
Syriac text with Greek retroversion by W. Frankenberg, Evagrius Ponticus, Abhandlung der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wisenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Neue Folge, Band xiii, no. 2 (Berlin, 1912). 613-619; 617 & 619.

1. I know your kindness, my Lord: that those who on account of the broadness of a separating distance are kept remote from one another (which habitually comes to pass through multiple and manifold causes) if they come to learn one another’s desires or hidden secrets, or if they wish to share with each other [things] that not just anyone ought to perceive, but rather (only) spirits accustomed to the possession (of these secrets) - this they do by means of written characters. And [although] far (from one another they are in this way brought) near: and [from] far away they see and are seen; remaining silent they speak and hear; and although perchance sleeping they are awake, for their desires are in fact fulfilled. And [although] sick they are healthy; sitting,
they walk. And I would go so far as to say that even though dead, they live. For written characters have the power to impart not only things present, but also things past and future.

2. And this illustrates the [mutual] harmony of the senses; for as each manifests its own power it can [simultaneously] take the place of the other. Thus [in writing] the hand takes the place of the tongue, and the eye takes the place of the ear. And paper is the “earth’[so to speak] of the heart: it receives the [other’s] wishes sown into the furrows of its lines, together with numerous additional forms of assistance, multiform meanings, differences, and the qualities found in these things, concerning which it is not yet time to speak in particular.

3. And in this the one entrusted with the written characters rejoices. I even say that the one who is not entrusted with them γρηγορουσιν ως δη της αυτων προαιρεσεως εργω απαρτイζομενης και νοσηλευοντες υγιαινουσι και καημενοι τρεχουσι λεγω δε και αποθανοντες αν ζωσιν οτι ου τα ενεστωτα μονον τα γραμματα οια τε εστι μηνυσαι αλλα και τα τε παρελθοντα και τα μελλοντα και εντανθα φαινεται η των αισθησεων συμφωνησις οπως μια εκαστη αυτων την αυτης δυναμιν αποδεικνυσι τε και τον της εταιρας τοπον εκπληροι, οτι αντι της γλωσσης η χειρ και αντι του ωτος ο οφθαλμος αντι δε της καρδιας γης ο χαρτης δι' ολκων των στιχων τας προαιρεσεις εν αυτη εσπαρμενας (?) υποδεχομενος, μετα των λοιπων [187βα] αντιληψεων πολλων και πολυειδων, διακρισεων τε και δυναμεων α διεξιεναι νυν ου καιμος. και εν τουτοις μεν ενφραινεται ο τα γραμματα . διδαχθεις λεγω δε στι και ο
(when it is necessary) is helped by the one who has been entrusted with them. This latter profits through seeing, the former through hearing. The advantage of hearing is, indeed, not as great and indispensable as that of seeing. But you are well acquainted with these distinctions.

4. In light of all this, who could possibly be in a position to properly praise the giver of all these gifts, demonstrating as they do above all else the potency, the wisdom, and the love of the giver? For it is clearly evident that he who is widely separated from his friend takes notice of his friend’s will by means of hand and quill and ink and paper, together with the other available materials. On the other hand, one who is close by has need of none of these things: rather he requires either the mouth that word and breath wait upon and that serves ear and heart, or else [he needs] only hand and fingers, that serve eye and heart. But observe that the true refreshment of him who is separated from his friend is imparted through vision; but for the one who is near, through hearing.
5. And all of this that takes place by means of written characters is moreover a symbol of what in reality comes to pass for those who are far from God. Namely, what concerns those far from God on account of their detestable works, which have created a separation between them and their creator: so God has, on account of His love, through the mediation of created things, sent them as written characters by means of his potency and wisdom - that is through his Son and his Spirit - devised (a way) through which those (far from God) may perceive His love for them and be brought near to it [his love].

6. And it is not only the love of God the Father that they perceive through created things, but also his potency and his wisdom. That is, in the same way that one who reads the written characters perceives through their beauty the potency and insight of the hand and fingers that
have written them, together with the intention(al design) of their author; in the same way one may by beholding the creation with understanding, perceive the hand and fingers of its creator, together with his intention(al design) - namely, love.

