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Following the Footsteps of the Invisible

The Complete Works of
Diadochus of Photikē

Introduction, Translation, and Notes by
Cliff Ermatinger



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To Archbishop Jerome Listecki—
with gratitude.

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Introduction to the Life and Spirituality of Diadochus of Photikē

*Draw me in your footsteps, let us run together*¹

Diadochus of Photikē

A fifth-century mystic perceived his hidden Lover's approach. He let God enrapture his heart once and for all and dedicated the rest of his life to following the footsteps of the Invisible One.

Although our author is the most important ascetical writer of his century, solid data on him is quite scarce. He lived sometime between 400 and 487 as bishop of Photikē in Old Epiros—a place besieged by invasions, covered over by earthquakes, and eventually lost for a while to history until some excavations in north-eastern Greece turned up evidence of its location at the end of the nineteenth century.² Although Photius says otherwise,³ Diadochus's name does not appear on any of the documents of the Council of Chalcedon (451), therefore his episcopal ordination

¹ Song 1:4.

² See Demetrios Triantaphyllopoulos, "He mesaionike Photikē kai he these tes sten Palai Epeiro," *Actes du Xe Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* 2, 1984, 577–85.

³ PG 103:1089–1192.

must have been posterior to the council. Since his signature does appear along with the names of the other bishops of Old Epiros at the bottom of a letter to Emperor Leo (457) reporting the murder of Bishop Proterius of Alexandria as a result of some theological differences with some Monophysites, his episcopal ordination was conferred between those years.

It seems Diadochus's turbulent times not only brought about his early death but also served to broaden his influence on other spiritual leaders. If there is any truth to the theory⁴ that Diadochus was pirated off to North Africa during a Vandal foray through Epiros, then that would explain how he came to be the spiritual father to Eugene, bishop of far-off Carthage, and to the ascetical writer Julian Pomerius, as the African bishop Victor of Vita says. Of the "great" Diadochus he also says that he "merits every sort of praise since his many writings illumine the Catholic faith like bright stars."⁵

Although heaven gained a martyr, the church lost a shepherd and spiritual giant. Of "his many writings" only four have survived and his authorship of one of them is disputed. Taken in strict terms, Victor seems to speak of dogmatic treatises. Of the four works, the three briefer writings are clearly dogmatic, while Diadochus's masterpiece *Discourses on Judgment and Spiritual Discernment* (which Diadochus also calls *One Hundred Gnostic Chapters*) today would be relegated to the genre of spiritual theology. Nonetheless, our author would resist such a distinction, since for him it is precisely by living the life of prayer and asceticism proposed in his *Discourses* that one is equipped to utter correctly a word about theology. The only authentic theology is

⁴ Henri Irenee Marou, "Diadoque de Photice et Victor de Vita," *Christiana Tempora*, 373–80, Rome, 1978; also, Angelo Cardinal Mai brought this fact to light in 1840, see PG 65:1139–40.

⁵ Edouárd Des Places, SJ, ed. and trans., *Diadoque de Photice: Oeuvres spirituelle*, SCh 5bis (Paris: Du Cerf, Paris, 1955), 9. This is the critical edition of the Greek text used for this English translation.

lived theology, for “nothing is more miserable than a Godless mind philosophising about God.”⁶

His Works

In Diadochus of Photikē we find a pure Greek specimen. Even as Greece was busy hellenizing the East, its own culture was undergoing latinization from the West. The price of exportation was unintended imports. This is clear to readers of Greek works of that era. The Attic Peninsula seemed to be undergoing an identity crisis that brought with it social, religious, and linguistic syncretism—all of which our author managed to resist. Since the overall level of Greek had deteriorated and writers of the fifth century became increasingly aware of how far their language had drifted from the beauty of Classical Greek (they had lost the use of the optative, for example) many writers clumsily attempted to rectify this. Others simply kept on writing as the linguistically mixed masses spoke. If we could imagine a large portion of our immigrant population speaking English as a second language, some of whom throw in a few “forsooths” every now and then in memory of past linguistic glory, and suddenly someone were to appear writing with the purity of style of John Donne, we might get a clearer picture of Diadochus’s cultural stature. As the beauty of his language attracted many more adepts it also proved to be a worthy platform for his solid doctrine. He set a new standard for subsequent generations.

The *Discourses on Judgment and Spiritual Discernment* is by far Diadochus’s most famous and influential work. The critical edition of the Greek text offers the primary title *One Hundred Gnostic Chapters*, which is followed by a decalogue of the life of Christian virtue. A secondary title follows on the heels of these definitions and this is the title I have chosen to use. Nonetheless, Diadochus

⁶ Gnostic Chapter 7 (hereafter, references made to this work will be identified by GC).

seems to offer yet another title as an afterthought, calling it his *Ascetical Treatises* on the last page. Each title is fitting.

A collection of one hundred brief sayings or “chapters,” known as a “century,” was a popular literary device among spiritual writers of the ancient world. The number one hundred points toward perfection, a reflection of God in his unicity and multiplicity. It may have been Evagrius Pontus (345–392), who introduced this practice into Christian literature with his own *Gnostic Chapters*. Century writers began to spring up throughout the Middle East and Greece over the next few hundred years. After Evagrius, the most important among the proponents of this literary form are chronologically Mark the Hermit, Diadochus of Photikē, and Maximus the Confessor. Sometimes a century was a collection of sayings, more often these maxims regarded a particular area of the spiritual life redacted by a spiritual father for his disciples. The disciples would memorize the one maxim at the beginning of the day and spend the rest of the day interiorizing that thought amid their tasks and times of quiet.

It should be mentioned that Diadochus has his own style of century. Rather than offer weighty, challenging aphorisms, his chapters, with their multiple ideas, offer much more in one chapter than other century writers. He makes his point and then, having gotten the reader’s attention, uses the opportunity to engage his theological foes. Other times he uses colorful metaphors to exemplify his rules for discernment. But all that he says remains on the level of experiential theology and is quite practical.

The ten definitions with which Diadochus begins this work set the foundation for everything he is about to say. It seems that such distinctions are not only necessary to understand our author’s usage but also offer us a glimpse into his spiritual experience. A large portion of the *Gnostic Chapters* offers insightful rules of discernment (*diakrisis* in Greek—a term that means to distinguish, separate, cut), and this seems to be the methodology of the Diadochan corpus. He wants to define terminology, distinguish the provenance of the interior movements that accompany the spiritual life, guide the spiritually perplexed to the heights of divine union, and separate orthodox teaching from the dominant heresies of his age.

The Homily on the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ is similar to his *Gnostic Chapters* in its elevated and rhythmic Greek style and its elongated phrases that can give headaches to translators. The *Homily* has the clear purpose of defending Christ's divinity and human natures and he carries this out masterfully. In it he makes the crowning victory of the Incarnation the divinization of man. His finale is a christological confession meant to trump the Monophysites.

The Vision is a communication with Saint John the Baptist in the guise of a dream. Using an effective question-answer format, Diadochus's inquiries regarding contemplation, the beatific vision, apparitions, and angels are all satisfied. In some regard aspects of his teaching resemble Pseudo-Dionysius's angelology. No manuscript of *The Vision* prior to the thirteenth century exists and the eleven existing texts all attribute this work to the bishop of Photikē.

The Catechesis is an enigma. Although it follows the same question-answer format as *The Vision*, some have attributed its authorship to Simeon the New Theologian. Nonetheless, it is absent from lists of Simeon's works and most recent scholarship seems unwilling to attribute it to Simeon. This work considers God's relationship to the world, the divine attributes, and angelology, ending with a reminder of the role of good works in the order of salvation. Regardless of doubts that some scholars have in ascribing this work to Diadochus, Des Places includes it in his critical edition and so have I.

Diadochus's Milieu

We can only understand Diadochus if we consider his context. The century he was born into was fraught with theological and political disputes, and the serious Christian was pulled in different directions by opposing schools of spirituality. The two dominant currents of mystical theology of the day were, on the one hand, intellectualist or philosophical, and, on the other, aesthetic or biblical.

The earliest Christian writers, beginning with Saint Paul, provided the foundation for the aesthetic school, which emphasized

the role of the will and the affections in the order of loving communication with God. Macarius, a contemporary of Diadochus, was the most influential proponent of this school in its orthodox form. Messalianism was a heterodox expression of this school.

On the other hand, the intellectualist school stressed the role of the intellect (*nous*) in the order of communication with God under the banner of the dictum, "the goal of life is contemplation."⁷ This school was founded by Origen and the Alexandrians and was most widely promulgated by Evagrius of Pontus, who immediately preceded and influenced our author.

Although the Messalians on the one side and Origen and Evagrius on the other were condemned by the church, Diadochus reveals traces of both schools in synthetic form, avoiding the exaggerations taught by these schools, proving that they both had much that was salvageable.

Evagrius proposed a Platonic anthropology, holding that material is oriented toward sin and in need of being spiritualized. Although the concept of the heart is important for Evagrius, he makes the term interchangeable with mind or soul, following the Platonists. Diadochus will have none of this. Diadochus proposes a positive anthropology that sees the flesh just as penetrated by grace as the soul is from the moment of baptism. Although Evagrius barely mentions the sacraments, Diadochus's theology is a theology of baptism and its consequences. Further, Diadochus's use of the word "heart" is biblical, implying the entire person as receptor of God's grace. Nonetheless, Diadochus shares much of Evagrius's thought with regard to the insubstantiality of evil, prayer free of all forms and images, the role of dispassion, and types of demons.⁸

The Messalian heresy confused the presence and work of God's grace with "experience" or feelings. Such subjectivity obviously lent itself to error under the guise of "mystical materialism."⁹ If

⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 2.21.

⁸ All of these themes will be taken up later.

⁹ Ireneé Hausherr, "L'erreur fondamentale et la logique de Messalianisme," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 1 (1935): 328–60.

the Pelagians downplayed the effects of original sin and mitigated the need for grace, the Messalians responded with their own aberration claiming that everyone was conceived not only in sin but also in a state of diabolical possession. Further, this dour theology held that sacramental baptism and Eucharist provided no remedy. Such demons can only be expelled through prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29) was their clarion call and, unlike the exceptional case of which our Lord speaks, this was the state of the general, albeit unaware, populace. Thus, the rule of the day was excessive asceticism and constant prayer until such point that the person arrived at the much-awaited experience of liberation from the possessing demon. The continual prayer and asceticism required of Messalians precluded other activities and eventually invited the liberating grace whose advent was accompanied by visible, tangible phenomena, ending with the divinization of the soul.¹⁰

The great spiritual writer now known as Pseudo-Macarius attempted to correct some of the errors of the Messalian sect. It seems that one of Diadochus's aims was to further correct Pseudo-Macarius. Diadochus retains the notion of unceasing prayer, but not to the exclusion of other responsibilities, since prayer, more than an activity, is an attitude resulting from a relationship. Diadochus also clearly promotes the notion of spiritual progress but recognizes that the Holy Spirit is the foremost protagonist on the journey to spiritual perfection. Further, our author will not deny the efficacy and, indeed, the necessity of prayer and asceticism in the order of salvation and sanctification, but his is a refreshing spirituality which avoids excess of any stripe save in the area of *agapē*.

One of Diadochus's many virtues is his ability to find a middle way amid so many exaggerations. Thus his response was equilibrium with regard to fasting¹¹ and penance,¹² happiness and

¹⁰ Friedrich Dörr, *Diadochus und die Messalianer: ein Kampf zwischen wahrer und falscher Mystiker in fünften Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder & Co., 1937).

¹¹ See GC 47.

¹² See GC 45.

lamentation,¹³ use of alcohol¹⁴ and food,¹⁵ and even prayer.¹⁶ Prayer, sacrifice, moderation, and the life of virtue are necessary to continue on the path of transformation in Diadochus's teaching. Yet they are never the beginning or end of it since love is the fulfillment of the law. God's grace initiates the process in baptism thus making it possible to carry out the above practices. Grace seconded by loving human will brings divinization to completion.

Questions on grace and anthropology could be adequately addressed only in light of a healthy Christology—and there was widespread disparity of teaching in the fifth century. The degree of theological confusion was equaled only by the passion with which it was promoted. No sooner had Nestorius been condemned in his attempt to correct the Arian heresy by postulating two persons and two natures in Christ, than others took up yet another heretical standard, holding that our Lord, as one person, had only one nature. These said that in some way our Lord's human nature had been swallowed up by or absorbed into his divine nature—hence the name "Monophysite." Whereas centuries later Nietzsche would tout "philosophy done with a hammer," the Monophysites preceded him by doing theology with a sword. These are the scholars who killed Bishop Proterius of Alexandria as mentioned above. The Nestorianism of the Antiochians and the Monophysitism of the Alexandrians were condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Since the condemnation was not enough to quell the confusion, Diadochus joined in the fray.

Diadochus's insight and balance have influenced posterior generations from the sixth to the eighteenth centuries. Maximus the Confessor quotes him several times.¹⁷ Photius sings the praises

¹³ See GC 68, 69.

¹⁴ See GC 47.

¹⁵ See GC 43-51.

¹⁶ See GC 68.

