

The Ladder of Divine Ascent

John Climacus



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John Climacus (c. 579–649), also known as John of the Ladder, was a monk, mystic, and spiritual master whose timeless wisdom still lights the path of those seeking holiness. Living as a hermit on Mount Sinai from a young age, John devoted decades to prayer, fasting, and silence before becoming abbot of the famed monastery there. His enduring masterpiece, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, written at the request of another abbot, charts a 30-step spiritual journey toward union with God—each “rung” representing a virtue or victory over passion, from humility and detachment to perfect love.

John’s insights are vivid, practical, and deeply psychological—he knew the human heart’s struggles and its longing for divine peace. With poetic power and monastic realism, he shows how self-discipline, repentance, and love gradually lift the soul toward heaven. The Eastern Church honors him as one of its greatest teachers, celebrating him during Lent as a model of spiritual ascent. Quiet, luminous, and profoundly wise, John Climacus remains a guide for anyone yearning to climb the ladder from earth to eternity, one faithful step at a time.

Introduction

The Ladder of Divine Ascent is a masterpiece of spiritual wisdom, written for monks but speaking powerfully to every soul that longs to climb toward God. St. John Climacus, a 7th-century monk of Sinai, envisions the spiritual life as a ladder of thirty rungs, each step representing a virtue to be gained or a vice to be overcome. From renouncing the world to conquering pride, from humility to holy love, each rung leads the soul upward into deeper freedom and radiant union with Christ.

What makes this work enduring is its clarity and realism. John writes with the insight of a seasoned spiritual physician: he knows our weaknesses, our struggles with distraction, anger, and self-love—and he offers remedies drawn from prayer, fasting, silence, and tears. Yet beneath its severity runs an unshakable tenderness. Every struggle is a rung on the ladder, every fall a chance to begin again.

Read this not as an ancient manual, but as a mirror for the heart. Let its piercing honesty and luminous hope guide you upward. By the final rung, you'll glimpse what John saw: that love, not effort, is the summit—and that the climb itself is grace.

Step 1 - On Renunciation

When writing to the servants of God it is best to begin with God himself. Our God and King is indeed good, supremely good, and all good. Of the intelligent creatures made by Him and glorified with the honor of free-will, some are friends of Him, while others are truly His servants, still others are worthless, and others are completely separated from God. Still others, although they are mere creatures are counted as His opponents. When we say friends of God, holy father, we mean people, who surround God as intellectual and incorporeal beings. As for the worthless servants, we speak of those who after receiving baptism have not kept the oaths they made before God. By those who are separated from God, we imply the heretics and unbelievers. Lastly, by adversaries of God we mean those who have rejected and fled from the commandments of the Lord and who wage a terrible war on those who wish to fulfill it.

Each type of person detailed above could have a special writing dedicated to him. But for the simple, as we are, it would not be useful at this juncture to go into such long evaluations. So then, come, in unwavering obedience, to stretch out unworthy hands to those who are the true servants of God, who piously force us, and by their faith, compel us by their instructions. Let us compose this writing with a pen taken from their wisdom with an ink made from their humility that is humble and yet shines forth. Let us then write with it on the smooth, white paper of the hearts of them. Or indeed rest it on the tablet of the spirit, and let us write pious words (or sow seeds), and let us start as such.

God is the property of all free creatures. He is the living breath of all of us. He is the salvation of all of us, both the believer and the unbeliever, those who are righteous and unrighteous, the godly and the ungodly, the lustful and the dispassionate, the monk and layman, the wise and foolish, the sound in health and the sick, young and old. For just as light shines forth from the sun, and the

weather changes for all alike, 'for there is no distinguishing between people with God.' [Rom 1:18]

The impious one is a mortal creature with an intelligent nature, who of his free-will puts his life behind him and thinks of his Maker, the always existing, as not existing. The iniquitous man is one who makes God law's according to his own fashion, and tries to mix faith in God with heresies that work in opposition to Him. The Christian, however, is the one who seeks to imitate Christ in thought, word and works, as far as he is able as a human being, believing correctly, and simply in the Holy Trinity. He is a lover of God who is communion with all that is sinless and natural, and as far as he is capable, leaves aside nothing good. The continent man is the one, who in the middle of temptations, traps and tumult, strives with all his power to imitate the manner of the one who is free from them. The monk is the one who with his earthly and polluted body strives toward the rank and the state of the angels. A monk is the one who strictly keeps his nature under control and ceaselessly keeps watch over his senses. A monk is one who keeps his body chaste, his mouth undefiled, and his mind enlightened. A monk is a soul which mourns and is concerned with the remembrance of death incessantly asleep and awake.

Everyone who willingly left behind all the things of this world, has done so either for the reward of the future Kingdom, or on account of the magnitude of their sins, or because of their love for God. If they did not leave the world for any of these reasons their withdrawal was irrational. But God who lays out our struggle for us waits to see what will be the end of our contest.

The one who has left the world in order to shake off the weight of his own sins, should be as those who dwell outside the city in the grave-yard. He should not cease his stream of hot and fiery tears and the unvoiced grieving of his heart until he also sees that Jesus has come to him and taken away the hard stone covering his heart and unbound Lazarus, which is to say, our mind, from the bonds of

sin, and commanded his serving angels to release him from his lusts that he may go to blessed dispassion. If not, he will have attained nothing.

Those among us who would like to leave Egypt and depart from Pharaoh, need a Moses to be a mediator with God and from God. This is the one who stands between action and meditation, raising hands of prayer on our behalf to God, so that led by him we also can cross the sea of sin and defeat the Amalek of our passions. This is the reason why those, who would have given themselves over to God, betray themselves if they think they have no need of a guide. For those who left Egypt had Moses as a guide for them. And those who left Sodom had the angel. The first are like those who are saved from the lusts of their soul by the attention of doctors (those who left Egypt). The others are like those who wish to depart from the defilement of their miserable body. For this reason they require a guide, an angel one might say, or at least a guide who is equal to an angel. For according to the measure of the depravity of our wounds we need a guide who is an equally well-trained doctor.

Those who desire to rise with their body to the heavens, need first to struggle and to constantly suffer, especially in the first part of their renunciation, until their inclination to pleasure and unloving hearts reach the love of God and purity by a manifest grieving. A great labor, very great, with unseen grieving, most especially for those who live recklessly, until by simplicity, lack of anger and toil we force our mind, which is a hungry dog of the kitchen given to barking, into one who instead loves purity and watchfulness. Let those of us who are feeble and lustful have the courage to present our illnesses and feeble nature to Christ with undoubting faith, and speak to Him. And we will confidently receive His help, even though this is beyond what we deserve. But only if we unrelentingly move to the full depth of a humble nature.

Everyone who goes into the worthy fight, which is both narrow and difficult, but also light, should understand that they must jump into the fire, if they truly expect the reward of the heavenly fire to be within them. But let each one study his own character, and let him consume his bread with the bitter seasoning, and let him drink of his cup with tears, so that his servitude not lead to his judgment. If it be that everyone who is baptized is saved then I will be silent about the following.

To those who embark on this struggle they must give up everything, despise everything, scorn everything, and remove everything, so that they will be able to put down a strong foundation. A firm foundation consists of three levels, three columns. These are innocence, fasting, and self-control. Let all infants in Christ start with these virtues, using them as their infant like examples. For you find in a baby nothing which is cunning or deceitful. They do not have an uncontrollable appetite or stomach. There is no body lit with fire. But as they increase, perhaps as they consume more food, their animal passions increase as well.

To fall behind in the contest from the beginning of the struggle provides evidence of our eventual defeat and is a very detestable and risky thing. A good beginning will be important for us when later on we become sluggish. A soul which is strong at the beginning, but then loses its vigor is pushed forward by the remembrance of the previous zeal. In such a way new wings are given.

If the soul deceives itself and falls away from the blessed zeal, let it look in detail as to the reason. Let it take up arms with all its strength and zeal against this reason. Because the earlier zeal can only be reacquired by the same door from which it left.

The one who leaves the world out of fear is like incense that burns. It begins with a beautiful smell but ends with smoke. The one that abandons the world because of a desired reward is like millstone, that always moves about its selfish state. But the one who leaves the world because of his love of God has acquired fire from the

beginning, and like a fire fed with fuel, it becomes an ever greater flame.

Some construct bricks on stones. Still others put columns on the uncovered earth. But there are others who after going a brief distance, and having warmed their muscles and joints, go even faster. The one that can understand, let him understand this parable.

So let us run our race with zeal as those who are summoned by our God and our King, since the time we have is brief, and lest we should be found on the day of our death with no fruit and die of hunger. Let us be pleasing to the Lord as troops please their general, since we must provide a full account of our ministry at the end of the campaign. Let us be afraid of the Lord no less than brute beasts. Because I have observed men who were about to steal, not fearing God, but upon hearing the bark of dogs immediately turn back. What the fear of God did not bring about, the fear of animals accomplished. Let us have a love for God that is at least on par with our respect for our friends. I have many times seen people who scandalized God and had not been affected at all. But those same people I have seen afterward irritating their friends over some small thing, then use every possible device, offering, and apology, both by themselves and with the aid of friends and family, not leaving aside gifts, so that they might regain their former friendship.

At the start of our renunciation, it is important that with toil and grief we accomplish our virtues. And when we have made some advancement in them, we stop feeling grieved, or we feel only a little grief. And when our mortal mind is given over to an eagerness we achieve our virtues with all gladness and earnestness, with love and a godly fire.

It is those, who at the very start, pursue the virtues and accomplish the commandments with gladness and eagerness that deserve all praise. In the same manner those who labor in asceticism for a long

time and still find it difficult to observe the commandments, if they observe them at all, are worthy of true pity.

Let us not condemn or scorn a renunciation that is based only on circumstances. I have observed men who have escaped into exile come across a king by chance when he was on a journey, and then join his band, enter his court, and eat with him. I have observed seed carelessly fall to the ground and bear a multitude of fruit. The opposite I have observed as well. I have seen someone enter a hospital with a different intent, but the friendliness and the warm-heartedness of the doctor won him over, and after being treated with care, he was cured of the darkness that was upon his eyes. So for some that which was unintentional was more firm and stronger than that which was intentional.

Let no one say that the burden or the number of his sins makes him unworthy of the monastic oath. Then for the desire of pleasure depress himself, pardoning himself with excuses for his sins. For where there is much defilement, much care is necessary to remove the illness. Those who are well do not go to a hospital.

If a king from the world were to summon and petition us to minister before him, we would not tarry for other instructions. We would not come up with excuses, but we would set aside all things and earnestly go to him. So then, let us be attentive, so that if the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the God of gods should call us to his divine duty, we should not excuse ourselves on account of laziness and cowardice and discover ourselves with no excuse in the final Judgment. One can walk with difficulty, even if bound with the bonds of everyday concerns and the iron of worries. And those who have chains of iron on their feet can even walk, but they will often stumble and get hurt. A man who is unmarried, is only bound to the world only by business dealings, and he is as one who has bonds on his hands, and when he desires to start the monastic life he is impeded by nothing. However, the man who is married is as

one who is chained hand and foot, so that although he desires to run he is unable.

Some people in the world living carelessly have asked me, "We have wives and many social concerns, how could we possibly lead a life of solitude?" I answer them, "Do as much good as you can; do not speak ill of anyone; do not steal; do not lie; do not be boastful; do not hate; go to church; have mercy on the poor; do not be a stumbling block to anyone; do not draw near the bed of another; and be satisfied with what you receive from your wives. If you do these things you will be close to the Kingdom of Heaven."

Let us take up the virtuous fight with gladness and love without being afraid of enemies, who though invisible, can see directly into our souls. If they see it changed by fear, they fight against us all the more viciously. For these discerning beings have seen that we are not courageous. So let us arm ourselves against them with courage. There is no one who will fight against a determined warrior.

Purposely the Lord makes our battles easy at the start so that we should not quickly return to the world right at the beginning of our struggle. So rejoice in the Lord always, all you servants of His, sensing in this an initial sign of our Master's love for us, and a sign that He has summoned us. When God observes brave souls He has been known to let them endure conflicts right from the start, so as to crown them earlier. But for those in the world the Lord hides the difficulty of the contest. For if those in the world were to know the difficulty, they would never renounce the world.

Offer up to Christ the endurance of your youth, and in your elderly years you will rejoice in the treasure of dispassion. What is collected when young feeds and comforts the state of those who have become tired in old age. In our youth let us diligently labor and let us run attentively, for the time of our death is not known. We have very wicked, perilous, crafty, evil foes, who have fire in their hands and will attempt to scorch the temple of God with it. These

enemies are strong; they do not sleep. They are immaterial and unseen. Let no one when he is young listen to the demonic foes, when they tell him: "There is no need to exhaust your flesh lest you become ill and sickly." Rarely will you find anyone in this generation, who wants to mortify his body, although he may restrain himself from a variety of tasty dishes. The goal of this demon is to make the beginning of our spiritual life slothful and undisciplined, then to make the end like the beginning.

Those who are set on ministering to Christ, with the aid of spiritual fathers and their own knowledge will strive to find a place, and mode of life, and a dwelling place, and suitable practices. The Community life is not for everyone, because of greed. And solitary places are not for everyone because of anger. Each person must ponder what is best for his needs.

The entire monastic state is made up of three types of dwelling: the solitary place of a spiritual contestant; a life of silence with one or two others; or the patient endurance of a community. Do not turn to the right or the left, but follow the straight road of the King. Of the three modes of life given above, the second is good for many people, since it is written: "Woe to him who is alone when he falls into despair or sloth or laziness or apathy, and does not have other men to raise him up." As the Lord said, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Who is the faithful and sagacious monk? It is the one who has kept his zeal undiminished, and to the conclusion of his life has not stopped every day to add fire to fire, ardor to ardor, zeal to zeal, love to love.

This is the first step. The one who has put his foot to it, let him not turn back.

The Ladder of Divine Ascent

Step 2 - On Detachment

The man who truly loves the Lord, who has made a diligent labor to find the approaching Kingdom, who has made a start of seeing the seriousness of his sins, who is truly mindful of the eternal torture and punishment, who sincerely lives in fear of death, cannot love or concern himself with wealth, or possessions, or his family, or earthly honor, or friends, or brothers, or any of the things of this world. But shaking off all his ties with worldly things and having thus departed from every care, and coming to the point of hating his own fleshly body, and having taken off everything, he will follow Christ without worry or doubt. He looks always toward heaven, awaiting help from there, as the saint said, "My soul follows close behind you." And as the memorable author said: I have not grown tired of following you, nor have I longed for the rest of men, O Lord.

After our invitation, which is from God and not from men, and we have abandon everything that is written before, it is a true dishonor for us to concern ourselves about anything which will not help us at the time of our death. For the Lord said, this implies looking behind and not being suitable for the Kingdom of Heaven. He knows how erratic novices can be and how quickly we can turn back to the world through visits, spending time with worldly people. When a certain man said to Him, "Allow me first to go and bury my father," our Lord answered, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead."

When we have renounced the world, the demons give us ideas that we should be jealous of those in the world who are merciful and charitable, and to be sorry that we have left aside these virtues. The goal of our enemies is through false humility to either make us go back to the world, or if we continue on as monks, to lead us to despair. One can disparage those in the world out of arrogance, or one can belittle them behind their backs in order to keep from despair and remain hopeful.

We should listen to what the Lord said to the rich young ruler who had fulfilled almost all the commandments: "One thing you lack. Sell what you have and give to the poor and become a beggar who receives charity from others."

Being determined to run our course with diligence and zeal, let us contemplate cautiously how the Lord judges all the creatures of the world, speaking of those who, though living, are "dead", as when he told someone: "Leave those in the world who are dead to bury those whose bodies are dead." His wealth did not stop the rich young man from receiving baptism. And so, it is incorrect to say, as some do, that the Lord ordered him to sell all he had to be baptized. This is more than enough to provide us with a steadfast conviction in the great honor of our vow.

It is beneficial to look into why those who are living in the world who spend much time in vigils, fastings, labors, and difficulties, but when they leave the world and start their monastic journey as if in some trial or on the ground of practicing, stop the discipline of their previous false and fake asceticism. I have seen that in the world they sowed many seeds bearing virtues, which were watered with vainglory as by a sewage stream underground, and were hoed by pretension, and for fertilizer were given praise. However, when transplanted in the desert ground, which is cut off from people of the world and so not fertilized with the putrid water of vainglory, at once they wilted. For water-hungry plants will not produce fruit in hard and dry practice fields.

The one who has come to hate this world has left despair. But the one who retains an attachment to tangible things has not yet been saved from despair. How indeed is it possible for us not to be unhappy at the loss over what we have loved? We should have diligent alertness in everything. And to this we must dedicate our full attention above all else. For I have observed many in the world, who through their concerns, occupations, cares and vigils, have avoided their carnal desires. But when they take on the monastic

habit they become free from concern, and they defile themselves in wretched ways by the desires of their body.

We should take heed with ourselves so as not to trick ourselves into thinking we are pursuing the straight and narrow path when in truth we are following the way which is wide and broad. The following will demonstrate the meaning of the narrow path: a putting to death of the stomach, vigils of standing, restraint in the consumption of water, small portions of bread, the cleansing drink of dishonor, insults, condemning, derision, the deprivation of one's will, long-suffering in annoyances, unquestioning endurance of insults, disregard of sneers, and the habit when ill-treated, of enduring it hardily. Or when slandered, of not being angry. When disgraced by another, not to be upset. When reviled to be humble. Blessed are those who follow the path we have spoken of, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

But no one will come into the heavenly bride-chamber with a crown unless he provides the first, second and third renunciation. By this I mean the giving up of all commerce, friends and parents; the renunciation of one's will; and the final renunciation of the arrogance that destroys obedience, "come out, you from among them and be separate," says the Lord, "And touch not the defiled world." For who among them has ever done a miraculous sign? Who has brought back someone from the dead? Who has cast out demons? None. All these are the great prizes of monks, prizes which those of the world cannot receive; and if they were able, then what would be the necessity of asceticism or solitude?

Following our renunciation, the demons warm our hearts with the memory of our parents and family. Let us then fortify ourselves against them by means of prayer, and let us kindle within ourselves the memory of the endless fire, so that by this memory we will extinguish the unseasonable warming of our heart.

If someone believes he is without affection for an object, but is saddened by its removal, then he is merely tricking himself.

For those who are young and are given over to their lusts and to lavish living, but desire to come to the monastic life, let them give themselves over to fasting and prayer. Let them convince themselves of the need to renounce all lavishness and immorality, so that their final state not be worse than their first. This harbor gives security, but it also opens one to danger. Those who navigate the spiritual seas realize this. It is a pathetic sight to see those who have endured the dangers of the open sea to suffer shipwreck when in the harbor.

This is the second step. Those who run this course let them not imitate Lot's wife but Lot, and run away.

Step 3 - On Banishment or Living as a Stranger

Banishment implies that we forever leave the things of our past country which hinder us from attaining the aim of the religious life. Banishment involves moderate manners, a hidden wisdom, caution not known by many, a secret life, a hidden intention, secret prayer, a longing to be humiliated, a desire for difficulty, continual determination to love God, an overflowing of benevolence, an abandonment of vainglory, and a depth of stillness.

The ones who love the Lord are at first very disturbed by this thought, as if they are burned with divine fire. I speak of the detachment from their own, which is done by those who love perfection in order that they might have a difficult and simple life. But excellent and worthy of praise as it is, it needs great discernment. For not all types of banishments taken to their extreme are of value.

Prophets may be dishonored in their own country, as the Lord states. So let us take care that our banishment not be an opportunity for vainglory. For banishment is a division with all things so as to keep the mind attached to God. Banishment loves and brings forth constant weeping. A banished exile, is a fugitive of every bond with his brethren and strangers.

When entering the solitary life with haste, do not tarry for the souls who love the world, for the thief comes at an unknown hour. In attempting to save those who are reckless and lazy, they cause many to perish with them, because over time the fire is extinguished. At the moment the flame burns inside you, flee. It is not known to you when it will be extinguished and you will be in darkness. Everyone is not required to rescue others. The saintly Apostle states: "Each one will give an account of himself to God." Also he states, "You who teach others, do you not teach yourself?" Or said another way: I do not know if we can teach others, but instruct yourself above all.

When banished, take heed to the demon of roaming and of carnal lust, for banishment provides him an opening.

Admirable is detachment, but banishment is her mother. After banishing oneself for the sake of the Lord, we must have no bonds of affection lest we appear to be wandering in order to satisfy our lusts.

Have you banished yourself from the world? No longer touch the world. For the passions yearn earnestly for a return.

Eve was banished from Paradise in opposition to her will, while the monk desires to be banished from his home. She desired yet again the tree of rebellion. And the monk would expose himself to peril from his kinsfolk.

Flee from the areas of sin as if from the plague. For when fruit is absent, we no longer have the desire to consume it.

Keep guard against the deception of robbers. They propose to us that there is no need to isolate ourselves from those who are in the world. They suggest that we will obtain an excellent reward if we gaze upon women and yet stay temperate. We should not believe these ideas, and instead hold the opposite.

After we have spent a year or two separate from our family, and have obtained some degree of piety or remorse or temperance, then vainglory rises up within us and suggests that we should go back to our home country, "to educate the multitude." And, as they say, "to be an example to those who knew our former undisciplined state." And should we have the talent of rhetoric and some understanding, the idea comes to us that we should be saviors of souls and instructors of the world, thinking that we should not squander at sea what we have collected so well at the harbor. But we should not imitate Lot's wife, but Lot. For a soul, when it returns to its former life, is like salt, it becomes insipid and useless. Flee from Egypt, not looking back. For the hearts that glance back with fondness will not see Jerusalem, the land of peace. To those who

have left their brethren in the simplicity of a child at the start, and have cleansed themselves may with some gain return to their home country with the purpose of saving others after saving themselves. However, Moses who was given permission to gaze upon God and was sent by God to save his own people, came upon numerous dangers when in Egypt, which are the dark nights of the world.

It is better to distress our parents rather than the Lord. Because he has made us and saved us, but parents have often destroyed the ones they love and sent them to their destruction.

The one who is banished and possesses understanding, sits like one who speaks a strange tongue among people of another language.

Not from hate do we remove ourselves from our people or dwelling places (God forbid!), but to keep away from the damage that we may incur from them. As in all things, Christ instructs us as to what is best for us. For it is evident that many times He left His fleshy parents. When He was told, "Your Mother and brethren are searching for You," our good Lord and Master immediately gave us an example of a dispassionate hatred, for at the time he said, "My Mother and My brethren are those who do the will of My Father in heaven." [Matt 12:49]

Let your father be one who is capable and willing to toil with you in carrying the weight of your sins; and let your mother be remorse, which can purify you from defilement. And let your brother be your friend who labors and wars beside you in your struggle to the heights. Take for yourself an inseparable wife - the recollection of death. Let your precious children be the groanings of your heart. Let your body be your slave, and let your comrades be the angels who can assist you at the time of your death, if you befriend them. This is the family who seeks the Lord.

The love of God extinguishes the love of parents. He who claims to love both misleads himself. He would do well to hear Him who

states, "No one can serve two masters." "I have not come," states the Lord, "to bring peace upon the earth (which is to have love of parents, above love of sons and brothers who serve Me) but war and the sword, so as to divide those who love God from those that love the world; so as to separate the carnal from the spiritual, the haughty from the humble. For contention and division please the Lord when it comes from love for Him.

Take heed lest you uncover an outpouring of sentiment with your affection for the things of your dwelling, and you drown in the waters of worldly love. Do not become tearful from the testimony of your parents or friends, for if you do so, you will weep forever. When they encircle you as bees, or rather wasps, and they weep concerning you, do not for one instant hesitate, but direct the gaze of your soul to the things you have done in the past and upon your death. This way you will fend off one grief by another. Our own, or more accurately, the ones who are not our own, with praise, promise they will do everything to gratify us. However, their true goal is to impede our excellent way and soon to twist us away to their own way of life.

For the solitary life we should choose abodes where there will be a lack of ease and ambition, and instead a chance for increasing our humility. For if not, we should be escaping but with our passions as companions.

Conceal your high birth and do not be prideful about your distinction, so that you not be one thing in word and another in action.

None have taken banishment so well as that excellent patriarch of whom it was said, "Get you out of your country and from your kinsfolk and from your father's house." [Gen 12:1] At which point he was commanded to go to an alien and savage country.

At times the Lord brings more honor to the one who has banished himself after the way of this noble patriarch. However, even if this

honor is given by God, yet it is better to remove oneself with the shield of humbleness.

If either men or demons laud us for our banishment, as if it were some great achievement, let us contemplate Him who on account of us was banished from heaven to earth, and we will see that it will never be possible for us to make up for this.

Being attached to a certain relative, or even a stranger, is hazardous. For in time it may lead us to return to the world and will extinguish the beginning of our remorse. It is not possible to gaze at heaven with one eye and at the ground with the other. It is also impossible for someone not to expose his life to peril who had not divorced himself, both in mind and body from his brethren and from others.

With much toil and exertion a right and steady disposition is cultivated within us. But that which is accomplished with much effort can be destroyed in a moment. "For bad company corrupts good manners," [1 Cor 15:33] being at times both carnal and unruly. The one who befriends people of the world or comes to them after he has renounced the world will most certainly fall into their nets and will corrupt his own heart by contemplating them. Or if he has not become polluted, by denouncing the ones who are corrupt he will also become corrupt.

It is impossible to conceal from our mind, the organ of understanding, that which is defective and full of ignorance. Just as the palate discerns between different foods; the hearing distinguishes between ideas; the sun exposes the frailty of the eyes, and speech reveals the ignorance of a soul. However, the law of love is an inducement to try things that are beyond our ability. And so I suppose, but do not dogmatize, that following a chapter on banishment, or I should say in this step, something needs to be said about dreams, in order that we may not be in the darkness about this ruse of our cunning enemies.

A dream is the product of the mind while the body is dormant. It is a fantasy, a vision of the eyes when the mind is resting. A fantasy is a raptured state when the body is not asleep. A fantasy is the manifestation of something which in reality is not there.

The purpose of speaking about dreams here is clear. When we depart from our dwelling place and from relatives for the sake of the Lord, and banish ourselves into exile for the love of God, then the demons try to excite us with dreams. They show us our relatives, in a state where they are either in distress or dying, or are held in bondage on account of us or that they are destitute. The one who trusts in dreams is like one who runs after his own shadow and attempts to catch it.

The demon of vainglory will prophesy in dreams. Being cunning, he makes conjectures about the future. If these prophesies happen to come true, we are astounded. We are jubilant over the idea that we have so quickly obtained the ability to foretell the future. This demon becomes a prophet to those who trust in him. But he always lies to those who hate him. Since he is a spirit he can observe what is going on in the lower air. And when he notices that someone is near his end, he will prophesy about it to the gullible ones in dreams. But the demons do not know anything of the future from foreknowledge. Because if they did have foreknowledge then the magicians would also be able to foreknow our death.

Demons will often change themselves into angels of light, or change their appearance to be that of a martyr, and then they come to us during our sleep, they make it appear that we are in communication with them. After we wake up they submerge us in an unholy happiness and pride. However, you can discern their craft by this fact: angels show us torments, judgments and divisions. And after we wake up we discover we are shaking and sorrowful. Once we start to believe the demons in dreams, then they have their way with us when we are awake as well. The one who trusts in dreams is truly a novice. But the one who disbelieves

dreams is intelligent. Only trust dreams that reveal tortures and judgment for you. However, if despair troubles you then these dreams are also from the demons.

This is the third step, which is equal in number to the Trinity. The one who has attained it, let him not glance to the right or left.

Step 4 - On Obedience

Our essay now, out of necessity, covers fighters and athletes of Christ. As the flower comes out before the fruit so detachment of the body or will always come before obedience. For with the aid of these two virtues, the divine soul steadfastly goes up to the heavens as on wings of gold. Perhaps it was concerning this that the one who received the Holy Spirit sang, "Who will give me wings as a dove?" I will fly by action, and I will rest through meditation and humbleness.

However, let us not fall short, if you agree, to relate in detail in our essay the armaments of those courageous warriors: how exactly they grip the shield of their faith in God and their guide, and with it how they fight off, so to speak, every notion of unbelief and wavering. How they regularly lift up the drawn sword of the Spirit and kill all the desires that come to them. How, clothed in the iron armor of humbleness and long-suffering, they ward off every affront, injury and arrow. For a helmet of salvation they have the abbot's protection by prayer. And when they stand, their feet are not together, but one is stretched out in service and the other is unmoving in prayer.

Obedience is the abandonment of our own life through the deeds of our body. Or stated another way, obedience is the putting to death of the members of our body while the mind stays alive. Obedience is not doubting, a willing death, an uncomplicated life, danger free of concern, a rapid defense by God, courage at death, a safe journey, a sleeper's advancement. Obedience is the grave of the will and the resurrection of meekness. A dead body does not debate or vacillate between good and evil. For the one who has piously killed the soul of a novice will give answer for all things. Obedience is a renunciation of discrimination in a treasure of discernment.

To begin the mortification of the will of the soul and body requires much labor. The middle often involves toil, but at some points it is without pain. However, the conclusion is an indifference toward labor and pain. Only at the point he observes himself doing his will does the living corpse feel pain and grief of heart. For he is concerned when faced with the responsibility of exercising his own judgment.

You, the one who has made up his mind to strip himself for the arena of the spiritual confession; you, the one who desires to take the yoke of Christ on his neck; you, the one who is attempting to put your weight on someone else's shoulders; you, the one who is hurrying to making an oath to give up your life to slavery, for which you desire to have freedom put to your account; you, the one who is upheld by the hands of others, swimming across this great ocean. It is best that you understand that you have made the decision to journey over the short but difficult path, from which only one path forks, which is called a singularity. However, the one who has renounced all this, even in those things which seem to be spiritual and excellent and well-pleasing to God, has reached the finish line, even before starting his travels. For obedience is the disbelief of all things which pertain to oneself, however excellent they may seem, until the conclusion of one's life.

When the goal of meekness and the desire of salvation force us to bend our neck and deliver ourselves over to someone else in the Lord, before embarking on this life if there be any evil or arrogance in us, we should initially question and study it, and so, that is to say, test our navigator, so that we not confuse the sailor and the navigator, an ill-person for a physician, a lustful person for a dispassionate one, the open sea for the safe harbor, and thus have the result of a quick shipwreck of our life. For when we have come to the arena of divinity and obedience we should not act as judge over our guide, even if we see in him some small failing, since he is only human. For if we make ourselves a judge we will get no gain from our subjection.

It is highly important for the ones who desire to keep an unwavering faith in their superiors to record their good works ineffaceably in our hearts and to ever bring them to mind, so when the devils sow distrust in us against them, we are able to rebuke them by these memories. For the greater faith abounds in the heart, the more the body becomes eager. But the one who trips up by not trusting has stumbled already. For everything that does not come from faith is sin. The instant the idea of acting as judge or condemning your spiritual director comes to your mind flee from it as from sexual immorality. Do not give that serpent any authority, room, entry, or permission. Instead say: Hear O deceiver, I have no power to be a judge of my spiritual director, for he has been established as a judge over me. It is not my place to judge him."

The Fathers have established that psalmody is a weapon, and that prayer is a wall, and sincere tears are a cleansing. But holy obedience is in their judgment a declaration of faith, the absence of which will not allow anyone to see the Lord who is under the power of his passions.

The one who subjugates himself, passes a judgment against himself. Even if he is in perfect obedience to the Lord, although it may seem imperfect, he will evade judgment. However, if he acts on his own will in some areas, then even though he thinks himself to be obedient, he puts the weight on his own shoulders. It is better if the spiritual director does not stop rebuking him. However, if he becomes silent, then I have no words. Those who surrender themselves to the Lord in purity run a good race without embittering the bile of the devils through their questioning.

At the beginning let us give our confession to the excellent judge, and only to him. However, if he so bids, then to everyone. Cuts displayed in public will not become worse, but will heal.

I once observed in a monastery a dreadful judgment from the excellent judge and pastor. For when I was there, a thief came to the monastery wanting to take on the monastic life. And the most

superb pastor and doctor commanded him to rest for seven days, so he might see the manner of life there. When the days were finished the pastor summoned him and inquired of him in private: "Do you still desire to stay with us?" Seeing that he consented with all honesty, he then inquired as to what ill he had done while in the world. And observing that he related to him everything with all innocence, he pushed him still more, and stated, "I would like you to say this before all the brothers." The man really did disdain his sins, and leaving aside all shame, he immediately vowed to do it. "And if you desire," he stated, "I will say it in the midst of Alexandria."

So the pastor collected all his sheep into the church, about two hundred and thirty, and during the Sunday service, at the conclusion of the reading of the Gospel, he introduced this thief. He was dragged by many of the brothers, who hit him moderately. They then bound his hands behind him. He was clothed with a hair shirt and had ashes upon his head, and everyone was astonished at his appearance. Suddenly a terrible cry was heard, for none knew what was occurring. Then at the point the thief reached the doors of the church, that pastor who had a love for all souls, said to the thief in a loud voice, "Halt! You are not worthy to come here."

Silenced by the command of the pastor preceding from the sanctuary, (for he told us afterwards that he heard thunder and not a human voice at all) he immediately collapsed to the floor on his face. His whole body was shaking with fear, as he lay on the floor, wetting it with his tears. This most excellent doctor of souls, used every possible means for his salvation, desiring to make an example of his saving and effective humbleness, again he encouraged him, before everyone, to relate in detail all he had done. And with trembling he acknowledged every one of his sins, which disgusted every ear, not just the fleshy sins, but natural and unnatural ones with people and with animals. He had also committed poisonings, murders and numerous other things which are not seemly to listen to or to put in writing. When finally his

confession was finished, the pastor immediately instructed him to be given his monastic garb and that he be added to the brethren.

Awed by the sagacity of the holy man, I inquired from him when we were in private, "Why did you make such a big show of him?" And that true doctor answered, "For two reasons: first, to save the penitent from future embarrassment by present embarrassment. And it truly did that, Brother John. For he did not come up off the floor until all of his sins were pardoned. And have no doubt of this, for one of the brothers told me, "I observed someone horrible holding a reed and a tablet for writing, and as the man said each sin, he removed it with the reed. And this likely happened, for it is written: 'I will confess my sin to the Lord. And You have forgiven the evil of my heart.' Also I did this since there were others among the brothers who had sins they had not yet confessed to, and I wanted to encourage them to confess them as well. For without confession no one will receive forgiveness."

I saw many other things that were excellent and worth noting with that ever-to-be-remembered shepherd and his herd. A good part of it I will try to bring to your mind as well. For I dwelt a long time with him, observing his way of life there, and I was amazed to see just how many of those dwelling on earth could mimic the heavenly angels.

In this flock all were joined by the unbreakable bond of love. And what was even better was it did not involve too much closeness or gossip. Perhaps more importantly, they made every effort not to injure the conscience of a brother in any form. And should anyone display anger to another, the pastor would put him in isolation, like a prisoner. One time when a brother spoke poorly concerning his neighbor to the pastor, that holy man immediately commanded him to be thrown out, stating, "I will not allow both a visible and invisible devil in the monastery."

I observed many things that were indeed advantageous and excellent among those holy fathers. I observed the brotherhood

collected together and joined in the Lord, with a most excellent active as well as contemplative life. For they were so preoccupied with heavenly thoughts and with the practice of good works that there was rarely any need for the pastor to instruct them in anything. For with their own consciences they brought each other to godly alertness. For there were many godly practices which were set out, studied and established. If the superior were absent and one of the brothers started to speak with foul language or speak ill of people or simply to speak idly, another brother by means of a secret gesture would make him mindful of this, and make an end of it silently. However if the brother did not observe the sign then the one who had gestured to him would make a prostration and withdraw himself. The ever present topic of conversation (when they spoke at all) was always on the remembrance of death and eternal judgment.

I should not neglect to speak of the remarkable accomplishment of the community baker. He had reached the point of being ever-mindful of God and weeping during his labor. I inquired from him how he obtained such gifts. When I urged him on the matter, he said, "I never thought I was serving men, but God himself. And having decided I was unworthy of stillness, by the light of the baking oven fire I am forever reminded of the coming fire."

Let us take note of another achievement of them. For even at the dining area they did not cease from meditation, but according to a certain practice, these blessed monks would remind each other of the importance of interior prayer by private signs and gestures. They not only did this in the dining area, but in each meeting.

And should one of them make a mistake, the brother would offer many petitions to permit them to bear the accountability and the punishment from the pastor. This is why this most excellent man, on understanding that his disciples would do this, would give softer punishments, understanding that the one he would chastise was in

fact, innocent. And he would not even question the one who had made the mistake.

Would there be any form of idle talking and jesting among them? If a brother started to argue with his neighbor then a third who was walking by would take on the role of the penitent and so would break up the argument. But on observing that the two were malicious or vengeful, he would bring an account of the argument to the father who was second to the superior, and thus set the path for their reconciliation before the sun went down. However, if they remained uncompromising both would be disciplined by having their food withdrawn until they made amends or they would be removed from the monastery grounds.

It was not without purpose that this honorable sternness achieved perfection among them, for it brought forth much fruit. Of those holy fathers many became excellent both in the active and spiritual life, with humbleness and discernment. Often one would observe a terrible and heavenly sight, honorable, old and white-haired men of angelic beauty running around in obedience as children, and finding much joy in their humiliation. I have seen there men who passed fifty years in obedience. But when I asked them to relate to me what comfort they had achieved through their toil, some of them said: a profound humbleness with which they could ward off any attack. Others stated that they achieved complete freedom from grief in slander and rebukes.

I have observed still others of those memorable fathers with white angelic hair who have obtained a profound innocence and wise simpleness, that is quick and led by God. In the opposite case, an evil man is one thing on the outside and another inside. But the simple one has unity of character. None of them are foolish and silly, like many men in the world who are known as "senile". Instead on the outside they are completely meek and kind, radiant and true, and there is nothing hypocritical, or false in their words or personality (a rare thing). And inwardly (in their soul), they are as

simple babes, making God their superior with their every breath, while their mind stays alert to the wiles of demons and passions.

My entire life, holy and sincere father and God-loving community would not be enough to relate the angelic life and excellences of those blessed monks. And yet it is more appropriate to decorate our writing and stimulate you to an eagerness in the love of God by their earnest struggles than by my own insufficient words. For above all debate the superior decorates the inferior. This only I seek, that you should not think we are making up what is written. For such mistrust would detract from its worth. Instead let us continue the former account.

There was a man by the name of Isidore, a magistrate, from Alexandria, who had of late given up the world at the aforementioned monastery and I found that he was still there. That all-holy pastor, after taking him in, discovered he was replete with wickedness, cruelty and a cunning, savage and proud disposition. However, with human skillfulness, that very wise man, came up with a way to trick the wiles of the demons. And he said to Isidore, "If you desire to put on the yoke of Christ, then I desire first that you learn obedience." Isidore answered, "As iron is to the blacksmith, so I yield my will to you, holy father." The excellent father, using this comparison, immediately gave an iron labor to Isidore, saying, "I would like you, fleshly brother, to stand by the monastery gate, and to bow before each person entering and exiting, and to say, "Pray on my behalf, father; I am paralyzed." And as an angel is obedient to the Lord so he obeyed.

After spending seven years at this task, he acquired profound humbleness and remorse. After a hard seven years and great patience, the most excellent father considered him honorable enough to be one of the brothers, and he desired to affirm him by having him ordained. However, Isidore through others, and at my own humble intercession, pleaded with the pastor numerous times to permit him to complete his mode of life, implying that his end and

summoning were near. And this was indeed the case. For ten days after his spiritual director allowed him to continue in his low estate, he went honorably to the Lord. And upon the seventh day after his death, the monastery gate keeper also died. For that blessed man had told him, "If I have found favor in the presence of the Lord, in a brief time you will also be forever united to me there. And this is what occurred, as a witness to his great obedience and heavenly humbleness.

While he was alive, I questioned the great Isidore about what he had meditated on when he was at the gate. The well-known ascetic did not keep it secret from me, desiring to aid me. "At the start", he said, "I reckoned that I had been sold as a slave for my sins, so it was with resentment and great toil, and as one might say with blood, that I made each prostration. But when a year had gone by, I stopped feeling grief in my heart and I waited for a wage for my servitude to God. However, when a further year had finished, I started to be very much aware of my unworthiness, even to be in the monastery, and to be in contact with the fathers, and to participate in the Divine Mysteries. And so I did not even attempt to look upon anyone's face, but I stooped low with my eyes, and even lower with my thoughts. With sincerity I begged for the prayers of those that entered and exited.

At one time when we were sitting together in the dining hall, this most excellent superior put his holy lips next to my ear and asked, "Would you like me to show you heavenly discretion in old age?" And having entreated him to do just this, the holy man summoned Laurence from another table, who had spent about forty-eight years in the monastic community and was the second priest. He came forward and made a prostration before the superior, and received his blessing. When he got up the superior said not a word to him, but proceeded to leave him standing without eating beside the table. Breakfast was only just served and so he remained there for an hour, or two. I was embarrassed to look up into the face of this laborer, for his hair was white and he was eighty years old. When

we stood up, the saint dismissed him to the great Isidore, who was referred to earlier, so that he might repeat the beginning of Psalm 39.

I, being a most useless man, did not neglect the opportunity of testing the old man. I inquired from him, what he was meditating on when he was standing beside the table. He stated, "I thought of the pastor as the being the very image of Christ and I reasoned that I had not received the order from him, but from God Himself. So as I stood praying, Father John, not as in presence of a table of men, but instead as if being before the very altar of God. And on account of my trust and love for the pastor, no wicked notion about him came into my mind, for love is not bothered by a blow. But understand this, Father, if anyone gives himself to simple and voluntary innocence, he allows the devil neither time nor place to make an assault on him."