7. And if you now say to me: How is it possible to put hand and fingers in the place of potency and wisdom - that is to say in the place of the Son and the Spirit, then listen to the Spirit of God who says: “The right hand of the Lord has worked might, the right hand of the Lord has exalted me.” (Ps 117 15 f.) And “Your right hand, Lord, is glorified in potency” (Ex 15:6) etc. See, the right hand and potency signify the son. And concerning the Spirit the Son himself says in his Gospel: “But if I cast out demons through the Spirit of God...” (Mt 12:28); while he says through another evangelist: “by the finger of God”. (Lk 11:20) See, finger and wisdom signify the Spirit of God. In short, it is apparent that hand and finger signify the
potency and wisdom of God, that is the Son and the Spirit.

8. This service is most certainly rendered by created beings towards those who are far from God, of whom one part delights in God through hearing, and the other through seeing. Those who on account of their purity and their acceptable works are near to God’s will do not require the written characters, represented by created beings, to perceive through them the design and potency and wisdom of their creator: rather, they are waited upon by the very Logos and Spirit - that is by the hand and the finger (of God) without the mediation of any created being.

9. It is the same with one who speaks: that is, the word is not heard without his breath (pneuma), nor can his will be recognized in his breath without his word; and the one who makes a sign cannot do so using a hand without fingers, or fingers without a hand; thus the Son of God, who is word and hand and potency, does
nothing without the Spirit, who is wisdom and finger. For it is said, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made firm, and by the breath of his mouth all their potency”. (Ps 32.6) And “The heavens proclaim the glory of God, and the firmament makes known the work of his hands.” (Ps 18.2) And “I will see the heavens, the work of your finger.” (Ps 18.4). Behold, Word and Spirit, and behold also hand and finger.

10. And do not ask “Why have you spoken of many fingers? The Spirit is but one! Do not listen to me, listen to Isaiah who says, “The spirit of wisdom and the spirit of insight,” etc (Is 11.2). Shall we thus think of a multiplicity of Spirits? After having heard him, listen now to Paul who says: “There are apportionments of the gifts of grace, but the Spirit who accomplishes them is one and the same.” (1Cor 12.4)

11. So then, instead of created beings that serve those far away, helping them recognize as far as possible and in the manner of letters [of the alphabet] the purpose, the potency and the wisdom of their creator; love and potency and wisdom themselves serve those who are close by. For they are themselves a pure and rational and intelligible creation: they of the pneuma to esti sophia kai daktullos legei gar tois logosin tis kurion ois oufanoi esterewsthshan kai tois pneumatikou stoimatos autou pasas h dynami autwn (ψ 32, 6) kai oi oufanoi dihgyontai ktl (ψ 18, 2) kai oti oisome tovs oufanous erga tovs daktulon sou (ψ 8, 4) idou logos kai pneuma kai cheir kai daktulos.

10. και μη ερωτησον δια τι πολλους δακτυλους ειρήκας του πνευματος ενος ουτος μη μου ακουε αλλα Ησαιου λεγοντος πνευμα σοφιας και συνεσεως κτλ (Is 11, 2). η γαρ πολλα πνευματα προσηκει ημας απο τουτου μελεταν; εκεινου ηκουσας ακουε και Παυλου λεγοντος διαιρεσεις χαρισματων εισι το δε αυτο πνευμα (I Cor. 12, 4).

11. και αντι των κτισματων διακονουντας τε και καθοσον δυνατον γνωρι ζοντων τοις μακραν εν ομοιωματι στοιχειων την τε προαιρεσιν και δυναμιν και σοφιαν του κτιστου αυτη η αγαπη και η δυναμις και η σοφια διακονουσι τοις εγγυς οι και αυτοι εισι κτισμα καθαρων και λογικων και νοερου ωστε στοιχεια δυνατα και αρχικα και αυτοι (φωτεινως) δηλαυγως
also clearly show forth in the manner of powerful capital letters the potency and wisdom of their creator.

12. And just as the potency and wisdom - that is the Son and the Spirit - are magnificent letters through which the love of the Father is recognized: so the rational beings are, as we have said, letters through which the potency and wisdom of the Father is recognized. So then, the Son and the Spirit are the letters of the Father through whom he is recognized. The rational creation, however, depicts the letters through which the Son and the Spirit are recognized, and this is on account of the “according to our image”. (Gen 1.26) The visible and corporeal creation itself depicts the letters of this intelligible and incorporeal creation in so far as the visible things are symbols of the invisible.