¹⁷ *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*, PG 91:277C; *Disputatio cum Phyrro*, PG 91:301C, where he quotes GC 5. And *Quaest. Et respon.*, PG 90:792C, where he quotes GC 100.

of the *Gnostic Chapters* in his *Bibliotheca*.¹⁸ Both John Climacus and Mark the Hermit favorably refer to Diadochus. His influence is perhaps most visible in the writings of Simeon the New Theologian as well as other philokalic writers such as Barsanouphios, Nicephoros of Athos, Gregory of Palamas, and Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain as well as the author of *The Way of the Pilgrim*. In the West, the Society of Jesus recommended that its novice masters read Diadochus's *Gnostic Chapters* to better fulfill their duties as spiritual directors.¹⁹ Given some similarities in their respective rules for discernment of spirits, many have claimed that Ignatius of Loyola was influenced by our author. This cannot be so since Ignatius had no knowledge of Greek and it was a Jesuit son of Ignatius who first translated the *Gnostic Chapters* into Latin late in the sixteenth century.²⁰

Diadochus's Spirituality

Image and Likeness—the Alpha and Omega

In commenting on the creation of the human in Genesis 1:26, Saint Irenaeus introduces to Christian anthropology the distinction between image and likeness, namely, image (*methexis*) meaning ontological participation and likeness (*mimesis*) reflecting the proportionate degree of man's moral resemblance to God.²¹ For Tertullian, image is an indelible ontological reality, while likeness is the *ruah* (see Gen 2:7), the spiritual life of man that, unlike the image, can indeed be lost.²² Our author continues this line of thought albeit with a rather original treatment of the distinction.

Diadochus stands out for his positive vision of the material world in general and human nature in particular. He takes pains

¹⁸ See *Analecta Bollandiana* 81 (1963): 414–17.

¹⁹ "Regulae magistri novitiorum Libri ad usum magistri novitiorum accomodati," *Institutum Societatis Iesu* 3 (1893): 121.

²⁰ PG 65:1167–1212.

²¹ See *Adv. Haer.* 5.6.1; 5.8.1; 5.16.2.

²² See *Bapt.* 5.6.7.

to stress the ongoing goodness of creation and the human condition, for God created the human in his image²³ and likeness.²⁴ The image of God is found in the soul's higher regions,²⁵ which have become darkened by original sin. The Incarnation provides the solution to this unfortunate state, and its merits begin to work on the soul from the moment of baptism. This "bath of holiness" allows the process of transformation to go forward, but personal fragmentation still needs to be remedied. The reintegration of the scattered parts is the path to the restoration of the lost likeness.

The other part, which is "in the likeness," he hopes to bring about with our cooperation. When the soul begins to taste the goodness of the Holy Spirit with profound sentiments, then we ought to know that grace is beginning to paint the likeness over the image. In the same way, in fact, that painters first sketch the figure of a man in one color, and then little by little make it flourish with one pigmentation upon another, reflecting even the model's hair faithfully, so too the grace of God first establishes a sketch of "in the image" through baptism as when the human was first created. When grace sees that we desire with all our heart the beauty of the likeness and to be naked and without fear in its workshop, then it makes virtue flourish upon virtue, thus elevating the soul's beauty from glory to glory, it places upon it the distinguishing marks of "the likeness."²⁶

"In this way spiritual sense reveals that we have been formed 'in the likeness'; yet it is through illumination that we will know the perfection of likeness."²⁷ This likeness is a goal to be attained only through human cooperation with grace. Just as the Bride of Christ is adorned by the good deeds of the saints (see Rev 19:8), meaning that the degree of beauty of the church triumphant in

²³ "It is in the soul with its intellectual movement that we are in the image of God, and the body is akin to its dwelling place" (GC 79).

²⁴ See GC 4.

²⁵ See GC 78.

²⁶ GC 89.

²⁷ GC 89.

Heaven is, to some extent, dependent on free human actions accomplished through grace, so too each member's degree of likeness to God is determined by his or her free acts.

The arrival at perfect likeness to God befits the soul destined for divinization (*theosis*) and, ultimately, for mystical matrimony. At this stage the soul is shot through with the light and love of God. "Such a one is present and absent in this life. He has his body for a dwelling place, but vacates it through love. He relentlessly moves toward God in his soul. Once he has transcended his self-love through love for God, his heart becomes consumed in the fire of love and clings to God with unyielding desire."²⁸

The consummation of *theosis* occurs in the *eschaton*, when the perfect are permitted to enter into the divine nuptials. Diadochus points to Christ's dual nature as a reference to our destiny. Christ's ascension means that he is taken up into glory (see 1 Tim 3:16) in his human nature in order not to violate the laws of human nature, which explains why the saints will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord (see 1 Thess 4:17). "For what is fitting for the Incarnate God's body is also fitting for those he will divinize through the abundance of his grace, because it pleases God to make gods of humans."²⁹

Being made god by God, a hallmark of Byzantine theology, means an accidental, as opposed to substantial, participation in God's nature (see 2 Pet 1:4) summed up by the dictum "God became man that we might become gods."³⁰ This participation—a gift of grace to which God invites each person—is a participation in Christ's humanity, which has been divinized. Becoming divine by participation implies no violence to human nature, rather this transformation is a return to God's original plan for humanity, becoming authentically human and adequate for eternal intimacy with God. "In this way it is a habit, not a nature, that the Incarnation of the Word modified, so that we might be stripped of the memory of evil and robed in the charity of God: not transformed

²⁸ GC 14.

²⁹ Homily VI.

³⁰ Athanasius, *De incarnatione*, 54.5.

into what we were not, but renewed through glory by the transformation into what we were.”³¹

Personal Fragmentation and Aisthēsis

In their original state our first parents enjoyed utter integrity. Diadochus stresses this fact by pointing to one all-important aspect for his anthropology—*aisthēsis*, the lone sense that oriented the entire person through unmistakable perception of God.³² After the Fall, the image was retained but likeness suffered effacement, albeit not total obliteration. Further, evidence of this distortion is the interior division we all experience, the disintegration of the one sense into many fragmented parts, all becoming senses in their own right, but damaged and in need of redemption and reintegration back into the one, preternatural sense.

Beyond the interior division, now sadly proper to the human condition, this division directs worldviews and becomes institutionalized. The thirteenth-century intellectual divorce that occurred when theology was shoehorned into philosophical methodology in order to become more “scientific” comes to mind. Among the disastrous results were nominalism, an increase in superstition, and doubt with regard to the intelligibility of God. Centuries before, Diadochus addressed this issue: “It is always better to await the illumination of faith, energized by love, which equips us to speak, since nothing is more miserable than a Godless mind philosophising about God.”³³ The key to an integral worldview is an integrated world visionary, and this begins with his own healing. This is played out, to a great extent, in what Diadochus terms the “sense.”

Since Diadochus’s notion of the sense is central to his anthropology, touched by grace, it becomes a focal point in his experiential theology. Sense then is coupled to practically every part of

³¹ Homily VI.

³² See GC 29.

³³ GC 7.

human makeup in an effort to show how far this fragmentation has gone. Some of his usages of the word “sense” follow:

1. Sense of the heart “enables the *nous* to breathe the perfume of supernatural goods,”³⁴ and the heart is the personal core of the human person, the root of all human activity and passivity. Heart is located at the deepest center of the soul and even of the *nous*, “where love is transformed into knowledge.” The heart has members and even “visible parts”³⁵ by which Diadochus seems to mean those areas more easily accessible through reflection as opposed to the hidden places where grace resides. These hidden places only become manifest through divine movements there, which arouse the sense.
2. Intellectual sense: by way of the sense, the *nous* progresses and prepares itself to thus receive all the virtues,³⁶ the highest of which is *agapē*.
3. Corporal senses: they have their corresponding interior senses and, though exterior, they are to be neither shunned nor coddled but ordered. They have a role in “the entire person turn[ing] toward the Lord”³⁷ and “as a result, grace, by way of the spiritual sense, makes the body rejoice with ineffable exultation in those who advance in knowledge.”³⁸ “And from that moment onward, he comes to find himself immersed in such an ardent longing for the illumination of the intellect, penetrating even his bones.”³⁹ This sense of longing is an anticipation of the glorified body.
4. Interior sense: where the person enjoys union with God through purity.⁴⁰

³⁴ GC 23.

³⁵ GC 85.

³⁶ See GC 89.

³⁷ GC 85.

³⁸ GC 79.

³⁹ GC 14.

⁴⁰ See GC Def. 8.

5. Deep sense: this is reached toward the end of the spiritual itinerary.⁴¹
6. "Total sense of fullness": this is a key concept for Diadochus. This is experiential knowledge that involves the entire person (*plērophoria*—"total"). *Plērophoria* also means "certainty." The mystics never doubt the reality of their experience. Once this sense has been satisfied the person will never return to the delights of this passing world.⁴² But this total sense of fullness is only tasted by those to whom the Holy Spirit has granted it and is, in part, dependent on the degree of their fervent love.⁴³
7. Imperceptible sense: the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit secretly at work in the recesses of the soul unperceived by the host soul.⁴⁴

Peira—*Experience*

Given that the spirituality of Diadochus is nothing if not a lived theology, it is logical that he places the role of "experience" at center stage. In fact, the word appears on practically every page of his *Gnostic Chapters*.

Although a common term in modern spirituality, aspiration toward an experience of God's grace was also an important facet of certain schools of Byzantine spirituality. Diadochus's nemeses, the Messalians, placed an exaggerated degree of importance on what they termed experience, the sensate awareness of God's action. Regardless of his opposition to the sect, Diadochus used their vocabulary in an orthodox way.

The type of experience to which Diadochus refers can be achieved through prayer and intimate contact with the divine Beloved. Such experiences fill the soul with light that the world

⁴¹ See GC 88.

⁴² See GC 44.

⁴³ See GC 90.

⁴⁴ See GC 85.

can never offer.⁴⁵ Such experiences occur in the sense and result in knowledge. To underline the primacy of the experience of God through prayer Diadochus says, “Spiritual discourse brings the intellectual sense to full measure. It comes from God borne by the power of love. . . . [T]hrough its contemplations it is filled in proportion to the measure of desire in its exercise of charity. It is always better to await the illumination of faith, energized by love.”⁴⁶

Diadochus presents a sort of virtuous circle brought about by the experience-sense-knowledge paradigm. The experience of grace serves as a reserve from which the sense can draw and ushers in true knowledge of God, which, in turn, brings about a certain communion between God and the warrior.⁴⁷ “Indeed, knowledge unites the human to God by experience.”⁴⁸ This unifying experience brings about a transformation in the heart of the warrior to such an extent that he or she begins to have God’s sentiments and vision, seeing even those who insult and attack him or her as God sees them.⁴⁹

Here it is clear that, for Diadochus, experience is not merely a feeling or something sensed—although it includes that phenomenon. Experience is an awareness of God’s love lived out in the sense of the heart which, from there, penetrates the entire person.⁵⁰ In those

who have willingly detached themselves from the goods of this life in hopes of future goods . . . self-mastery makes bodily attractions to die off. In them alone, thanks to their

⁴⁵ See GC 11.

⁴⁶ GC 7.

⁴⁷ Diadochus frequently uses the term *agōnistēs* (meaning athlete, wrestler, fighter, combatant, or warrior) to describe the contemplative person who has taken to the path of spiritual perfection. Since he describes the following of Christ in terms of spiritual combat, I have chosen to translate this term as “warrior.”

⁴⁸ GC 9.

⁴⁹ See GC 91.

⁵⁰ See GC 14.

detachment, can the mind exercise at full strength so as to perceive God's ineffable blessings. As a result it transmits its own share of joy even to the body, in proportion to its progress, exulting without ceasing in its full confession of love [see Ps 41:5]. "My heart puts its trust in him;" he says; "I have been helped, my flesh has bloomed again, I thank him with all my heart" [Ps 27:7]. The joy that actually is produced in the soul and the body is a reliable reminder of incorruptible life.⁵¹

In GC 79 Diadochus reiterates how the experience of God's love penetrates, purifies, and delights the *nous*, the sense, and the body. This formula is particular to Diadochus who insists that the *peira* does not occur only in the *nous* but throughout the entire person because grace penetrates the entire person.

Baptismal Grace

The path to reintegration of the senses and restoration of the likeness requires divine intervention through grace and human cooperation with that grace. God's initiative through grace and the human's ability to respond through discernment of spirits form the two poles of Diadochus's spirituality. More than a doctrine, Diadochus's theology presents us with a relationship in process. This process begins at the moment of baptism: "Through the regeneration of baptism holy grace obtains two benefits for us, one of which infinitely surpasses the other. It grants us the first immediately, since we are renewed in the water itself which washes us of every stain of sin and it restores all the etchings of the soul—that is, making evident what is 'in the image'—cleansing it of every stain of sin."⁵²

Baptism has profound effects on the soul, one of which is the person's ability to desire what he ought to desire. This is part of the path of reintegration:

⁵¹ GC 25.

⁵² GC 89.

