

On Cleaving to God

attributed to Albert the Great

Chapter 7: How the heart should be gathered within itself

What is more, as is said in the book *On the Spirit and the Soul* (of St. Augustine), to ascend to God means to enter into oneself. He who entering within and penetrating his inmost nature, goes beyond himself, he is truly ascending to God. So let us withdraw our hearts from the distractions of this world, and recall them to the inner joys, so that we can establish them to some degree in the light of divine contemplation. For this is the life and peace of our hearts—to be established by intent in the love of God, and to be sweetly remade by his comforting. But the reason why we are in so many ways hindered in the practical enjoyment of this matter and are unable to get into it is clearly because the human mind is so distracted by worries that it cannot bring its memory to turn within, is so clouded by its imaginations that it cannot return to itself with its understanding, and is so drawn away by its desires that it is quite unable to come back to itself by desire for inner sweetness and spiritual joy. Thus it is so prostrate among the sense objects presented to it that it cannot enter into itself as the image of God. It is therefore right and necessary for the mind to raise itself above itself and everything created by the abandonment of everything, with humble reverence and great trust, and to

say within itself, He whom I seek, love, thirst for and desire from everything and more than anything is not a thing of the senses or the imagination, but is above everything that can be experienced by the senses and the intellect. He cannot be experienced by any of the senses, but is completely desirable to my will. He is more-over not discernable, but is perfectly desirable to my inner affections. He cannot be comprehended, but can be loved in his fullness with a pure heart, for he is above all lovable and desirable, and of infinite goodness and perfection. And then a darkness comes over the mind and it is raised up into itself and penetrates even deeper. And the more inward-looking the desire for it, the more powerful this means of ascent to the mysterious contemplation of the holy Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity in Jesus Christ is, and the more interior the yearning, the more productive it is. Certainly in matters spiritual the more inward they are the greater they are as spiritual experiences. For this reason, never give up, never stop until you have tasted some pledge, as I might say, or foretaste of the future full experience, and until you have obtained the satisfaction of however small a first fruits of the divine joy. And do not give up pursuing it and following its scent until you

have seen the God of gods in Sion. Do not stop or turn back in your spiritual journey and your union and adherence to God within you until you have achieved what you have been seeking. Take as a pattern of this the example of those climbing an ordinary mountain. If our mind is involved by its desires in the things which are going on below, it is immediately carried away by endless distractions and side tracks, and being to some extent divided against itself, is weakened and as it were scattered amongst the things which it seeks with its desires. The result is ceaseless movement, travel without an arrival, and labour without rest. If on the other hand our heart and mind can withdraw itself by its desire and love from the infinite distraction below of the

things beneath it, can learn to be with itself, abandoning these lower things and gathering itself within itself into the one unchanging and satisfying good, and can hold to it inseparably with its will, it is correspondingly more and more gathered together in one and strengthened, as it is raised up by knowledge and desire. In this way it will become accustomed to the true supreme good within itself until it will be made completely immovable and arrive securely at that true life which is the Lord God himself, so that it can now rest in him within and in peace without any changeability or vicissitude of time, perfectly gathered within itself in the secret divine abode in Christ Jesus who is the way for those who come to him, the truth and life.