13. We, who are a rational creation and who for a reason about which is is not yet necessary to speak were bound to this visible creation, must therefore take care that we comprehend and perceive through these visible things the invisible. And this we will be unable to do if we refuse to recognize the full meaning of sensible things.
14. In the same way that the reality which is hidden in the written characters is withdrawn from those who do not understand how to read, no matter how intently they contemplate [the letters]; in the same way he is in want who is wanting in insights of this visible creation, as well as in the perception of that intelligible creation that is hidden within them, no matter how intently he contemplates this (visible creation). In contrast to him is the one who on account of his eagerness and purity was initiated into them, who recognizes that they all tell forth (of these hidden realities).

And when he has become aware of these, then he himself becomes acquainted with the potency and wisdom of his own constitution, and ceaselessly tells forth concerning the will of such unfathomable love, which fulfills itself in precisely this potency and wisdom.

15. And I state clearly, that just as the body reveals through its deeds the soul dwelling within it, and the soul through its movements tells of the intellect which is its head; in the same way the intellect which is the “body” of the Spirit and the Logos reveals these, just as a body does for the soul dwelling within it. And precisely this same “soul” (that is Spirit...
and Logos) of this intellect reveals their “intellect” which is the Father.
And just as the intellect acts in the body through the mediation of the soul, in just the same way the Father acts through the mediation of his “soul” in his body, which is the intellect.

16. The body containing the intellect does not recognize what the intellect does. But the intellect which is the “body” of the “intellect” recognizes what its intellect is doing, what it has done, and what it will do. For it alone of all created things and their hierarchies is the Father’s true image and a receptacle of knowledge of the Father; the intellect “that is renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.” (Col 3.10)

17. And if such written characters that serve those far off are able to convey what has happened and what will happen, how much more do the Word and the Spirit know all and communicate it to the intellect - their “body”!

And I say in truth that I am acquainted in this context with many “doors” full of manifold distinctions, but I did not wish
to write them down for you, since I cannot entrust to you paper and ink for this reason: on account of those who might chance upon this letter, and because this paper might fall into the hands of audacious powers. And that is why it is not possible to express our opinion on everything.

18. And just as it is apparent that there is something that it is impossible to communicate with paper and ink, in the same way there is a matter about which created things which are written characters for those far away are not in a position to share fully the will of their author - I will say [it is] His nature. For they are not all his “likeness”. The Logos and the Spirit, however, which are the letters of the Father, know all and share all. For they are not created, but are rather “the very stamp and true reflection of the Father’s being” (cf. Heb 1:3).

19. But the intellect knows all, for it is revealed to him by the Logos and the Spirit, the All-knowing, whose true “image and likeness” he himself is: (Gen 1:26) so it is with one near to his friend, who can know his whole will through his word and his breath. And insofar as there...
is something which is not disclosed to him by the Logos and the Spirit, this is not because they were somehow incapable of communicating it to him, but rather because those who listen do not always apprehend everything.

20. The intellect is therefore by means of its “intellect” made capable of everything; the soul, however, does not even recognize its own nature. The soul, on the other hand, recognizes the nature of its body, even though it does not recognize its own nature. If, however, it does know its own nature, then it is no longer soul, but rather intellect.

21. And furthermore, the intellect does not perceive its own nature; this being rather through the Logos and the Spirit who are its “soul”. And just as the nature of the body is not known, this being rather through the soul which dwells within it, the soul being known without its body; in the same way the Son and the Spirit are not known, this being rather through the intellect, that is their “body”. The “soul” of the intellect always knows its “intellect”, even without its “body”, in
that it is of the same substance as its “intellect”, that is the Father.

22. And just as there will come a time when these names and numbers will be removed from within the body and the soul and the *nous* because they will be elevated to the rank of the *nous* in accordance with [Christ’s prayer] “that they may be one [in us], as you and I are one” (Jn 17:21); even so there will come a time when the names and numbers will be removed from within the Father and His Son and His Spirit (on the one hand) and His rational creation (on the other), which truly is His “body”, in accordance with the (word): “So that God may be all in all.” (1Co 15:28)

23. But do not imagine that because I said that the names and numbers will be withdrawn from within the rational creation and their creator, that the hypostases and the names of the Father and the Son and the Spirit will be blotted out! Much more [rather] just as the nature of the intellect is united with the nature of the Father since it is His “body”, so also will the names of the soul and the
body be enfolded into the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit, and there will for ever remain one nature - the three hypostases of God and His likenesses: as before the Incarnation, so after the Incarnation on account of the harmony of wills.