From the moment of baptism, as I mentioned, grace hides itself in the depths of the spirit, its presence concealed even from our very senses. But when one begins to long for God with total conviction, then in sublime colloquy it communicates a portion of its wealth to the soul through the intellect's senses. From the moment in which he has firmly set his heart upon complete possession of what he has discovered his desire is such that he is happily willing to abandon all of this world's present goods in order truly to acquire the field in which the treasure of this life lies hidden.⁵³

Describing grace's effects on the interior life Diadochus calls our attention above all to its operation on the intellect, memory, and *aisthēsis*. Conspicuously absent in Diadochus's spirituality is any emphasis on the will. When treating the post-baptismal state, which does not completely do away with concupiscence, he refers to the "two-way inclination of our desire [or will]" and makes a few passing references to this faculty.⁵⁴ The will seems to be a function of the sense, which is not entirely unthinkable if we are to follow the dictum that the will always chooses the good, albeit often merely a subjective good, while the *aisthēsis*, or our perceptive faculty, is also led by attractive goods. Yet in the preternatural state the human's only faculty was the perceptive faculty. While it is the intellect that informs the will, and therefore plays a prominent role in Western thought, for Diadochus, it is the sense that needs to be reeducated in order to recognize and respond to true goods. The primacy of sense underlines Diadochus's entire system of experiential theology, and such perception will be necessary in order successfully to engage in the post-baptismal struggles that must surely ensue.

Thus it was for the soul and the body that the holy Word of God was made flesh and, as God, liberally grants us the water of salvation through the baptism of regeneration. Through the action of the life-giving and Holy Spirit we are regenerated.

⁵³ GC 77.

⁵⁴ See GC 5, 25, 93.

Thus we are purified immediately in body and soul—that is, if one is completely oriented toward God—because the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us and sin is evicted from us. So it is impossible that in the soul’s simple and integral form two persons could subsist—as some hold. Since through the baptismal bath divine grace adheres to the lineaments of the image—as a guarantee of likeness—where is the Evil One going to stay, for what partnership do light and darkness have with one another? We who have taken up the course of holy combat believe that through the bath of incorruptibility the multiform serpent is cast out of the treasure chamber of the intellect. Nor should we be surprised if after our baptism, along with good things, we should also think crude things. For the bath of sanctity takes away from us the stain of sin, but it does not change this two-way inclination of our desire, nor does it impede demons from making war against us or speaking deceitful words to us, so that what we, as carnal people are incapable of protecting, do indeed preserve through the power of God insofar as we take up the weapons of righteousness.⁵⁵

Evil and Spiritual Combat

As the waters of baptism pour the Holy Spirit’s presence into the soul, the diabolical occupant of the previously unwashed soul is necessarily evicted to the outer regions of the person. He continues his work albeit from a different vantage point and with less efficacy.

Evil, for Diadochus, is a nonentity. Nonetheless, in a diabolical perversion of creation, disobedient choices lend evil substance: “Evil is not in nature nor is anyone evil by nature, since God made nothing evil [see Gen 1:31]. But when in the concupiscence of heart someone gives shape to that which is not in reality, then precisely that which he desires begins to exist.”⁵⁶ The ensuing schizophrenia of sin leaves the person broken, with his singular mystical sense in shards. The damage, says Diadochus, manifests

⁵⁵ GC 78.

⁵⁶ GC 3.

itself in a multitude of senses pulled in opposing directions as each part of the person claims its own good. The sense of the heart, the sense of the intellect, the corporal senses, the deep sense, the interior senses, need to be pulled back together forming the “total sense of fullness.”⁵⁷ After baptism or after a conversion experience, when the entire person is penetrated by God’s grace and begins to take to the path of reintegration, there yet remains a demonic obstacle to overcome.

Diadochus dedicates much attention to demons; however, he divides them into only two groups: subtle and crass.⁵⁸ In other words, we can recognize what kind of a demon is present through its operation. The more subtle demons incite spiritual sin (pride, vainglory, ire), while the crass demons lead us into sins of sensuality. Our author seems to find in Adam and Eve the paradigms of dual demonic influence: when discussing Adam’s sin, Diadochus treats it as a disorientation of the natural sense of the soul,⁵⁹ while Eve’s sin was provoked by immoderation of the corporal senses.⁶⁰ Since each of our first parents was enticed by different types of demons, we, their children, all experience the disintegrating effects of both sorts of demons as well as the ensuing weakness from their original Fall.

[O]n account of the fall through disobedience, this one sense of the soul is distanced from the soul in its movements. Therefore, one part of it is dragged about by the passions, which is why we experience pleasure in the good things of this life; but the other part is often motivated by rational and spiritual delights when we practice moderation, which is why our mind is urged on toward those heavenly beauties when we live according to wisdom. If we learn to persevere in our disdain for worldly goods, we will be able to conjoin the earthly longings of our soul to this disposition of the mind by way of communion with the Holy Spirit who makes this possible for

⁵⁷ GC 90.

⁵⁸ See GC 81.

⁵⁹ See GC 25.

⁶⁰ See GC 62.

us. If his divinity does not illumine the treasures of our heart sufficiently, we will not be able to enjoy what is good with an undivided sense, that is, with an integral disposition.⁶¹

Diadochus describes the nature of spiritual combat as a type of tug-of-war between the Holy Spirit and the devil. So permeated with the sense of spiritual combat is his theology that Diadochus often favors military terminology over vocabulary more proper to the spiritual life. For example, his term *agōnistēs* (“fighter,” “wrestler,” “athlete,” “warrior”) and derivatives of that word far outnumber “ascetic” and other terms that indicate a man of God.

Engaging in spiritual combat implies leaving oneself open to be taken advantage of and “dragged about” by the evil one who manipulates our passions. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, speaks to what is noble and godly in our nature, respectfully attracting us through spiritual delights. These divine advances make known the presence of the Lover and begin to restore lost integrity and communion. This is the beginning of perception of the footprints of the Invisible One. But this perception is only possible through authentic discernment of what the Holy Spirit is accomplishing in the soul. Such discernment permits us to cut through competing interior movements and authentically to desire and encounter that which brings about union and communion, namely the integrating love of God. Such discernment aids us in overcoming divisive tendencies and vices that prevent God’s work from coming about in the soul.⁶²

Demonic activity manifests itself in several ways, usually by attacking the person in the area of the passions where the individual is weakest: at times the enemy takes advantage of interior states of sorrow such as that caused by God’s pedagogical desolation or the sorrow resultant from an immature degree of humility, or the sorrow of this world born of lukewarmness.⁶³ One of the enemy’s more effective weapons is anger (often fruit of the previ-

⁶¹ GC 29.

⁶² See GC 71, 92.

⁶³ See GC 85.

ously mentioned states of sorrow). Anger, says Diadochus, is the vice that most darkens the intellective faculties and hinders any sort of union between God and the soul.⁶⁴

Vanity and presumption destroy any likeness to God,⁶⁵ while lukewarmness (*akēdia*) leaves the mind and, more particularly, the all-important memory of God (*mnēmē theou*), enchained.⁶⁶

But demons do not limit their activity to inciting the passions of our fallen nature; they toy with our mind, eliciting thoughts, dreams,⁶⁷ and, at times, visions.⁶⁸

Demonic fantasies, on the other hand, are completely the opposite: they do not keep the same image and they do not manifest themselves in a consistent form for long. This they do not willingly do, for in their deceit they only borrow such forms and cannot resist for long. They begin to scream and make lots of threats, often taking the form of soldiers, at times playing on the soul with their shrieks. However, when the mind is purified it recognizes them and even in its dreaming it awakens the body.⁶⁹

Other tactics include engendering false joy, which usually ends in frustration,⁷⁰ mitigated concern for demonic activity,⁷¹ and reversal of understanding of good and evil.⁷²

Although baptism successfully ousts the demon from the recesses of the soul, the enemy maintains a certain grasp of the interior, which diminishes and becomes an ever more exterior vantage point in proportion to the spiritual progress one makes. As his position of attack alters, the devil is forced to adapt his

⁶⁴ See GC 26, 62, 71, 87, 96.

⁶⁵ See GC 4, 46, 68, 81.

⁶⁶ See GC 58, 96.

⁶⁷ See GC 38.

⁶⁸ See GC 36.

⁶⁹ GC 37.

⁷⁰ See GC 30.

⁷¹ See GC 33.

⁷² See GC 43, 81.

tactics, which can become more subtle. In the case of a warrior who has taken to the path of spiritual combat it is clear that he has no regard for his own evil inclinations. Aware of this, the devil takes to imitating the Holy Spirit,⁷³ appearing as an angel of light. If the warrior resists, the devil lets loose his arsenal in explosive and open attacks even against the body of the warrior.⁷⁴ More subtly still, the devil will attempt to convince the warrior of the strength of his own virtue, above all through the words of those who are already under diabolical influence.⁷⁵

The Role of the Heart

Diadochus's motive in writing to his disciples is "that we come to love God alone with conviction and all the sense of our heart, which is to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind. Whoever is moved by God's grace to this is exiled from the world even as he continues to live in the world."⁷⁶

The notion of the heart is yet another key to understanding Diadochan spirituality. Following biblical anthropology, our author makes the heart the epicentre of the human person and the organ of true knowledge.⁷⁷ Likewise, those who shun the divine light of knowledge are condemned to live with a "darkened and sterile heart."⁷⁸

The most explicit text on the role of the heart is GC 14.

One who loves God with the sense of his heart "is known by him" [1 Cor 8:3], because inasmuch as one receives the love of God, according to that measure he will dwell in the love of God. And from that moment onward, he comes to find himself immersed in such an ardent longing for the illumination of

⁷³ See GC 30.

⁷⁴ See GC 81.

⁷⁵ See GC 33. In this passage Diadochus is pointing his finger at the Messalians.

⁷⁶ GC 40.

⁷⁷ See GC 80.

⁷⁸ GC 82.

the intellect, penetrating even his bones, that he loses all awareness of himself and he is completely transformed by the love of God. Such a one is present and absent in this life. He has his body for a dwelling place, but vacates it through love. He relentlessly moves toward God in his soul. Once he has transcended his self-love through love for God, his heart becomes consumed in the fire of love and clings to God with unyielding desire. "If we seem out of our senses it was for God; but if we are being reasonable now, it is for your sake" [2 Cor 5:13].

Once the devil has been exorcised from the heart real spiritual life begins. The preceding text offers us the many-faceted role of the heart and reveals its almost universal usage in Diadochan vocabulary. In this passage we see that the heart becomes the receptive vessel of the Holy Spirit, "receiving the love of God." The heart is also the source of longing for intellectual illumination, it includes even that which is mineral in the human person, the bones. The heart is the source of passionate love for God and the organ that God works upon in order for the person to transcend himself in loving ecstasy.

In Diadochus's experiential theology, God's presence makes itself felt in the "sense of the heart." Although for many fathers God could never be felt and for Greek philosophical tradition the heart played no role in the path to God, for Diadochus this is no obstacle. His theology bears within itself a healthy tension between rationality and believing affectivity. Such tension stems not from internal conflict but from the necessary mutual strengthening that shields both reason and affectivity from atrophy. "You will use your lips to confess that Jesus is the Lord and your heart to believe that God has raised him up from the dead" (Rom 10:9). While the importance of the heart does not lead to neglect of a sober measure of reason, Diadochus does not permit the sobriety of his reasonable faith to suffocate the heart, for the heart's task far transcends that of naked reason. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" is the alpha and omega of his epistemology. In other words, grace and the act of faith require the integral person even as they seek to bring about his reintegration.

Beginning with the infusion of baptismal grace, a metamorphosis of the entire person is wrought, encompassing the body and soul along with all his senses and faculties by way of *energeia*. The divine presence active in the human person's every facet forms the glorious body, making precious stones out of the transformed living stones (the bones) for the edifice and making a temple of the Holy Spirit from the heart (the rest of the spiritual person).

Mnēmē Theou (The Memory of God) and the Taste of His Goodness

Just as the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit poured into the soul ousts the demonic presence, a similar, albeit more extended process of displacement and occupation is played out in the memory and the intellect.

"If one were to think that because we have both good and evil thoughts, both the Holy Spirit and the devil dwell together in the soul,⁷⁹ let that one understand that this occurs because we have neither tasted nor seen how good the Lord is."⁸⁰ Diadochus clearly wants to avoid a mechanistic vision of grace (and uses the opportunity to take a jab at his nemesis, the Messalians). If purity of heart is efficient in the order of the vision of God, it appears not to be sufficient in light of this text. Purity of heart prepares the occasion for the experience of Christ, yet the experience itself is not self-sufficient purity. Diadochus has a preference for the word "taste" when describing perception of God's presence and the recollection of God's action in one's life. But above all, Diadochus uses "taste" in terms of the result of divine love at work in the soul.⁸¹ Taste bespeaks a certain union and it is precisely this union that will ultimately satisfy the longing for vision and knowledge of God.

⁷⁹ See GC 78.

⁸⁰ GC 85.

⁸¹ See GC 1, 14, 23, 40, 50, 95.