God sent to that righteous Savior of the spiritual sheep another just like himself to be the money-keeper of the monastery. He was chaste and sober as none other, and gentle as few are. At one point, the great elder, for the instruction of the others, feigned being angry with him within the church and commanded that he be cast out before the proper time. Knowing that he was blameless of the charge of the pastor, I begged the case of the money-keeper in the presence of the great pastor. But that sage said, "I also know, Father, that he is innocent, but just as it would be unfortunate and wrong to take bread from the lips of a starving babe, so too the pastor of souls does ill both to himself and also to the ascetic if he does not allow him many chances to receive crowns which the pastor knows that he has earned each time he has endured insults, disgrace, scorn or ridicule. For three terrible wrongs are done. For one, the pastor loses the reward for discipline and punishment. Second the pastor acts unrighteously when through that one person he could have profited others, but neglects to do so. Thirdly, a most grievous injury is done to those people who are the most laborious and long-suffering. For if they are left for a period of time

with no reproach or censure from the pastor, in the same way as those who are steadfast in virtue, they forget their former humility and long-suffering. For even a field, which is good and bears fruit and is productive, if neglected of the water of shame, can return to being a forest and it will bring forth the thorns of pride, cowardice and boldness. Understanding this, the excellent apostle wrote to Timothy, "Continue to admonish and discipline them both in season and out."

I argued this point with that sincere pastor and brought to his attention the wickedness of our race, and stated that either unmerited or merited punishment may cause some to leave the flock. But that temple of all wisdom said to me, "A life which is attached to the pastor with love and trust for the sake of Christ will never allow him to leave him even if it should cost him his own life, and this is most certainly true if he has received healing of his injuries, for he brings to mind him who said, 'Neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other creature can divide us from the love of Christ.' But should the soul not be attached and faithful to the pastor in this manner, then I question if such a person is dwelling here in vain, for he is bound to the pastor by a hypocritical and fake obedience." In truth, this excellent man was not deceived, for he has guided many, and led many to maturity and has brought them to Christ as pure sacrifices.

Let us be attentive and marvel at the wisdom of God which is contained in earthly bodies. For when I was present in the same monastery I was struck at the novices' trust and long-suffering, and at how they suffered censure and chastisement from the pastor with great strength, and even to outright ejection from the monastery. They tolerated all this not only from the pastor but also from those beneath him.

For my spiritual instruction I examined one of the brothers, Abbacyrus, who had dwelt in the monastery for fifteen years. I observed that practically everybody ill-treated him, and those who

were involved in ministering, threw him out of the dining hall almost every day for the brother was simply a little too talkative. And I asked him, "Brother Abbacyrus, why do I observe you being thrown out of the dining hall each day, and many times going to bed without dinner?" He answered, "Trust me, father, the fathers are examining me to see if I am truly monastic material. However, they are not doing so zealously. And understanding the excellent man's goal and their own, I keep all this to myself without feeling dejected, and I have done this for fifteen years. For at my arrival in the monastery they related to me how one who gives up the world must be tested for thirty years. And it is true, Father John, without testing, gold cannot be purified."

This courageous Abbacyrus dwelt in the monastery for two years after I arrived. Then he went on to the Lord. Before he died he said to the Fathers, "I am grateful to the Lord and you all. Because you have tested me for the benefit of my salvation. I have dwelt here for seventeen years with no temptations from the demons." The excellent pastor rewarded him and commanded that as a witness he be entombed with the regional saints.

It would be rather unjust of me, to all those eager for perfection, if I were to bury in a grave of silence the prize and glory of Macedonius, the foremost of the deacons there. He was so given to the Lord that just prior to the feast day of Holy Theophany, in truth, two days before it, he asked the pastor for a leave of absence to go to the city of Alexandria for his own private needs. He vowed to return as quickly as possible for the coming feast and to help prepare for it. But the devil, who despises all that is good, delayed the archdeacon, and though he had the permission of the abbot, he did not come back to the monastery for the holy festival at the appointed time. When he returned one day late, the superior stripped him of his diaconate and set him at the rank of a newest novices. However, that excellent deacon of long-suffering and patient endurance submitted to the abbot's order as peacefully as if it had been another who was being rebuked and not himself. And

after he had passed the forty days in that state, the wise shepherd again elevated him to his original position. But hardly a day had gone by before he begged the pastor to return him to his previous punishment and disgrace, saying, "I have committed a sin which is unpardonable in the city." However realizing that Macedonius was speaking a lie, he brought about a punishment only on account of humility. The saint consented to the good intention of the ascetic. Then what a spectacle to see! A dignified elder with his white hair passing his days as a lowly novice and truly begging each person to pray for him. "For", he stated, "I have fallen into the sexual sin of disobedience." But this excellent Macedonius in private related to me, low as I am, why it was he took such a humiliation of his own self-will. "Not at any time," he confided to me, "have I had a feeling of such alleviation from every trouble and such sweetness of Godly light as at that time. It is the characteristic of angels," he said, "not to fall, and for some even it is not possible for them even to fall at all. But it is the characteristic of men to fall, and then to get up again, as many times as this should happen. However, it is the characteristic of devils and them alone, never to get up once they have fallen."

A brother who was the treasurer of the monastery once told me, "When I was a youth and keeping watch over the cattle, I had a terrible spiritual fall. But since it had never been my practice to hide a snake in a hole in my heart, I grabbed it by the tail (by tail understand, the conclusion of the matter) and presented it to the doctor. With a jovial face he hit me moderately on the face and said to me, 'Away, my child, and persist in your labor as you did before, without having any fear.' And receiving this with a fiery faith, after some days, I obtained confidence as to my healing and steadfastly remained in my way with fear and gladness."

Each animal, some say, has its peculiarities which mark it out from others. In the same way among the brothers there were distinguishing marks in success and in character. For if the doctor observed that some of them enjoyed showing themselves in front of

the people of the world who were at the monastery visiting, then when in the company of the visitors he would give them awful rebukes and the most embarrassing work, so that they, at once, would make themselves scarce whenever visitors arrived. This ultimately was a victory, and would offer the most amazing spectacle: vainglory pursuing herself and fleeing from the company of people.

Since the Lord did not desire to leave me without the prayer of one of the holy fathers in the monastery, a week prior to my leaving He brought me a most excellent man by the name of Menas, who was second only to the abbot. He had spent fifty-nine years of his life in the community in various positions. When he had finished the normal rites, on the third day after the death of this holy man, quite suddenly the entire space in which the holy man lay was filled with a sweet fragrance. Then the excellent man permitted us to reveal the coffin where he lay, and after doing this we all beheld a fragrant myrrh which was pouring out as two fountains from his honorable feet. The instructor said to everyone, "Behold! The sweat of his labors and toils which pour forth as a myrrh acceptable to God."

The fathers of the monastery spoke of the many victories of this holy Menas, and among others the following was recalled: At one time the abbot desired to try his God-given endurance. At the appropriate time, in the evening, Menas went to the superior's cell, and after prostrating before him, he asked to give him the usual lesson. However, the abbot left him on the floor until the time of the hourly Office, and only at that point blessed him. And he reproved him for being desirous of attention-seeking and for being hasty. He then commanded that he get up. The holy man understood that Menas would take all this with courage, and so he made the spectacle for the instruction of everyone. A disciple of St. Menas verified all these things which were said to us by his teacher, and added, "I was seeking to learn if sleep overcame him while he was prostrate before the superior, but he affirmed that while on the floor he had gone through the whole Psalter from memory."

I should not neglect to decorate the crown of this step with this gem. At one time I started a conversation on the topic of silence with a group of the most skilled elders of the community. And with smiling faces and a joyful mood they told me in a pleasant way, "We, Father John, being carnal, live in a material world, preferring to wage our war according to the measure of our feebleness, and we understand it better to wrestle with men, who are at times wrathful and at other times humble, rather than with demons who are always furious and warring against us."

One of those, ever-to-be-remembered fathers who displayed a great love for me in God, quite candidly told me, "If, dear wise man, you have present in you the strength of the one who said, 'I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.' If the Holy Spirit has come upon you in a dew of purity, as it did with the Holy Virgin; if the might of the most High has over-shadowed you with long-suffering, then like the Son of God, gird your loins with the belt of obedience, and having arisen from the dinner of silence, wash the feet of the brothers with a spirit of remorse, or indeed roll under the feet of all those in the community in a spirit of self-deprecation. Place vigilant and strict guards at the gate of your heart. Keep in check your roaming mind in your distracted body. In the midst of movements of your members, exercise a mental quietness. And most strangely of all, in the middle of any distraction be immovable in your soul. Restrain your tongue which storms into debate. Seventy times seven a day struggle with this tyrant. Set your mind to your soul as to the wood of the cross which is struck as an anvil with blow after blow of the hammers, to be derided, reviled, insulted and ill treated, without in the least way being shattered or hurt. But maintain a peaceful calm and be unmovable. Leave off your own desires as clothing of shame, and having stripped it off enter the training ground. Arm yourself with the breastplate of faith which is rarely obtained. Do not be broken down or injured by mistrust in your spiritual director. Control the sense of touch that jumps forward unabashed by using the reins of self-control. Bridle your eyes,

which are eager to spend every hour gazing upon physical beauty, by contemplation of death. Muzzle your mind, which is over-concerned with private matters, and easily given to disparage your brother, by loving your neighbor. By this all men will know, dear father, that we are Christ's disciples, if when we live together we show love for one another. "Come," said this good friend, "come and abide with us and let the living water which you drink at all times be scorn. For David, when he had tasted of every pleasurable thing under heaven, finally stated in disbelief: Behold, what is so good, or what is so beautiful? Only that brothers should live together as one. But if we have not been given this virtue of obedience and long-suffering, then it is most appropriate for us, having realized our frailty to dwell separate from the athletic games and instead to glorify the contestants and pray that they may have patient endurance." The excellent reasoning of the most praiseworthy father and instructor won me over (he who reasoned with me in both an evangelic and prophetic way, and also as a friend). And without a pause I consented to praise holy obedience.

Now, having made note of another advantageous virtue of these holy fathers, which precedes from paradise, I will return to my useless bunch of briars. The shepherd realized that some members would hold conversation with each other when we were standing in prayer. Such ones he made stand for an entire week beside the church, and commanded that they do a prostration before each person that went in or out. What was even more remarkable was he enforced this even with clergy, including the priests.

I observed one of the brothers standing during the psalms singing with a sincerity more than the others, and that his motions and shifts of his face made him appear as though he were talking with somebody else, particularly at the start of the Psalms. So I asked him to elucidate me on what this manner of his meant.

Understanding that it was for my gain not to conceal it, he said to me, "I have the habit, father John, at the start to organize my thoughts, my mind and soul, and having collected them, I tell them:

'Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.'

Having watched the affairs of the brother supervising the dining hall, I noticed that he had at all times a small book in his belt. I came to learn that he penned his thoughts in it every day and revealed them to the pastor. I observed that not only he, but many of the brothers did the same. This I learned was at the command of the excellent pastor.

At one time one of the brothers was thrown out by the pastor on account of defaming his neighbor to him and deriding him as a gossip. For an entire week the one who was thrown out did not go from the gates of the monastery, entreating that he be allowed in and granted forgiveness. When that lover of lives found out about it, and that he had eaten nothing the entire time, he told him, "If you have the steadfast longing to dwell in the monastery, I will bring you down to the rank of a penitent." When the penitent accepted this with eagerness, the pastor commanded him to be removed to another monastery which is for those who grieve about their missteps. And this was done. But now seeing that we have spoken about this other monastery we will touch upon it for a short time.

A distance of one mile away from the great monastery there was a place which is called the prison. It lacks every luxury. There is no smoke, or wine or oil in the meals, and nothing was ever seen but bread and small vegetables only. It is here that the shepherd would imprison, with no allowance to be freed, the ones who had fallen into sin once they were in the brotherhood. All were not together, but instead each was in a isolated cell alone or perhaps at most as a pair. He left them there until he received confidence from the Lord of their repentance. He appointed a sub-prior over them called Isaac, who mandated to those given to him they that should be almost unceasing in prayer. To keep them from despair, there was there a large number of palm leaves. Such was the life and rule of

and the behavior of those who sincerely sought the face of the God of Jacob.

To respect the toils of these holy ones is good. To imitate them brings salvation. But to desire suddenly to take on their way of life in every detail is not possible or reasonable.

When remorse bites us let us recall our sins until the Lord, seeing the earnestness of our labors (the labors of those who do harm to themselves for the sake of Him), takes away our sins and changes the grief that is eating up our heart and turns it into joy. For it is written, "According to the multitudes of the sorrows of my heart, your compassion has made joyful my soul." At the proper time let us recall the one who said to the Lord, "How numerous the problems and wickedness, which you have revealed to me. And yet you return and renew me. From the depths of the earth when I had fallen, you again brought me up."

Blessed is the one who when reviled and rebuked each day, controls himself for the sake of the Lord. He will gather with the choir of martyrs and courageously speak with the angels. Blessed be the monk who examines himself each hour as being worthy of every dishonor and reviling. Blessed the one who puts to death his will until the end, and gives the concern of himself to his spiritual director. For he will be appointed to sit at the right hand of the Crucified one. The one that will not accept a rebuke, righteous or unrighteous gives up his salvation. But the one that concedes to it with labor, or without labor, will in a short time receive forgiveness of his sins.

Display to God in spirit your faith in your superior and your true love for him. And God in ways unknown will suggest to him that he should be joined to you and have concern for you, just as you care for him.

The one who reveals each snake shows that he has sincere faith. But the one that hides them will roam in trackless wastelands.

A man will realize his love for his brothers and his sincere generosity when he observes that he grieves for the sins of his brother, and has joy over his progress and virtues.

The one whose will in conversation is to set up his own opinion, even if what he says is true, should realize that he is cursed with the devil's illness. And if his behavior is only like this when in conversation with his equals, a reprimand from his superiors may cure him. But if he does this even when those who are more excellent and wiser than he are present, then his sickness is without cure.

The one who does not yield himself when talking, obviously will not do so either in action. For the one who is not faithful in small things will not be faithful in many things either, for he is truly obstinate. This one toils for nothing, and will obtain nothing from obedience, but his own destruction.

If someone has a pure conscience in the point of obedience with his superior, then he daily waits for death as if it were sleep, or indeed life. And he is not depressed, understanding that when the time of his departure draws near not he, but his spiritual director, will be judged.

If someone obtains, voluntarily, some chore from his father, and in accomplishing it suffers a fall, he should not blame the giver of the chore, but instead the one receiving the weapon. For he received the weapon in order to do battle with the enemy and instead used it on his own heart. But if it be that he compel himself for the sake of the Lord to take on the task, although formerly he related his weakness to the one who granted it, he should take courage. For even though he stumbled, he did not die.

I have been neglectful to put before you, my friends, this, a sweet bread of virtue: I observed there men obedient to the Lord who constrained themselves to endure insults and disgrace for the sake

of God, so that, having instructed themselves in this manner, they became accustomed to being hurt by the rebukes that others gave.

By being resolved to make a confession, the soul is then held back from sinning as by a bit. For the things we do not confess, we do without fear as in if in darkness.

When the superior is not present, if we imagine that he is in our presence, and ever standing beside us, then we will evade every encounter, or word, or conversation, or food, or sleep, or anything else that we suppose he would not want us doing, then we have learned genuine obedience. Fleshly born children are glad when their instructor is absent, but true ones perceive it as a loss.

I once inquired from one of the most-skilled fathers and entreated him to relate to me how humbleness is acquired through obedience. He stated, "The one who is obedient is the one who has discernment. Even were he to raise the dead and obtain the virtue of tears and freedom from dispute, he will still suppose that it happened through the prayers of his director. In this way he stays foreign to empty conjecture. For how is it possible that he could take pride in what he has accomplished if he tells himself that it is by the aid of his spiritual father and not his own labor?"

The work of the above virtues is not known to the one who is a solitary. For his efforts will produce pride and they carry the implication that his deeds are from his own labors.

The one who remains in obedience has escaped from two traps and continues in the future as Christ's obedient servant.

The devil makes war with those under obedience. At times to pollute them with fleshly defilements and to make them hard of heart. At other times to goad them into restlessness. At still other times he produces in them barrenness, slothfulness in prayer and a sleepy, confused spiritual state of darkness so as to pull them from their contest by leading them to believe they have achieved nothing through their obedience but instead are moving backward. For he

does not give them time to think about the truth, that the absence of our imagined goods or blessings brings us to a deep humble state.

Still, some have repulsed that deceiver by long-suffering. And when he is still talking, another angel stands beside us and after a short time tries to trick us in a different way.

I have observed some dwelling in obedience, who at the instruction of their father, were filled with remorse, humility, self-control, zeal and freedom from arguments. However, demons came to them and planted the thoughts that they were now ready for the solitary life. And in the solitary life they would come to be free from passions as their last accomplishment. When tricked, they departed from the harbor and left for the sea. However, when a storm came upon them they were horribly exposed to the hazards of the vile and loathsome sea without the aid of a navigator.

This sea is certain to be aroused and agitated, so that it throw out onto the dry land the wood, dry grass, and all the pollution that was poured onto it from the streams of the passions. Let us take heed from nature, for we learn that after the storm comes a profound peace.

The one who at times is obedient to his father and other times disobedient is like one who sometimes puts cream on his eyes and other times lime. For it has been said, "If one builds and another tears down, what is the benefit of the toil?"

Do not be misled, son and obedient servant of the Lord, with the spirit of pride, so that you confess your sins to your superior as if they belonged to someone else. It is not possible for you to escape embarrassment except through embarrassment. Frequently the manner of demons is to convict us that either we should not confess, or to confess as if it is someone else's sins, or to put the blame of the sins on others. Strip bare your injury to the doctor and with no shame say, "This is my own wound, Father, it is my disease, which I have brought about through my laxness, and not

by others. No one can take the blame for this: no man, spirit, body, or anything else, save my own slackness.

During confession your manner should be that of a condemned criminal both with your external appearance and inside your mind. Have your eyes fixed upon the ground, and if you can, with your tears, wet the feet of your judge and doctor as if they were the feet of Christ.

If all things rely on routine, and follow it, then all the more do virtues rely on routine, for God is their great partner.

Son, you will not toil as many years seeking for blessed inner peace, if at the start you give yourself over completely to insults.

Never think that is incorrect to state your confession to your director, in prostration, as before God. I have observed convicted criminals, by their remorseful countenance and strong confession and appeal, soften the harshness of the judge changing his wrath to pity. This is the reason why John the Baptist had confession as a prerequisite to baptism for those who approached him. Not that he had need of knowing their sins, but for the benefit of their salvation.

Let us not be amazed if we are still assaulted following our confession, for is it more desirable to wrestle with ill-thoughts than with pride.

Do not be overly enthusiastic and carried away when you hear the stories of the solitary hermit fathers, for you are part of the army of the First Martyr. If you do fall, do not abandon the training ground, for all the more we need a doctor. The one whose foot strikes a stone if he did not have help would not only have fallen but would have died.

When we are low, the demons rapidly assault us, and taking advantage of a reasonable or unreasonable excuse, they counsel us to take on the life of a hermit. The enemy's goal is to strike blows when we sin.

If a doctor argues he is not competent, then you must go to another, since there are few who are made whole without a physician. Who would argue the point that any ship which is shipwrecked with a skilled navigator would not be completely destroyed if it altogether lacked a navigator.

Humility produces obedience, and dispassion comes from humility, for the Lord recalls us when we are in our lowliness and he redeems us from the hands of our enemies. Nothing stands in the way of saying that dispassion comes from obedience. In this way our aim of humility is achieved. For the start of dispassion is humility. Just as Moses is the start of the Law, and the mother is perfected by the daughter, and the Synagogue is perfected by Mary.

Those ill souls, who for a time, rely on a doctor, and obtain benefit from him, but then leave him for another before they are made whole, merit every chastisement from God. Do not turn away from the hand of the one who has led you to the Lord, for you will not in your life regard anyone as you do him.

It is truly hazardous for a soldier that lacks experience to abandon his troop and undertake a lone attack. So also it is not without danger for a monk to try to be a hermit before he has gained skill and practice in the battle with animal lusts. The one brings peril to his body and the other danger to his soul. Two are better than one, Scripture tells us. "It is better that a son be with his father, and battle with his bonds with the heavenly aid of the Holy Spirit." The one who takes the leader away from a blind man, the shepherd from the flock, the guide from a lost man, a father from his son, a physician from his patient, a navigator from his ship, puts all in danger. The one who tries, without help, to fight with the spiritual beings is destroyed by them.

Those who go to a hospital let them first show their pains, and so those who go to obedience let them show their humility. For the first, the primary sign of their well-being is the ease of their pains,

and for the second an increasing condemnation of oneself. There is no indication so accurate.

It is enough that your conscience be a mirror of your obedience.

Those in the solitary life under a father, have only demons set against them. But those who live in a community must strive with humans and demons. The first group is under the eyes of their superior and keeps his instructions carefully. The second group, because of his absence, to some extent break them. But those who are cautious and labor, are able to make up for this shortcoming by dealing with the conflicts and so win two crowns.

Let us keep watch diligently over ourselves. For in a harbor full of boats it is easy for them to knock against each other, especially if although unseen, they are full of anger as if with a worm.

Let us exercises profound silence and lack of knowledge in the presence of the director. For a quiet man is the son of wisdom, forever taking in knowledge.

I have observed a devout person who would take words from the lips of his director, and I despaired that he would ever be obedient when I observed that it led him to conceit and not to meekness.

Let us be vigilant and awake, being concerned with how and when active duty should be favored over prayer. Because one cannot do everything at every moment.

Take heed to yourself when in the company of your brothers, and do not make it look like you are more correct than they are in any situation. For when you do this you will have committed two wrongs: you will hurt them by your incorrect and deceitful zeal, and you will give yourself a reason for arrogance.

Have zeal in your soul without displaying any of it externally, either by an outward sign or by hinting at it in your speech. This will only occur when you cease from looking down at your neighbor. But if

you are given to doing this, become like your brothers so that you do not differ from them only in your haughtiness.

I observed an unskilled disciple, who when he was with a group of people boasted of his teacher's labors, supposing that he would win himself honor with another's harvest. However, he only received dishonor because everyone would ask him, "How is it that a naked, dry branch could sprout forth from a good tree?"

Not when we have bravely suffered the rebukes of our father are we judged to be long-suffering, but when we suffer it from all types of men. For we endure it from our father out of respect and as a duty.

With earnestness drink rebuke and reviling from all that offer it, as if it were the water of life, for it cleanses the passions. Then a profound purity will rise as the sun in your soul, and the holy light will never become dim in your heart.

If someone observes that the brothers are placated by his labors he should not be arrogant in his heart because of this, because robbers are everywhere. Keep in mind always the one who said: When you have done all that is ordered of you say, "We are useless servants. We have only done what we were obligated to do." The final judgment of our toils will only be known at the time of our death.

A monastery is heaven on earth. Let us therefore set our hearts on being like heavenly bodies ministering to the Lord. At times those who dwell in this heaven have hearts of stone. But at other times, through remorse they achieve solace, in such a manner that they keep away from arrogance or pride and they take away the weight of their toils with tears.

A small amount of heat will soften a large lump of wax. Likewise a small amount of dignity can soften, sweeten, and clear away quite suddenly all the wrath, rudeness, and uncivilized hardness of our heart.

Once I observed two men sitting in secret looking at the toils, and listening to the moaning of the ascetics. One was doing this so that he could imitate them, the other so that when the time came, he could ridicule and obstruct God's workers in their excellent toil.

Be not so irrationally quiet as to irritate and aggravate others. And be not slow in your walk and deeds when you are commanded to be quick. For if so, you will be worse than those who are possessed and revolting. Many times I have observed, as Job states, souls that are slow of character, and at times from zeal. I was astonished at the variety of wickedness.

The one who is not a solitary, but is present with company cannot obtain so much benefit from psalmody as from being in prayer. For the multitude of voices makes the psalms indistinguishable.

Always be struggling with your mind. When it roams about, summon it to return to you. God does not necessarily require from those who are still under the obedience, that their prayer be altogether free from distractions. Be not depressed when your thoughts are taken from you, but stay at peace and constantly bring back your mind. Unceasing remembrance is fitting only for angels.

The one who has, in private, made an oath to never give up from striving until his death and to suffer a thousand deaths of both body and soul, can not easily stumble with faults. For the fickleness of the heart and the disloyalty to one's dwelling will forever cause falls and trouble. Those who with ease travel from place to place are total failures for nothing is so fruitless as a lack of patience.

If you chance upon an unknown doctor and hospital, simply act as if you were passing through, and privately test the life and spiritual skill of those that are abiding there. And at the point you start to sense you are benefiting from the physicians and nurses and your illness becomes better, most especially with your particular illness, that is spiritual arrogance, then approach them and purchase them with the silver of humility. And write up a receipt on the paper of

obedience with the letters of good works with the angels bearing witness. Pull apart and destroy the paper of your will in their presence. By journeying from place to place you will get into the habit of ruining the price with which Christ redeemed you. May the monastery be your grave before the grave. For no one will leave the tombs until the full resurrection. And some pious souls have departed from the graveyard; look, they are dead. Let us entreat the Lord that this may not occur with us.

At the point the senses find their instructions to be burdensome, the lazier come to the conclusion that they would rather spend time in prayer. However, when they are commanded to do something which is easy they flee from prayer as if from fire.

Some work at a certain duty, but to calm the mind of a brother, at his petition they abandon it. Others abandon their work because of laziness. Others stick with their work because of egotism, but others because of zeal.

If you have kept yourself through your requirements and observe that the eye of your soul is making no advancement, do not take an opportunity to leave. The true are true in all places, and the opposite is also correct. In the world slander has resulted in many divisions, but in communities avarice engenders every stumble and refusal. If you are master over your mistress (the stomach), every place you dwell will provide you dispassion, but if she subjugates you then outside of the grave you will be in peril everywhere.

The Lord, who made the wise blind, opens the eyes of those who are obedient to having virtue as their guide, and he blinds them to their faults. However, the one that hates good does the reverse.

Let us discover, in so called quicksilver, the image of mature obedience. For no matter what material we roll it, it moves to the lowest point, and will not mix with corruption.

Let those who are eager, take heed to themselves, lest by denouncing reckless they themselves bring about a worse

condemnation. I believe Lot was just because he lived among such people, but he never seemed to have judged them.

Let us always, and most especially when singing in the church, be silent and focused. Because by distractions the demons try to make our prayers have no effect.

The true servant of the Lord is the one who in body is standing before men, but in his mind is knocking at heaven with his prayer.

Affronts, embarrassments and other such things are like bitter wormwood to the soul of a novice, while praise, glory and admiration are like honey and bring forth all kinds of sweetness to the lover of pleasure. But let us observe the character of each: wormwood cleanses the dirty interior, but gall is increased with honey.

Let us rely with a strong confidence on those who have taken up the task of caring for us in the Lord, even if they seem to command something which goes against our salvation. For it is at that point, our faith in them is tested, as in a hot oven of disgrace. For it is a sign of the most sincere trust if we are obedient to our directors without any hesitation, even when we observe the opposite of what we desire to occur.

Humility comes from obedience, as we stated before. Discernment comes from meekness as the great Cassian has stated with excellent and splendid reasoning in his chapter on discernment. Understanding comes from discernment, and from understanding comes foreknowledge. And who would not go after this good path of obedience, noting that great blessings are prepared for him? For it was of this excellent virtue of obedience that the Psalmist spoke of when he said, "You have in your goodness prepared for the poor, an obedient soul O God. Your presence is in his heart."

Over the course of your life remember that excellent contender who for a full eighteen years never listened with his external ears to his director telling him, "You might be saved." Instead he heard from

the Lord not the words, "You might be saved, " (which is uncertain) but, "You are saved".

Those who live in obedience, when they realize the haughtiness and extravagance of the director, seek his permission to go after their own will. But let them realize that when they receive this they deprive themselves of a martyr's crown. For obedience is a complete stranger to hypocrisy and doing one's desires.

There was a man who received a command, but realizing the intention of the one who asked it, that is, the doing of the command would not give him pleasure, asked to be released from it. Another observed this as well but obeyed with delay. The question is: of the two, which acted more righteously?

That the devil should act against his own desires is not possible. Those who live an easy life abiding in a place alone or a community, will convince you of this fact. Let the desire to leave our place be evidence for us that our mode of life is well-pleasing to God. For being fought against is a sure sign that we are in a war.

I cannot keep quiet about a matter which is not good to leave in silence for fear that I should unfairly keep to myself that which should be made manifest. The well-known John the Sabbaite mentioned to me things worthy of hearing. That he was free from all untruth of speech and actions of wickedness, as you know from your own dealings, holy father. This man said to me, "In my monastery in Asia (for this is the place where the excellent man was from) there was a elder who was reckless and lacked discipline. I speak of this, not to condemn the man, but only to give the truth. He received, I am not sure how, a young disciple by the name of Acacius, who was simple but circumspect in mind. He tolerated such abuse from the elder as would seem amazing to many people. For each day the elder ill-treated him with rebukes, insults, and even blows. However his long-suffering was not simply meaningless suffering. I observed him each day in his terrible state as if he were the most abased slave. I would inquire of him, "What

is the trouble, Brother Acacius? How are you today?" He would immediately show me a black eye, or a wound on his neck or head. And understanding that he was a laborer, I would tell him, "Well done, well done: suffer it and it will be for your benefit." After nine years under the merciless elder, he left to go to the Lord. After five days had passed from the time of his burial in the cemetery with the fathers, Acacius's elder went to an elder living there and told him, "Father, Brother Acacius is dead." When the elder heard this he replied, "Trust me elder, I do not believe this." The other said, "Come and see." The elder immediately got up and came to the cemetery with the elder of the blessed ascetic. Then he spoke to him, as if to a living person who is merely asleep and said, "Brother Acacius are you dead?" The practitioner of excellent obedience, displayed his obedience even in death and replied to the excellent elder, "How can it be, Father, for one who keeps obedience to die?" Then the elder of Acacius became horrified and, in tears, fell upon his face. After this he asked the abbot of the Lavra if he could have a cell near the tomb. He lived there piously, forever telling the fathers, "I am a murderer." I suppose, Father John, that the one who conversed with the dead man was indeed the great John himself. Because that blessed one related another story to me as if it concerned someone else, but it was in truth about him, as I was later to learn.

"There was another one," said John, "in Asia, in the same monastery who also became a disciple of a monk that was humble, meek and quiet. And observing that the elder honored and had concern for him, he correctly judged that this would be lethal for most men, and he entreated the elder to have him depart. (Since the elder had an additional disciple, this would not be much of a problem for him.) And thus he left and with a letter from his superior he came to dwell in Pontus in a cenobitic monastery. When he entered this monastery, on the first night he had a dream in which he saw his reckoning being totted up by somebody. And after finishing the account he was left with a debt of one hundred pounds

of gold. After he awoke he pondered on what he had been shown to him in the dream and said: 'Oh Antiochus' (this was his name), 'you are sure to come short of your debt!' 'And when I had lived for three years in this monastery in complete obedience, I was held in contempt by all and was rebuked as an alien (for there was no foreign monk there), then another time I saw in a dream a person giving me a credit-note for the remittance of ten pounds of my debt. And arising from the dream I pondered concerning the matter and said: 'Only ten! How will I pay the remainder?' Following this I said to myself: 'Woe to Antiochus! There is more labor and neglect for you.' From that moment I started to feign being foolish, yet still not neglecting to minister to everyone. However, when the pitiless fathers observed that I readily ministered in the same state, they gave me all the hardest work of the monastery. In such a manner I toiled for thirteen years. Then in a dream I saw the ones who had appeared to me previously and they provided me with a bill for remitting the full total of the debt. Thus when the brothers of the monastery constrained me for anything, I brought to mind my debt and suffered it bravely. So now you understand father John." That wise John related all this to me as if it were about somebody else, which was why he used the name Antiochus, but in reality it was a story about himself who so bravely removed the handwriting by his endurance and obedience.

Let us understand the virtue of discernment which this holy man acquired from his complete obedience. When he was dwelling in St. Sabba's monastery three young monks came to him desiring to be his disciples. He happily took them in and immediately was warmly hospitable to them, desiring to refresh them after their long journey. When three days had gone by, the elder told them, "By my very nature, brothers, I am given to fornication, and I will not be able to take any of you." However, they were not offended, for they knew the excellent work of the elder. Still no matter how much they asked him, they were not able to persuade him. Then they fell at his feet and entreated him to at least give them a rule (how and where they

should live). He gave in to their appeals, understanding that they would receive it with humbleness and obedience. The elder told one, "The Lord desires you, dear child to live in a solitary place under obedience to a father." And to the next he said, "Go and sell your will to God, then take up your cross and labor in a cenobitic monastery and you will surely have treasure in heaven." Lastly to the third he said, "Draw in with your breath the word of the one who said, "He who endures to the end will be saved." Go, and if it is possible choose as your mentor, in the Lord, one who is a most exacting and demanding man. And, in perseverance, every day drink down reviling and derision as if milk and honey." Then the brother told the splendid John, "Father what if the mentor lives a careless life?" The elder answered, "Even if you were to see him engaging in fornication, do not abandon him but tell yourself, "Friend, why are you present here?" Then you will observe that all arrogance and lust will disappear and dry up.

Let all of us, who desire to fear the Lord, battle with all our strength, so that in the university of virtue we will not obtain for ourselves animosity and depravity, cunning and guile, curiosity and wrath. For these things do occur, and no wonder! For so long as man is a private person, or a sailor, or a farmer of the ground, the King's enemies will battle against them. However, when the enemies observe him using the King's colors and the shield, knife, sword, and bow and clothed in the soldiers armor, then they grind their teeth at him, and do all they can to bring him to ruin. So let us be vigilant.

I have observed pure and beautiful children attend school for the purpose of wisdom, instruction and benefit, but through spending time with the other students they learn only guile and depravity. The wise will comprehend this.

It is not possible for those who eagerly learn a skill not to make daily progress. Some see their advancement while others, by God's will, remain ignorant of it. A skilled banker never neglects to take

account of the day's profit or loss in the evening. But he is not able to see it clearly unless he adds it to his book every hour. For the hourly reckoning clarifies the daily tally.

When a fool-hearted person is blamed or yelled at, he is injured and tries to oppose it, or immediately he makes an apology to the one accusing him. This is not on account of meekness, but to stop the charges. When you are being mocked, be quiet and take, with long-suffering, these spiritual cleansing flames. When the doctor has concluded then ask his pardon. For at the point he is angry it may be that he will not accept your apology.

When battling with the passions, let those who dwell in communities toil every hour, most particularly against greed from the stomach and irritability. In a community there is much food for these passions.

The devil advises those in obedience that they should undertake impossible virtues. While, for those in solitude he gives unreasonable notions. Look into the mind of an unskilled novice and you will discover distracted thoughts, and a longing for quiet, for the most strict fast, for unceasing prayer, for complete freedom from vainglory, for continual remembrance of death, for unceasing compunction, for complete freedom from anger, for profound silence, for complete innocence. And if by God's will they lack these things to begin with, they hasten worthlessly to a different mode of life and are tricked. For the enemy encourages them to pursue these excellences prematurely, in order that they may not endure and achieve them in their time. But to those abiding in solitude the deceiver encourages hospitality, works of mercy, brotherly love, life in a community, and visiting those who are ill. The devil's goal is to have the latter be as agitated as the former.

There are but a few (and this is true) who are able to live in solitude. It is only those who have achieved godly comfort as support for their toils and divine help for their labors.

Let us be judges of the character of our passion and of our obedience, and let us select our spiritual father in such a manner. For if you are given to lust, then do not choose as your instructor one who works miracles and is prepared to welcome everyone with a meal. Instead choose an ascetic who will not accept any comfort in food. If you are prideful, then make sure he is harsh and inflexible, and not timid and caring. Let us not go after those who are gifted with foresight, but instead the ones who are completely meek and whose character and dwelling place conforms to our illness.

Let us follow the example of the previous discussed righteous Abbcyrus, taking his excellent custom which is so helpful for obedience: the continual thought that your director is testing you. With this truly you will never sin. However, if your superior regularly criticizes you, and with it you gain great faith and a love for him, understand that the Holy Spirit is invisibly dwelling in your soul and the power of the most High has overshadowed you.

Never boast or rejoice at the rebukes and insults you endure. Instead be grieved that you committed something worthy of your ill-treatment and that you have angered your director's soul against you. Do not be startled by the following words, because I have Moses to back me up: it is better to sin against God than to sin against our father. Because if we anger God, our instructor can intercede for us. However, if he is angry with us then there is no one to intercede. However, really either case seems the same to me.

Let us examine things closely, and base our decision, staying alert, as to when we should suffer in silence and with thankfulness the charges made against our director, and at what point we should comfort him. I suppose that in every case when insult is made we should be quiet. Because this is our time to gain profit. However, in those instances where there is another person, we should make a plea to keep the bond of love and harmony intact.

The ones who have fled from obedience will relate to you its worth. Because it was only at that point that they understood they had been living in heaven.

The one who fleeing to dispassion and God, sees as a tremendous loss any day he is not insulted. For just as trees which are pushed by the winds sink their roots deep into the earth, so also those who dwell in obedience get stronger and more firmly establish their souls.

The one who has come to understand his weakness by dwelling in solitude, and then moved his place and put himself under obedience has, without toil, regained his sight and seen Christ.

Keep striving brother athletes. I say again, continue running as you hear wisdom calling out to you: Just as gold in the oven, or indeed, in a community, the Lord has tested them, and as a burnt offering He has taken them in His bosom. To Him is the glory and endless dominion, with the eternal Father and the Holy and loving Spirit. Amen.

The number of Evangelists is equal in number to this step. Let the contestant keep running without fear.

Step 5 - On Painful and Genuine Repentance Which is the Life of Godly Convicts, and Concerning the Prison

Just as John outran Peter, so now obedience comes before repentance. For the one who arrived first is a sign of obedience, and the other of repentance.

Repentance is a renewing baptism. Repentance is a covenant with God for another life. A penitent is one who purchases humbleness. Repentance is a lack of trust toward comforts of the body. Repentance is a condemning of oneself upon reflection and a lack of care of oneself. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the giving up of despondency. A penitent is a convict that is not dishonored. Repentance is a reconciliation with the Lord by the exercise of good works against sin. Repentance is the cleansing of the conscience. Repentance is the willful suffering of all injuries. One who is repentant inflicts his own punishments. Repentance is an ill-treatment of the stomach and a compulsion of the soul into strict awareness.

Collect together and draw near, all those who have upset God. Gather and hear what I tell. Gather and observe what he has made manifest to my soul for your instruction. Let us give the first and most honorable place to the tale of the workers that were both dishonored and also honored. Let each of us who have endured an unforeseen and dishonorable fall pay attention and act. Arise and be seated, you, the one who, because of your falls is lying prostrate. Give heed, my brothers, to my words. Incline your ears, you who desire to make things right with God by a genuine conversion.

Infirm as I am, I have heard of a strong and rather odd way of living in meekness for those who live in a separate monastery which is known as "The Prison." This facility was under the stewardship of the previously mentioned man, that light of lights. When I was visiting I requested the great man to permit me to see it. And that

excellent man, not desiring to pain a soul in any form, conceded to my petition.

On arriving at this place of penitents, the dwelling of grievers, I observed (if I am not too forward to say) that which the eyes of most carefree people have never seen, and what the ear of lazy, amenable people has never heard, and what has not come to mind of the meek. It was to see such actions and to hear such speech as would lend God to pity, such deeds and motions as would readily bring His love for mankind.

I observed those guilty, yet innocent men, in the open air, standing all throughout the night until morning and not once moving their feet. And only by the compulsion of nature did they daze to sleep but they did not yield to rest. Instead they rebuked themselves and pushed away sleep with reproach.

There were others who raised their eyes to heaven, and with weeping and cries, prayed to obtain a measure of aid from there.

Still others were standing in prayer with their hands tied back behind them like prisoners, their faces in a dark shadow of sorrow, cast down toward the earth. They counted themselves not worthy to even gaze up into heaven, because they were so overtaken by the shame of their thoughts, and conscience. There was nothing they could find to either speak or pray to God about, how or in what way to start their prayers. Instead as if full of darkness and a complete despondency, they presented to God nothing but a soul without words and a mind devoid of voice.

Still others were sitting on the bare earth in sackcloth and ashes, covering their faces by putting their head between their knees, and hitting the ground with their foreheads.

There were others who regularly hit their chests, thinking of their former life and the status of their soul. There were some who moistened the earth with their tears. And there were others, who, not being able to bring forth tears, hit themselves. With loud voices

many grieved over their souls as if grieving over the dead, no longer with the strength to endure the distress of their heart. Others moaned within, but suppressed all sound of their mourning. Some could no longer endure it and would simply cry out.

I observed others who from their manner and thoughts seemed to be mad. In their inconsolable state they were like dumb men in total darkness; they were indifferent to life itself. Their minds had already fallen to deep depths of humility and they had burned the very tears of their eyes with the fire of despair.

There were others who sat pondering, with their gaze fixed upon the earth, shaking their hands endlessly, and crying out like lions from the very depth of their heart to their teeth. Some were praying with the desire of being granted forgiveness. Others from complete humility denounced themselves of not being worthy of pardon, and would call out that it was not within their ability to make themselves right before God. Some entreated the Lord that He would punish them here so they would obtain mercy in the next world. Still others, overcome by the burden of their conscience would say with all genuineness, "Save us from the future wrath, even though we are not deserving of the Kingdom, and this will be enough for us."

I observed there meek and remorseful souls in despair overcome by their burden. Their cries to God would have moved the stones themselves to pity. Looking down to the earth they would say, "We understand, that in all righteousness we deserve every possible torment. For how are we capable of making things right given the magnitude of our debts, even if we were to call upon the entire world to cry out for us? But this prayer is our only entreaty, this petition that He may not rebuke us in his anger, or chastise us in His wrath. Punish us, but spare us! For it is enough if you save us from Your great judgment, from the unseen and unknown punishments. For we are not bold enough to pray for full forgiveness - how could we? We have not kept our oath but have polluted it, even beyond your tender compassion and forgiveness.

And it is there, my friends, that the words of David are fulfilled, being clearly seen. For it is there, where men suffered hardship, and were bowed over to the very conclusion of their life. They went about with gloomy faces all day, and the injuries on their body reeked from rotting, and yet they spent no effort caring for their wounds. They would forget to eat their bread, and their water for drinking was mixed with their tears. They would consume ashes and dust with their bread, and their bones held to their flesh, dried up like stubble. You could hear them saying nothing but, "Woe, woe! Alas, alas! It is fitting, it is fitting! Spare us, spare us Lord." Some of them were repeating, "Have mercy," while others simply stated, "Pardon us, Lord; forgive us, if it is possible."