24. And on this account, namely, there are numbers among the body and the soul and the intellect: on account of the varieties of wills. But every name will be taken away that has come upon the intellect secondarily on account of the “movement”. But those many names will also be taken away by which God is named and that necessarily refer to [Him] with respect to the diversity of the rational creation, whether this be in its original sense, in retrospect with regard to the economy of salvation, or in a metaphorical sense. As for example with regard to sinners, “judge”; to the lawless “avenger”; to the sick, “physician”; with regard to the dead, “awakener”, to enmity and death “destroyer” and “woe-bringer”, and so forth.
25. It is not as if all these distinctions will simply not continue: rather, they will pass away because that which necessitated them will not continue. The names and hypostases of the Son and the Spirit, however, will not pass away for they have no beginning and will have no end. And since they are not so named on account of a transitory reason, they also will not pass away. Rather, from when and henceforth their origin continues so do they continue, and for as long as it continues. This, however, is not the case with the rational creation, the origin of which is indeed the Father. For he is [the origin] of this creation through grace; but he is the origin of the others [i.e. the Son and the Spirit] through the nature of his being.

26. In what concerns the intellect there are as we said, it nature, its hypostasis, and its rank. And once [long ago], since through its autonomous freedom it fell down from its first rank it was called “soul”, and as it slid down from there it was subsequently designated as “body”. But someday body, soul, and intellect will [again] be one and the same, by means of the transformation of their wills.
And since there will someday come a time when its various wills and movements will pass away and it will rise up in its first creation, its nature and its hypostasis and its name will again be one, which God knows. And if it has arisen in its nature, then [it is true] of it alone of all beings that neither its place nor its name are known. And it remains for the naked intellect alone to say which is its nature.

27. Do not be amazed that I have said that the rational beings will, through their uniting with God the Father, become one nature with the three hypostases without any expansion or change. If, then, this sensible sea that is one in its nature and its color and its taste - if into it many rivers with various tastes are mixed not only is it itself untransformed by their multiplicity; rather, these (rivers) are completely and effortlessly transformed into its nature and color and taste - how much more will the intelligible, limitless, and unchangeable sea that is God the Father transform into His own nature and color and taste all the intellects that turn back to him, like tributary streams reaching the sea! And from then on they will be one in His unity without end and without
distinction on account of their union and blending with Him.

28. But in the same way that the blending of tributaries in the sea entails no addition to its nature or change in its color, even so there comes to pass through the blending of the intellects with the Father no doubling of natures or quadrupling of hypostases. Rather, just as the sea is one in its nature and color and taste both before and after the blending into it of the tributaries, just so is the divine nature one in the three hypostases of Father, Son, and Spirit both after the intellects are blended with it and before they are blended.
29. Thus we see indeed that the tributaries, before the water of the sea came together in one place and the dry land became visible, were one in it. But since they have separated from it they have become many and various, since each has been changed according to the taste of the land in which it found itself. It was precisely thus with the intellects before sin accomplished a separation between them and God; like the land between the sea and the tributaries: [they were] one in Him without change. But as their sin became notorious they separated themselves from Him and became alienated from Him and His taste and His color; for each one took on the flavor of the particular body with which it had been united. But if the land were to be withdrawn from the middle, then sea and tributaries would [again] be unchangeably one. In the same way if the sin [lying] between the intellects and God were to be erased, they would again be one and not many.
30. Do not think that because I said that the rational beings had been in God beforehand like streams in the sea, that therefore they are also in their nature without beginning in Him! Much more, rather, even if they are without beginning with Him in his wisdom and creative power - even then their creation certainly has a beginning. But they do not have an end because of their union with Him Who has neither beginning nor end.

31. It was to all these things that my thoughts were drawn as I sought to comprehend the great gift of the written characters. And since a great ecstasy came over me and caused me to praise and render thanks to their giver, I also wanted to record this for love of you, so that you, too, may weave the crown of ceaseless praise for Him to Whom that work of praise is due. And let us implore Him to grant us that, just as he has in his mercy made us worthy to praise Him for these small things, so He would once more make us worthy by His grace to delight without end in his love, without the mediation of any of His creatures; rather only through the mediation of His Son...
and His Spirit; that we may sing praise to Him for all that He has made. Amen

αυτον επαινειν ινα παλιν τηι αυτου χαριτ ευδοκη ημας ου τινος των κτισματων μεσιενοντος αλλα του υιου αυτον και του ' πνευματος δια της αγαπης αυτον ευφρανθηναι απαυστως και δοξαζιομεν αυτον περι ων εκτισε παντων αμην.