The warrior who has tasted and seen how good the Lord is (see Ps 34:8) has an experience to draw upon amid future spiritual struggles and darkness—all of which are necessary for spiritual progress. Further, such an experience is all-important to the task of reintegration. The apparent incongruity between the physical sense of taste affecting the intellectual sense of sight is proof that the fragments of sense are coming together. This coalescence is proven by the phenomenon of spiritual progress, which embraces the entire person, enlightening the intellect, filling the heart, even as it brings delight to the body.⁸²

If we fervently long for God's virtue, at the outset of our progress the Holy Spirit lets the soul taste God's sweetness in all the fullness of its sentiment, so that the mind might have keen awareness of the ultimate prize for efforts which so please God. But later it will often hide the richness of this life-giving gift so that, even though we should attain all the other virtues, we will consider ourselves as nothing if we do not yet have the habit of holy love. . . . From that moment onward, the soul suffers much more. On the one hand, it retains the memory of spiritual love, yet on the other hand, it cannot attain it in the spiritual sense for lack of those trials that bring about complete perfection. Therefore it is necessary to abnegate oneself in order to arrive at its taste with all one's perception and complete certainty. This is so because no one still in the flesh can attain his perfection except the saints who make it to martyrdom and perfect confession. Therefore, he who has attained this is completely transformed and would not wantonly grasp for food, for what desire for the goods of this world could there be for one who is nourished on divine love? Therefore, wisest Paul—that great deposit of knowledge—who proclaimed to us the fullness of the future delights of the first among the just, says the following: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" [Rom 14:17]. All of that is the fruit of perfect charity. And so, those who progress toward

⁸² See GC 79.

perfection can continually taste it from here below, but no one can attain perfection, except when the mortal part is swallowed up by life.⁸³

The memory of God acts as something of an anchor reaching the depths of the mind where God resides.⁸⁴ It makes contemplation possible⁸⁵ although it will require persevering effort and vigorous control of memory whose banks also contain relics of what the evil one has committed. For “if his divinity does not illumine the treasures of our heart sufficiently, we will not be able to enjoy what is good with an undivided sense, that is, with an integral disposition.”⁸⁶

This “double thought,” as Diadochus call it,⁸⁷ can be vanquished easily through willed memory of God,⁸⁸ “thus rending evil ineffective”⁸⁹ and “consuming the dross of evil in the furnace of the memory.”⁹⁰ When the soul perceives divine action in the depths of the soul, then memory of God progresses from recollection of a past experience of God thus initiating a new and renewing experience. *Mnēmē theou* and experience provide the soul with a virtuous cycle of spiritual progress.

Diadochus is clear in teaching that progress is only possible through spiritual combat. The memory of God brings to mind the taste of God and acts as a sort of efficient commemoration, making present past sacred realities which, in turn, transform one’s present. Thus, far beyond a mere activity, the memory of God refers to one’s identity, something to which the serious warrior is called “to consecrate himself.”⁹¹

⁸³ GC 90.

⁸⁴ See GC 33.

⁸⁵ See GC 11.

⁸⁶ GC 29.

⁸⁷ See GC 88.

⁸⁸ See GC 3, 5.

⁸⁹ GC 81.

⁹⁰ See GC 97.

⁹¹ GC 96.

Why do evil and good coexist in the memory? “It is through the original deceit that [the intellect] once and for all has as a habit the memory of evil.”⁹² Although Diadochus encourages his disciples to sweep away the memory of evil with a “mere thought,” in other passages his presentation is not so facile.

And so it happens that the soul thinks good and evil things at the same time, just as that man in our example who shivers and feels warm at the same time when he is touched by the warmth of the sun. And so, from the moment in which our mind has slid into this double knowledge, it then produces good and bad thoughts at the same time even though it does not choose to do so—and this above all in those who have come to experience the subtleties of discernment. Even as the mind strives to think of good things, soon it remembers evil things, given that ever since Adam’s disobedience human memory is divided in double thought. If we begin then, to fulfill God’s commandments with fervent zeal, from that moment onward grace will illumine all of our senses with deep sentiments, as if it were burning our thoughts and penetrating our heart with the peace of unyielding friendship, preparing us to consider things spiritually rather than carnally. This is what frequently occurs to those who approach perfection—to those who ceaselessly keep within their hearts the memory of the Lord Jesus.⁹³

Thus, such evil thoughts are made possible thanks to our weakened nature but their genesis is often the evil one. The moral fortitude of the warrior determines whether those evil seeds sprout roots in the heart or not. Should such thoughts be entertained, the body will soon appropriate them and act; hence our Lord’s reference to the relationship between evil thoughts and the act of fornication—for “those who are friends of this life’s pleasures proceed from thoughts to faults.”⁹⁴

⁹² GC 83.

⁹³ GC 88.

⁹⁴ GC 96. See Mark 7:22-24.

Such persons “do not know that our mind, possessing the subtle faculty of the sense, makes its own the action of the thoughts suggested to it by evil spirits, by way of the flesh as it were. By way of complicity, the body’s malleability draws it more toward the soul in a way unknown to us.⁹⁵ The flesh always loves to be adulated without measure by such trickery, so it seems that the thoughts sown by demons originate in the heart. On the other hand, we actually do appropriate them when we desire to be gratified by them.”⁹⁶

Therefore, “warriors should always keep custody of their thoughts so that the mind can discern the thoughts that pass through it and store in the memory banks those that are good and come from God, while casting out of nature’s storage all those that are perverse or diabolical.”⁹⁷

In doing so, the memory develops good habits that grow proportionately to the demise of the memory of irrational pleasures and, “walking beyond the half-way point . . . the soul takes to the well-worn path of virtue and joy.”⁹⁸ Yet the intellect is still in need of reconstructive activity to reintegrate it with the will, the memory, and all the other fragments of original *aisthēsis*. “When we have sealed off every venue through the memory of God, our mind will demand from us an exercise that satisfies its need for activity. Here we must let out a Lord Jesus, as the only perfect way to achieve our goal. No one, it is said, can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ without the Holy Spirit.⁹⁹ So let it [the mind] contemplate this word alone at all times in its interior treasury so as not to return to the imagination. To all who ceaselessly meditate on this holy and glorious Name in the depths of their heart is granted the vision of the light of their minds.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ See 26:41.

⁹⁶ GC 83.

⁹⁷ GC 26.

⁹⁸ GC 93.

⁹⁹ 1 Cor 12:3.

¹⁰⁰ GC 59.

The Jesus Prayer and the Memory of God

When discussing prayer, the majority of Diadochus's comments concern the benefits of prayer. Initially, prayer requires silence,¹⁰¹ which protects it from passions.¹⁰² Such stillness in prayer makes the mind expansive and this permits a more fruitful discernment of spirits.¹⁰³ Prayer is the privileged moment in which the Holy Spirit grants his gifts of knowledge and wisdom.¹⁰⁴ Perseverance in prayer, above all in moments of depression, prepares the soul for subsequent richer gifts of contemplation.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, inconstancy in prayer will elicit a worldly spirit¹⁰⁶ and stifle the purification process of the soul. Rather, the soul will retain its dross if not ceaselessly submitted to the crucible of divine love through constant contemplation.¹⁰⁷ Other hindrances are anger,¹⁰⁸ sins of excess, or defect in the realm of asceticism.¹⁰⁹

Since Diadochus is writing to prayer warriors it does not seem fitting to him to present them with a primer on prayer. Given the experiential nature of prayer, Diadochus is in no hurry to present a model experience for everyone to follow; rather, he is content to motivate his readers to continue to advance in their lives dedicated to prayer and offers them rules to discern if their experiences are actually from God or not. Further, in prayer we can speak only like children,¹¹⁰ and children do not need to be taught how to utter sounds. Thus, he avoids discussing methodology and offers in its stead some basic instructions on the Jesus Prayer.

With his remarks on the memory of God cited above (see GC 83), Diadochus provides us with the key to successful memory of

¹⁰¹ See GC 10.

¹⁰² See GC 62, 68.

¹⁰³ See GC 68.

¹⁰⁴ See GC 9.

¹⁰⁵ See GC 73.

¹⁰⁶ See GC 64.

¹⁰⁷ See GC 97.

¹⁰⁸ See GC 26.

¹⁰⁹ See GC 45.

¹¹⁰ See GC 61.

God: Jesus. Correcting Evagrian intellectualism, which proposes getting beyond the form in prayer—even if that form is the Incarnate Word—Diadochus emphasizes the heart’s role, thus opening the door to intimacy with the Person of Christ. As the mind contemplates the sacred Name, the lips recite it, thereby letting the Jesus Prayer begin to integrate mind and body through prayer. But more than provide an aid to original integrity of the sense, the Jesus Prayer is a means toward divine illumination and, ultimately, toward *theosis*. If a purified heart immersed in the memory of God is the prerequisite for the ultimate beatific vision, it is the Jesus Prayer that provides the necessary illumination for this to occur.

Diadochus connects the memory to sense, maintaining that they both have undergone fragmentation as a result of the original Fall. This fragmentation reveals itself in a sort of universal schizophrenia: “And so, from the moment in which our mind has slid into this double knowledge, it then produces good and bad thoughts at the same time even though it does not choose to do so—and this above all in those who have come to experience the subtleties of discernment. Even as the mind strives to think of good things, soon it remembers evil things, given that ever since Adam’s disobedience human memory is divided in double thought.”¹¹¹

Our author protects the inherent goodness of human nature but explains the universal tendency to evil as part of our passions and the suggestions of the evil one. Yet he leaves our behavior ultimately up to free choice. Once we have developed a habit we begin to define ourselves.¹¹² The role of free choice is all-important in the reintegration of the divided *nous*, but this reintegration will come about once the memory has been healed and the sense reintegrated.

What follows is a brief exposition on the Diadochan version of the Jesus Prayer and its role in reintegration.

¹¹¹ GC 88.

¹¹² See GC 3, 43.

Diadochus is the first witness of the now widespread Jesus Prayer. His version is far simpler than the more common prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Nonetheless, the Diadochan version, "O Lord Jesus,"¹¹³ says much more by merely invoking the Holy Name. It says everything. It surpasses the primordial need we all have of salvation and, in its simplicity, encompasses all reality, for it is God's Name revealed to us, and it is in Jesus Christ that all of salvation history is recapitulated.

To utter "O Lord Jesus" is a turning toward him with trust and longing, an act of faith, hope, and love, and with the certainty of a response. It is the invocation of the Name above all other names (see Phil 2:9-10). While ceaseless memory of God maintains the healthy tension and affection necessary for divine union, the invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus also has a strategic significance. Since it was the devil who provoked the Fall and Christ came to undo his works, it makes sense that invocation of the Holy Name should prove powerful in expelling demonic suggestion: "But if the mind is recollected and perseveres in keeping the fervent memory of the Holy Name of Jesus, it will take strength from that holy and glorious Name using it as a weapon against deception. Thereafter, the impostor leaves off his deceit and throws himself into waging open war against the soul. In this way the mind progresses more in its experience of discernment by recognising the wiles of the evil one."¹¹⁴

Nonetheless, invocation of the Holy Name is not a talisman but a way of perpetuating a relationship with Christ. And this relationship requires singularity of heart. To attempt to lead a licentious life and think to invoke fruitfully the Holy Name of Jesus can only lead to frustration: "When the soul is agitated by anger, or blurry-eyed from a hang-over, or discouraged by onerous worries, even if it should forcefully strain itself, the mind cannot attain the memory of the Lord Jesus Christ on its own. Thus darkened by

¹¹³ See GC 59.

¹¹⁴ GC 31.

its restless passions, the mind becomes a stranger to its own sense. And so the vehemence of the passions entrenches the memory in callousness, the soul's desire finds nowhere to set its seal that the mind might bear the mark of meditation."¹¹⁵

Diadochus summarizes his teaching on the Jesus Prayer in the following text:

When the entire person turns toward the Lord, then [grace], in an ineffable movement, manifests her presence in the heart and awaits once again the soul's movement, permitting that the devil's darts penetrate unperceived unto the most intimate sense, so that in an even more fervent resolve and humble disposition, the soul seeks God. For the rest, if the person begins to advance in the observance of the commandments and continuously invokes the Lord, then the fire of holy grace spreads even to the external senses of his heart, burning the chaff of the human soil completely. Thus, even the demonic darts land far from these parts and only lightly pierce the passionate part of the soul. Finally, when the combatant has dressed himself in all the virtues and, above all, perfect poverty, then grace illumines all of his nature with an ever deeper sentiment, setting it ablaze with great love for God. From that moment onward, the demonic bowshots are extinguished outside of the body's senses. Thus the breeze of the Holy Spirit which moves the heart toward those winds of peace extinguishes even those demon-borne fiery darts in midair.¹¹⁶

Here the role of the Jesus Prayer and its part in the reintegration of the sense is laid out: Fidelity to God's commandments makes the invocation of the Holy Name fruitful. The Name brings about the memory of God, which, in turn, prepares the path to union with God. Diadochus often mentions obedience to God's commandments and the invocation of Jesus/*mnēmē theou* in relation to each other. To attempt such obedience or recollection is only

¹¹⁵ GC 61.

