

Spiritu Ambulate*
("Walk in the Spirit.")¹
[September 7, 1455; preached in Brixen]

[1] "Walk in the spirit."

In this epistle Paul teaches us that man can walk in a twofold way: either according to the spirit or according to the flesh. Thus, the spirit and the flesh are parts of a man. Now, to walk is to move toward that which one desires. But the movement is because of the desire. Therefore, a man's movement is composed of mutually opposing factors, viz., of a twofold desire—[a desire] for things visible and [a desire] for things invisible. As the Apostle says elsewhere: "The things that are seen are temporal, [but] the things that are not seen are eternal."² [A man's] every movement is from the soul, which has a twofold spirit. [The soul has] one spirit that is corporeal. By means of it the soul proceeds unto this perceptible world. For example, by means of a bright spirit in the optic veins [the soul] moves toward visible things; and by means of another spirit it moves toward audible things; by means of another, toward things tasteable; by means of another, toward things tangible; etc. And all these things that are perceptible are called [by the Apostle] visible; and just as they are corruptible and temporal, so too this [corporeal] spirit is corruptible. By means of a second spirit a man moves toward things invisible, and [that] spirit is incorporeal and invisible and incorruptible, as are also those things toward which the man moves by means of that spirit. Now, the Apostle illustrates in his epistle both what the corruptible things are and what the incorruptible things are, toward which the soul moves.

[2] Certain philosophers stated beautifully that the soul is composed of *the same* and *the different*; and they likened the soul to number, which is both simple and composite.³ For example, the number three is simple because it is not divisible (for it does not admit of either more or less); but, nonetheless, it is composed of the even and the odd. Yet, it is composed only of itself. (For prior to number nothing can be conceived.) For if you conceive of three units prior to the number three, they do not constitute the number three unless you conceive of them as united. But three units that are united are but the number three. Therefore, [the number three] is composed of itself. And because it is composed, it is from one thing and from another thing, i.e., from what

is odd and from what is even, or from what is indivisible and from what is divisible. And because number is composed of itself it is conceived of as self-moving.

Next, [these philosophers] likened the *rational* soul to number.⁴ For the rational soul is simple and is composed, but is not composed of anything other than itself. Now, since it is from God, who is Simplicity itself, only immediately: it falls short of pure simplicity and is, as it were, a “composite simplicity.” Just as in an eagle there is a certain light-weightedness (for this reason the eagle goes above the earth and flies unto the aether), so too the soul turns toward those things that are subject to change, or else it turns toward things eternal and unchangeable—things that always remain existing in one and the same way. Hence, the soul seems to be like a living number that is composed of the *even* (or divisible) and the *odd* (or indivisible). For a soul is a life that can be conceived of as a number that numbers.

[3] Indeed, [the soul] is a life that is composed of what is sensory, or divisible, and what is intellectual, or indivisible. And because [the soul] is like a living number, it sees within itself harmonies. For it measures external, perceptible harmony by means of an internal, incorruptible harmony. Moreover, the soul can be conceived of as a living number ten, which within itself has (1) the number that numbers all things and (2) all that which produces, in all things, proportion or harmony or beauty. For example, a [musical-]artist takes a monochord, and with it he produces from a proportion of numbers an octave; and from another relationship [of numbers he produces] a fourth; from another, a fifth. And from these [he produces] harmonies. And he approves of nothing in this art except what conforms to his own nature. For the only reason he knows that there is a harmony from one and two, or from two and three, or from three and four is that he finds in the sound a certain agreement with that which has its origin within himself. And he abhors dissonance because it does not conform to his own being. Hence, he has within himself that by means of which he *measures* and *numbers*, *compounds* and *divides*—as Boethius says that he unfolds to the external notes that which he harbors within himself.⁵ By analogy, if the value of a golden denarius were alive, it could unfold itself and liken itself to many things and could enfold many things by likening [them] to itself. Similarly, the value of a ducat extends over many small coins from Verona; and it enfolds within itself the value of many such coins. For the intellect is, as it were, the value of the things that are understandable by it. These intelligible

things are under the intellect's jurisdiction, as are the forms of perceptible things. For the perfection of the intellectual nature enfolds all sensory perfection, even as intellectual knowledge excels all sensory knowledge and encompasses all such knowledge and extends itself in an unfolding way beyond all such knowledge and unites and collects all sensory knowledge within itself in an enfolding way.

[4] But because neither value nor proportion nor likeness nor unfolding nor enfolding can be understood unless number is first understood: the soul, which makes judgments about all these things, is rightly said to be like a living number, which of its own power can make judgments about all these things. But if someone were to say that number is quantity, I say that I do not mean that the soul is a living number in the likeness of a mathematical number or of a quantity but mean that it is a substantial number, from which the concept of mathematical [number] flows forth in a likeness. For a mathematical number presupposes a certain number that exists in and of itself and that makes a judgment about the mathematical [number].

Now, the soul is not either a number or a harmony or anything that is apprehended by the senses or imaged by the imagination. But because it is created in order that the glory of the Omnipotent Creator may be shown to it, it has an intellectual eye for seeing all the works of God and for discriminating and judging, so that [in this way] it can be elevated unto an admiring of the glory of the Omnipotent [Creator]. But all distinguishing, without which there is no judgment, presupposes number. For without *one* thing and *another* thing there is no distinguishing. But how is it possible that there be one thing and another thing without there being number? Therefore, if number makes possible distinguishing, then the soul can be called a certain living number that unfolds from itself numerical judgments and numerical distinctions.

[5] If, then, the soul is [created] by God in order to attain a vision of the glory of His majesty, then the soul has a body only in order to apprehend God's visible works, to the end [of obtaining a vision] of God's glory. And so, [the soul] ought not to be attached to the flesh or to visible things and ought not to give itself over to corruptible desires but ought in all respects to turn to magnifying the glory of the Great God. And thereby [it ought] to transfer itself by means of visible things unto the Invisible God, in order that God may be the intended End. God is Goodness itself, which is desired by all. Therefore, he who clings to the desires of the flesh posits his state-of-

rest there. His god is his belly.⁶ But the spirit, whose essence is not flesh or blood, abhors these corruptible desires. However, the sensual man does not perceive those things that are of the Spirit [of God].⁷ God is the Good Spirit, whom all good spirits desire.

So there are contrary desires: the desires of the corruptible nature are directed toward this perceptible world and are temporal; the desires of the incorruptible spirit are not directed toward this corruptible world but are desires to see the King of Peace's glory—a glory that is a peace that surpasses all understanding,⁸ a peace than which nothing more joyous or more desirable can be thought of. Hence, Paul admonishes us to walk in the spirit.⁹ And he adds the reason: because such ones do not fulfill the desires of the flesh. For the flesh has desires that are at odds with the spirit, and the spirit [has desires that are] at odds with the flesh. (For these [differing desires] are opposed to each other, so that you do those things which you do not wish to do.¹⁰) For example, if someone who is walking in the spirit sees a beautiful woman, he gives glory to God, and he turns to admiring Infinite Beauty, of whose light this [woman's beauty] is a certain very remote trace. He who thus walks in the spirit does not fulfill the desires of the flesh and does not commit adultery [in his heart]¹¹ with that beautiful woman. For the beauty does not move him carnally but moves his spirit (by which he walks in the spirit) unto admiring the glory of the Creator. When such a man is moved to desire [carnal] union with the beautiful [woman], he thinks in the spirit: "if, even in corruptible material, that which is beautiful¹² is so attractive—if the beauty of the flesh is so appealing to the flesh—then how [greatly must] Absolute Beauty and Beauty *per se* attract the spirit to itself! And of what kind [must be] that delight of the spirit's union with Wisdom, which is Beauty itself!"

[6] Moreover, take note of the fact that the will cannot be compelled to give assent, although oftentimes, because of the resistance of the flesh, a man cannot do that which he wills [to do]. For in the members [of the body] the law [of the flesh] wars against the law of the mind.¹³ And because every [act of] sin is voluntary and because the Law was put into place because of transgressors,¹⁴ those who walk in the spirit are not under the Law. And so, [Paul] says that if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the Law.¹⁵ For the spirit leads hearts upward unto God; but the flesh [leads] downwards. Christ said that He is from above because He was led by the spirit and said that the carnal Jews were from below because they were led not by the spirit but by

the flesh. Paul speaks of the works of the flesh as manifest, which are, namely, fornication, uncleanness, etc.¹⁶ All these follow from fleshly desires and are temporal and corruptible. Indeed, they lead him-who-does-them to corruption and death. But because the Kingdom of God is eternal life, such [followers of the flesh] will not possess the Kingdom of God. The Law was set in place for men such [as these]; it is the law of death. Hence, by means of all these [fleshly movements the soul] turns to otherness and division. But the fruits of the movement by which [Paul] commands us to walk in the spirit are, as he says, love, joy, peace, etc.¹⁷ For by means of this movement the soul turns to oneness and sameness. And so, the fruits of that movement are love, joy, peace, etc. All these [fruits] that [the Apostle] lists originate from, and exist from, oneness and sameness. Therefore, they are eternal and unchanging. For the soul proceeds toward union. Yet, strength that tends continually toward union becomes stronger. Against such individuals who are guided in such a way that they bear the fruit of life, no law is set in place. And the following is Paul's intention: [to say] that the Law does not justify; for the Law, set in place because of transgressors, forbids sin. However, the prohibition does not justify; rather, faith does. Faith makes us walk in the spirit; it justifies, (as we clearly apprehend from the fruits enumerated by Paul).

[7] Paul concludes: "Those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh together with its vices and lusts."¹⁸ And such ones have put to death their earthly members, in which there [now] lives only the spirit of Christ. Note that [Paul] says that the flesh is crucified together with its vices and lusts. For the Christian, who is obliged to follow Christ, ought not to permit to his flesh the liberty of walking according to vices and lusts; rather, [he ought] to be fastened with nails to the Cross by way of his unceasing memory of [Christ's] death. For in regard to those whom the flesh (and its vices and lusts) controls: they are subject to the Prince of this world¹⁹ and are not Christ's. For Christ's Kingdom is not of this world.²⁰ And no one can be of His Kingdom unless he overcomes the Evil One through crucifixion.²¹

[8] Because the conflict of which Paul [speaks] is the beginning and the root of every conflict and every dispute, a certain preacher²² marvels at this conflict. For it is as if two friends who were raised together from childhood, [and] who had lived together on good terms, [and] whose way of life could not exist without each other's association, were to contend with each other. For there cannot be a greater

friendship in this world than that of the soul and the body. This fact is evident because “friendship” refers to union: it is characteristic of friends to will and not to will the same thing.²³ And such a union, [viz., a union of friends], varies. For example, [there is a union] of citizens who live together in one state and who like one another. A closer union [consists of] those who live together in one house and are of one and the same set of parents [and] who like one another even more. The union of a man and a woman is still closer. Lastly, the soul is united with the body so as to constitute a single human being; this is the closest [union], and [these two] love each other exceedingly.

[9] *Among the first* [group, viz., the citizens,] strife and disagreements arise, and one part [of the citizenry] endeavors to destroy the other. (But by nature the spirit does not wish to be separated from the body. Accordingly, Christ said: “Let this cup pass from me ...,” etc.²⁴) *The second [kind of] friends*, [viz., those living together,] divide things that are common to them; for example, brothers and sisters [divide] possessions. (However, the body and the soul never desire to divide-up; rather, they share all things with each other, and actions and being-acted-upon are connected. Aristotle in [Book] I of *On the Soul* [notes]: ‘Someone’s saying that the soul rejoices or sorrows is like his saying that the soul weaves or builds;²⁵ for no operation of the soul occurs without the body.’) *The union of a husband and a wife* is a close union. “For for this reason a man leaves his father and his mother and will cling to his wife.”²⁶ Nevertheless, if one of them dies, the surviving one marries someone else. However, *the body and the soul* are not related in that way; for the body never would will to have a different soul—and vice versa. Moreover, the soul has so great an inclination for the body that it cannot be happy unless it is joined to its body. Hence, just as [the two] were conjoined in regard to what was merited, so they shall be united with respect to their reward. And there is no soul that has had a body so unseemly that the soul would not rather be united to it than to the very beautiful world. For [the soul and the world] would not be congruent with each other; and a perfecting [power] ought [always] to correspond to what is capable of being perfected by it. Now, in this friendship [between the body and the soul] the soul is found to be the more faithful, since it is earnestly concerned over caring for the body. Hence, [the soul] devises whatever things are necessary for the body’s preservation, loveliness, and pleasure. For example, reason devises crops for [the body’s] nourishment, in order to preserve it. It devises ointment for [the body’s] pleasure and also devises pow-

ders and medicines, pleasant colors and pleasant tastes. Likewise, [it devises] different arts-and-crafts that conduce to the comeliness of the head and of the entire body. Etc.

[10] Therefore, since the friendship [between body and soul] is so great, it is strange that Paul says, to wit, that [the body and the soul] are opposed to each other. Moreover, since the flesh is so weak that without the soul it cannot either exist or live, how does the weak flesh rebel against the very strong and very quick spirit? Then too, how will our flesh—naked by nature and lacking horns and claws—battle against the spirit, which is armed with knowledge and with skills? The preacher Aldorf²⁷ answers that the battle is conducted by means of motion: viz., the motion of obedience, of habit, and of corruption. [It occurs] by means of the motion of obedience because to obey its Creator is something innate to every creature; and only the sinner and the demon are exceptions; for a sinner's will resists the Creator. And so, it is proper that [the sinner], because of disobedience, is fought against by his own subordinate. And this is the point that Isidore²⁸ makes as regards an arrogant man: his body will not be subjected to his soul, nor will his soul be subjected to his reason—if his mind is not subjected to the Creator. But all the things that are subject to us are rightly subject to us when and if we subject ourselves to Him from whom they have been made subject to us. And so, although the body and the soul have a friendship, nevertheless (as the Wise man says)²⁹ on the part of two existing friends it is something sacred to honor truth [above friendship]—and [to honor] especially to that Truth which is the Fount of truth [and] which said “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”³⁰

[11] Moreover, the reason that the flesh has desires contrary to the spirit is that each thing acts in accordance with its form. For example, choleric individuals are easily moved to anger; “sanguine” individuals are wanton; etc. But the flesh is like a heated cauldron that boils and bubbles, as says Jeremiah 1.³¹ And the soul always supplies the firewood, viz., the vital nutrients, i.e., food and flavors. And from everywhere [the soul] draws that from which it feeds that flame: by way of the eyes [it draws in] beautiful colors; by way of the ears, melodious sounds; by way of the mouth, pleasant tastes; by way of the nostrils, pleasant scents. And it receives all these things in excess of the rightful norms. And so, from these things the heart is kindled and inflamed because, in addition, all flesh is corrupt and foul. From the

flesh goes forth a foul smell that causes infection more than does spoiled food. And so, since the soul is bent in the direction of the flesh, it receives the foul odor that the flesh gives off because of its licentiousness. Hence, it is not surprising if [the soul] is corrupted and made bestial. Chrysostom [notes]: through every carnal act a man is made like the animals—and especially through acts resulting from lust.

[12] The teacher Matthew of Cracow, in his book, raises questions as to God's having done all things well. And, among other [questions, he asks] why the soul was united to the lowly clay³² of the flesh. He answers that [this creating] was done very reasonably in order to display the divine majesty, which could indeed join together such different things. For who would have believed that between such disparate and different things there could be a union such that one person could be made from them? Moreover, it was reasonable that after God willed to create substances, He would create [substances] of each kind: viz., an immaterial [substance], a bodily [substance], and [a substance] composed of both [the immaterial and the material]. Furthermore, [this creating was done] so that the immaterial creature, although noble, would avoid pride and would learn to be humble. [And it was done so that he would learn] not to despise even the lowest of creatures but to govern [them] and to care for [them]—[to do so] (1) in the light of the fact that he himself can be joined to them with very great union, with very great inclination, and with very great agreement and that he can incur poverty so great that he will need these [creatures] for many goods, and (2) in the light of the fact that they can be made so dignified and so influential with that spirit that they can render it inclined even to things lowly. And not only was that union [of body and soul] reasonable, but also, as it seems, it was so necessary that without it immaterial and corporeal creatures would have been without order and without agreement; and, thus, the order of the universe would have been less perfect.