32. Now listen as well to that which occasioned our letter to your kindness, and forgive the fact that we have lingered a while on these matters because of their importance.

I understand, as you know, O Lord, that there are people who assert (63b) that “Habit is a second nature”. But it seems to me that this assertion is not only unwise, but that it reveals the lack of culture and capacity for judgment of those who follow it. Your erudition knows well that just as it is difficult for a camel to fly in the air like an eagle, or for a fish to amuse itself on dry land, since they do not possess these capacities in their natures, together with many other things that are similar to this example that could (only) with difficult come to pass - it is just as difficult for something to change that which is in its nature.

But as far as habit is concerned: just as it is an easy thing for the eagle to fly in the air if he wishes, or to sit upon the ground if he wishes; and as it is an easy thing for the fish to undertake his wandering in one river or another or from the river into the sea,
or even from the sea into the river because it lies within his nature: in the same way it is an easy thing for everything that develops one habit to be superseded by another habit. For there is space in the (individual’s) nature for both the one and the other.

33. Therefore, what I want to say is as follows: I am in the habit of taking nourishment once a day. And if I wish to reach out beyond the (ordinary) exercise of this habit, I can take (nourishment) every two days. But if, on the contrary, I wish to act against this habit, I could take nourishment twice a day. Put briefly as I said, one habit can supersede another (64a) because of a nature that can incline first in this direction, then in that. However, it is in accord with nature to always take nourishment at a particular time. But it is beyond nature to stop eating altogether, and it on the other hand is against nature to be constantly gluttonous. And so it is with all things similar to this example.

34. Therefore, neither that which is beyond habit nor that which is against habit resembles a miracle, insofar as all this is inherent within habit. On the other hand, that which is beyond nature or is against nature does resemble a miracle. After the miracle, however, that goes beyond nature follows praise; following that which is against nature comes reproach.

35. It is now worthwhile to bring to (our) awareness how many natures there are, how many their ranks are, how many their combinations; and forms are; how many the movements of each of them are and what is opposed to them, what these movements and their opposites are, which of these in their time are naturally set in motion from within without external cause, and which of them, even thought they are themselves found in
nature, are multiplied by external causes; which (of them) even disturb and torment nature, if it happens that the combination of the elements warm and dry predominates, and which do this when it has to do with the combination of the elements warm and wet, which when it has to do with the combination of the elements wet and cold, and which with the combination of the elements cold and dry, which when it has to do with the combination of all elements in equal weight; which are the (movements) in which it is possible that, even when they are set in motion, do not succeed in coming to action; which are those that are not completed in action because nature does not hold its ground (resist?); whether there are some that can be completely uprooted out of nature, and if they are uprooted, whether others may be implanted instead of them.

36. And if we have understood all that, then we know what accords with nature, what transcends nature, and what is against nature. In my opinion, until one is aware of all these distinctions he cannot be concerned with what transcends nature. In fact I assert that (this would be the case) even if the course of his life accorded with nature. Who, indeed, can abandon darkness if he has not seen the light? Or who leaves the husks if he has not found bread? (cf. Lk 15:16) Together with numerous other examples of this sort.

37. Therefore just as the report of blessed Moses provides information concerning the visible creation - you are indeed entrusted with the ordering of human beings - just so do we wish to pray that with the help (65a) of God we may be in a position to speak also about the visible body and its combinations and its orders and its ways of behaving and its movements.
38. Now then, as far as the number of natures of creatures is concerned, it is widely known that there are only two: the sensible and the intelligible (nature). He Whom we must refrain from approaching on account of His hiddenness and majesty, is perceived, insofar as one is able and the possibility exists, through this sensible (nature), just as the soul [is perceived] through the body.

39. Let us therefore begin, as we are capable of it, with our treatise on the body and its characteristics. Your learning, my Lord, knows that this sensible body was created out of four sensible elements by the glorious, praiseworthy wisdom of God. And since it has its [continuing] existence in them, it also has from them and through them its life and its death, its health and its sickness, none of it apart from the foreknowledge of its creator.

40. Deriving from this come also as we said the various movements in it which express these qualities. Its qualities are the following: warmth and coldness, dryness and wetness. And on this account it (65b) is not able to live in dryness without moisture, nor in warmth without coldness. If therefore the qualities are found to be in balance, then it is healthy, and its movements are set in motion in an orderly fashion. But if one of these qualities attains a preponderance, then it disturbs the whole ordering. From this proceeds an eager striving towards balance of the qualities.