¹¹⁶ GC 85.

possible for those under the Holy Spirit's influence,¹¹⁷ for it is a realization of the second baptismal gift. Baptismal grace bestows two gifts on the soul: a renewal of one's status as image of God and the opportunity to restore the divine likeness. In bestowing the second gift, infinitely surpassing the first, the Holy Spirit "hopes to bring about [this transformation] with our cooperation."¹¹⁸ On the level of *bios* this requires obedience to God and ascetical practices, while on the level of *nous* it demands the constant memory of the Lord. This complementary operation spreads to all the senses and unites them in a common purpose. The expenditure is far outweighed by its benefits. Not only is eternal salvation promised in the next life, a sort of psychological healing is wrought in this life, thanks to the effects of asceticism, prayer, and the effects of the reintegration of the senses and its resultant joy.

So let it [the *nous*] contemplate this word alone at all times in its interior treasury so as not to return to the imagination. To all who ceaselessly meditate on this holy and glorious Name in the depths of their heart can see at last the light of their minds. Thus tamed by such an exacting effort of thought, every stain on the soul's surface is consumed in ardent feeling, for it is said, our God is a consuming fire [Deut 4:24]. Therefore the Lord invites the soul to immense love of his own glory, for persevering in the mind's memory of that glorious and most desirable Name with an ardent heart, which produces in us a habitual love of his goodness which, from that moment onward, nothing can hinder. This is the precious pearl [see Matt 13:36] which is obtained upon having dispossessed oneself of all one's belongings and whose discovery brings about ineffable joy.¹¹⁹

Continual prayer is rooted in love. It is the result of having sold everything to obtain Christ, the precious pearl. Freed up from

¹¹⁷ See GC 16.

¹¹⁸ GC 89.

¹¹⁹ GC 59.

egoism and passions the warrior begins to discover Christ in his fullness and, as a result, himself in his original beauty.¹²⁰ Proper to a person who is friendly with virtue is to consume all that is earthly in his heart through the memory of God, so that, little by little, evil is consumed by the fire of the recollection of goodness, and the soul returns perfectly to its natural shine but with an even greater splendor.¹²¹

Contemplation has a direct role in the order of eschatological *theosis* and is, therefore, an exercise in the theological virtue of hope. Hope, holds Diadochus, is “an emigration of the intellect in love, moving toward those things that await us.”¹²² Emigration is the language of ecstasy, privileged knowledge gained only from direct experience of God. Indeed for Diadochus, “Knowledge [is] unawareness of oneself in the ecstasy of God.”¹²³ He returns to this ecstatic paradigm stating that in contemplation a person “loses all awareness of himself and is completely transformed by the love of God. Such a one is present and absent in this life. He has his body for a dwelling place, but vacates it through love. He relentlessly moving toward God in his soul. Once he has transcended his self-love through love for God, his heart becomes consumed in the fire of love and clings to God with unyielding desire.”¹²⁴

Although all contemplation is guided by the theological virtues,¹²⁵ it is dangerous to attempt contemplation unless one has attained a certain degree of enlightenment.¹²⁶ Rather than postulate spiritual elitism, Diadochus, as always, has the spiritual well-being of his disciples at heart. Since all “knowledge consists wholly of love,”¹²⁷ to attempt contemplation without having at-

¹²⁰ See GC 59.

¹²¹ GC 97.

¹²² GC Def. 2.

¹²³ GC Def. 5.

¹²⁴ GC 14.

¹²⁵ See GC 1.

¹²⁶ See GC 8.

¹²⁷ GC 92.

tained an adequate degree of love and dedication would be presumptuous and could only end in disaster. For Diadochus, prayer and asceticism are exteriorizations of an existent relationship, and to purport a quality of relationship with God that does not yet exist could only spell one's undoing. Hence it is humility that most helps one attain a healthy selflessness, forgetting one's own success and progress¹²⁸ in order to pray as one ought according to one's state. But once a person has gotten beyond the sensibly fervent prayer of the beginner and arrived at the prayer "beyond all expansion"¹²⁹ then he should seek this state without ceasing, spending the "greatest amount of time in it."¹³⁰ For it is only contemplation that can fill the heart with burning desire for God¹³¹ to then begin following in the footprints of the Invisible One.¹³²

Fear, Penthos, Tears, and Apatheia

Considering the alternatives—eternal glory and its requisite long, arduous purification, or the prospect of eternal loss—a degree of fear seems reasonable. Scripture's presentation of judgment and eternal condemnation certainly provokes a salutary fear. Nonetheless, what is one to make of that reality supported by the scriptural declaration that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10) balanced against Christ's frequent counsel, "Have no fear" (Matt 28:10)?

Fear is the passion that responds to a present or imminent danger. There are particular modes of fear. In relationship to God (psychological ills such as scruples aside), the mode of fear experienced depends on the spiritual state of the individual. Diadochus treats each mode of fear as symptomatic of one's spiritual health, a sort of indicator of where one is on the path of reintegration.

¹²⁸ See GC Def. 6.

¹²⁹ See GC 68, 73.

¹³⁰ GC 68.

¹³¹ See GC 7.

¹³² See GC 69.

Initial fear of God, the fear of punishment proper to novices in the spiritual life, is accompanied by newly found contrition (*penthos*), an attitude, unlike fear, that dare not change so long as one is in this world. This attitude propels the disciple of Christ to seek out penance, to make reparation, to weep for the offended God, and to give oneself over to the love of God.¹³³ Growing in love for God balances out fear until such moment when true love finally casts out all fear (see 1 John 4:18).

Beginning with the fourth century the phenomenon of the gift of tears has been appropriated by ascetic language. This is a common feature in Byzantine spirituality and is frequently found in Western spirituality as well. The Greek fathers hold tears in esteem, as proof of authentic conversion and pure love for God. “Blessed are those who mourn” (Matt 5:4) applies to the follower of Christ who, having sought consolation and glory in this world, repents. Thus, rather than a pessimistic presentation of Christian spirituality, this teaching reflects the guaranteed path to beatitude. Tears purify the heart of the penitent as much as they reveal conversion. They are a sign of gratitude for God’s favor, for a tear-washed face reveals a purified soul. Tears, in effect, are a grace.

According to the Greek fathers, a fruit of the work of grace in the soul is *apatheia*—the mind’s freedom and independence from carnal *pathos*—passion. This implies an interior strength born of asceticism and blossoming into ardent love for God. With this in mind, it should be clear that *apatheia* is by no means an end in itself but rather it opens the door to true knowledge (*gnōsis*) of the love of God. To underline the introductory role of *apatheia*, Diadochus opens his most important work by defining “faith [as] an impassible [*apathēs*] consideration of God.”¹³⁴ Such interior self-dominion and quiet permit grace to work fruitfully and also engender better self-knowledge—both necessary for the all-important task of discernment of spirits.

¹³³ See Mark the Hermit’s *De Paenitentiae*, 11, PG 65:981A.

¹³⁴ GC Def. 1.

Discernment of Spirits

After the work of grace and its effects we come to the other pole of Diadochus's spirituality.

A considerable portion of the path toward reintegration is covered through sound discernment of spirits. With true discernment the disciple penetrates the mysteries of God even as he uncovers the secrets of the human heart. It requires a spiritual perspicuity that sees past flesh, space, and time. Discernment therefore involves the art of identifying the true causes of interior movements: divine, diabolical, or human. Such movements include consolations, desolations, images, and dreams, and part of the task of their discernment is knowledge of self: of one's tendencies and aspirations, present state of soul, psychological state, and so forth.

For Diadochus, discernment of spirits is where theology and *praxis* meet. It requires learning to refine the "taste" of God's presence and discovering that true theology is not information about God but an experience of him. Therefore, real discernment has to be done in prayer; otherwise the warrior loses the taste for God and his relationship grows cold. Prayer without discernment has its own dangers, as it exposes the warrior to the deceits of the enemy. Learning infallibly to discern the "footprints of the Invisible One"¹³⁵ means that one has reached the heights of the spiritual life as a "theologian."

A true theologian has experienced God in an ineffable way, and such divine encounters become the standard by which to judge; otherwise, "we will not gladly forego present delights if we do not yet fully taste the sweetness of God with all our sense."¹³⁶ The encounter with the living God presents the warrior with a wholly new parameter. It is precisely this otherness of the source of these new experiences that can perplex the neophyte as well as the experienced follower of Christ. Therefore, Diadochus intends to help the reader discover the source of the interior movements

¹³⁵ See GC 1, 69.

¹³⁶ GC 44.

of consolations and desolations, dreams and visions, that make up the spiritual life.

Diadochus calls consolation a “movement”¹³⁷ that consists of divine love that inflames and impels the soul, seeking its reintegration so that “every part of the soul is ineffably united to the sweetness of this divine desire in an attitude of unending simplicity.”¹³⁸ Symptoms of divine consolation include:

- Consolations without previous cause, mediation, or “imagination.”¹³⁹
- Certainty that the motion comes from the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰
- Profound peace to the soul.¹⁴¹
- A fire within the heart and soul.¹⁴²

The enemy, too, can use consolation to deceive the warrior. Diadochus mentions that this often happens at certain times of the day or during certain activities. “Satan begins sweetly to lull during the night’s rest, when one is just starting to fall into a light sleep.”¹⁴³

Already differences are manifest. As opposed to the deep peace of the Holy Spirit, the evil spirit produces “sweetness,” not nearly as deep or long-lasting as God’s gift. Other symptoms of diabolical consolation include:

- Interior sweetness is briefly accompanied by inappropriate thoughts.¹⁴⁴
- It is disordered and brings about disorder if followed.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ GC 33.

¹³⁸ GC 34.

¹³⁹ See GC 33.

¹⁴⁰ See GC 33.

¹⁴¹ See GC 35.

¹⁴² See GC 33, 34.

¹⁴³ GC 31.

¹⁴⁴ See GC 33.

¹⁴⁵ See GC 32.

- It produces interior agitation.¹⁴⁶
- It seeks to make the warrior stumble on his path toward re-integration, bringing about interior division through vain consolation. In order to accomplish this the evil one will try to hide his presence in an attempt to convince the warrior that God is at work.¹⁴⁷ If he succeeds in this, he can be assured of sowing confusion in the heart and mind of the unwary warrior.

As mentioned before, the memory of God and, in particular, the Jesus Prayer are the weapons of choice for such encounters. This prayer has a threefold effect: it works as a defense against evil spirits, it engenders union with Christ, and it acts as a litmus test in the discernment of spirits.

Perhaps more subtle a subject to discern is that of the genesis of desolation. Diadochus discusses two reasons for desolation when the source is God. In the first case, God's motives are pedagogical or corrective, producing spiritual dryness and darkness in the soul of the warrior, hiding his presence deep in the recesses of the soul.¹⁴⁸ Through such a manoeuvre God provokes the devil to attack the warrior with the intention that he experience the enemy's assaults and, in turn, learn to seek divine assistance. "Indeed, corrective desolation does not deprive the soul of divine light in any way whatsoever. As I have already said, frequently grace merely hides its presence within the soul, so that impelled by the devil's bitterness, the soul progresses though seeking God's assistance with all fear and great humility, thus recognizing little by little the evil deeds of the enemy."¹⁴⁹

For the soul advancing along the path of spiritual progress, the greatest enemy is spiritual pride. Pedagogical desolation intends to check the surge of pride and bring the warrior to new levels of

¹⁴⁶ See GC 35.

¹⁴⁷ See GC 33.

¹⁴⁸ See GC 85.

¹⁴⁹ GC 86.

humility. "God's pedagogical desolation brings about in the soul profound sorrow, humiliation, and a degree of despair, so that the glory-seeking and timorous parts be led to humility, as is fitting. Quickly it brings fear of God and tears of confession upon the heart and a deep desire for beautiful silence."¹⁵⁰

God also disposes of desolation as a means to punish the soul that has wandered from the true path. "That desolation which occurs on account of infidelity to God leaves the soul filled with despair mixed with faithlessness, pride, and anger."¹⁵¹ This is the logical consequence of one's own choices. In fact, it would be a contradiction for God to reward the soul with consolation if it had made evil choices or decided to live in mediocrity. God's mercy lets the soul experience the fruit of its choices with a view to its turning back to him.

Both desolations work toward spiritual good in one who knows how to respond in such a spiritual state. Chapter 87 offers the rules of discernment for such cases: "Understanding the experience of both types of desolation we must then go to God with the dispositions proper to each."

[1.] In the first case we ought to offer Him thanksgiving along with contrition as the one disciplining our undisciplined mind in the school of consolation, and for having taught us as a good father the difference between virtue and vice.

[2.] In the second case we should offer Him unceasing confession of our sins, tears without end, and greater solitude, so that by way of added effort we can petition God to look upon our heart as he did before. But one ought to know that when the battle between Satan and the soul takes the form of a confrontation—here I am referring to the purgative desolation—grace, as I said before, hides itself but operates invisibly aiding the soul in order to show its enemies that victory belongs to the soul alone.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ GC 87.

¹⁵¹ GC 87.

¹⁵² GC 87.