One could look and see how their tongues were dry and hung from their mouths as a dog. Others punished themselves in the heat of sun, while others chastised themselves in the cold. There were some who tasted only a little water so as not to perish of thirst, and then stopped drinking. There were others who, having tasted a small portion of bread, discarded the remainder, and claimed that they were not worthy enough to receive food like normal human beings, since their behavior had been like that of a beast.

Where would you look and see any laughing, or idle chatter, or annoyance, or wrath? That these things existed among men was unknown to them, for their sorrow had wiped out anger. Where was arguing among them, or vanity, or ostentatious speaking, or care for the body, or levity, or concern, or pondering over wine or eating fruit, or the joy of cooked food, or entertaining their palate? Even the expectation of such things had been removed from among them in the present time. Where among them was the concern for worldly things, or judging others? Nowhere.

Among such were the endless groans and cries to the Lord. Some, hit themselves forcefully on the chest, proclaiming to God, as if standing before the heavenly gates, "O Judge, open to us, open! We have barred ourselves from entering by our sins. Open to us!"

Still others would say, "Show us but the light of Your face, and we will be saved." Or: "Provide light to the meek sitting in the darkness and shadow of death." Or: "Let Your mercies hasten to forestall us, Lord, for we have been destroyed, we are in sorrow, for we have fallen away completely." Others would state, "Will it be that the Lord will ever show us again the brightness of his countenance?" Or, "Can our souls get over this unimaginable debt?" Or, "Can He be moved to mercy on our account? Will we ever again hear Him tell us, who are in eternal bonds, 'Go forth', and to those of us perishing in the Gehenna of repentance, 'You are forgiven?' Will our cry come to the ears of the Lord?"

They used to all sit with the view of death ever before them saying, "How will it go with us? What will be our punishment? What will the end of us be? Will there be a reprieve for what we have done? Will forgiveness be given for those in the shadow of darkness, the meek, the convicted? Is our prayer strong enough to come into the presence of the Lord, and how much grace would it achieve there? What gain would it bring about? What ability would it have, since it comes from our vile lips? Perhaps it would not have any force. And so would it be able to fully reconcile us with the Judge or only in part - or only perhaps to half of our wounds? Really our wounds are too great, and call for much toil and sweat. Do our guardian angels draw near to us or are they still far off? Until they draw near to us all our efforts are in vain. For our prayer does not have the force or the wings of innocence to ascend to the Lord unless our angels come close to us and receiving our prayer, bear it to the Lord."

Some of them would speak of their doubts to each other and say, "Are we achieving anything brothers? Will we gain our petitions? Will the Lord receive us again? Will He open to us?" To this others would answer, "Who knows? As our brothers the Ninevites stated: Will God repent and save us from this immense punishment? Regardless, let us perform our duty. If He opens the door, fine and good. But if He does not, blessed be the Lord God who in His righteousness has shut the door to us. But may we at least keep

enduring in knocking at the door until we reach our end. Maybe He will open it from our diligence and forwardness." Therefore they encouraged each other, saying, "Let us run, brothers, let us sprint. For we need to run, and to run hard, for we are far behind our holy group. Let us run hard, and let us not spare our vile flesh, but let us destroy it as it has destroyed us."

And this is exactly what those blessed ones were actually doing. From the large number of prostrations their knees had become wooden, their eyes dull and deeply sunk in their sockets. They had no hair at all. Their cheeks were scarred and scorched by the heat of their tears. Their faces were white and gaunt. In every way they resembled corpses. Their chests were lacerated with blows, and from their oft striking of their chest, they spat out blood. Where could one find any comfort of beds, or clean and starched clothing? Everything was dirty, ragged and full of lice. By contrast, what is the hardship of those that are possessed, or of those that weep for the dead, or of those who have been exiled, or those that are punished for murder? Their involuntary suffering and torture is nothing to be compared with the voluntary suffering seen here. I beseech you brothers do not think that this is a fabricated tale.

Many times they appealed to the excellent judge, by whom I mean the pastor, that angel among men, with petitions, entreating him to put shackles and irons on their hands and neck, and to bind their legs in stocks, and not to let them go free until the grave took them, or not even to have a grave.

For I will truly not conceal this great, deeply moving lowliness which I found among these blessed men, and their penitent love for God and true repentance. When one of these excellent dwellers in the land of repentance was near to departing to God, and was about to stand before the impartial judgment seat, then when he observed that his end was close, he would entreat the good abbot through his superior to make a solemn oath not to provide him with a human burial. Instead he would ask to have him tossed like an irrational

beast into the river or to be provided as food for wild animals. And often this was done, by that discerning light, who would command that a corpse be removed without psalmody or the proper honors.

Most awful and merciless was the spectacle of their final hour, when his fellow-debtors would learn that one of their company was at the point of preceding them by ending his race, they would collect around him while his mind was still alert and with thirst, tears, love, a comforting look and depressed voice, nodding their heads, they would entreat the man who was dying, saying to him, full of compassion: "How are you doing, brother and fellow criminal? What is it you will say? What is your hope? What are you expecting? Have you achieved what you were seeking with your toil? Is the door open to you, or are you still under the sentence? Have you achieved your aim or not yet? Have you obtained any assurance or is your end still uncertain? Have you achieved freedom, or is your mind in the fog of doubt? Have you come to any form of enlightenment within or is your heart still dark and full of shame? Have you heard an inner voice tell you, "Behold you are made well, or, Your sins are forgiven, or Your faith has made you whole?" Or did you hear, "Let sinners be delivered to hell," and, "Chain him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness," or, "Let the evil man be taken from you, for he will not see the glory of the Lord?" What then can you say brother? Tell us, we entreat you, that we have some notion of the state we will find ourselves in. For your end is already close, and you will not have another chance." To these questions the one dying would answer, "Blessed be God who has not cast aside my prayer, nor His compassion for me." Others said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not delivered us to be prey for their teeth." Still others would say sadly, "Will our souls be able to traverse the impassable water of the spirits in the air, not having full assurance, but observing what would happen in the reckoning of our debts. Still others more sorrowfully would reply, "Woe to the soul which has not held to its oath. At this time, and only at this time, it will learn what has been made ready for it."

When I had observed and listened to all of this from them, I almost became despondent myself, by observing my own disinterest and contrasting it with their agony. For what an abode this was of theirs, all in dark, reeking, foul and dirty. It was well called a prison and an abode of convicts. The mere appearance of the place was enough to instruct any about penitence and grief. But that which is difficult and intolerable for some is easy and satisfactory for those who have stumbled and fallen from virtue and spiritual goodness. Because the soul which has departed from its previous boldness, and has lost the hope of dispassion; that has ruined the purity of chastity; that has permitted its wealth of gifts to be plundered; that has become an alien to heavenly comfort; that has dismissed the commandments of the Lord; that has quenched the wonderful fire of tears; and is struck with sorrow and by remembering all this will embark on the aforementioned toils with all eagerness and will also piously resolve to kill himself with deeds of penance, if only there be but a simple spark of love or fear of God. Such indeed were these blessed men. For holding these things in mind, and knowing the great height of excellence from which they had fallen, they would say, "We remember in the old days, our fiery enthusiasm." Others would call up on God saying, "Where are Your old mercies, O Lord, which You revealed to our soul in Your truth? Remember the disgrace and the labors of Your servants." And others would say, "If only I could be restored to my past state, in the days when God guarded me, and when the light of His lamp shone upon the depth of my heart."

How they would bring to mind their previous achievements, and cry over them as if they were their children who had died, and they would state, "Where is the purity of my prayer? Where is its former boldness? Where are the pleasant tears rather than the bitter ones? Where is the hope of chastity and of being completely pure? Where is prospect of holy dispassion? Where is my trust in the pastor? Where is the good effect of the shepherd's prayer for us? All this has been destroyed, and has fallen away as if it never was."

Some actually prayed to be possessed by demons, others entreated the Lord that they might become epileptic. Others desired their eyes to be destroyed and to be a pitiful sight. Others wanted to be paralyzed, so that they might not suffer in the afterlife. And I, my companions, found so great a comfort in their anguish that I forgot myself, and was completely rapt in my mind.

After spending thirty days in the prison, as impatient as I am, I went back to the monastery and to the excellent pastor of souls. When he saw that I was very much altered and had not my old self, in his wisdom he perceived what this change meant. He said to me, "Well, Father John, did you observe the toils of those who are truly laboring at their toil?" I answered, "I saw them indeed, Father, and I was awestruck. I believe those fallen convicts are more blessed than the ones who have never fallen and are not lamenting over their condition. Because, as a consequence of their fall, they have resurrected themselves." "This is indeed true," he answered. And his truthful mouth told me this tale, "Roughly ten years ago I had a brother present here who was very eager and active. And so, when I observed that his spirit burned thus, I trembled on his behalf should the devil, out of spite, cause him to trip his foot upon a stone, as he hastened on the course of his life as often happens to those who move quickly. And this is exactly what occurred. Once, late in the evening, he came to me, showing me an open injury, desiring a bandage and asking for a cauterization. He was very frightened and when he saw the physician he did want to have too deep a cut made. He cast himself on the earth, embracing my feet, and moistening them with his many tears. He asked that I should shut him in the prison which you saw. 'It is not possible that I not be sent there,' he sobbed. At last, in a very rare thing for those who are ill, he entreated the physician to transform his gentle kindness into strictness, and with all speed he departed to the prison of penitents and became their fellow companion and toiler. The distress which comes from the love of God had pierced his heart as if by a sword. On the eighth day he departed to the Lord, stating that he should

not be given a burial. But still I brought him here, and entombed him with the fathers, as was his due, because after his time of servitude, on the eighth day he went free. But no one knows with certainty if he rose from my vile and miserable feet before he won over God's grace. And little wonder, for having obtained the faith of the harlot in the Gospel, he wet my humble feet with such confidence. For all things are possible to the one who has faith, said the Lord. I have observed defiled souls madly going on about physical love, but setting their experience of carnal love as a cause for repentance, they change that same love over to the Lord. And when they overcome their fear, they bring themselves avidly to the love of God. This is the reason why the Lord does not, when referring to the chaste harlot, say 'For she feared much', but instead, 'For she loved much.' For she could easily remove love through love."

I am very much aware, my excellent friends, that the toils which I have related will to many seem unbelievable, and will to some bring about depression. But to the hardy soul they will be a goad, and a flame of fire, and he will depart with zeal in his heart. The one who is not up for this will understand his sickness, and having taken on humbleness with self-rebuke, he will go after the former, and I know not if he will even surpass him. But the one who is negligent will not attend to my tales, for fear he become despondent and waste what little he has achieved, and thus become like the man of whom it was related, "From the one who lacks a generous spirit, even what little he has will be taken from him."

It is not possible for those of us who have fallen into the very depths of sin to ever be pulled from it, unless we dive to the depth of the humble state of the penitents.

The penitential humbleness of the remorseful is one thing. The self-accusation of the conscience of those who remain in a sinful state is yet another. The blessed riches of a humble nature, which those who are in a state of perfection achieve by the grace of God is still

another. Let us hasten to discover the words which detail the third type of humility, otherwise our labors will be empty. A sign of the second type is the ability to deal perfectly with dishonor. The former habit often terrorizes those who despise it, and it is no mystery. The details of the trials of God and our stumbles is clouded in a murkiness, and one cannot know which ones are the falls that result from neglect; and which come from the withdrawal of God's grace; and which come from God turning away his face from us. However, I was once told that in the case of a withdrawal of God's grace we receive a quick repugnance from them, for the one who saves us does not permit us to be held in bondage for long. And let those of us who stumble battle most of all with the demon of despair. For he is present with us when we pray, and he calls to mind our previous state of grace with God. And in doing thus he attempts to distract us from prayer.

Let it not be a surprise to you that stumble each day. Never give up, but hold your ground with courage. Most assuredly your guardian angel will give honor to your long-suffering. While an injury is still new and warm it is not hard to heal, but aged, ignored and festering ones are difficult to cure, and their treatment requires much care through cutting, bandaging and cauterization. And if ignored for too long they become incurable. However, with God all things are possible.

The demons tell us that God gives grace before we stumble, but after our fall He is intransigent.

After you stumble, do not believe the one who tells about your minor shortcomings: "If only you had not committed such a tremendous fault. However, this is nothing by comparison." Many times little gifts mollify the wrath of the Judge.

The one who sincerely keeps track of what he has done looks at each day in which he does not grieve, as a loss, regardless of what good he might have done.

Let the one who mourns not expect confidence at his death. Because the unknown is not established. Let me be spared through certainty, so that I might be renewed before I die uncertain. When the Spirit of the Lord is present, the chains are released. Where deep humility is the chains are released. But those who lack these two confidences, are indeed chained.

Only those dwelling in the world are foreign to these two confidences, and most particularly the first. However, with giving of charity, there are those who run the course so that when they depart they know what their profit has been.

The one who mourns for himself will not understand the sorrow or stumbling or rebukes of another. When a dog is bitten by a wild animal it becomes all the more wrathful against it and is given to ceaseless anger by the torment of the injury.

It is important to study with care if our conscience has stopped accusing us, not because of our purity, but instead because it is absorbed with evil. An indication of liberation from our stumbles is the ceaseless understanding of our obligations.

There is nothing which can equal or surpass the mercy of God. So then, the one who falls into depression really is committing suicide. A indication of sincere repentance is the admission that we merit all the toils, seen and unseen, which happen to us, even the larger ones. After Moses had seen God in the bush he went back to Egypt, which is the darkness and the brick-making of the Pharaoh, which is a symbol of the spiritual Pharaoh. However, he again returned to the bush and not just the bush, but back to the mountain. The one who has come to understand meditation will never be despondent about himself. Job became poor, but then he became twice as rich as before.

With cowardly and lazy people, the stumbles that happen after the first calling are difficult to deal with. They shatter the expectation of dispassion and urge us to look up at our rising from the depth of sin

as a condition of blessedness. See, look, for surely we will not go back by the same path that we wandered off. But instead by a different, shorter path.

I observed two men journeying to the Lord on the same path, at the same moment. One was older and had advanced further in labors, while the other was his disciple. But before long he overtook the elder, and arrived before him at the sepulcher of humility.

Let us all, and most particularly those that stumble, take heed in case we catch the same sickness of heart as the impious Origen. For this vile sickness, by using God's love for man as a pretext, is quickly received by those who love pleasure.

In my reflection, or indeed, in my repentance, a flame of prayer will be ignited which will consume matter. Let the pious convicts spoken of previously give you a rule, and an example of a life of repentance, and over the course of your life you will not require any book until Christ, the Son of God, and God, illuminates you in the resurrection of sincere repentance. Amen.

Now the fifth step has been reached by you, who are repenting. For by means of repentance you have cleansed the five senses, and through a willful submitting to punishment and retribution, you have eluded eternal punishment.

Step 6 - On the Remembrance of Death

Each word is preceded by a thought, and the remembrance of death and sins is preceded by mourning and crying. And so this matter arrives at its appropriate location in this chapter.

A daily death is the remembrance of death, and remembering our departure involves weeping and mourning each hour.

Fear of death is a basic instinct that is bred of disobedience, but horror at death is a sign of unrepentant sin. Christ has fear of death, but he does not display terror from it, so as to truly show the qualities of His two natures.

Just as bread is the most necessary of all foods, so also of all works the thought of death is the most essential. For those that live in the world the remembrance of death bears anguish and frivolousness and beyond these, depression. However, for those that are at liberty from all distractions it produces a freedom from concern and unceasing prayer and it keeps watch over thoughts. These same virtues both cause the remembrance of death and also are engendered by it.

Just as tin is different from silver, even though it appears to be similar, so for the one who is discerning there is an obvious distinction between a natural and supernatural fear of death.

A sure sign of those that carry death in their mind is the extent of their voluntary detachment from every beast, and the total renunciation of their desires.

The one who, without doubt, believes that death awaits daily is virtuous, but the one who, every hour, surrenders to it, truly is a saint.

Not every longing for death is good. Some, regularly sinning from habit, pray that they may die with some form of humility. And there are some, who, not wanting to repent, long for death out of

despondency. And others, from arrogance think they are dispassionate, and for a time do not fear death. And there are some, if they be found, who through the force of the Holy Spirit yearn for their departure.

Some ask: "Why, if the remembrance of death so salutary for us, has God kept us from knowing the time we will die?" This they ask not understanding that in this manner God magnificently achieves our salvation. Because no one who knew the hour of his death would hasten to baptism or the monastic life. Instead all would spend their time in sin, and only when the hour of their death drew near would they come to baptism and repentance. However, from the long acquired habit of vice we would be completely incurable.

When lamenting over your sins never accept that mongrel that suggests to you that God has a tender heart. This idea is only of value when you observe yourself falling into a profound despair. For the goal of the enemy is to push you out of your lamenting and fearless fear.

The one who desires to keep within himself the remembrance of death, judgment and God, yet also in the same moment surrenders himself to the cares and distractions of the world, is like a man who swims and yet desires to clap his hands.

A graphic remembrance of death trims down consumption of food. And when, through humility, food is reduced, the passions are reduced as well.

An indifferent heart blunts the mind, and a surfeit of food dries up the spring of tears. Being thirsty and keeping vigil vex the heart, and when the heart is vexed then the waters will flow. What we have spoken about will seem to be cruel to the gourmet and unbelievable to the lazy, but a zealous man will eagerly try them out, and the one who has discovered it through experience will smile. But the one who is still searching will become more despondent.

In the same way that the father has stated that perfect love does not know sin, so I state that a perfect awareness of death is freedom from fear.

There are many things to do for the alert mind. By this I mean, pondering on the love of God, on remembering God, on remembering the Kingdom, remembering the zeal of the holy martyrs, remembering the presence of God (as it was said, "I saw the Lord before me"), remembering the heavenly, spiritual powers, remembering one's death, judgment, chastisement and condemnation. We started with the grand, and have finished with the things that are unfailing.

A monk from Egypt once related to me, "When I had set the remembrance of death in my heart, whenever there came to be a need, and I desired to provide some comfort to the clay, this remembrance stopped me like a judge. And the fantastic thing was that, even though I desired to push it off, I was powerless to do so."

There was another who dwelt here in a place known as Thola, who many times went into ecstasy at the remembrance of death, and when the brothers would find him in this state they would lift him up and bear him away scarcely breathing, his manner being the same as one who had fainted or fallen into an epileptic fit.

I cannot keep quiet about tale of Hesychius the Horebite. He spent his life in total apathy, not giving the slightest heed to his soul. At one point he became quite sick and for an hour departed from his body. When he revived he entreated us to depart from him immediately. Then he barred the door to his cell, and he remained there for twelve years, never speaking a word to anybody, and eating nothing but bread and water. So caught up in the spirit was he that he never moved, meditating on what he had seen when in his ecstasy, as if he had left his mind, and he quietly wept hot tears. At the point he was close to his death, we broke down his door, and upon entering we asked him many questions, but the only thing he said was, "Forgive me! There is no one, who when he has attained

the remembrance of death, will sin any more." We were astonished to see that he, who had been so remiss before, so quickly transformed in a blessed way. We piously buried him in a grave near the fort and when a number of days had passed we returned to look for his relics, but we could not find them. And so the Lord showed to us, by his sincere and honorable repentance, that even after a long neglect He approves of those who want to amend their ways.

In the same way that many assert the abyss is without end, for they call it an infinite place, so also the remembrance of death brings purity and activity to incorruption. The previously discussed saint verifies the veracity of what has been stated. For such ones, unremittingly add fear to fear, and do not cease until the energy of their bones is finished.

Let us be assured that the thought of death like all other graces, is a gift from God, for how can it be that many times when we are close to the grave we are often without tears and hard, and yet often when we have no such scene before us we are full of remorse?

The one who has died to everything remembers death, but the one who is bound to the world unceasingly plots against himself.

Do not have a desire to reassure people with your speech about your love for them, but instead entreat God to display your love for them without a word. Otherwise there will not be sufficient time for both intimacies and remorse.

Let yourself not err, heedless laborer, as though one moment can make up for another. For a day is not enough to pay back the full debt which you owe to the Lord.

It is not possible, some say, to spend the day piously without regarding it as the last day of our life. And it is astonishing indeed how even the heathens have stated something similar, seeing that they define philosophy as the reflection on death.

This is the sixth step. The one who has overcome it will sin no more. Remember your end and you will never sin.

Step 7 - On Lamentation Which Brings About Joy

Lamentation, according to God, is sorrow of the soul, and the manner of a grieving heart, which is always fervently looking for that which it thirsts after. Then when it fails in its journey, it painfully goes after it, and pursues its trail mourning terribly. Indeed, lamentation is a golden goad in a soul which stripped of all bonds and chains, and rooted by holy grief, guards the heart.

Remorse is a continual testing of the conscience which results in a cooling of the flame of the heart by spiritual confession. Confession is an amnesia of one's nature, as if anyone on account of this actually forgot to eat his bread.

Lamentation is the joyful removal of all bodily comforts.

A sign of those who are still advancing in holy lamentation is self-control and stillness of the mouth; and of those who have advanced further, a release from anger, and long-suffering in the face of injuries; and for those who are perfect, humbleness, a desire for dishonor, a hunger for suffering, not being judgmental of transgressors, charity over and above one's strength. The first are adequate, the second praise-worthy, and blessed are those who hunger for toil and thirst after disgrace, for they will have an abundance of food that does not satiate.

If you have the gift of lamenting, keep hold of it with all your strength. For it is easily lost when it is not securely established. For just as wax will melt by the heat of the fire, so also lamentation easily dissipates with noise, concern for the body, luxury, and most particularly when gregariousness and light-heartedness are present.

More important than baptism is the spring of tears that comes after baptism, although it may be somewhat bold to state this. Because baptism is the cleansing from evils that were present in us

beforehand, but the sins which we commit after baptism are cleansed by tears. Although baptism is performed at infancy, all of us have polluted it, and so we need to purify it anew with tears. If, in His love for humanity, God had not granted us tears, few there would be, and difficult to discover, those who would be in a condition of grace.

Sighs and miseries call up to the Lord. Tears poured forth from fear intercede on our behalf, but tears of blessed love show us that our prayer has been received.

If there be nothing that accompanies humility so well as mourning, certainly there is nothing so opposed to it as laughter.

Keep a good grip on the all-holy, joy-sorrow of holy grief, and never cease from laboring at it until it elevates you high above the things of the world and offers you spotless to Christ.

Never stop imagining and studying the gloomy abyss of never-ending fire, and the pitiless servants, the unsympathetic and inflexible Judge, the infinite depth of the subterranean fire, the constricted descents to the terrible rooms and gaping gulfs, and every such thing, so that the carnality present in your soul may be held fast by horror and that it make room for pure chastity, and accept the radiance of the heavenly light which shines more brightly than any flame.

At the time of prayer and entreaty stand shaking like a condemned criminal before a judge, so that with your outward figure and your inner form you might quench the fury of the just Judge. Because he will not show scorn for the widow's soul which is present before Him, overcoming with grief and troubling the Untiring One.

The one who has come to have heartfelt tears will find every place suitable for grieving. However, the one whose sorrow is merely an outward display will spend no end of time conversing about locations and manners. In the same way that hidden treasure is

more secure from theft than the one visible in the market, so also let us utilize this with what we have related above.

Be not as those who when they bury their dead at first grieve over them and then later get drunk on their behalf. Instead be as the convicts in the mines who are whipped each hour by the jailers.

The one who sometimes grieves and other times lives in pleasures and laughter is like a man who stones the hound of carnal-lust with bread. In form, he is driving it away, but in reality he is inciting it to be regularly present with him.

Be focused without airs, aloof in your heart. For the demons are afraid of concentration, just as robbers are afraid of guard dogs.

Here, we have certainly not been summoned to the wedding banquet, but here, rather He who has summoned us has called us to grieve over ourselves.

Some, when they grieve, compel themselves untimely to contemplate nothing in particular during this blessed time, not understanding that tears without understanding are fitting only for an irrational nature and not for the rational one. Tears are engendered by the mind, and the father of the mind is rational thoughts.

Let your lying down in bed be for you an example of your descending into your tomb and you will give less time to sleep. Let the refreshment you receive at the table be for you a sign of the grisly table of those worms and you will pamper yourself less. In drinking water, be mindful of the thirst of that fire, and you will surely deny your carnal nature its desires.

When we are forced to endure honorable disgrace from the superior, discipline or rebuke, let us call to mind the fearful condemnation of the Judge, and we will destroy, with humility and long-suffering, as with a double-edged sword, the irrational grief and resentment which will surely be sown within us.

The seas dry up with time, as Job states, also with time and long-suffering, the aforementioned things which we have covered are steadily gained and perfected within us.

Let the thought of the never-ending fire recline with you every evening, and let it also rise with you. Then laziness will never overtake you during the hour of psalmody.

Let your garment compel you to the labor of mourning. For all who grieve for the dead are clothed in black. If you do not weep, weep for this reason. But if you weep, mourn even more that you have brought yourself low from a state without pain to a painful state by your sins.

When it comes to tears, as in all things which our good and just Judge does, he will surely factor into His consideration the power of our nature. Because I have observed small tears come forth with much labor like drops of blood and I have seen springs of tears pour forth with ease. And I considered those laborers more by their labor than by their teardrops, and I believe that God does as well.

Theology is not proper for those who grieve, for the nature of it will dissipate their lamentation. Because the theologian is as one who sits on the seat of the instructor, while the one lamenting is like one who spends his time on a heap of manure, clothed with rags. This is why David, I suppose, even though he was an instructor and wise, answered those who asked him when he was lamenting: "How will I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" - which is to say, the land of the passions.

In both creation and in remorse there is that which can move itself and that which something else moves. At the point the soul starts to weep, wet and soft tears without any labor or worry, let us sprint, because the Lord has come unbidden, and has given us the sponge of God-loving grief and the cold water of pious tears to clear away the account of our sins. Keep watch over these tears as your greatest joy, until they leave. Excellent is the force of this

sorrow, more excellent than that which comes from our own labor and contemplation.

The one who laments only when he wants to has not yet achieved the elegance of mourning, but instead it is he who laments not on the matter of his choosing, but on those which God desires. The repulsive teardrops of vanity are often mixed with lamentation which is well-pleasing to God. Behaving piously, we will discover this by testing ourselves when we observe our lamentation and yet still do evil.

Sincere remorse is anguish of soul sheared of every joy, which does not give itself rest but hourly envisions only its disintegration. And it waits for, like cold water, the solace of God who consoles humble monks.

Those who have grasped lamentation in the depths of their soul, despise their life as a thing which is toilsome and grievous, and a reason for tears and toils, and they turn and run away from their body as if from an enemy.

At the time we observe anger and conceit in those who appear to be grieving in a manner that is well-pleasing to God, then their teardrops are seen as repulsive to God. Because what fellowship is there between light and darkness?

The fruit of gruesome remorse is self-regard. So also the fruit of praise-worthy remorse is comfort.

As the flame destroys straw, so pure teardrops destroy all physical and spiritual corruption.

Many Fathers say that the issue of weeping, particularly for novices, is an ambiguous one, and difficult to discern, since tears come about in diverse ways. For example, there are tears that come from nature, from God, from painful grief, from honorable suffering, from vanity, from wantonness, from love, from the remembrance of death, and innumerable other reasons.

Being stripped bare by the fear of God, let us exercise ourselves in all these matters and attain unpolluted and sincere tears over our disintegration. Because there is no deception or vainglory in this, but rather the opposite, purification, advancement in love of God, cleansing from sin and the purification of passion to dispassion.

It should not be a surprise that lamentation starts with good tears and ends with bitter ones. However, it is honorable if ugly and physical tears are purified to spiritual tears. People given to vanity comprehend this problem well.

Do not believe your spring of tears before your soul has been fully cleansed. Because wine should not be trusted when it is taken straight from the barrel.

No one will argue that all tears in accord with God are beneficial. However, we will only know for certain at the hour of our death what the benefit was.

He who proceeds with endless lamentation in accord with God does not stop daily to feast. Instead never-ending lamentation waits for him who unceasingly feasts with his body.

Criminals in jail have no happiness or joy, and real monks, have no feasts in the world. This is perhaps why the blessed griever, moaning said, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may have joy from now on in Your indescribable light."

Be like a ruler in your heart, seated on high in humbleness, and telling laughter, "Depart," and it departs; and to wonderful weeping, "Come," and it comes; and to our despot and servant, the body, "Do this," and indeed it does it.

The one who is dressed in blessed and graceful lamentation as though in a wedding garment understands the spiritual joy of the soul.

Can someone be found who has lived all his life in a monastic setting so devoutly that he has never forfeited a day, hour, or

moment, but has used all his time in the service of the Lord, keeping in mind that never in all your life can you have the same day twice?

Blessed is the monk who is able to raise up the eyes of his soul to the heavenly powers. He is indeed safe from stumbling if he unceasingly, through the remembrance of death and sin, wets his cheeks with living water from his eyes. It is not difficult for me to trust that the second state will lead one to the first.

I have observed brazen supplicants and beggars using shrewd speech quickly incline the very hearts of rulers to mercy. And I have also observed men impoverished and needy in virtue, with speech not as shrewd but instead meek, obscure and faltering, call out boldly and regularly from the depth of a forlorn heart to the Heavenly King and by their fierceness, compel His divine nature and mercy.

The one who in his heart is prideful because of his weeping, and then quietly judges those who do not shed tears, is like one who requests a weapon from the king to use against his enemy, and then later commits suicide with it.

My companions, God does not request or will that one should lament from grief of heart, but instead he should have joy with spiritual laughter out of love for Him. Take away sin, and the teardrops of remorse will be redundant for your eyes. What is the value of a dressing when there is no wound? Before his trespass Adam did not weep. So also there will be no tears after the resurrection when iniquity will be abolished, for then grief, sorrow and lamentation will have run away.

In some people I have seen lamentation and in others I have seen lamentation for a lack of sorrow. Although they have it, they are as though they lacked it. And through this wonderful lack of knowledge they continue safely. Of these it is said, "The Lord makes wise the blind."

Weeping often leads foolish people to pride, which is why they are not supplied with tears. And these people, looking for teardrops in vain, thinking themselves hapless, relegate themselves to sighs, moans, mourning, grief of soul, profound remorse and depression. All of these, although helpful, are looked upon by them as useless, but they can indeed take the place of weeping.

If we observe with care we will many times discover a bitter jest played upon us by demons. For when we are full they excite remorse in us, and when we fast they harden our hearts so that we are tricked by false tears, and we permit ourselves to partake in indulgence, which is the mother of the passions. We should not give heed to them but we should instead do the contrary.

When I think about the nature of remorse I am struck that, that which is referred to as grieving and lamenting actually contains delight and joy interwoven within, in the same manner as honey in a honeycomb. What are we then to discover from this? That remorse is, in a sense, a gift from God. There is in the soul no joyless joy, for God comforts those who have a remorseful heart in a hidden manner. However, as an incentive to glorious remorse and beneficial grief, let us listen to a soul-benefiting and very pitiful story.

There was a man named Stephen who dwelt here, who was very much given to the solitary life, and had been trained in the monastic way for many years. His soul was decorated with tears and fasting, and he was adorned with many other excellent graces. He had a cell on the incline of the holy mountain where the holy prophet and oracle Elijah had once dwelt. But after a time this renowned monk took upon himself a more ascetic and severe repentance, and he went to a region of hermits known as Siddim. He dwelt there many years in strict austerity. The place lacked every possible comfort, and was rarely visited by anyone, since it was about seventy miles from the monastery. Near the end of his life the elder went back to this cell on the holy mountain where two very devout disciples were

present who were from Palestine, and who took care of his cell. Having spent a few days there he became ill and died. The day before he died, he went into ecstasy and with his eyes open he looked to the right and then to left of his bed and, as if someone were calling him to account, with a distinct voice those around him heard him say, "Yes, certainly that is correct, but that is why I fasted for many years." And again, "Yes, that is true, but I shed tears and ministered to the brothers." And again, "No, you are defaming me." And at times he would say, "Yes, that is correct. Yes, I do not know how to reply to this. But with God there is compassion." And it was really a terrible and awful spectacle to see, this visible and pitiless questioning. And what was quite horrible was all the things which he was accused of, he had not even committed. How astonishing! To many of the accusations the hermit replied, "I do not know how to reply to this," even though he had been a monk for almost forty years and possessed the gift of tears. Woe, woe! Where was the voice of Ezekiel to tell the torturer, "As I find you, I will judge you, says the Lord." Indeed he was not able to say anything of the kind. And why? Praise to Him who alone understands! And there were some who, as before the Lord, related to me that a leopard would receive food from his hand in the wilderness. And during this reckoning, he left his body, forsaking us never to know his sentence or final judgment.

Like a widow who, lacking her husband, and possessing an only son, receives comfort from him alone after the Lord, so also the soul that has stumbled has no other comfort at the hour of death but the labor of fasting and weeping.

Those who are like that do not sing, and they do not yell to themselves in their singing, because these things dissolve lamentation. And if you desire to invite it by such a manner, then you are a long distance from accomplishing your goal. For lamentation is the grief of a soul on fire.

For many people grieving has been the forerunner of holy dispassion, for it readied, plowed, and removed the sinful substances.

One experienced doer of this virtue related to me, "Often, as quickly as I attempted to yield myself to vainglory, or wrath, or gluttony, the consideration of grief argued within me and stated, 'Do not be full of vanity, or I will depart from you.' And so too, at the compulsion of the other passions, I would say to the idea, 'I will never rebel until you offer me to Christ.'"

The depth of lamentation observes consolation, and chastity of heart gives illumination. Illumination is an indescribable action which is ignorantly observed and invisibly perceived. Consolation is the comfort of a grieving soul which, like a small child, at the same time both whimpers and yells out happily. Divine intercession is the renewing of the soul which is overcome by sorrow, which in a marvelous way changes painful tears into soothing ones.

Weeping over our departure engenders fear, and when fear gives birth to fearlessness, happiness dawns. When joy is unerringly achieved, godly love blossoms forth.

Push back with a hand of humility every momentary delight, as though not being worthy of it, for fear that by allowing it you welcome a wolf rather than a shepherd.

Do not be quick to meditation when it is not an appropriate time for meditation, so that it follow after and embrace the loveliness of your humble nature and join you in ever-lasting pure marriage.

When an child begins to identify his father, it is filled with happiness. However, if the father sojourns for a time because of his work and then returns home again, the child becomes full of both sorrow and joy - joy at seeing the loved one, and sorrow at having been bereft for so long of its loveliness. And a mother will at times hide from her baby, and when she beholds the grief with which the child looks for her, she is full of joy, for in this way she instructs the

child to be joined to her evermore, and stokes the flames of the child's love for her. The Lord says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

A convict, who has heard the sentence of death, will not be anxious as to how the theaters are being managed. So also the one who is sincerely mourning will be unable to return to luxury, or honor, or irritation, or indignation. Lamentation is the grief of a sorrowful soul which adds grief to grief, just as a woman is in pain when she brings forth a baby.

Righteous and holy is the Lord. He leads the one who is reasonably quiet into a reasonable feeling of guilt, and each day he makes him joyful who is reasonably obedient. However, the one that does not practice either of these ways, is deprived of lamentation.

Chase away the hound of hell that arrives at your moment of most profound grieving, and asserts that God is not lenient or sympathetic. For if you observe it, you will discover that prior to the sin he calls God compassionate, sympathetic and merciful.

Routine creates habit, and endurance grows into an emotion of the heart. What is done with an intrinsic feeling of the heart is difficult to remove.

However, excellent the life we have, if we have not obtained a penitent heart we should reckon it flat and fake. For this is necessary, indeed essential if I may say, for those who have again been polluted after they have been baptized for they should purify the tar from their hands with the unending flame of the heart and with the oil of God.

I have observed some who have achieved the final stage of grieving, for I observed them truly pouring out of their mouths the blood of a miserable and a broken heart. I remembered him who said, "I am chopped down as grass, and my heart is dried up."

Teardrops which are caused by fear bring security. However, teardrops which are produced from love which has not achieved perfection, as may occur with some, are readily stolen, unless the remembrance of the never-ending flame, at the right time ignites the heart. It is amazing how much more secure is the more humble way in its time.

There is a variety of matter which dries up the spring of our tears, and there is also other matter which produces mud and reptiles. From the first, Lot had unlawful relations with his daughters, and from the latter the devil was cast out of heaven.

The enemies of us are so evil that they pervert even the mothers of virtues to the mothers of vices, and the things which create meekness, they change into sources of pride. Often the location and the view of our habitation are of a nature to bring us to remorse. Let Jesus, Elijah and John who all prayed alone convict you of this fact. Many times I have observed tears brought about in towns and crowds so that we suppose that the multitudes are not harmful and so pull us closer to the world. But this is the goal of the wicked spirits.

A mere word has many times cast off grief. However, it would be amazing if a mere word could make it return.

At the point our soul departs from this world we will not be accused of not having performed wonders, or for not having become contemplatives or theologians. However, we will surely have to provide a defense to God for why we have not grieved continually.

This is the seventh step. The one who is found deserving of it, may he help me as well. Because such as one has already been assisted, since by means of this seventh step he has cleansed himself from the corruption of this world.

Step 8 - On Liberty From Anger and Humility

In the same way a steady flow of water on a fire will quench the flame, so also the weeping of sincere sorrow will be able to extinguish every fire of anger and irritation. So we place this step after the last.

Liberty from anger is an inexhaustible appetite for disgrace, just as for the egotistic there is a never-ending appetite for praise. Liberty from anger is a triumph over nature and an indifference to slander, obtained by toil and perspiration.

Humility is an unchanging character of the soul which continues untouched either by a bad or good report, in disgrace or in honor.

The start of freedom from anger is stillness of the mouth when the heart is troubled. The middle is a stillness of the mind when there is a small agitation of the soul. The end is an unchanging calm beneath the breath of polluted winds.

Anger is a calling to mind of secret hatred, that is, a remembrance of sufferings. Anger is a longing for the hurt of the one who has irritated you. Irritability is the unseasonable kindling of the heart. Soreness is the motion of displeasure in the soul. Resentment is the motion of one's character and turmoil of the soul.

As at the display of light, darkness withdraws, so also at the scent of humility all anger and resentment disappear.

Those who are given to anger are negligent of being cured from this passion. But these sad people do not give a moments thought to the one who stated, "The instant anger befalls him, he falls."

A millstone has a fast motion which is able in moment to grind and remove more spiritual grain and fruit than another could grind away in a full day. So it is necessary, that with knowledge, we take care. It may happen that a blaze of fire, when encouraged by a powerful

wind, will destroy the field of the heart more readily than a still flame.

We should not neglect, my companions, to consider that the evil demons often depart from us suddenly, so that we may become negligent of our powerful passions which although generally of little trouble, suddenly become hopelessly difficult to deal with.

Just as a hard rock with sharp edges has all its sharpness and hardness worn away by hitting against and rubbing with other rocks, and thus becomes rounded, so also a hard and sharp soul, by dwelling in a community and mixing with hard, irritable men, changes in one of two ways: either its injuries are cured by its long-suffering, or by withdrawing it will surely realize its illness, for its shameless fleeing will make this clear to it as if by a mirror.

One who is angry is a voluntary epileptic, who for simple reasons, regularly falls and stumbles.

There is nothing so unhelpful to penitents as an irritated spirit, since change requires great humility and anger is a mark of every possible arrogance.

If it is the sign of great humility even when in the company of one's enemy to be calm and loving toward him in one's heart, it is also a sure sign of a hot temper when someone persists in arguing and raging against his absent enemy with both speech and gestures, even when he is alone.

If peace of the soul is the Holy Spirit, as He says it is, and as He indeed is, and if the agitation of the heart is anger, as it indeed is and as it is said to be, then nothing so hinders His dwelling within us as anger.

Although we are aware of many unbearable fruits of anger, we have discovered only one, its involuntary progeny, which is helpful even if illegitimate. I have observed people roaring in rage and spewing out of their long pent-up hatred. These, by their passion were saved

from passion, and have achieved from their enemy, penitence or at least a detailed reasoning of the grudge. I have observed others who although they seemed to display a calm patience, instead were feeding an animosity within themselves under a dark silence. I thought them to be more pitiable than those who had their fits of rage, since they were pushing back the holy and white Dove with their black bile. It is important for us to exercise care in handling this serpent, for it too, like the serpent of carnal pollution, has a physical nature cooperating with it.

I have observed people in anger push away their meal, out of spite, and from their irrational abstinence they only succeeded in adding venom to venom. Still others I have observed become disturbed on account of a spurious issue and have given themselves over to gluttony, and tumbled out from a ditch headlong over a cliff. There are others I have observed who were reasonable, and like a good doctor mixed the two, and have acquired from a little comfort a great gain.

Sometimes wrath is soothed by singing in moderation. However, sometimes if done untimely and without moderation it moves to the attraction of pleasure. So then let us set times for doing things, and thus make good use of it.

At one time, when I was sitting outside the monastery close to the cells of those who were dwelling in solitude, I overheard them raging in their cells, alone from anger and resentment, like caged birds. They were jumping at the face of their enemy as though he were present with them. I piously warned them not to continue in the solitary state for fear they should be transformed from humans into demons. I have also seen people that are carnal and impure in heart, at times be humble even though they are what you might call, flatters and ostentatious people. I instructed these ones to take on the solitary life as medicine for their carnal and polluted hearts, so that they not be changed from reasonable people into irrational animals. However, when they told me they were slaves to the

passions of anger and carnality, I resolutely prohibited them to dwell under their own authority. Instead I recommended that their directors should have them live in one mode of life for awhile and sometimes in another, but in either state they should be fully given to their director. The carnal person is likely to injure himself, as well as one of his close companions. However, the angry person is like a wolf, who will trouble the entire flock, offending and disheartening many.

It is not good to trouble the eye of the heart through anger. As was stated, "My eye is wearied from anger." However, it is even worse to display in words the trouble of the soul and to fight about it is absolutely foolish and foreign to monastic, heavenly and divine living.

If you desire, or indeed plan to remove a chip from another, then do not strike at it with a stick instead of a knife for you will only push it further in. And the stick is this: rough speaking and ugly gestures. This is the knife: moderate teaching and patient reproving. "Reprove," states the Apostle, "rebuke, encourage." He did not say, "Hit." Even if this is necessary, rarely do it, and let it not be done by your own hand.

If we are attentive we will see that many troublesome people exercise themselves in vigils, fastings and stillness. For the goal of the demons is to propose to them, under the guise of remorse and repentance, those things which will only ameliorate their passion.

