physically, spiritually, and eternally. ([See] *On the Foul-Mouthed*, Chapter 2.)<sup>65</sup>

[13] Moreover, this sin [of blasphemy] God punishes visibly, more than other [sins are punished visibly]. For example, [this visible punishment occurred] in the case of the boy of whom Gregory [tells] in his Dialogue.<sup>66</sup> And [it occurred] in the case of the soldier in France who, while blaspheming, fell into an epileptic fit and on the third day was suffocated by the Devil. And a certain man hauling hay while blaspheming was killed by a fire. Furthermore, a man who was blaspheming against the eye of the Virgin Mary lost his own eye; he blasphemed against her foot and lost [his own foot], etc. A certain blasphemer who wanted to shoot arrows at God discharged an arrow. It was in the air for three days and then returned, bloodied, and landed [lethally] on the blasphemer, whose soul the Devil [then] had. In the area of Milan a man was blaspheming in the midst of his comrades. He was seized by the Devil, lifted into the air, stripped of his clothes, and carried off to Hell. And at Rome a blasphemer was hanged in front of his window by devils. At Milan a blasphemer was seen to be carried off publicly by the Devil. Or again, at Florence, at the location of hermits, there was a denarius-coin having the image of the Virgin. A certain blasphemer, servant of Count Hugo, struck it, and blood flowed from [it], etc. Then too, [the following] must be known: he who does not love God tolerates a blasphemer; and he who does not correct [a blasphemer] when he has the ability to do so, will perish with the blasphemer, etc.

## PART THREE

*On Bethphania—i.e., on the Changing of Water  
into Wine; and by means of Which Contemplation  
This [Transformation] Is Effected*

[14] In a third way let us see from the work of ‘bethphania’ (i.e., [the work] of changing water into wine) how it is, indeed, that we who are watery and insipid and cold may be changed into red and strong wine. And let this [understanding] come about by means of our reflecting on myrrh, so that our life may be buried in Christ by our putting off the old man, etc.<sup>67</sup> Recently, through contemplation, we stood at the Lord’s crib, and we saw the new-born infant in the crib. And because our soul was then made Christ-like: necessarily, in order to be saved, it grows with Christ throughout the eight days leading up to His circumcision. On the first day it grows by meditating on death. On the second day it grows by meditating on the transitory nature of temporal things. On the third day it grows when it meditates on the loss that results from the fact that it is too inclined toward benefits to its body. On the fourth day it grows when it meditates on the Devil’s various machinations, by which a man is ensnared.

On the fifth day [our soul] grows when it reflects on its wretched exile. [The soul] is (1) so oppressed by the bulk of the body and is (2) so distracted by various kinds of things—and (3) by the desire for those things it is so fervently inclined toward the lowest goods—that only with difficulty can it raise itself up to Heavenly things that are to be sought gladly. On the sixth day [the soul] grows when it becomes aware of how greatly God is displeased by arrogance, because of which He cast the angel [Satan] out of Heaven and cast man out of Paradise. On the seventh day [the soul] grows by meditating upon the fact that divine grace is of such efficacy that (1) it makes a man to be conformed to the divine purpose in all his actions and (2) it illumines his activities with a certain God-likeness. And, at that point, [the man] recognizes that of himself he is incapable of doing anything. On the eighth day [the soul] grows when it meditates on the abundance and the richness of divine goodness, which is of such great savor that it draws every mind that tastes of it into a state of having no desire for, and having even a disgust for, every ephemeral delight.

[15] And after Christ has thus increased in us for eight days, the soul begins to be circumcised, so that it may be saved and may remain completely saved. It is circumcised, first, with the knife of providence

through the safeguarding of the outer senses. After making progress, [the soul] is circumcised with the knife of justice through the fervent doing of good works. Thereafter, thirdly, [it is circumcised] with the knife of wisdom through the use and continuance of an internal orderly disposition. And when it has been thus circumcised on [these] three additional days: then, as a result of its fervent love on the twelfth day, it understands that after the eight days were completed, it was saved. Hence, at that point, [the soul] makes itself to be a king from the East (i.e., a new king [from the East]) by departing from Saba (i.e., from darkness), by making its kingdom *clean* and *peaceful* and *Solomon-like* by slaying Adonias ([i.e.,] the lust of the eyes), and by condemning Abiathar to death if he leaves Jerusalem (i.e., by restraining and condemning the lust of the flesh, although it cannot be altogether put to death), and by killing Joab ([i.e.,] the pride of life)—after the fashion of Solomon, who killed both his brother Adonias and Joab the leader and who condemned the priest Abiathar.<sup>68</sup>

And thereupon, with the star of grace as a guide, [the soul] will be led, unfailingly, through the true pathways of the Lord, provided it does not rely on human aid but with steadfast hope clings to divine aid. And [the soul] will come to the Lord Jesus, who is God and a man; and humbly it will find Him—in the Judea of confession, in the House of Bread<sup>69</sup>—to be in Himself of infinite succulence. And it will offer Him (1) faith that is steadfast, incorrupt, golden, without blemish, and incorruptible and (2) the incense-bathed hope of an expected reward of eternal glory and (3) the myrrh of very strong love that will persist unto death and will never fail. By means of this love [the soul] will be happily united—in eternal glory and as a beloved, adopted joint-heir—to Jesus, our very relishable Savior, our Lord, the First-born Heir of all, etc.<sup>70</sup>

And so, the third part of our adoration will be completed (1) when we will have entered, in the foregoing way, into His courts with offerings and (2) when we will—as purified, circumcised, mortified, and bathed in myrrh—adore Him in His holy court. And then—as having been anointed and made Christians—we shall enter (since we have found eternal redemption), into the Holy of holies,<sup>71</sup> so that we shall be saved in eternal glory, to which we are led by Him who lives and reigns [forever], etc.

## NOTES TO *SERMON XVIII*

1. Psalms 28:2 (29:2).
2. The feast-day January 6 commemorates Jesus's manifestation to the Magi. The two other epiphanies referred to in this sermon are the manifestation on the occasion of Jesus's being baptized and the manifestation at the Feast of Cana, where Jesus changed water into wine.
3. Mathew 1:20-21.
4. "... recently": i.e., the feast-day January 6 is close to the Feast of the Nativity (December 25).
5. Psalms 146:6 (147:6).
6. Genesis 9:2.
7. Acts 10:34.
8. Romans 12:11-12.
9. Matthew 24:45-51 (not Matthew 20, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text). Luke 12:41-48. John 14:21. II Kings (II Samuel) 19:26.
10. Job 39:9-12.
11. Philippians 2:3. Ecclesiastes 7:22 (not Ecclesiastes 4, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text). Matthew 21:33-41. Proverbs 30 (not Proverbs 29, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text.) IV Kings (II Kings) 21:23 (not IV Kings 29, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text). I Kings (I Samuel) 25:10.
12. Isaias (Isaiah) 52:13. Luke 12:42-44. Isaias (Isaiah) 49:3-6. I Kings (I Samuel) 17:32. Luke 19:11-26.
13. Luke 16:2.
14. Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Psalmum XC*, "Qui Habitat." Sermon 12.6 (*PL* 183:233C).
15. Genesis 28:17.
16. I Peter 2:17.
17. I Peter 2:13.
18. Romans 12:10.
19. Cf. Matthew 18:10.
20. Cf. Cyprian (not Crispianus, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text), *Liber ad Demetrianum*, 8 (*PL* 4:568-569).
21. Seneca, *Epistolae Morales*, Ep. 47.
22. Ecclesiasticus 33:31 (not Ecclesiasticus 23, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text).
23. Deuteronomy 23:7.
24. Matthew 12:50.
25. Matthew 25:40.
26. Cf. I Timothy 5:17 (not I Corinthians 15, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text).
27. Cf. Lamentations 5:12.
28. Romans 13:1: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers."
29. Colossians 3:22: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the

flesh.”