Another phenomenon that requires discernment of spirits is that of dreams and visions. Chapters 36–40 are dedicated to this teaching. Diadochus is categorically opposed to visions, not because God is incapable of manifesting himself through such a means but rather because they would contradict God’s desire for us to walk in the twilight of faith.¹⁵³ His suspicion of visions leads him to instruct his disciples to reject any such image that appears to them as “patent deception of the enemy.”¹⁵⁴

Dreams, on the other hand, are not always diabolical at their source. “Dreams that reveal to the soul the love of God are sure indicators of a healthy soul. . . . [T]hey approach the soul completely reasonably, heaping upon it spiritual delight. Therefore, even after the body has awakened, the soul seeks the joy of the dream with great desire.”¹⁵⁵

Quite another thing are those dreams which come from the enemy.

Demonic fantasies, on the other hand, are completely the opposite: they do not keep the same image and they do not manifest themselves in a consistent form for long. This they do not willingly do, for in their deceit they only borrow such forms and cannot resist for long. They begin to scream and make lots of threats, often taking the form of soldiers at times playing on the soul with their shrieks. However, when the mind is purified it recognizes them and even in its dreaming it awakens the body. Other times it delights at having discovered the deceit. Therefore, confuting them over and over again in the same dream, it sparks his fury.¹⁵⁶

These are opposed to the divinely inspired dreams that do not “go from one image to another, nor do they frighten the senses, nor do they sneer or suddenly show a sombre expression.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ See GC 36.

¹⁵⁴ GC 36.

¹⁵⁵ GC 37.

¹⁵⁶ GC 37.

¹⁵⁷ GC 37.

Further, “dreams are almost always nothing more than vague thoughts or the forms of errant thoughts.”¹⁵⁸ In other words, most often there is no supernatural source for the dreams made of one’s own jumbled thoughts and recollections.

In spite of his recognition of divinely induced dreams, Diadochus seems suspicious of all of them and thinks it virtuous to remain skeptical, regardless of the experience.¹⁵⁹ Entrusting oneself to dreams proves too great a danger and provides a shaky foundation for decision making. For “even if God’s goodness should send down a vision to us and yet we were never to accept it, our much longed for Lord Jesus Christ would not be angry with us on that account, because he knows we come to this on account of diabolical deceptions.”¹⁶⁰

Thus far we have seen that for Diadochus discernment is another word for cooperation with grace. By way of discernment, which offers “light of true knowledge,” we progress along the path toward divine light. Discernment entails following the footprints of the Invisible One by way of the intellectual sense, which means developing a taste for the things of God, an experience that leaves us loving him with still more conviction and decision. In other words, rather than a mere a source of knowledge, discernment of spirits offers light in order to act.

Our author insists that such light and action are only possible if the disciple is willing to engage in spiritual combat, since that is necessary for spiritual growth and maturity. True discernment amid trials and darkness, generously engaging in spiritual combat, all contribute to the purification of the whole person and the soul’s reintegration. Yet, this is a fight in flux. The tactics of the enemy and the action of the Holy Spirit are, to a certain extent, determined by the spiritual state of the individual. The following text makes it clear that Diadochus recognizes rules and modes of discernment proper to each stage of the spiritual life:

¹⁵⁸ GC 38.

¹⁵⁹ GC 38.

¹⁶⁰ GC 38.

One thing is the joy of the beginner; quite another is that of the perfect. One is not free from a wandering mind, while the other enjoys the strength of humility. And between the two are found godly sorrow and painless tears, for truly, *in much wisdom there is much knowledge and he who has increase of knowledge has increase of sorrow* [Sir 1:18].¹⁶¹

The Stages of the Spiritual Life

The brief analysis of the Jesus Prayer began by highlighting the relationship between obedience, memory, the reintegration of the sense, and the healing of the *nous*. Each of these elements is a microcosm of Diadochus's entire spiritual itinerary. What follows is a presentation of Diadochus's description of the stages of the spiritual life as well as the counsels he prescribes to achieve such progress under the guise of discernment of spirits.

A word about the nature of the stages of spiritual progress is in order. Although this teaching has a biblical foundation, and the support of the patristic, scholastic, and Spanish mystical traditions, it often suffers from misrepresentation by those spiritual directors who seem to fear that knowledge of this teaching might engender spiritual pride or simply confuse the faithful, and who therefore shun it. Note that these spiritual directors do not deny the truth of the teaching, but are simply hesitant to teach it. On the other hand, treatment of this subject has been rather hackneyed since the seventeenth century as writers have attempted to reproduce this sublime teaching in their manuals, neatly divided into ascetical and mystical theology. Such books have managed to categorize the stages and their corresponding symptoms in a way foreign to the mystical tradition and have forfeited what is simple and profound. Beyond those deficiencies, the two areas that have most suffered have been the role of the gifts of the

¹⁶¹ GC 60.

Holy Spirit and the unity of the one divine project in the life of the Christian, played out through the successive stages.¹⁶²

Evidence of the phenomenon of spiritual growth and the need to strive for progress can be found in the words of our Lord who indicates progressive stages from servant to friend (see John 15:15) and from friend to sons in the Son (see Matt 28:10; John 21:5). Paul, although he classifies people as carnal or spiritual (see Rom 7:14), favors the analogy of physical growth from infants to mature (see 1 Cor 3:1-3; Eph 4:12-16) to describe the stages of the spiritual life. As if to prove that all analogies are imperfect, Paul emphasizes the role of personal striving in the order of perfection and completion in Christ (see Phil 3:12-15) as opposed to normal, unwilling physical transformation. Hebrews 5:12-14 also reflects Paul's analogy of spiritual infants who need to mature.

Greek philosophy had already come up with its own division of people classified as *praktikoi* (those dedicated to the active life) and *theoretikoi* (those dedicated to the contemplative life). The Greek fathers adopted this usage, applying the *praktikos* term to those still in the stage of active purification and reserving the term *theoretikos* for those who had achieved mystical knowledge of God. This was the case with Origen and the Alexandrian School. This distinction was further developed by the Cappadocians from whom Evagrius inherited part of his teaching.

Evagrius holds that the first stage, *praktikos*, consists of the acquisition of virtues that ends in dispassion (*apatheia*). Such an achievement permits the dedicated person to advance to the stage of *gnōsis*, which bears within itself two levels: contemplation of material beings and contemplation of immaterial beings known through conformity to divine reason, the Logos, the Source of all visible and invisible. This leads to the contemplation of God, *theologia*, the supreme knowledge and the ultimate stage of the spiritual life.

¹⁶² Examples of this are Giovanni Battista Scaramelli, *Direttorio Ascetico* and his *Direttorio Mistico* (1751), and Tomasso di Valgornera, *Mystica theologia divi Thomae* (1662).

Diadochus mirrors his contemporary, Mark the Hermit,¹⁶³ in identifying the stages with the following terms:

1. "Beginners" (*archomenoi*), "infants" (*nepiazontes*), "novices" (*eisagogikoi*), or "those being purified" (*katharizomenoi*).
2. "Middle stage" (*mesoi*) or "those who have been purified" (*katharisthēntes*).
3. "Perfect" (*teleioi*).

Diadochus is careful not to so isolate the signs of each stage as if they had nothing to do with the life of the soul at other moments of the spiritual journey. Nonetheless, he is keen to identify the signs (and their idiosyncrasies) most common to each stage and the corresponding action to be taken in discerning them and addressing them. Further, the path toward reintegration has specific patterns proper to each stage, determined by the predominant aspect of the spiritual life undergoing purification at that moment. Although the Holy Spirit focuses his purifying action on a certain aspect of the interior, the other elements of the soul are not ignored. Rather, they are obliquely affected. For example, to take the path of reintegration requires a fundamental option proper to a first conversion. But such a decision is not sufficient to stay the course. The decision must be renewed frequently along the path to spiritual perfection.

Once the *choice* has been made the predominant aspect of the first stage is shown to be the purification of the *memory*. Having passed to the middle stage, the soul undergoes a purification of the *sense*. The perfect, in turn, experience the crucible of the purified *intellect*. Nonetheless, each stage contains some element of the others. It is interesting to note that, like the prodigal son who had to retrace each wayward step in order to be restored to his former dignity, beginning with the most recent step, so too does Diadochus's path of reintegration entail a reverse route of

¹⁶³ See *De Pean.*, 7; PG 65:976C; 11; PG 65:981B. This terminology is adopted by John Climacus, as well.

disintegration: obfuscation of the intellect, fragmentation of the sense, failing of the memory of God, and ultimately the choice for evil.¹⁶⁴

As the soul journeys toward reintegration, progress manifests itself not only in the new spiritual situations and phenomena but above all in the transformation of those elements that will accompany the person throughout his itinerary. Paying close attention to the effect of grace and its manifestations in the four areas mentioned above (choice, memory, sense, intellect) as well as to the corresponding states of love—and its balance with fear, tears, prayer, virtue, the nature of trials, discernment of spirits, and the dangers proper to each stage—we begin to see with more clarity—the genius and the completeness of Diadochus’s theology.

The First Stage—Beginners

“If we fervently long for God’s virtue, at the outset of our progress the Holy Spirit lets the soul taste God’s sweetness in all the fullness of its sentiment, so that the mind might have keen awareness of the ultimate prize for efforts which so please God.”¹⁶⁵ The Holy Spirit rewards the godly choice for following Christ with consolation, although this joy cannot compare with the joy of the perfect.¹⁶⁶ For such initial joy can be only partial, as “when someone in the winter season who stands out in the open facing East at the break of day, the front of his body is warmed by the sun, but his back is deprived of all warmth because the sun is not yet over his head. That is how it is for those who are just beginning spiritual activity.”¹⁶⁷

But such initial joy, a logical consequence of the newly formed relationship with God, also acts as a preparation for trials that are sure to come. One trial proper to this stage results from the neophyte’s spiritual, and perhaps psychological, instability, teetering

¹⁶⁴ See GC 29.

¹⁶⁵ GC 90.

¹⁶⁶ See GC 60.

¹⁶⁷ GC 88.

between euphoric, presumptuous consolation and depressive desolation.¹⁶⁸ Further,

the word of knowledge teaches us that the novice soul given over to theology is easily disturbed by a host of passions, above all ire and hatred. She suffers this more on account of her own personal spiritual progress than on account of a great number of demons stirring up the passions. Thus, so long as the soul is inclined toward worldly mindedness, she will even stand idly by, unaffectedly watching justice trampled underfoot by someone because she is more concerned with her own cares and such a soul does not look to God.¹⁶⁹

The nature of the choice for God proper to this stage of spiritual progress takes the form of obedience, the virtue that ultimately opens the door to divine love.¹⁷⁰ This is a virtue Christ loved “passionately,” in proportion to his love for the Father who commanded him.¹⁷¹ Further, love for obedience engenders humility,¹⁷² which is the “true seal of piety.”¹⁷³ It permits the warrior to forget about self and one’s achievements¹⁷⁴ and importance,¹⁷⁵ to become little, and to allow God to treat oneself as a mother would her child.¹⁷⁶

Humility is a particularly difficult virtue to acquire¹⁷⁷ since it is heaped upon the warrior through physical ailments, the scorn of others, or one’s own interior mental trials, convincing him that he is worse than the rest.¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, it is precisely the ongoing choice for humility that permits the subsequent transformation

¹⁶⁸ See GC 69.

¹⁶⁹ GC 71.

¹⁷⁰ See GC 41.

¹⁷¹ See GC 41.

¹⁷² See Vision 7; GC 41.

¹⁷³ Sermon 2.

¹⁷⁴ See GC Def. 6.

¹⁷⁵ See GC 13.

¹⁷⁶ See GC 65.

¹⁷⁷ See GC 95.

¹⁷⁸ See GC 95.

to commence. "When the passions are stirred, silent battle must ensue using prayer and charity—all done in humility."¹⁷⁹

The first stage of the spiritual journey sees tears stemming from fear of the evil one,¹⁸⁰ proof of imperfect love. Tears of contrition¹⁸¹ also appear in the eyes of the newly converted, with their sins still fresh in their unpurified memories.

In this first stage, the memory acts as an instrument for discerning spirits as well as purification, above all when invoking the Holy Name of Jesus. Memory can turn one's attention away from evil¹⁸² even as it fortifies the warrior. Important for this stage is how the memory of the Holy Name acts as a sort of exorcising rite, forcing the evil one to reveal himself even when he has succeeded in deceiving the warrior through false consolation.¹⁸³ Exercise of the memory of God engenders, in turn, true consolation, which

is brought about when the body is fully awake or even when it begins to feel sleep coming on, when one has bonded oneself to [God's] love through the fervent memory of his Name. False consolation, on the other hand, is, as I have said, always produced when the warrior enters into light sleep, half forgetful of God. Thus, the first type comes from God who manifestly exhorts the souls of the warriors to a great outpouring of reverential love. Whereas, the other type accustomed to influencing the soul with winds of deceit, attempts to rob the healthy mind of its experience of the memory of God while the body sleeps. But if the mind maintains the attentive memory of the Lord Jesus, as I mentioned, the enemy's apparently pleasant and mild breeze dissipates, and it then joyfully leaps into battle with its second weapon after grace: the confidence that comes from experience.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ GC 96.

¹⁸⁰ See GC 86.

¹⁸¹ See GC 87.

¹⁸² See GC 3, 56, 81.