If, as stated earlier, a wolf with the aid of a demon can distress a flock, then surely a wise brother aided by an angel can calm the waves and make a boat sail peacefully, by pouring, a good wine-skin full of oil onto the water. And the punishment of the first is difficult to bear, but great is the prize the latter will merit from God, and he will be an instructive example for everyone.

The start of blessed long-suffering is to be able to accept disgrace with grief of the soul. The middle state is to be at liberty from

distress in the middle of these things. However, perfection, is to look upon disgrace as honor. Let the first be joyful, the second mighty, and blessed is the last, for he delights in the Lord.

I have observed what a painful spectacle angry people present from their pride, although they are not cognizant of this, because they sink into anger and then become even more angry at their ruin. I was amazed to observe how one fall was disciplined by another, and I had pity on them as I regarded them punishing sin with sin. I was terrified at the wiles of demons and almost became despondent of my life.

If someone has observed that he is overcome easily by pride and anger, hatred and hypocrisy, and has the idea of protecting himself against them by using the two-edged sword of humility and long-suffering, then if he desires to be totally free from these sins he should depart and dwell in a monastery as one in a wool cleaning shop of salvation. In particular he should pick one that is very strict. Then he will be pulled spiritually and struck by the rebukes, harsh words, and insults of the brothers and maybe even physically hit, stomped on, and kicked, and thus he will wash off the dirt which is in the discerning section of his soul. You should trust the well-known saying that rebuke is the wash basin for the passions of the soul. For when people of the world crush someone with rebukes and then brag about this in front of others, they say, "I gave him a scouring." And this is indeed correct.

For novices to be at liberty from anger as a consequence of grief, is one thing, the calmness that is discovered among those that are perfect is quite another. In the first, anger is kept within by weeping as if by a bridle. In the latter it has been put to death by dispassion, just as a serpent is killed with a knife.

At one time I observed three monks accepting the same wounds at the same time. One could feel the sting of it, but remained quiet. The second rejoiced over his wounds for the merit he earned, but was sorrowful for the one that had done the wrong. The third,

considering the ill-effect of his misbehaving neighbor, wept bitterly. And so fear, merit, and love were all observed to be at work.

A fever in the body is one thing, and the circumstances of it are many. Likewise with the rising up of anger, for the occasions of our passions have a variety of causes. This is why one cannot give the same rule for all of them. Rather I would propose that each person who has fallen sick should inquire after his own particular treatment. The first stage in a treatment should be the diagnosis of the root cause of the illness. When this is found the patient will get the right treatment from God, and from their spiritual directors. Thus, for example, those who desire to unite us with the Lord should come to the available spiritual court, and there we should examine ourselves in a broad manner concerning the previously stated passions and their inducements.

Bind the oppressor, anger, with the chains of humility and let it be struck with long-suffering, and pulled about by godly love, and accused in front of the judgment seat of rationality. Let it be carefully studied, "Tell us fool, what is the name of the man that fathered you and the mother who for the cause of wickedness brought you into the world, and the names of your vile sons and daughters. And not this alone, but tell us the plots and plans of those who battle against you and destroy you." Anger will answer us, "I have many sources, and many fathers. My mothers are vanity, greed, and often lust. My father's name is pride. My daughters are: remembering ill-treatment, wrath, hatred, and declaration of rights. But my enemies, who keep me bound, are the virtues, liberty from anger and humility. She who plots against me is known as meekness. But in regard to the one who begat meekness, ask her in the proper time."

The reward of the eighth step is the crown of liberty from anger. The one who wears it by nature may wear no other crown. But the one who has achieved it by struggling has overcome all eight at once.

Step 9 - On the Remembrance of Injuries

The blessed virtues are like Jacob's ladder, and the profane vices are like the manacles that fell off the chief of the apostles, Peter. The virtues lead from one to the next, and carry up the one who chooses them to Heaven. The vices, by contrast, by their very character both bring forth and choke each other. Since we have just spoken about how absurd anger names "remembrance of injuries" its child, it is fitting that we should speak about this topic here.

The remembrance of injuries is the completion of anger, the custodian of sins, enmity of uprightness, destruction of virtues, venom for the soul, a worm in the mind, disgrace of prayer, ceasing of entreaty, lack of love, a pin fastened in the soul, a joyless feeling beloved in the tenderness of bitterness, unceasing sin, vigilant iniquity, constant ill-will.

This gloomy and malevolent passion, I mean remembrance of injuries, is one of those that is begotten, but has no children. For this reason we do not have much to say about it.

The one who has ceased from anger has killed the remembrance of injuries, because childbearing only occurs while the father lives.

The one who has achieved love has cast out revenge, but the one who nourishes a feeling of ill-will amasses never-ending misery for himself.

A feast of love destroys hatred, and true gifts calm the soul. However, a feast that is poorly governed is the mother of audacity, and by the window of love gluttony jumps in.

I have seen ill-will shatter the chains of persistent sexual immorality, and afterwards remembrance of injuries, in an incredible manner, it did not permit the broken union to be restored. What an amazing spectacle, a demon saving a demon! However, it is perhaps the work of Divine Providence, and not that of demons.

Remembrance of wrongs is far removed from natural, healthy love, but sexual immorality with ease draws close to it, just as at times lice can be observed on a bird.

Be hateful and bitter towards demons, and be always at odds with your body. Your carnal nature is a self-willed and deceitful companion. The more you have concern for it, the more it harms you.

Remembrance of injuries an excellent interpreter of Scripture - the sort that adapts the words of the Spirit to its own interpretation. Let it be disgraced by the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner") which cannot be recited with it.

After much toiling, when you still cannot take out this thorn, you should make amends with your enemy, even if it is only by word. Then it may be that you will be embarrassed by your persistent hypocrisy towards him, and with your conscience biting at you like a fire, you will perhaps feel a genuine love for him.

You will recognize that you have destroyed this vice, not only when you pray on behalf of your enemy, nor when you exchange presents with him, nor when you summon him to dine with you, but only at the point when you learn that he has suffered a spiritual or bodily mishap and you grieve and shed tears for him as if for yourself.

A spiteful hermit is a serpent hidden in a burrow, which contains a deadly venom.

The remembrance of Jesus' afflictions will cure the remembrance of injuries which is embarrassed by his long-suffering.

Worms fester in a rotting tree, and ill-will finds a home in fake humility and quiet people. The one who has expelled it has discovered forgiveness, but the one who abides with it is deprived of grace.

Some, for the hope of obtaining forgiveness, take up various labors and toils. But the one who forgets injuries surpasses them. If you are able to quickly forgive, then you be forgiven lavishly.

A sure sign of repentance is the forgetting of injuries. However, the one that abides with them and supposes that he is repenting is like a man who, when asleep, considers himself running.

I have observed people full of resentment suggest that others forgive. Yes, and being embarrassed by their own words, they expelled this passion.

Let no one look upon hateful malice as an innocuous passion, for it is able to reach even spiritual people.

Step number nine. Let the one who has obtained it courageously entreat the Savior, Jesus, to deliver him from his future sins.

Step 10 - On Defamation or Slander

No right-thinking person, I believe, will argue that calumny is the child of malice and hostility. Thus it is put next after its forefathers.

Defamation is the child of malice, a subtle but at the same time crude illness. It is a leech, hiding, not felt, ravaging and draining the blood of charity. It is the impersonation of love, the advocate of a polluted and stiffened heart, the destruction of purity.

Some women sin without being embarrassed, while there are others who in secret and with an air of modesty conduct themselves in a worse way than the former. It is the same with disgraceful passions. There are many hypocritical maidens: falseness, vice, depression, the remembrance of wrongs, thinking little of others in one's heart. They seem to suggest one thing, but have something else all-together in mind.

I have listened to some people maligning, and I have admonished them. And those doing the wrong answered in defense that they were conducting themselves in this manner from love and concern for the one who they were maligning. I told them, "Quit this type of love, for otherwise you will be denouncing as a liar the one who said, 'The one who secretly defames his companion, I cast away.' If you love, then pray in secret, and do not deride the man. For it is this type of love which is well-pleasing to the Lord. However, I will not keep this secret from you, (and by all means consider it, and do not condemn your enemy): Judas was a companion of the disciples of Christ, and the thief was a companion of murderers. But what a change occurred when there was a crisis.

The one who desires to conquer the spirit of calumny, should not assign blame to the one who stumbles, but to the demon who incited him. For there is no one who desires to sin against God, although we all sin, even though we are not compelled to do it.

I knew a man who committed sin openly, but repented in secret. I judged him to be a dissolute person, but he was pure before God, having appeased Him by sincere repentance.

Do not consider the feelings of one who slanders his neighbor, but instead tell him, "Cease this, my brother! I commit still worse sins daily, so how can I speak ill of him?" In this manner you succeed in two ways: you will cure yourself and your neighbor with the same bandage. This is one of the quickest paths to forgiveness, I mean not to condemn: "Judge not, so that you not be judged."

Fire and water cannot mix, and in like manner, one cannot condemn others while desiring to repent. If you observe one who is sinking into sin right at the hour of his death, even then do not condemn him, for Divine judgment is not revealed to people. Some have descended into terrible sins publicly, but have done even greater good works in secret, so their accusers were fooled, seeing smoke rather than the sun.

Hear me, listen all you judges of other men. If it is correct (as it truly is) that "with what judgment you judge, you will be judged," then with the sins we condemn our neighbor, carnal or spiritual, we will certainly sink into them ourselves.

Those who are quick to strictly judge the sins of their neighbor sink into this problem because they have not yet achieved a regular and careful remembrance of their own shortcomings. For if one could perceive his own sins precisely, without the curtain of pride, he would concern himself with nothing else while he lived, seeing that even if he were to live a hundred years, he would not have time enough to grieve over his sins even if he were to see the entire river Jordan pouring forth as tears from his eyes. I have seen that type of grieving, and I did not discover in it even the slightest bit of condemnation.

The demons, who are killers, thrust us into vice. And if they are unable to achieve this, they make us condemn those who are

sinning, in order that they stain us with the very charge with which we are condemning others.

This is a sign of those that are spiteful and condemning, they are full of a hateful spirit, and with delight and without it bothering them they defame the instruction, or business, or accomplishments of their neighbor.

I have observed people caught up in the worst sins in secret, and in apparent purity, they have severely criticized those who have slightly stumble in the open.

To pass judgment on others is a reckless assumption of Divine power. To condemn another is the destruction of one's soul.

Pride without any other vice can destroy a man, and in the same manner, if we have taken the habit of condemning, we can be completely destroyed solely by this. For truly this is what condemned the Pharisee.

A skilled grape-picker, who consumes the ripe grapes, will not begin with collecting unripe ones. A generous and rational mind takes attentive care of the virtues it sees in others. But the idiot seeks flaws. Of these it has been said, "They have sought out iniquity and perished in the search."

Do not judge, even when you observe something with your own eyes, for many times they are tricked.

The tenth step. The one who has conquered it is the one who exercises love or grieving.

Step 11 - On Loquaciousness and Stillness

In the previous chapter we wrote concisely on just how hazardous it is to be judgmental, and how this sin sneaks into the hearts of people that appear to be very spiritual. We also wrote how it is blessed to put oneself under the rebuke and reproof of the tongue. Here we must demonstrate the root cause of this sin, and give a report on the mode of entry, or rather, exit.

Gregariousness is the throne of pride, which delights itself in showing off. To be talkative is a mark of ignorance, a gateway to slander, a leader to joking, a slave of untruth, the destruction of remorse, the author of depression, the forerunner of sleep, the dissolution of memory, the ruin of vigil, the cooling of zeal, the dimming of prayer.

Intentional stillness is the mother of prayer, a calling back from imprisonment, a preservation of fire, a director of the mind, a vigil against enemies, a jail of sorrow, a companion of teardrops, a powerful remembrance of death, an artist of correction, a busybody with judgment, an assistant to distress, an enemy of freedom to speak, a friend of quietness, an enemy of the desire to instruction, an increase of understanding, an author of meditation, secret progress, unseen rising.

The one who has become mindful of his vices has mastered his tongue, but a gregarious person has not yet understood himself as he should.

The companion of stillness draws close to God, and by speaking with Him privately, he is enlightened by God.

Jesus' silence made a disgrace of Pilate, and by a man's silence, pride is overcome.

When Peter spoke a word, he grieved bitterly, because he forgot the one who said, "I said, I will be mindful of my ways that with my

tongue I do not sin." Also the other who said, "A fall from on high to the earth is better than a trip of the tongue."

I have no desire to write many things on this topic, even though the trickery of the passion would like me to do so. But once, I heard from someone who questioned me about stillness. I told him that chattiness is certainly the offspring of either a poor, lazy setting and habit (because the tongue requires discipline like the rest of the body), or, especially in the case of ascetics, chattiness is rooted in pride, and at times gluttony. This is the reason why many who check the stomach through violence are able to easily bridle the tongue and its loose lips.

The one who is concerned with his own death, reduces his use of words. And the one who has received spiritual grief, avoids chattiness like fire.

The one who has fallen in love with stillness keeps his mouth shut, but the one that enjoys roaming about is pushed out of his cell by this passion.

The one who understands the aroma of fire from up high, flees from conversation with men like a honeybee from smoke. For the bee is driven back by smoke, while a man is delayed by company.

There are few who can hold water without a bucket and still fewer who can control an unrestrained tongue.

Step eleven. The one who has conquered it has smitten a variety of evils.

Step 12 - On Lying

Fire is the child of flint and steel, and lying is the child of a loose tongue and jesting.

Falsehood is the ruin of love, and perjury is the rejection of God.

Let no one with good morals suppose that the vice of lying is a trivial subject, for the All-Holy Spirit brought a terrible verdict against it above all other sins. "If You will destroy all who tell a lie," said David to God, what will they endure who attach a pledge to a lie?

I have observed those who pride themselves on their ability to lie, and arousing laughter by their joking and nonsense, have pathetically destroyed, in those who listen, the practice of lamentation.

When demons observe that, right from the start we plan to stay aloof from the droll chatter of the leader, as from a disease, then he tries to ensnare us with two ideas, suggesting, "Do not insult the leader," or, "Do not seem as though you love God more than them." Depart! Do not hang around, or at the hour of prayer their jokes will reappear in your thoughts. And not only flee, but devoutly trouble the poor company by bringing their notice to the remembrance of death and the final judgment. For it may be profitable for you to be stained with some pride, if you are to help others.

Hypocrisy is the mother of falsehood and often its aim. Some would define hypocrisy as a reflection on lying, and the author of lies which has a terrible pledge caught up in it.

The one who has achieved the fear of the Lord has given up lying, having inside himself an incorruptible judge, which is his conscience.

We observe certain measures of injury from the various passions, and this is truly the case with falsehood. There is one judgment for

the one who lies because of a fear of chastisement, and quite another for the one who lies when there is nothing to fear.

One will lie for the mere lewdness of it, and another for the delight it brings. Another does it to make those standing around laugh, and another to ensnare his brother, and do him harm.

Lying is destroyed through the harsh punishment of the director and finally will be brought to ruin by much weeping.

The one who allows himself to lie does so with the excuse that it is out of concern for others and sees the ruin of his soul as charity. The author of lies makes it seem as though he is imitating Rahab, saying that through his own ruin he is saving others.

When we have purged away lying, then we can use it, but solely with fear and only when it is truly needed.

A baby does not understand lying, and neither does a soul that has been purged of evil.

The one who is drunk from wine cannot help but speak the truth on every matter, and he who is drunk with remorse will not lie.

Step twelve. He who has ascended to it has received the root of all graces.

Step 13 - On Despondency

As we have stated many times before, despondency is the first child and many times one of the off-shoots of chattiness.

Despondency is laxity of the soul, a slackening of the mind, a disregard of asceticism, disdain for one's oath. It is a blessing for those in the world. It charges God for being pitiless and devoid of concern for humanity. It is listless during psalmody, feeble in prayer, obstinately stuck on performing ministry, determined to do manual work, apathetic to obedience.

The one who is subject to obedience does not understand despondency. Rather he accomplishes spiritual tasks by sensory ones.

Despondency is at odds with communal life. However, she is a close, ever-present, friend of the hermit. She will never depart from him until his departure, and struggles with him every day until his end. She smiles when she sees a hermit's cell. She sneaks up and settles close by.

In the morning a physician will visit patients, but despondency drops in around noon.

Despondency is an excuse for being hospitable. She asserts that through manual work, charity could be distributed and she insists that we earnestly call upon the sick, bringing to mind Him who said, "I was sick and you visited Me." She gives us the idea to depart and visit those in despair and the faint-hearted, and brings one faint-hearted man to be the solace of another.

She reminds those who are caught up in prayer of their required chores. And cruel as she is, she provides every possible excuse to pull us away from our prayer as with a bridle.

At the third hour, the demon of despondency creates trembling, migraines, and even weeping. At the ninth hour the ailing one

strengthens himself. And when the meal is ready he hops out of bed. But at the time of prayer, again his body becomes weak. He starts to pray, but he is overcome with sleep, and rips up his petitions with ill-timed yawning.

For each passion there is a corresponding virtue which can destroy it. However, despondency is generally the death of the monk.

A brave soul revives his expiring mind, but despondency and laziness fritter away all its wealth.

Seeing that despondency is one of the principle eight vices, and perhaps its most severe, let us reckon it with the other vices. However, let us put forth this: When there is no singing of psalms then despondency does not show its face. And when the hourly office is complete, the eyelids open up.

The spiritually forceful ones shine forth during the time of despondency, for it produces a multitude of crowns for the monk struggling with it.

Look and you will see that if you stand up on your feet despondency will struggle with you. But if you remain seated it will advise you to recline and then to rest against the wall of your cell. Then it induces you to look out the window, by making various noises and footsteps.

He who laments knows nothing of despondency.

Let this oppressor be chained up by the remembrances of your shortcomings. Let us attack him by means of manual work. May he be dragged to the tribunal by the remembrance of the coming blessings. And let him be strictly examined when he is set before the court.

Reveal to me, you spineless, wandering fool, who gave birth to you? What are your children? Who are your enemies? Who will bring you to ruin? And despondency, under coercion, may be imagined to answer, "With those that are sincerely under obedience

I have nowhere to abide, but with those who provide a dwelling place for me, I reside quietly. I have a multitude of mothers, sometimes indifference of the soul, sometimes neglect of heavenly things, at times undue difficulties. My children, who dwell with me are, wandering, disobedience to one's director, forgetting the eventual judgment, and at times reneging on an oath. My enemies, who have now chained me, are singing psalms and manual work. My opponent is the remembrance of death. Prayer with an expectation of coming blessings, is my complete destruction. Who begat prayer? Ask her."

This is the thirteenth triumph. The one who has truly achieved it has become skilled in goodness.

Step 14 - On the Boisterous, yet Evil Lord, the Belly.

We have been struggling with ourselves in everything which we have discussed, and this is particularly so when we speak about the belly. For I doubt if anyone can free themselves of this lord before resting in their tomb.

Gluttony is the belly's hypocrisy. Because when it is gorged it protests of scarcity, and when it is full and close to bursting it complains that it is hungry.

Gluttony is the master of garnishes, the origin of tasty dishes. You plug one spurt, and it appears somewhere else. You plug that, and another one appears.

Gluttony is an illusion of the eyes, which takes in moderation but desires to consume everything immediately.

Being gorged with food is the father of sexual immorality, but death of the belly is the instrument of chastity.

The one who plays with a lion many times tames it, but the one who cherishes the body will make it ever more reckless.

The Jew delights on Sabbath days, and at feasts, and a gluttonous monk rejoices on Saturdays and Sundays. He counts down the days until Easter, and he readies his food many days beforehand. The servant of his stomach carefully plans out what foods he will rejoice in at the feast, but the servant of God meditates on the graces he will be honored with.

When a stranger visits, the servant of the belly is full of love, on account of gluttony alone, and he thinks that laxness for himself is purely for the comfort of his brother. When there are others present, he supposes it is permissible for him to consume wine, and considering it best to hide his virtue, he ends up a slave of the passion.

Many times pride opposes gluttony, and they argue with each other for the miserable monk as if for an acquired slave. The one will encourage him to take it easy, while the other suggests that he should let his virtue be victorious. The discerning monk will reject both, at the proper time removing each passion with the other.

So long as the body is carnal, let us be moderate at all times in all places. When it has been mollified (which I think is impossible for the living), then we should hide our achievement.

I have observed old priests beguiled by demons, on feast days allowing young men who were not their disciples to partake of wine and everything else. If those who make such allowances are well attested in the Lord (that is, they are spiritual), then may we also allow ourselves their liberties. However, if they are careless, let us give no consideration to their permission, particularly when we are caught up in the heat of the battle with our carnal nature.

When Evagrius was afflicted by an evil spirit, he imagined that he was the wisest of monks both in mind and deed. However, the miserable man was misled, and became the most idiotic man in many regards. For he said, "When we long for a variety of foods, then restrict it to bread and water." To give this instruction is like telling a child, "Ascend the full ladder in one step." And so, discarding this rule, let us say, "When we long for a variety of foods, it is better to ask what is appropriate for the body's nature. So, let us also use trickery when struggling with our crooked enemy. And barring a particularly hard conflict, let us first restrict our intake of fatty foods, and then from warming our food, and only after this from those things which make our food pleasant. If possible, allow your stomach to have satisfying and easily digestible food, so as to gratify its unending hunger by sufficiency, so that we be rescued from too much desire, as from a disease, by quick digestion. If we examine the issue, we will discover that many of the foods which inflame the belly also inflame the body.

Mock the demon, who after your meals, suggests you should eat your next meal later in the future, for tomorrow at the ninth hour he will modify the plan of the previous day.

One type of moderation is proper for those whose behavior is exemplary, and another type for those who are weak. For the first, a motion of the body is an indication for the need of restraint, but the latter have such motions regularly being afflicted by them until their death. The first desire to keep their mind at peace, and the latter entreat God by spiritual mourning and grief.

Those who are perfected find their joy and comfort in possessing dispassion over all things. The ascetic-warrior delights in the heat of the struggle, but the slave to the passions delights in the feast of feasts, Easter (Pascha).

The glutton dreams solely of food and treats, but the mind of the one who grieves dreams only of judgment and punishment.

Control your belly before it controls you, then you will be confident in your ability to keep yourself in check with the help of disgrace. Those who have fallen into this terrible hole understand what I have said, but those who are eunuchs have not encountered it.

Let us cut back on our belly by the remembrance of the future fire. For there are some who were slaves of their belly and have severed their organs, and they perished in a double death. If we investigate this subject, we will discover that it is the belly alone which is the source of all human shipwrecks.

The mind of one who fasts prays solemnly, but the mind of an unrestrained person is glutted with unchaste idols.

Satisfaction of the belly dries the fountain of tears, but when the belly is dry it produces these waters.

He who delights in his stomach and desires to vanquish the spirit of sexual immorality, is like one who attempts to extinguish a flame with oil.

By being frugal with the stomach the heart is made humble. However, by satisfying the belly the mind becomes arrogant.

Keep a guard over yourself at morning, midday and during the hour before partaking of food, and you will understand the benefit of fasting. In the morning, the mind jumps and chases one thing after another. When the sixth hour of the day draws near it settles down, and by the time the sun sets it is completely calm.

Limit your belly and you will no doubt secure your mouth, because the tongue is empowered by a surfeit of food. Battle with all your strength against your belly and hold it back solemnly. If you work a little, the Lord will quickly labor with you.

Leather wine-skins can hold much more liquid if they are flexible, but if they are neglected they will not hold as much. He who overburdens his belly with food, swells his innards, but the one who battles with his belly makes it smaller. When the inside has contracted, then we cannot consume as much, and in the future we will naturally become fasters.

Many times thirst is overcome by thirst, however it is difficult or impossible to overcome hunger with hunger. When the belly overtakes you, control it with work. But if this is not possible due to illness, battle against it with vigil. If your eyes become weighty, do manual work, but if you are not sleepy, do not do manual work, because it is impossible to fill the mind with God and Mammon, which is to say, God and manual work.

Understand that many times a demon dwells in the belly and does not permit a man to be satiated even if he has consumed all Egypt and swallowed the whole river Nile. And once he has partaken of food, this defiled spirit departs and sends instead the spirit of sexuality, describing to him our state of being, and saying, "Seize him, seize him. For when the belly has been filled he will not be able to withstand you." With a smile the spirit of sexuality arrives and having chained us up hand and foot with sleep, does with us

everything he pleases, polluting the soul and body with filth, dreams and discharges.

It is astonishing to behold the spiritual mind polluted and overshadowed by the carnal lusts, and likewise the immaterial spirit cleansed and purified by clay.

If you have made a vow to Christ to travel the straight and narrow path, control your belly, for by satisfying and expanding it, you are breaking your oath. Take heed and you will hear Him saying, "Broad and wide is the path of gluttony that leads to the ruin of fornication, and there are many who enter through it, because narrow is the gate and difficult is the path of fasting that leads to a pure life and there are few who enter by it."

The ruler of the demons is the fallen Lucifer, and the ruler of the passions is gluttony.

When you sit at a table that is overloaded with food, think of the grave and judgment, because even with this you will only slightly control this passion. In tasting of your drink, always bring to mind the vinegar and gall of your Lord, and you will no doubt be either moderate, or you will groan and make your mind humble.

Do not be tricked, you will not be saved from Pharaoh, and you will not behold the heavenly Passover, unless you regularly consume the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. For the bitter herbs are the constraint and toil of fasting and the unleavened bread is the mind that is free of pride. Let it be joined to your very breath, the words of him who said, "But I, when demons vexed me, clothed myself with sackcloth and humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer cleaved to the bosom of my soul."

Fasting is a struggle against nature and the removal of all that stimulates the palate, the inhibition of lust, the excision of evil thoughts, liberation from dreams, purity in prayer, the radiance of the soul, the defense of the mind, liberation from blindness, the gateway of remorse, humble sorrow, joyful remorse, a break from

speaking, an agent for stillness, a watch for obedience, alleviation of sleep, health of body, a means to dispassion, a clearing of sins, a door to Paradise and its joy.

Let us inquire of this enemy, or indeed this prince of our missteps, this gateway of the passions, the stumbling block of Adam, this destruction of Esau, this ruin of the Israelites, this disgrace of Noah laying naked, this deliverer of Gomorrah, this rebuke of Lot, this destruction of the sons of Eli, this leader to corruption. Let us inquire from him: Where was he born? Who are his children? What defeats him? And who is able to crush him?

Tell us, torturer of all humans, who has purchased everyone with the money of greed, "How did you get entry to us? After you come what do you normally generate? And what is the path of your departure?

Gluttony, disturbed by these rebukes, raging in a fury against us and frothing at the mouth, answers, "Why are you, who are my subjects, overcoming me with rebukes? How is it you are attempting to put distance between us? I am chained to you by your very nature. The gateway to me is the very matter of food. The occasion of my insatiability is regular practice. The corner-stone of my vice is repeated habit, apathy of soul and forgetting death. How do you propose discovering the names of my children? If I enumerate them, they will be more than the sand of the shore. However, I will tell you at least the names of the first born among my beloved children. My first-born son is the agent of sexual immorality. After him is hardness of heart and then drowsiness. From me comes an ocean of evil thoughts, waves of dirt, depths of impurity that are unknown and lack names. My daughters are sloth, chattiness, close association in speaking, joking, flippancy, disobeying, a hard neck, being difficult, talking back, insensibility, bondage, pride, vainglory, arrogant boasting, after which comes impure prayer, distracted thoughts, and many times sudden misfortune, which is caught up with depression, the most vile of all

my daughters. The remembrance of wrongs hinders me but does not overcome me. The remembrance of death is always against me, but there is nothing coming from men that will bring me to ruin. The one who has the Comforter abiding in him prays to Him in opposition to me, and the Comforter, when entreated, does not permit me to behave passionately. But those who have not partaken of His gift without fail seek their comfort in my sweetness."

The mastery over this sin is a brave one. He who is capable, let him go quickly to dispassion and to the highest level of purity.

Step 15 - On Incorruptible Chastity and Purity Which the Corruptible Achieve Through Labor and Perspiration

That raging mad, mistress gluttony has just told us that her child is conflict against bodily purity. And this should not astonish us since that forefather of old, Adam, teaches us this as well. Because if he had not been conquered by his belly he would have remained ignorant as to the existence of a wife. This is the reason why those who abide by the first commandment do not succumb to the second transgression. And they remain the children of Adam being ignorant of what became of Adam after his fall. However, they are brought a little lower than the angels (being under the curse of death). And this has been done to stop evil from becoming immortal, so says the one who is called the theologian.

Chastity means that we clothe ourselves with the angelic nature. Purity is the long sought-after dwelling place of Christ and the heaven on earth of the heart. Innocence is the supernatural rejection of nature, which implies that a mortal and corrupt body is struggling with the heavenly spirits in an amazing way.

The one who is pure casts out love with love and is able to quench the carnal flame by the spiritual fire (The Holy Spirit).

Purity is the word that is present in all the virtues.

The one who is chaste even when asleep has no motions or changes of any sort in his body.

The one who is chaste has regularly achieved perfect indifference to variation in bodies.

The order and the measure of complete and total purity is to be equally administered to both animate and inanimate beings, rational and irrational.

No one who is fully exercised in purity should credit himself with its achievement, because it is impossible for someone to overcome his own inclinations. When one has overcome nature, it should be understood that this is the work of the one who is beyond nature itself. For with certainty, the weaker yields to the stronger.

The start of purity is the denial of having any association with evil thoughts and dreamless discharges. The middle of purity are motions from an surfeit of food, but without involving dreams and discharges. The final state of purity is the mortification of the body after the mortification of evil thoughts.

Blessed indeed is the one who has obtained sincere apathy to every body, color and beauty.

It is not the one who has preserved his clay unpolluted that is chaste, but the one whose members are subordinate to his soul.

Excellent is the one who is able to continue at liberty from passion even when touched. But still more excellent is the one who is untainted by sights, and who has overcome the fiery flame kindled by the beautiful things of the world by reflection on the beautiful things of heaven.

The one who chases off this mongrel by prayer is like someone struggling with a lion. The one who tames it by his struggle is one still chasing his enemy. But he who has finally removed its appeal, even though he still has his carnal nature is like one who has already risen from the grave.

If the mark of sincere chastity is to be indifferent to dreams when sleeping, then it is truly a sign of sensuality to be liable to discharges from such thoughts when awake.

The one who struggles with this enemy by bodily toil and sweat is like the one who has bound his enemy to a withered branch. However, the one who struggles against him with moderation, vigil and alertness is like one who puts a leash on him. He who resists

him by humbleness, freedom from anger and thirst is like who has destroyed his adversary and buried him in the sand. And when I say sand I mean humility, for it yields no grain for the passions but only dirt and ashes.

One is able to keep this torturer chained by conflict, another by meekness, and another by a heavenly revelation. The first is like the morning star, the second is like the full moon, and the third one is like the fiery sun. They all have their abode in the heavens. And from the morning dawn comes sunlight, and in the sunlight the sun dawns. So too with what has been written, we can ponder on it and bring new things to light.

A fox feigns being asleep, and the body and demons feign innocence. The first do it to mislead a bird, the latter to ruin a soul.

Over the course of your life, never trust your body, and do not depend on it until you are present before Christ.

Do not rely on temperance never to stumble. The one who never ate was expelled from heaven.

There are wise men who have correctly defined renunciation, writing that it is violence to the body and a battle with the belly.

With novices, stumbles often occur due to luxury. With intermediates it occurs because of pride, and also from the same reasons that cause beginners to fall. But with those that are drawing near to perfection, it is from judging their neighbor alone.

Some have lauded those who are eunuchs by nature since they are saved from a martyrdom of the body. However, every day I praise those who have made themselves eunuchs by cutting off their evil thoughts as though with a sword.

I have observed people who have stumbled involuntarily, and I have observed people who desire to fall but cannot. I pitied the latter all the more than those who stumble every day, because they long for foul odor even though they are impotent.

The one who falls is worthy of pity, but even more pitiable is the one who causes another to stumble, since he is responsible for both, and he bears the burden of the pleasure enjoyed by the other one as well.

Do not suppose you can defeat the demon of sexual immorality by debating with him, because with physical nature on his side, he has the superior argument.

The one who has committed himself to struggle against his carnal nature and overcome it by himself fights in vain. Because unless the Lord wrecks the house of the body and builds the house of soul, the man who longs to destroy it has kept vigil and fasted in vain.

Bring to the Lord the frailty of your nature, fully admitting your own inability, and you will obtain, without even knowing it, the grace of chastity.

In those who are sensual (as a certain person who had experienced this passion personally related to me after he conquered it) there is a sense of a certain kind of love for creatures and a sort of immodest and heartless spirit which publicly asserts what it feels in the senses of the heart. The spirit engenders a sense of physical hurt in the heart, violently as if from a burning stove. As a consequence, the one suffering does not fear God, scorns the remembrance of punishment as if nothing, disregards prayer, and while in the very act looks upon the body as though it were a lifeless corpse or stone. He is like a person that is out of his mind, in a stupor, forever drunk with longing for bodies, rational and irrational. And if the days of this spirit were not reduced, not a single life would be saved, arrayed as it is with this body of clay, mixed with blood and dirty water. How could this be? For everything which is created desires insatiably that which is like it: blood longs for blood, the worm yearns for a worm, clay for clay. Does not the flesh also yearn for flesh? But those of us that check our nature and long instead for the Kingdom attempt various schemes to trick this enemy. Blessed are those who have not fallen into the struggle

portrayed above. Let us pray that we may forever be saved from such a struggle, because those who fall into the ditch we have described fall far beneath those who are ascending and descending by means of the ladder. To climb out of such a ditch and to merely reach the start of the ascent requires them to undergo much perspiration and intense asceticism.

We should ponder on the issue of whether our spiritual foes each have their own duty to fulfill when they are set in battle array against us, just like in a war. Amazingly enough, we find they do. When I meditated on those who were tested, I saw that there were stumbles of differing severity. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The devil often has the practice when battling with ascetics and those dwelling in solitude, of employing all his zeal, all his wiles, all his trickery, all his skill and aim, to attack them by unnatural ways, and not only through what is natural. There are ascetics who meet with women, and are not tempted through lust. And they have at times thought of themselves as blessed, not understanding, miserable things, that since there was a worse fall prepared for them, the lesser one was not needed.

I suppose that our vile killers have the practice of overwhelming and enticing us feeble creatures with vices against our nature for the following reasons. One, that we may have ample means of stumbling. And two, that we may get a more severe punishment. What we have described was discovered by personal experience by one who had earlier been in charge of donkeys and had been delivered over to the wild donkeys and was horribly disgraced. This occurred even though he had earlier been fed with bread from heaven, but then was dispossessed of this blessing. And what is perhaps most amazing is that following his repentance, our originator Abba Antony, after sorely lamenting, said about him, "An excellent pillar has fallen down." But that sage hid the nature of the fall, for few understand that sexual immorality of the body is

possible even without relations involving another body. There is present in us a type of death, and a terrible sin, which is always carried about inside, particularly during our younger years.

However, I dare not to speak about these things for my hand is constrained by the one who said, "The things which are performed by them in private are disgraceful to speak, write or hear about."

This, my beloved enemy, the flesh, and yet not mine alone, was described of as death by Paul: "Who will save me from this body of death?" Another theologian calls it a passion-loving, servile and nocturnal foe. At one point I wanted to know why it was described by such names. If the carnal nature is death, as we stated earlier, whosoever overcomes it surely will not die. But who is the one that will live and not taste death in his corrupt flesh?

I request that you ponder on this question: which person is better? The one who dies and then after rises again, or he who never dies? Those who praise the latter are duped, for Christ died and rose. However, the one who praises the first suggests that for those who fall, or rather die, there is no need of despair.

So long as grief and anguish are present, we will not give ourselves over to any additional vices. However, when grief and anguish are extinguished, then the adversary speaks to us again about the mercy of God.

The Lord, who is incorruptible and incorporeal, delights in the chastity and purity of our body. However, there is nothing which so delights the demons, some say, as the foul smell of sexual immoral behavior, and no vice brings them so much joy as the corruption of the body.

Chastity means that we clothe ourselves with the likeness of God, as much as is possible for a human.

The mother of all sweetness is earth and water, and the mother of purity is stillness and obedience. Detachment of the body is achieved by stillness, and has many times been upset by

intercourse with the world, but what is achieved through obedience is sincere and secure everywhere.

I have observed arrogance lead to humility, and I call to mind the one who said, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" The stone and the fruit of pride is a fall, but many times a fall is an opportunity to be made humble, for those who desire to use it for their benefit.

The one who desires to conquer the demon of sexual immorality with gluttony and gorging is like a man who tries to extinguish a fire using oil.

The one who tries to end this war through moderation alone, is like a man who has the notion of evading the open sea by swimming with only one hand. Join a humble nature to moderation, because if one lacks the first the latter is worthless.

The one who sees that a passion is overcoming him, should begin taking up arms to do battle with this vice, particularly if the enemy is a local one, because if this passion is not brought to ruin we cannot achieve any gain from overcoming the other passions. Having killed this Egyptian, we will surely perceive God in the bush of humility.

When being tempted I have sensed that this wolf was creating inexpressible gladness, weeping and comfort in my soul, but it was all fake, so I naively thought I was receiving fruit from this and not injury.

All other vices that one does are outside the body, but the one who gives himself over to impurity defiles his own body. This is surely due to the fact that our very flesh is stained by defilements, which do not occur with other vices.

I would like to inquire, why with all the other sins we speak of them as stumbling, but when we learn that someone has been involved in fornication we say with remorse, "Such and such has fallen."

A fish quickly eludes a hook and a carnal soul flees solitude.

When the devil desires to bind two people to one another with a disgraceful bond, he labors on the dispositions of the two, and then kindles the flame of lust.

Those who are given to sensuality will often appear compassionate, merciful, and inclined to remorse, while those who are concerned with purity often do not appear to have these graces in the same measure.

A certain educated man once asked me a weighty question, "What is the most serious sin, apart from murder and apostasy?" And when I replied, "To sink into heresy," he inquired, "Why is it then that the catholic church accepts heretics who have genuinely anathematized their heresy, and deems them worthy to receive the Mysteries. But the one who has fallen into fornication is not readily accepted, even though he admits and disowns his sin. For the Apostolic Constitutions command that he be barred from the Mysteries for several years?" I was confounded by this question and it continues to baffle me.

In discerning between joys that we feel while singing psalms, let us study, meditate on and watch what approaches us from the demon of fornication, and that which proceeds from the words of the Holy Spirit and from the grace and force within them.

Young man, do not fall short in knowledge of yourself. I have observed men pray with all their being on behalf of their loved ones, who really were simply doing so under the impulse of the spirit of fornication. But they supposed they were acting in fulfillment of the law of love.

The body is polluted by touch alone. Nothing is so hazardous as this sense. Remember the one who covered his hand with his cassock when he was about to bear his ill mother, and mortify your hand to material and immaterial objects, both with your own body and another's.

I suppose that one should not refer to anyone as a saint in a true sense, until his body has changed into pure holiness, if such a change is possible at all.

When we are reclining on our bed let us be particularly wary and alert, because at that point our mind battles with the demons outside of our body, and if it is carnal, it quickly becomes a deserter.

Ever have the remembrance of death and the repetition of the Jesus Prayer with you as you go to sleep and let them remain with you when you rise. You will find nothing else as good as these aids when you sleep.

Some suppose that conflict and discharges during sleep only come from eating, but I have seen people who are gravely sick and fast severely also given over to these forms of corruption. One time I inquired from one of the most skilled and honorable monks concerning this, and the holy man described it to me quite clearly, "Discharges while we sleep," said that excellent man, "are from a surfeit of food and from a lax life. They also happen because of our arrogance, when we take pride that we have not had these discharges for some time. They also come from condemning our neighbor. The last instances," he continued, "can even happen to those who are ill." But it may be that all three can happen. If anyone does not see any of these reasons in himself, he is blessed to be free from passion. But if this still occurs then it happens purely from the envy of the demons and God permits it for a period of time so that, after an innocent accident, he will receive true humility.

No one should get into the practice of meditating during the day on the visions seen while sleeping. For the goal of the demons in suggesting this, is to pollute us while we are awake by having us dwell on our dreams.

Again let us listen to another trick of our enemies. In the same way that rotten food brings about sickness in the body after a period of time, or several days, so this occurs with those things that corrupt

the soul. I have observed those who have surrendered themselves to a lax life and do not immediately sense the attacks of their foes. I have observed others talk and share meals with women and have absolutely no evil thoughts. But then they were tricked and incited to be lax and to suppose they were secure and at peace. Then without warning they fell into ruin in their cells. Oh the carnal and spiritual ruin that befalls us when we are alone! The tempter knows this full well. But the one who is not tempted need not understand.

During these circumstances the best remedies for us are: sackcloth, ashes, standing throughout the night, hunger, wetting the tongue only in measure when thirsty, living in the tombs, and most importantly having a humble of heart, and taking advantage, if one is available, of a spiritual director or cautious brother, who can act as a spiritual elder to help us. But I would be amazed if someone can rescue his ship from the open ocean by himself.

The same sin can bring a punishment a hundred times harsher for one person compared to another, depending on the state, disposition, setting, progress and many other factors.

Once, someone related to me a case involving an exceptionally high level of purity. He told me, "A certain man, upon beholding an attractive body, praised the Great Creator, and from this one glance he was brought to a love of God and a spring of tears. It was fantastic to see how something which would have been the ruin of most, was for such a one the unnatural occasion of a crown." If a person regularly acts thus and has similar emotions on similar circumstances, then he has risen eternal even before the general resurrection.

May we be directed by the same principle in singing songs and hymns. For those that love God are brought to divine merriment, to holy love and to weeping by both worldly and spiritual tunes, but those who love pleasure the converse is true.

As we have discussed previously, some people living as solitaries are subject to much more brutal assaults from their foes. And small wonder, for the demons dwell in such locations. For the Lord in His concern for our salvation has pushed them off into the deserts and the depths of hell. The demons of sexual immorality violently attack the hermit in order to force him to return to the world, as if he had derived no benefit from dwelling in the desert. Demons stay away from us while we dwell in the world, so that we may remain conversing with worldly-minded people, for we are not assaulted there. So we should keep in mind that the setting in which we are assaulted in is the location in which we will be battling in a harsh war with the enemy. For if we are not struggling, the enemy is showing us that he is our ally.