30. Leviticus 19:32.
31. I Timothy 5:1 (not I Timothy 4, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text): “Rebuke not an elderly man, but entreat him as a father ....”
32. Seneca, *Epistolae Morales*, Epistola 25.
33. I Peter 3:1 (not I Timothy 3, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text).
34. Exodus 20:12: “Honor thy father and thy mother.”
35. John 19:26-27.
36. I Timothy 5:8.
37. William Perald, *Summa Vitiorum*. Codex Cusanus 60.
38. Ecclesiasticus 3:6-7.
39. Ecclesiasticus 3:9-10.
40. Ecclesiasticus 3:11.
41. Genesis 9:20-25.
42. II Kings (II Samuel) 15:7-23.
43. IV Kings (II Kings) 2:23-24.
44. Psalms 94:3 (95:3).
45. Psalms 93:14 (94:14).
46. Psalms 94:4 (95:4).
47. Psalms 95:7 (96:7).
48. Psalms 94:7 (95:7).
49. Psalms 33:4 (34:3).
50. “... by formed faith”: i.e., by faith in-formed by love. Cf. Galatians 5:6.
51. Daniel 6:26.
52. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, I, 1, 1 (*PL* 42:819-820).
53. *Vitae Patrum*, IV, 41 (*PL* 73:840).
54. William Perald, *Summa Vitiorum*. Codex Cusanus 60.
55. Acts 7:57.
56. Matthew 26:65: “Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed: What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy.”
57. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, 13, 3, ad 1.
58. Presumably, Nicholas is alluding to the idea that the first five commandments (on Moses’ first tablet of stone) are more grave than are the last five (on Moses’ second tablet of stone).
59. Matthew 5:22.
60. Spiritual death is eternal separation from God.
61. *Decretales Gregorii IX*, Liber V, Titulus VII (*De Haereticis*, cap. X). [See *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, edited by Aemilius Friedberg, Vol. II, column 783 (Leipzig, 1880): “... longe gravius est aeternam quam temporalem laedere maiestatem.”
62. S. P. Scott, translator, *Corpus Iuris Civilis: The Civil Law*, Book IX, Title 7 (p. 4 of Vol. 15). Cincinnati, 1932 [reprinted 1973; Vol. 15 is contained in Vol. 7 of the reprinted edition]. Capital punishment is not here mentioned.
63. *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Vol. III (*Novellae*), pp. 381-383 (Berlin, 1904), pp. 381-383 (*Novella* 77, entitled “Ut non luxurietur contra naturam ...”).

64. At 12:7 I am regarding “qui” as deleted.
65. *Decretales Gregorii IX*, Liber V, Titulus XXVI (*De Maledicis*), cap. II. [See *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, edited by Aemilius Friedberg, Vol. II, columns 826-827 (Leipzig, 1880).
66. Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum Libri*, IV, 18 (*PL* 77:349).
67. Colossians 3:9. Ephesians 4:22.
68. III Kings (I Kings) 1:5-7 and 2:24-31.
69. “House of Bread” is the meaning of the word “Bethlehem.”
70. Colossians 1:15-16.
71. Hebrews 9:12.0

**Sermon XIX: Verbum Caro Factum Est**

(“The Word was made flesh . . .”)

[December 25, 1438; preached in Koblenz]

[1] “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”<sup>1</sup>

While being now about to say a word about the Word, there occurs [to me] Fulgentius's set of statements in a sermon on the Nativity, where he says:<sup>2</sup>

We find no words by which we can adequately say anything about the Word. For this is a Word which, having been brought forth, does not perish but remains born. It is not an ephemeral word but is an eternal Word. It is not a word *made* by God but is a *begotten* Word—yea, an only-begotten Word. But how can a man speak fittingly about God? How can a mortal speak fittingly about the Immortal? The visible, about the Invisible? The mutable, about the Immutable? The work, about the Artificer? The creature, about the Creator? The small, about the Immense? The temporal, about the Eternal? The power by which He created us is indescribable; the omnipotence by which He re-created us and saved us is indescribable. We call it omnipotence by which the Word—who was in the beginning and was with God and was God—made everything that previously was not. But we call it grace by which the Word, having been made flesh, came to seek and to save that which was lost.<sup>3</sup>

[2] Hence, since all language is altogether inadequate to say a word about the Word, but since, nevertheless, we are commanded in the [Book of] Psalms to declare His salvation from day to day:<sup>4</sup> let us—on the basis of the teaching of St. Paul, St. Dionysius, and others—obtain today (when the heavens have been made mellifluous) from the Word made flesh, from the very beloved Child, that He make up our insufficiency. And let us say with St. Augustine (Chapter 3 of his *Soliloquies*): “O Word through whom all things have been made and without whom no thing was made, O Word preceding all things but preceded by no thing, O Word creating all things but without whom all things are nothing, O Word through whom You, [O God], said from the beginning ‘Let there be light,’ and light was made: command now that there be light (and light will be made) in order that I may see light and may recognize whatever is not light. For without You darkness is reckoned for me as light, and light is reckoned as darkness. And, thus, without Your light: error is present, and vanity is present; there is no truth; there is no discernment; there is confusion; ignorance is present; there is no knowledge; there is blindness; there is no pathway, no life,



etc. Let there be light, so that I may see the light and avoid the darkness, which does not comprehend You, etc.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, give light in my heart [and] words in my mouth. Open the secrets of the Holy Scriptures, and open the deep mysteries of Your Kingdom.”

[3] And once again, praying with Dionysius at the beginning of his *Angelic Hierarchy*, let us say: O Lord, Holy Father, You<sup>6</sup> are the Father of lights<sup>7</sup> and He from whom all enlightenment is present in heaven and on earth. For You illumine; and, thus, in illumining, You make lights. And You draw into the brightness of Your light the darkness of creatures, and You unite [creatures] with You in the unity of Your light. And unto this end You sent to us, on this day, Jesus, Your principal Light, who illumines every man who comes into this world.<sup>8</sup> Through Your only Son deign to enlighten us . . . , etc. And in order that this [enlightening] be accomplished, let us approach the Mother of the Incarnate Word ([the Word] who was made flesh from her flesh at the moment when she said “Let it be done with me in accordance with Your word”<sup>9</sup> . . . ) in order that she may intercede with her Son for us, so that we may deserve to be heard, etc.

#### ORGANIZATION

*Three Parts of the Sermon Are Indicated. Eleven Conditions  
for Entering into [an Understanding of] the Gospel  
(John 1:1-14) Are Elicited from the Gospel*

[4] First, [I will speak] about the Eternal Word, next about the Word’s having been made flesh, thirdly about His having dwelt among us. In order to enter into [an understanding of] these [topics], let us first of all clearly examine the Gospel-text in which John expresses, first, the co-eternity of the Word with the Father when John says: “In the beginning was the Word.” Secondly, [let us consider] the distinct property and personality of the Word—distinct from the Father’s—because “the Word was with God.” Thirdly, [let us examine] the Word’s sameness of substance with the Father, because “the Word was God.” Fourthly, [let us consider] the effective causal agency of the Word with respect to all things visible and invisible, because “all things were made by Him and without Him nothing was made.”

[And let us examine]:

- . . . fifthly, the ideal formedness (in the Word) of all created<sup>10</sup> things. For “what was made was life in Him,” since a creature has truer existence in God than in itself. Hence, our knowledge of

things in the Word is called morning knowledge, and our knowledge of things in their own genus is called evening knowledge.

- ... sixthly, created things' permanent aliveness in the Word, because "in Him was life."

- ... seventhly, the goodness diffused from the Word unto all things, because "the life was the light of men." Hence, every creature is only a certain participated divine goodness [i.e., a certain participation in Divine Goodness].

- ... eighthly, the brightness breathed into John and the other prophets, because "a man was sent [from God] ...," etc.

- ... ninthly, the humanity assumed by the Word, because "the Word was made flesh."

- ... tenthly, the Word's graciousness that was shown to us, because "He dwelt among us and we saw ..."