Lastly, [Matthew of Cracow] says (using many words) that the whole corporeal nature would not by itself arrive at being able to assist the angels in praising God—for that [angelic] nature was created for these acts-of-praising—unless [the corporeal nature] were joined to the rational spirit.³³ Hence, man can help the angels in their praise of God. And [he can help] to repair angels' ruin and to elevate the corporeal nature.

[13] [Matthew of Cracow] asks why God created material things

to be so appealing. He answers:³⁴ Given that the conjoining of something suitable to the object-perceived causes pleasure, then after [God] created things that perceived and that were animated, [viz., ensouled bodies], He ought also to have created pleasurable things. And He did so in order that His infinite delight could be detected in creatures and because [these] delights could not be enjoyed unless they were present [both] in the spirit and the flesh. For if they were not present in the flesh but only in the spirit, the flesh would be altogether despised as base. For who would be concerned very much to obtain food, drink, and clothing, to beget offspring and to rear them—things that require concern, trouble, and effort—if it were not *pleasurable* to make use of such things and if to lack these things were not detrimental? (As a result men would be less concerned to preserve life both in the individual and in the species. Some men are already tired of this [preserving of life—tired] because of such worries and toils.)

Hence, reason demanded that there be great fleshly delight (1) in order that, at times, the delight would offset that weariness and [those] toils, (2) in order that, at times, an [otherwise] hesitant spirit's crown and victory and approbation be [due to its] great activity, [and] also (3) in order that, at times, from the greatness of our delight in the flesh we would be persuaded of the greatness of the delight in the spirit—a delight that is difficult to believe (since it is rarely and dimly perceived and since we are more readily persuaded from the baseness of the body's delight). For if there is such great delight in base, foul, and shameful (and, hence, detrimental) works of the flesh, how incomparably greater is believed to be the delight that comes from that most noble work—viz., the union of the spirit with God, who is supremely good and supremely delightful. Moreover, [God created the rational soul as united to a body] so that the spirit and the flesh would, like certain marital partners, be judged to be equals in the following respect: that since the spirit sometimes is so elevated from, so alien from, and so withdrawn from, the flesh that in a certain way it does not endow the flesh with sensation (or, at least, seems not to sense by means of the flesh), so too there would be a certain operation of the flesh that would withdraw from using reason.

After it was *suitable* that there be such great pleasure in the flesh, it was exceedingly *necessary* that [the great pleasure] be present only in a base work, lest, if the work were noble, men would be strongly attracted [to it in terms of pleasure] and would (since reason would be set aside) become bestial. And so, it was expedient that [men] be dis-

posed in such a way that the more strongly pleasure would attract them, the more strongly a work's shameful, foulness, and baseness would hold them back. And also [it was expedient that] either the concern that is present in marriage or a sense of disgrace or the danger to honor and to the body and to the soul—which things are accustomed to follow fornicators—[would hold them back]. And [it was expedient that men] therefore not have grounds for complaining against God—as, nonetheless, they do complain (although unjustly) because they have to restrain themselves so greatly if they wish to turn [to God].

[14] The same man, [viz., Matthew of Cracow],³⁵ asks about the reason for which the body and the soul are united with such great discord. He answers, first, that in the state of innocence the soul was constituted with greater dignity than was the flesh. But because it misused its dignity for injuring God by inclining itself (against God's command) toward the flesh, it was deprived of the possession of dignity. But the fact that the *spirit* was inclinable to the flesh was due to the fact that also the *body* is conductible to better things than it naturally has an inclination for, so that it can obtain the delights of heavenly things and of spiritual joys. Moreover, it is evident that the immaterial creature and the material creature (which are so different that they scarcely fit together in the highest and ultimate genus) do not at all have the same natural inclinations, since [the two of them] are of disparate natures. Rather, [as is evident], the body is inclined toward material things; [but] the spirit, toward immaterial things. Therefore, if between them there was to be made a true union, it was necessary that they remain distinct, in some way, as regards their natural inclination. Otherwise, they would seem to be [numerically] *one* rather than to be *united*.

[15] But how would this distinction [between body and rational soul] be apparent, or what kind of distinction would it be, if the things united were in no way at variance [with each other]? Who would naturally believe that the spirit is in a *human* body rather than in a *brute* body if there were perceived only the corporeal operation and corporeal affection and [if there were perceived] no operation of the spirit (which operation is, as it were, extraneous to, and at odds with, the flesh)? For even now—notwithstanding the obvious and clearly recognizable opposition and conflict [between body and spirit] many mindless people doubt or deny that there are in men souls or spirits. On the other hand, if [the two] were in every respect at variance [with each other] and if there were no interdependence between them or no mutu-

al adhering, then how would they be shown to be united? For things that are conjoined in such a way that they are not at all influenced by one another but rather [in such a way that] one [of them] easily turns (for one reason or another) wherever it will, without the other [of them], and is easily separated from the other: [such things] can be said to be *adjacent to* one another, not to be *united to* one another—as is evident in the case of stones that constitute a pile. And, thus, a good [finite] spirit or an evil [finite] spirit is not said to *unite* to itself a body but is said, rather, to *assume* a body. Nor was the Holy Spirit *united* to a dove, as the Word [of God] was *united* to [a] human nature.

Now, we fittingly say to be united those things that adhere to each other in such a way that because of a natural property (or otherwise induced property), or because of free and voluntary affection, the one is influenced by the other even to the point that what otherwise pleases or suits it, now pleases or suits it less with respect to it itself by itself.³⁶ And because such is [the relationship] between the body and the soul, the union between them is manifestly evident. And the fact that the one is influenceable by the other evidences their union. But the difference, and the opposition, of their inclinations shows their distinctness and their natural diversity. Furthermore, after man sinned with respect to his reason—in that he did not duly govern in accordance with reason and in that, in accordance with the flesh, he consented to the flesh's pleasure—he ought rightly to have been punished in both his parts [viz., body and soul] and by means of them both. And how could this be better done than that they thus influence each other and be at odds with each other and repel each other? Not only would the one struggle against the other but each would struggle with itself, since it did not keep the peace that was granted to it.

NOTES TO *Spiritu Ambulate*

- * Sermon CCII.
- 1. Galatians 5:16.
- 2. II Corinthians 4:18.
- 3. See Nicholas's dialogue *De Mente* 6 & 7, as regards the mind and number.
- 4. *Loc. cit.*
- 5. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Book V, Meter 4, 339 (*PL* 63:850).
- 6. Philippians 3:19.
- 7. I Corinthians 2:14.
- 8. Philippians 4:7.
- 9. Galatians 5:16.
- 10. Galatians 5:17. Romans 7:19.
- 11. Matthew 5:28.
- 12. Here (at 5:40) I am reading (with the Paris edition) "quod pulchrum" in place of "pulchra".
- 13. Romans 7:23.
- 14. Galatians 3:19.
- 15. Galatians 5:18.
- 16. Galatians 5:19-21.
- 17. Galatians 5:22-23.
- 18. Galatians 5:24.
- 19. The Prince of this world is the Devil. John 12:31. Matthew 9:34.
- 20. John 18:36.
- 21. Galatians 2:19.
- 22. The editors of the printed Latin text here cite Aldobrandinus de Toscanella. And they refer to a passage in his sermon: viz., folio 185^v^a, lines 26-31 of Latin ms. R 1 at the Priester Seminar in Brixen, Italy.
- 23. Sallust, *De Coniuratione Catilinae* 20, 4.
- 24. Matthew 26:39.
- 25. Aristotle, *De Anima*, I, 4 (408^b11-13).
- 26. Mark 10:7.
- 27. Aldobrandinus de Toscanella, *op. cit.* (n. 23 above), folio 186^r^b, lines 23-31.
- 28. Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, I,9,11 [*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Vol. CXI, pp. 28-29]. *PL* 83:553.
- 29. The Wise man is the Lover of wisdom, i.e., "the Philosopher," viz., Aristotle. See his *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 4 (1096^a16-17). See also *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, Ethica, Book I, Sententia 9 [p. 233 in Jacqueline Hamesse, editor, *Les auctoritates Aristotelis: un florilège médiéval* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1974).
- 30. John 14:6.
- 31. Jeremias (Jeremiah) 1:13.
- 32. Matthaëus de Cracovia (Matthew of Cracow), *Rationale Operum Divinorum (Theodicea)*, Tractatus VI, Chap. 6 (at the beginning) [edited by

Vitoldus Rubczyński and published in Cracow in 1930. See p. 137, lines 4-7]. See also Genesis 2:7.

33. Matthew of Cracow, *op. cit.*, Tractatus VI, Chapter 6 [p. 138].

34. *Ibid.*, Tractatus VI, Chap. 3 [pp. 132-134].

35. *Ibid.*, Tractatus VI, Chap. 7 [pp. 139-141].

36. *Ibid.*, Tractatus VI, Chap. 7 [in particular, p. 141, lines 6 ff.]. At **1 5:26** I am reading “de per se” (with the manuscripts) in place of “de [per] se” in the printed edition of the Latin texts. The former phrase is an expression sometimes used in Medieval Latin, so that the word “per” need not be excised.

Ex Ipso, per Ipsum, et in Ipso*
("Of Him, by Him, and in Him ...")
[June 12, 1446; preached in Mainz]

EXORDIUM

[1] "Of Him, by Him, and in Him are all things. To Him be honor and glory forever" (Romans 11 and in the epistle read at [today's] mass).¹

As we are about to say a few things concerning the most holy Trinity—doing so by way of arousing-unto-wonderment rather than of disclosing the incomprehensible trine and one God, and doing so in order that we may be elevated unto honoring and glorifying Him—let us pray for God's grace.

PART ONE

Introduction of the Topic

*From the Pauline Epistles It Is Shown That the Power
and Wisdom of God Are in All Things
and That in Man's Infirmities God's Power
and Wisdom Are To Be Blessed.*

[2] The Apostle Paul, inferring a certain very profound conclusion (viz., that God concluded all in unbelief, in order to have mercy upon all),² added: "O the depth of the riches!"³ And he concluded: "To Him be honor and glory!"⁴ Elsewhere the same apostle very wisely draws the following conclusion: that according to nature we are needy, sons of wrath, deficient, foolish, subject to the Prince of darkness. God—in order to show the riches of His grace in His goodness toward us in Christ Jesus⁵—willed that we obtain mercy in and through Him in whom God established all things that are in heaven and that are on earth⁶ (as [we read] this in Ephesians 1 and 2), so that there not be anyone in the flesh who could glory over himself but that anyone who glories, glory in the Lord (as [we read] in I Corinthians 1).⁷ [3] And to the end that the excellency be of God's power and not of us, we have this treasure in earthen vessels (II Corinthians 4).⁸ [This statement] is as if to say: we who are in the flesh have a certain divine seed in an earthen vessel. For we are the offspring of God (Acts 17).⁹ That is, we have a spirit formed in the image of God [and] formed as the seed-of-life, which can make life fertile—not [fertile] in accordance with the

flesh but in accordance with Him (viz., God) of whom [our spirit] is the image. But this seed cannot, of its own power, bring anything into actuality but [can do so only] by the loftiness of God's power. Similarly, there is in a grain of wheat a certain treasure of vegetative life—[life contained] in an earthen vessel, i.e., in that grain, which is composed of many elements from the earth. But this treasure cannot actually produce anything—in order that there actually be vegetative life—except with the help of a more sublime power, viz., the sun's power. And, thereupon, the sublimity of the sun's power works by bringing the seed of vegetative life into actuality when the grain hides itself in the earth and mortifies the earthen vessel, so that in this way that vessel does not prevent itself from being able to bear much fruit.¹⁰ Likewise, in our case it is necessary—if the spirit is to bring the seed of life into actuality by means of the loftiness of God's power—that out of humility we hide this earthen vessel [of ours] in the earth (from whence it took its origin), reflecting on the fact that we are ashes from ashes, so that, subsequently, we not at all glory [in ourselves].

[4] And God will give prevenient grace, i.e., rain that moistens the earth of our sensibility, so that in this way the hardness of our bodily covering, which resists the motion of the spirit, may be softened. Next, [God] gives the grace that makes one pleasing—[gives it] through His sublime power, which moves the life of the spirit from potency into actuality, so that the spirit may bear fruit. And just as it is not the sun's fault that it does not effect in the grain-of-corn the power of the vegetative¹¹ life, but the responsibility rests with the farmer, who does not place the grain in the sun in suitable ways: so too it is not the fault of God's power that that power does not infuse into us all the things that are necessary for bringing the life of our spirit into actuality if we undertake the right activity. Now, the standard of right activity is Christ the Lord, in whom [God] determined to judge the world. For to follow in His footsteps is to come to perfection through Him without whom no one can obtain the glorious fruit of life. [5] Hence, we must take note of the fact that the excellence of [God's] power brings it about, in the case of your divine seed, which is of another world, that you mortify [yourself] in this world. For as the example of the seed of grain shows: in order to acquire a vegetative¹² life there ought to precede a mortification of the elemental power, which consists of a certain harmonious proportion-of-elements in the grain. And when in an animal the animal life is to be originated, the vegetative life must die. And if an intellectual life is to be originated, the animal life

must die. And, similarly, if something is to be brought from potency into actuality, the potency must die, so that it no longer is, if there is to be the actuality.

[6] Accordingly, if we intend to attain something of the next world in accordance with that which we possess in this world (in which that of the next world is present as a treasure in an earthen vessel), then that which is of this world must be mortified, in order that the treasure can be extracted. Hence, the Apostle Paul says elsewhere: If someone wishes to be wise after the fashion, namely, of the wisdom of the next world—[wisdom] that is hidden in the wisdom of this world as in an earthen vessel—let him become foolish, after the fashion, namely, of this world.¹³ And this [becoming foolish is what it is] to mortify that earthen vessel of mundane wisdom, so that in this way [the earthly vessel of wisdom] is made wise through the loftiness of God's power. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (I Corinthians 3).¹⁴

[7] And in this way we can understand how it is that the contrary [comes from] the contrary: from poverty (i.e., from the mortification of this world's riches) there arise spiritual riches; and from the mortification of this world's joy there arise joys of the next world—and similarly for other things, as is clearly inferred from the teaching of Christ in Luke 6 and other places.¹⁵ And take note of the basic point: that this sensory world is a likeness and a befiguring of the eternal intellectual-world, which is the Kingdom of God; but the form of this world passes away (as says Paul),¹⁶ because a likeness and an image are put aside when one reaches the real and perfect thing. [8] Therefore, the life of this world is not [true] life but is an image and a shadow of true life. [The case is] similar regarding wisdom and practical wisdom and joy and all other [such] things. Hence, one must mortify these likenesses, which harbor intellectually within themselves the seed of the real thing, so that (in a similar way) after the shadow and the image are put aside one comes to the exemplar. And note that just as the gladness of this world is an image and a shadow of the gladness of God's Kingdom, so too the sorrow of this world is an image of the sorrow of the Prince of darkness's kingdom. From these [considerations] you may surmise how much joy the saints who are in the Kingdom of God have and how much sorrow the damned have. And this latter consideration is very useful.

[9] Hence, turning [our thoughts] back to the Apostle [Paul], we say that in order to show the glory of the Great God, all things are that

which they are. Therefore, O man, receive with great marveling at God's goodness all the things that come to you or are given to you by God, and say: 'God gave being to me in order to show in me, who was nothing, the greatness of His goodness—so that by His omnipotent power I am that which I am. He made me to be a human being in order to show in me His great power when He will elevate me unto the company of the angels. He made me weak and infirm in order to show His power in me when He will work in me sublime things. He permits me to sin in order to show in me the power of His mercy and grace when I shall be converted to Him. He permits me to err in order to show in me the power-of-His-wisdom, by which He is able to elevate me unto the light of true knowledge. He permitted all men to sin in order that all would need grace, so that He could show in Christ Jesus, the Savior of all, the riches of His grace.'¹⁷

[10] After countless such things: [say, O man], with Paul: 'He permits me to be weak in order that there may dwell in me the power-of-Christ, which is made perfect in weakness.'¹⁸ Although I am the chief of sinners, I obtained mercy in order that Christ Jesus could display His very great long-suffering in order to instruct those who are [so] going to believe Him [that they are brought] unto eternal life.'¹⁹ And when you thus ascend, you will cry out with this same Paul: "Now to the King of the ages—the immortal, invisible, sole God—be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1).²⁰ And let [the words] "O the depth of His riches . . ." etc.,²¹ be expounded (as is done elsewhere).