¹⁸³ See GC 31.

¹⁸⁴ GC 32.

The exercise of the memory of God, Christocentric to be sure, restores the soul to its original beauty with greater glory.¹⁸⁵ It frees the *nous* of the fantasies that inhibit true prayer¹⁸⁶ and affords the warrior a glimpse of the light of his own intellect in the depths of the heart.¹⁸⁷ The memory of Jesus arouses true love for goodness, thus replacing the memory of accrued disordered attachments of the previous life.¹⁸⁸ And since the memory of the Lord Jesus must become unceasing, it constitutes the type of prayer proper to this stage.¹⁸⁹ Such prayer must be independent of place since it consists of an attitude of prayer and a longing of the heart rather than something voiced.¹⁹⁰

The exercise of the memory of God is not merely something to do. Invoking that memory acts as a bridge, linking the warrior to his future glory and anchoring him in his preternatural past. Originally, human nature included one sense that had God for its object. The task of reintegration will require the novice to work from the exterior inward. This work will include fasting and moderation in drink.¹⁹¹ The self-control common to all virtues must not limit itself to the cultivation of bodily virtues but reach into the very interior, purifying the soul.¹⁹² The life of asceticism and fidelity to Christ, in a word, the choice for Christ, demands totality. Although as far as Diadochus is concerned the age of martyrs is past, true Christians are not excluded from this honor. In a time of peace for the church, the bodies and souls of warriors must still undergo purification and trial—those opportunities sought actively and those passively received. Fidelity to grace in such moments constitutes “the second martyrdom.”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁵ See GC 97.

¹⁸⁶ See GC 68.

¹⁸⁷ See GC 59.

¹⁸⁸ See GC 32, 59, 88.

¹⁸⁹ See GC 56, 97.

¹⁹⁰ See GC 97.

¹⁹¹ See GC 47, 52.

¹⁹² See GC 42.

¹⁹³ GC 94.

From the moment of baptism, as I mentioned, grace hides itself in the depths of the mind, its presence concealed even from our very senses. But when one begins to long for God with total conviction, then in sublime colloquy it communicates a portion of its wealth to the soul through the intellect's senses. From the moment in which he has firmly set his heart upon complete possession of what he has discovered his desire is such that he is happily willing to abandon all of this world's present goods in order truly to acquire the field in which the treasure of this life lies hidden.¹⁹⁴

Although the *nous* dominates the third stage, it already experiences the beginnings of grace's transformation, albeit not without human cooperation. The infusion of grace warms the heart with ineffable movements,¹⁹⁵ awakening the mind to hidden realities and pointing it toward the possession of God.

The novice warrior experiences grace as enlightening and encouraging; it urges him to follow the footprints of the Invisible One.¹⁹⁶ "At the outset of our progress, the Holy Spirit lets the soul taste God's sweetness in a total sense of fullness, so that the mind might have keen awareness of the ultimate prize for efforts which so please God."¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, as a beginner, prayer still suffers from images and fantasies that hinder perfect union.¹⁹⁸ Further, the untamed passions and the failure to have acquired perfect *apatheia* weighs down the warrior in this struggle.

In spite of the spiritual consolations experienced at the beginning, suffering is not wanting thanks to the still disintegrated personality. Discernment of spirits is more fundamental at this stage, distinguishing between good and evil. But all of this is carried out amid one's own thoughts, affections, attractions, and sentiments, which are not necessarily always pure. In other words, it is not enough correctly to discern what is good and evil, unless

¹⁹⁴ GC 77.

¹⁹⁵ See GC 85.

¹⁹⁶ See GC 69.

¹⁹⁷ GC 90.

¹⁹⁸ See GC 73.

one humbly and adequately has taken stock of all that is occurring in the soul. Therefore, “warriors always should keep custody of their thoughts so that the mind can discern the thoughts that pass through it and store in the memory banks those that are good and come from God, while casting out of nature’s storage all those that are perverse or diabolical.”¹⁹⁹

Further, although the Holy Spirit bestows a certain perception of grace on the neophyte and “at first it is normal for grace to illumine the soul with its own light with great perception,”²⁰⁰ such ones “have their hearts only partially warmed by holy grace. Thus their mind can begin its fruitful spiritual thought, but the visible parts of the heart continue thinking according to the flesh, since not all their members are illumined in the depth of their perception by the light of holy grace.”²⁰¹

Following the normal pattern of spiritual progress after the first conversion, the warrior discovers that his battle with sin takes place interiorly—in the area of thoughts and unfortunate words, unlike his old life, which exteriorized sin through action. “Therefore it is necessary that they consecrate themselves to the observance of the holy commandments and a profound memory of the Lord of glory. For *he who keeps the commandment knows no evil word*,²⁰² which means he will not be distracted by evil thoughts and words.”²⁰³

At this stage, “when the soul enjoys the fullness of its innate fruits, it sings the psalms with more strength and prefers to pray with a louder voice. . . . The former disposition is accompanied by joy, thus awakening the imagination. . . . In this way the seeds of contemplation sown in tears are made manifest in the soil of the heart because of the joyful hope of its harvest.”²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ GC 26.

²⁰⁰ GC 69.

²⁰¹ GC 88.

²⁰² Eccl 8:5.

²⁰³ GC 96.

²⁰⁴ GC 73.

The Second Stage—Mesoi

The two predominant elements in the second stage are *aisthēsis* and *apatheia*. More precisely, the hallmark of *apatheia* indicates that the warrior has made the necessary progress in the first stage to develop the habit of generosity and virtue when confronted with temptation. For “impassibility [*apatheia*] does not consist in not being attacked by demons, because then we would all have to depart from this world, as the Apostle says [see 1 Cor 5:10], but in remaining undefeated when we are attacked by them.”²⁰⁵ Further, having advanced considerably, and obtained a proportionate degree of *apatheia*, the soul becomes more receptive to the action of the Holy Spirit²⁰⁶ and is more awake to his movements in the partially restored sense.²⁰⁷

Diadochus cites as another sign that the warrior is approaching the firm acquisition of *apatheia* that he is capable of accepting the cross of illness and suffering with virtue.²⁰⁸ Such an attitude will be necessary for the warrior in this stage, so fraught with purifying vicissitudes.

This is when the devil of hatred increases his attacks on the souls of the warriors in such a way that they accuse of hatred even those who love them, and their kiss conceals mortal hatred. From that moment onward, the soul suffers much more. On the one hand, it retains the memory of spiritual love, yet on the other hand, it cannot attain it in the spiritual sense for lack of those trials that bring about complete perfection. Therefore, it is necessary to abnegate oneself in order to arrive at its taste with all one’s sense and complete certainty. . . .²⁰⁹ As a result, grace, by way of the spiritual sense, makes the body rejoice with ineffable exultation in those who advance in knowledge.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ GC 98.

²⁰⁶ See GC 25.

²⁰⁷ See GC 71.

²⁰⁸ See GC 54.

²⁰⁹ GC 90.

²¹⁰ GC 79.

The increased reintegration affords a newfound simplicity in the soul, producing an ever more wordless prayer. With ease, the soul encounters God “in the solitude of her own heart with joy and listlessness.”²¹¹ Diadochus uses several terms to describe the experience of God, the consuming Fire, with recourse to synonyms of warmth, fire, and heat. This interior fire brings assurance of God’s presence but also enlightens the intellect, revealing ever more clearly the nature of one’s past and present state of soul, thus effecting a heightened sorrow for one’s own offenses. Knowledge of one’s own fault as well as the awareness that one has given scandal—even to worldly people—is yet another cause of great mortification.²¹²

Further, “the Lord permits the soul to be burdened by demons in order to teach her the value of discernment of good and evil, and to render her humbler still, because the discomfiting diabolical thoughts shame the soul even as it is purified.”²¹³

Such experiences heighten the warrior’s ability to discriminate. The perceptive faculty (*aisthēsis*) of the intellect is made up of this ability to discern the tastes of different experiences. After attaining a certain degree of *apatheia*, the warrior becomes aware of the vastness of God’s rich grace and can prefer nothing else in its place. *Aisthēsis*, the experiential knowledge of God, is reintegrated by the action of the Holy Spirit in the purified soul. Thus equipped he can properly taste God (note Diadochus’s use of *geusthai* and *geusis* [“taste”], *hēdutēs* [“sweet taste”] and *glukutēs* [“sweetness”]). The memory of such experiences is stored in the purified mind and serves as a reserve in times of trial. “The sense of the mind has a precise taste for the things it discerns. Just as our corporal sense of taste flawlessly distinguishes between good and bad tastes when we are healthy and we are therefore drawn to good things, so too, when our mind starts to move about freely and without much worry, it is capable of feeling the wealth of divine

²¹¹ GC 73.

²¹² See GC 92.

²¹³ GC 77.

consolation without ever being dragged here and there by anything that could oppose it."²¹⁴

Upon seeing the warrior's conviction and the work of the Holy Spirit advance in the area of the sense, the enemy flies into a rage in an attempt to hinder this work and "violently takes the soul prisoner by way of the bodily senses, especially when they find us negligent in running the race of piety, inciting it—murderers that they are—to do what it does not want to do."²¹⁵ Thus, for "those who are in the middle stage of combat,"²¹⁶ the enemy piques the increased awareness of one's own physical weakness, injustices from others, and one's own interior struggles in the area of thoughts; they are driven to new levels of humility.²¹⁷

The experience of joy is followed by periods of "spiritual tears followed by a longing for silence. For the memory keeps its warmth when the voice is moderated and it prepares the heart to express itself with tearful and joyous thoughts."²¹⁸ Whereas the tears of the first stage were a product of contrition, the quality of tears in this second stage are, above all, tears of gratitude²¹⁹ shed painlessly amid "godly sorrow."²²⁰

Diadochus compares the increased presence and influence of the Holy Spirit to oil thrown upon raging seas, bringing calm, lulling the soul to rest. Indeed, if one "perseveres in it . . . it is continuously assuaged by the fear of God. . . . Fear of the Lord Jesus brings about a certain purification in his warriors, since the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever [Ps 19:10]."²²¹ The increase of love mitigates the balance of fear in this stage as fear gives way to love—albeit, an imperfect love.²²²

²¹⁴ GC 30.

²¹⁵ GC 79.

²¹⁶ GC 95.

²¹⁷ GC 95.

²¹⁸ GC 73.

²¹⁹ See GC 27.

²²⁰ GC 60.

²²¹ GC 35.

²²² GC 16.

Progress brings with it its own subtleties. Discernment of spirits is no longer a crass decision between good and evil, but a testing field for the spiritual maturity of the warrior (see 1 Cor 14:12). Spiritual decision making entails choosing between good and better. Diadochus leaves us the following example:

As the body tastes earthly sweetness and has a sure sense for it, so too the mind can infallibly recognize the Holy Spirit's consolation far above those of the flesh: Taste, it is said, and see that the Lord is good [Ps 133:9]. Through the exercise of love, the mind retains the memory of this taste, infallibly discerning the best things and choosing them, as the Saint says: my prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your sense, so that you can always recognize what is best [Phil 1:9-10].²²³

Diadochus compares the mode of discernment at this stage to the craft of fishermen who, "so long as the sea is calm . . . can discern movements in the depths of the sea in such a way that not even one of the creatures crosses his path unseen."²²⁴

When Diadochus considers immature the fundamental level of discernment simply between good and evil, he underscores the call to perfection. Otherwise, given the fallen state of human nature, Diadochus astutely observes that "one simply ends up seeking himself."²²⁵ He presents this struggle in terms of wisdom, something accessible but only obtained if sought and granted. Once received, "the mind, impregnated, as it were, by the action of the Spirit, becomes something akin to a spring overflowing with love and joy."²²⁶

²²³ GC 30.

²²⁴ GC 26.

²²⁵ See GC 96.

²²⁶ GC 34.

The Third Stage—Teleoi (The Perfect)

The return to authentic humanity through arrival at restored likeness to God is not the end of the spiritual journey. Rather, it is the last preparation for mystical matrimony with God. The concept of “spiritual matrimony” is thoroughly scriptural, found throughout the Old Testament where God speaks of Israel in nuptial terms.²²⁷ In the New Testament, under the New Covenant, Christ identifies himself as the divine Spouse to the church and to individual souls, each one his bride.²²⁸ This was a common theme among the fathers of the East and West. Tertullian writes: “the flesh follows the soul which is now married to the Spirit, as part of the bridal offering, no longer servant of the soul, but of the Spirit.”²²⁹ Origen teaches: “Christ is the spouse to whom the soul is united in faith.”²³⁰ Cyril of Jerusalem says with more precision that after baptism, she who was a servant has received the Lord as her Spouse.²³¹ Dydimus the Blind echoes Cyril with “he who has created our soul takes her as spouse in the baptismal font.”²³²

Diadochus’s dedicates little attention to this doctrine. Since his is a practical theologian, he is more interested in providing counsel for the journey rather than spending more than a minimum amount of time elaborating on the goal. In GC 67 Diadochus lays out the path to such mystical union and describes the eschatological phenomenon:

All of God’s gifts are exceedingly beautiful and attain every benefit, but none of them moves and makes our heart to burn with love for his goodness as much as *theologia*. . . . It illumines our intellect in the fire of transformation and then brings it to enter into communion with those spirits that serve the Lord

²²⁷ See Jer 2:20; Ezek 16; Hos 2; the entire book of Song of Songs.