- ... eleventhly, the full usefulness obtained by us to this end [viz., of salvation], because "[the Word was] full of grace and of truth."

#### *PART ONE*

*The Loftiness-of-Soaring by means of which  
John the Evangelist  
Speaks about the Word. And the Reasons  
for There Being a Trinity in God*

[5] All the doctors [of the Church] admire the height of the eagle-in-flight ...,<sup>11</sup> which, as Ezechiel saw,<sup>12</sup> was above other fables. Hence, Eriugena,<sup>13</sup> [commenting] on [the text] "In the beginning was the Word," [alludes to] the voice of the high-flying bird that soars (not above the material air or the aether or the circumference of the entire perceptible world, but) beyond all speculation, beyond all existing and non-existing things—[the bird] that transcends [them] by means of wings of innermost knowledge-of-God and by eyes of very bright and very lofty contemplation.<sup>14</sup> Now, I mean by "existing things" "things [whose names] do not altogether lack human or angelic meaning." I mean by "non-existing things" "things [whose names], indeed, elude the power of all understanding." The blessed theologian John soars above not only things which can be spoken of or understood but also above those things which surpass all understanding and meaning. And by an ineffable flight of mind he is exalted beyond all things unto the secrets of the one Beginning of all things. And discerning clearly the incomprehensible, singular super-substantiality of this Beginning and

of His Word (i.e., of the Father and of the Son), John begins his Gospel [by writing]: “In the beginning was the Word.”

O blessed John, you are rightly called John since in Latin [your name] means “him to whom a gift has been given.”<sup>15</sup> For to which of the theologians was there given what was given to you, viz., to penetrate the secrets of the Highest Good? Etc. Likewise, Dionysius<sup>16</sup> in his letter to John (this is his last letter) calls John *the theologian* and *the sun-of-the-Gospel*. Augustine<sup>17</sup> in Homily 20 *On John* tells of how John transcended the earth, the sea, the air, and all other created things. And in Homily 36 on the same [man, Augustine<sup>18</sup> tells of] how at dinner John imbibed from the Lord’s breast those things which later he belched forth above all created understanding. Regarding the agreement of the Gospels, [Augustine<sup>19</sup> mentions] how it is that the three other Evangelists walk, as it were, with the man Christ on earth, whereas the Evangelist John soars in the loftiness of the divinity. Etc.

Moreover, Jerome, [in his letter] to Paul<sup>20</sup>—and it is a preface to the Bible—expresses admiration for the voice of [John], the rustic and the fisherman, [who wrote]: “In the beginning was the Word.” Plato and Demosthenes did not know of this voice. Etc. [Furthermore], Jerome, in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*<sup>21</sup> and his *Commentary on Zacharias*,<sup>22</sup> says, about this matter, that John told of mysteries unknown perhaps to the angels. Ambrose [comments] in this regard in Book III of his *On the Sacraments* and in his *Incarnation of the Lord*.<sup>23</sup> Gregory in Homily 4 of his *On Ezekiel* says that [John] is rightly called an eagle because by means of his own eyes he focuses on the divinity.<sup>24</sup> And [Gregory] tells of how John passed beyond himself in order to see the Word in the Beginning.<sup>25</sup> Bede in his Homily 1 on the [Gospel of] John [says] the same thing.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, [see] Chrysostom, Homily 1 of his *On John*.<sup>27</sup> [See] Bernard, Sermon 8 of his *On the Canticles*.<sup>28</sup> [See] Haimo, Book III of his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*.<sup>29</sup> [See] Peter Damian, Sermon 2, regarding the present festival.<sup>30</sup>

[6] Furthermore, [consider] how it is that the Platonists, too, affirmed a great part of this Gospel, as Augustine states in Book 10, Chapter 29 of *The City of God* and in Book 8 of the *Confessions*.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Plato spoke of this Word not as being a Person in God but as being the Ideal Form of things through which God created all things. (This Form corresponds to the Son.) Some philosophers posited below God another substance, which they called Supreme Intelligence or Supreme Intellect, through which, they claimed, God created all things. And, thus, from afar they sensed something [of the

truth]. Nevertheless, they did not arrive at a knowledge of the Person [of God]. However, for those who nowadays hold, by faith, that [God is] a Trinity, it would not be difficult to find, subsequent to their faith, rational grounds for [this belief in] a Trinity—as states Richard of St. Victor at the outset of his *On the Trinity*.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, he there investigates [these reasons], as [elsewhere] did also Anselm, Augustine, Damascene, and others. However, from merely naturalistic considerations and without their having had faith, they would not have arrived at these reasons. As Isaias says: “Unless you believe, how will you understand?”<sup>33</sup>

[7] [The second member of the Trinity] is called *Word* because of His immateriality and intellectuality. He is called *Son* because of His consubstantiality and connaturality [with the Father]. He is called *Splendor* because of His co-eternity [with the Father], just as splendor is ever contemporaneous with the sun. He is called *Image* because of His likeness to, and equality with, [the Father].

#### PART TWO

##### *Likenesses That Befit the Incarnation of the Word*

[8] Peter of Tarantasia,<sup>34</sup> at the beginning of his third [book], says that the example of ingrafting besuits the Incarnation—with the exception that (1) [the thing ingrafted and the thing to be ingrafted] are not of the same nature and species and (2) in place of a site [for the ingrafting], an ordering is understood (so that the human nature is understood to be ingrafted into the divine nature in an ordered relationship). And note here that there are many kinds of union with respect to a common nature: for example, (1) matter and form [are united], or (2) as elements [are united] in a composite, or (3) as an accident [is united] with a substance, etc. Note here that just as grafting is done so that a branch (by way of the root) will bear better fruit, etc., so Christ is the Tree of life in the midst of Paradise. And because human nature by eating the forbidden fruit produced only the fruit of death, human nature was, through grafting, transplanted into the Tree of life. Christ says that He is the Vine and that the Apostles are the branches, etc.<sup>35</sup> (Take note of this.) And [consider] that Christ Himself said that He planted the vineyard and expected it to produce grapes, but it produced wild grapes, etc.<sup>36</sup> And thereafter He transplanted that vineyard and ingrafted it into His divinity, etc.

[9] St. Thomas in his compendium that begins “*Aeterni Patris*,” says that a likeness obtains between (1) the union of [Christ’s] humanity with His divinity and (2) the union of an accident with its substance.

For the accident is united [to the substance] and exists in it and does not lose its own nature; and the case is similar with the subject's hypostasis, personhood, or suppositum,<sup>37</sup> even though the human nature is not an accident in union [with a person, or suppositum], etc. Moreover, the situation is the same as our saying "person" (or "hypostasis," or "suppositum") in the sense of a complement to being. For example, in the case of a stone, which is without a rational soul, we can speak of the suppositum of a stone. However, because of a supervening rational nature that completes him, a man is not, [as is a stone], called a suppositum on the basis of a composition of elements. Accordingly, in Christ there is a suppositum (or hypostasis, or person) only of the soul, the body, and the divine nature.<sup>38</sup>

The Jews, Arius, Manichaeus, Eutyches, and Nestorius have erred regarding the birth [of Christ]. The Jews deny that in Christ there is a divine nature. (John 10: Since you are a man, why do you make yourself out to be God?)<sup>39</sup> Arius affirmed that the Son is inferior to the Father. Manichaeus denied that Christ had real flesh; rather, he said [that Christ had only] apparent flesh. Eutyches asserted that the humanity was absorbed by the divinity. Nestorius maintained that there were two persons, just as there were two natures.

[11] Pope Clement, in his sermon *On Circumcision*, compares Christ with one who is attired, saying that the humanity is to be understood as a garment. [He said this] because a garment is conformed to the one who wears it and because the garment is supported by the one who wears it and because the one who wears it is manifested in and by the garment. Analogously, in Christ the humanity was excellently formed; it was supported in and by the Person [*suppositum*] of the Word, [and] through the humanity the deity was manifested.