And this concludes the sermon's first part, which serves as an introduction of our topic.

PART TWO

Exposition of the Topic

(a) *On the Blessed Trinity, which is spoken of in the topic.*

[11] The second part [of the sermon] will concern the expounding of our topic insofar as the Blessed Trinity is spoken of to us in the topic. Now, as concerns this part, we must note that—as the same Paul says in the last chapter of I Timothy—God dwells in light inaccessible.²² Hence, no one has seen Him or can see Him, because that light exceeds the power of intellectual sight. According, then, to this [passage] God cannot be seen, because He is invisible. And it is not the case that anything can be conceived to be like Him (Acts 17);²³ nor has [any such

concept] entered into the heart of man.²⁴ Therefore, He also cannot be named; rather, He is ineffable. Hence, in accordance with that habitation by which He dwells in light inaccessible, which is His own blessed divinity, He is unnameable by either “oneness” or “trinity”.²⁵ Rather, His name is above every nameable name,²⁶ whether in Heaven or on earth, even though without Him nothing is nameable, since of Him and through Him and in Him whatever is nameable is named.²⁷ And so, God is unattainable Absolute Infinity.

[12] God is considered in another way insofar as He is our God and is the Creator-of-all-things, being in the world as a cause is present in what is caused. Because, then, all things are of Him and through Him and in Him as what is caused is present in its Cause, we ascend from the things caused unto the trineness of the Cause—[ascend] in such a way [as to infer] that without Him nothing was made but that all things are by Him²⁸ and that He is the Tricausal Beginning. Here Paul, who says that God is triune, speaks in such a way [as to indicate] that God’s Essence is the Cause of all being. [13] But how are we able to attain unto seeing that God is trine and one? It is not at all possible for us to apprehend [this essence] by this way of ascent from things caused unto their Cause; nor is it possible for me to teach about [this essence], since essence, or quiddity, (even specific essence, i.e., essence contracted in accordance with a species,) cannot be attained, except with respect to the fact *that it is*. By comparison, we cannot see humanity by means of apprehending its quiddity; rather, [we can see] only *that it is*—[see this] *a posteriori* from human beings, who partake of humanity.

[14] Thus, we shall be able to be elevated a bit—in a certain loftiness of our enlightenment, with faith guiding us—unto the fact that the Divine Trinity *is*. Thus, being in the presence of the Seraphic and Evangelical spirits, we may exclaim in [our own] spirit: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, . . .,” etc. (Isaias 6 and Apocalypse 4).²⁹ But Isaias says that he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high up, etc.³⁰ (See elsewhere [regarding this topic].)³¹ Consider there [in Isaias] that since Isaias was in the spirit, he saw [the Lord sitting] on the throne high up, etc., and saw that the Seraphims covered the Lord’s face and His feet with wings-of-power.³² For the following must be noted, in particular: [viz.] that with two wings they covered the feet of sensory movement, and with two wings they covered the facial movement (i.e., cognitive movement), for an acquaintance is made from [looking at] the face). And having been kept situated above His face by [two] other wings

(viz., by the motion of rapture), they flew unto Paradise (as we read also concerning Paul in II Corinthians 11 and Acts 22 and elsewhere, etc.³³). And the following is, in truth, to be inferred [from the text]: [viz.,] that the Seraphic spirits revered the Trinity in oneness and the Oneness in trinity—as did also Moses (when he said “*beresit bara elohim*”)³⁴ and the other prophets. Hence, while the Seraphims were flying, they were exclaiming.³⁵ For in an intellectual soaring³⁶ one comes to that divine exclaiming, etc.

[15] But we who—having unclean lips, etc. (according to Isaias),³⁷—are present in this world among sinners cannot *exclaim*, because we do not fly. But by faith we apprehend and see the Lord of hosts and the flying Seraphic spirits. But we come to the point of exclaiming when a Seraphic spirit ministers to us purification by means of a [live] coal from the altar of the Lord.³⁸ At that time, then, we exclaim; and we are sent to administer the Seraphic office in this present world, among the people. And take note of the fact that the Seraphic spirit approaches the preacher when the preacher comes to the self-knowledge that he is unclean and when he is purified in the loftiness of his intellect by a burning coal of zeal for, and fervor for, God. Consequently, after he is thus inflamed [and] is without fear and possesses purified lips: because of the fire of love he exclaims and proclaims ..., etc. [16] Therefore, [a preacher] who wishes to stimulate his audience to exclaim as do the Seraphims must lead them at least to see by faith the Lord high up on His throne and to see that [the Lord’s] house³⁹ is full of His majesty, etc.⁴⁰ Note that when by faith [a hearer] is led unto seeing God the Creator, then he sees that the heavens and the earth are full of God’s glory.

[17] In the foregoing way I will lead you by faith, because you believe that God exists and that He is the Best of all things and is the Creator of all things. So, then, you see Him on high. For by ascending to the Seraphims *by way of all creatures*, you still do not see Him, because creatures are beneath Him, and He is on the highest throne above the Seraphims. But although He is above all things, He is nonetheless within all things. For, as Paul says in Acts 17: although He does not dwell in temples made with hands, because He is the Maker of all things, He is not far from any one [of us], because in Him we live and move.⁴¹ And elsewhere Paul says that God is above all men and is present in all men.⁴² And so, you see that of Him, by Him, and in Him are all things⁴³ [18] You see that He is none of those things which can

be apprehended or named, even though in all things He is all things. Similarly, humanity is not any of the human beings; and, nevertheless, of it, by it, and in it all human beings are that which they are. And for this reason humanity cannot be far from any human being, because in it all human beings exist, live, and move in accordance with the fact that they are human beings—just as in God, the Creator, they exist, live, and move in accordance with the fact that they are creatures.

[19] Next, we see that from the gift of God all creatures have that which they have. But God gives nothing that He does not have. Therefore, God has all the things that are found in creatures. It is not the case that He has something other than Himself, since apart from Him there can be nothing. And so, His having is His being. Therefore, whatever is found in creatures is found in God—which is to say: it *is* God.⁴⁴ Now, plurality is only oneness that is partaken of in such and such ways. Accordingly, all the many things that are found in creatures are a participation in the one Infinite Power that is found to be received in such and such various ways. And the various modes of reception give rise to various names. Hence, God is the one and most simple Infinite Power, which fills the whole house of His creation. In accordance with one mode we give to this Power that is participated-in the name *being*; in accordance with another [mode we call it] *living*; in accordance with another [mode we call it] *understanding*; in accordance with another, *truth*; in accordance with another, *goodness*. And so, we call God Good, Life, Being, and so on. Hence, by means of all these names, which we ascribe in this way to God, we intend to say nothing other than that God is Infinite Power that is altogether simple, etc.

(b) *On the triad* fecundity, offspring, love (*or* union).

[20] Now, we find with respect to man some three things that are very natural and without which this world could not exist: viz., fecundity, offspring, and love (*or* union). For since this world cannot partake of the Divine Power (viz., Absolute Eternity and Absolute Immortality) in which God alone dwells: falling short of Absolute Eternity, it partakes of Eternity in various modes. And this perceptible world partakes of Eternity in a temporal and motional way; and, hence, it falls into instability and corruption. Unless, then, this Divine Power, which is thus partaken of, were to have in its essence fecundity, offspring, and love in such a way that these three were the very simple Power that is partaken of by creatures in their own way: that Power could not be omnipotent and natural in such a way that this world could be filled

with its majesty, in order for this world to exist. Therefore, in the essence of the world, which partakes [of Divine Power], there is found fecundity, offspring, and union; the world has received this trinity through a flowing-forth. (Genesis 1: "Increase and multiply!")⁴⁵ And so, [the world] is present in the Creator as in its Fount. ([See] the end of Isaias, where Isaias proves by reference to the fact that God has given to others the power-of-begetting that He Himself also has this power.)⁴⁶

[21] And here note carefully that this fecundity, offspring, and union are the simple essence of each thing and that these three things obtain different names in higher things and in lower things—in genera, in species, and in individuals, etc. For in the case of each thing that exists there is found (a) that by means of which it exists (and [this] is the fecundity), (b) that which [the thing] is ([and this is] the offspring), and (c) the union [of the fecundity and the offspring]. In the genus *animality* there is found fecundity, offspring (in accordance with the fecundity), and union. These are the simple essence of animality. The case is similar for the species. [22] Hence, in the specific essence of humanity: fecundity, offspring, and union *are* the humanity. And the fecundity of the entire essence begets the offspring; and the fecundity is in the offspring, and the offspring is in the fecundity. And the fecundity is in the union-of-love with the offspring, and the union is in the fecundity and in the offspring. And so, even though he who names human fecundity does not name either offspring or union, nevertheless he names the essence, since in fecundity are present offspring and union.

[23] And note that in the essence of a complete syllogism there are three propositions: a major [premise], a minor [premise], and a conclusion. But the three propositions are not anything other than the syllogism. Moreover, the minor [premise] and the conclusion are present in the power of the major [premise]; and the major [premise] is the fecundity of the syllogism. And the minor [premise] is the offspring of the fecundity because it is unfolded from the major [premise]. And the conclusion is the union of both [premises], etc. Hence, in the minor [premise] there is present the major [premise] and the conclusion: the major [premise is present] because [the minor premise] is the unfolding of the power of the major [premise]; and the conclusion [is present] because it is enfolded in the minor [premise]. The situation is similar in regard to the conclusion. Hence, if it could be conceived that the

major [premise] were the syllogism (and, similarly, [that] the minor [were the syllogism] and that the conclusion [were the syllogism]), then this [example of the syllogism] would be a certain likeness [to the Trinity], although a remote likeness.

[24] Similarly, there is the example with regard to perfect mastery [*perfectum magisterium*]. For in the essence of perfect mastery there is *activity*, *art*, and *delight*: from the activity comes the art; from the activity and the art comes the delight. And because we are craftsmen by virtue of crafting: the activity is the fecundity; the art is the offspring; the delight is the union. Moreover, there is a quite close likeness between temporal mastery and the eternal-mastery-that-has-to-do-with-creation. Likewise, in the essence of one's exercising [an ability] there is a *doer* (the fecundity), *that which is done* (the offspring), and *the doing* (the union) that proceeds from the doer and that which is done.

[25] Likewise, this consideration of fecundity and of offspring is found in the soul: memory is fecundity; intellect is offspring; will, or love, or delight, is union. Similarly, in the essence: *intellect* is fecundity of understanding, that which is *understandable* is the offspring, and that which is the *actual understanding* on the part of the fecund power-of-understanding and of the understandable offspring is the common bond. The case is similar with regard to love, or will, and with respect to all existing things, which cannot be otherwise except by participation in the triune Divine Essence. By virtue of this participation [these things] have a nature that is 'fecundity, offspring, and love—in a simplicity of essence.' Without these [three things] they could not have a nature or exist naturally and perfectly.

[26] Moreover, intellectual natures partake of this triune essence in their own way, so that fecundity, offspring, and love are the intellectual nature—even as in the human species they are the human nature and in plants they are the plant-nature and in elements they are the elemental nature. In the foregoing way [the labels "fecundity," "offspring," and "love"] are brought into harmony with Divine Scripture, which names fecundity *Father* and names offspring *Son* and names love *Holy Spirit*.

By means of my [present] treatment [of this topic] we are given closer assistance (as much as is granted to us) as we ascend in our investigation of the triune Divine Essence.

NOTES TO SERMON *Ex Ipso, per Ipsum, et in Ipso*

- * Sermon LXI.
- 1. Romans 11:36. Cf. 16:27.
- 2. Romans 11:32.
- 3. Romans 11:33.
- 4. Romans 11:36 and 16:27.
- 5. Ephesians 2:7.
- 6. Ephesians 1:10.
- 7. I Corinthians 1:31.
- 8. II Corinthians 4:7.
- 9. Acts 17:28-29.
- 10. John 12:24.
- 11. Here at 4:9 I am surmising “vegetabilis” in place of “sensibilis”.
- 12. Here at 5:6 I am surmising “vegetabilem” in place of “sensibilem”.
- 13. I Corinthians 3:18-19.
- 14. I Corinthians 3:19.
- 15. Luke 6:20-25.
- 16. I Corinthians 7:31.
- 17. Ephesians 2:7.
- 18. II Corinthians 12:9.
- 19. I Timothy 1:15-16.
- 20. I Timothy 1:17.
- 21. Romans 11:33.
- 22. I Timothy 6:16.
- 23. Acts 17:29.
- 24. I Corinthians 2:9.
- 25. See J. Hopkins, “Verständnis und Bedeutung des dreieinen Gottes bei Nikolaus von Kues,” *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, 28 (2003), 135-164. See also Cusa’s *De Visione Dei* 17 (7 8).
- 26. Phillipians 2:9.
- 27. Romans 11:36.
- 28. John 1:3. Romans 11:36.
- 29. Isaias (Isaiah) 6:2-3. Apocalypse (Revelation) 4:8.
- 30. Isaias (Isaiah) 6:1.
- 31. Sermon XXXVIII (4).
- 32. Isaias (Isaiah) 6:2.
- 33. See II Corinthians 12:2-4. Acts 22:9-11.
- 34. Genesis 1:1.
- 35. They were exclaiming “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. All of the earth is full of His glory.” Isaias (Isaiah) 6:3.
- 36. Nicholas regards the words of Isaias (Isaiah) 6:1-3 as having also a symbolic meaning, so that, for example, the angels-who-are-flying signify also an intellectual soaring.
- 37. Isaias (Isaiah) 6:5.
- 38. Isaias (Isaiah) 6:6.

39. Cf., below, **19**:14-16. God's creation is His house.
40. Cf. Psalms 71:19 (72:19).
41. Acts 17:24-28.
42. Ephesians 4:6.
43. Romans 11:36.
44. In God, all things are God, states Nicholas in many places: e.g., *De Docta Ignorantia* II, 5 (**119**).
45. Genesis 1:28.
46. Isaias (Isaiah) 66:9: "Shall not I that make others to bring forth children, myself bring forth, saith the Lord? Shall I, that give generation to others be barren, saith the Lord thy God?" (Douay-Rheims version).

Una Oblatione Consummavit*
in Sempiternum Sanctificatos
("By One Sacrifice He Has Perfected Forever
Those Who Are Sanctified.")
[April 2, 1455; preached in Brixen]

[1] "By one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who are sanctified."¹

Christ is the one who by means of one sacrifice has perfected forever those who are sanctified. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.² John says in the first chapter of the Apocalypse that He who has washed us with His own blood is the Prince of the kings of the earth.³ From the [Book of] Genesis's beginning we know that man was created in order to govern all the beasts.⁴ Thereafter, in Genesis 4, we find that God said to Cain that sinful-desiring is subordinate to Cain.⁵ I understand this [statement] as follows: that the inclination which results from the bestial, or animal, nature (i.e., from the sensory nature) and which is the inclination to sin is subordinate to man, i.e., to reason, and man will have control over it. Moreover, we find that men are set over men. These former are called kings; for such ones are rulers by nature, since in them the power-of-ruling that is from reason flourishes more strongly. For men who flourish in rational capability are, says Aristotle,⁶ naturally rulers and lords over others. Accordingly, man is placed in charge of the beasts.

[2] Now, Christ, whose Kingdom is not of this world,⁷ is the Prince of the kings of the earth. Just as there is a kingdom of a king who feeds men and a kingdom of him who feeds beasts, so there is also the Kingdom of Him who feeds the kings of men. For this Prince is He who has dominion over rulers' entire power of reasoning;⁸ and so, He is the Wisdom of God.⁹ For no faculty of reason that is devoid of wisdom is suited to rule. For only wisdom, which shines forth in reason, is obeyed. For when in his reason someone displays truth, which is wisdom, he is immediately obeyed; and one who hears, and who by means of hearing understands, complies with the biddings. Therefore, the Wisdom that is Truth is the Prince of kings, and His precepts are very palatable and pleasing precepts of life that enlivens; and they are full of love.