41. Furthermore, as far as the intelligible body is concerned, its ordering is as follows: life and death; health and sickness. The interrelationships between them are as follows: standing and sitting; walking and lying; remaining silent and speaking. Its movements in contrast are as follows: hunger, sleep, appetite,
anger, fear, worry, hatred, indolence, agitation, cunning, cruelty, arrogance, melancholy, sorrow, malice. In opposition to these impulses are: satiety, wakefulness, aversion, peacefulness, courage, delight, love, eagerness, rest, innocence, gentleness, humility, joyfulness, consolation, kindness. Its senses are the following: vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch.

All this as well as similar [traits] not mentioned here we have in common with the animals. For everything the animals and beasts possess the body (also) possesses.

42. It is clearly impossible for all of these [movements] to appear in the body constantly and simultaneously. More commonly if one of them stirs in its time, stimulated by some cause from within or from without, it actually [drives] out the movement that is opposed to it - although this remains present in the body as a possibility, since it will appear in its time. Thus if hunger is present, satiety is absent, if sleep, then wakefulness; if sorrow and anxiety, then joy and courage, together with the other comparable (opposites).

43. However, you must know that the opposing (movements) are not completely separate. For out of satiety arises hunger, and out of joy, worry. For without these the body cannot continue; but it does not require them all in the same way a every moment. For [the body] cannot constantly sleep nor remain constantly wakeful; neither can it constantly take nourishment, nor remain constantly without nourishment.

44. And thus it is with all movements and their opposites that we have tallied according to the three (66b) orderings and six ways of relating discussed above, as I would say according to life and health and sickness. With regard to the state of wakefulness and sleep and those (movements) associated with the state of
wakefulness and health - these are absent from sleep and sickness, if not all and completely. For we see that during sleep, eating, the countenance {das Gesicht - vision?}, the capacity to make distinctions, wrath, sorrow and joy, that in reality remain, are inactive together with other similar impulses.

45. During an illness not all of these remain inactive as they do during sleep, rather the extent and severity (of the illness) brings the movements to a standstill. All (movements), on the other hand, health and the state of wakefulness, even if they do not all act in the same way. Breathing is always present, during both wakefulness and sleep, in both sickness and health, along with all the movements of the body: for it is (the body’s) life. And just as breathing is with all, is found among all, and accompanies everything; so death is foreign to all (movements) and causes them all to cease.

46. It is nonetheless possible, as is said, that the soul because of the body’s subjection to it is in a position (67a) to do anything like God, because it is His “image;” so that we, even during the body’s lifetime, may renounce some of these movements that we named. And as, furthermore, some people assert, if they were found to be completely like God, they would be in a position, just as [when] they were created, to renounce all movements of the body. However, after they abandoned being in God’s image, and of their own free came to be in the image of the beasts, (compare Ps 48, 13:21; Rom 1:23) they have been subjected to all the bodily movements they have in common with savages and their relations, the beasts. For it is not possible for the soul, finding itself in its deeds to be in contradiction to its nature, (to be in a position) to renounce the body in its movements, [thus] transcending its nature.
And just as fire does not put out fire, nor water dry out water, even so the soul which through its actions finds itself in a body, is not able either to free the body from what is proper to it, nor even to bestow upon it what is not proper to it. Pride, namely, and vainglory and envy are not proper to it.

47. Now if the movements of the body are moved according to nature and in an orderly way, then this signifies a certain small, partial health of the soul. If, however, they are absent, then this is a sign of (67b) perfection. Therefore we do not praise the body, for of itself it can do nothing marvellous: that is, it cannot succeed in somehow rising above its nature - but rather [we praise] the [321] soul. However the soul too is not particularly worthy of praise, since it has done nothing particularly worthy of admiration. For even if it had raised up the body above its nature, it would nevertheless remain in its own nature. And what happens in accordance with nature is worthy of neither praise nor admiration.

48 And this is not (only) my own (opinion), but (also) that of the soul’s Creator Himself. For since he knew what the soul is in a position to do, he said: “When you have done all this, then say: We are only useless servants; we have only done what we were assigned.” And it is evident that the Master of the servants commands of him nothing apart from that of which he knows, which he is able to do.