[12] An example can be given (as concerns the aforementioned [ideas]) with respect to the attracting of what is attracted. For example, the attracting power of a magnet causes the iron's nature—at rest in and of itself—to exist in such a way that [the following holds true]: If the iron were to exist by itself, it would act conformably to its weight and would [tend] to move downwards. But now, since its own nature, which is being attracted, does not exist in itself but exists in the nature of the attracting magnet, the iron remains united to the magnet.

### PART THREE

#### *The Preconception of All the Things in the Word*

[13] All existing things derive their *existence* from the Word: all

things were made by Him.<sup>40</sup> All living things derive their *life* from the Word. But in the Word being and living are not distinguished, because that which was made was, in Him, Life.<sup>41</sup> Whatever things have vital light, or living light, have it from the Word, because the Life was the light of men.<sup>42</sup> For when the Gospel says that the Word enlightens every man ..., etc.,<sup>43</sup> it speaks (as regards this world) of the region of human nature. In this region there is found participation in the living light that we call *intellect*. Therefore, *being, living, and understanding* are found [to be present] in this world. And, hence, since they exist not from themselves but from God, they are from God only insofar as they are from the Father—and Primal Fount—of being, living, and understanding. And because all existing things are thus from the Beginning, which is from no other, this Beginning is Eternity itself. Therefore, since the Beginning is Eternity, it is Absolute Necessity itself. Therefore, the things that are originated from the Beginning do not constrain it. Hence, they are originated because it pleases the Beginning. And so, all things exist because of the goodness of the Beginning, which diffuses itself without any change of itself or division of itself, etc.

[14] Consequently, God conceived of that which He created; and that of which He conceived He willed. He who wills, wills something. Therefore, the act of will proceeded from the one who wills and from what was willed. Hence, if God the Father willed, then He preconceived that which He willed. Therefore, God preconceived creatures, and the preconceived [creatures] were pleasing [to Him], and so they came into existence. Therefore, all that a creature has it has from the Paternal Beginning in accordance with the fact that it was preconceived by Him and was pleasing to Him. Accordingly, the Beginning preceded every creature and preconceived it, and the preconception was pleasing to Him.

[15] But since time is the measure of the motion of creatures, there is no time prior to creatures. Therefore, before all time there exists the Beginning of creatures and the Conception of creatures and the Love of what is conceived. Now, before all time there is only Eternity. But Eternity is singular [and] simple, because otherwise—[i.e., if it had parts and were divisible—it would not be Eternity. For in that case—[i.e., if it had parts]—it would exist subsequent to the Beginning and would not be the Beginning but would be quantity and time. Accordingly, Beginning, Preconception, and Love are one Essence, which is called Eternity. The Beginning is Father; the

Preconception is Word, or Son,<sup>44</sup> who proceeds from the Father; the Love is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Word. The foregoing comes from Genesis: “God saw that it was good. And He said, ‘Let us make man in [our] image . . . .’”<sup>45</sup> Before [what-was-to-be-created] existed, God saw [it] in His eternal Preconception, and [what was preconceived] was pleasing. The expression of goodness is a manifestation of the will, because the good is desired because of itself.

## NOTES TO *SERMON XIX*

1. John 1:14. Cf. Sermon XI.
2. St. Fulgentius (468-533, Bishop of Ruspe (located in what today is Tunisia), Sermon II (“De Duplici Nativitate Christi”), paragraph numbers 1 & 3. Nicholas excerpts and paraphrases. (*PL* 65:726-727).
3. John 1:1. Luke 19:10.
4. Psalms 95:2 (96:2).
5. John 1:5.
6. Here (at 3:3) I am regarding the word “qui” as deleted.
7. James 1:17.
8. John 1:9.
9. Luke 1:38.
10. Here (at 4:16) I am reading “factorum” in place of “sanctorum” (as do the editors of the Latin text).
11. Apocalypse (Revelation) 4:7.
12. Ezechiel (Ezekiel) 1:10.
13. Eriugena (not Origen, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, along with the editors of the Latin text). See the beginning of Eriugena’s *Homilia in Prologum Sancti Evangelii Joannem* (*PL* 122:283BC).
14. In this sentence (at 5:5-10) I am reading “supervolitantis” in place of “supervolitans” and am reading “obtusibus transcendentis” in place of “obtus transcendens.” See the beginning of Eriugena’s *Homilia in Prologum Evangeliae Johannis* (*PL* 122:283B).
15. Eriugena, *ibid.* (*PL* 122:283CD).
16. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Epistola* 10 (*Dionysiaca* II, 1572 and 1576).
17. Augustine, Homily 20 (not Homily 19, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text). See *In Joannis Evangelium*, Tractatus 20, paragraph number 13 (*PL* 35:1563).
18. Augustine, Homily 36 (not Homily 24, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text). See *In Joannis Evangelium*, Tractatus 36, paragraph number 1 (*PL* 35:1663).
19. *Ibid.* (*PL* 35:1662).
20. Jerome, *Epistola* 53 (“Ad Paulinum”), paragraph number 4 (*PL* 22:543).
21. Cf. Jerome, *Commentarii in Ezechielem Prophetam*, Book I, Chap. 1, verse 7 (*PL* 25:21-22).
22. Jerome, *Comentarii in Zachariam Prophetam*, Book III, Chap. 14, verse 20 (*PL* 25:1539C).
23. Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, III, 2, paragraph number 11 (*PL* 16:454A). *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento*, Chap. 3, paragraph numbers 15-17 (*PL* 16:857-858).
24. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Ezechielem Prophetam*, I, 4, paragraph number 1 (*PL* 76:815AB).
25. *Ibid.*, paragraph number 3 (*PL* 76:816D).
26. Venerable Bede, *In Sancti Joannis Evangelium*, Chap. 1 (*PL* 92:637B-638B).



27. John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Joannem*, I, paragraph number 2 (PG 59:26).
28. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, VIII, 7 (PL 183:813CD).
29. Pseudo-Haymo Halberstat, *Expositio in Apocalypsin Beati Joannis*, II, 4 (not Book III, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text). (PL 117:1010AB).
30. Peter Damian, *Sermones*, II, 64, 351 (“De Sancto Joanne”) (PL 144:874D-875A).
31. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, X, 29 (not X, 7, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text). (PL 41:307). *Confessiones*, VIII, 2, 3 (PL 32:750).
32. Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*, I, 4 (PL 196:892).
33. Isaias (Isaiah) 7:9 (Old Latin Bible).
34. Peter of Tarantasia was born ca. 1225 in Tarentaise in south-eastern France. He became Pope Innocent V. And he died in Rome in 1276.
35. John 15:5.
36. Isaias (Isaiah) 5:2.
37. When applied to a human being, the Latin word “suppositum” is a theological translation of the Greek word ὑπόστασις, often translated as *person*. (See, above, Sermon XVII (6).) When applied to non-human beings (e.g., to a stone), the word “suppositum” is closer in meaning to the Aristotelian notion of οὐσία (“substantia”; “substance”).
38. The rational soul and the body constitute, together, human nature. In Christ the human nature and the divine nature are said to be hypostatically united, i.e., united in the Person of God the Son. This Person is the suppositum.
39. John 10:33.
40. John 1:3.
41. John 1:3-4.
42. John 1:4.
43. John 1:9.
44. Cf. Cusa’s *De Sapientia*, II (34-35).
45. Genesis 1:25-26.

**Sermon XX: Nomen eius Jesus**

(“His name [was called] Jesus.”)

[January 1, 1439 or 1440; feast-day of the circumcision  
of Jesus; preached in Koblenz]]

[1] “His name [was called] Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us, to begin with, pray that His name may be sanctified in us in such a way that we may be able to expound the praises of His holy name—[doing so] with the intercessory help of the Virgin Mary, His mother, who is blessed among women [and] who has begotten for us the Word, whose name is eternal.