Therefore, just as man by nature is set over the beasts, so the

inner man¹⁰ is set over the outer man, which by Paul is called the sensual man.¹¹ And the Word of the Father is set over the inner man; and the Father is over the Word. Similarly, Paul said that the head of the woman is the man.¹² This [judgment] means only that reason has dominion over inclination.¹³ Furthermore, Paul says that the head of man is Christ and that the head of Christ is God.¹⁴ Now, just as the king-over-sensuality, [viz., reason,] is better than is the entire sensory nature (for the rational soul is better than all brute-animal desires), so the Prince-over-reason, [viz., Christ,] is better than all men. Accordingly, the humility of the Prince of kings is more virtuous than is all human humility, and His obedience is more virtuous than is all human obedience. And because obedience is better than is sacrifice,¹⁵ obedience together with His sacrifice is the perfect sacrifice, for it enfolds within itself all the merit and all the pacifying-mediation that, through sacrifices, can possibly be made for the purpose of reconciliation.

[3] Furthermore, note that the text of Genesis states that God created man in His image and likeness, so that man is in charge of the beasts. It is as if [the text] said: True rulership is rulership on whose governance all things depend for their existence and for their being conserved. This is the rulership of God, the Creator. Man was created in the likeness of God, who is altogether sovereign; and man partakes of that divine power, [which he exercises] with respect to the beasts. Now, it is evident that rulership is not devoid of reason. Therefore, the rational power was created in the likeness of God. And we experience this fact because [our rational power] exercises control over our sensory, or sensual, nature. Therefore, since reason's governance extends over the sensory nature, it is evident that the outer man (which is the sensual man, since it does not perceive the things which are of God) ought to be subordinate to the inner man, which spiritually perceives the things which are of God. Hence, because [the inner man] perceives the things which are of God, it ought to rule over the outer man (in accordance with the fact that the Word, or Prince of Reason, speaks in it) and ought always to say: "I will hearken to what the Lord speaks in me."¹⁶ And in this way [the inner man] preserves its likeness-of-God with respect to its rulership; and it increases this likeness the more it conforms its ruling to the divine precepts that it perceives.

[4] But if [the inner man] neglects its governing role, so that it does not rule over the dominating tendencies of the sensuality, then, as a result, the appetite rises up in disobedience, and the image of God is

darkened, and the power of the king is lost, and the role of a servant is assumed, and the likeness-of-God is darkened, so that, in the end, [the inner man] is subjected to the Prince of Darkness. But when the image of God does not remain in the inner man but rather the sensuality,¹⁷ or the sensory appetite, subjugates¹⁸ it, then that man cannot come to God, i.e., to its own [true] End. For the End and the Beginning of the image is God, who is the Truth of the image. And the image cannot arrive at its Truth¹⁹ if the Truth does not shine forth in it—i.e., if it ceases to be an image. Therefore, Christ is the Restorer of the darkened image. He teaches us how it is that the image can be born anew from the bedarkeness. And He began to act and to teach, in order that by means of visible experience we might arrive at rebirth. And for us He was made the Way,²⁰ so that we might know how [in us] the image is to be restored in order for it to be the image of God. He was made the Exemplar-Truth, for He said “I have given you an example so that as I have done you too may do.”²¹ “Learn from me.”²² Etc. And we still have need that [in us] the image of the Living God be alive and have movement-of-life (so that as a living image which sees within itself Him of whom it is an image, it can within itself taste of God, in whom it finds rest and unto whom it is moved by continual desire). Therefore, Christ was made to be for us Enlivening Life. Therefore, with His own blood He washes away the uncleanness (coming from the clay of the earth) of the daughters of Zion. After the cleansing, He creates (i.e., restores) a new man that is in conformity with God,²³ and He breathes into his face the breath of life,²⁴ so that the image of God is reborn as a living spirit.

[5] And note that, necessarily, it pertains to Him who is to be the Renewer of the darkened image to have within Himself the exemplar and truth of him whose image He wills to renew. For otherwise [the renewal] cannot occur. And because only the Son [also] has within Himself the Father-Creator, and because only the Son knows the Father, whom no one has seen:²⁵ only the Son is the Savior, or Renewer, or Regenerator, of the new man. And no man, of himself, is able to renew his own image conformably to God, whom he has not seen. [He is] even less [able to renew] someone else’s image. Hence, the Son of God is the only one [who can renew man’s image]. He, without whom there is no [salvation], works salvation in all respects. And He says: “Behold, I make all things to be new.”²⁶ The text says that only the Son knows the Father—[only the Son] and he to whom the Son wills to reveal [the Father].²⁷ Hence, God, who is hidden from

the eyes of all, can be revealed only by the Son; and the revelation is the renewal of the image, as is said above.

Note that the Restorer, or Renewer, of our image [of God] ought to have been possessed of our nature, in order that from His conduct we could be instructed about our infirmities and about the darkness of our image [of God]. And in Him the image [of God] ought not to have been darkened, or dimmed, by the darkness of sins. Otherwise—[i.e.,] if in His [image] there had not shined forth the Exemplar-Truth—there could not have been present in Him the mastery for restoring our image [of God]. Hence, if God the Father had not been present in the intellect of the Teacher, then how could the Teacher have restored [in us] the image of Him whom He would not have seen in and through His own image? Therefore, the Teacher of restoration could not have [been born] of the lust of the flesh, on account of which lust the image [of God] would have contracted a loathsome blemish (as occurred in the case of Adam's descendants, who exist as human beings as a result of lust and of blood relationships). Therefore, it was necessary that the Teacher of restoration be a human being and be born from a virgin-mother without a male seed. Accordingly, it was necessary that He be the Son of man.²⁸ And so, it was necessary that the Son of God, who alone knows the Father, be also the son of the Virgin. In order to be able perfectly to restore [our image of God], he was mortal, as are men. And he underwent, in succession, all the things that are contained in the Gospel. For thus, in the best way possible, the image of God in us was to be renewed by our Teacher and Lord. Therefore, nothing was done unnecessarily, nothing insufficiently; rather, [everything was done] according as our salvation required. And if together with this understanding you begin to understand [Christ's] deeds and if you inquire about our restoration, then you will find that by the most orderly providence of God all things serve this end perfectly.

[6] Consider the likeness of a grain of wheat. For Christ mentioned this likeness to the Gentiles, as John writes²⁹ and as on Monday we read in the Gospel. Christ wanted to disclose, with reference to Himself, that the Grain (which in John 6 is called the Living Bread that comes down from Heaven)³⁰ is not mortal unless it falls into the ground. For to the end that He become mortal, the Grain humbled Himself by falling into consecrated, virginal ground—[ground that was] not marred or barren but was good. And there He put on the form of a mortal man. And He descended into that earthiness in order, at length, to die. And [He did] this in order not to remain alone but to bear

much fruit. For the Wisdom, [viz., Christ,] of the Omnipotent Father would have remained without a human nature had He not put on flesh and in this way become subject to death. Now the power-of-the-vegetative-life that is hidden in a piece of grain does not die by virtue of the death of the grain of wheat but rather increases all the more, so that it is communicated to many things. Similarly, the divine³¹ life's power that is hidden in mortal Jesus does not die by virtue of His death but rather increases and communicates itself, so that it bears much fruit. And when you consider (1) that the vegetative power in the grain is potentially so great that it is not in any way measurable and (2) that the divine power of the Word [of God] is likewise actually so great that it exceeds all understanding, then you see that [this] likeness is amazing.

[7] The likeness in regard to the true vine is perfect.³² For Adam is like the vine which, though expected to bring forth grapes, produced wild grapes³³ because it was turned into bitterness, although it was created by God. Hence, all the branches that proceed from it, in accordance with its condition, bring forth wild grapes as fruit, and the branches are conformed to the nature of the corrupted grape-vine. But Christ is the new Adam;³⁴ and so, He is as a new true vine³⁵ that is healthy and fruitful. And the branches can be found to be fruitful only if they are germinating from the [True Vine]. Adam is the vine of corrupt [human] nature; Christ is the Vine of grace. Adam is the vine of the old man; Christ is the Vine of the new man.³⁶ Adam is the vine of illicit desire [*concupiscentia*]; Christ is the Vine of ordinate love [*caritas*].

[8] Consider that the instituting of the sacrifice of the new law is in memory of a freeing from death, just as the instituting of the sacrifice of the pascal lamb was in memory of a freeing from death (as we read in Exodus 12). For the blood protected the house and saved the firstborn who were present in it so that they would not be slain by the Angel of Death, who, finding this protection, passed over that house. Therefore, [the passing-over] is called "*Phase*."³⁷ Now, what are things firstborn except things consecrated to God? For the things firstborn pertained to God. Hence, Christ is the Firstborn of all³⁸ and is the Saint of saints.³⁹ By His blood he protects every firstborn so that he not be killed by the Spirit of Death but rather may live forever. This sacrifice was instituted in memory of this freeing from perpetual death. Note that memory is, as it were, a place or a container or a house, into which the soul gathers, and reposit, all the things that come to it from

this world by way of the senses. And memory has a door-of-entrance through which the perceptual forms of things enter into it. This door ought to be closed at night and marked—marked on the transom and the posts—with the blood of the Immaculate Lamb. And when the Death Angel, who is the Prince of this world⁴⁰ and of darkness and who goes about his business in darkness, sees that the door-of-memory is bedaubed with blood, he passes by and seeks elsewhere a soul whom he may slay. But when it is day, i.e., daylight, this door ought to be open.

We must take note of the fact that the children of Israel believed that Moses safeguarded his household by the blood of a lamb; and they experienced that they themselves, as they had believed [they would be], were saved. Faith, which comes by hearing⁴¹ or by the word, saves by means of a perceptible sign that suitably signifies that which is believed. For he who is unbelieving obtains nothing from a visible sacrament. Hence, you know that the intellectual spirit, whose abode is the memory, is firstborn, because [this spirit] is breathed-out by God, who is its Life. And this spirit, the breath of life, is saved, so that the Evil Spirit (who is opposed to its life) cannot harm it if the door of memory is dedaubed with the blood of Him who conquers that Spirit by the shedding of [His own] blood. This bedaubing is done only in undoubted faith. If one spurns the perceptible sacrament of this faith, according as the sacrament was instituted by its Author: then, as is clearly evident, [the faith] is not true faith. Hence, this sacrifice is celebrated as a sign of the firmness of the covenant,⁴² or agreement, (concluded through assured faith) between the Word of God and the acknowledgement of man.

[9] Moreover, you know [the following]: Christ is the Word who not only protects us, so that our Adversary the Devil⁴³ can do [us] no harm, but who also raises and enlivens the dead (and those conquered by the Adversary) and transfers them to being sons of God. Therefore, not only is He Medicine against malady, and not only is He the strengthening Food-of-life,⁴⁴ but He is also the One who conveys [us] unto Himself. Therefore, this faith is best signified by means of the visible form of bodily food, which expels weakness and furnishes strength—as do, basically, the wheaten bread and the wine. Hence, take cognizance of the fact that in the power of the bread and the wine—[a power] that expels the weakness of the flesh's ravenous hunger and that brings strength, or renews strength, (things which happen with respect to the outer man)—faith sees the power of the Word

working similar things in the inner man. And that which nature ministers to the outer man by means of visible food, faith by means of invisible Food (which is the Word of God) obtains in the inner man (which is invisible). Therefore, by means of [this] same food, [viz., bread and wine], that is ordained in this way by God through His Word, the body obtains desired nourishment; and, at the same time, so does the soul. The body [obtains it] by means of the digestive power and by means of the power of the union that occurs through a natural heat; the soul [obtains it] by means of the power of faith (which is the more digestive the stronger it is) and by means of the power of the union that occurs through supernatural heat—a heat which is *caritas*.

[10] Hence, you know that the perfect food for both men [viz., the inner man and the outer man] is found only in the Catholic Church, outside of which there is found food only for the outer man. Now, the Eucharist is the food for both men. Accordingly, insofar as it is bread digested in the stomach, it nourishes the body;⁴⁵ and it nourishes the rational spirit insofar as it is the Word-of-God-the-Son, received by faith. For the Word that is received by such faith that it is the Word of God the Son is a rich bread which furnishes complete satisfaction. But the nourishing power that is in the bread is principally from God, even as the power of the Word that nourishes the soul is from the Word of God, i.e., is from the divine substance. Hence, in the eucharist there is found a single substance from which these powers flow. It cannot be called the substance of the visible bread but [can be called] the substance of the Word. And Christ indicated this fact when, in the way in which Moses expressed this mystery, He said: “Man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”⁴⁶ For the fact that the outer man can live from the substance of the bread does not exclude the fact that he can live from the substance of the Word that possesses the power of the bread. Hence, those who say that *both* the bread *and* the Body of Christ are present in the sacrament do not take note of the fact that the *substance* of bread is not necessary for nourishing if there is present a substance such that in it the power-of-nourishing is enfolded.⁴⁷ For the power of the lower substance is present in the power of the higher substance, as the Prophet says: “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established and all their power.”⁴⁸

[11] But keep in mind that in the celebration of the sacrament the substance of the bread is supposed to be assumed into the more excellent substance of Christ. Otherwise, the sacrament would not be per-

fect—[a sacrament] in which transubstantiation ought to be present in every manner possible. This transubstantiation truly occurs when our nature passes over into gracious sonship with God;⁴⁹ I do not mean that our nature perishes but mean rather that our substance is assumed into the more excellent [substance of God]. Similarly, here [in the eucharist] the bread's nature, which is present in the eating, does not *perish*, but, rather, the substance is *transubstantiated*—i.e., is assumed into the more excellent substance. The divine prophet David expressed this fact for us when he said: "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls and furnishing faithful testimony to little ones."⁵⁰ What is the unspotted law of the Lord except the word of God? This law, which is the word of God,⁵¹ transforms souls—just as wisdom transforms our intellect, by making it wise. And [the word of God] furnishes to little ones faithful testimony to this transformation. That is to say, in regard to this sacrament [the word of God] furnishes exceedingly faithful testimony to this transformation, in which the substance of the bread is transformed into the substance of the Incarnate Word—[an occurrence] that is a very precise and very effective attesting to [the following fact: viz.,] that although our spiritual nature is seen to be human and ignorant, it can be transformed by the Word of God unto being a son of God and can be turned from the darkness of ignorance-of-God and ignorance-of-truth unto the vision [of God] and unto the light [of God].

[12] From the aforesaid it is evident that Christ is present in the sacrament—not spatially present but present together with the accidents of the substance of the bread. It is not the case that the accidents are present in the bread's substance. Rather, they are present in the power that flows from [that] substance which is more excellent than is the substance of the bread. Therefore, the substance of the bread, after having been turned into the substance of the Body of Christ, precedes [ontologically] every accident. So the accidents remain as they previously were; but the substance is transformed. By comparison, when an ignorant man is made wise, and when a layman is made a priest, and when a subject or a servant is made king, all [the accidents] remain what they happened to be; and only the ignorance is changed into wisdom, and the imperfect into the perfect. This is a close likeness; but it would be closer if the ignorance, and likewise the wisdom, were each a substance.

Nevertheless, suppose that someone were to understand the bread not to be *transubstantiated* but, à la Paul, to be *clothed upon*⁵²

with a more noble substance, as we expect to be clothed upon by the light of glory, with our substance preserved. (Certain ancient theologians are found to have understood [the Eucharist] accordingly. They said that *both* the bread and the Body of Christ are present in the sacrament.) One [who would make such a claim] would have to pay attention to the meaning of the expression ["clothed upon"]. For if he says that that light of glory is an *accidental* feature, nevertheless [that light] will be more noble than was the earlier substance (as Christ said of Judas that it would have been better had he not been born than that he be damned). And thus, in turn, the light of glory will be better than is the soul's substance. And so, [this viewpoint] is not much at odds with my point. However, I am giving the name "substance" to that than which nothing better is found in the bread. But if you call it an accident because it comes subsequently to the natural being of the thing, there is no difference [between us] except as regards the manner of speaking.