When we are present in the world for some good cause, we are shielded by the hand of God, perhaps by the prayer of our spiritual father, so that the Lord may not be blasphemed by us. At times we are shielded from harm by our apathy and by having had long exposure to the things present in the world and the topics of discourse, and all its other movements. But sometimes it is because the demons withdraw from us of their own will and leave us only the demon of conceit who is able to replace the rest.

Listen to yet another scheme and snare of that adversary, all you who desire to be established in chastity, and watch out for it. One who had gained experience dealing with these wiles related to me that the demon of carnality would often hide himself entirely, and during a time when a monk was sitting or chatting with women, he would propose to him great godliness, and maybe even weeping, and would suggest teaching them about the remembrance of death, judgment and purity. Then the unfortunate woman, being tricked by his words and fake piety, would rush to this wolf, as if to a shepherd. Then with time when acquaintance blossomed into closeness, the poor monk would undergo a fall.

Let us by all possible means keep away from either gazing upon or hearing of that fruit which we have sworn not to partake. It is foolish to suppose that we are better than the Prophet David, for that is impossible.

Purity deserves such exalted praise that some of the Fathers dared to call it independence from passion.

There are some who say that those who have tasted sin can never be called pure. To dispute this point I would say if someone truly desires it, it is simple enough to graft a good olive branch onto a wild olive tree. But if the keys of heaven had been given to one who had always been chaste, then perhaps those who make such an assertion would be correct. But may they be disgraced by the one who had a mother-in-law, and was still pure enough to receive the keys to the Kingdom.

The serpent of carnality has many faces. With those who lack experience with vice, he plants the thoughts of taking on one ordeal, and then ceasing. But this wily foe then suggests to those who have attempted one trial, to try yet another by the remembrance of their fall. Many people who lack experience, sense no struggle within themselves, simply because they cannot discern what is evil. But the experienced, since they are familiar with this abhorrence, endure tribulation and fight. But many times the converse also occurs.

When we awake from our sleep in a calm and peaceful mood, we are being privately assisted by the holy angels, in particular if before we went to sleep we prayed and kept vigil. But at times we awaken being sullen and this is the consequence of nightmares and fantasies.

I have observed the evil in me lifted up on high and towering above and raving and frenzied just like the cedars of Lebanon. And as I recovered with moderation, this rage was not there as before, and I

made lowly my thoughts and searched for him, and I could not discover his dwelling, not a single mark of it.

The one who has overcome his body has overcome nature itself. And the one who has overcome nature has been exalted above nature, and has become a little lower than the angels.

It is not extraordinary for the incorporeal to battle with the incorporeal. But it is extraordinary for one clothed in the material, and struggling with this antagonistic and wily matter, to drive off incorporeal enemies.

The good Lord shows his concern for us in that the brazenness of women is moderated by timidity, as if by a bridle. For if women were to chase after men, nobody would be saved.

According to the judgment made by the Fathers, a distinction is set between various things, such as attraction, or relation, or assent, or enslavement, or striving, or what is known as passion in the soul. And these blessed men define attraction as the imagined image, or likeness which becomes implanted in the heart after being seen for the first time. Relation is conversation with whatever has shown itself, joined with passion or dispassion. And assent is the movement of the soul to whatever has been shown to it, joined with joy. But enslavement is a violent and undesired violation of the heart, or a fixed union with what has been presented to it, which ruins our good estate. Striving, by their definition in strength equal to the opposing force, which either conquers or succumbs to loss according to the soul's longing. They specify passion in a particular way as that which hides uneasy in the soul for a period of time, and by its close association with the soul leads it to habit, a self brought-on complete abandonment. Among these problems the first does not have sin, the second sometimes, the third may have sin depending on the state of the athlete. Striving can lead to crowns or punishments. Enslavement is judged depending on if it happens at the time of prayer or at a different time. It is judged one way in situations which are not as important, and in another way when bad

thoughts are involved. However, passion is condemned in every situation and requires either repentance or a change of future behavior. So it is that the one who sees the first attraction dispassionately slices off with a single strike all the others.

Among the more exact and wise Fathers there is talk of a more subtle problem. This is a concept which is referred to as a snap of the mind. Its feature is this: without time passing, with no word or image, it suddenly presents a passion to its prey. There is nothing quicker than this in the visible world, or more indistinguishable in the spiritual world. It reveals itself in the soul by a mere remembrance with which the soul lacks the time to dwell on it. Since it does not proceed with time, and is not joined to any image, it is impossible to examine, and in certain instances is unknown to the individual. If someone, with the aid of lamentation is capable of seeing such subtlety, he can detail to us how a soul is capable with only the eye, by a quick glance, or a touch with the hand, or when listening to a song, or without any concept in the mind, to commit the sin of impurity.

There are some who state that passions assault the body from sexually immoral thoughts. But some say the opposite: that bad thoughts come from motions of the body. The first state that if the mind had not first tread the path, the body would never have followed after it. The latter conclude that the animosity of carnal passion supports their theory, stating that many times evil thoughts come into the heart as a consequence of a beautiful sight, or a touch of the hand, or from the fragrance of perfume, or listening to pleasant speech. If someone is able, with the help of the Lord, may he explain this, because to understand these issues is essential and helpful for those abiding in the active life. However, for those that are exercising themselves in virtue with a simple heart, issues like this have no importance. For not everybody has understanding, and neither does everyone have the breastplate of blessed innocence to fight the machinations of the wicked spirits.

There are some passions which are able to move from the body to the soul, and others perform the reverse. The latter occurs with people that live in the world, but the first occur only with those dwelling as monks, because of the scarcity of provocations coming from outside the body. Concerning this topic I will only state: "You will seek knowledge from wicked men and you will not find it."

When we have battled a good deal with this demon, who is the partner of vileness, and cast it from our heart, tormenting it with the rock of fasting and the blade of a humble nature, then this vile one like some sort of worm conceals itself in our members and attempts to pollute us, tricking us with unseasonable motions.

Those who are dominated by the demon of pride especially suffer by this. This occurs when their hearts cease to be regularly concerned with polluted thoughts, so that they become susceptible to the passion of arrogance. To be fully assured of the veracity of what was stated, at the point they have gained a certain degree of pious stillness, let them privately study themselves. Then they will surely discover there are some thoughts which are hidden deep in their heart like a serpent in a pile of manure, hinting that they have advanced in attaining a greater purity of heart through their own toil and labor. Miserable fools! They do not consider the saying, "What have you that you did not receive as a gift, either from God, or by the help and entreaties of other people?" And thus may they examine their own dealings, and may they toss the serpent spoken of above from their heart in haste, destroying it through a humble nature, so that when they have cast it off, they will remove their outer garment of skin (the passions) and like innocent children sing to the Lord the victorious song of chastity, only if, when they are exposed, they do not discover they are bare of humility and free from ill-will which is normal for children.

This demon, even more than the other ones mentioned, looks for ripe opportunities, and at the moment we are unable to pray in

opposition to it, then the ungodly beast strikes up a battle against us.

Those who have not been able to attain sincere heartfelt prayer can find support through violence in prayer with the body. By this I mean extending the hands, striking ones chest, earnestly lifting up ones eyes to the heavens, profound moaning, many prostrations. However, it may be that they are unable to do this because of other people nearby. The demons particularly like to do battle with them in these moments. And since we are not powerful enough to hold them off by strength of the mind and the unseen power of prayer, we surrender to our foes. If you can, remove yourself a certain distance. Conceal yourself for a time in some private place. Lift up the eyes of your soul, and if you are able, your physical eyes as well. Without letting your arms move hold them in the form of a cross, so that you might disgrace and overcome your Amalek. Shout to Him who is powerful to deliver you, without subtle words use a humble entreaty, using this as your introduction: "Have mercy on me, because I am feeble." Then you will come to understand by experience the strength of the Most Exalted, and with unseen aids you will invisibly push back the unseen ones. The one who adapts himself to fight battles by these means will in time be able to rout his enemies purely through spiritual means, for the latter is compensated by God to those who practice the former, and for good reason.

In an assembly where I was, I perceived that one of the more eager brothers was being bothered by bad thoughts, due to the fact he could not find a good place for private prayer. So he set out, as if physically forced, to a location which was suitable for his aim, and there he prepared himself for battling against the enemy with prayer. When I rebuked him because he choose a filthy location, he answered me, "In a dirty spot I prayed to banish dirty thoughts in order to be cleansed of all uncleanliness."

Every demon will attempt to cloud our mind, so as to propose what they want. Because so long as the mind does not close its eyes, we will not be plundered of its wealth. But the demon of sexual immorality attempts this more than the others. Many times, after clouding our mind, which directs our actions, it suggests and pushes us in the company of others to do those things that only the truly mad do. Then later on when the mind is composed we are very much embarrassed by our vile deeds, speech and motions not only from those who saw us but also from ourselves, and we are astonished at our former dumbness. Many times, merely by deliberating on their past actions men have ceased from this vice.

Expel the foe when he impedes prayer, contemplation or watchfulness after you have sinned. Remember the one who said, "Since the soul grieved by the memory of former sins troubles me, I will provide relief from her foes."

Who has overcome his carnal nature? It is the one who has broken his heart. And who is the one that has broken his heart? It is he who has denied himself. For how is it possible not to be broken when you have put to death your will?

There is a passionate person even more fervent than the passionate, and he will also acknowledge his defilements with joy and delight. Polluted and disgraceful movements of the heart are often formed by the one that tricks the heart, the demon of sexual immorality. But moderation and simply ignoring them is the remedy.

However, I am at a loss as to what practice or discipline I can use to shackle this companion. What example from the passions can I use to judge him? Before I can tie him up he is free, and before I can judge and punish him we have been reconciled and I have abased myself so that I show mercy to him. How is it possible to detest the one who by nature I love? How am I able to be at liberty from the one to whom I am eternally tied? How can I flee from the one who will be my companion at the resurrection? How can I transform to immortality that which has a mortal nature? What

debate can I employ against the one who has the argument of nature?

If I should tie him up through fasting, by judging my neighbor I am delivered to him again. If, holding back from condemning others I conquer him, then through arrogance on account of this, I am bested by him again. He is both a friend and an enemy, an aid and a foe, a help and a betrayer. If I am good to him he assaults me. If I wear him out he gets weak. When he is relaxed, he causes trouble. If I turn to leave in disgust, he will not allow it. If I try to mortify him, I put myself in danger. If I knock him down, then I lack the means for acquiring virtues. I welcome him, and I refuse him.

What is this enigma? What is the reason for this mixing of carnal and spiritual? How can I be made up of both an ally and an enemy? Speak to me, speak to me, my companion, my very nature, for I will not ask anyone else so that I might understand you. How can I continue without being hurt by you? How can I stay away from the hazards of my composition? I have already made an oath with Christ to battle with you. How can I triumph over your rule? For I am determined to be your lord.

And the body may answer the soul, "I will never speak to you of things which you do not know, but instead those things which we both understand. Within is my father, conceit. The flame which I feel from outside comes from pleasing me and from ease. The flame inside which burns comes from former comforts and actions. Once I have conceived, I breed sins, and when they are born, they give birth to death or despondency. If you prevent your appetite from eating you have shackled my feet from moving forward. If you are yoked with obedience, you have cast off my yoke. If you become humble, you will strike off my head."

This prize is the fifteenth triumph. The one who has attained it while abiding in the flesh has already died and been resurrected. From here on he will have a foretaste of the coming immortality.

Step 16 - On the Love of Money or Greed

Many wise instructors examine next, after the oppressor just mentioned, the thousand-headed devil of greed. As uneducated as we are, we had no desire to alter the ordering of the educated, and so we have used the same custom and rule. Let us speak briefly about this illness and then cover shortly the cure.

Greed, or avarice, is idolatry, the daughter of a lack of faith, a pretext for illness, a forerunner of old age, a prophecy of drought, an announcer of famine.

Avarice laughs at the Good News, and deliberately commits iniquity. He who possesses love disperses his money. But the one who claims that he lives for both love and money has tricked himself.

He who grieves over himself has also rejected his body, and when the time calls for it, he does not save it.

Never say that you are amassing silver for the poor, because with two mites the Kingdom of Heaven was bought.

A man who was hospitable and an avarice man once met each other, and the latter referred to the other as incomprehensible.

The one who has overcome this passion has removed his anxiety, but the one who is joined to it will never achieve purity of prayer.

The start of avarice is the excuse of charity, and the completion is a loathing of the poor. As long as he is acquiring he is generous, but when the silver is in his hand he stiffens his grip.

I have seen how people of meager means profit themselves by dwelling with the meek, and so forgot their initial poverty.

A monk who is covetous is a foreigner to being idle, and has a regular remembrance of the saying of the Apostle, "Let a lazy man

not eat." And also, "These hands of mine have served me and those who accompanied me.

The sixteenth contest. The one who has achieved this triumph has either acquired love or removed concern.

Step 17 - On Poverty

Being poor is to give up anxiety, a life without worry, an unhindered traveler, a stranger of grief, a faithfulness to the commandments.

An impoverished monk is a king of the world. He has given over his concerns to God and through his trust has received all men as his servants. He will not speak of his want to another, and he takes what comes to him, as if from the hand of the Lord.

The penniless ascetic is the child of detachment and he regards as nothing the things he has. When he becomes a hermit, he considers all things as dung. If he is concerned about anything, he has not yet achieved poverty.

A poor person is spotless when praying, but a greedy man prays to physical images.

Those who are under obedience are foreigners to avarice. For when the body has been rejected, what remains for his own? There is only one course by which they are amiss, which is being prepared to quickly leave and travel from one location to another. I have seen material belongings make monks suffer to stay in one location. But I laud those who are vagabonds for the Lord.

The one who has enjoyed the exalted things quickly scorns the things below. But the one who has not sampled the things that are above, finds delight in material things.

A man who makes himself poor for no purpose will suffer two blows: he misses out on present treasures and future ones.

Let us monks be then as trusting birds, because they have no concerns and they do not gather.

Great is the one who devoutly gives up his material goods, but holy is he who gives up his will. The one will obtain a hundredfold more of either money or graces, but the other will inherit everlasting life.

Waves cannot abandon the sea, and neither do anger and distress leave the greedy.

He who disdains matter, has left arguing and disputes, but the greedy man will fight to the death over a needle.

Undoubting faith casts off concerns, and remembrance of death refuses the body as well.

There was no hint of avarice in Job. So when he lost all his possessions he continued untroubled.

Avarice is called the root of all evil, because it engenders malice, robbery, envy, division, ill-will, tribulation, remembrance of injuries, cruelty, and murders.

There are some who, with a small fire, have burned a great deal of wood. And some have eluded all of the passions just listed with the aid of one virtue, which is detachment. It is born of experience and from a taste of God, and from pondering on the reckoning to be made at our death.

The alert reader will remember the historical account of the mother of evil. When she listed her vile and damned children she said that her second child was the stone of apathy. However, the many-headed snake of worshipping idols hindered me from giving it its own proper spot, for reasons that elude me. However, the wise Fathers set it on the third link of the chain of eight deadly sins. Having spoken enough about the love of money, we purpose now to discuss apathy, the third sickness, even though it was the second child. After this we will dwell briefly on the topic of sleep and vigil, and also childish and cowardly fear, for these shortcomings belong to beginners.

The Seventeenth step. The one who has ascended to it is traveling to Heaven stripped bare of all material possessions.

Step 18 - On Apathy, which is, the Death of the Soul and Mind before the Death of the Body

Apathy in the body and the spirit is a numb feeling, which from a lengthy illness and neglect slips into insensibility.

Apathy is neglect that becomes a regular practice, deadening the mind. It is the birth of conjecture, a trap for eagerness, a noose of bravery, an ignorance of remorse, a gateway to depression, the mother of forgetting, which begets a neglect of the fear of God. Then she incestuously becomes a daughter of her daughter.

The one who is apathetic is a philosopher without a brain, a self-damned critic, a hypocritical windbag, a blind man who instructs others how to see. He speaks about curing an injury, but never ceases aggravating it. He protests of an illness, but does not cease eating what is bad. He prays in opposition to it and then straightaway goes and does the very thing. Then when he has done it, he is annoyed with himself. The vile man is not embarrassed by his own words. "I am committing sin," he yells, and earnestly continues committing it. His mouth prays in opposition to his vice, and his body fights for it. He philosophizes about the topic of death, but acts as if he were going to live forever. He sighs over the division of the soul and body, but dozes on as if he were endless. He speaks of moderation and temperance, but he lives for the consumption of food. He reads about the final judgment and starts to snicker. He reads about arrogance, and is arrogant while reading. He reiterates what he discovered about vigil and then falls asleep immediately. He lauds prayer, but flees from it as if it were the plague. He praises obedience, but he is the first one to disobey. He praises detachment, but he is not embarrassed to be bitter and to struggle for a piece of cloth. When he gets angry he quickly becomes caustic, and then he is indigent at his caustic nature. He does not sense that after each ruin he is succumbing to another. After he overeats he repents, but then after a period of time he does the same thing. He praises stillness and then lauds it with a

flood of words. He instructs on the topic of humility, and while teaching often becomes angry. Awakening from passion he groans, and nodding his head, he once again gives into passion. He derides jesting, and instructs on lamenting while smiling. In front of others he reproaches himself for being arrogant, and in reproaching himself he is only looking for praise for himself. He gazes at the faces of others with passion, and speaks about purity of heart. While spending time in the world, he lauds the life of solitude. Without realizing it, he embarrasses himself. He praises charity, and disdains beggars. At all times he is own adversary, but he has no desire to rouse himself, I will not say, "he is unable."

I have observed numerous people just like this listen to the topic of death and the fearsome judgment and weep, and with teardrops still on their cheeks they earnestly go their dinner. I was astonished how this oppressor, this skunk of gluttony, by total apathy, can become so powerful as to alter even grief.

As much as my ability permits and my understanding allows I have revealed the tricks and snares of this hard, stony, wild and idiotic passion. I lack the endurance to expand on the topic. The one who is experienced and capable in the Lord should not hold back from using treatment on their wounds. For I am not embarrassed to acknowledge my own shortcomings, since I am also ill from this disease. I would not have been able to reveal its trickery and subterfuge by myself if I had not seized hold and retained it, investigating it and forcing it to admit to what has been related previously, and flogging it with the whip of the fear of the Lord and incessant prayer. This is the reason why this oppressor and wicked one said to me, "My servants chuckle when they look upon the dead bodies. When they pray they are stony, rigid, and gloomy. When they look upon the holy altar they have no feeling. When they participate in the Mysteries, it is as if they are consuming regular bread. When I see people moved with remorse, I deride them. From my father I have learned to destroy all good things which are the offspring of bravery and compassion. I am the mother of jesting,

the nursemaid of sleep, the friend of a swollen stomach. When I am revealed I do not show remorse. I go together with false piety.

I was struck by these words of this mad being and inquired about her father, desiring to know her name, and she said, "I have no single set of parents, my conception is a blend and not definite. Satiety feeds me. I grow with time, and a bad habit secures me. He who maintains this practice will never be free from me. Be regular in vigil, reflecting on the final judgment, then maybe I will to some degree release my grip on you. Find out the root cause of me, and then wage war on my mother, for she is not the same in all instances. Frequent the tombs and pray there, and keep the image of them in your heart. But unless you engrave it with the reed pen of fasting, you will never overcome me."

Step 19 - On Sleep, Prayer, and Psalmody in Church

Sleep is a certain condition of nature, a representation of death, a numbing of the senses. Sleep is singular, but like a passion, its causes and occurrences are manifold. That is to say, it starts from nature, from food, from demons, or sometimes from extended and strict fasting, by which the flesh becomes weak and finally yearns for the comfort of sleep.

Just as extended drinking is a custom of habit, so too from habit comes over-sleeping. So we must contend with the matter of sleep, most particularly in the easygoing days of obedience because a habit which is deeply entrenched is difficult to treat.

Let us look and we will find that spiritual trumpet which acts as an outward sign of the collecting of the brothers, but is also a sign for the gathering of our enemies. Indeed there will be some of them who will be present at our bedside, and when we arise they encourage us to lie back down again. "Hold on," they say, "until the initial hymns are concluded, then you should go to church." Others plunge those present at prayer into sleep. Some create sharp, bizarre pains in the belly. Others encourage us to talk in the church. Some incite the mind to bad thoughts. Others encourage us to rest against the wall as if we were worn-out. At times they entangle us in bouts of yawning. Some of them produce waves of giggling during the time of prayer, with the aim of inciting the anger of God against us. Some compel us to rush through the readings or singing, simply from indolence. Others indicate that we should sing more slowly for the enjoyment of it. And at times they sit right on our mouths and close them, so that we are hardly able to open them at all. However, the one who understands that he is standing in the presence of God will be like a post at the time of prayer, and he will pray with profound emotions, and none of the previous mentioned demons will give him trouble.

The truly obedient man often without warning becomes radiant and lifted up during prayer. This contestant was readied and warmed before, by his heart-felt service.

Everyone is able to pray with a congregation, for many it is helpful to pray with just one other companion. Prayer in solitude is possible for only a few.

When singing with many people it is not possible to pray a voiceless prayer of the spirit. Still your mind should be attentive in pondering the words being read or chanted, or you should repeat a certain prayer while you are waiting for the next verse to be chanted.

It is not fitting for anyone to start doing any alternate work, or rather, engage in a diversion, during prayer. For the angel who accompanied Antony the Great instructed him on this clearly.

In the same manner that a furnace tries gold, so also the exercise of prayer tries the Monk's enthusiasm and love for God.

An honorable work. The one who makes it his own draws close to God and drives out the demons.

Step 20 - On Bodily Vigil - How to use it to Achieve Spiritual Vigil and how to Exercise it

Some are present before earthly kings without arms or armor, others hold a staff of the office, and others have shields, and others swords. The first way is much better than the last, for they are often personally familiar with the king and part of the royal entourage. This is also the case with earthly kings.

Now let us examine how we should stand before God our King, when we are present during the prayers in the evening, or during the day or night. For some people during the evening all-night vigil raise their hands in prayer as if they were bodiless and naked of all concern. Others stand during that time singing hymns. Others are more given to reading. And some from feebleness, bravely withstand sleep by laboring with their hands. Others attempt to feel the terror of death, hoping by so doing to feel remorse. Of all of these, the first and last are in all-night vigil for the love of God. The second do what is suitable for a monk. The third go the most basic way. And still God receives and honors the offerings of each one in accord with their aim and ability.

A watchful eye creates a pure mind, but frequent sleep ties up the soul.

A watchful monk is an enemy to sexual immorality, but a sleepy one fornicates with it.

A vigil extinguishes lust, saves from ghostly dreams. A vigil is a tearing eye, a warm heart, a watch over thoughts, a disinterest in food, a calming of passions, a controlling of spirits, a restraining of the tongue, an expulsion of fantasies.

A monk who deprives himself of sleep is a fisher of the mind, and in the quiet of the night he can easily see and trap them.

The monk who loves God, says "Excellent, excellent!" when the bell finally rings for prayer. The indolent one says, "What a pain!"

The setting of the table brings forth the gluttons, but the labor of prayer brings forth the lovers of God. The first prance on beholding the table, but the latter frown.

Extended sleep creates forgetfulness, but a vigil cleanses the memory.

The profit of the farmer is collected on the threshing floor and with the wine-press, but the profit and the wisdom of the monk is collected during the evenings and the night-time when present at prayer and active in spiritual work.

Extended sleep is an unrighteous ally. It plunders the indolent of half their life, and maybe more.

The monk who lacks experience is fully alert in pleasant conversation, but when the time of prayer has come his eyes become heavy.

The indolent monk is well-known and skilled at conversation, but when reading is about to start, he can barely keep his eyes open. At the sound of the trumpet the dead will rise, and when idle conversation is present those who were asleep become alert.

The oppressor, sleep, is a wily companion. When we are satiated with food many times it departs from us, but at times of hunger and thirst it assaults us viciously.

It asserts that we should perform work with our hands during the time of prayer, for it is unable by other means to disrupt the prayers of the attentive.

Initially it comes to struggle with novices so as to make them careless right from the beginning or to pave the way for the demon of sexual immorality.

Until we are free from this we should not ask to be excused from the communal service, for many times embarrassment keeps us

away from dozing. The dog is the foe of the rabbits, and the demon of pride is the foe of sleep.

When the day has finished, the salesman takes a seat and reckons his profit, and the ascetic does the same when the singing of psalms is finished.

When prayer is complete wait attentively, and you will observe that hoards of demons, as if assaulted by us, attempt to overrun us at the end of the prayer with silly fantasies. Sit and attend, you will regard those who are in the practice of seizing the first fruits of the soul.

It is possible that regular contemplation on the verses of the Psalms extends into the time of sleep. It may happen that the demons lodge these passages into our mind so as to lead us to vainglory. I would not have spoken about the third instance, if someone had not compelled me to do so. The soul which has been engaged the entire day, without stopping, with the word of the Lord will love to be involved with it when asleep as well. For this second grace is, in a particular way, a prize for the first and aids us in keeping away from various falls and fantasies.

Step twenty. He who has ascended to it, has brought light into his heart.

Step 21 - On Immature and Childish Faint-heartedness

If you chase after virtue in a monastery or a community, it is unlikely you will be assaulted a great deal by fear. But the one who dwells in solitary locations should strive to avoid being overtaken by that child of pride, and daughter of disbelief, cowardice.

A lack of courage in an immature disposition in an aged, prideful soul. Faint-heartedness is a lack of faith that is a result of expecting the unexpected.

Being afraid is the practice of danger before it happens. Or another way, fear is a quivering feeling of the heart, anxious and worried by unknown dangers. Fear is the loss of resolve.

A vainglorious soul is a servant of faint-heartedness. In vain, it relies on itself, and it is afraid of any sound or shadow of other beings.

Those who grieve for their sins are unaffected by other griefs and are insensible to faint-heartedness, but those that lack courage frequently have mental breakdowns. But this is rather natural, for the Lord justly forsakes the haughty, so that the rest of us will be instructed not to be proud.

Even though all fainthearted people are proud, yet not all who have courage are meek, since even thieves and grave-robbers are often without fear.

Do not falter to go late in the night to those locations where you normally feel afraid. But if you surrender only a small degree to such weakness, then this immature and foolish sickness will age with you. As you go through life, equip yourself with prayer. When you arrive at your destination, stretch out your hands. Scourge your enemies with the name of Jesus, for there is no weapon more powerful in heaven or on earth. When you are free from the

pestilence of fear, glorify Him who has saved you. If you persist in being grateful, He will forever guard you.

In the same way that it is impossible to gratify the belly in one sitting, so it is impossible to conquer fear immediately. It will surrender only to the measure of your grieving. But to the degree that our lamentation fails, we persist in being cowardly.

My hair and my body trembled said Eliphaz, when he described the animosity of the demon. Sometimes the soul, and sometimes the body become cowardly first, and one infects the other with its illness. If this inopportune fear does not infect the soul when the body winces, then the disease is close to being cured. True liberty from fear comes when we earnestly receive all the unseen events in our life with a penitent heart.

It is not due to a location being gloomy and solitary that demons gain power over us, but through emptiness of soul. And through God's providence this occurs so that we may be instructed by it.

The one who has become the Lord's servant will fear only his Master, but the one who is not yet afraid of Him, frequently is frightened by his own shadow.

The body becomes afraid when it is in the presence of an invisible spirit. However, when it is in the presence of an angel, the soul of the humble one is filled with delight. So when we perceive the presence by the effect it has, let us hasten to prayer, because our fair guardian angel has come to pray with us.

The one who has overcome fear has certainly devoted his body and soul to God.

Step 22 - On the Manifold Nature of Vainglory

Some people make a distinction between vainglory and pride and would assign it its own section. Such would assert there are eight principle and deadly sins. However, Gregory the Theologian and other teachers have listed only seven, and I am inclined to agree. For who has overcome vainglory and still has pride? The distinction between them is as between a youth and a man, or between flour and bread. For one is the beginning and the other is the end. So now that the opportunity presents itself let us cover the beginning and the end of the passions, that unholy self-respect. For if someone were to attempt to philosophize in detail on this topic he would be like one who argues about the weight of the winds.

Concerning the form, vainglory is an alteration of nature, a corruption of character, a point of reproach. And regarding its quality, it is a waste of work, a squandering of sweat, a loss of wealth, a child of disbelief, the beginning of pride, a shipwreck in the harbor, an ant on the threshing-floor which, even though it is small, it has plans for taking all one's toil and goods. The ant awaits the harvest of the wheat, and vainglory waits for the collection of the wealth of virtue. For one delights in stealing and other in spending.

The spirit of depression delights at the sight of growing sin, and the spirit of vainglory at the sight of the growing wealth of virtue. The gateway of the first is an abundance of injuries, and the gateway to the second is a treasure of toils.

Look and you will discover profane vainglory growing up to the very tomb in garments, oils, slaves, perfumes and similar such items.

The sun shines its rays on everyone, and vainglory shines on all undertakings. For example, I am vainglorious when I fast, and I am vainglorious again over my discretion when I ease the fast trying to remain unseen. When I am nicely dressed I am conquered by vainglory and when I put on ragged, old clothing I am again

vainglorious. When I converse I am conquered, and when I am quiet again I am conquered. No matter how I toss this prickly-pear, at least one thorn stands up-right.

A person that is vainglorious is a faithful idolater. He seems to honor God, but he desires to please men and not God.

Everyone who engages in attention-seeking behavior is vainglorious. The fast of the vainglorious has no merit and his prayer is useless, because he performs both for the praise of men.

An ascetic who is vainglorious is deceived twice, he tires his body, and he receives no recompense.

Who cannot chuckle at the vainglorious laborer who is present at psalmody and is stirred by one passion to laughter and then to weeping for everyone to see?

Many times God covers from our sight excellences which we have achieved. But he who honors us or, I should say, deceives us, opens our eyes through this acclaim, and once our eyes are opened, our wealth disappears.

The one who flatters you is a slave of demons, an escort to pride, a wrecker of remorse, a destroyer of virtues, a deceiver. Those who praise you mislead you, says the prophet.

People with a lofty spirit take disdain honorably and willingly, but only truly devout and holy people receive praise without injury.

I have observed people grieving who, when honored, rose up in anger, and as if at a communal gathering, one passion gave way to another.

Who among men knows the thoughts of a man, except the spirit that abides within the man? So let those who attempt to honor us to our face be quiet and disgraced.

When you hear that your friend or neighbor has slandered you behind your back or even in your presence, then exhibit love for him and honor him.

It is a good deed to shake off the honor of men from your soul, but to reject the glory of demons is even better.

It is not the one who belittles himself who displays humility, but the one who gives the same love to the person who reviles him.

I have observed the demon of vainglory offering thoughts to one brother, while he shows them to another, and he induces the latter to reveal to the first what is in his mind, and then glorifies him as a mind reader. And at times, that vile creature, even touches the members of the body and produces sensations.

Do not be concerned about him when he asserts that you should become a bishop, or an abbot, or a doctor, for it is hard to repel a dog from the butcher's shop.

When he observes that any have obtained, to some small degree, a contemplative disposition, he quickly suggests that they forsake the desert for the world, saying: "Depart from here to rescue the souls which are falling away."

Ethiopians have one type of face, and statues have another, so too the vainglory of those abiding in a community have a different figure, compared to those who abide in the desert.

Vainglory urges monks who enjoy lightheartedness to wait for guests to arrive and then to leave the cloister to greet them. It urges them to prostrate before them, and even though replete with pride, it fakes humility. It looks at the attitude and voice, and maintains an eye on the hands of the guests so as to receive something from them. It uses the names, "lords" and "patrons" which are full of godliness. To those reclining at the table it urges abstinence, and it censures servants without mercy. It moves those who are lazy when standing up in psalmody to put forth an effort, and those who

lack a voice to become good singers, and the tired to become alert. It lauds the conductor, and requests to be allowed the primary position in the choir. It refers to him as father and master while the visitors are still present.

Vainglory makes proud, those who are favored, but it makes resentful, those who are disregarded.

Vainglory brings disgrace instead of honor, since it creates dishonor for its angry disciples.

Vainglory makes hot-tempered people mild before others.

It has a high aspirations for natural gifts, and by means of them often throws its unhappy servants to their ruin.

I have observed a demon hurt and driven off his own brother. For just at the point a brother had become angry, guests suddenly appeared, and the vile offender resold himself to vainglory. He was not able to serve two passions at the same time.

He who has become a slave to vainglory has a double life. In appearance he dwells with monks, but in his mind he is in the world.

If we earnestly long to please the Heavenly King, we should be zealous to partake of the heavenly glory. The one who has partaken will reject all earthly glory. I would be surprised if anyone could reject the latter unless he had partaken of the first.

Many times after being divested by vainglory, we turn and expose it more skillfully. I have observe some who started spiritual works on account of vainglory, and even though they had a foul start, their end was honorable, because their motive changed.

The one who is boastful about his natural gifts, by which I mean skill, ability to master material, talent in reading, a good pronunciation, keen intelligence and all such talents received from us without effort, never will receive heavenly blessings, since he

who is unfaithful with a few things is also unfaithful and prideful with many.

For the benefit of great dispassion, rich talents, miracle-working and the ability to prophecy, many people wear out their bodies to no effect. They do not understand, poor fools, that it is not by labor as much as by humility which is the mother of such virtues.

The one who requests gifts from God in exchange for his effort has set an unstable foundation. The one who thinks himself an unworthy debtor will hastily and without warning obtain wealth.

Do not trust the winnower when he urges you to show your virtues for the instruction of those who hear. For what will a man gain if he should bring benefit to the entire world, and forgo his own soul? There is nothing which so instructs our neighbor as an honest and humble demeanor and speech, for this acts as a goad to others not to be arrogant. And what can be more helpful than this?

One who possessed the gift of foresight once related to me what he had observed, "At one time," he said, "when I was present in the assembly, the demon of vainglory and the demon of pride came to me and sat down on either side of me. One prodded me on my side with the finger of vainglory and suggested that I tell of some vision or deed which I had accomplished in the desert. But when I had driven him off, telling him, 'Let them be confounded and set at naught who devise evil against me.' Then the demon on my other side immediately told me, 'Good job, good job, you have become excellent at overcoming my brazen mother. Turning to him, I used the rest of the verse and said, 'Let them be confounded and put to shame that say, Well done, Well done.'" And as for my question, "How is vainglory pride's mother?" he answered, "Glory lifts up and inflates, and when the soul is lifted up, then pride grabs hold of it, lifting it up to heaven and then throwing it down to the abyss."

There is honor that comes from the Lord, for He says, "Those who honor Me, I will honor." And there is honor that is offered to us by

means of diabolic tricks. For it is written, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." You may be confident that it is the first type of honor when you see it as hurtful and keep away from it by all means, and keep secret your way of life wherever you travel. But the other will be clear to you when you do something, however insignificant, and then have the desire to be seen by others.

Vile vainglory compels us to imagine that we possess some virtue that we do not have, urging us on by the words, "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good deeds."

The Lord frequently leads those who are vainglorious to a position of meekness by means of disgrace.

The start of overcoming vainglory is the imprisonment of the mouth and the love of dishonor. The middle stage is the driving back of every possible deed of vainglory. And the end, if the abyss has a bottom, involves attempting to act in the presence of others so that we are humiliated without actually feeling it.

Do not cover up your sins with the notion of removing a stumbling block from your neighbor. Although it is not recommended to apply this treatment in every situation, but it will vary given the character of one's sins.

When we summon honor, or when it arrives uninvited from others, or for the sake of vainglory we resolve to follow a particular course of action, we should remember our lamentation and we should consider the holy fear with which we stand before God in prayer alone. By these means we will surely put rude vainglory out of our presence, if we are indeed interested in how to achieve pure prayer. If this is not enough, then we should quickly recall our end. And if this also does not work, then let us at least fear the embarrassment that comes from honor. For the one who elevates himself will be humbled, not only there, but indeed here also.

When our flatters, or our tempters, bring glory upon us, let us quickly bring to mind our many sins, and we will discover ourselves not worthy of such praise either in word or deed.

Certainly there are some prayers of vainglorious people that merit being heard by God. But the Lord has the practice of knowing their prayers beforehand so that their arrogance should not be inflated because their prayers have prevailed.

Those who are simple are not as contaminated with the venom of vainglory, for vainglory is the loss of simplicity and a false manner of life.

Many times it happens that when a worm is fully grown it acquires wings and lifts itself up high. So also when vainglory grows it begets pride, the start and the maturity of all evil.

He who lacks this illness is close to salvation, but the one who is not at liberty from it is distant from the glory of the saints.

The twenty-second step. The one who is not seized by vainglory cannot fall into that vile pride which is so detestable to God.

Step 23a - On Absurd Pride and also on Polluted Profane Thoughts

Pride is apostasy, a creation of the devil, the disdain of others, the mother of condemning others, the child of praise, a mark of barrenness, a departure from divine aid, the forerunner of craziness, the messenger of missteps, a foothold for being possessed by Satan, a wellspring of anger, a gateway to hypocrisy, the foundation of demons, the assistant of vice, the benefactor of being sympathetic, a denial of mercy, an angry interrogator, a ruthless judge, an adversary of God, a root of blasphemy.

The beginning of pride is the maturation of vainglory. The middle involves humiliating our neighbor, the shameless exhibition of our toils, self-satisfaction of the heart, disdain of being exposed. The end is the refusal of help from God, the praising of one's labors, a diabolic nature.

May all of us who desire to keep away from this abyss take heed. This passion finds sustenance in gratitude, for in the beginning it does not brazenly suggest we forsake God. I have observed people who praise God with their mouth but in their mind they glorify themselves. This is validated by the Pharisee who prayed ironically, "God, I thank You."

At the place where a fall has overcome us, pride is there with a tent set up, because a fall is a mark of pride.

An honorable man told me, "Imagine that there are twelve disgraceful passions. If we intentionally love one of them (pride), it will occupy the space of the other eleven."

An arrogant monk will argue forcefully, but one that is humble is unable to even look another in the eye.

The cypress tree does not stoop down to dwell on the ground, and neither does a haughty monk to obtain obedience.

A prideful person takes hold of authority, since he cannot, or indeed, does not wish to be completely lost.

God opposes the haughty. Who then will have pity for them? Every haughty person is polluted before God. Who can purify such a person?

The proud are rectified by falling into sin. It is the devil who goads them on. But apostasy is insanity. In the first two instances people have many times been cured by others, but the last is not treatable.

The one who rejects a rebuke displays his passion (pride), but the who allows it is free from this chain.

An angel fell from heaven having no other passion with the exception of pride, and so we may inquire if it is possible to ascend to heaven through a humble nature alone, without having the other virtues.

Pride is a privation of treasure and toil. They called out but no one was there to save, doubtlessly because they called out with pride. They called to the Lord and He did not listen to them, doubtlessly because they did not attempt to remove the vices against which they were praying.

A well-educated old man spiritually disciplined a proud brother, but in his blindness he said, "Pardon me, Father, but I am not proud." The wise man replied, "What clearer evidence of this very passion could you have provided us, son, than to state, 'I am not proud'?"

Some people are able to profit from a submissive, strict and humiliating life, and also by the reading of the miraculous deeds of the Fathers. But even with these there is scant hope of salvation for those who are afflicted by this illness.

It is disgraceful to be proud of the graces of others, and completely foolish to think one deserves the graces of God. Only be elevated by such talents as you had before you were born. But what you received after you were born, and even your birth itself, God

bestowed upon you. You have only acquired those virtues that did not require your mind because your mind was provided to you from God. And you have only obtained those achievements by yourself if they did not involve your body, because your body is not your own, but is the work of God.

Never be overly confident until you hear the final judgment against yourself, keeping in mind the wedding guest who made it as far as attending the wedding. But then he was tied up, hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness.

Do not raise your neck, you animal of the earth! For there are many, who even though holy and spiritual, were thrown out of heaven.

When the demon of pride gets a footing with his servants, he reveals himself to them either when they are asleep or through a vision when they are awake, taking the form of an angelic being or a martyr, and he provides them with a revelation of mysteries, or of a freely given spiritual grace, so that the miserable ones are tricked and totally lose their minds.

Even if we were to go through a thousand deaths for Christ, we would not be able to pay back all that we owe him. For the blood of God is one thing, and the blood of his servants something very different. Here I am reflecting on the dignity and not on the purely physical matter.

We must regularly study and contrast ourselves with the holy Fathers and the luminaries that have gone before us, and we will then discover that we have not yet started on the path of the ascetic life, nor have we maintained our oath in a noble manner, and in temperament it is as if we are still dwelling in the world.

A monk, correctly speaking, is one whose soul's eye does not cast a proud look, and whose bodily senses are indifferent.

A monk is one who summons his enemies to war like vicious animals, and annoys them as they run away from him.

A monk experiences unremitting rapture of mind and grief of life.

A monk is one who is nourished by virtues as others are by the comforts of life.

A monk has unending light in the eye of the heart.

A monk has a depth of humility into which he dove and drowned every wicked spirit.

Forgetting our sins is the consequence of arrogance, for the memory of them leads to a humble nature.

Pride is a complete poverty of the soul, under the delusion of wealth, supposing there to be light in its darkness. The vile passion not only hinders our progress, but even casts us down from our heights.

The haughty man is a pomegranate, rotten on the inside, while radiantly beautiful on the outside.

A haughty monk does not need a demon, he has turned into a demon and foe for himself.

Darkness is alien to light, and a haughty person is alien to all virtues.

Blasphemous words are born in the heart of a haughty person, but in humble souls heavenly meditations are born.

A robber hates the sun, just as a proud person has contempt for the meek.

I do not understand how it is, but those that are haughty generally are completely ignorant of their true nature. They suppose that they are overcoming their passions, but they only understand their impoverishment when they depart from this life.

The one entangled in pride will require the aid of God, for the salvation of men cannot help him.