[2] There are three things that today make the feast-day important: [today is] the eighth day after His birth ([consider] the Collect and Leviticus 23);<sup>2</sup> [today is] the circumcision of the [Christ]-child (Luke 2; Genesis 17);<sup>3</sup> and [today is] the assigning of the name (according to the Gospel). The word “name” (“*nomen*”) has to do with the first [of these topics]. The word “His” (“*eius*”)—i.e., of Him who was circumcised—has to do with the second [of these topics]. The word “Jesus” has to do with the third.

*PART ONE*

*The Names That Are Assigned to God  
through Eminence and Removal*<sup>4</sup>

[3] As regards the first [topic], I will speak about a threefold name in accordance with a threefold birth, etc. For in the introit of the first mass there is said (in Hebrew): “Jehovah said . . .,” etc. Secondly, in the second introit there is said: “Light will shine on us today<sup>5</sup> because unto us the Lord was born; and He is called Wonderful, God, Prince of Peace, etc. As regards the third [introit]: “A child is born . . .”<sup>6</sup>

[4] The [part of the] sermon that determines His name insofar as it is wonderful but, nevertheless, ineffable for us and unknown to us will be brief. The [part of the] sermon that attempts to express symbolically the infinite name of the Word and Son will be lengthy. The [part of the] sermon that attempts to explicate the name “Savior,” which is the name of an activity, is the lengthiest.

The first name-for-God, which is ineffable, is attained only negatively. The second name (e.g., “Creator”) is disclosed, variously and extensively, only in and through creatures and through creatures’ like-

nesses [to the Creator]. The third name is explicated very extensively by means of the grace of the Incarnation. Consequently, we say (together with Dionysius and with the Apostle Bartholomew, mentioned by Dionysius in *The Mystical Theology*) that the sermon on the name of God is very holy and very brief, the sermon on the Creator is extensive, [and] the sermon on the Re-creator is very extensive and very important.

[5] A name derives from observing, because words are signs of the things that are in the mind, etc. We understand nothing except what takes its origin from perceptible things.<sup>7</sup> Thus, God is not comprehensible. Therefore, according to Dionysius, we ascend unto God in a threefold way. [First, we ascend] by way of *perceptible things* qua things caused. According to Augustine, this fact [holds true] for several reasons: either (a) because nothing has brought itself into existence or (b) because from what is changeable we must come [inferentially] to what is unchangeable, from the imperfect we must come to the perfect, from what is good we must come to what is best, etc. Secondly, [we ascend] by way of *eminence*, so that we understand to be in the cause that which we find in the caused as perfecting the thing caused. Thirdly, [we ascend] by way of *removal*, so that we remove from the excellence of the cause the defect which we find in what is caused.

[6] With respect to the true name which should indicate to us what God is, Dionysius says that God is unnameable [and] ineffable because He is not comprehended. For we have the statement, only by Anselm, that God is Something better than can be thought. But this Something Better is unnameable if it is unthinkable. Therefore, “Best” is not a name for God; instead, “Super-best” is. Hence, in accordance with the fact that we know what God *is not* rather than knowing what He *is*, God is unnameable rather than nameable. Nor is the name “Unnameable” a proper name for God; [i.e., it is not a word that] signifies God together with signifying His proper quality. Rather, [“Unnameable”] signifies that which God is not. Etc.

However, among all names, the Tetragrammaton<sup>8</sup> is [God’s] proper name. Etc. Likewise, [God’s proper name is] a name that is above every [other] name.<sup>9</sup> Hence, just as God is not good but is super-good, so He is not nameable but is super-nameable. Thus, God’s name comprehends all things nameable, even as God’s being comprehends all being. Therefore, His name is eternal and infinite. Now, the name “Eternal” or “Infinite” is not His name [that is above all other names]. Rather, [the name above all other names] is “Ha-Shem,” [meaning] “the Name,” in an absolute sense.<sup>10</sup> We cannot [use] this [name that is

above all other names] to name [Him] absolutely as He is. Rather, we name Him insofar as [“Name” has] a contracted [sense] and stands for some property (e.g., *eternal*, *infinite*) that especially befits Him. Hence, God’s name is the name through which every [other] name is a name, and His name is the essence of all names, etc.

[7] Therefore, in the name “Jehovah” there is the secret of this ineffability, because, as say Jerome and Rabbi Moses [Maimonides],<sup>11</sup> [that name] was not able to be applied to anything else. That name signifies God in accordance with His omnipotence. Hence, the Ancients affirmed of this name—the Tetragrammaton (i.e., “[the name] of four letters”)—all secrets; and the Jews have a book, the *Cabbala*, on the power of this name. But the Jews do not read aloud this name except on one [annual] occasion when fast-days precede it; and they reverently safeguard the books in which this name is written. And they do not esteem as holy a book in which this name is not found. And Jerome states that in the sacred writings of the Hebrews this name always retained its original [Hebrew] characters, etc.<sup>12</sup> Hence, this ineffable name [that is called the] Tetragrammaton is not a name [i.e., a noun], because it does not signify a substance together with [signifying] its proper or common property. Nor is it a verb signifying [something] together with signifying a time and a manner. Nor is it a pronoun or a participle or a part of a meaningful expression; rather, it is a [meaningful] whole at once. Etc.

## PART TWO

### *The Names That Befit God as Cause in relation to the Caused. Fire as a Metaphorical Name for God*

[8] “Light will shine upon us, because unto us the Lord was born, and He will be called [Wonderful ...]” etc.<sup>13</sup> There are many names that befit God as Cause in relation to what is caused [by Him]. For “Creator,” “Illuminator,” “Savior,” “Enlivener,” etc. [are such names]. [There are] names which befit God by a [symbolizing] analogy,<sup>14</sup> because [what they name] is found in the case of undefective creatures—e.g., [the names] “Good,” “Mighty,” “Comprehending,” etc. [And some names] somehow [befit God] with some kind of [metaphorical] resemblance—e.g., “Messenger of great counsel,” “Lion,” “Lamb,” “Rock,” “Consuming Fire.”<sup>15</sup> [There are] names that befit God by way of removal—e.g., “Immortal,” “Invisible,” and other [names] in the chapter “*Firmiter credimus*.”<sup>16</sup>

[9] All nouns signify either a perfection or an imperfection. If

[they signify] a perfection, then [they signify] either (1) a perfection that is not found in creatures (and these perfections—as, for example, *omnipotent, eternal*—befit God properly) or (2) a perfection that is found in creatures in an indeterminate way (and these perfections—as, for example, *comprehending*—befit God less properly) or (3) a perfection that is found in creatures in a determinate manner (and these perfections—e.g., *lion, lamb*—do not at all befit God properly but only metaphorically). Now, *in accordance with the first mode* we have the divine names “Jah,” “Adonai,” “El,” “Elohim,” “Vaheie,” “Schaddai,” “Sabaoth,” and other names—from Solomon’s *Books of Exorcisms*, from Greek words, and, likewise, from words from inhabitants of India (e.g., “esgi abhir”). *In accordance with the second mode* we have “theos” (from “theoro,” “video,” or “curro”). We have “deus,” “got” (from “bono,” “boeg,” “tengri”); and in accordance with the different languages we have other names (“logos,” “ratio,” “verbum,” etc.). And, furthermore, as Ambrose says,<sup>17</sup> God created a variety of things in order that by means of the diversity His power would be expressed. Languages, too, are diverse, in order that the one ineffable name might be expressed in different ways. *In accordance with the third mode* [God] is called Lion, Lamb, Light, Consuming Fire, Light in which there is no darkness.

[10] And for the purpose of our being instructed, let us consider the metaphor of fire, according to [the teaching of] Dionysius,<sup>18</sup> in his *Hierarchy*, 15.

Dionysius, in *The Angelic Hierarchy*,<sup>19</sup> Chapter 15, says that among all material things fire represents the image of God most closely.

(1) Fire is invisible in itself, for it is not seen except in something that is on fire. Likewise, God [is invisible . . . , etc.].

(2) Fire is present in all things, although invisibly; nonetheless, it is disseminated throughout all material things. Similarly, God is present invisibly in all things.