49 And furthermore (the soul) deserves no praise, insofar as it has not in and of itself raised itself up through its own nature. Instead, in the same way that the body ascends of its own nature through the health and power of the soul, just so the soul also ascends through the power and the wisdom of God to his (God’s) nature.
50 Worthy of great admiration, in contrast, is the Almighty’s economy of salvation, which itself served all things that are worthy of admiration: I mean those which accord with nature, (f.68a) those contrary to nature, and those transcending nature. If in contrast the human being is discovered to be contrary to nature, then it is a miracle and a (matter for) reproach; but if according to his nature, there (exists) neither (a reason) for praise nor for reprimand. He is unable, however, to do anything transcending his nature. Thus he is worthy neither of admiration nor of praise, instead (one can only say), that [p.322] he is beyond reproach. Because no matter how many virtues as we are able to effect, we are nevertheless acting up to that point (only) in accordance with nature.

51. However just as the body is not able to remain alive without nourishment, it is also the same for the soul without virtues. And just as a single day’s nourishment does not suffice for the rest of one’s days, likewise the virtues accomplished on this day will not be enough to keep us alive. And if this sensible and limited flesh daily requires its corresponding nourishment, how much more does the soul, which is not limited by human beings, require a nourishment without limits!

52. And what I say is that the virtues are required after the fashion of bodily food by the soul; and that they are even more essential for it than breath is for the body! For without nourishment it is possible for the body to survive for (several) (68b) days; but without breath, in contrast, not even for an hour.

53. I plead therefore that it not be inimical to us to practice the virtues, and that we not rely on that which was [previously] done and give up on their practice because we imagine that what is past suffices. And we also should build up neither with God
nor man a [sense of entitlement for services?] for the (virtues) we have practiced or will practice, just as it it is not suitable for us regarding the food which our body takes to itself to build up with someone a [sense of entitlement for services?] for we eat. Finally, all we do happens for the sake of our subsistence, and therefore we are not worthy of the price. Because if we do it, then it is to our advantage; if, however, we do not do it, it is to [p.323] our harm.

God on the other hand does everything - acting in accordance with nature and transcending nature and contrary to nature - not for His sake, but for ours. For he does not need these things, and therefore he is in [all] of them worthy of the price, and it is impossible for Him to be praised by all the rational beings as is his due.

54. For all He has done is, as we said, in accordance with nature and against nature and transcending nature. That is, in accordance with and contrary to His own nature; but transcending our own nature. If indeed the human being is not in a position to do something well beyond his (69a) nature, but effects all the virtues in accordance with nature, how much more is He, the sum all Good, able to effect nothing[ against] his nature.

55. Three things there are which, indeed, do not exist in God: First (there is) no defect in His will; second, (no defect) in his creative-power; and third (no defect) in his actions. For he wills the death of no one, and he is able to create no other entity equal to Himself and without beginning; and he commits no sin; and there is nothing that happens which transcends His nature.

56. In accordance with His nature, namely, was this good: that when we did not exist and he did not need us, he graciously
created us “in His image” and made us “heirs” of all that accords with his nature and is particularly His own. But against his nature [and in accord with His nature] is the fact that he descended and endured all that we had acquired since we had stepped out of our nature: that is, everything from conception to death. [p.324]

Indeed, he did not come as one who had done something worthy of this punishment, but rather for the sake of his natural love, in order to free us from the curse, and from everything that followed from it which we on account of our transgression had received. He, however, took on these (consequences) without transgression and (so) was able to erase them for us.

57. It is surely against nature that God was born of a woman. But God, on account of his love for us and without his nature being bound or enslaved by one of the commandments, was born of a woman, because (such) was His pleasure, without his destroying what he was, in order to free us from the conception and birth of the curse and sin, and to bear us again by means of a birth of blessing and justice.

58. We came indeed to this conception and birth fixed under the curse, since of our own free will we had corrupted our nature. He however, since He is what He is, in his mercy has taken [up]on Himself with birth all that follows birth up to death - things which are not only contrary to His own nature, but concerning which I say that they are also against our proper nature - in order to free us who voluntarily fell into these things by committing sin from that which he without sin voluntarily took upon Himself. For we were not able by ourselves to ascend [sel'q] above them. Therefore, because we committed the sin, we have fallen into these (things). But He has not only not
remained in these things, but he has facilitated our ascent, [selʾq] because He, as we said, descended [nḥrʾt] to them in his love without sin.