At one time I perceived this crazy impostor as it was ascending in my heart carrying its mother, vainglory, on its shoulders. Tying them up with the noose of obedience and beating them with the cords of humility, I insisted on knowing how they were able to enter me. Finally, when whipped, they said, "We do not have a starting point or a birth, for we are the source of all the passions." Repentance of the heart that is born from obedience is our real foe, and we cannot stand to be in submission to anyone. That is the reason we fell from heaven, even though we had power there. In short we are the parents of all that is in opposition to a humble nature. For everything which advances humility opposes us. Our authority reaches to everything under heaven, so where will you flee from our presence? We frequently accompany long-suffering under disgrace, and obedience, and liberty from anger, want of animosity, and assistance of one's neighbor. Our children are the sins of those who are spiritual: anger, slander, ill-will, peevishness, yelling, blasphemy, hypocrisy, hate, envy, arguing, self-command. There is only one matter in which we have no ability to interfere, and we will tell you about this, for we cannot take your beating. If you maintain a true condemnation of yourself before the Lord, you can be sure that we will be feeble as a spider-web. For the saddle-horse of pride is vainglory on which I have mounted. But devout humility and self-condemnation scorn both the horse and its rider, gladly singing the tune of triumph. Let us praise the Lord, for gloriously He has been glorified. Horse and rider He has thrown into the sea and abyss of humility.

The twenty-third step. The one who mounts it, if he is able, will be powerful.

Step 23b - About Unspeakable Blasphemous Thoughts

We know that from an irritating root and mother is born a rather annoying child, that is to say, unmentionable blasphemy is born from vile pride. So it is important to reveal it, since it is no common creature, but the most wicked of all our enemies. And what is even more problematic, it is hard to write, admit, or reveal these thoughts to a spiritual doctor. And thus this unrighteous illness has engendered annoyance and misery in many, killing all their hope, just as a worm in a tree.

At the time of the Holy Liturgy, during the time when the Mysteries are being completed, this foul foe many times blasphemes the Lord and the holy affairs that are being accomplished. This displays vividly that it is not our own soul that speaks these unmentionable, impious and inconceivable words within us, but the enemy who hates God, who ran away from heaven for speaking blasphemies against the Lord. Because if these disgraceful and horrendous words belonged to me, how could I give glory after partaking of the gift? How can I praise and slander at the same moment?

This trickster and polluter of souls has often made many people go crazy. No other movement of the mind is so troublesome to speak about in confession than this one. That is why it often stays with many people until the very conclusion of their life. For there is nothing that offers demons and evil thoughts such authority over us as feeding and concealing them in our heart unconfessed.

There is no one in the presence of blasphemous thoughts that need suppose he is liable, for the Lord is the Knower of hearts and He knows that such words and notions are not from us but from our enemies.

Being drunk is a source of falls, and pride is the source of bad thoughts. As far as falls are concerned the drunk is not the one to blame, but he will surely be punished for being drunk.

When we are present in prayer, those polluted and unmentionable thoughts attack us, but if we persist in praying to the end they withdraw immediately, for they will not battle with those who stand up against them.

The impious enemy not only blasphemes against God and everything that is holy but speaks the most terrible and vile words inside our minds to compel us either to renounce praying or lose hope. He has stopped many people from praying, and pulled away many from the Holy Mysteries.

This wicked and cruel oppressor has exhausted the bodies of some with remorse, and worn out still others with fasting, and has allowed them no repose. He does this with those who live in the monastery as well as with those that dwell in the world proposing that there is no hope of salvation for them and affirming that they are more pitiful and miserable than all the unbelievers and pagans.

The one who is disturbed by the spirit of blasphemy and would like to be rescued from it should understand that it is not his own soul that is the source of such thoughts but the corrupt demon who said once to the Lord, "All these things I will give you if you bow down and worship me." And thus let us humiliate him as well, and not give heed to his implications. Tell him, "Get behind me Satan! I will worship the Lord my God, and Him only I will serve. Your deeds and your word will come back upon your head, and your blasphemies will come down on your crown in the present and in the coming world. Amen"

He who desires to struggle with the demon of blasphemy by any other means is like a man attempting to take hold of lightning with his hands. How can you grasp, or struggle and grip one who suddenly explodes into the heart like a rush of wind, speaking words faster than lightening and then suddenly disappears? All other foes will pause, struggle, tarry and give time for those who desire to wrestle with them. But not so with this one. He has only

just appeared, and then he vanishes. He has barely said one word, and he is gone.

Many times this demon enjoys haunting the minds of simple and pure people, and they are more troubled and struck by it than others. We can surely say of them that all this occurs to them not from self-regard but from the jealousy of the demons.

We should cease condemning and judging our neighbor, and then blasphemous thoughts will not trouble us, for the first is the occasion and the beginning of the latter.

Just as one who is confined in his house hears the speaking of those going by without participating in their discussion, so the soul abides in private and when it overhears devilish blasphemies it is disturbed by what is said by the demon going by.

The one who hates this enemy is saved from its torture. But the one who comes up with some other means to attack it will finish by giving in to it. He who desires to overcome this spirit by speaking is like someone attempting to shut up the winds.

A cautious monk who is disturbed by this demon exhausted his flesh for twenty years by fasts and vigils. However, since he felt no better, he wrote his temptation on a card and went to a holy man and delivered him the card and prostrated before him with his face to the ground, not daring to glance up. When the elder read it he smiled and, lifting up the brother, he told him, "Put your hand on my neck, son." When the brother had done this, the excellent man said, "Upon my neck, brother, be this sin, for no matter how many years it was or was not present in you, from now on, disregard it." This monk assured me that before he had even departed from the elder's cell, his illness had left. The man who had been tested by these means told me this himself, giving praise to God.

The one who has overcome this sickness, has evicted pride.

Step 24 - On being meek, simple and honest which does not come from nature but from regular practice, and about ill-will

The light of dawn comes before the sun, and meekness is the forerunner of humility. So let us hear the arrangement by which the Light has ordered these virtues, for He has said, "Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." So then before gazing toward the sun (humility), it is necessary to be illuminated by the light (meekness), and then we can clearly gaze toward the sun. Because it is impossible, completely impossible, to look toward the sun before we have achieved that light, which we have learned from the arrangement of these virtues by the Lord.

To be meek is an unalterable state of mind, which persists through praise and disgrace.

Meekness is comprised of, praying peacefully and honestly for an irritating neighbor.

Meekness is a rock looking over the sea of annoyances, which breaks all the waves that come upon it, yet stays entirely unmoved.

Meekness is the support of long-suffering, the gateway, or indeed the mother of love, and the strength of discernment, for it was said, "The Lord will instruct the meek in His way." It readies us for the forgiveness of sins. It is courage in prayer, a dwelling of the Holy Spirit. To whom should I look? To him who is meek and silent.

Meekness is the companion of obedience, the leader of the brotherhood, a control for the wrathful, a curb for the cranky, a servant of joy, the imitation of Christ, a thing fitting for angels, bonds for demons, and a shield preventing irritability.

In those who have meek hearts the Lord finds repose, but the troublesome soul is the throne of the devil.

The meek will inherit the earth, or indeed will exert authority over it, but ill-tempered people will be driven out of their land.

A meek soul is a seat of simplicity, but an irritable mind is the author of wickedness.

A silent soul makes way for wise words, for the Lord will lead the meek in judgment, or indeed in discernment.

A righteous soul is a companion to humility, but a wicked one is a daughter of haughtiness.

The souls of those who are meek are full of wisdom, but a wrathful mind is a citizen of gloom and ignorance.

An irritable man and a fraud met each other, and it was impossible to discover an honest word in their conversation. Uncovering the heart of the first you will reveal turmoil. Gazing upon the soul of the other you will observe ill-will.

Simplicity is the regular practice of the soul that has become impermeable to wicked thoughts.

Evil is an expertise, or indeed, a diabolical distortion, lacking truth and supposing it can conceal itself from general attention.

Hypocrisy is a conflicting state of body and soul woven together with every possible artifice.

Honesty is a delightful state of soul well removed from every hidden agenda.

Honesty is unmixed thought, genuine personality, candid and unplanned speaking.

Innocent is the one whose soul abides in the natural innocence which with it was formed, and who makes entreaty on behalf of everyone.

Ill-will is a distortion of honesty, a false form of thought, deceitfully hidden by amiability, spurious vows, unclear words, deception of

the heart, a depth of trickery, deception that has become a regular practice, pride turned into habit, an enemy to a humble nature, a pretext of penitence, a lessening of grieving, animosity toward confession, unruliness, a means of stumbling, a stumbling block to the resurrection, a smiling at injury, altered frowning, fake reverence, a devilish life.

A wicked person is a companion and namesake of the devil, which is the reason why the Lord instructed us to name the devil, saying, "Deliver us from the evil one."

Let us flee from the cliff of hypocrisy and from the depth of deceit, hearing the one that stated, "Wrong-doers will be destroyed, just like the green grass they will quickly wither." For such people are nourishment for the demons.

God is called love, as well as righteousness. That is reason why the wise man in the Song of Songs says to the pure of heart, "Righteousness has loved you." In addition the father of the sage says, "Good and righteous is the Lord. And concerning those who are His namesakes He had said that they will be delivered, "Who saves the righteous of heart?" And also, "His face sees and visits those who are upright and just."

The first characteristic of childhood is complete simplicity, and so long as Adam possessed it, he did not perceive the nakedness of his soul, or that his flesh was indecent.

Superb too is that innocence which truly is in some by nature, and indeed blessed. But it is not as glorious as that which is grafted in with labor and toil after repenting from sin. For the first is shielded and secured from pretense and passion, but the latter leads to the heights of a humble and meek nature. The first has little merit, but the latter unending, unending.

Let everyone who desires to draw the Lord to himself come close to Him just as his disciples came to the Master, simple, without deceit, without deception or cunning, not from idle curiosity. He Himself is

pure and absolute, and He desires souls that present themselves to Him to be pure and innocent. For you will indeed never observe simplicity apart from humility.

The wicked one is a fake prophet who supposes that with words he can catch thoughts, and from the outward show, inclinations of the heart.

I have observed sincere souls who have learned to be wicked from wicked people, and I pondered on how they could lose their natural character and supremacy so quickly. But it is as simple for those who are sincere to fall from grace, as it is difficult to convert the one who is insincere. But sincere exile, obedience and watching of lips have many times had great power, and have marvelously returned the incurable.

If knowledge inflates people, simpleness and want of education can perhaps to the same degree humble them. Nevertheless here and there are those who pride themselves on their ignorance.

The three times blessed and most guileless Paul is a good example for us. He is the rule and character of blessed simplicity, for there is no one, certainly no one, who has ever observed or heard of or could possibly see such a degree of advancement in so brief a time.

A monk who is simple of heart is like a rational, dull beast, who puts his weight on his superior. A beast does not talk back to his master who yokes him, nor does a sincere soul do this with his director, but goes wherever he is led. Even if he is sent to the slaughter, he makes no objection.

It is difficult for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and it is just as difficult for those who are dumbly wise to enter simplicity.

A fall has often rectified the wise, providing them salvation and purity despite themselves.

Fight to escape your own discretion and by doing this you will discover salvation and innocence through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

He who is powerful enough for this step, let him take heart, for he is imitating Christ, his Lord, and has been saved.

Step 25 - On superb humility, the ruiner of the passions, which is grounded in spiritual feeling

The one who supposes it is possible to use mere words to explain the emotion from and the result of the love of the Lord precisely, with words such as, blessed humbleness, elegantly, holy innocence, sincerely, godly enlightenment, true fear of God, steadfastness of the honest heart, and supposes that by his account of things of this type he will enlighten those who have not had the experience of them, is like a person who with words and analogies would like to give the concept of the sweetness of honey to others who have never tried it. Just as the latter speaks without effect, not to say babbles, so the first either gives the sense of having no experience of what he is relating, or he has become only a tool of vainglory.

This topic sets a prize in front of us as a standard, maintained in earthen vessels, which are our bodies, and the quality of it defies all description. This prize has an engraving which cannot be understood because it comes from the heavens, and those that attempt to describe it with words only supply themselves with monumental and tireless difficulty. And the engraving says this, "Holy Humility."

May all who are guided by the Spirit of God enter together with us into this wise and spiritual assembly, gripping in their spiritual hands the God-engraved stones of wisdom. We have gathered, we have studied, and we have examined the meaning of this valuable engraving. And one said, "It means endless ignorance of one's accomplishments." Another says, "It is the understanding of oneself as the last of all and the worst sinner of all." Yet another says, "The mind's understanding of one's feebleness and powerlessness." Yet another says, "In moments of anger it means to hinder one's neighbor and be the first to end an argument." And another again,

"Understanding the grace and mercy of God." Another again says, "The sense of a remorseful soul, and the renunciation of one's self-will." However, when I had heard all these things and carefully and solemnly contemplated on it, I discovered that, from what had been said, I had not been able to understand the holy feeling of that virtue. Then, finally, having collected what had dropped from the lips of all those educated and holy fathers as a dog collects the crumbs that fall from the table, I too gave my understanding of it and said, "Humility is a grace without name in the soul. Its name is heard by those who have been taught it by experience. It is an unmentionable treasure, a name and a grace from God, for it is said, "Learn it not from an angel, nor from man, and not from a book, but from Me, that is, from Me abiding in you, from My illumination and working within you, for I am meek and humble of heart and in the mind and in the spirit, and your souls will discover rest from conflicts and rest from debates.

The figure of this holy vine has one form during the winter of the passions, a different one during the spring of the budding fruit, a still different one during the harvest of the virtues. And all these different forms agree in joy and producing fruit, and so they all have their own marks of the coming fruit. For when the cluster of divine humility starts to blossom inside of us, we immediately start, although with our effort, to detest all worldly honor and praise, and to cast out from ourselves annoyance and indignation. To the degree that this head of the virtues advances in our soul through spiritual growth, so also we look upon all the good works achieved by us as nothing, or rather as a vile, believing that each day we put more and more onto the unrevealed weight of our dissipation. We believe that the generosity of heavenly gifts raining upon us to be beyond what we deserve and will only serve to exacerbate our punishment. So our thoughts continue undisturbed, resting safely in the coffin of modesty, only listening to the bumps and gibes of the grave-robbers, not being threatened by anything they say, because modesty is an impregnable wall.

So we have undertaken in a few words to philosophize concerning the budding and the increase of this ever-thriving fruit. But what is the excellent reward of this sacred virtue? You who are close to the Lord must inquire of the Lord Himself. It is not possible to measure the quantity of this sacred treasure, and to describe its size is still more inconceivable. Still, with regard to its distinguishing marks, we should attempt to declare the thoughts of our mind.

Painful remorse, lamentation purified of all corruption, and divine humility in novices, are as different from one another as yeast and flour from the finished bread. By visible repentance the soul is shattered and refined to bring it to a certain degree of unity, I will say perhaps a mixing with God, by the agency of the water of sincere grief. Then with a spark from the fire of the Lord, holy humility turns into bread and is made hard without using the leaven of pride. Therefore when this divine three-fold rope, or indeed, divine rainbow, joins into one force and action, it secures its own effects and qualities. And whatsoever you name as a mark of one of them, it is also a sign of another. So I will try to show what I have stated by a short example.

The primary and most important characteristic of this superb and grand trinity is the consent to disgrace with great pleasure, when the soul takes it with hands extended and receives it as something which soothes and cauterizes the illness of the soul and significant vices. The next characteristic is the passing of all anger, and meekness at its mollification. The third and highest level is the sincere doubt of one's excellent characteristics and a ceaseless longing to learn.

The conclusion of the Law and the Prophets is Christ for the integrity of every believer. And the conclusion of the corrupt passions is vainglory and haughtiness for each person who does not concern himself with this business. But the ruiner of them, this spiritual deer (humility), watches over him who abides with it immune to all forms of poison. For where can the venom of

hypocrisy appear in a meek soul? Where is the venom of slander? And where will the serpent rest and be disguised? Will it not instead be taken out of the soil of the heart and be slain and killed?

In unity with humility it is not possible that there should be any sight of malice, or of any argument, or even the smell of disobedience, unless faith is the matter of dispute.

He who has as a bride humility is before everything else meek, mild, full of remorse, sympathetic, concerned, radiant, pliable, not offensive, alert, not lazy, and why say any more? He is free from passion, for the Lord recalled us in our humility, and delivered us from all our enemies, and our passions and corruptions.

A monk that is humble will not toy with the mysteries, but a haughty one will look into the methods of God.

The demons glorified one of the most discerning of the brothers, showing themselves visibly to him. But this great sage said to them, "If you stop glorifying me through the thoughts of my heart, I will assume from your exit that I am most excellent. But if you continue glorifying me, from your praise I will guess my uncleanness. For each proud-hearted man is unclean in the presence of the Lord. And so either depart from me, and then I will become great, or else glorify me and through you I will receive more humility." Stricken with confusion, they immediately disappeared from view.

Let your soul not be a lake in the stream of life, a lake which is at times full and at other times dry from the fire of praise and glory. Instead let it be a spring of dispassion forever springing up in a stream of poverty.

Understand, my beloved, that the valleys will become deep in corn and fruits of the spirit. This valley is a soul that is meek and low among all the mountains, that is, it is replete with toils and virtues, and yet always continues meek and stable. David never said, "I have fasted," or "I have kept the vigil," or "I have stretched out

naked on the ground," but, "I humbled myself, and quickly the Lord saved me."

Repentance lifts up the fallen, lamentation raps at the door of heaven, and divine humility opens it, but I confirm this, and I worship the Trinity in One, and the One in the Trinity.

All manifest things receive their light from the sun, and all that is accomplished by reason receives its impetuosity from humility. When there is no light, there is darkness. Where there is a lack of humility, everything we have is rotten.

In the entire universe there is only one spot that has only seen the sun one time, and there is one thought which has many times given birth to a humble nature. There was also one day on which the entire earth rejoiced, and there is one virtue which the demons are unable to mimic.

It is one thing to elevate yourself, another to not elevate yourself, and quite another to humble yourself. One person may be forever condemning others, another does not even judge others, but he does not judge himself. A third, although he is blameless, is constantly condemning himself.

It is one thing to be humble, another to contend for humility, and yet another to glorify the humble. The first is a characteristic of the perfect, the second to the sincerely obedient, and the third to all believers.

The one who has humility inside will not be deceived by his mouth, for what is not in the treasure chest cannot be carried out through this door.

A horse, when it is by itself, supposes that it is galloping, but when it is in the company of others it discovers just how slow it is.

It is a mark of the beginning of better health when our mind stops priding itself on its natural gifts. But while that foul odor is present in the nose, it cannot smell the fragrance of myrrh.

Holy humility stated, "My beloved will not chastise, nor judge, nor exercise authority, nor flaunt his knowledge, until he has joined himself with me. For when it has joined himself with me, the law is no longer relevant to him."

The vile foe uttered praise into the heart of an ascetic who was struggling for holy humility, but through divine impulse he plotted to overcome the trickery of the spirits by a devout ploy. He got up and listed on the wall of his cell the names of the best virtues in order, which are: pure love, angel-like humility, simple prayer, holy chastity and similar such virtues. So when vainglorious thoughts started to laud him, he told them, "May we go and be judged." Then, approaching the wall, he read off the names and told himself, "When you keep all these then you will understand just how distant you still are from God."

We are unable to explain the nature and substance of this sun, humility, but from its characteristics and results we can describe its inner form.

Humility is a heavenly sanctuary to shield us from looking upon our accomplishments. Humility is a depth of self-effacement, which no robber can attain. Humility is a mighty tower in the face of the foe. The enemy will not overcome him, nor will the son, or indeed, the thought of transgression do harm to him. He will cast away his foes from his presence and will overcome them that despise him.

Apart from all the distinctive characteristics given above, the excellent holder of this treasure also has others within his soul. And every one of these characteristics except for one are manifest marks of this treasure. You will understand with surety that you have this holy property within you by a profusion of unmentionable light, by an unspeakable love for prayer, and prior to this being reached, by a heart that is not judgmental of the shortcomings of others. And the forerunner of what has been described is a despising of all vainglory.

The one who has come to understand himself has achieved a knowledge of the fear of the Lord, and he who has walked with the help of this fear, has come to the gateway of love.

Humility is the gateway of the King that welcomes those who come near to it. And I suppose that the Lord was speaking of this gateway when He said, "He will enter and will leave from life without fear, and he will find pasture and green grass in paradise." Every one who has come to the monastic way of life by any other gate is a robber and thief of his own soul.

Those of us who desire to know this must never stop studying this. For if our soul is discerning enough to recognize that our neighbor is superior to us in every way, then divine mercy is close to us.

It is not possible for snow to suddenly catch on fire, and it is even harder for humility to abide in an unorthodox person. This is a thing which the devout and faithful accomplish, and then only when they have been cleansed.

Most of us refer to ourselves as sinners, and it might be that some really think it, but it is disgrace that proves the heart.

The one who is rushing to that calm harbor of a humble nature will never stop to do all he is capable of, and he will push himself forward by words and ideas and afterthoughts and many other ways, by examinations, and studies, and by his entire life, by entreaties and supplications, meditations and deliberations, and employing every possible means until with the help of God and through dwelling in humiliations and the most wretched conditions, and by labors he saves the boat of his soul from the endless storms of the ocean of vainglory. For he who is saved from this sin, is easily forgiven the rest of his iniquities, like the tax-collector in the gospel.

There are some who throughout their entire lives use the evil works formerly committed by them, and for which they have been granted forgiveness, as a motivation for humility, and so push out their

meaningless self-respect. There are others who, keeping in mind Christ's passion, look upon themselves as forever in debt. There are others who look upon themselves as worthless for their constant shortcomings. Still others on account of their ever-present temptations, illnesses and sins have put to death their haughtiness. Others for lack of grace have seized hold of the mother of graces (humility). There are also those (if they are still around) who, with the hope of receiving gifts from God, to the degree that they acquire them, humble themselves and so live reckoning themselves not worthy of such treasure, and every day put it to their debt. Such is humility, such is joy, such is the most excellent prize.

When you observe or hear that there is one who in a few years acquired the most superb dispassion, then know that he journeyed by no other path than by this holy short-cut.

A divine team is love and humility, for the one lifts up and the other, holding up the exalted, never lets it fall.

Remorse is one thing, understanding oneself is another, humility is yet another.

Remorse is the consequence of stumbling. He who stumbles is shattered and is present at prayer without bravery but with honorable persistence, as one who is crushed, holding himself up with the rod of hope and using it to chase away the hound of depression.

Knowing oneself is a sure notion of one's spiritual growth and always remembering one's smallest sins.

Humility is the spiritual instruction of Christ which is spiritually acquired in the closet of the soul by those that are reckoned as deserving it. One cannot explain it in words.

The one who states that he fully senses the aroma of such myrrh yet detects, when lauded, even a slight motion of the heart, or

knows the power of the words, let that man make no mistake, he is already in error.

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your Name give the honor", I once heard someone state with sincere conviction. Because he understood that human nature is not able to dwell in glory without some loss. My acclaim will be from You in the great Church, which is, the coming age, and before it I am unable to receive it without risk to myself.

If the boundary, discipline and feature of intense pride is to fake such virtues which one does not have for the sake of glory, then it must be a mark of the most profound humility to lessen ourselves by feigning that we possess faults which we do not have. It was in this manner that he acted who took into his hands cheese and bread. Similarly the advocate of purity who stripped himself, and free of passion, proceeded through the entire city. Such men have no concern for human rebuke. They have already received invisible strength by means of prayer to encourage everyone. But the one who is concerned about the first will display a deficiency in the latter. When God is ready to listen to our prayer, then there is nothing we can do.

It is more honorable to insult men than God. God delights when He observes us racing off to meet with disgrace, so as to shatter, kick and ruin our empty self-respect.

These virtues are the result of us fleeing from the world borne to the highest level, for only the most excellent among us can take ridicule from our own people. Do not be astonished at what has been related, for there is no one who is able to ascend an entire ladder in one step.

Through this all we will know that we are God's disciples. Not because the demons submit to us, but because our names are engraved in the heaven of humility.

The innate characteristic of the lemon tree is that it raises its branches up when it possesses no fruit, but the more the branches stoop down the more fruit they produce. Those who possess the mind to comprehend this will know its meaning.

Divine humility received from God is the ability to produce fruit thirty, sixty and one hundredfold. The dispassionate achieve this to the highest level, the brave to the middle, and all can ascend to the first.

The one who has come to understand himself will never be deceived into attempting something which is beyond his abilities, but keeps his feet securely on the blessed road of humility.

Birds are afraid of the sight of a hawk, and those who exercise humility are afraid of the sound of debate.

Many have achieved salvation without prophecies and divine lights, without marvels and omens, but without humility no one will come to the marriage chamber, for humility is a guard of those gifts, and without her they will lead superficial people to destruction.

For those among us who have no desire to humble ourselves, the Lord has determined in His providence that none can look upon his faults quite as well as his neighbor does. So we are forced to be grateful for our recovery not to ourselves but to our neighbor and to God.

The person who has a humble mind will always disregard his own inclinations as being in error, and in his petitions to the Lord he examines with undoubting faith to understand and to obey. He does not set his mind on the life of his lords but puts his concern on God who used a donkey to instruct Balaam on his responsibility. A laborer of this type, even though he does all things, and thinks and speaks by the will of God, still he will not trust himself. Self-respect for those that are humble is just as much a burden as another's decision is for the proud.

It appears to me that it is characteristic only of an angel to not privately commit sins, for I heard an angel of the earth say, "I know of nothing against myself, yet am not by this made righteous. But He who judges me is the Lord." So we should always condemn and rebuke ourselves so as to throw off involuntary sins through willful disgraces. For if we do not, at our death we will surely be given a harsh punishment.

The one who requests less than he deserves from God will surely obtain more than he deserves. This is clearly shown by the tax-collector who requested forgiveness but obtained justification. And the thief merely requested to be remembered in His Kingdom, but he inherited Paradise.

It is not possible to observe a fire, small or large, in a natural beast. It is also impossible that anything of a physical nature should be discovered in true humility. So long as we stumble with willful sins, there no humility in us. It is a mark that there still remains something material within us.

The Lord, understanding that the goodness of the soul is modeled on visible deeds, took a towel and gave us an example of how to walk the path of humility. For the soul conforms to its outward deeds; it takes its form and shape from its works. Authority was the reason for the pride of one of the angels, even though it was not the reason it was given to him.

The person who is seated on a throne has certain characteristics, and the one who is seated on a heap of manure has yet others. That may be why that excellent saint sat on the heap of manure outside the city. Because then when he had acquired complete humility he stated with a profound feeling, "I detested myself and fled away, and I have reckoned myself dirt and ashes."

I discovered that Manasseh sinned like no other has ever sinned by corrupting the temple of God with idols and polluting all the divine worship. If the entire world had engaged in a fast for him it would

have been no help. However, humility had the strength to correct even what was incorrigible in him. "If You had desired a sacrifice I would have given it," said David to God, "but You will not be pleased with whole-burnt offerings," which are bodies wasted by fasting. The sacrifice of God ... and everybody knows what is next.

I sinned against the Lord, holy humility once cried out to God after it committed adultery and murder. And quickly he heard, "The Lord has removed your sin."

The honorable Fathers established that the path to humility and its foundation is bodily labor, and I would venture to say obedience and truthfulness of heart, for they are innately in opposition to self-respect.

If some angels were turned into demons through pride, doubtlessly angels can be fashioned out of demons with humility. Therefore, those who have stumbled may take heart.

Let us hurry with our all our strength to battle our way to the peak of humility. If this should fail though, let us at least climb upon her shoulders. But if your labors are not sufficient for this, let us at least not tumble out of her embrace. For I suppose there is no one, who, if he falls away, will obtain any eternal gift.

The muscles of humility and its characteristics, although not its marks, are: poverty, secret retreat from the world, hiding wisdom, simple words, begging alms, concealment of royalty, putting away familiarity, and doing away with chatter.

There is nothing which can so humble the soul as a situation of poverty and a beggarly existence. Because we only show ourselves to be philosophers and lovers of God when we have the possibility of being exalted, and instead we run from it irreversibly.

If you go to war with a certain passion, take humility with you as a companion, for she will tread upon the asp and the adder, which

are sin and despair, and will trample underfoot the dragon and the lion, which are the devil and the serpent of the body.

Humility is the heavenly siphon which can be used to raise the soul to heaven from the depth of sin.

There was one who observed in his heart the splendor of humility and taken with wonder, asked her to reveal to him the name of her parent. Smiling delightfully and calmly at him, humility answered, 'How is it you are in haste to know the name of my parent? He has no name, and I cannot reveal it to you unless you possess God.' To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The mother of the spring is the depth of the ocean, and the spring of discernment is humility.

Step 26a - On Discrimination of thoughts, passions and virtues

Discrimination in novices is a sure understanding of themselves. In intermediate souls it is a spiritual feeling that perfectly discriminates between what is inherently good from what is of the world and what is opposed to it. And in the perfect, it is the understanding which is obtained through divine illumination, which can brighten, with its lamp, the darkness present in others. Or indeed, speaking generally, discrimination is, and is understood as, the sure knowledge of God's will at all times, everywhere and with all affairs. This can only be discovered in those who have a pure heart, body and mouth.

The one who has devoutly killed the three passions [gluttony, greed, vainglory] within him has put to death the other five as well. But the one who has been neglectful about the first will not overcome any of the other passions.

Discrimination is a pure conscience and a purity of senses.

May no one on observing or hearing of something supernatural from the ways of the monastic way disbelieve from their ignorance. For where God, who is supernatural, abides, many supernatural things occur.

Every battle involving Satan is rooted in these three things: carelessness, pride, or the envy of the devils. The first one deserves pity, the second is ruinous, but the last is blessed.

After God, may we have our conscience as our goal and our order for doing all things. For by doing this, we may perceive the direction the wind blows and thus angle our sails.

In everything we do we make our best effort to please God. However, the demons dig three ditches against us. In the first, they try to hinder any good from being accomplished. In the second, after their first failure, they attempt to set things up so that what is

done is not in accord with the will of God. However, when these foes are defeated, then standing silently near our soul, they laud us for having such a godly life. The first is to be refused with zeal and by fear of death, the second by obedience and disgrace, and the third by ceaseless self-rebuke. We will be stuck with this type of labor until the godly fire comes into our holy place. Then the influence of a bad habit will cease to be present with us. Our God is a flame destroying every heat of lust and motion of passion, every inclination within us, and everything blind and dark both within and without, physical and spiritual.

The demons generally create in us the contrary of what has been said. Because when they take control of the soul and darken the light of the mind, then there is no longer within our miserable souls either temperance, or discernment, or self-understanding or humility, but instead there is apathy, a lack of discernment and spiritual blindness.

What has just been described is understood keenly by those who have repressed their lust so as to become pure, and have restricted their liberty of speech, and have been transformed from being brazen to modest. They understand how, after quieting the mind, after ceasing its blindness, or indeed its mutilation, they are embarrassed inside for what they have said and done earlier, when they were blind.

If the day, being present in our soul does not come to the evening and grow dim, then the robbers will not come and steal, and kill, and destroy our soul.

Thievery is the loss of possessions. Thievery is the doing of what is not virtuous as if it were. Thievery is the unseen imprisonment of the soul. The destruction of the soul is the demise of the rational mind that has come to do wicked deeds. Destruction is despair of oneself following transgression of the law.

May no one state that he is unable to abide by the commandments of the Gospel, because there are those who have excelled beyond the commandments. You will surely be convinced of this fact by him who loved his neighbor more than himself and set down his life on his behalf, even though he had not known this commandment of the Lord.

Those who have been humiliated by their passions may take heart. For even if they stumble into every ditch and are ensnared by all the traps and suffer all sicknesses, but after are brought to sound health they become doctors, signals, lights, and navigators for everyone, instructing us as to the course of every illness and from their own experience become capable of preventing their neighbors from stumbling.

If there are some who are still subject to their bad practices from before, and still can instruct with only a word, let them instruct. However, they should not, in addition, have authority. For it may be, being embarrassed by their own speech, they may at some point start to carry out what they teach. And even if they do not start, yet they might be capable of helping, as I observed happen with others who were caught in the mud. Even though bogged down, they were telling those going by, how they had been bogged down there, describing this for their salvation, so that they would not stumble in the same manner. Still, on account of saving others, the all-mighty God saved them as well from the mud. However, if those who are possessed by passions willfully dive into gratifications, may they instruct others by their silence, for Jesus began both to do and to teach.

Dangerous, truly dangerous is the ocean that we meek monks are sailing, an ocean in which there are a multitude of winds, rocks, whirlpools, buccaneers, storms, shallow waters, sea monsters and surges. A rock inside the soul may be thought of as a harsh and violent anger. A whirlpool is despair which grabs hold of the mind and attempts to pull it down into a deep depression. The shallow

water is the ignorance which receives what is vile as good. The sea monster is this weighty and violent body. The buccaneers are the dangerous agents of vainglory who plunder our booty and hard-earned virtues. The surge is a bloated and heavy belly, which by means of its greedy hands delivers us to the beast. The storm is haughtiness which throws us out of heaven and bears us up to the sky and then plunges us down to the abyss.

The ones who are involved in teaching understand what learning is appropriate for novices, what is acceptable for the intermediate and what is good for instructors. May we take intelligent precautions so as not to extend our study and halt at the lessons of novices, because to observe an aged man attending a school for children is shameful.

Below is a good alphabet for everyone:

A) obedience B) fasting C) sackcloth D) ashes E) weeping F) confession G) stillness H) humility I) watchfulness J) bravery K) cold L) labor M) working hard N) shame O) remorse Q) loving your brother R) meekness S) undoubting faith T) liberty from concerns of the world U) hate-less hate of parents V) detachment X) pure simplicity Z) willful lowering

A good plan for the skilled, and proof of their advancement is: lack of vainglory, liberty from anger, excellent hope, quiet, discernment, a strong remembrance of the coming judgment, sympathy, hospitality, restraint in discipline, prayer without passion, neglect of self.

Here is a model, rule and set of commandments for those who carnally are seeking perfection of spirit and body:

A) an unchained heart B) a faultless love C) a depth of charity D) an aloof mind E) the dwelling of Christ F) a surety of the light of prayer G) a profusion of heavenly illumination H) a desire for death I) a disdain of life J) an escape from the body K) intercession for the world L) a compeller of God M) a co-worshiper with the angels N) a

depth of wisdom O) an abode of mysteries P) a custodian of secrets Q) a savior of others R) a god of the demons S) a master of the passions T) a master of the body U) a master of nature V) destruction of sin X) an abode of dispassion Z) with the aid of the Lord, an imitator of the Lord

We need to have great watchfulness when the body is ill. The demons, observing us lying low, and unable to contest with them because of our illness, attempt to assault us violently on such occasions. The demon of annoyance and, at times, of blasphemy floats near those dwelling in the world during times of sickness. Also the demon of gluttony and sexual immorality assaults those dwelling apart from the world if they have a surfeit of comforts. However, if they are dwelling in an ascetic mode of life without any comforts, then the oppressor of depression and ungratefulness is regularly present with them.

I observed that the wolf of sexual immorality increases the pain of the ill, and at the time of their afflictions, produce in them carnal motions and discharges. It was amazing to observe how the body boils and burns with craving in the middle of powerful afflictions. Again I looked, and I observed men lying on their bed who were comforted by the strength of God or by remorse, and through this comfort they drove off the pain and attained a state of mind in which they had no desire to rid themselves of their illness. Again I turned and observed those in anguish who through their sickness were saved from the passions of their souls as if through repentance, and I praised Him who purified clay with clay.

A mind that is spiritual is surely cloaked in spiritual understanding. If it is present in us or not, we should never cease from searching for this understanding. And at the time it appears, the senses of body will automatically stop their normal action. Understanding this, one of the sages stated, "And you will receive a sense of the Divine."

The life of a monk with regard to deeds, words, thoughts and motions must be practiced with absolute conviction. If not there will be no monastic or even angelic life.

Divine Providence is one thing, Divine aid is another, Divine security is another, Divine grace yet another, and Divine comfort yet another. Providence is exhibited in all of creation. Help is only observed in the faithful. Security is present only for those who sincerely have faith. Grace is in those who minister to God. And comfort is in those who love Him.

At times a treatment which is a cure for one, is a poison for another. And sometimes a treatment given to the same person on the right occasion is a cure, but at on another occasion it acts as a poison.

I have observed an inexperienced doctor who, by constraining a ill person who was already meek to suffer humiliation, pushed him into depression. I have also observed experienced doctors who operated on a haughty heart with the scalpel of disgrace, and depleted it of all its vile-smelling pus.

I have observed the same sick person at times drink the medication of obedience, move, run and remain awake so that he might be clean of his defilement. But at other times, when the eye of his soul was ill, I observed him staying without any motion, still and quiet. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Some people, I am not sure why (for I have discovered it best not to look arrogantly into the gifts of God) are innately given to moderation, or stillness, or temperance, or humility, or sorrow. But there are others, who are innately not given to such practices and yet compel themselves and even though they sometimes are overcome, as those sometimes will who war with nature, are, in my view better than the former ones.

Do not brag, O man, of the treasure you have received without toil. For the Giver, foreseeing your pain, and illness, and destruction, at

least provides for you, to some degree, through these undeserved graces.

Schooling received in childhood, instruction, education, when we become older will either aid us or impeded us in achieving virtues and living the monastic life.

Angels are a lamp for monks, and the life of the monk is a lamp for everyone. So may monks struggle to be a good example in all things, giving no opportunity for falling, either with deeds or words. Because if the light should become dark, how great will be that darkness, which is, those living in the world.

If you will take heed to me, those of you who desire to do so, it is fitting for us not to be many-sided, and not to divide our poor soul into many detachments, and not to war against myriads of foes. Because it is not for us to understand or even to know all their ranks and orders.

With the aid of the Holy Trinity, let us fight with three against three. For if not we will create much labor for ourselves.

If the One who made the sea become dry earth really dwells with us, then our Israel as well, which is, the mind that sees God, will surely cross over this sea untroubled, and will behold the Egyptians drowned in the waters of tears. But if He does not yet dwell within us, who will hold up the thundering waves of this sea, which is our flesh?

If through our action God rises in us, His foes will be dispersed. If we come close to Him by meditation, those who despise Him will run away from His presence and ours.

May we attempt to discover godly truth more by labor and sweat than simply by words. For at the time of our death it is not words but works that will need to be displayed.

Those who hear of wealth concealed in a particular place look for it and, having found it, make every effort to hold on to what they have

discovered. But those who acquire wealth without toil easily waste their goods.

It is hard to conquer bad habits, and for those who persist in augmenting the bad habits they have with new ones they will either fall into depression or they will receive no gain from obedience. But I realize that to God all things are feasible, for to Him nothing is impossible.

Some people posed to me a question which was hard to answer and which exceeded the abilities of one like me, and cannot be discovered in any of the books that I have been exposed to. For they asked, "What are the children of the eight capital sins? Or which of the three principle sins is the father of the other five minor sins?" However, through professing my honorable ignorance with respect to this puzzle, I discovered from the holy men the following, "Lust's mother is gluttony, and despondency's mother is vainglory. Grief and anger are the children of those three (greed, luxury, ambition). And pride's mother is vainglory."

In response to this answer of those ever-to-be-remembered Fathers, I started again to sincerely inquire from them as to the family history of the eight sins, who begets who? And these dispassionate souls warmly taught me, stating, "The foolish passions have no arrangement or logic, but they have every kind of disorder and jumble to them." And the holy Fathers verified this by compelling examples and provided many evidences, some of which we will present in this step, in order to bring some light from them in discerning the rest.

The thing I mean is this. Improper joking sometimes is a child of lust; sometimes it is a child of vainglory, when someone takes on a devout air; and at times it is a child of luxury.

Too much sleep comes at times from luxury or from fasting, when those who are fasting are haughty about it. But sometimes it comes from depression and at times from our nature.

Chattiness is a child of gluttony, and oftentimes of vainglory.

Depression is born of luxury and at times a want of the fear of God.

Blasphemy is a child of pride, but is many times engendered from judging our neighbor for the same thing, or from the undue envy of the devils.

Hardness of heart at times comes from eating too much, and at times from coolness and affection. Again affection is born at times from lust or greed or gluttony or vainglory, and various other reasons.

Ill-will comes from vanity and anger.

Hypocrisy is born of self-regard and stubbornness.

All the opposite virtues come from parents opposite to these. But I will not expand on the topic, for otherwise there will not be enough time if I explore each one of them. I will only state that the cure for all the passions spoken of above is humility. The ones who have received this virtue are victorious.

Pleasure and ill-will are the mother of all vices. The one who has these inside of him will not see the Lord, and refraining from the first will provide little gain without refraining from the other.

As a demonstration of the fear of the Lord, let us look at the fear we have in the company of rulers and wild animals. And as an example of longing for God let bodily love be a model for you. There is nothing against using examples of the virtues from what is opposite to it.

This generation is terribly polluted and full of arrogance and hypocrisy. In bodily struggles it may reach the heights of our Fathers of old, but it is not adorned with their gifts, although I suppose nature never needed spiritual gifts as much as they do now. But we have received exactly what we merit. For God is visible not in toils but in innocence and humility. For if the strength

of God is made perfect in weakness, the Lord will surely not refuse a humble worker.

At the time we observe one of our fellow-athletes in Christ in physical pain and sickness, let us not spitefully attempt to discover the reason for his sickness, but instead with pure and heart-felt love let us attempt to treat him as if he were a member of our own body, and as a fellow-contestant injured in the struggle.

Illness is at times for the sake of cleansing our sins, and at times to humble our mind.

When our excellent and all-merciful Lord and Master observes people being over slothful in their exercises, and inflicts their bodies with illness, an exercise that gives them no toil and which may purify the soul from wicked thoughts or passions.

All the things that befall us, visible or hidden, can be received by us with a inclination that is good, or passionate, or somewhere in between. I observed three brothers chastised. One was angry, one repressed his grief, but the third harvested the fruit of abundant joy.

I have observed farmers who were scattering the same seeds on the ground, and yet each had his own particular aim. One thought ahead to the repayment of his debts; another wished to become wealthy; another wished to glorify God with his fruit; another desired to receive praise for his labor from those who journeyed by on the path of life; another wished to irritate his neighbor who was jealous of him; and another did not want to be reproved by others for his slothfulness. Here are the names of those seeds thrown to the ground by the farmers: fasting, watchfulness, charity, works and such. Let our brothers in the Lord inquire diligently as to their motives.

When drawing water from a well, at times, without realizing it, we draw up a frog in the water. So too in obtaining virtues many times we become involved in vices that are indiscernibly caught up with them. The type of thing I mean is gluttony with hospitality; passion

with love; craftiness with discernment; ill-will with meditation; cunning, procrastination, slothfulness, opposition, stubbornness and disobedience with humility; unruliness with quietness; pride with joy; laziness with hope; strict judgment also with love; depression and laziness with silence; bitterness with purity; familiarity with meekness; and in the rear, following, as a general servant, or indeed venom, vainglory.