(3) Fire moves through all things unmixedly, even as God is not mingled with other things. Moreover, in itself fire is unmixed, as is also God.

(4) Fire is set apart from all elements because of its nobility of nature, its sublimity of place, and the efficacy of its activity.

(5) In and of itself fire—and each of its parts—is through and through light. Similarly, God is Light; and in Him there is no darkness.<sup>20</sup>

(6) Although in and of Himself God is Light, nevertheless He is

unknown to the senses, even as fire in terms of its power in a flint-stone [is undetectable to the senses], etc.

(7) Even as fire is invisible, so it is ungraspable.

(8) Fire triumphs over all things. God is a Consuming Fire.<sup>21</sup>

(9) All things are receptive of fire, and in their own measure they too set on fire, once they themselves have been set afire.

(10) Fire conveys itself to all things heatable, illuminable, and ignitable. Likewise, God [communicates Himself] to material natures, to natures capable of perception, and to intellectual natures.

(11) Fire is renewing of all things. By means of enlivening-heat<sup>22</sup> [things] grow, flourish, etc. [The case is similar] with respect to their being nourished, increased, etc. [It is similar] with respect to circulation, with respect to a deer, etc.

(12) Fire diffuses its rays in circular fashion.

(13) Fire is unencompassable, for it is encompassed by the mind alone. There is no material that could encompass it, because everywhere that it is it is a whole, etc.

(14) Since in and of itself fire is unmingled, it divides and separates all things, even as God distinguishes between all things.

(15) Fire is upwardly directed and is always highest. It cannot be kept under foot, etc.

(16) Fire progresses keenly, i.e., swiftly, unless it is retarded, etc. God's word runs swiftly,<sup>23</sup> reaching from end [to end],<sup>24</sup> etc.

(17) Fire is [characterizable as] a movable sameness—as we see in the case of the heavens, where fire discloses God's inner activity, etc.

(18) Fire moves other things; fire's power is the cause of all movement. Similarly, God causes all things to be moved.

(19) Fire is an unencompassable encompassing, since it turns other things into itself but is itself turned into no other thing. And, by comparison, the personal oneness of the Word assumed a human nature into His own Person; and God beatifies souls.

(20) All movable things, insofar as they are moved need fire, whereas fire has need of no other. In this respect fire bears a resemblance to God, who has no need of our goods.<sup>25</sup>

(21) Fire augments itself (just as, in things numbered, number [increases] and, in things lit, light [increases]). Its power is not bounded. [Likewise,] God is unboundable.

(22) Fire is invisibly present to all things. Not only is it present in another thing as light is present in the eye of a blind man, but also it is present there as light is present in the eye of one who has sight; for

fire aids the eye in its act of seeing, etc. Likewise, God invisibly works all things in all things.<sup>26</sup>

(23) Fire gives itself to all things very generously but remains undiminished, even as knowledge, [in being spread, remains undiminished] ..., etc.

(24) When disregarded, fire seems not to be present; but with rubbing, it suddenly is manifest and again becomes unencompassable, etc. Fire is said to be disregarded when we do not take steps to bring it forth. It is manifest suddenly by the rubbing of iron with a stone. And if we take no pains to capture it in material tinder, it flies forth ungraspably. Similarly, the foolish say in their heart, “There is no God.”<sup>27</sup> God draws near to the contrite-in-heart with His goodness. But if they neglect to receive Him with perseverance in the tinder of the virtues and of virtuous actions, etc., He flies forth.

And because reason grasps these [truths] about fire, we see how it is that reason is higher than fire and its essence [*ratio*].

### PART THREE

#### *The Names Signifying the Son (in the Assumed Humanity) as Savior. The Son’s Circumcision*

[11] As regards the third [introit]: “A child is born to us, and a son is given to us. His government is upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called ‘messenger of great counsel.’”<sup>28</sup> And for this name “[Messenger] of great counsel” the Gospel substitutes [the name] “Savior,” or “Jesus,” etc. In Apocalypse, Chapter 19, John says (concerning our topic) with respect to circumcision: “He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and His name shall be called ‘the Word of God.’”<sup>29</sup> Isidore, in Book VII, Chapter 2 of his *Etymologies* says, a propos of the names that befit the Son in His [state of] assumed humanity:<sup>30</sup> He is called Christ—i.e., “one anointed with ointment” or “Messiah”—because above all His fellow-men [He was anointed] ..., etc.<sup>31</sup> He is called *Jesus*, *Soter*, *Salvator* (in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin). He is called Emmanuel (i.e., “God with us”); so Matthew says “Emmanuel ...,” etc.<sup>32</sup> He is called Only-begotten,<sup>33</sup> First-born;<sup>34</sup> He is called Beginning, Middle, and End,<sup>35</sup> [and called] the Way, the Truth, and the Life.<sup>36</sup>

[12] But (if we return [now] to the text of the Gospel): He is called *Jesus*, or *Issus*, according to the Greeks, or *Hessus* according to the Arabs, *Jhesus*, or *Jhešua*, according to the Hebrews ..., etc. Because He saves His people, He is called Savior. Now in the Gospel

we are told that He was circumcised on the eighth day; and the name given to Him was “Jesus,” i.e., “Savior.” The eighth day is a new day and a day of renewal.<sup>37</sup> For after [our] circumcision with the sharp stone of firmness-of-faith in Christ (who was the true Rock), and after all worldly things have been cast aside [by us] on the eighth day of [our] resurrection from the defilement of the world—[cast aside] in order that we might investigate [Christ’s] deity by way of negation (as Dionysius says):<sup>38</sup> then our Savior appeared, who, nonetheless, was not at rest throughout the seven days that measure all time and all circular revolution. For on the first day the name of ‘Him who on account of His holy name is propitious toward our sins’ pardoned our sins.<sup>39</sup> On the second day He protected from the Devil the one who knows Him. (He will protect him “because He knows my name.”)<sup>40</sup> On the third day He delivered from evil. (“Help us, O God, our Savior, and deliver us for the sake of Your name’s glory . . .,” etc.)<sup>41</sup> On the fourth day He gives a good spirit.<sup>42</sup> (“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name . . .”).<sup>43</sup> On the fifth day He multiplies virtues through the Holy Spirit (“You will guide me for Your name’s sake.”)<sup>44</sup> On the sixth day He works signs (“In my name they will cast out demons.”)<sup>45</sup> And after these seven days of this world’s flux, Christ eternally saves—[saves] on the eighth day of resurrection. (Hence, whosoever shall call upon Your name shall be saved.)<sup>46</sup>

[13] It must be known that although this salvation chiefly concerns eternal salvation, nevertheless [Christ] also saves from infirmity (Mark 6: “Whoever touched Him was made whole”),<sup>47</sup> from tempest and storms (Matthew 8: “Save us; we perish”),<sup>48</sup> and from all corruption (Philippians 3: “We look for the Savior”).<sup>49</sup> All the Prophets proclaim Him, and Paul says about this name of the Savior: in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow—of things on earth, things in heaven, and things beneath the earth.<sup>50</sup> For He is called Savior because of His power to save; and, likewise, [He is called Savior], *ab aeterno*, because He is God and because of His fixed disposition to save. Likewise, [His name] was imposed by the Angel<sup>51</sup> because of His act of saving. And, similarly, [it was imposed] today by Joseph at the circumcision. For the name was ordained [and] consecrated from eternity; it was uttered by the mouth of God. It was desired [and] prophesied by the Fathers. It was prefigured in Joshua, foretold by the Angel, made known by the Virgin Mary, imposed on the eighth day by Joseph, disclosed by the angels, preached by the Apostles, praised by those professing it, foretasted by the holy virgins as being oil poured forth,<sup>52</sup> venerated by



believers. The name “Christ” is the shared name; the name “Jesus” is the personal name. The name “Christ” has to do with grace; the name “Jesus” has to do with glory.