[13] Moreover, from the aforesaid you know that, necessarily, the Body of Christ is present in the sacrament without quantitative magnitude and, thus, is present indivisibly and completely in each part of the host. By analogy, if our memory recalls a mountain, the memory is not of greater magnitude than when it recalls a grain of millet. Moreover, the memory is present as a whole in whatever thing it remembers, and the thing that it remembers is present in the memory. For memory, which is not quantitative, takes on the things that it remembers; and this [taking-on] is for the thing to be found in memory. And if at one and the same time the memory were in many things (as one face is in many [on-looking] eyes and as one voice is in many ears, etc.), then the analogy would be more precise. [I will speak] of these matters elsewhere.⁵³

NOTES TO *Una Oblatione Consummavit*

- * Sermon CLXXXIII.
- 1. Hebrews 10:14.
- 2. I Timothy 6:15.
- 3. Apocalypse (Revelation) 1:5.
- 4. Genesis 1:26.
- 5. Genesis 4:7.
- 6. Aristotle, *De Politica*, I, 2 (1252^{ab}).
- 7. John 18:36.
- 8. Colossians 1:18.
- 9. I Corinthians 1:24.
- 10. II Corinthians 4:16.
- 11. I Corinthians 2:14.
- 12. I Corinthians 11:3.
- 13. Here one should note Nicholas's figurative interpretation of a passage that feminists regard as expressing an antiquated idea. Although Nicholas here gives a figurative interpretation, he does not regard it as precluding the traditional non-figurative interpretation. The two interpretations are equally valid, he would maintain.
- 14. I Corinthians 11:3.
- 15. I Kings (I Samuel) 15:22.
- 16. Not meant by Nicholas to be an exact quotation. See Psalms 84:9 (85:8).
- 17. Here (at 4:8) I am reading, with the Paris edition, 'animalitas' in place of 'animalitatis'.
- 18. Here (at 4:8-9) I am reading, with the Paris edition, 'subigit' in place of 'subegit'.
- 19. "... at its Truth": i.e., at its true Origin and true Goal, of which it is an image.
- 20. John 14:6.
- 21. John 13:15.
- 22. Matthew 11:29.
- 23. Ephesians 4:24.
- 24. Genesis 2:7.
- 25. Matthew 11:27. John 1:18.
- 26. Apocalypse (Revelation) 21:5.
- 27. Luke 10:22.
- 28. John 1:51. Note, too, that "Son of man" is used in John as a Messianic title.
- 29. John 12:24-25.
- 30. John 6:51.
- 31. Here (at 6:19) I am reading, with the Paris edition, 'divinae' in place of 'divina'.
- 32. John 15:1.
- 33. Isaias (Isaiah) 5:2. Wild grapes are sour.

34. I Corinthians 15:45-49.
35. John 15:1.
36. Ephesians 4:22-24.
37. Exodus 12:11.
38. Colossians 1:15.
39. Daniel 9:24
40. John 12:31.
41. Romans 10:17.
42. Here (at 8:48-49) I am reading, with the Paris edition, 'compacti' in place of 'compactatorum'.
43. I Peter 5:8.
44. John 6:35.
45. Nicholas is not unaware of I Corinthians 11:34, which indicates that the eucharistic host is not intended to satisfy hunger and thereby to nourish the partaker's body. Rather, Nicholas is alluding to the fact that insofar as bread qua bread is nourishing, this nourishing power remains present subsequently to the transubstantiation.
46. Matthew 4:4. Deuteronomy 8:3.
47. Nicholas is here denying that there are *two* substances in the consecrated bread. Rather, there is but one: viz., the divine substance. See Sermon CCXXXV (11).
48. Psalms 32:6 (33:6).
49. John 1:12.
50. Not meant by Nicholas to be an exact quotation. See Psalms 18:8 (19:7).
51. Sometimes when Nicholas uses the expression "verbum Dei" ("word of God) he is referring to the Son of God (the Word of God); however, sometimes, as in the present case, he is referring to the Bible. Only the context can help us decide which referent is intended.
52. II Corinthians 5:2-4.
53. See Sermon CCXXXIII (6).

Una Oblatione*

(“By One Offering . . .”)

[April 6, 1455 (Easter Sunday); preached in Brixen]

[1] “By one offering [He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.]”¹

[2] Christ says that He is Life and is Enlivening Life.² The day before yesterday we heard about the tree that was placed in the middle of the inhabitable world, i.e., of the earth—a tree to which life was affixed.³ We must consider that the inhabitable earth, established by God from the beginning, can be called Paradise. And on the earth there are the rivers Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, and Ganges.⁴ And [we must consider that] the earth has, in the middle, a Land of Promise,⁵ which occupies the center in relation to the whole of the inhabitable earth. And I will skip taking note of how much the Land of Promise is praised by Moses and the Scriptures. In this part of Paradise God took special delight, and He was present with men, with prophets, and with saints. And it is written (1) that He walked in the middle of Paradise at the time of the afternoon breeze⁶ and (2) that Israel⁷ (which means “man who sees God”), when resting there, set up a stone, which he anointed,⁸ and (3) that Israel made an offering.

All of the foregoing things can be fittingly understood as regards the Incarnate Word of God. For He walked there in the afternoon, i.e., when the sun was beginning to start downwards, viz., after the midpoint of the course of time, from the sun’s rising to its return unto the earth. And He looked for Adam—[i.e., for the human race]. For He came to seek and to save that which was lost from the house of Israel.⁹ For He said that He was sent to those who were then dwelling in that central part of the world. And at God’s voice, or God’s word, sinners, [who descend] from Adam, hide themselves. For a thief hates the light, as do other sinners.¹⁰ Moreover, [the Incarnate Word] is the Stone, or Anointed Rock—i.e., is Christ—and is the Offering and the Tree of life and the true Vine¹¹ and whatever else can be said along these lines.

[3] There [on earth] the first covenants between Israel and God were established: to wit, (1) that Israel would be God’s and God would be Israel’s God and (2) that Christ—who on the altar of sacrifice confirms the covenants—would be the Mediator. There [there was] the ladder, viz., the sacrifice, which ascended as a small cloud of smoke.

For the affections-of-holy-desires, on the part of a man who seeks God, ascend. This man is supported on that ladder, at its top; and the grace of God comes down [to him]. These ascendings and descendings can rightly be said to be angels who ascend and descend by means of the ladder;¹² for they are certain messages from Paradise, or certain spiritual declarations; and they are loving communications between God and the contemplating soul. Hence, it happens that there is there a temple to which the contemplatives ascend in order to pray.

Now, it is not strange if St. Ambrose¹³ believed those who wrote (1) that Christ died where Adam died—both¹⁴ of them [having died], that is, in the middle of that Paradise—and (2) that the Tree of death, viz., Adam, and the Tree of life, viz., Christ, meet in the middle of Paradise, viz., at Calvary. For in the life of Adam there is death. For although having a true knowledge of good and evil is something divine and makes a man closely like unto God, who is Life: nevertheless, eating of the fruit-of-knowledge—i.e., being puffed up because of knowledge—brings about death. But in the death of Christ there is life. For although He really died, nonetheless because [He died] innocently and out of obedience to the Father-of-life, then in accordance with the innocence and the humility and the obedience that He showed to the Father-of-life, He ought to have obtained merit and grace in the Father's eyes.

[4] But how would [Christ] obtain a reward from the Father of life if after the death that He underwent He would not have been capable of receiving a reward? Of itself, death is endless; therefore, the reward ought also to be such, viz., endless. Hence, the reward is the restoration of endless, or eternal, life; and this restoration is resurrection from death unto life. Note that when life is given to humans because of obedience to God, then there is assured hope that the Rewarder will give divine life. For unless God were to give divine life, how would He be just and good? Exaltation is the reward of humility; life is the reward of obedience and of [obedience unto] death. To Abraham, who obeyed even unto death¹⁵ in the case of his son, God promised divine life when He said: "I am Your great Reward."¹⁶ Hence, Paul says: "He who comes to [God] must believe that He is and that He is a Rewarder."¹⁷ Now, the more humbly and out of love one undergoes death on account of obedience, the greater is the reward of divine life on account of merit. Therefore, God willed that the death of His beloved Son be a death than which no other death can be more innocent, more humble, and greater in love—[willed it] in order that

the Son would obtain exaltation above all others. Hence, this is the Tree of Life—that enlivens. Therefore, the merit of Christ's death enfolds the complete reward of divine life. Accordingly, every spirit that dies in and through Christ's death obtains—because of participation in Christ's death—participation in the divine life in Christ, i.e., obtains Christ's reward. Therefore, Christ, who is the Firstfruits of the dead¹⁸ [and] whom God raised up by way of reward, merited resurrection-into-life for Himself as Head¹⁹ and for all others who as members receive Him—[merited] for each [member resurrection] in his own order.²⁰

[5] Pay careful attention as to why of all those who are able to die, the death of Christ was the consummate death. For because of His agony²¹ we know that He was aware of the bitterness of death; and so, His soul was sorrowful unto death.²² This knowledge of His death—[a knowledge] that was in His rational soul—made the bitterness of death incomparably more bitter than is any death of those who are ignorant of the bitterness of death and made [his death] a consummate death. And so, when He died He gave His soul over to death for our sakes. His is the consummate death; and in accordance with the magnitude of its bitterness, the reward was as great as would be merited by all the saints who can die because of obedience to God. Hence, since anyone who loses his soul (i.e., who dies) finds life, Christ's death is efficacious for enlivening all [souls].²³ Moreover, we must note that the soul that is fit for receiving a reward for death—viz., [the reward] of eternal enlivenment—is incorruptible, because [that soul] is the possessor of the reward of eternal life. Therefore, only man, who has a rational soul, can, by freely losing his soul, come to immortal life.

[6] On this day²⁴ Christ expounded Moses and all the Prophets to His two disciples who were going to Emmaus—[explaining] that it was necessary for Him to suffer and in that way to enter into glory.²⁵ Therefore, the puzzle is solved—[the puzzle] as to why God permitted our [fore]father Adam to sin and permitted us all to die as a result of that sin. (By comparison, Christ says that the man [in John 9] was born blind in order that God's glory might be made manifest by means of the restoration of his sight.)²⁶ For Adam's being permitted to fall into sin did not result from [a previous] sin that Adam [had] committed or that someone before him [had] committed, since no one preceded him. Rather, [he was allowed to fall into sin] in order that the glory of God might be manifested. For although sin, which God forbade to be done,

is displeasing to God, nevertheless God knows how to bring what is good from what is evil.²⁷ And this [same thing] can likewise be said of all those who are predestined unto glory [and] who are found to have been sinners; for example, [it can be said] of Paul. Wherefore after the many things which Paul says in Galatians 3 about our being justified by faith, or grace, he adds: “The Scripture has adjudged all things to be under sin, in order that the promise, [coming] by faith in Jesus, might be given to those who believe.”²⁸ And later [Paul says]: “You are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”²⁹ Paul says with regard to himself that God changed him from persecutor to apostle in order that God might manifest in him all long-suffering—[doing so] for the information of those who shall believe in God unto eternal life.³⁰

[7] Hence, God willed to show this glory of His in His Son so that as by one man death came unto all, so by Jesus life would come unto all.³¹ The Son glorifies the Father by manifesting the riches of the Father’s glory and by conferring these riches [on us]. And the Father glorifies the Son, because through the Son He gives eternal life. Therefore, God wills that all men be in need of grace in order that He might manifest the riches of His grace in them all—[manifest these riches] through Jesus, upon whom (as upon a Fount) He conferred fullness of grace.³² God permitted us all to be needy, in order that He might show Himself to be altogether perfect and to be the One who in Christ consummates and perfects all things. Consider Paul, [writing] to the Ephesians and the Colossians: [consider] how profoundly he preaches Jesus, in whom God willed that all things be restored.³³ And there is no other knowledge than this knowing [that restoration comes through Jesus].³⁴ And if you enter rightly into the Scriptures, you will find nothing except God, the world, and Christ; and you will find Christ to be the one in whom God reconciled the world unto Himself. Consider carefully: God the Father willed that even we human beings be partakers of His glory.³⁵ For what greater glory could there be for human nature than that there be found included in human nature the man who is God’s Blessed Son, in and through whom all things in heaven and on earth are blessed? For without the word of God angels would be without life.³⁶ Divine reason, which is the word of God, is the wisdom that nourishes every rational creature. And by means of His word, which nourishes all rational spirits forever, God manifests, unto His³⁷ own glory, the riches of His wisdom.³⁸

[8] Furthermore, in regard to those matters that are located in

another part [of Scripture]: note that the Prophet says: “I will freely sacrifice to You.”³⁹ Herefrom [we see that] the will acquires the reward and distinguishes the works, since only someone who has free will can merit [anything]—i.e., [only someone] who is able to transgress but who has not transgressed . . . , etc.⁴⁰ Without the will there is no reward. But the will has a certain freedom, which is its life. If the soul puts to death this freedom, then it reduces itself to bondage, for [in that case] the soul has surrendered its freedom. Therefore, if the surrendering that is the death of freedom, i.e., the death of the soul’s own life, is done for God’s sake, then he who thus offers himself to God in sacrifice, expects a reward. This reward is the bestowing of divine life. For he who dies for God’s sake by renouncing his life, which consists in freedom, will obtain, in return, divine life. For God, as a generous Rewarder, gives divine life—i.e., gives participation in His own life—to that soul which has given to Him its own life. Now, he who professes Christ gives his life to God. (For Christ is the Teacher and Instructor and Head of this religion and is He who *did* that which He *taught*. Hence, He is the Way of obtaining divine life.) This profession consists in faith that is [in-]formed by love. Through this faith a man (1) renounces all that he possesses and (2) follows Christ. For as Christ, in all humility, becomes obedient to God up to the point of [undergoing] the most horrible of all horrors, [viz., death], so [the professing Christian] becomes subject to Christ, his Head.

Furthermore, be cognizant [of the following]: Those in a religious order are subject to their master, whom as a representative of Christ they prefer to themselves [and] through whom they serve under Christ. Moreover, those who are subject to the tribune of an army serve under the emperor of whom the tribune is the representative. In a similar way, a soul [of a man] in a religious order—[a soul] which has become mortified—serves in obedience to the superior who is set over it by Christ, who said with regard to the superiors: “He who hears you hears me; he who despises you despises me; and he who despises me despises Him who sent me.”⁴¹ Be aware that without true obedience, which mortifies our life, or our freedom,⁴² we cannot expect from God the Father, who has sent us Christ, the reward of immortal and divine life.⁴³

[9] Now, note that, properly speaking, freedom-of-soul is called *spirit*. Therefore, when there is present in a man not his own freedom but rather the commanding word-of-God, which he obeys, then the man’s spirit is dead, and God’s Spirit lives in him. And this is so

because [such a] soul is motivated only by arousal on the part of God's Spirit. However, "Spirit of God" can be construed in a different way: viz., insofar as [the Spirit of God] is concealed in governing precepts and governing laws. And in this sense we say that the spirit that observes the commandments is alive, because it is aroused by the Spirit of the word of God. But the Spirit of the word of God—the Spirit that is found in Christ— is the Spirit of salvation. For it is the Spirit of the spirits that have to do with the fulfilling of all laws. By means of this Spirit we are aroused to love not only our neighbor but also our enemies so as to benefit them. And this Spirit is, properly speaking, the Spirit-of-God, who makes His sun to rise upon good men and evil men.⁴⁴ Therefore, if we have in us the Spirit of Christ,⁴⁵ we must not doubt that we are member[s] of Christ and are enlivened by His Spirit and that we shall be there where our Head is. And we shall exist through that Spirit of the Son of God and shall be sons of God by participation.

[10] And note that the spirit-of-man that is properly called the freedom of the soul can be motivated by a good spirit; and [this] is [the spirit] that leads the soul to the right region, which is a paradise of delights for the soul. Or [the spirit of man can be motivated] by an evil spirit; and this [evil spirit] leads to a region, but not the right one. Therefore, when our freedom ceases and there commands within us the spirit that leads to things earthly (as is the case with the spirit of greed or of lasciviousness or of pride), then we are made servants of that evil spirit, by whose command we are motivated. Hence, such a soul is seen to be alive unto this world, because [that soul] is moved and stimulated by the things of this world.⁴⁶ And in this freedom-of-living there is servitude and death. But when the soul is moved away from this present world toward those things that are of the other [world], then we see that [the soul] is dead to this present world⁴⁷ and is a servant [in regard to that other world]. But, nevertheless, it is alive and free; for its serving is a reigning. For [a spirit] that is motivated by the Spirit of Jesus is seen to be separated [from this world] and dead [to this world] because of renunciation of [this] world. And, nevertheless, [such a spirit] rules over the world and the flesh. Hence, it is not a servant but is free, because the Spirit of Jesus adorns it with freedom.