We need not be troubled if when we inquire of the Lord about something we continue for awhile not receiving an answer. It would have been well-pleasing for the Lord if all men in a moment had become dispassionate, but in His foresight he knew this would not be for their benefit.

All who make petitions and do not receive them from God, are rejected for one of the following reasons: either because they make their requests at an unfitting time, or since they ask contemptibly or pridefully, or because if they were to obtain their request they would become arrogant, or in the end, they would become careless after receiving their petition.

There is no one, I suppose, who would question that demons and passions withdraw from the soul either for a period of time or completely, but there are few who understand the cause of their departure.

A few of the faithful and even of those that are unfaithful have had all, except one, of the passions leave them. The one that is left is the principal evil which completely makes up for all the others, for it is so devastating that it was able to eject an angel from heaven.

The wasted matter of the passions is consumed by the divine flame. And at the time this matter is being uprooted and the soul cleansed, all the passions withdraw. This happens if the man does not draw them again to himself through worldly customs and idleness.

Demons withdraw of their own will to make us negligent, and then without warning they take away our poor soul.

I am aware of another way in which those creatures sneak away. They leave when the soul has fully attained the practice of vice and is its own deceiver and foe. Babes are an example of this behavior, because when weaned off their mother's breasts from a long acquired habit they continue to suck on their fingers.

I am also aware of a fifth type of spiritual dispassion which is acquired with great purity and honorable innocence. God justly provides help for such as these, for he saves the pure of heart, and takes away from them all sin, in the same way as babes, who, when they are naked, are very much oblivious to it.

Sin or passion was not from the beginning set in our nature, for God is not the Creator of passions. But from Him there are in us many innate virtues, which include: mercy (even the pagans are merciful) and love because we loan, and journey, and plant, hoping for a profitable outcome. Therefore if, as has been demonstrated, love is an innate virtue within us, and is the bond and the completion of the law, then it must be that the virtues are close to our natural state. So those who claim they are unable to exercise them should be embarrassed.

Beyond nature are chastity, liberty from anger, a humble nature, prayer, vigil, fasting, ceaseless remorse. Some of these we are taught by men, some by angels, and for some the Instructor and Provider is Himself God the Word.

When we are faced by evils, we should select the least. For example, many times it happens that we are present at prayer, and a brother approaches us. So we have to either cease praying, or upset the brother by ignoring him with no reply. Love is more important than prayer, because prayer is a specific virtue but love covers all the virtues.

A long time ago, when I was in my youth, I arrived in a city or town and while reclining at the table I was assaulted, at the same time, by notions of gluttony and vainglory. Since I was afraid of the children of gluttony, I determined that it was better to give into vainglory, because I knew in those that are young the demon of gluttony will often overcome the demon of vainglory. This is not a surprise, for among those in the world the root of all wickedness is love of money, but for monks it is gluttony.

Many times God's Providence keeps a certain small passion present in spiritual people so that by unceasing condemnation of themselves on behalf of these insignificant flaws they will acquire a rich abundance of humility which no one can steal.

It is not possible for those who have not spent time in obedience to be humble. Because all those who have learned a trade on their own think highly of themselves.

The Fathers claim that the active life is made up of two virtues of the most common type: fasting and obedience. For indeed the first overcomes carnality, while the other supports this victory with a humble nature. This is the reason why lamentation has a two-fold power, because it ruins sin and creates humility.

For the devout it is normal to provide for everyone who asks, and to those even more devout to provide for others, even when they are not asking for something. But not to ask for something back from the one who took it, even when they have the opportunity, is only a feature perhaps only of the truly dispassionate.

With respect to every passion and virtue, may we carefully study ourselves as to where we are: the start, the middle, or the end.

All the assaults which we undergo from the demons come from three sources: carnality, haughtiness, and the jealousy of the demons. The final ones are blessed, the middle are quite pathetic, while the first are losers until the end.

There is a particular sense, or rather practice, which is called suffering hardship. The one who obtains it will never fear pain, toil or adversity or turn away from them. Being held together by this magnificent grace, the souls of the martyrs rashly detested their tortures.

Keeping watch over one's thoughts is one thing, and protecting one's mind is yet another. So far as the east is from the west, so much loftier is the latter than the first, even if it is more toilsome.

It is one thing to pray for liberation from evil thoughts, and yet another to oppose them, another to detest and reject them. For the first approach he gives witness who said, "O God, come to my aid." For the second it is he who said, "And to those who rebuke me I will make an opposing reply." And again, "You have made us oppose our neighbors." For the third the Psalmist bears witness saying, "I was dumb, and did not open my mouth." And, "I put a bridle on my mouth, when the sinner was in my presence." And again, "The haughty has transgressed the law beyond measure, but I have not deviated from meditating on You." The one who rests on the middle step many times will make use of the first of these ways though being taken unaware. The one who rests on the first step will not be able to fight off his enemies by the second approach. The one who has attained the third step is able to repel the demons.

Of course it is impossible for a spiritual being to be limited to a body, but for one who has God anything is possible.

In the same manner that the one whose sense of smell is good, can perceive who has secret perfumes, so also the chaste soul can perceive in others both the smell which he has himself received from God and the vile odor from which he has been liberated, even though others cannot smell its fragrance.

It is not possible for everyone to acquire dispassion, but it is possible for everyone to be saved and reconciled with God.

Take heed that you are not overcome by strangers, those thoughts which compel you to be curious about the unutterable judgments of Divine Providence or the visions which imply that the Lord shows partiality. Because they are the children of self-respect and are revealed in this way.

There is a demon of greed which many times is disguised as humility. There is also a demon of vainglory, and one of carnality as well. Both suggest giving alms, but if we are free of them, we will not be frugal with our deeds of mercy regardless of where we are.

There are some who have claimed that demons work against demons, but I am certain that they all work for our ruin.

Our own strong inclination and wish, with God's help, comes before all spiritual deeds both manifest and spiritual, for if the first has not cleared a path, the second will not follow.

If there is a time for all things under heaven, as the Preacher tells us, and by 'all things' we should know it means all things that concern our spiritual life, then, if you are willing, let us examine it so that we may attempt to do at each moment what is fitting for that occasion. This is surely the case for those who enter the games, for there is a time for dispassion (I make this remark for the athletes who are doing their apprenticeship). There is a time for weeping. There is a time for hardness of heart. There is a time for obedience. There is a time to give orders. There is a time to fast and a time to eat. There is a time for struggling with our foe, the body, and a time when the fire burns down. There is a time of spiritual tempest, and a time for spiritual peace. There is a time for profound grief and a time for spiritual gladness. There is a time for instruction and a time for listening. There is a time for corruptions, perhaps from pride, and a time for purifying through meekness. There is a time for battle and a time for secure rest. There is a time for stillness and a time for distraction. There is a time for ceaseless prayer and a time for devout ministry. Therefore may we not be tricked by haughty zeal and pursue, prematurely, what will happen in its time. That is, we

should not during winter seek for that which should come in the summer, or at spring for what is due at the harvest. Because there is a time to sow in toil, and a time to harvest the unmentionable graces. For otherwise we will not obtain even in its time what is fitting for that time.

By the inexpressible providence of God some people have obtained divine rewards for their labors before doing them; others during their toil; others after; and some only at the time of their departure. It is then a question of which of them was made the most humble.

There is a depression that is the result of many sins, of a heavy conscience and of a profound grief. This is because the soul is covered with many injuries and descends under the weight of them into the depth of depression. There is another type of grief that comes to us from haughtiness and vanity, when one supposes that he has not merited his sudden fall. The one observing closely will discover the characteristics of each: the one coldly yields to apathy while the other in depression still holds on to his struggle, which is not in agreement with his state. The first is treated by moderation and hope. The latter is treated by a humble heart and the practice of not condemning anybody.

It should be no surprise for us or seem alien to us when we observe that some people do evil acts under the screen of nice words. Because it may have been that in Paradise the serpent was killed by an overpowering pride.

In all that you do and in each mode of life, regardless if you are under obedience or your work is not under the authority of anyone, either in physical or spiritual concerns, may this be your guide, to inquire of yourself, "Am I truly doing this in agreement with God's will?" To give an example, when we, I mean novices, perform some duty and the humility obtained from this deed is not put to your soul, then in my view, regardless if the deed is large or small, we are not performing it in accord with God. For in those of us who are youths in the spiritual life, to grow in humility is the accomplishment of the

will of the Lord. But for those who have attained the middle state perhaps the trial is the end of our inner struggles. And for the perfect, it is the growth and profusion of the divine light.

Even a little thing can be not small to the great. However, to the little, even great things are not quite perfect.

When the air is free of clouds, then the sun shines radiantly and the soul, which is liberated from its old habits, and is forgiven, has surely seen the divine light.

Vice is one thing, laziness is another, apathy another, passion another and to stumble another. He who is able to examine this in the Lord, let him perceive it clearly.

Some people glorify more than all the other gifts, the working of miracles and manifest spiritual gifts, not realizing that there are higher gifts than these, which are unseen and so are safe.

The one who is perfectly cleansed observes the soul of his neighbor (not the actual physical matter of the soul) and can discern its state. But the one who advances further can discern the state of the soul from the outward body.

A small flame may eventually consume an entire forest, so also a small defect can ruin all our efforts.

There is a repose from hostility which arouses the strength of the mind without exciting the fire of passion. There is a fatigue of the body which may stimulate even motions of the flesh. In which case we should not rely on ourselves, but instead we should trust in God, who, without our knowing it, kills the lust abiding in us.

When we observe that some love us in the Lord, then we should not permit ourselves to be at liberty with them, for nothing is able to so quickly ruin love and engender enmity as familiarity.

The eye of the soul is very beautiful and spiritual, and it is superior to everything after heavenly bodies. On account of this those who

are still subject to passions many times can discern the thoughts in the souls of others because of their surpassing love for them, in particular when they have not been overwhelmed and corrupted by the clay. There is nothing so contrary to the spiritual form as the material, may the one who reads understand.

Superstitious practices, used by ordinary people, are against Divine Providence, and for monks, they are against spiritual understanding.

May those who are sick in soul perceive God's presence in their bodily activities, dangers and external allurements. However, the perfect perceive it with the presence of the Holy Spirit and through spiritual graces.

There is a demon who visits us when we are in our bed and gives us wicked and vile thoughts to make us falter when rising from prayer and from preparing to fight against it. And it causes us to fall asleep with these vile thoughts so that we might have evil dreams as well.

There is a wicked spirit by the name of 'forerunner', who assaults us right at the moment we wake up from sleeping, and pollutes our initial thoughts. Dedicate the first fruits of your morning to the Lord, because the entire day will be colored by whatever gets the start of it. It is of value to hear what an experienced man said to me, "From my morning," he said, "I see the outcome of the entire day."

There are a great variety of paths for holiness and destruction. This is the reason why many times a path that is unfit for one person is perfect for another, and yet the aim of both is agreeable to the Lord.

With every temptation that befalls us the demons strive to make us speak or do something unseemly. But if they are unable, they stand silently and propose that we should thank God arrogantly.

Those who keep their minds on things above, after their soul leaves the body, ascend in two elements. However those who keep their

minds on things below, go down. Because when souls leave the body there is no other option. Among all God's creatures only the soul exists within something else (the body) and not within itself. It is astonishing how it is able to exist outside of where it began its existence.

Devout mothers give birth to devout daughters, and those mothers are born of the Lord. It is not a bad idea to put this rule to use in the opposite way.

Moses, or indeed God Himself, prohibits a coward to go to war for fear that the final spiritual fault be worse than the initial bodily fall. And this is correct.

All the parts of the body are enlightened by the eyes, and discernment of divine virtues is a lamp for the mind.

Step 26b - Concerning Skilled Discernment

In the same way that a stag, thirsting from heat yearns for rivers, so a monk yearns to take hold of the excellent and holy will, and not this only, but also for what is not the perfect will of God, and also for that which is opposite it. This is a topic that is of grave importance for us and is not readily described. That is, which of our concerns should be dealt with immediately, with no delay, and quickly, according to the one who said, "Woe to the one who delays each day, each time, and again, what should be done with temperance and carefulness, since it is recommended by him who stated, "War is a point of instruction, and again, "Let everything be done properly and in order." Because it is not for all people to determine such small matters quickly and accurately. For even David who bore God within him through the Holy Spirit, prayed for this grace and at times said, "Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God." And at times again, "Guide me to Your truth." Or again, "Reveal to me the path I should walk, O Lord, for I lift up my soul from every concern of life and of the passions, and lift it up to You."

Those who desire to discover the will of the Lord must first of all put to death their own will. Then, after having entreated God with faith and sincere purity, and having requested from the fathers or perhaps the brothers with a humble heart and without doubting, they should receive their counsel as if it came from the very mouth of God, even if it be opposed to their own opinion, and even if those who are asked are not particularly spiritual. For God is not unrighteous, and he will not misdirect souls who with sincere faith and purity of heart humbly yield to the counsel and judgment of their neighbor. Even if they be violent beasts who were asked, yet He who answers is the Spiritual and Unseen One. Those who permit themselves to be led by this practice without having the least misgiving are possessed by an excellent humble nature. For if one were to describe his concerns on a harp, how much more, do

you suppose, could a rational mind and sensible soul instruct than a mere object.

Due to self-will there are many who have not consented to the perfect and simple blessing described above. And instead have attempted to discern what was well-pleasing to the Lord by themselves. As such they have given to us numerous and diverse judgments about this issue.

A number of those who were searching for the proper will of God put away all attachments and gave their thoughts over to the Lord concerning the various predilections of their soul. By this I mean if they should do an action or oppose it. They gave over their minds divested of their own will, supplicating with a passionate prayer for a certain number of days. By this means they achieved an understanding of His will, either by the spiritual mind spiritually speaking with their mind or through the total disappearance from their soul of their treasured will.

Still others because of the diversions and distress which accompanied their venture came to the conclusion that these troubles were from God, who said, "We desired to come to you many times but Satan hindered us."

There are others, of the opposite inclination, who realized that their activities were pleasing to God and from its success said, "God helps everyone who intentionally chooses to do well."

The one who has received God within him through illumination, both in deeds requiring speed and in deeds which do not require haste, is confident of His will through the second way, but without a certain period of time.

To doubt one's decisions and to stay in doubt for a long time without confidence is a sign of an unenlightened and ambitious soul.

God is not unrighteous and does not shut the door on those who knock with a humble heart.

In everything we do, the purpose should be sought from the Lord, both for those things which require speed and those that are able to be delayed. For everything which is free from attachment and all pollution will be ascribed to us as good only if they have been accomplished with the aim of pleasing the Lord, and not for someone else, even if these actions are not completely holy.

Looking into what is above us has no good conclusion. The Judgment of the Lord concerning us is incomprehensible. Through his divine providence He usually elects to conceal His will from us, understanding that, if we were to know it, we would disobey it, and on this account we would receive a harsher punishment.

A sincere heart is at liberty from various distractions and securely sails on the boat of purity.

There are brave souls who with love and a humble heart undertake tasks that are above them. There are also haughty hearts who do the same thing. Our enemies frequently deliberately propose things to us above our abilities so as to cause us to grow faint and cease attempting even what is within our ability, and thus make a joke out of us to our foes.

I have observed those who were diseased in their soul and body who, due to their numerous sins, engaged in struggles that were above their abilities and which they were not able to continue. I say to these that God looks upon our repentance, not our toil but our humility.

At times our rearing is the source of our many evils, and at times our companions. However, many times a perverted soul is itself enough for its destruction. He who is free of the first two is free from the third one as well. But anyone who has the third flaw is deprived in everything, because there is no place more secure than heaven.

In the event that others spitefully argue with us, be they unbelievers or heretics, we should cease arguing after we have rebuked them twice. However, in the situation in which they desire to discover the

truth may we never tire of doing good. Still, we should use both occasions for the foundation of our own heart.

The one who is in anguish about himself when he learns of the supernatural virtues possessed by the saints is irrational. For it is just the opposite. They instruct you most of all by two means: either they move you to imitate their blessed bravery, or they guide you by the path of thrice-blessed humility to profound self-condemnation and the examination of your innate feeble nature.

Among the most corrupt, wicked demons, there are some who are more wicked than others. They propose to us that we should not be alone in our sin, and urge us to involve others in the same vice so as to make our punishment even harsher. I have observed one person learning a evil habit from another, and even though the one who was teaching it came to realize what he was doing and started to repent and stopped doing the wrong, his repentance had no effect because of the effect on his student.

Amazing, indeed amazing and unintelligible is the evil of the wicked spirits. It is not observed by many, and I supposed that even those select few only see it to a small degree. So, how is it that while dwelling in pleasures and wealth we keep alert and watchful? And why, while we fast and toil with work, are we pathetically overcome by sleep? Or how is it our heart becomes hard while we dwell in quiet? And how is it, while we sit with our friends, we have remorse? How is it when we hunger we are tempted in dreams? And yet when we are full we do not have these temptations. In our poverty we are full of darkness and unable to grieve. However, if we take wine we are merry and sorrow comes with ease. The one who is able in the Lord, may he enlighten those in the dark. Because we do not understand this issue. At the very least we can declare that such a transformation is not always the work of demons. This at times occurs with me, I do not know how. Perhaps it is from the mind I have been endowed with, or perhaps it is from the dirty and greedy body with which I am girded about.

With respect to the changes noted above, which are difficult to understand, let us honestly and meekly entreat the Lord. If after we pray we still have the same feelings at work in us, then we should understand that this is not the work of the demons, but of our own nature. For many times it is well-pleasing for Divine Providence to aid us through struggles and to limit our haughtiness in every way.

It is hazardous to look into divine judgments, for those that inquire navigate in the ship of pride.

Somebody inquired of a seer, "Why does God, who foreknows our stumbles, supply some people with graces and miracle-working powers?" He answered, "So as to make other spiritual men more cautious, and to show the freedom of human will, and to give no excuse for those who stumble at the final judgment."

The law, being flawed, states: "Take heed to yourself." However, the Lord, who is flawless, added that we should also reprove our brother, saying, "If your brother sins against you," and so forth. If your rebuke, or I should say, your reminder, is guileless and meek, you should not fail to fulfill the Lord's will, and particularly in the instance of those who admit correction. However, if you have not advanced this far, then at very least fulfill the basic principle set down by the law.

Do not be astonished when you observe those whom you love setting themselves against you because of your admonitions. Foolish people are pawns of the devils, and particularly against the enemies of the demons.

One thing concerning us greatly astonishes me: Why do we so readily and hastily give ourselves over to our passions when we have the awesome God, angels and saints, to assist us in the virtues, and solely the evil demon against us? I have no desire to continue writing about this, actually I cannot.

If all formed beings keep to their substance, then why, as the great Gregory states, am I, the image of God, mixed with clay? If some of

God's creatures have managed to lose their formed nature, it is indisputable that they will regularly struggle to go back to their first state. Man should employ every possible means to lift up his clay, and seat it upon the throne of God. May no one make up excuses for not venturing on this ascent, for the path and gateway is open.

The mind and soul are stimulated to imitation when they discover the spiritual exploits of the Fathers, and their eager enthusiasts are driven to copy them, by learning from their instruction.

Discernment is a lamp in the dark, the way back for those that wander from the path, the enlightenment of those whose vision has become dim. A person with discernment discovers sound health and abolishes illness.

Everyone who is astonished at trivialities does so because of two reasons. It is either from gross ignorance, or they enlarge and glorify the works of their neighbor with the aim of a humility.

May we make every effort not only to struggle with the demons but also to battle against them. The first, at times, casts them off, and is at times cast off. But the latter is forever pursuing the enemy.

The one who has overcome the passions injures the demons, and by feigning that he still has passions he tricks his enemies and continues untouched. One of the brothers once fell into dishonor and not being the slightest bit upset by it in his heart, he prayed in his mind. Then he started to weep over the embarrassment, concealing his dispassion with a passion. There was another brother who had no desire to become the superior yet feigned that he was trying to achieve it. And how am I able to relate the purity of that man who entered a whorehouse, seemingly on account of vice, but lead the prostitute to an ascetic life? And again, there was a cluster of grapes that was brought early in the morning to one of the solitaries, and after the one who had brought them had left, he consumed them with the appearance of devouring them, but with no enjoyment, purely to make it appear to the demons that he was

a glutton. Another one misplaced a few palm-leaves and was engaged throughout the entire day with feigning that he was upset about it. These people need to be careful, for in trying to deceive the demons they may end up deceiving themselves. Concerning these, certainly the Apostle said, "As deceivers and yet genuine."

The one who desires to offer his body chaste to Christ and to display to Him a clean heart should carefully keep his purity and liberty from anger, because without these our toil is worthless.

In the same way that eyes have a variety of colors, so also our soul has a variety of shadowings of the spiritual Sun. One form happens by means of weeping, another by means of the spiritual. Another form comes from listening to words, and another is the delight that suddenly wells up in the soul. There is also a type that comes from stillness, and yet another which by means of rapture indescribably and suddenly brings the mind through a spiritual light to Christ.

There are the virtues, and also there are mothers of the virtues. So also a sage struggles to achieve the latter. The Instructor of the mother-virtues is God Himself by His own workings, while there are numerous instructors of the daughter-virtues.

May we take heed for fear that we make up for a lack of food by a surfeit of sleep, and the opposite. Because this type of behavior is the trait of idiotic people.

I have observed laborers, who for whatever reason, to small degree, pampered their bellies, but not long after, these brave ascetics rebuked their bellies by standing the entire night, and by these means they were instructed to be satisfied with less.

The demon of greed combats violently in opposition to those who have nothing, and when it is unable to overcome them it reminds them of worldly poverty and urges those who have become spiritual to become materialistic once more.

When in a state of despair never cease to keep in mind the Lord's precept to Peter that he should forgive a person who sins seventy times seven times. Because He who gave this precept to another will Himself do much more. But when we are honored let us again recall the saying, "He who will keep the entire spiritual law, and fall in one passion, which is to fall into pride, has himself become guilty of it all."

There are particular inclinations of evil and jealous spirits which willfully abandon the saints so as to prevent those who fight from receiving any further crowns for overcoming them.

Blessed are the peacemakers, which no one can dispute. However, I have also observed makers of enemies who are equally blessed. There were two people who started to have an unclean attraction for each other. But one of the fathers who was particularly discerning and experienced was the agency by which they began to despise one another. He did this by turning one against the other, saying to each that he was being defamed by the other. And this sage through human deception triumphed in warding off the devil's enmity and creating a hatred by which the unclean attraction was destroyed.

Some lay aside one precept on account of another. I have observed young men who were joined together in a good spirit. And yet, so that they not disturb others consciences, by joint agreement they maintained their distance for a while.

In the same way that marriages and funerals are opposites of each other, so are pride and depression. But on account of the disorder caused by the demons one may observe the two concurrently.

At the start of the monastic life some of the impure demons will teach us about the art of the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. They very much enjoy doing this with conceited people and those who have spent much time in secular studies so by slowly misleading them they may bring them to heresy and blasphemy.

We are able to perceive these devilish actions by the disorder and impious delight that one senses in his soul while being taught.

Every beast has its rank and beginning from the Creator, and for some, their end as well. But the conclusion of virtue is endless, because the Psalmist said, "I have looked upon the end of all perfection, but Your law is extremely broad and limitless." If there are some excellent ascetics who can go from power of deed to power of meditation, and if love never fails, and if the Lord will keep your fear coming in and your love going out, then from these things one can conclude that there is truly no end to love. We will never stop advancing in it, either in the present time or in the future, endlessly putting light to light. And no matter how odd what I have described may appear to many, nevertheless it will be done. From the witnesses we have given, I would have to say, blessed Father, that even the angels do not stop advancing. Instead it is quite the opposite with them, they forever they add glory to glory, and understanding to understanding.

Do not be amazed if the demons often give us good thoughts, and wise arguments against them. The goal of our enemies in this instance is to have us suppose that they perceive the thoughts of our minds.

Do not condemn those who are eloquent when preaching. However, do not encourage this, for the benefit of a word has many times made up for the lack of works. We do not receive all things to the same degree. With some people speaking is more important than deeds, but with others the latter is more important than the first.

God is not the author or occasion of evil, and those who claim that some passions are innate have been tricked, not understanding that we have changed the very matter of nature into passions. For example, nature provides for us the seed of bearing children, and yet we have warped this into sexual immorality. Nature gives us a way of expressing anger against the serpent and yet we have

employed this against our neighbor. Nature encourages us with eagerness to strive for the virtues, but we strive with evil intent. It is natural for us to desire honor, but honor from on high. To be oppressive is natural, but only against demons. Joy is innate, but joy for the sake of the Lord and for the good-will of our neighbor. It is natural to be bitter, but this is to be used against our spiritual foes. We have acquired a longing for pleasure, but not for dissipation.

An eager soul stimulates the demons against itself. And as our struggles grow, so do our crowns. He who has never been hit by foes will surely not be crowned. But the soldier who does not recoil in spite of his falls will be praised by the angels as a hero.

The one who went three nights in the earth came back to life eternal. The one who has overcome three hours will never perish.

Divine providence prompts the sun to dawn within us for our instruction. And then it sets, and He creates darkness, His hiding. And the night comes, in which the young, brutish lions roam, which had formerly departed from us and all the creatures of the forest of thorny passion, roaming to pull away the hope that is in us, and looking for their food of the passion from God in either thoughts or deeds. Again by means of the darkness of a humble nature the sun dawns in us and the wild creatures assemble and rest in their dens, which are our carnal hearts, but not directly in us. Then the demons tell one another, "The Lord has done amazing things for them." And we reply, "The Lord has done wonderful things for us, and we are joyful, but you are cast out. Look, the Lord riding on a swift cloud." Indeed the soul that has been raised above all carnal lust, and arrives in Egypt, into the heart that is dark already, will crush the idols of men, which are the useless thoughts of the mind.

If Christ, even though he is all-powerful, as a man, escaped in bodily form from Herod, then let the reckless understand that they should not throw themselves in temptations. For it was said, "May your foot not be moved, nor the angel who watches you doze."

Conceit wraps itself around bravery in the same way bindweed wraps itself around the cypress tree.

Let us regularly keep watch against confessing even the idea that we have achieved any good. And let us keep seeking diligently to see if this is one of our traits. For if it is we know that we have completely failed.

Be ever on the look-out for traces of the passions, and then you will discover a multitude of them in you which you are not capable of distinguishing in your sick state. This is a consequence of our feebleness or because they are so deeply set.

God acts a judge over our intentions. But on account of His love for us He also requires us, as far as we are capable, to do good deeds. Most excellent is the one who leaves nothing unfinished that is within his abilities. But still greater is the one who humbly tries to do what is beyond his ability.

The demons many times try to prevent us from doing what is simple and advantageous to us, and they induce us to do things which are more difficult instead.

It seems to me that Joseph is esteemed for keeping away from the opportunities of sin, and not for his dispassion. One may seek to know, from what, and from how many sins does avoidance deserve a crown? For it is one matter to keep away from a shadow, but it is much better thing to rush toward the sun of righteousness.

Being in the dark is reason for stumbling. A stumble leads to a fall, and a fall to death.

Those who have been conquered by wine frequently wash with water, but those who are overcome by passions are cleansed with tears.

Corruption is one matter, darkness another, and blindness still another. The first is treated through moderation, the second by

seclusion, and the last by obedience, and with the aid of God who, on account of us, became obedient.

We have as an example two places in which ordinary things are purified. May we imagine by comparison two grand institutions for people who desire to contemplate on things above. A community of monks which is well-pleasing to God is like a laundry cleaner in which dirt, filth and perversity of the soul are scrubbed out. The dye-works is like the solitary life for those who have cast off lust, remembrance of injuries and anger, and are now moving from the monastic to solitary life.

There are some who declare that we stumble into the same sins since we are incapable of correcting our previous sins through the deficiency of our repentance. So one should inquire, "Have all who have not stumbled with the same type of sin sincerely repented as they should have?" There are some who fall into the identical vices either because they have developed a profound forgetfulness of their previous sins, or because they suppose in their own love-of-luxury way that God is tender hearted, or they may have fallen into despair concerning their salvation. I am not sure if someone will condemn me if I remark that their distress comes on account of them not being strong enough to tie up the enemy who is dominating them through the oppressive force of habit.

We should ask why the soul which is immaterial does not see the type of spirits that are dwelling with it. Could it be on account of it joining with the body? This is understood only by Him who united them.

One time a wise man inquired of me, "Speak to me, speak to me, for I long to understand which of the spirits are likely to suppress the mind when we commit sin and which elevate it?" However, I was disgraced by the question, pleading my ignorance, with an oath, on the matter. Then he who desired to understand instructed me himself, saying, "I will provide you with some words, a leaven of understanding, and then I will let you discover the rest through your

own effort. The spirit of lust, anger, gluttony, depression, and tiredness have no inclination to raise the pride of the mind. However, the spirit of avarice, ambition, chattiness, and several others put wickedness to wickedness. This is reason why the spirit of criticism is close to the latter ones.

Should a monk spend an hour or day visiting people in the world, or if he should host them, he should delight when he leaves them as if he were someone who had been liberated from a snare. However, if he feels the opposite, that he has been struck with grief, this implies that he has become the pawn of conceit or lust.

We should start by testing to see which direction the wind is blowing, and then we will not put our sails against it.

Encourage with love and allow a little rest for the old men who are experienced with charity, and have worn out their bodies with asceticism. But urge young men who have tired their souls with sins to be austere, and make them remember the eternal fire.

It is impossible, as I stated earlier, to immediately become totally at liberty from gluttony and conceit at the start of the monastic life. However, we should not use luxury to battle vainglory, because when novices overcome gluttony they become vainglorious. Instead may they control it by being frugal. Because the hour will come, and is already here for those who long for it, when the Lord will also suppress this passion beneath our feet.

When they go into the monastic life the young and the old are not struck with the same passions. Rather many times they have opposite illnesses. Therefore, blessed, sincerely blessed is humility, since it makes repentance secure and is profitable for both the young and old.

Do not be offended by what I am about to tell you. There are truly right and honest souls, even though rare, who are alien to ill-will, hypocrisy and trouble, for whom dwelling with men is not pleasant. However, with the assistance of their director, from a harbor of

solitude they are able to rise to heaven without longing for or suffering the trouble of communal life.

People can cure the lustful, angels the malevolent, but God alone can cure the haughty.

One characteristic of love often involves allowing our neighbor, who is often a guest, to do whatever he desires, and no matter what, offering to him all our concern.

One might inquire as to how and to what degree, when and if good is ruined by a type of repentance in the same manner as evil.

It is necessary that we use much discernment to know when to take our stand against sin, and in which cases and to what degree to battle against the food of the passions, and when to draw back from the struggle. Because, for the sake of our feebleness, at times we must consent that it is better to flee than to die.

Let us watch and take note of when and how we can clear out our gall by ill-will. Some demons raise us, some lower us, some stiffen, some comfort, some obscure, some feign to communicate enlightenment, some make us lazy, some make us crafty, some make us gloomy, and some make us happy.

It should not bother us if we discover that our passions are more powerful at the start of our monastic journey, than they were when we were in the world. Because we have to take away the causes of illness, and then our health will be restored. The creatures were there concealed all the time, only they did not reveal themselves.

When, by some mistake, those who are drawing near to perfection are defeated by demons in a small matter, they should immediately use every possible means to remove this error from them again a hundredfold.

Just as the winds, in peaceful weather, trouble only the surface of the sea, but at other times they trouble the deep as well, so you can picture yourself in the gloomy winds of sin. Because those held in

bondage by their passions are shaken in the true consciousness of the heart, but in those who had previously advanced are only disturb in the shallow of the mind. That is why the latter quickly sense their normal peace, for the heart was left unpolluted.

It is the advantage of the perfect to understand correctly if a thought in the soul comes from their consciousness, or from God, or from demons. Because the demons do not initially propose that everything is vile. This surely is a dark enigma and hard to unravel.

The physical eyes enlighten the body, but in manifest and spiritual discernment the eyes of the heart are enlightened.

Step 26c - A Short Summary of the Former Steps

A steadfast faith is the mother of renunciation. The reverse of this is obvious.

A firm hope is the gateway to detachment. The reverse of this is obvious.

The love of God is the support of self-banishment. The reverse is obvious.

Obedience is the child of self-rebuke and the longing for good health.

Moderation is the mother of good health. The mother of moderation is the remembrance of death and the steadfast memory of the gall and vinegar of our Lord.

The assistant and support of purity is solitude. The extinguishing of carnal lust is fasting. The enemy of disgraceful thoughts is heartfelt remorse.

Faith and self-banishment kill avarice, but kindness and love delude the body.

Unceasing prayer is the destruction of depression. Remembering the judgment is a tool for zeal.

Delight in disgrace is the treatment for anger. Psalmody, kindness and poverty suffocate grief.

Detachment from all sensory things is the meditation of the spiritual.

Stillness and solitude are the enemies of vainglory. If you are with people, look to be shamed.

Manifest vainglory is treated by an austere setting, but hidden vainglory can only be cured by the One who is forever unseen.

The deer kills all manifest serpents, but humility kills the spiritual ones.

By natural things we can gain a better understanding of the spiritual.

In the same way a snake cannot divest itself of its former skin unless it first borrows into a narrow hole, so neither are we able to cast off our old biases (the elderly part of our soul and the vestment of the former man) unless we travel by the straight and narrow road of fasting and shame.

It is equally impossible for the person who feeds and comforts his body to soar to heaven as it is for a bird with a well-stuffed belly.

Caked mud is unseemly to pigs, and a wearied body offers no repose to demons.

In the same way that a fire is quenched by an overabundance of wood, all the while creating too much smoke, so too much grief often creates a smoky and gloomy soul, and stops the flow of tears.

In the same way that a blind man is useless as an bowman, so too an unruly student is lost.

Treated iron can sharpen untreated iron, and so also a zealous brother many times has rescued a lazy one.

Just as eggs that are kept warm in a dung hatch, so also thoughts that are not confessed hatch and lead to trouble.

Just as horses run in competition with each other, so also a virtuous community encourages itself with mutual zeal.

Just as a cloud obscures the sun, so wicked thoughts dim and destroy the mind.

Just as a condemned man who is going to his death will not discuss the theaters, so also the one who sincerely weeps for himself will never fill his belly.

Just as an impoverished man sees the king's treasures and becomes yet more aware of his poverty, so also when the soul learns of the great deeds of the Fathers it becomes more humble.

Just as iron is drawn to a magnet even without intending it, because it is pulled by nature itself, so the one who has become involved in vice is dominated by it.

Just as oil quiets the ocean, although it has no desire for it, so fasting suppresses the instinctive passions of the body.

Just as the water of a clogged river moves upwards, so also the soul that is set upon by trouble ascends to God and is rescued by means of penitence.

Just as the one who is adorned with perfume makes his presence known whether he wants to or not, so also the Spirit of the Lord is revealed by its speech and humility.

Just as the sun causes gold to glitter, so virtue reveals the man who has it.

As wind troubles the depths, so also anger troubles the mind more than anything else.

Just as hearsay alone does not cause a strong desire to eat what the eye has not beheld, so those who are pure in the body acquire great repose by means of their ignorance.

As thieves will not assault a spot where they observe the weapons of the king lying, so he who has put prayer in his heart will not easily be robbed by spiritual robbers.

As a flame does not produce snow, so those who desire glory here will not find it there (in heaven).

Just as a spark has many times kindled much wood, so it has been discovered that one good work can blot out many sins.

Just as it is not possible to slay a savage beast without a weapon, so without a humble nature it is impossible to become at liberty from anger.

Just as physically we are unable to survive without nourishment, so also, right up to hour of our death, we cannot, even for a moment, allow room for negligence.

As a beam of sun, going through a crack illuminates all in the house and reveals even the smallest dust particles, so also the fear of the Lord, coming into the heart of a man, shows to him all his sins.

Crabs are sometimes trapped because they walk sometimes forward and other times backward. So the soul that now jokes, now grieves, now lives in pleasure, cannot advance.

The sleepy are plundered without trouble, and so are they who look for virtue close to the world.

Just as a man who is battling with a lion is overcome the moment he looks away, so also is the one who, while striving with his flesh, allows it any rest.

As he who ascends a rotten ladder puts himself in danger, so all glory, honor, and power resist humility and bring down the one who possesses them.

Just as it is impossible for a hungry man not to think about bread, so it is impossible for a man who is earnest about his salvation not to ponder death and judgment.

Just as writing is wiped out with water, so sins can be wiped out with tears.

As some, for want of water, wipe out writing through other ways, so there are souls who have no teardrops, but beat and scrub out their sins, by grief, groaning and a heavy heart.

Just as a heap of dung breeds a heap of worms, so a multitude of food breeds a multitude of stumblings, wicked thoughts, and dreams.

In the same way that a blind man is unable to see to walk, so an indolent man cannot see good or do it.

So the one whose legs are bound is unable to walk, so also those who store up money are unable to ascend to heaven.

As a new injury is treated simply, so the converse is true of those tormented by a chronic illness of the soul. If they are cured, they are cured with much trouble.

Just as a dead man is unable to walk, so a depressed man is unable to be saved.

The one who claims to have genuine faith yet abides in sin is as a man who has no eyes set in his face. However, the one who has no faith, even if he does good, is like a man who takes water and pours it in a vessel full of holes.

Just as a boat which has a good navigator is able to securely enter the harbor with God's assistance, so the soul which has a good shepherd, although it has committed many sins, readily ascends to heaven.

Without a leader one may wander away from the road, however careful he is, so also he who travels the monastic road under his own leadership soon comes to ruin, even if he possesses all the wisdom in the world.

If someone is feeble in the body and has a serious fall, he should go by the way of humility and her characteristics, because he will find no other path to salvation.

Just as the one who has been ill for a long time, cannot regain his health in a moment, so it is impossible to immediately conquer the passions, or even one passion.

Watch the scope of each passion and virtue and you will discover how you are developing.

Just as those who trade gold for clay are fools, so also those who speak about, and reveal spiritual things for material profit.

There are many who have quickly received forgiveness, but no one has achieved dispassion rapidly. This requires much time, love, yearning, and God.

May we discover which beasts and birds will hurt us at sowing time, and at the time when the seeds sprout, and at the time of harvest, so that we may lay our snares in a fitting manner.

Just as a man with a fever should not commit suicide, so also until our final end we should never lose hope.

Just as it is unfitting for one who has just buried his father to go immediately from the funeral to his wedding, so also those who are grieving over their falls it is unfitting for them to pursue honor, or repose or glory in this life.

As citizens have one type of abode and prisoners another, so the necessities of those who are grieving should be different from those that are innocent.

Just as a king commands a soldier, who has received serious injuries in combat, in his presence, not to be removed from his service, but instead to be advanced, so also the Heavenly King gives crowns to the monk who suffers many dangers from demons.

Spiritual insight is a characteristic of the soul itself, but sin is a beating of discernment. Attentive discernment causes either wickedness to stop or be reduced, and it is the child of a conscience. A conscience is the word and confidence given to us from our guardian angel at the time of our baptism. This is why we discover that the unbaptized do not have such strong pangs of grief in their soul when they do their evil works.

The reducing of evil gives birth to an avoidance of evil. And the avoidance of evil is the start of repentance. And the start of repentance is the start of salvation. And the start of salvation is a good purpose. And a good purpose is the mother of working. And the start of working is the virtues. And the start of virtues is a blossoming. And the blossoming of virtue is the start of good works. And the child of virtue is endurance. And the child of endurance is regular practice. And the offspring of regular practice is good character. And good character is the mother of fear. And fear engenders keeping the commandments, both heavenly and worldly. The keeping of the commandments is a mark of love. And the start of love is a profusion of humility. And a profusion of humility is the daughter of dispassion. And the possession of the last is the completeness of love, which is the complete dwelling of God in those who by means of dispassion are pure in heart, for they will see God. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Step 27 - On Blessed Stillness of Body and Soul

We are as purchased slaves under bondage to unholy passions. Therefore we know to some degree the fancies, methods, desires and craft of the spirits that govern our feeble souls. But there are other people, who through the activity of the Holy Spirit, and as a consequence of their freedom from the oppression of those spirits, are very much awake to their craft. The first, being in a grievous state of illness, can only conjecture as to the relief which they could have with sound health. However, the latter, being in a good condition, are capable of forming notions and reaching conclusions as to the problems of such illnesses. This is the reason why we, who are feeble and sick, pause to philosophize in our discussion about the sanctuary of solitary stillness, for we know that near the table of the good brothers there is always a hound waiting to grab a morsel of bread from it, which is, a soul. Then it flees away with it in its jaw and consumes it alone. We have no desire to give room to that hound, and provide a cause to those who are seeking an opportunity. For this cause we think it unwise to speak about peace to the valiant fighters of our King who are fighting in the war. We will only say that the crowns of peace and calm are forged for those who do not waver in the struggle. But we have no desire to trouble anyone by describing other things without writing about this, and so we will, if you like, speak concisely about solitude, even if only to define it.

Stillness of the body is the understanding and lessening of practices and feelings. Stillness of the soul is understanding one's thoughts and inviolate mind.

A companion of stillness is brave and unceasing strength of thought which keeps a regular watch at the gateway of the heart and kills or wards off the thoughts that come to it. He who is quiet in the deep of his heart will perceive the truth of this last statement. However, the one who is still a youth is oblivious and ignorant to it.

A discriminating solitary does not need words, since he shows his words by his deeds.

The start of stillness is to cast off all noise as troubling for the deep recesses of the soul. And the conclusion of it is not to be afraid of disturbances and to stay immune to them. However, when he goes out, still without a word, he is caring and completely a household of love. He is not readily moved to talk, nor is he given to anger. The converse is clear as well.

The solitary is the one who struggles to keep his spiritual state within his carnal house, as much as this is a paradox.

The cat retains her grip on a mouse, and the mind of the solitary grips his spiritual mouse. Do not say that this parable is foolish. If you do, then you do understand what stillness is about.

A monk dwelling with another monk is not saved in the same way a lone monk would be. When a monk is living alone he must be vigilant and not have a drifting mind. When he has company, the other one will assist his brother, but an angel helps the one who is alone.

The heavenly powers gather together in worship with the one whose soul is at peace, and they stay lovingly with him. The converse of this is clear.

There is a profound depth to the dogmas, and the thoughts of the solitary do not wander into them without trouble.