[14] The [name “Jesus”] is the name that is above every [other] Name.<sup>53</sup> There is no other [name] under Heaven . . . , etc.<sup>54</sup> For it is honey in the mouth, a melody in the ear, a shout-of-joy in the heart, according to Bernard.<sup>55</sup> When preached, it lights-up, as does a lamp-of-oil; when reflected on, it nourishes; when invoked, it soothes and anoints. According to Peter of Ravenna, [this name] gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, walking to the lame, life to the dead; it put the Devil to flight, etc.<sup>56</sup> Anselm: “Jesus” is “a sweet name, a delightful name, a name that consoles the sinner, and a name of blessed hope. Therefore, O Jesus, be Jesus to me.”<sup>57</sup> [The name “Jesus”] has cleansing power with regard to a stain, sanctifying power with regard to guilt, justifying power with regard to wrong-doing—all of which things are forgiven through the name “Jesus.” (“You are cleansed, you are sanctified, you are justified . . . ,” etc.)<sup>58</sup> Jesus said: “Whatsoever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give to you.”<sup>59</sup> Hence, all the prayers of the Church are ended by this name.

[15] Let us now—in accordance with the Biblical account and so that Christ’s every action is our instruction—reflect on what was done [for us] on this day and on what is to be done by us. Christ, on account of His love [and] in order to redeem us, was circumcised on this day and was made a bloody spouse<sup>60</sup> of the Church [and] through His name was shown to us. Now, first of all, we ought to consider the wondrous humility of incarnation and of the observance-of-law in the case of Him who did no sin.<sup>61</sup> [And we ought to consider] the fact that for our sakes the Infant, the Law-giving God,<sup>62</sup> did not shun<sup>63</sup> this pain of circumcision, so that we might learn that we are to be subject to the Law through obedience and so that we not allow ourselves something on the basis of a presumption of innocence, etc.

[16] On this day [Christ] began to shed His blood for us; and so, it is the first day of the year for us Christians. Secondly, [He shed His blood] during prayer;<sup>64</sup> thirdly, when whipped; fourthly, when crowned [with thorns]; fifthly, at the crucifixion; sixthly, at the piercing of His side. On the seventh day He rested; on the eighth day He rose up.<sup>65</sup> Hence, just as on the eighth day after His birth He received a name accompanied by the shedding of blood, so after seven days of painful passage, for our sakes, He obtained on the eighth day another name—[a name] of triumph—accompanied by glorification, etc.

Hence, the custom [of re-naming] took its beginning from the changing of the name from “Abram” into “Abraham” [and] from “Sarai” into “Sarah.”<sup>66</sup> Christ was circumcised because, first of all, He was of the lineage of Abraham, to whom the promise was made.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, [it was done] so that He would be like His ancestors. Thirdly, [it was done] in order that He would approve of the Law as having been good; fourthly, in order to commend the virtues of obedience and of humility; fifthly, in order to be subject [to the Law] that He had given. Sixthly, He became subject to the Law in order to redeem those who were under the Law;<sup>68</sup> seventhly, in order for our sakes to be subject to the Law from the time of His infancy; eighthly, in order to manifest the reality of His flesh; ninthly, in order to praise chastity and to put an end to lust. Tenthly, Christ is the end of the Law unto justice to all who believe ..., etc.<sup>69</sup>

[17] Let him who has recently given birth to Christ within himself strive today to circumcise his own soul (which he has wanted to lead unto Christ and to transform into Christ)<sup>70</sup> in order that (1) he not be reproachable in outward demeanor, in action, or in word ([see] St. Bernard)<sup>71</sup> and in order that (2) his thoughts may be holy, his affections pure, and his intentions upright. We ought to be, in heart,<sup>72</sup> circumcised of all harmful and unclean thoughts, of false and injudicious judgments, of evil intentions, so that in the presence of God we may fear to think in our hearts that which we would be ashamed to say before men. [We ought to be], in tongue, circumcised of words that are shameful, slanderous, lying, idle, and superfluous. [We ought to be], in all our senses, [circumcised] of things forbidden, illicit, sensual, and unnecessary. Moreover, [we ought to be circumcised] of every occasion [on which] ..., etc. There is little value in being circumcised in the one part and not in the other. Pope Pius says: “Fasting is of no benefit unless mind and tongue refrain from things that are forbidden.”<sup>73</sup> Bede [says] the same thing:<sup>74</sup> “Therefore, he is circumcised with true circumcision (1) who plugs up his ears so that he does not hear of [brutal] bloodshed<sup>75</sup> and (2) who closes his eyes so that he does not see what is evil<sup>76</sup> [and] (3) who guards his pathways so that he does not transgress with his tongue<sup>77</sup> and (4) who keeps an eye on himself so that his heart is not heavy with drunkenness and winebibbery<sup>78</sup> and (5) who washes his hands among the innocent<sup>79</sup> and (6) who keeps his pathways free of every evil way<sup>80</sup> [and] (7) who chastises, above all else, his own body and subjects it to servitude<sup>81</sup> and (8) who safeguards his own heart with all care, since from his heart proceeds his

life.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, his actions that are hidden are not less in need of chastising, in order that when, together with my fasting, I give alms, I do not seek glory. The Apostle earnestly commends circumcision in heart.”<sup>83</sup> (Bede [says] these things.)

[18] The highest [purpose] of [spiritual] circumcision is to cut away sins (which in man are not at all necessary) by means of penance. And unless [circumcision] occurs in the soul, the soul is a daughter of perdition. For “the male whose flesh will not have been circumcised of its foreskin will perish.”<sup>84</sup> However, eight [things] ought to precede this circumcising: (1) the conversion of the sinner to God, (2) - (8) recognition of sin, contrition for sin, confession of sin, loathing of sin, making of satisfaction [for sin], precaution [against sin]; then comes the justification of him who is wicked.

There are three circumcisings. The one that occurs in the body is a sacrament. The two [others] are offshoots of the sacrament: viz., the circumcising away of sin (which occurs daily in the soul) and the circumcising away of the penalty of sin (which will occur at the resurrection).

#### ADDENDUM

[19] [Thoughts] regarding the new year.

Here [I will speak both of] how the [divisions of] the year were introduced and of the fact that [the name] “January” derives from “Janus,” according to Rabanus in his [work] *On Computation*.<sup>85</sup> Janus, at his own home, received Saturn when the latter first came to Italy. And because Janus obtained from Saturn the art of planting, he divided his kingdom with him. This present month, according to Numa Pompilius, was dedicated to Janus.<sup>86</sup> And in the opinion of [some] men Janus was conducted up to the stars, and he is depicted with two heads. And because of this [event] witches were accustomed to scurry about on this day. And because such [men] who depict Janus are of the number of pagans rather than of the number of Christians, the saints forbade the new year to start [with him], as [relate] Maximus in a sermon<sup>87</sup> and Augustine in his sermon on the *Calends of January*.<sup>88</sup>

Because we Germans were pagans, we designate the [new] year from the first day [of the month of January], and we say “iar” [i.e., “Jahr”] from Janus—even as we take the name “sontach” from the sun; “maendach,” from the moon; “dingestag” or “eretag” from Mars; “gwudenstag,” from Mercury; “tonerstag” from thundering Jove;

“fritag” from Venus; “samstag” from Saturn. The beginning of the year is not today but is on the day of the Annunciation. But according to one measure, today could be called the beginning [of the new year] because today Jesus first began to shed His blood for us. There are different beginnings of the year according to different nations, even as there are [differences] of months and of weeks. God ordained it in this way, so that all things would remain doubtful for us in order that we would avoid presentiments and superstitions, etc. Hence, for the new year I give to you today the circumcised Jesus, the Spouse of the Church. From Him you can have whatever you wish, provided you will be circumcised of your sins, etc.

[20] [Here is] the order of things to be spoken of:

“His name [was called] Jesus.” This feast-day is important for three important reasons. Moreover, each of the three is commemorated by us today: [viz.,] (1) the giving of His name, (2) His circumcision, and (3) the beginning of the year.