59. It certainly transcends nature that a human being should be born of a virgin without (marital) intercourse, whereby the virginity of his mother was retained. And it furthermore transcends human nature, that a man should die of his own will and after his death arise of his own will, unharmed and without external assistance. God, however, Who loves human beings became human and was willingly born without (marital) intercourse; and he died, because he wanted it (so), and is of own will arisen unharmed. Because “his right has saved him and his holy arm - that God who became a human being, while remaining at the same time God.

60. He namely, the leaven of the deity, who in his mercy has concealed Himself in the unleavened dough of mankind, has (yet) not only not spoiled his nature and his taste and his power, but thoroughly leavened the whole mass of dough with all that is his. Admittedly, for a short time the leaven, too, which was hidden in the dough is considered to be unleavened. But after a certain time, not only is the whole lump of dough considered to be leavened - it is so (also) in reality.

61. Likewise it was also assumed of Our Lord in our own time and in our world and at our level that he was (merely) a human being. But in His own time and in His world and in His kingdom, not only is the human being assumed to be God; rather He is that (also) in reality. And just as in this world a thing cannot be two: God and a human being, bur one: God on account of Himself and the same human being on account of us, even so there do not also happen to be two: God and the human
being (f.70b) but rather one: God therefore, because he is God, [p.326] and the Human God on God’s account, who became human. Thus in the same way as this one [became] human for their sake, so also those on His account [become] God.

62. Now, when God became man, he annihilated none of his natural attributes. A human being, on the other hand, remains continuously neither in all his natural faculties nor in that which transcends his nature; rather he destroyed what he had actually been as a human being. For it is characteristic of his nature that as a human being he was created “according to the image of God.” But it lies beyond [transcending] his nature, that “we become like him;” and in fact also in the (text): “I have come so that they might have life, and have it in abundance” as also in that other (text): “I was placed over my kingdom; and even greater honor was added for me.”

63 And in truth, as the prophet beheld all that was to come to pass, he was amazed and called him “more wonderful,” who accomplished all this out of his love for the rational beings. And right worthy of astonishment and praise [71a] is this miracle! An inexpressible miracle it is: namely, that the nature of the rational beings, which on account of their created state and the start of their existence and because of the “movement” of their wills became estranged from the divine nature (which is without beginning, the creator of all things, and immutable) - [their nature] united with the nature of their creator, and through his mercy are to become one with him in all, without end.

64. I, however, confess to your love, that, just as astonishment seized the prophet as he beheld these things, and he exclaimed: “O More wonderful!”, likewise astonishment has seized me
concerning all I have encountered on the way on which I had embarked and I was prevented from the intention with which I had begun, because I was held fast by the mighty chain of the love for these things which against my expectation I encountered. And (so) I stood, kept from the full completion of my beginning.

65. I claim nevertheless, that perhaps even this “beginning” came about precisely as a result of this “end.” Indeed, just as the course of one who desires to stand at the “end” of all streams ends at the sea, even so one who desires to stand at the power of each creature, ends at the “richly-varied wisdom” which has created it.

66. And just as one who stands at the shore of the sea is seized by astonishment, at its limitlessness and its taste and all that is proper to it; and furthermore how the rivers, streams and brooks which plunge into the (sea) themselves become in it limitless and undivided, because they all acquire what belongs to it: even so remains the one who considers this “end” of all insights, in great astonishment and admiration, because he sees, that [all] these distinctions of various knowledges themselves blend into an essential and single knowledge; and that all those [knowledges] and these become one without end.

67. Since we have thus abandoned [our attempt] to bring that first intention to completion because we were suddenly confronted with that beloved “end,” behold: thus is it stored up for you and for me and for anyone who wishes it in the great treasure house of “all the treasures of wisdom,” the “breast of Christ;” on which John reclined at the Last Supper and searched to know [lit. “researched”] concerning the traitor. He
obtained knowledge at this Last Supper! Therefore without the “Last Supper” and without the “breast of Christ” the “traitors” are not recognized. Take care, however, that as soon as he is recognized he is also expelled and that stillness enters.

68. Now, just as “good earth” which receives the “seed” can bring forth not only what it has received, but rather “thirty-sixty- and a hundred-fold;”

(72a) likewise also in your skillful mind that “seed” which was cast into it should not remain alone; rather, you must be assiduous, so that what was sown in you may bring forth many times doubled, so that the “landlord” rejoices over it and always entrusts to you his “seed” and the earth becomes blessed and many “poor” are fed, so that concerning the “landlord” and the “earth” and all who are fed glorification and prise arises to that “Over-landlord” to whom belong all seeds of benediction in eternity. Amen.