Since it is not good to swim with one's clothes on, then one in bondage to the passions should not be involved with theology.

The cell of the solitary is his body, and within it is an altar of wisdom.

The one who is ill in his soul from a passion and tries to live in solitude is like someone who has plunged into the ocean from a

boat and imagines that he will make it to shore securely on a piece of wood.

For all those who are striving with their clay, stillness is fitting at the opportune time only if they have a good director. Because the strength of an angel is required to be a solitary. I describe those who live a life of genuine stillness in both body and soul.

The one living alone who is slothful will speak lies, goading people with suggestions to end his solitude for him. Then after leaving his cell, he faults the demons. He has not realized that he is own demon.

I have observed those living alone who stoked the flame of their longing for God, kindling fire with fire, love with love, longing for longing.

The one who lives alone is an earthly image of a heavenly angel who with the paper of love and with the letters of zeal has set free his prayer from laziness and neglect. The solitary is the one who publicly announces, "O God, my heart is prepared." The solitary is the one who states, "I slumber, but my heart is alert."

Close the door of your cell to your body, the gate of your tongue to words, and the inner door to the wicked spirits.

The endurance of the sailor is tried at the noontime heat or when he is quiet, and a want of necessities tests the endurance of the solitary. When the first becomes discouraged he swims in the water, and when the other becomes depressed he spends time with company.

Do not be afraid of boisterous trivialities, because grieving does not know timidity and is not afraid of them.

Those whose mind has found sincere prayer speak with the Lord face to face, as if talking into the ear of the King. Those who use vocal prayer prostrate before Him as if in the presence of the whole court. But those who dwell in the world entreat the King in the

middle of the din of the multitudes. If you have discovered the practice of prayer accurately you will understand what I have described.

Make your seat on high and observe, as you are able. Then you will be able to see in what way, when, and from where, how many, and what type of robbers come to take your clusters of grapes.

When the watchman becomes tired he stands erect, and prays. Then he takes his seat again and bravely resumes his previous occupation.

The one who has discovered this from experience desired to relate it in careful detail to others, but he was fearful that he might lessen the zeal of those who were already doing it, or that he might scare off those who were just deciding to try it by the noise of his speaking.

The one who enters into delicate and erudite discussions about stillness brings demons upon himself, for there is no one else who will properly despise such perversions.

The one who has achieved stillness has entered into the depths of the mysteries. However, he would not have sunk so deep unless he had first observed the tumult of the waves and the wicked spirits, and maybe even been sprayed by these waves. The excellent apostle Paul verifies what we have described. If he had not been brought up into Paradise, as into solitude, he could never have heard the unmentionable words. God will speak into the ear of the solitary wonderful words. This is the reason why in the book of Job, the ever-wise man stated, "Will not my ear hear wonderful things from Him?"

The solitary is the one who flees from all human company, but without enmity, in the same way that others rush to it eagerly. He desires to continue receiving the holy sweetness.

Go and give away now (for to sell would take too long) all that you have, and distribute it to the poor monks, so that in their prayers they may walk with you to solitude. Take up your cross, and bear it with the aid of obedience, and strongly carry the weight of the loss of your will and forever more come and follow Me to be joined to the most holy stillness, and I will instruct you on the manifest labors and life of the spiritual beings. They never cease to grow tired of ever glorifying their Creator, and he who ascends to the heaven of stillness never stops glorifying his Maker. Incorporeal spirits will not consider physical things, nor will those who have become incorporeal in a physical body think about nourishment. The first will not be conscious of food, and the second will need no guarantee of it. The first do not regard money or goods, and the latter do not consider the ill-will of the wicked spirits. Those above in heaven have no longing for physical creation, and those here below on earth have no yearning for physical things observed by the senses. The first will never stop to progress in love, and the latter struggle with them daily. Those who are very much aware of the riches of their progress, and these regard their love of their ascent. Those will not cease until they attain the perfection of the seraphim. And these will not tire until they become angels. Blessed is the one who hopes. Three times blessed is the one who holds the promise. However, the one that has it is an angel.

In every science, as people know, there are variations in beliefs and goals. For all things are not complete, either from lack of effort or strength. Therefore some come to this harbor, or indeed ocean, or maybe abyss, since they are unable to control their tongue or from a past habit of the body. Still others because they lose control of their temper and the unfortunate souls cannot conquer this among the multitudes. Others through pride have decided that it is better to navigate on their own rather than with a guide. Others in the midst of material goods cannot keep themselves from partaking. Some desire to nurture their zeal with stillness. Others desire to torture themselves privately for their shortcomings. For some it is to attain

honor. Others again (if the Son of Man should find any on earth) are joined to blessed stillness from a joyful thirst for the love and sweetness of God, but they do not attain this unity before they have removed all despair, since union with despair would be a form of adultery to one who is joined to God.

As much as my feeble understanding allows (for I am as an inexperienced builder) I have built a ladder of ascent. May each one perceive on which rung he is standing. Is it self-will, or worldly honor, or feebleness of tongue, or hot anger, or too much attachment? Is it to compensate for shortcomings, or to augment ardor, or to put fire to fire? The last will be first and the first last. The first seven are the works of the feeble of the world, some approved, and some unapproved. However, the eighth one plainly displays the seal of the coming age.

Take heed, solitary monk, be watchful at the hours when the wild creatures lurk, otherwise you will not be capable of adjusting your traps for them. If despair, which you have separated from has departed from you, then the next duty will be redundant. However, if she continues to push herself forward, then I am at a loss how you will be able to dwell in solitude.

Why did the blessed fathers of Tabennisi not have as many luminaries as those of Scete? Learn this, those who are able. I am unable to speak, or indeed, I have no desire to.

Some lessen the passions, others spend their time in psalmody or prayer, while others give themselves to meditation, and spend their days in deep meditation. May the question be searched out according to the type of the ladder. The one who is capable of receiving this, let him accept it in the Lord.

There are lazy souls dwelling in monasteries, and by pampering those things which feed their laziness they are completely destroyed. However, there are also souls who by means of dwelling

with others divest themselves of their laziness. And the same often happens not only with the negligent, but also with the eager.

We can employ this same practice for solitude. For truly many whom the solitary life has welcomed as skilled have been rejected for willfulness, condemning them for their wish to satisfy themselves. Still others who have entered this mode of life have become more earnest and eager by means of fear and concern about the judgment they will have to face.

The one who remains disturbed by ill-temper and pride, by hypocrisy and memory of injuries, should not risk undertaking the solitary life, lest he acquire distraction and nothing else. But if someone is free of these, he will understand what is best, and yet I suppose, not even this one.

Here are the marks, routes and evidences of those who are correctly living in solitude: an untroubled mind, pure and holy thoughts, rapture to the Lord, remembrance of eternal punishments, the quickness of death, ceaseless desire for prayer, unsleeping watchfulness, a loss of lust, ignorance of attachment, a departure from the world, the passing of gluttony, a certain knowledge of the divine, a spring of discernment, peace with tears, the passing of chattiness, and many other similar things which normal people are likely to think strange.

These are the marks of those who are living the solitary life incorrectly: lack of spiritual treasures, a growth of anger, a storehouse of resentment, a loss of love, an increase in vanity. I will refrain elaborating on the rest which follow.

However, our section has now come to the point where we must ponder the case of those dwelling in obedience, all the more because this section is mostly intended for them.

The marks of those who are legally, chastely and truly bound to this regular and true obedience, both in truth and by the teaching of the inspired Fathers, are these. And each day (if only we have hallowed

a day to the Lord) they will push forward and progress so that they will be perfect in their time: a growth of basic humility, a reduction of anger (for how is it able not to lessen since the bile is spent), dispersion of gloom, entry of love, alienation from the passions, rescue from malice, lessening of lust through regular examination, ignorance of depression, growth of zeal, sympathetic love, exile of pride. This is the prize which everyone should pursue, but few reach. A spring without water should not be honored with the name. And what follows, he who is capable of thinking already understands.

A new wife who has not been true to her wedding vows has corrupted her body, and a soul that has not been true to its oath has polluted its spirit. Rebukes, malice, beatings and, most despised of all, estrangement will occur with the first. The other will have to put up with: corruption, forgetting death, an insatiable belly, loss of control of the eyes, laboring for honor, yearning for sleep, stiffening of the heart, numbness and a feeling of being dead, rapid growth of evil thoughts and a desire to permit them, hostage of the heart, troubling of spirit, being unruly, contradicting, attachment, lack of faith, skepticism, chattiness and, perhaps the worst, regular familiarity, and still worse, a heart without remorse which in the careless is followed by apathy, the mother of demons and stumbles.

Of the eight wicked spirits, five attack those in solitude, and three go after those under obedience.

The one who lives in solitude and battles depression often suffers ill, because he spends time which would be better spent in prayer and meditation trying to figure out ways of struggling against it.

One time, becoming lazy, I was in my cell and pondering leaving it. However, some people arrived and started to honor me for my solitary life, and immediately the thought of laziness gave way to pride. I was astonished how this three-horned demon resists the other spirits.

Watch every hour the blows and slaps, the desires and changes of your comrade (the spirit of despair) and observe how and where they are leading. He who has attained peace through the Holy Spirit is accustomed to this scene.

The initial duty of solitude is the separation from all business, if it is honorable or not, for he who permits even honorable ones will surely allow those which are not. The second duty of solitude is sincere prayer. The third is hallowed working of the heart. It is certainly impossible for one who has not learned the alphabet to read books. It is also impossible for the one who has not achieved the first to attain the last two.

Involved in the middle duty, I was among the middle ranks and an angel enlightened me, thirsting as I was. Again I was with them, and I inquired, "What exactly was the Lord prior to Him taking on a manifest form?" The angel was unable to tell me, because he was not permitted. So I inquired, "What state is He now in?" He answered, "In the state that is fitting to Him, but not in our state." I inquired, "What does it mean, the standing and sitting at the right hand of the Father?" He answered, "It is impossible to understand these mysteries through human hearing." I urged him to lead me where my yearnings pulled me, but he told me, "The hour has not yet come, because not yet does the fire of incorruption burn strongly within you." If, at that time, I was on this earth, I do not know, or out of it I cannot tell.

It is troublesome to conquer the noonday nap, particularly during the summer. At that time, and perhaps only then, is physical work allowed.

In my experience the demon of despair readies and sets the path for the demon of lust, so that by forcibly enfeebling the body and pushing it into sleep the latter may create corruptions in those exercising solitude through a realistic dream. If you withstand these demons strongly, then they will surely start a harsh assault on you to make you cease your labor for the sake of your lack of progress.

But there is no greater evidence that we are beating the demons than that they furiously assault us.

When you leave solitude, protect what you have attained. When a cage has been opened, birds will fly away, and then we will achieve no further profit from solitude.

A tiny hair troubles the eye, and a small concern destroys solitude, for solitude is the exile of thoughts and notions, and the denial of every honorable concern.

The one who has truly achieved solitude does not think about his body, for He who vowed, will not be untrue.

He who desires to offer his mind chaste to God, and is disturbed by concerns, is as a man who has bound his legs closely together and then believes he can run freely.

Those who are knowledgeable about worldly philosophy are truly rare, but I assert that those who are well versed in divine philosophy of true stillness are even more rare.

The one who has never truly known God is not ready for solitude and exposes himself to many problems. Solitude suffocates the inexperienced, who having not tasted the sweetness of God, loses their time in being held hostage, robbed, becoming depressed and, in general, being governed by the passions.

The one who has experienced the benefits of prayer will eschew the multitudes like a wild donkey, because if not for prayer, what makes him different than a wild donkey who is free from the association with people?

The one who is held by the passions and dwells in the desert lets his mind attend to their talking. So the holy elder, George Arsilaite, who is not completely unknown to your blessedness, at one time described and instructed me. For he once instructed my useless soul and, guided me to solitude. He said, "I have perceived that early in the day is the normal time for the demons of pride and lust

to make their attack. At noon it is the demons of despair, regret and anger. And in the evening it is those lovers of dung, despots of the miserable belly.

It is better to dwell (in a community) in poverty and obedience than to be a solitary who has lost his mind.

The one who has arrived at the solitary life properly and yet does not see its merit daily is either doing it in the wrong way or is being robbed of it by his self-respect.

Solitude is unending worship and waiting for God.

Let the memory of Jesus be present with each breath, and then you will realize the benefit of stillness.

For a monk who is under obedience willfulness is a fall, but for the solitary it is a break in praying.

If you delight in having guests visit your cell, understand that you are not taking a break from depression only, but also from God.

The example for your prayer life should be the widow who was wronged by her foe, and for your stillness, the excellent, angelic Arsenius, the solitary. Recall in your stillness the life of the excellent solitary, and see how many times he repelled those who came to him, so that he would not lose the better part.

My experience has shown me that the demons often compel foolish pleasure-seekers to visit those dwelling in solitude on the right path so that they may put a deterrent in the path of those men. Watch out for such ones, and do not be timid about offending those idle busy-bodies through your pious behavior, because as a consequence of this insult, maybe they will cease from roaming around. But watch that you do not accidentally insult someone who on account of his thirst has journeyed to find water from you. Each case requires the light of discernment.

The life of those exercising solitude, and in particular those who are very much alone, should be led both by the conscience and common sense. The one who runs his race properly, and does all his tasks, speaking, thoughts, steps, purposes and motions in agreement with the Lord, labors for the Lord's sake with spiritual zeal as though he were in the presence of the Lord. If he is plundered, he has not discovered how to live the practice of virtue.

I will illustrate, says one, my proposal and my will on the harp, consonant with my ever-faulty judgment. As for me, I will give my will to God in prayer, and from Him I will obtain assurance.

Faith is the wing of prayer. Lacking faith my prayer will come back to my bosom. Faith is a firm resoluteness of the soul, unwavering through any trouble. A believer is not one who supposes that God can do all things, but one who trusts that he will receive all things. Faith makes way for what looks impossible. The thief showed this clearly. The mother of faith is long-suffering and a sincere heart. The latter makes faith firm, and the first strengthens it. Faith is the mother of stillness. For if one does not believe, how is he able to exercise stillness?

The one who is confined in jail is afraid of the judge who condemned him, but the solitary in his cell bears the fear of the Lord, and the court is not so horrifying for the first as the judgment seat of the Judge is to the latter. You must have great fear for the solitary life, good man, because nothing is so powerful in driving away despair. The condemned man is always watching to see when the judge will arrive at the prison, and the sincere worker ponders when the angel of death will arrive. The weight of grief oppresses the first, but the latter has a spring of tears.

Bring forth the rod of endurance, and the hounds will quickly cease their misbehavior. Endurance is the toil that does not squash the soul and never falters with distractions, honorable or not. The long-suffering man is a flawless laborer who changes his flaws into victories. Long-suffering is the limit of toil that is tolerated each day.

Long-suffering puts aside every pretext and all regard for herself. The laborer needs long-suffering more than food, because the one earns him a crown, while the other might bring about destruction. The long-suffering man has died long before he is put in his grave, having already made a grave out of his cell. Hope gives birth to long-suffering and so does lamentation. But the one who has neither is a slave to despair.

Christ's soldiers should understand what enemies to fend off from afar, and which ones to attack at close range. At times the struggle merits a crown, but at other times declining has made men depraved. It is not possible to give instructions on such affairs, for we all have different dispositions and traits.

There is one particular spirit which you should carefully watch for. It is the one who assaults you without interruption while you stand, walk, sit, move, rise, pray and sleep.

Not every loaf made from the heavenly wheat of this spiritual food has the same form. Some people in the pasture of stillness have always carried this thought with them: I behold the Lord always before me. But others: In your long-suffering you will save your souls. Still others: Keep vigil and pray. Others: Ready your deeds for your death. Yet others: I was humbled and he rescued me. Others: The pains of the present life are not worth being compared to the future glory. And still others regularly have the following words in their thoughts: Lest he seize you and there be no one to save you. Because everyone runs, but one obtains the prize without trying.

The one who advances strives not only when awake, but also when he is asleep. Then even when sleeping some strike down the demons who come to them and rebuke immoral women concerning the issue of purity. However, do not anticipate visits and do not make ready for them ahead of time, because solitude is pure and free.

No one desiring to construct a tower and cell of solitude will start this labor without first sitting down and reckoning the cost. And he does this by means of prayer, contemplating within himself if he has enough resources to finish it, so that he does not build a foundation and then be a joke to his foes and a hindrance to other laborers.

Study the sweetness which you feel within your soul, lest it be used for corrupt ends by evil doctors, or indeed crafty ones.

Assign the majority of the night to prayer and only what remains to the Psalter. Then during the day ready yourself according to your ability.

Reading greatly enlightens the mind and assists it in focusing. For such words are those of the Holy Spirit and they correct those who concentrate on them. May the things you read push you to activity, for you are active. Continued reading becomes unnecessary as these words are put into practice. Undertake to be enlightened through the words of salvation by your efforts, and not simply from books. Until you obtain spiritual strength do not examine works that are metaphorical because they are dim, gloomy words, and they cloud the feeble.

A single cup of wine is enough to expose its flavor, and one word from a solitary reveals to those who can taste it his entire inner disposition and labor.

May the eye of your soul be steadfastly fixed in opposition to pride or self-respect, because nothing is so ruinous.

When you depart from your cell be liberal with your tongue, for it can disperse in a instant the fruits of much work.

Attempt to forget intrusiveness and curiosity, because they can ruin solitude like nothing else.

Provide for those who visit you with what is essential both for their body and spirit. If they are more learned than us let us display our philosophy by our silence. And if they are brothers who abide in the

same manner of life, may we open the door of works to them in fitting degrees. Still it is best to consider everyone as above us.

My desire was to prohibit all manual work from being done by those who were still children during the church services, but the one who bore sand all night in his garments forbade me.

What is given as the dogma of the holy, uncreated and honorable Trinity contrasts with the dogma of the providential Incarnation of One of the Persons of this all-hymned Trinity. Because what is plural in the Trinity is singular in Him. For what there is single, is here plural. In the same manner some practices of life are fitting for a solitary and others for those under obedience.

The holy Apostle stated, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" I will state, "Who has known the mind of the man who dwells in stillness in both body and spirit?"

The strength of a king is his wealth and the multitude of his servants. The strength of a solitary is the abundance of his prayers.

Step 28 - On holy, divine prayer, the mother of virtues, and on the deposition of the mind and body in prayer

Prayer is by its essence communication and union of God and man. Through its activity the world is held together and there is reconciliation between God and man. It is the mother, and the daughter of weeping, the atonement for sin, a bridge over temptations, a wall to sufferings, a quashing of disputes, a labor of angels, nourishment for all spiritual creatures, future happiness, limitless action, a fountain of virtues, a spring of graces, unseen advancement, nourishment for the soul, an enlightenment of the mind, an knife for grief, a showing forth of hope, the rejection of lamentation, the riches of monks, the wealth of solitaries, the lessening of anger, a mirror of advancement, the awareness of achievement, evidence of one's state, a portent of the future, a mark of glory. For the one who sincerely prays, prayer is the tribunal, the judgment seat, and the court of the Lord before the coming judgment.

May we arise and listen to the words of that blessed queen of the virtues as she calls out with a loud voice to us: "Come to Me all you that toil and are overburden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke, and you will find repose for your souls and recovery for your injuries. Because My yoke is light and is a royal cure for grave sins.

If we desire to be present before our King and God and to speak with Him we must not run into this without planning. Otherwise He will see us from a distance without the armaments and proper garments of those who stand in the presence of the King. Then He will command His attendants to grab us and cast us away from His presence and rip up our entreaties and cast them in our face.

When you are planning to stand before the Lord, let the clothing of your soul be knit with a thread that has become ignorant of evil, lest your prayer be of no avail.

May your prayer be wholly simple, because God was reconciled to both the tax-collector and the prodigal son by a single sentence.

The disposition of prayer is one and the same for everyone, but there are many types of prayer and many different prayers in general. Some communicate with God as if he were a friend and lord, interceding by glorifying and entreating, not for themselves, but on behalf of others. Some struggle for greater spiritual wealth and honor, and for boldness in prayer. Still others request to be saved from their adversary. Some entreat to obtain a particular rank, and others for the complete pardon of debts. Some solicit to be liberated from prison; and others for forgiveness of charges.

Before all other things let us put forth our heartfelt thanksgiving first on our prayer card. On the next line we should have our confession, and sincere remorse of soul. Then may we give our entreaty to the King of all. This is the best form of prayer, which was given to one of the brothers by an angel of the Lord.

If you have been subject to a court trial before a corporeal judge, you will not require any other example for what your disposition should be in prayer. However, if you have not stood before a judge, and you have not observed others being cross-examined, then learn at the very least from the manner of entreaty used by those who are ill toward doctors when their surgery draws near.

Do not be complicated in speech with your prayer, because the plain and unsophisticated stammering of children many times has won the compassion of the heavenly Father.

Do not try to talk much when you pray, otherwise your mind will be preoccupied with finding the right words. A single word from the tax-collector appeased God, and one cry in faith delivered the thief. Verbal eloquence in prayer often distracts the mind and results in fantasies, but terseness gives focus.

If you sense sweetness or remorse at some part of your prayer, stay focused on it, for at that moment our guardian angel is praying with us.

Do not be forward, even if you have achieved purity, but instead advance with a humble heart, and you will obtain still more courage.

Even if you have ascended the entire ladder of the virtues, pray for remission of sins. Listen to the groaning of Paul concerning sinners, "Of whom I am foremost."

Oil and salt garnish food, and teardrops and purity provide wings for prayer.

If you are robed in meekness and have liberty from anger, you will not have difficulty in freeing your mind from bondage.

Until we have obtained sincere prayer we are like teachers instructing children on how to start walking.

Try to raise, or indeed, to close off your mind within the words of your prayer, and if in its infantile condition it grows tired and fails, raise it up again. Shakiness is normal for the mind, but God is strong to establish all things. If you endure in this work, He who assigns limits to the sea of the mind will come visit you as well, and while you pray he will tell the waves, "You will come this far and no further." The spirit is not limited, but where the Author of the spirit is, all things obey.

If you have looked up to the Sun, as you should, you will also be able to communicate with Him correctly. However, if not, how can you sincerely communicate with that which you have not beheld.

The start of prayer involves exiling all thoughts that come to us in single spurts, the instant they appear. The middle state involves restricting our minds to what is being said and thought. The fulfillment is a raptured state with the Lord.

One type of happiness happens during prayer for those dwelling in a community, and another occurs with those who pray in solitude. The one might be delighted, but the other is completely filled with humility.

If you regularly discipline your mind not to roam, then it will be close to you at meals as well. But if it roams without restraint, then it will never be with you. A great exerciser of lofty and perfect prayer said, "I would rather speak five words with my understanding," and so forth. However, such prayer is alien to young souls. So we, being flawed, require not only quality but also a generous quantity of time for prayer, because the latter clears the way for the former. It was said, "Provide pure prayer to the one who prays firmly, even though he prays corruptly and with difficulty."

Unclean prayer is one matter, its dissolution is another, theft another, and abandonment another. Prayer is defiled when we are present before God and imagine useless and unfitting things. Our prayer is lost when we are distracted by vain concerns. We are robbed of our prayer when our thoughts start to drift before we even notice it. We lose our prayer before any sort of assault or disruption that befalls us at the hour of prayer.

If we are with others during the hour of prayer, then may we inscribe within ourselves the traits of the one that prays. However, if others are not present, then let us also make our outward appearance correspond to prayer. Because for those who still have such flaws, the mind often agrees with the body.

Everyone, and in particular those who have appeared before the King to have their debt pardoned, need to have unmentionable remorse. While we are still in jail let us hear Him who tells Peter, "Put on the garment of obedience, throw off your own desires and, divested of them, come to the Lord in prayer, appealing to His will only." At that time you will receive God, who directs the helm of your soul and directs you securely.

Lift yourself up from love of the world and love of pleasure, putting aside all cares, divest your mind, give up your body, for prayer is nothing but exile from the things of the world, seen and unseen. For what do I possess in heaven? Nothing. And what I have longed after, on earth, apart from You? Nothing but to hold steadfastly to You in prayer without diversions. To some people, affluence is enjoyable, but to others, honor, and to others, belongings, but my earnest desire is to hold on to God, and to place the hope of my dispassion in Him.

Faith provides wings to prayer, for without it we are unable to fly up to heaven.

Those of us who are passionate must regularly pray to the Lord. For every passionate person who attained dispassion has only achieved it by defeating their passions.

Although the judge was not afraid of God, yet on account of a soul, widowed from Him by a fall and sin, bothers Him, and so He will avenge her from her adversary, the body, and from the spirits who war against her. Our great Savior attracts to His love those who are generous by the speedy recompense of their entreaties. However, He compels mindless souls to continue in prayer in His presence for long periods of time, while hungering and thirsting for their entreaty, because a poorly conditioned dog when he get his bread immediately leaves with it and forgets his provider.

Never say, after spending a considerable amount of time in prayer, that nothing was acquired, because you have already achieved something. What greater good is there than to hold steadfastly to the Lord and to persist in unending union with Him?

A prisoner is not afraid of his punishment so much as an ardent man of prayer is afraid of his obligation to pray. So, if he is sensible and wise, by recalling this he will be able to evade every rebuke, anger, concern, distraction, injury, satiety, temptation, and troubling thought.

Ready yourself for the hours of prayer by constant prayer in your soul, and you will quickly advance. I have observed those who radiated in obedience and, as much as they were able, attempted to retain the remembrance of God. And at the point they stood in prayer they were immediately lords of their minds, and wept rivers of tears, because they had been prepared for this by blessed obedience.

Psalmody in a congested assembly is attended to by captivity and roaming thoughts. However, in solitude this does not occur. Still those that abide in solitude are likely to be assaulted by depression, while in the first the brothers assist each other through their zeal.

Battles demonstrate the love of a warrior for his king, but the hour and exercise of prayer demonstrates the love a monk has for God.

Your prayer will demonstrate what state you are in. Theologians describe prayer as the mirror of a monk.

The one who is preoccupied with something and persists in it when it is the time of prayer is led astray by the demons. These robbers intend to rob us every hour.

Do not excuse yourself when someone requests that you pray for the soul of someone else, even though you have not yet attained the blessing of prayer, because the faith of the petitioner many times saves the one who prays on his behalf with remorse.

You should not become excited if you have prayed on behalf of someone and it has been heard, because it is his faith which has proved to be powerful and effectual.

Every lesson which a child receives from his instructor he will be expected to know with certainty every day. So it is fitting that an account should be made of each prayer that we make, so that we know what authority has been given by God. Thus we must look after this issue. When you have prayed solemnly, you will quickly be wrestling with fits of rage, because this is what our foes desire.

We should constantly be active in each virtue, particularly prayer, with great emotion. A soul will pray with feeling when it conquers rage and anger.

What is achieved by regular and extended prayer is enduring.

The one who has discovered the Lord will cease describing the aim of his prayer, because then the Spirit Himself will speak for him with unmentionable sighings.

While praying, never allow any sensory imagination, so that you are not distracted.

The certitude of every entreaty becomes clear during prayer. Certitude is an absence of doubt and the firm proof of the unprovable.

Be full of mercy if you are concerned about prayer. Because by means of mercy the monk will receive a hundredfold and the remainder in the coming age.

When a flame comes to abide in the heart, it stimulates prayer, and following its resurrection and ascension to heaven, a flame descends into the upper room of the soul.

There are some who say that prayer is more important than remembrance of death, but I glorify the two natures in one person.

A well-trained horse when mounted becomes warm and hastens its gallop. By galloping I mean psalmody, and by horse I mean a determined mind. He smells the battle from far off, he is prepared, and continues to be lord of the field.

It is wrong to take water from the mouth of someone who is thirsty, and it even worse for a soul that is praying with remorse to be pulled from its blessed chore before it has completed its prayer.

Do not be negligent in prayer until you observe that through divine providence fire and water have passed by. For you will not have a

time for the forgiveness of your sins again, perhaps for the rest of your life.

By spurring forth one idle word the one who has known prayer often corrupts his mind, and then while standing at prayer he no longer achieves his aim as he did previously.

It is one thing to regularly be attentive to the heart, and another to manage the heart with the mind, that governor and bishop that brings spiritual sacrifices to Christ. When the holy and heavenly fire descends to abide in the souls of the first, as states the one who is called the Theologian, it burns them since they are not pure, however it enlightens the latter in accordance with their level of perfection. Because the same flame is called both the devouring flame and the illuminating light. This is why some leave the time of prayer as if they were walking out of a furnace of fire and experience a release as if being freed from some corruption and from all that is earthly. But there are others who come forth as if illumined by light and robed in a cloth of gladness and humility. However, those who leave the time of prayer without feeling either of these two, have prayed only with the body and not in the spirit.

If a body is altered in its motion by contact with another body, then how is it possible for one to remain unaltered who touches the body of God with pure hands?

We observe that our all-good King, just like a worldly king, at times gives His gifts to his soldiers Himself, at times through a friend, at times through a servant, and at times in an obscure manner, for it will be in accord with the robe of humility that each of us wears.

In the same manner that a worldly king is repulsed by a man who turns away his face and speaks to his lord's foes while in his presence, so also our Lord will be repulsed by one who allows impure thoughts during the time of prayer.

Drive off, with this stick, the hound that keeps attacking, and no matter how many times he attempts, never give way to him.

Entreat with weeping, search with obedience, rap with endurance. For in this way he who petitions receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who raps it will be opened.

Take heed when you pray not to exaggerate your petitions on behalf of the other gender, so as not to be fooled from the exposed right side.

Never go into details in confessing acts of the body, otherwise you may betray yourself.

Never allow the time of prayer to be spent on pondering important worldly matters or even spiritual ones, lest you lose the better part.

The one who regularly holds fast the rod of prayer will never fall. And even if he falls, it will not be lethal. Because prayer is a pious coercion of God.

The gain from prayer can be deduced by the attacks of the demons at the time of the Office and its fruit from overcoming the enemy. But this I have learned, "You favor me because my enemy will never overcome me in the time of war." "I cried with my all my heart," writes the Psalmist, which is, with body, soul and spirit. For where the two last ones are assembled, God is there in the midst of them.

We do not all have similar needs, neither with respect to the body or with respect to the spirit. For quick chanting is agreeable to some, and a slower pace of chanting is agreeable to others. The first are wrestling with the captivity of the mind, while the latter struggle with ignorance.

If you regularly communicate with the King about your foes, be brave when they assault you. You will not toil for long, because they will soon retreat by themselves. These vile spirits have no desire to see you win a crown for your striving against them in prayer. And furthermore they will run away as from a flame when flogged with prayer.

Be brave, and you will have God as your instructor in prayer. In the same way that it is impossible to learn to see properly by talking because vision depends on one's own vision, so it is impossible to understand the beauty of prayer by instructing others. Prayer has a Teacher of its own, who is God, who instructs men in wisdom, and admits the prayer of the one that prays, and blesses the years of the righteous. Amen.

Step 29 - About heaven on earth, divine dispassion and perfection, and the resurrection of the soul before the general resurrection

It is here that we who lie in the deepest ditch of ignorance, and in the gloom of the passions of the body and in the shadow of death, have the audacity to philosophize about heaven on earth.

The firmament is adorned with the stars for its beauty, while dispassion has its virtues. By dispassion I speak of nothing other than the inner heaven of the mind, which looks upon the wiles of the demons as pathetic toys.

And thus the one who is sincerely dispassionate, is seen as dispassionate, who has fashioned his flesh to be pure, and who has lifted his mind above created beings, and has subjugated all his senses, and who keeps his soul before the Lord, always reaching out to Him even past his strength.

Some claim, indeed, that dispassion is the resurrection of the soul prior to the body, but others state that it is the full understanding of God, second only to that of the angels.

This perfection, yet incomplete, this perfection of those who are perfect, as one who has tasted it told me, so hallows the mind and pulls it away from physical things that for a good period of life in the flesh, after coming into the heavenly harbor, a man is raptured as though in Heaven and is lifted up to meditation. One who has had experience of this states elsewhere, "For God's strong men of the world are now magnificently exalted. Such a one, as we understand, was that Egyptian who prayed with others for a considerable period of time without resting his hands stretched forth in prayer.

There is one who is dispassionate and there is one who is more dispassionate than the dispassionate ones. The one sternly despises all that is evil, but the other has an endless treasure house of virtues.

Dispassion is also called purity, and well so, because it is the portent of the general resurrection and the purity of the polluted.

Dispassion was displayed by the one who declared, "I have the mind of the Lord." Dispassion was also displayed by the Egyptian who stated that he no longer was afraid of the Lord. Dispassion was displayed by the one who prayed that his passions should come back to him. Who, before the coming glory, has been given the dispassion of the Syrian? David, being glorious among the prophets, said to the Lord, "O save me, so that I will regain my strength, but that warrior of God cries out, "Save me from the waves of Your grace."

The soul which is covered in the virtues obtains dispassion in the same manner as the passionate who are covered in pleasures.

If it is the peak of gluttony to compel oneself to eat even without the desire for food, then it truly is the peak of moderation for one who is hungry to conquer nature when it is flawless. If it is intense sensuality to rant about irrational and even inanimate things, then it is the limit of purity to view all people in the same sense as inanimate things. If it is the peak of greed to continue gathering and never to be satiated, it is the peak of poverty not to spare one's own body. If it is the peak of depression, while dwelling in full peace, not to possess long-suffering, then it is the peak of long-suffering to consider oneself even in suffering as being relaxed. If it is referred to as the ocean of anger for someone to be violent even when there is no one around, then it is a sea of patience to be as peaceful in the presence of your adversary as when he is absent. If it is the peak of vainglory when a person, observing no one close to him to glorify him, it is surely a sign of its absence to not let your thoughts be fooled in the presence of those who glorify you. If is a mark of

pride to be boastful even when in shabby clothing, then it is sign of saving humility to have low thoughts while involved in lofty tasks and accomplishments. If it is a mark of being fully subject to the passions to quickly submit to all things the demons plant in us, then I understand it as sign of blessed dispassion to be able to say simply, "The wicked one who evades me, I have not known. Not how he arrived, nor why, nor how he left. But I am oblivious to all things of this nature, because I am fully joined with God, and I forever will be."

The one who has been given such a disposition, while still living ever has God abiding with him as his Pilot in all his words, works, and thoughts. So, through illumination he understands the Lord's will as a type of inner voice. He is above all human teaching and declares, "When will I enter and come into the presence of God? Because I can no longer resist the force of love. I yearn for the everlasting beauty which You have given me in place of this clay."

But why speak any further? The dispassionate one no longer is alive for himself, but instead it is Christ that dwells within him, or so states the one who fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.

The king's crown is not made of only one stone, and dispassion does not achieve perfection if we disregard any virtue, however commonplace.

Think of dispassion as the heavenly palace of the Heavenly King, and the many mansions as the dwelling places within this city, and the wall of this heavenly Jerusalem as the remission of sins. Let us sprint brothers, let us rush to enter the bridal chamber of this palace. If we are hindered by anything, by a habit or anxiety, or by time itself, what a catastrophe! May we at very least dwell in one of those mansions close to the palace. But if we are weighed down and become tired, let us be confident of at least being within the walls. Because the one who does not find himself there before his departure, or indeed, does not make it over the wall, will be outside

in the wilderness of demons and passions. This is the reason a certain man prayed, "Through my God I will climb over a wall." Another declared, as if in the person of God, "It is your sins that isolate you from Me?" My friends, let us breach this wall of division which we have built to our own detriment through disobedience, and may we obtain the remission of our sins, because in Hell no one is there to forgive our debts. So then, brothers, let us give ourselves over to our duty, because we are on the list of the pious. There is no space for excuses about a stumble, or opportunity, or concern. For to each one, who has accepted the Lord by the baptism of regeneration, He has given the authority to become children of God, declaring, "Be still and know that I am God and I am Dispassion." To Him be the glory unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Blessed dispassion raises the mind that is lowly from earth to heaven, and lifts the pauper from the heap of dung that is the passions. And yet love, whose honor is above all, makes him sit with the rulers, the holy angels, and the princes of the people of God.

Step 30 - On the joining together of the ultimate trinity of the virtues

And now at the end, after all we have gone over, there remains these three that join together and fasten the unity of all, faith, hope, love. And the greatest of these is love, because God is so named.

And as far as I understand, I see the one as a beam, the second as a light, the third as a circle, but in all, one illumination and one glory.

The first can create and form everything, the divine grace envelops the second and makes it secure from any disappointment. The third cannot stumble, does not cease in its way, and permits no rest to the one who is injured by its divine rapture.

He who desires to describe blessed love is attempting to describe God. However, it is hazardous to expound on God, and perhaps even dangerous for the careless.

The angels know how to discuss love, but even they are only able to do this according to the measure of their enlightenment.

God is love, so the one who desires to describe this, attempts with dim eyes to weigh the sand in the sea.

Love, from its very essence, is the likeness of God. As much as it possible for humans, in its action it is intoxication of the soul, and through its unique characteristic it is a spring of faith, and abyss of long-suffering, an ocean of lowliness.

Love is fundamentally the exile of all opposing thoughts, for love thinks nothing evil.

Love, dispassion and adoption are separated from each other as sons from each other by name, and only by name. In the same way light, fire and flame join together to form one essence, so it is with love, dispassion and adoption.

As love fades, fear becomes visible, because the one who lacks fear is either full of love or his soul is dead.

Nothing is improper about portraying desire, fear, care, zeal, ministry, and love for God in scenes taken from everyday life. Blessed is the one who has achieved such love and longing for God as a raptured lover has for his lover. Blessed is the one who fears the Lord as much as men in a court fear the judge. Blessed is the one who is as eager with sincere zeal as a well-trained servant is to his lord. Blessed is the one who is as jealous for the virtues as those husbands who keep vigil on account of jealousy over their wives. Blessed is the one who is present in prayer before the Lord as the servants are present before the king. Blessed is the one who untiringly seeks to please the Lord as others attempt to please men.

A mother does not even cleave so strongly to a babe at her breast as will a son of love always cleave to the Lord.

The one who sincerely loves always retains in his mind the face of his loved one, and there holds it softly. Such a one has no rest from his intense longing even in sleep. For even then he communicates with his loved one. So also with our body, thus also with our spirit. The one who was wounded by love, spoke of himself, "I rest because nature demands it, but my heart is alert in the fullness of my love."

You should note, honorable brother, that the buck, the soul, after killing those creatures, longs and faints for the Lord with a flame of love, as if it were wounded by an arrow.

The result of hunger is obscure, but the result of thirst is powerful and clear to everyone, and the result of burning heat. So also the one who longs for God says, "My soul thirsts for God, the powerful, and living God."

If the countenance of a beloved one visibly and fully alters us, and makes us happy, joyous and lighthearted, what will the

countenance of the Lord do when he makes His unseen presence known in a spotless soul?

Be afraid when there is an inner confidence of the soul that ruins impurity, because it was said, "Nail down my flesh in fear of You." And the blessed love devours some, according to the one who declared, "You have raptured our heart. You have raptured our heart." But at times it makes others radiant and cheerful, because it was said, "My heart trusted in Him and I have been assisted. Even my flesh has been restored." Also, "When the heart is cheerful the face is also cheerful." So when the entire man is in a state which is mixed with the love of God, then the outward composure of his body becomes a sort of mirror, showing the glory of the soul. This is how Moses, who had seen God, was glorified.

Those who have attained this angelic disposition many times forget about physical food. I suppose that many times they do not even have an interest in it. And small wonder, for often another longing displaces the thoughts of food.

I suppose that the body of those pure men is not even under the power of illness, because they have been made incorruptible, for they have cleansed the inflammable carnal body in the fire of purity. I suppose that even the food that is put before them they take with no joy. Because there is a river underground that feeds the roots of a plant, and their souls have become nourished by heavenly fire.

The increase of fear is the beginning of love, but a mature state of purity is a foundation for the knowledge of God.

The one who has completely joined his senses to God is mystically guided by Him to a knowledge of His words. But lacking this union it is hard to speak about the things of God.

The established Word completes purity and kills death with its presence. And once death has been killed, the disciple of the knowledge of God is enlightened.

The Word of the Lord proceeding from the Father is pure, and will be so forever. But the one who does not fully know God can only postulate about it.

Purity forms its disciple into a theologian who is able to understand the doctrine of the Trinity.

The one who loves the Lord, first loved his brother, because the latter is evidence of the former.

He who loves his neighbor cannot put up with gossips, and instead flees from them as from fire.

The one who declares he loves the Lord, but is upset with his brother is as one who dreams that he is sprinting.

The strength of love is hope, because with it we eagerly wait for the prize of love.

Hope is the treasure of unseen wealth. Hope is a wealth of security of the riches waiting for us.

It is a repose from works; it is the gateway to love; it is the removal of despair; it is the shape of what is not there.

The loss of hope is the dissolution of love. Labor is limited by it. Work requires it. Mercy surrounds it.

A monk full of hope is a destroyer of depression, with this weapon he overcomes it.

Encountering the Lord's gift creates hope. The one who is lacking experience resides in doubt.

Anger kills hope, because hope does not disappoint, but one who is angry has no beauty.

Love supplies prophecy. Love provides miracles. Love is a depth of illumination. Love is a spring of fire, to the degree that it bubbles up and sets a thirsty soul on fire. Love is the disposition of angels. Love is the advancement of eternity.

Declare to us, the supreme virtue, where do you feed your flock, where do you repose at noonday. Instruct us, quench our thirst, lead us, take our hand, because we long to finally soar away to you. Your dominion is over all things. And now you have raptured my soul. I am unable to contain your fire, so I will press forward glorifying you. You govern the strength of the oceans, and still the surge of its billows and put it to death. You have abased the proud, the haughty minded, like an injured man. With the weapon of your strength you have scattered your foes, and you have made your lovers invincible.

But I desire to understand how Jacob beheld you set above the ladder. Gratify my longing, declare to me: What is the method of such an ascent? What is the way, what is the commandment that binds together the steps which your lover puts as an ascent in his heart? I long to know the number of those rungs, and the time required for the ascent. He who understands the striving and the vision has informed us of the guides. However, he would not, or indeed, he was not able to illuminate us any further.

And this queen, or perhaps king, as if revealing himself to me from heaven and as if talking into the ear of my soul declared, "Unless, beloved, you relinquish your carnal nature, you will never know my beauty." Let this ladder instruct you on the spiritual mixing of the virtues. At the height of it I have set myself, as the great novice declared, "And now there abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love