Concerning the giving of His name three things must be considered relative to the eighth day, for in the three introits of the masses for the Day of the Nativity we find three names. Therefore, we have three names. To begin with, then, what is His name, and how can we understand the difference of names in conformity with the difference of understandings? *First*, [I will speak] about the ineffable name, [which], according to Dionysius, is “Jehovah,” “Tetragrammaton” [i.e., “YHWH”], “Hašēm” [or: “Ha-Shem”]. *Secondly*, [I will speak] about the names of the Creator and, to start with, about the names that include negation. ([See] Athanathos, etc.—for example, in the Chapter “*Firmiter credimus.*”<sup>89</sup>) [Then I will speak] about the names that include the perfection of a threefold order; and there [I will mention] the name “Infinite Activity,” etc. Next, [I will mention] the names in the *Books of Solomon*,<sup>90</sup> etc. [I will speak] about the second names and about the third ones and, at that place, about fire. *Thirdly*, [I will mention] the names of the Re-creator, because “a Child is born ...,” “He was clothed ...,” etc. I add and set forth the fact that the eighth name is “Jesus.”

First, [I will take up the topic of His names]: “Releaser,” “Propitiator,” “Protector,” “Giver,” “Spirit,” “Nourisher,” “Healer” (in a threefold sense), “Savior” (in a threefold sense). And in the conclusion [of this section I will say something] about the sweetness of the name “Jesus” according to Bernard and Anselm [and] Peter of

Ravenna—[a name] revered by them all. Secondly, [I will preach] about circumcision, about the reason [for it], about the six sheddings of blood, about our [spiritual] circumcision, etc. [Finally, I will say something] about the [new] year ..., etc.

## NOTES TO SERMON XX

1. Luke 2:21.
2. Cf. Leviticus 23:21.
3. Luke 2:21. Genesis 17:12.
4. I have moved this editors' heading here, instead of leaving it placed immediately before margin number 6, as in the edition of the Latin text.
5. Cf. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:2.
6. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:6.
7. Here Nicholas shows the influence of Aquinas.
8. See *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 24 (75). The Tetragrammaton is the name for God that consists of four Hebrew letters—Jod, He, Vau, He (or: Yud, Heh, Vav, Heh)—transliterated either as “YHWH” or as “JHVH” and becoming, in English, “Yahweh” and “Jehovah”.
9. Philippians 2:9.
10. See, below, the section marked by margin number 20. The word “ha-Shem” (meaning “the name”) came to be used by the Jews as a name for God.
11. Cf. Jerome's *Commentarii in Ezechielem Prophetam*, II, 6 (PL 25:57D - 58A). Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 61.
12. Cf. Jerome's *Praefatio in Libros Samuel et Malachim* (PL 28:594B - 595A). (Of interest here, as a reference, is but a single sentence.)
13. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:2.
14. Nicholas already stated that there is no comparative relation between the finite and the infinite. (See Sermons III (11:9-10); IV (34:39-40); VII (32:11); VIII (26:38-39)). He is not here changing his mind but is pointing out that some symbolisms are more appropriate than are others when it comes to speaking about, and representing, God figuratively.
15. Hebrews 12:29. Deuteronomy 4:24.
16. *Decretales* (of Pope Gregory IX), I, 1, 1. (See Aemilius Friedberg, editor, *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (Leipzig, 1880 (second edition, Vol. II)), column 5.
17. Ambrose, I have not found a plausible referent-passage in Ambrose's works.
18. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, 15 (*Dionysiaca* II, 994-1000). Not Chapter 16, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do also the editors of the Latin text.
19. See n. 18 above.
20. I John 1:5.
21. See n. 15 above.
22. Here (at 10:33) I am reading “vivifica” in place of “unifica”.
23. Psalms 147:15.
24. Wisdom 8:1.
25. Psalms 15:2 (16:2). (The meaning in the King James version differs significantly from the meaning in the Douay-Rheims version).
26. I Corinthians 12:6.
27. Psalms 13:1 (14:1).
28. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:6.
29. Apocalypse (Revelation) 19:13.

30. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, VII, 2, 1-2 & 6 (PL 83:264).
31. Hebrews 1:9.
32. Matthew 1:23.
33. John 1:18.
34. Romans 8:29.
35. Cf. Apocalypse (Revelation) 1:8.
36. John 14:6.
37. The "eighth" day is the first day of the week, following the lapse of the week's seven days. The first day, Sunday, commemorates Christ's resurrection.
38. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus*, 13 (*Dionysiaca* I, 551-555).
39. Psalms 78:9 (79:9).
40. Psalms 90:14 (91:14).
41. Psalms 78:9 (79:9).
42. Luke 11:13.
43. John 14:26.
44. Psalms 30:4 (31:3).
45. Mark 16:17.
46. Acts 2:21.
47. Mark 6:56.
48. Matthew 8:25.
49. Philippians 3:20 (not Philippians 4, as Nicholas writes and as I have corrected, as do the editors of the Latin text).
50. Philippians 2:10.
51. Luke 1: 26-31.
52. Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon) 1:2.
53. Philippians 2:9.
54. Acts 4:12: "For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."
55. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons in Cantica Canticorum. Sermo* 15, 6 (PL 183:847).
56. Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermo* 144 (PL 52:586BC).
57. Anselm of Canterbury, *Meditatio* I (*Opera Omnia*, edited by F. S. Schmitt, Vol. III, p. 79). All volumes reprinted by Frommann Verlag, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1968.
58. I Corinthians 6:11.
59. John 16:23.
60. Cf. Exodus 4:26.
61. I Peter 2:22.
62. Cf. Isaias (Isaiah) 33:22.
63. Here (at 15:10-11) I am reading, with ms. C, "refugit" and not "relegit".
64. Luke 22:44.
65. See n. 37 above.
66. Genesis 17:5 and 15. Here (at 16:12-13) I am reading "ex" in place of "et<sub>1</sub>" and am reading "in" in place of "et<sub>2</sub>".
67. Genesis 17.
68. Galatians 4:4-5.
69. Romans 10:4.

70. The theme of deification is a common theme among the Medievals. See, for example, my *Hugh of Balma on Mystical Theology: A Translation and an Overview of His De Theologia Mystica* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2002).

71. Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Circumcisione Domini. Sermo* 1, 3 (*PL* 183:134A).

72. Romans 2:29.

73. Pseudo-Pius I (Pope), *Epistola* 1, 2 (*PG* 5:1122). Not an exact quotation.

74. Venerable Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio*, I, 2 (*PL* 92:340AD).

75. Isaias (Isaiah) 33:15.

76. *Loc cit.*

77. Psalms 38:2 (39:1).

78. Luke 21:34.

79. Psalms 25:6 (26:6).

80. Psalms 118:101 (119:101).

81. I Corinthians 9:27.

82. Proverbs 4:23.

83. Romans 2:29.

84. Genesis 17:14.

85. Rabanus Maurus, *De Computo*, 32 (*PL* 107:684-685).

86. Numa Pompilius is referred to by Rabanus Maurus. Nicholas takes his allusion from Rabanus. See n. 85 above.

87. Maximus Taurinensis, *Sermones de Tempore: Sermo* VI (“De Calendis Januariis”). (*PL* 57:543-544).

88. Augustine, *Sermo* 198 (“De Calendis Januariis”). (*PL* 38:1024-1026).

89. See n. 16 above.

90. See, above, the allusion—in the section marked by margin number 9—to Solomon’s *Books of Exorcisms*. See also what is said in Nicholas’s Sermon I (at 4:17-19). These *Books* or this *Book* (says Nicholas there) is also called *Sepher Raziel* (or: *Cephar Raziel*; *Sepher Rezial*; *Sefer Raziel*). It is sometimes known simply as the *Liber* (or *Libri*) *Salomonis*. The word “sepher” means, in Hebrew, *book*; and Raziel was said to be an angel. The book in question was said to have been given by the angel Raziel to Adam and to have been passed down to King Solomon. It contains secrets, mysteries, instruction in magic, cosmological considerations. It belongs to the Jewish mystical tradition.