NOTES TO *Una Oblatione*

- * Sermon CLXXXV.
- 1. Hebrews 10:14.
- 2. John 14:6.
- 3. This is the Tree of life of which Genesis 2:9 speaks.
- 4. Genesis 2:10-14. The river Phison is deemed by Augustine to be the Ganges; the river Geon, to be the Nile. See Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, II, 10, 13 (PL 34:203).
- 5. Hebrews 11:9.
- 6. Genesis 3:8.
- 7. "Israel"—i.e., Jacob.
- 8. Genesis 28:18.
- 9. Luke 19:10.
- 10. John 3:20.
- 11. John 15:1.
- 12. Genesis 28:12.
- 13. Cf. St. Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, 5, 29 (PL 14:303).
- 14. Here (at 3:19) I have corrected the printed edition of the Latin text by changing the editors' "utrique" to "uterque". See *Codex Latinus Vaticanus* 1245.
- 15. Here (at 4:14) I am regarding "suam" as a word to be deleted.
- 16. Genesis 15:1.
- 17. Hebrew 11:6.
- 18. I Corinthians 15:20.
- 19. Ephesians 5:23 and 5:30.
- 20. I Corinthians 15:23.
- 21. "His agony": i.e., in Gethsemani. Matthew 26:36-42.
- 22. Mark 14:34.
- 23. Christ is the Firstfruits—whose Resurrection precedes, ontologically, the resurrection of all others unto life. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." (See I Cor. 15:20-23 and 15:50-57.) In the present passage Nicholas is discussing the resurrection of believers—of those who have "died in Christ." Thus, he is echoing the emphasis of I Corinthians 15. He does not, however, anywhere deny that unbelievers shall also be resurrected—unto judgment and punishment and exclusion from God's presence.
- 24. "On this day": i.e., on the day that corresponds to Easter Sunday in the calendar of the Church—i.e., the day of Christ's resurrection.
- 25. Luke 24:26-27.
- 26. John 9:2-3.
- 27. Note Genesis 50:20.
- 28. Galatians 3:22.
- 29. Galatians 3:26.
- 30. I Timothy 1:16.
- 31. Romans 5:12.
- 32. Colossians 1:19 and 2:9.
- 33. Ephesians 1:10.

34. Philippians 3:10.
35. See Romans 9:23.
36. Psalms 103:4 (104:4).
37. Here (at 7:29) I am reading "suam" (as does the Paris edition) in place of "eius".
38. Note Colossians 2:3.
39. Psalms 53:8 (54:6).
40. Ecclesiasticus 31:10.
41. Luke 10:16.
42. That is, we are to make ourselves servants of God. See Romans 6:22.
43. See Matthew 10:39.
44. Matthew 5:45.
45. Romans 8:9. Galatians 4:6.
46. According to St. Paul, the Christian's soul is supposed to be dead to this present world. See n. 47 below. See also Galatians 6:14.
47. Romans 6:11.

Iam autem Die Festo Mediante*¹
("Now, about the Middle of the Feast, ...")²
[March 6, 1459; preached in Rome]

[1] Just as recently³ when we held an assembly you heard the command given to me about making visitations, so now I am present and will begin [my visitation]⁴ with [some] prefacing remarks. Yet, nothing more effective can be taken [as a text] than can the Gospel—which was written for our learning.⁵ [Today] in the office of the mass we read, from John 7, the Gospel-passage which goes as follows: "*Now, about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.*"⁶ [2] We [ourselves] are taught that in the midst of the feast-day we are to go up into the temple, surely a place of contemplation and of prayer. Therefore, feast-days are reminders that urge [us] to go up to the temple. And since very many people came together at that time, Jesus taught [them]. Note that Jesus teaches the word of God. And although [in the Gospel-passage] He does not indicate whom He taught, nonetheless it is sufficiently understood that He taught those who were going up into the temple—i.e., those who with an eagerness to approach unto things divine sought out the place dedicated to God. These are they who are teachable by God and who are eager to receive divine and heavenly teachings, which no one was better able to convey than was the Heavenly Teacher who is above all others. Jesus *taught*. What except salvation was He who is Jesus, or Savior,⁷ able to teach? What except meekness [was He] who is meek, [able to teach]?⁸ What except deep humility, He who is humble in heart?⁹ What except an understanding of all the Scriptures, He who is Truth?¹⁰ What except life, He who is Resurrection and Life?¹¹

[3] "*And the Jews wondered, saying: 'How does this man know letters, when He has never learned?'*"¹² Surely it was wondrous and unheard-of that someone knew writings who had not learned letters. Here you have a text [that attests] that Christ naturally knew all the things that other men scarcely at all attain with [much] study. Christ was able to be known in and through this alone: viz., in and through the excellence of all men. For everything that all men who thrive mentally *can* know, Christ *was* actually. Men can know languages, and one man [knows] more of them than does another man; but Christ is the Living Word of God.¹³ Men can be learned; Christ is Living Wisdom.¹⁴ Men can live by rational life; Christ is Rational Life

itself.¹⁵ Men can put on immortal life; Christ is Immortal Life.¹⁶ Men can put on incorruption; Christ is Incorruption.¹⁷ Men can arise from the dead; Christ is Resurrection.¹⁸ The case is similar regarding every perfection acquirable by man, since, as is true, Christ is *actually* every perfection.¹⁹ And you know that no one is so perfect that he could not be more perfect. And so, since the perfection of all men admits of more and less, it is not proportional to the perfection of Christ. For Christ's perfection is very lofty; no perfection can be greater or higher than it. Now, the maximum, than which there cannot be a greater, is in an actual way all things. For in its maximality it enfolds in an actual way whatever things can admit of more and less.²⁰ Hence, all possibility of perfection is derived from, and perfected from, that maximality and fullness.

[4] Moreover, consider the following: viz., that we have a con-created capability for perfection, in accordance with which we can dispose ourselves to be more perfect. Yet, we cannot bring ourselves from potency to actuality. For nothing that is in potency can bring itself into actuality, since potency is actualized by means of the actual. For example, that which is potentially hot is brought into actuality by that which is actually hot. In particular, by fire, which is actually hot, that which is capable of being made hot becomes actually hot. Now, the zenith of a student's perfection is that he be like his teacher. The zenith [of perfection] of the intellectual nature is that it be conformed to the Divine Word and Divine Intellect. Therefore, no teacher whatsoever except the Word of God can conduct our intellectual nature unto its own highest perfection. Therefore, no man can be happy except him who is Christ-like. No spirit [can be] happy unless it is conformed to the Spirit of Christ.

[5] Note that the text states that the Jews asked: "*How is it that He knows letters, when he has never learned?*"²¹ Therefore, skill at letters is both from art and by nature. For if the art [of reading and writing] is absent, [letters] are not known; and if intelligence is absent, [letters] are not learned. Hence, in Christ—who is the Word²² and who is the Omnipotent Art through which God made the world²³—art and nature are seen to coincide. Hence, [Christ] knew all things because [in Him] art accorded with intelligence; He is Art itself and is the Understanding of all things knowable. The Jews would not have been amazed if they had believed that Christ was the Living Word of all formable words. By way of analogy: if someone were to conceive of a

certain piece of writing as alive with an intellectual life, he would not be amazed if the writing understood itself without a teacher, since he would notice that the writing's being was a living intellectual word.

[6] "*Jesus answered them and said: 'My doctrine is not mine but is His who sent me.'*"²⁴ [It is] as if He were to have said: 'You wonder from where I know letters and have a learning that can be had only from one who [already] has it and passes it along. But what if I have been sent to you? In that case, my doctrine would not be mine but would be the sender's.' And note that Christ said to the Apostles, "It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father."²⁵ Therefore, just as someone omniscient who is sent by him of whom he speaks does not need study in order to acquire an art—and, thus, he speaks on his own, [apart from having learned]— so [Christ] dissolved wonder. [It is] as if He were to have said: 'God, who sends me, speaks through me, His Emissary.' God, the Creator, who is Spirit, speaks through Understanding, or Wisdom.²⁶ Christ is said to be the Right Hand of the Father.²⁷ For just as the hand is the organ through which a man does all his works, so the intellect is related to the soul, because [the intellect] is like [the soul's] hand. For [the soul] does all its works by means of the intellect. Analogously, God [works all things] through His Wisdom, which is Christ.²⁸

[7] And note that [Christ] says: "*My doctrine is not mine.*" [It is] as if He were to say: 'My [doctrine] is mine in such a way that it is not mine, because I have been sent.' Similarly, the sending is of Himself²⁹ in such a way that it is not of Himself, since [the sending] is done not by Himself but by the Sender. Therefore, Christ wanted to show that He was sent by God, whom the Jews did not doubt to know all things. As the Jews were claiming, no one, apart from any studying on his own part, knows so much that he would be able to teach. And this [truth] has its sole exception in the case of an envoy, who teaches not his own doctrine but the doctrine of the sender, who speaks through the envoy. If so, then, [says Christ], I must have been sent and my doctrine must be the doctrine of the Sender. Similarly, the doctrine of the Son is His own and is not His own but is the Father's. For insofar as He is the Son, all that He has is of His Father. This fact is understood if the Son is conceived to be the Sonship. Assuredly, this revelation of the divinity is great— viz., [the revelation] that the begottenness by which God the Father begets the Son must be conceived as the Supreme Power's sending Himself. For in that case the Sender sends from His whole essence and

nature Him who is sent. And so, [the one sent] is called the Son because He has the rational being, and the co-essential being, of the Sender.

[8] Next, Christ shows that the Sender is God. And he shows this fact not in any other way than on the basis of experience, which is a teacher of things. And He says: “*If anyone wills to do His will, [i.e., the Father’s will], he knows, on the basis of the doctrine [itself], whether it be from God or whether I speak [it] of myself.*”³⁰ Note both of these points. The Word very simply and very clearly indicates the fact that He is the Word of God. He says: ‘If anyone [wills] to do the will of Him who sent me, and if he purposes to do so in every respect, then (with this fact presupposed) when he takes up the aforesaid doctrine, he knows concerning the doctrine whether it is from God. For the doctrine is of such great efficacy that within it is contained a light that is manifested to him who receives the doctrine. Therefore, he will know whether [the doctrine] is from God or whether I speak [it] of myself as a private individual and not as one sent from God.’ For the Jews, who had already received God’s precepts that were revealed to them by Moses, who was sent by God, were readily able to understand whether [or not] Christ’s doctrine was from God, since Christ came [in order] to fulfill the Law.³¹

[9] Moreover, [Christ] adds how it is that this [distinguishing of doctrines] will be done: ‘*He who speaks of himself seeks his own glory. He who seeks his own interests speaks unto his own advantage and makes himself the goal of his teaching. But he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is truthful, and there is no injustice in him.*’³² Now, since [Christ’s] every teaching was only unto the glory and manifestation of God the Father and was the perfection of the teaching of Moses and of the prophets, [Christ] could be adjudged only as a true and just emissary. For a legate who gives all honor to his sender, and who sticks to his commission, is truthful and just. For even if the command of the sender were unjust, there would be no injustice in the legate, since he would not be arrogating anything to himself and would in no respect fail in doing his duty. All of the foregoing pertains to the fact that the Father, who sent Jesus, gave Him the commission to save by showing at all times works of mercy, even on the day of the Sabbath. And Christ, in curing a man on the Sabbath, wanted to show that He was not a violator of the Sabbath, because God commissioned [Him to act] in that way.

[10] There follows [in the Scriptural text]: “*Did not Moses give*

you the Law, and [yet] none of you keep the Law?”³³—as is corroborated below. There follows: “Why do you seek to kill me—on the grounds, namely, that I have not kept the law concerning the Sabbath?” (For [in the Law of Moses] it was commanded that such a transgressor be stoned.) Now, Christ, who willed to die, first took care to remove all occasions [for dying. He did so] in order [later] to show that He willingly, but unjustly, died [i.e., was put to death] for the salvation of all men. “The multitude answered and said: ‘You have a devil. Who seeks to kill You?’”³⁴—as if [Christ] worked miracles not by means of a human art or by means of a divine art but rather by means of a thousand contrivances of a lying devil and as if, nonetheless, it were not the case that [the Jews] were for this reason seeking to kill Him. They denied this [intent] because of a fear of the people, on account of whom they did not at that time dare to admit that they sought His death.

[11] Jesus answered and said to them: “I have done one work, and you all marvel.”³⁵ He is speaking of the man whom He cured on the Sabbath at the pond [called] Probatina—about which [one reads] earlier, in Chapter 5.³⁶ “Therefore, Moses gave you circumcision (not because it is from Moses [himself] but [because it is] from the fathers); and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.”³⁷ Originally, circumcision arose from the fathers, or patriarchs; later it was given by Moses, who also gave the law of the Sabbath. But the law of the Sabbath did not preclude [the law of] circumcision, which was commanded to be done on the eighth day of birth, which was possible to be the Sabbath. [12] “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath in order that the Law of Moses not be broken, are you angry at me, who have healed the whole man on the Sabbath?”³⁸ God’s law, as well as the law of nature (which preceded circumcision [and] which commands that we do to another what we would want done unto us), was not broken by the instigators of circumcision but was, instead, confirmed—just as circumcision [was confirmed] by Moses. Therefore, the law of the Sabbath does not infringe upon the law of God that is the eternal law. And no one ought to be angry about the fact that that [eternal] law is obeyed [when one is circumcised on the Sabbath]. Now, in fulfilling the eternal law in regard to healing the whole man on the Sabbath, Christ acted in accordance with the command of Him who sent Him. Therefore, . . . , etc.

[13] Moreover, consider [the following]: Not without very great

mystery is mention here [in the Gospel] made of the law of circumcision, of the law of the Sabbath, and of the healing of the whole man. For circumcision and the Sabbath rest upon covenants and agreements. But the healing of the whole man was mandated not by laws, etc., or by sacred signs of a covenant and of agreements, but by Christ, who alone healed the whole man. And [He did] this on the Sabbath because the Sabbath was instituted so that Christ, the Son of the Sabbath, would on His own day³⁹ heal the whole man. Note [the expression] “the whole man”: [Jesus healed] not with respect only to the soul or only to the body but with respect to both.

[14] “Do not judge according to the appearance, but make a just judgment.”⁴⁰ He who looks at what appears and at the surface, or outer-covering, judges according to the appearance. But he makes a just judgment who looks not at the letter but at the intent; for the intent is the Law’s meaning and quiddity. Here [in the passage above] we are taught that Christ revealed inward things and revealed the spirit of the letter; for He was the Message that was hidden in Scripture. Likewise, then, someone who according to the appearance judges that Christ is human, surely does not know Him. Rather, he must turn from [Christ’s] teaching and works unto inner matters in order to see the essence from which this power derives; and in this way he apprehends the deity hidden beneath the humanity. The case is similar, then, concerning the Law’s surface-statements and its hidden life-giving message.

[15] “But certain ones from Jerusalem said: ‘Is this not He whom the Jews seek to kill? And, lo, He speaks openly, and they say nothing to Him.’”⁴¹ Note [that] He speaks openly, because [He speaks] with the light of truth, which [the Jews] could not gainsay. “Have the rulers truly known that this is the Christ?”⁴² Yet, how would they know? For if they knew, they also would not know. For Christ cannot be known. “But we know this man, whence He is; but when the Christ comes, no one [will] know whence He is.”⁴³ In the immediately succeeding chapter Christ answers, saying: “I know whence I come and whither I go; but you do not know whence I come.”⁴⁴ For although they knew according to the appearance, they nevertheless did not regarding this matter make a just judgment, in accordance with the invisible nature.