²²⁸ See Matt 9:15; 22:2; 26:1-13; Luke 12:36; Rev 19:7-10; 21:3.

²²⁹ *De Anima*, 2.41; PL 2:720. Author’s translation.

²³⁰ *In gen hom* 10; PL 12:218. Author’s translation.

²³¹ *De baptism* 10; PG 33:425.

²³² *De trinitate*; PG 33:692. Author’s translation.

[see Heb 1:14]. Those of us, beloved, who have already been truly prepared for it desire this beautiful virtue, a thoroughly contemplative friend [to our soul], which achieves freedom from every worry, which, in the brilliance of indescribable light, nourishes the mind on the words of God. In a word, through the holy prophets the rational mind is united with divine Logos in an indissoluble communion, so that even among human beings—O wonder!—this godly bridesmaid [*nymphagōgos*] might harmonize the divinized voices which sing clearly of God's magnificence.

Theologia is also called *nymphagōga*.²³³ The *nymphagōga* is the chaperone who guides the bride to the house of the groom and ultimately to his royal wedding chamber. Diadochus alludes to Psalm 45:14, The Royal Wedding Song, which says, "Dressed in brocades, the king's daughter is led to the king, with bridesmaids in her train." *Theologia* is this mediation that leads the soul to union with God and introduces it to his nuptial mysteries. For Diadochus, *theologia*, a sign of perfection, although always mystical, is never an end in itself. The end is divine nuptials and theology is the necessary means toward it. In GC 79 Diadochus quotes this psalm directly with regard to the soul as an intimate place where God and the human bride are alone together, outside of the enemy's reach.

Such is the goal. What follows is an exposition on the nature of this third stage.

"Just as wisdom and knowledge are gifts of the one Holy Spirit, so too are all divine gifts; nonetheless, each gift has its own operation."²³⁴ The gifts serve to purify the intellect, the principal place of the Holy Spirit's operation in the third stage. In doing so, they bring peace and permit access to the "lamp of knowledge"²³⁵—which is Christ's spirit, incarnate wisdom. In other words, wisdom and knowledge are gifts of the Holy Spirit, each

²³³ I have translated this word as "bridesmaid."

²³⁴ GC 9.

²³⁵ See GC 28.

with its distinctive operation. Knowledge aids in discerning between good and evil,²³⁶ and is granted to the person who, after much prayer, has acquired a degree of *apatheia*.²³⁷ Diadochus describes this *scientia amoris* from his own experience—although he writes as if it were something told to him by another:

Someone from among those who love the Lord with unyielding resolve once told me the following: “Because I longed for conscious knowledge of the love of God, he who is Goodness itself granted me it; and ever since I have experienced the action of this sense with full certainty to such a degree that my soul was spurned on with joyful desire and ineffable love so that it quit my body to go with the Lord²³⁸—to the point of almost losing all awareness of this passing life.”²³⁹

Similar to Saint Paul, our author describes the heights of mystical experience in radical terms. More than simply a description of the tension of wanting to be with the Lord to such an extent that he loses much more than a taste for this life, it is a description of mystical death. He includes the body as participant in this experience, which points to the eschatological dimension of this ecstasy and attributes an anticipatory value to this communication: “The joy that actually is produced in the soul and the body is a reliable reminder of incorruptible life.”²⁴⁰ The redeemed human person returns to his original integration and experiences—as opposed to merely tastes—the superabundance of glory that God pours into him. This eschatological anticipation is founded on ever-advancing love, which will never cease to have two objects: God and others. In the same chapter in which Diadochus describes the apex of union with God he includes its logical consequence

²³⁶ See GC 6.

²³⁷ See GC 9.

²³⁸ See 2 Cor 12:2.

²³⁹ GC 91.

²⁴⁰ GC 25.

of love for enemies, thus underlining the inseparability of heaven and earth for the mystic undergoing glorifying transformation.²⁴¹

The intimacy of such union prohibits the mystic from any exteriorization or speech about such experiences, lest he open the doors of the bathhouse, allowing all the warmth to escape.²⁴²

Wisdom, like knowledge an exclusively supernatural gift, is similar in attributes to knowledge.²⁴³ Yet it not only permits speech of its own experience but also impels it. In other words, there is a charismatic element here lacking in knowledge. Whereas knowledge illumines through actions, wisdom illumines through the word and is granted only after much meditation on Sacred Scripture.²⁴⁴ It is wisdom that educates the warrior's spiritual palate to intuit the goings on in the soul, to reject what is evil and to choose between better and best.²⁴⁵

Far above and beyond both these gifts is the gift of theology. Nothing short of theology makes the soul burn with love for God and only God could prepare and grant such a gift.²⁴⁶ GC 67, as seen above, describes the consequences of this gift. Theology and knowledge never cohabitate to their fullness in the same person. Although the Gnostic may have attained a certain degree of contemplation and the theologian has experiential knowledge, the nature of each requires the totality of the person.²⁴⁷

Arrival at the third stage cancels out the balance between fear and love in which true love casts out all fear (1 John 4:19). "In those, however, who have been purified, there is perfect love. In such as they, there is not even a thought of fear, but never-ending fire and fusion of soul with God, by the working of the Holy Spirit; as it is said: my soul clings close to you, your right hand supports

²⁴¹ See GC 91.

²⁴² See GC 70.

²⁴³ See GC 9.

²⁴⁴ See GC 9.

²⁴⁵ See GC 31.

²⁴⁶ See GC 66.

²⁴⁷ See GC 72.

me [Ps 63:8].”²⁴⁸ This love is an interior fire. “Proper to a pure soul is . . . ardent love [*eros*] for the glory of the Lord. When the mind has these qualities, it measures itself with its own reason comparably to the judgment of that incorruptible tribunal.”²⁴⁹

Diadochus echoes Saint Paul when describing this *eros* for God:

One who loves God with the sense of the heart “is known by him” [1 Cor 8:3], because inasmuch as one receives the love of God, according to that measure he will dwell in the love of God. And from that moment onward, he comes to find himself immersed in such an ardent longing for the illumination of the intellect, penetrating even his bones, that he loses all awareness of himself and he is completely transformed by the love of God.²⁵⁰

As a result, such “fervor [is] granted to the heart by the Holy Spirit . . . [that] it arouses every part of the soul to long for God, not blown about outside one’s heart but all through it delighting the entire person in charity and boundless joy.”²⁵¹ Love and joy become “boundless” because the mystical death, the “second martyrdom,”²⁵² abolishes every boundary dividing the formerly fragmented senses, opening up the entire person to the utter simplicity of God. As a result, the mystic discovers his own totality. The encounter with divine Love “makes our soul burn with so great a love for God, that every part of the soul is ineffably united to the sweetness of this divine desire in an attitude of unending simplicity.”²⁵³ At the same time the intellect is so penetrated by the divine light that it is capable of seeing the light it has appropriated deep within the soul.²⁵⁴ Diadochus goes on to say that,

²⁴⁸ GC 16.

²⁴⁹ GC 19.

²⁵⁰ GC 14.

²⁵¹ GC 74.

²⁵² See GC 94.

²⁵³ GC 34.

²⁵⁴ See GC 40.

“in the moment in which someone is spurred on by God to such a degree of love, he is elevated beyond faith because when he reaches the very peaks of love, he now possesses him in the keen perception [*aisthēsis*] of his heart whom he first honored with faith.”²⁵⁵

The penetrating warmth of this divine love engenders joyful, loving tears—a new quality of tears proportional to this stage.²⁵⁶ And the intensified presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit work to purify the intellect to such an extent that the soul finds itself in a state where the memory is liberated from every image.²⁵⁷ “Living our whole life long gazing into the depths of our hearts with undying memory of God, we ought to live as blind men throughout this deceptive life. Thus proper to a truly spiritual philosophy is to clip the wings of ardent love for visible things.”²⁵⁸

Arrival at the third stage is not without its dangers. Although unlikely, it is indeed possible for the warrior who has attained a degree of perfection to fall back into his old ways. This is not only because human nature is weakened from original sin but also because of God’s respect for human freedom—even in its misuse.

Further, one who has advanced to this degree God sometimes abandons to the devil’s wickedness and the darkening of the intellect so that our freedom not be completely chained up by the bonds of grace—not only so that sin is defeated by his fight, but also because the person should continue to proceed into the spiritual trial. For whatever the disciple considers perfect in himself is actually an imperfection with respect to God’s ambition which instructs us with a love that seeks to surpass its own achievements and climb to the top of the ladder that appeared to Jacob.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ GC 91.

²⁵⁶ See GC 73, 100.

²⁵⁷ See GC 60.

²⁵⁸ GC 56.

²⁵⁹ GC 85.

Acquisition of such levels of purification and identity through grace makes the warrior possess the virtues and elements proper to this stage “as if by nature.”²⁶⁰ The term “stage” is not as determining or static as it might appear. Nor is achieving the heights of the third stage a common phenomenon. “This is so because no one still in the flesh can attain his perfection except the saints who make it to martyrdom and perfect confession.”²⁶¹

God’s desire is to divinize his children.²⁶² And Diadochus has taught us the way to this goal, which, in turn, permits the celebration of divine nuptials. It entails loving and being loved and being transformed into divine love until such moment that we are “robed in divine love.”²⁶³ Only in such a state do we find our true selves.²⁶⁴ And seeing ourselves as we are and as we ought to be, we are then capable of giving ourselves completely to the divine Spouse in one eternal matrimonial embrace, for which we were made and for which we long.

This Translation and Texts Consulted

I used Edouárd Des Places’s critical edition of the Greek text for my own translation of all four works. I am unaware of any previously published English translations of *The Homily on the Ascension*, *The Catechesis*, and *The Vision*. Des Places offers a French translation of these works, and Pablo Argárate has published all four Diadochan works in Spanish.²⁶⁵ A Latin translation of the *Homily* was published by Cardinal Angelo Mai in 1840.²⁶⁶ Vincenzo Messina published an Italian translation of the *Gnostic Chapters*,²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ GC 95.

²⁶¹ GC 90.

²⁶² See Homily 6.

²⁶³ Homily 6.

²⁶⁴ See GC 80.

²⁶⁵ *Diadoco de Fótice: Obras Completas* (Madrid: Editorial Ciudad Nueva, Biblioteca de Patrística, 1999).

²⁶⁶ PG 65:1141–48.

²⁶⁷ *Cento Considerazioni sulla Fede* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1978).

and K. Suso Frank published a German version of this work under the title *Gespür für Gott*.²⁶⁸ Further, Francisco Torres, SJ, published a Latin translation of the *Gnostic Chapters* in 1570, which, upon first publication, justly won high praise for its style.²⁶⁹ I know of two English translations of *Gnostic Chapters* prior to mine—one found in the *Philokalia*²⁷⁰ and another fine work by the scholar Janet Rutherford, titled *One Hundred Practical Texts of Perception and Spiritual Discernment from Diadochos of Photikē*.²⁷¹ Although disparate, both are excellent translations.

If there exist two good English translations of this text, why a third, one might ask. The *Philokalia* translation is highly readable and follows Horace's advice to translators quite stringently:

nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus
 interpres nec desilies imitator in artum,
 unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex.²⁷²

Horace counsels the translator to get out of the all-too-comfortable rut of the word-for-word translation done in the name of fidelity to the text. The *Philokalia* translation succeeds in this and provides us with a literary—as opposed to a literal—translation, in certain parts. On the other hand, Rutherford's translation intentionally snubs Horace with the valid argument that the reader has a right to an adequate reflection of the original text and that the text's linguistic and grammatical integrity ought to be respected. Certainly there is room for both methods and the translators have attained their goals.

Given Diadochus's difficult style and my aversion to an adulterated translation, my goal is to provide the reader with a third

²⁶⁸ K. Suso Frank, *Gespür für Gott* (Einsiedlen: Johannes Verlag, 1982).

²⁶⁹ *De perfectione spirituali capita centum*, PG. 65:1162–1212.

²⁷⁰ G. E. H. Palmer, Phillip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, trans., *Philokalia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

²⁷¹ Janet Rutherford, *One Hundred Practical Texts of Perception and Spiritual Discernment from Diadochos of Photikē* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, Institute of Byzantine Studies, 8, 2000).

²⁷² *Ars Poetica*, 133–34.

way. At the outset my proposed task was to offer a literal translation, faithful to the text but readable. Diadochus did not make it easy for me. His style is difficult; his vocabulary is rich, vast, and precise; and quite often his sentences are very long. I have taken it upon myself to shorten some of Diadochus's longer sentences, and where I have opted for something other than a word-for-word translation I offer explanations in the footnotes.

Whether I have achieved my goal is up to the reader. If someone can improve on my efforts that would be appreciated. I am, after all, a student of Greek, not a master. If, in spite of the deficiencies of my own work, someone finds spiritual food and grows in love for Christ through Diadochus's work, I would count it a blessing and my work worthwhile.