[16] “Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: ‘You know me and know whence I am’”⁴⁵—[you know it], that is, in judging according to the flesh,⁴⁶ as is [indicated] in the immediate-

ly succeeding chapter. “*And I have not come on my own* but I was sent, as I showed earlier on the basis of your admission that I teach but have not learned letters. But one who is sent is not sent from himself and does not come on his own; rather, *He who sent me is true; Him you do not know.*”⁴⁷ Behold, [Christ] shows that God alone is true and that He, from whom Christ comes originally, is unknown to the Jews. And so, [Christ] infers again that what is known according to the flesh is not opposed to the judgment that He is the Christ. [17] “*I know Him.*”⁴⁸ The Son alone knows the Father.⁴⁹ “*And if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you.*”⁵⁰ Note that the Jews who adhere to the outward letter [of the Law] are liars and that those who are like them are made liars. The father of the lie is the Devil.⁵¹ Therefore, all liars pass over into a likeness of the Devil. One who is true can speak only the truth in and through the true one sent by him, since [the one sent] speaks the words of the sender. “*But I know Him, since I am from Him and since He sent me.*” Note the conclusion that from Him who is true Jesus has, in an essential way, His being and His being sent. Likewise, Paul says that God sent His Son.⁵²

[18] “*They sought, therefore, to apprehend Him; but no one laid hands on Him, because His hour had not yet come. But of the people many believed in Him.*”⁵³ I understand “his hour” to mean the time when the consummation [of His mission] arrived. For Christ was first supposed to show two things: viz., (1) that He who was the Son of man was Son of God and (2) that He was going to undergo a voluntary death for the sake of our salvation. He showed the first thing by His words and by very true works of the kind that no people ascribe to anyone other than to God. He showed, secondly, that, being without sin, He was not justly worthy of condemnation but that [He underwent death] voluntarily on account of obedience⁵⁴ that redounded to our salvation. As long as these [two] things were not sufficiently shown, the time for undergoing death had not come.

[19] That He could be believed to be the Son of God had to be shown, because this belief renders certain His teaching and His promises concerning future things that are supernatural. Since these [future] things are such that they are not *seen* to be possible, it was necessary that Christ teach them on the basis of unquestionably reliable⁵⁵ authority. Now, no one doubts that God is truthful in His every word, no matter what He is speaking of. Yet, because of false apostles and prophets there can be doubt about whether or not someone is speak-

ing God's words. But He who by His works shows that not only is He a truthful prophet of God but also is the Son with the full power of God the Father—assuredly, He provides a firm foundation for belief in His teaching. [20] To one who reflects, a second thing shows itself to be necessary: [viz.,] that since Christ, as God's Son and Messenger, taught that sonship with God can be obtained for those who are without sin⁵⁶ and who willingly obey God even to the point of [undergoing] a most shameful death, then the reward for that death can be only eternal life and a life than which none other is better—as is that life which *understands*⁵⁷ that it is alive. For how could it be that God (who is *just* according to the unreserved belief of all men) would as a reward give—to a believer-in-Him who dies for His sake—less than immortal life?

[21] It was necessary that Christ display in regard to Himself the following: viz., (1) that the Son of God is without sin and (2) that He willingly was going to obey the Father even to the point of death on the Cross and (3) that in this way He would obtain a glorious resurrection from the dead and would enter into glory and (4) that every believer would be made a partaker of His death and a partaker of His resurrection. But *that* believer who with consummate desire determines to will to be obedient (conformably to Christ) even to the point of death—[he] has already become a participant in Christ's death, even if it would not happen that he suffer physical martyrdom, as [such martyrdom] is true of St. Martin and of other holy professors. And I recall that elsewhere (with Christ teaching [through me]) I said something analogous (1) regarding consummate hatred (on account of which someone is a murderer)⁵⁸ and (2) regarding consummate concupiscence of heart (on account of which someone is an adulterer).⁵⁹

[22] From the passage in the Gospel of John the Evangelist the foregoing points are clearly manifested, especially to one who is intent on finding them. Let these things—which have been said about the Gospel in the foregoing way very briefly and preliminarily—suffice.

NOTES TO *Iam autem Die Festo Mediante*

* Sermon CCXCII.

1. This title is supplied by the editors of the printed edition of the Latin text since the manuscripts have no title. The Paris edition uses the title "Sicut nuper dum", the first words of the text. In the Paris edition folio CXC is mislabeled as CLXXXVIII.

2. John 7:14.

3. "... recently": i.e., in February of this same year (1459).

4. Nicholas is making a pastoral visitation to Santa Maria Maior in Rome.

5. Romans 15:4.

6. John 7:14.

7. "Jesus" means *Savior*. Matthew 1:21.

8. Matthew 11:29.

9. Matthew 11:29.

10. John 14:6.

11. John 11:25.

12. John 7:15. "... know letters" : i.e., know how to read and to write and know certain texts and writings.

13. John 1:1.

14. I Corinthians 1:24.

15. Isaias (Isaiah) 1:18 (as applicable to Christ). I Corinthians 2:16.

16. I Timothy 6:16. Here (at 3:16) I am reading "vita" with the Paris edition, in place of "virtus" with mss. *V*₂ and *L*.

17. I Corinthians 15:53.

18. John 11:25.

19. Matthew 5:48 as applicable also to the Son.

20. *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 5 and II, 1 (96).

21. John 7:15.

22. John 1:1.

23. Hebrews 1:2.

24. John 7:16.

25. Matthew 10:20.

26. I Corinthians 1:24.

27. Christ sits at the Right Hand of the Father. Matthew 22:44 and 26:64.

From this belief arose the reference to Christ as the Right Hand of the Father.

28. I Corinthians 1:24.

29. "... is of Himself": i.e., He is the one who is sent.

30. John 7:17.

31. Matthew 5:17.

32. This is a paraphrase of John 7:18.

33. John 7:19.

34. John 7:20.

35. John 7:21.

36. John 5:1-18.

37. John 7:22.

38. John 7:23. The whole man (*totus homo*) is man qua both body and soul.
39. Matthew 12:8. Mark 2:28. Luke 6:5.
40. John 7:24.
41. John 7:25-26.
42. John 7:26.
43. John 7:27.
44. John 8:14.
45. John 7:28.
46. John 8:15.
47. John 7:28.
48. John 7:29.
49. Luke 10:22. John 8:55.
50. John 8:55.
51. John 8:44.
52. Galatians 4:4.
53. John 7:30-31.
54. Philippians 2:8.
55. Regarding Nicholas's use of "*infallibilis*" and its variants and cognates, see pp. 10-12 of my *Hugh of Balma on Mystical Theology: A Translation and an Overview of His De Theologia Mystica* (Minneapolis: Banning, 2002).
56. "... without sin": i.e., without sin because it has been forgiven.
57. Cf. Sermon CCLXXXVII (1-2).
58. I John 3:15.
59. Matthew 5:27-28.

Respexit Humilitatem*
("He Has Regarded the Humility . . .")
[July 2, 1446; preached in Mainz]¹

[1] "He has regarded the humility of His handmaiden" (Luke 1).²

Gospel-passage: "Mary, rising up . . .," etc.³

Because the angel had reported to the Glorious Virgin that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived in her old age: Mary, rising up, went out as soon as the angel departed from her. Etc.

PART ONE

*The Things Which—according to the Gospel (Luke 1:39-45)—
Evoked Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-55) Are Considered
under Various Aspects.*⁴

(a) *The manner in which God brought about the conception of Christ.*

[2] Now, we must consider the way in which the coming of St. John [the Baptist] was ordained in relation to Christ. For in order that Mary would believe that by the work of the Holy Spirit there could easily happen that which the usual law of nature denies to be possible: the angel mentions that [Mary's] cousin Elizabeth, who was sterile and elderly, had *conceived*—[had conceived] because no promise (*verbum*) of God's expresses an impossibility.⁵ Thus, when Mary heard of these things—viz., of the fact that her cousin had conceived (in transcendence of every mode of the law of nature), inasmuch as no promise of God's expresses an impossibility—she saw that her question was answered. [This was the question] about mode—the question that she put to the angel when she asked, "How will this [conceiving] be possible?" [The answer was], namely, that by the work of the Holy Spirit every word of God's would come true, because *possible* and *impossible* do not apply to God, since—beyond everything possible and impossible—He is pure Absolute Necessity itself. Hence, because His will *is* Absolute Necessity, that which He wills to be the case cannot fail to be the case. Rather, just as He is Absolute Necessity, so whatever He wills to be the case cannot escape from the necessity of being the case. Hence, the possible and the impossible are certain modes that have to do with the judgment of reason, so that one thing is said to be possible, another thing to be impossible. But God—who is beyond all

positing and negating, and beyond all that with which reason makes contact—is Absolute Necessity itself.

[3] Hence, with the question about mode answered—viz., [the answer] that God, who is not bound by mode, works all things by His word without this or that mode—Mary, by means of the example of Elizabeth, believed that the word announced to her was not impossible for God. And, hence, expressing her own faith, she said: “Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be done to me in accordance with Your word.”⁶

[4] We must consider the following: that when Mary said to the angel “How shall this [conceiving] occur, seeing that I know no man?”: then, having doubt about mode and expressing the reason for her doubt, she added mention of the mode-of-conception necessary according to the course of nature, viz., the union with a male. And the angel answers that the Holy Spirit . . . , etc. Thus, he is replying: ‘not in such a [human] manner, but the [Holy] Spirit will come upon [you] . . . ,’ etc. And lest Mary have a further doubt about the manner in which the Holy Spirit is to come upon her, the angel said further: “and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”⁷ [5] [It is] as if he were to say: ‘Do not think that the Holy Spirit will come upon [you] in a way-of-coming by which one comes from place to place by a mode of descent by which either what is heavy descends or a dove comes down from a dove-cot to the waters or a ray of the sun descends to the earth—or in any other way. For the operations of God are free of all mode. Thus, God is the Absolute, and mode is a creature, so that whatever in order to exist requires a certain mode is a creature. Thus, for there to be a man, there is required that there be an animal in such a mode. And for there to be a lion, [there is required that there be an animal] in such a mode. And for a man to be begotten, there is required such a mode. And so on, as regards all [creatures]. Hence, all modes—which in order for something to be made have to come together—display deficiency. Accordingly, in God no mode is necessary in order that He exist or act or come or supervene, because His power is absolute and omnipotent—is unrestricted to, and uncontracted to, mode.

[6] Consequently, the angel said: “And the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” [It is] as if he were to say: ‘As for my having stated that the Holy Spirit is to come upon you: understand the Holy Spirit’s coming upon you to be *this*: namely, the power of the

Most High's overshadowing you.' For God, who is not absent from any place, comes to the soul by means of grace when the soul is made pleasing to God by divine power. Just as He comes by means of sanctification when by divine power the soul is made holy, so [He comes] by means of justification when [by means of divine power the soul] is made just. And so on. Likewise, [He comes] by means of creation when by divine power a creature originates. Thus too, [He comes] by means of conception in the Glorious Virgin when the angel says: "Behold, you shall conceive," when by divine power the Son was conceived in the Virgin.

[7] Hence, because this conceiving occurred, apart from the mode of union with a male [and] by the power of the Most High overshadowing the Virgin, the angel says: 'He shall be called the Son of God.'⁸ For just as a father's sons are called sons because of the fact that they have been conceived by means of the paternal power that is present in the father's seed, so Jesus will be called the Son of God in conformity with His having been conceived of the Virgin. For he was conceived apart from the mode of a father's seminal power; but He was not able to be conceived apart from a power. Accordingly, [having been conceived] by the power of the Most High, who is beyond all mode [and] who is the Blessed God, He who is conceived will be called the Son of God.

(b) *Spiritual rebirth, which occurs by the power of God.*

[8] The case is similar as regards the rebirth of our spirit. For apart from a power we cannot be born again, since without a power a spiritual birthing cannot take place in our soul. Nor can that power be according to some mode, because such a spirit cannot be born in us in the manner in which something physical is born, since from physical modes there comes only a physical birthing. Hence, in order that there take place in us a spiritual birthing, which may search out all things (even the deep matters of God)⁹ and may live most happily, this [begetting] must occur by the power of the Most High's overshadowing our soul. This [overshadowing] is the Holy Spirit's supervening. To overshadow is to impart oneself protectingly and healingly—as Peter's shadow healed.¹⁰ And the Psalmist prays: "Under the shadow of Thy wings protect me."¹¹ [9] Accordingly, that which is then born is called a son of God. For that birthing whereby we are thus reborn occurs by the power of God. Hence, [we are each] a son of God.¹² Thus, the virginal conception teaches us how it is that we are born again in spirit.

This rebirth is needful—as in John 3 Jesus said to Nicodemus.¹³ St. Peter speaks of it in his canonical letter—[stating] that it occurs not by means of corruptible seed but by means of the Word of God, who lives and remains forever.¹⁴

[10] Therefore, as Christ gives an illustration: In the air there arises a blowing wind, which, nevertheless, cannot apart from a power arise there where it was not; however, that power cannot be attained, because we do not know whence that wind (*spiritus*) comes or whither it goes.¹⁵ The case is similar when in the soul there arises a spirit which causes in the soul a movement of divine love. This is the spirit which enlivens the soul and which is born in the soul—just as the wind (*ventus*) moves the air and is begotten in the air. Now, wind is nothing other than living air, or moved air; and so, it is air that is born again. So too, a spirit is nothing other than a living soul and a soul born again through enlivenment. And since this is the case, we know that this [enlivening] proceeds from an enlivening power. But that [power], which is the beginning and the end of spirit, cannot be attained. Hence, it is a mode above every [other] mode; but it is attained by means of a likeness. Just as that which is begotten of flesh is flesh, so too spirit, since it is found to be born, is known to be born from spirit—not in the manner of flesh but in a manner [*modus*] that is beyond every [other] mode [*modus*].

[11] Hence, although Nicodemus did not doubt to be true that which was said about rebirth—[said] on the part of Christ, whom he confessed to be a teacher and to have come from God¹⁶—nevertheless, he had doubts about its mode. And he expressed the reason for his doubt: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he re-enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time?”¹⁷ Jesus answered him [by saying] that he, Nicodemus, was speaking of a birth by which one enters into this world but [that] He, Christ, was thinking of him who is supposed to enter the Kingdom-of-God, which is not of this world¹⁸ [and] which flesh and blood do not possess.¹⁹ [12] Hence, in order for those who are born to enter into *this present* world, they were first in the womb, in which they were conceived and enlivened; and, thereafter, they were born. But after they are thus born once, they are present in this world, in which they must be *conceived anew* and enlivened anew—not in accordance with the flesh, as in the mother’s womb, but in accordance with the spirit—in order that their birth be an entrance into the Kingdom of God. And this

conceiving occurs through faith that is [in-]formed by love. For the spirit conceives by faith; the spirit's sacrament is the water-of-baptism, which shows believers to be reborn as newborn babes.²⁰ But the Holy Spirit enlivens this *conceptus*; and the Holy Spirit is the Power-of-Love without which the soul cannot have life. For the soul is moved by love alone. For just as the spirit that is the wind moves the air, so love moves the soul.

[13] Accordingly, since Nicodemus still had doubts about mode and asked, "How shall this [rebirthing] come about?" Christ replied: "Are you a teacher in Israel and know not these things? Verily, verily I say unto you: We speak of that which we know, and we testify of that which we have seen. But you do not accept our testimony."²¹ [This was] as if to say: 'Since you are a teacher in Israel and know not these things, you ought not to ask "how will this be done?" For if this were knowable with respect to mode, you, who are a teacher in Israel, would not fail to know it.' Thereafter [Jesus] adds: "We speak of that which we know"—as if to say: 'You ought not to have asked again how this [rebirthing] would be done; rather, you ought to have believed me. For earlier you avowed that I am a teacher and have come from God.' The teacher in Israel ought to have believed the Teacher come from God, because—like all teachers—He who is the Teacher come from God speaks of what He knows and testifies of what He has seen. But the teachers in Israel do not receive His testimony, because a knowledge of it does not fall within the scope of their mastery. Hence, they believe nothing except what they arrive at within their scope of mastery.

[14] Next, [Jesus] adds: "If I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I shall speak to you of Heavenly things?"²² [Thereby] He meant to indicate: 'I have now said to you earthly things about the wind-of-air [*spiritus aëris*—[said] that wind (*spiritus*) blows where it will, and its sound is heard, but nevertheless we do not know from where it comes or whither it goes. And these [phenomena] are perceptual and are of this earthly world. But that of which I spoke in a likeness of this [wind] is similarly present to each one who is born of the Spirit. That is, in him is present a vital birthing and a Spirit of great power, whose voice is heard (as that voice of Christ was heard, which proceeded from the power of [His human] spirit), and, nevertheless, we do not know from where [this Spirit] comes or whither it goes.' For [the

people] ought to have supposed, on the basis of the earthly example, that they ought not to ask how there would be done that which does not occur in any knowable manner. Therefore, [Jesus] adds: “If I have spoken to you of Heavenly things, how will you believe ...?”²³ [It is] as if He were to say: ‘Heavenly things—which have nothing in common with earthly things, since Heavenly things cannot be adequately illustrated by any analogy with earthly things—will never be understood by you who do not believe the Teacher whom you maintain to have come from God [and] who even now is guiding you by means of earthly examples.’

[15] [Jesus] adds: “And no one has ascended into Heaven except Him who has come down from Heaven, [viz.,] the Son of man, who is in Heaven.”²⁴ [Thereby Jesus] gives the reason for the difficulty of belief in Heavenly things: ‘Since you are unwilling to believe unless you understand the rationale, how then [do you expect to believe], given that no one by his own intellective power can ascend unto Heaven in order to see the things that are spoken of and attested to by Him who knows them and has seen them? For He alone who has come down from Heaven (viz., the Son of man, whom you, too, maintain has come from God, [maintain it] because of His works, which you have seen)—He has ascended unto Heaven and is in Heaven.²⁵ And for this reason you will not by any ascent of reason attain unto Heavenly things—you who are not of Heaven. Only the Son of man is seen to have come down from Heaven, when He assumed a humanity in accordance with the condition of this world, viz., in regard to flesh and blood—as even you maintain that He has come from God.’

[16] Hence, since the intellect of this Son of man was assumed by the Word of the Father (which Word is God), this intellect ascended unto the hidden things of God, which are called Heavenly things (because they are contrasted with things earthly), so that descending [and] ascending, as well as not-descending and not-ascending but being in Heaven, coincide in the Son of man. And so, He is one who is like the [brazen] serpent held up in the wilderness:²⁶ those who approached by faith and who looked upon the serpent—i.e., by turning toward it and seeking healing from their wounds—obtained through the serpent-that-was-set-up healing from the poisonous bites of the serpents of the wilderness. Accordingly, it is necessary that the Son of man be lifted up, so that whoever-believes-in-Him not perish

but have eternal life.²⁷ Hence, Christ concludes that rebirth with respect to the Kingdom of God is a liberation that does not allow a perishing; rather, that rebirth has eternal life. But since that rebirth is supposed to furnish an ascent unto Heavenly life, which is divine and eternal, and since no one can ascend except Him who descended, [viz.,] the Son of man: it is necessary that that rebirth be accomplished through faith in the exalted Son of man.

(c) *Christ's spiritual birth in us occurred exemplarily in the case of Mary.*

[17] We must take note of how it is that this [spiritual] birthing has its conception in faith, is conserved by hope, is enlivened by love. [This birthing] is spiritual, because faith is present in the intellect, which is spiritual, [i.e., immaterial]. Hence, this birthing is of an immaterial [*spiritualis*] nature. And there is begotten that which is conceived by faith, namely, Christ.²⁸ Hence, Christ is begotten in us spiritually by faith. Thus, we are reborn in spirit when Christ is born in us in spirit. And so, because Christ is in Heaven, we in this world are, by faith, like Christ-qua-conceived in the womb. And when we depart from this world, we are like Christ-qua-born. Therefore, belief in Christ's being conceived in us—a belief that works the initiation [*conceptio*] of regeneration—passes over into a completed birth and into a completed regeneration when we depart from the womb of this world.

[18] Hence, this Church of Christ's is like unto the womb of the Virgin, outside of which it is not possible that the *conceptus* of Christ exist. Now, by faith the Virgin Mary conceived; and, hence, all the things said to her by the Lord were accomplished in her, as is evident from the testimony of holy Elizabeth, who was full of the Holy Spirit.²⁹ Similarly, every spiritual conceiving of Christ arises from faith; and there will be accomplished all the things that are said by God to the one who believes in Him. Therefore, he who believes in the exalted Son of man as in Him in whom, he does not doubt, he will obtain justification, glorification, ascent into Heaven, and eternal life: in him will all things be perfected, because his soul will conceive and will bear a Son, who will be holy and great and who will be called the Son of the Most High. And this is the conceiving that is not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of a man but is of God.³⁰

[19] Hence, we must consider that Christ was first conceived

in the soul of Mary so that she, reborn in spirit, would be such that in her the Word would be made flesh.³¹ And the angel indicates to us this fact when he says that she was so full of grace that the Lord was with her. And fullness of grace is *this*: viz., that the Lord be present in the soul. From the Word, which Mary received, she had conceived in her soul, so that she passed into sonship with God,³² since the Lord was with her. For she believed that she would obtain salvation in and through the Son of God,³³ who at a fitting time was to be seen in [earthly] association with men. And she sought to *become* that which she *found*. Now, she *found* the grace (1) to *become* the Virgin Mother and (2) that in her the Word would assume flesh. Therefore, she *desired* [to *become*] this [vehicle of grace]. Accordingly, she believed that [the Word is] the Word of all men's salvation and that the Word had to be incarnated. Thus, she conceived the Word by faith. And by means of this rebirth her spirit passed into sonship with God. And for that reason she found grace with Him who was with her, so that, as mother, she merited to minister flesh to Him who was with her. For she was the daughter of the King, and the King willed to be of her species. "For He has regarded the humility of His handmaiden."

[20] Hence, in the case of the Virgin the rebirth that preceded the conceiving of Christ was all the more necessary for Mary's salvation, inasmuch as without it she would not have been of the number of those who [will] reign in the [future] blessed life—even as no one at all can enter into the Kingdom of God apart from that rebirth.³⁴ Yet, with respect to salvation it is not necessary for each person to minister flesh to the Word-that-was-supposed-to-be-incarnated, although it *is* necessary for us that the Word assume flesh. Hence, since Mary qua mother, ministered flesh to the Word, she needed that which was necessary for us all for obtaining sonship with God. Therefore, she who begat the Son into the world imparted to us sonship with God. Only in and through the Son can we obtain sonship with God. Lo, how Mary is the mother of all! She begat us all as sons of God in and through the only Son of God.

[21] Moreover, it seems that our rebirth is exalted unto the Word by way of humility, even as by way of humility the Word descended into the flesh, so that the Heavenly and invisible Word is likewise said to have been born again when He, who was altogether imperceptible, assumed a perceptible humanity. So too, we who are in

this perceptible world are said to be born again when we assume the Word-of-life,³⁵ who is not of this visible and sensory world but is of the Kingdom of God. [22] And so, the Word is born again in the Virgin, so that He is the Son of man—[born again] to the end that *we* be born again as sons of God. Therefore, in order that He might be born to all men, He was born of the Virgin. And He who was born to all men does not have on earth a father whose son He is. Accordingly, Mary says: “[God] has for Israel begotten His Child.”³⁶ For all people of God [are] as “Israel” (i.e., as “a man who sees God”). [God] begat His Child [for them]. And, hence, Christ calls Himself the Son of man and not the Son of this father or of that father, but the Son of *man*. Thus, just as there is present in a virgin a universality-of-conceiving that is indeterminate (so that she may conceive by this man or that man, as long as she is still unimpregnated by a man), so too the *conceptus* of the Virgin [Mary] is a universal *conceptus*—i.e., [is the *conceptus*] of *man* and not of *this man*. Accordingly, Jesus is the Son of God, who is the Father of all. And Ezechiel the prophet, who befigures Christ, was by God called by this name [“son of man”], because he was not provocative³⁷ but was humble, humane, and mild, so that he rightly preceded Christ in a befigurement.

PART TWO

Nicholas Expounds Mary's Song Verse by Verse

[23] Let us now examine, in consecutive fashion, the song of Mary.

After Elizabeth said to Mary ‘Blessed are you who have believed, for whatever things were told to you by the Lord will be accomplished,’ Mary declared: “My soul does magnify the Lord!”³⁸ [It was] as if to say: ‘You, Elizabeth, my cousin, who bear in yourself the prophet of the Most High³⁹—you exclaim that I am blessed and am blessed because I have believed the angel’s words announced to me by God. And [you say] that because I have believed, then there are to be accomplished in and through me all the things that are so excellent that they excel all [other] great things. Because [of this prophetic exclamation] my soul rightly magnifies the Lord, who has willed that I conceive and give birth to Jesus the Savior, who will be great, seeing that He is the Son of the Most High. For my soul can do nothing but magnify the Lord, who has made it to be great and made it to be full of grace. [24] And my spirit, which is life and which is a most loving movement of my soul, can only rejoice in God my

Savior.⁴⁰ For how could my spirit rejoice in someone other than in God, who is my soul's Love, Salvation, and Life?'

[25] Therefore, when I see, O Lord, how it is that since You are the Most High you have regarded the humility of Your handmaiden and have deigned to indwell this humble, handmaidenly habitation, then there is immense rejoicing in my spirit. For, indeed, humility in the soul is regarded with so loving an eye of God that the *conceptus* of the soul, viz., the spirit, rejoices—as John [the Baptist], the *conceptus* of Elizabeth, leaped in the womb when Mary, who was pregnant with the Word of God, greeted Elizabeth in her home.⁴¹ The spirit receives great joy when that which it loves is something great and when it experiences that its servantly and handmaidenly humility is not despised but is met with return-love. [26] Therefore, a rejoicing is said, unqualifiedly, to be present in the spirit when the Lord has regard for the humility of His handmaiden. For to a handmaiden nothing is greater or loftier than her lord. Therefore, rejoicing is greatest in the loving spirit of a handmaiden who is the handmaiden only of her lord, whom alone she loves when she experiences that her handmaidenly humility is pleasing to her lord and that it is met with return-love. Accordingly, how great was the rejoicing when the Lord loved His handmaiden so greatly that, having regard for her, He made her to be the mother of His only-begotten Son—[doing so], that is, by His Spirit, which *is* Love!

[27] 'For, indeed, because of this fertility all generations will call me blessed.⁴² For since in and through the only-begotten Son-of-God, become human, all generations can obtain such a blessing that they are exalted unto sonship with God, they will rightly call me—the mother of this super-blessed Son—blessed. Indeed, they will call me blessed unqualifiedly and absolutely, in the sense of being altogether blessed. Indeed, they will extol me as unqualifiedly and absolutely blessed—as being one who is altogether blessed. [28] For just as every generation (whether it be past or be future) can have, in this unique only-begotten Son of God, the fullness-of-perfection of its goal and of its rest, and just as all the graces of the fertility of all women are ordered to this birthing—ordered as unto their own end-goal—[so too] all generations will call me blessed because [I am] the mother of mothers because of [my having] the fertility of all fertilities. For just as this perceptible world is a certain likeness of the other, intellectual, [world]⁴³ and is, by means of truth, ordered to that

[other world] on which it depends for its likeness, so human propagation from generation unto generation depends on the only-begotten Son of God for its likeness and is ordered to Him through truth.

[29] ‘Therefore, every propagated generation calls me the blessed propagator of the Only-Begotten One. For [the Only-Begotten] has done such great things for me! They cannot be greater. And they have been done for me by Him who alone is powerful,⁴⁴ whose every promise (*verbum*) is not impossible [for Him to keep].’⁴⁵

[30] And His name is holy—not as if it were made to become holy but [in the sense of being] absolutely holy. By participation in Him all holy things are holy. [31] And this powerful Lord whose name is holy is He who, since He is Absolute Power, is also the infinitely powerful Lord, whose mercy those who fear Him have experienced from generation to generation.⁴⁶ For, indeed, He has mercifully protected those who in humility fear Him; but by the power that He has exercised in the strength of His arm, He has scattered those who through deceit of heart are haughty.⁴⁷

[32] He is the One who has put down the mighty from their seat.⁴⁸ For, indeed, all the mighty have been put down from their seat by the power of the Lord, whom they rejected. And He has exalted the humble.⁴⁹ For this [power of His] is the Power-of-power, which is mercy itself, so that it has regard for things lowly. And this having-regard-for is a viewing of the humble with an Eye of mercy. This viewing is an exalting.

[33] Indeed, the mercy of the Divine Power has filled the hungering with good things, for He fills all those things that receive Him.⁵⁰ And because the rich do not receive Him, who is the fulfillment of all perfection, He sends them away empty.⁵¹ For although the rich are seen to be in ample possession of temporal goods, nevertheless when they set their heart on these their riches and do not receive God, they will be sent away empty. For without [the possession of] truth every rational soul is empty and void. [34] Hence, [Mary] adds: “[God], being mindful of mercy, has for Israel begotten His Child.”⁵² [It is] as if to say: ‘Since this powerful and good Lord, who has regarded the humility of His handmaiden, is God (who is merciful and who is the filling up of every deficiency): He has brought about in and through me that He has begotten His Child for Israel. Thus, this Child, whom I conceived by the power of the Most High, is the Child who is the filling up of all deficiencies and in

whom Israel (i.e., the totality of men who see God) lives—as a father lives in his child. [35] And our merciful God, having been mindful of His mercy, has accomplished the foregoing, as He promised to our fathers—to Abraham and to his seed forever.⁵³ For in and through me [God], having now been mindful of His mercy, fulfilled for Israel this promise (made to the fathers) with regard to that super-blessed seed by means of which all nations would be blessed.’

Let the foregoing points have been thus briefly made, for the time being, as regards the song of Mary.

NOTES TO *Respexit Humilitatem*

* Sermon LXVIII.

1. Saturday, July 2, 1446 was the feast-day of the angel Gabriel's visiting of the Virgin Mary.

2. Luke 1:48.

3. Luke 1:39.

4. Here in the editor's heading I am reading "evangelium" in place of "evangelii". And I have changed "(*Luc. 1, 39-47*)" to "(*Luc. 1, 39-45*)" and changed "(*Luc. 1, 48-55*)" to "(*Luc. 1, 46-55*)". The heading here has verb endings that differ from those in the editor's Praenotanda (on p. 394). Within the Praenotanda "Canticum" is once capitalized, once not capitalized (without any apparent reason).

5. Luke 1:37.

6. Luke 1:38.

7. Luke 1:35.

8. Luke 1:32.

9. Cf. I Corinthians 2:10-12.

10. Acts 5:15.

11. Psalms 16:8 (17:8).

12. I John 3:2.

13. John 3:3-7.

14. I Peter 1:23.

15. John 3:8.

16. John 3:2.

17. John 3:4.

18. John 18:36.

19. I Corinthians 15:50.

20. I Peter 2:2.

21. John 3:10-11.

22. John 3:12.

23. John 3:12.

24. John 3:13.

25. John 3:13.

26. Numbers 21:9. John 3:14.

27. John 3:14-15.

28. Throughout this sermon Nicholas draws upon Meister Eckhart's theme of the birth of Christ in the soul of the believer. Cf. Nicholas's Sermon XVI.

29. Luke 1:41-42.

30. John 1:13.

31. John 1:14.

32. I John 3:2. See Nicholas's Sermon XXII (4 1). In that sermon see also (3 7). Note Nicholas's treatise *De Filiatione Dei*.

33. This is Anselm's theme. Mary's conception of Jesus was pure because prior to her conceiving she was purified by faith in her son as Redeemer. See Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, Book II, Chap. 16.

34. John 3:3.
35. Cf. Romans 13:14. Philippians 2:16.
36. Luke 1:54. Nicholas seems to understand this New Testament passage in the above way, which differs from the usual understanding. Cf. Isaias (Isaiah) 9:6.
37. Cf. Ezechiel (Ezekiel) 2.
38. Luke 1:46.
39. "... the prophet of the Most High": viz., John the Baptist. Luke 1:76.
40. Luke 1:47.
41. Luke 1:41 and 44.
42. Luke 1:48.
43. In *De Principio* (3 5:7-13) Nicholas writes: "Inmultiplicabile principium non est alterabile nec participabile, quia aeternitas. Nihil igitur in hoc mundo est eius similitudinem habens, cum non sit designabile nec imaginabile. Mundus est <mundi> infigurabilis figura et <mundi> indesignabilis designatio; mundus sensibilis est insensibilis mundi figura et temporalis mundus aeterni et intemporalis <mundi> figura; figuralis mundus est veri et infigurabilis mundi imago." *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, Vol. X, Fascicle 2b, edited by Karl Bormann and Heide D. Riemann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988), p. 50. The words in angular brackets have been supplied by me.
44. Luke 1:49.
45. Luke 1:37.
46. Luke 1:50.
47. Luke 1:51.
48. Luke 1:52.
49. Luke 1:52.
50. Luke 1:53.
51. Luke 1:53.
52. Luke 1:54.
53. Genesis 22:18.