

[THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY]

[*Via Illuminativa*]

[1] By means of the purgative way the mind is immediately raised up to the illuminative way, in accordance with the rule of the Psalmist, who says: “Amid the vale of tears he has determined in hisⁿ¹ heart to ascend.”¹ And because through groanings and tears the soul is cleansed from the remaining blight of sins, it is thereby immediately prepared for receiving the divine ray. The need for this [cleansing] is seen, then, first of all, on the part of the recipient. For in the case of a material mirror we recognize that if a breath or something else obscures the mirror, then a human face, although it places itself in front of the mirror, does not appear in the mirror. But when the mirror is wiped off, the face will immediately appear in it; thus, if the mirror could, as well, make use of human reason,² after the fashion of spirits, it would recognize by means of that [image] which it receives within itself, the one of whom [the image] is the representing likeness. In a similar way, when the obscuring mist is cleaned off of the rational spirit, then the spiritual sun sends in the rays of its grace. Considered in and of itself, that sun imparts itself equally to all.

Or an even better comparison: a ray from the material sun remains unchanging at a [shuttered] window—never receding, never veering from its natural goodness; rather, when the window is opened the ray immediately lights up the previously darkened inside of the house. In a similar way, the Heavenly City’s true spiritual Sun-of-Justice (of which the material sun is an obscure likeness or image) expects, as it remains unchangingly present at the door of our heart, nothing except that entrance be prepared for it by means of a purgative removing. Thus, the spiritual Sun will rest happily in the mind as in a bed, and will mark with rays of spiritual splendor the soul betrothed to it. And in this way spiritual illumination, which is due both to the recipient and to the in-flowing [ray], follows from purification.

[2] Secondly, this same [point] is disclosed through the unitive conjoining of the different things. For just as the [Book of] Wisdom says that “Wisdom itself is the brilliance of the eternal light and is the mirror without blemish,”³ so it is necessary that there be an assimilative conformity when through the union of true love the human mind is united to the brilliance of the eternal light, so that with all obscuring mist removed beforehand from the mind, the mind is ren-

dered like a mirror that is without blemish. Hence, it is first necessary that the mind be like a mirror without blemish; and forthwith it will be disposed toward receiving the quite divine bright rays of light. And in this way, the mind, after having been purified,ⁿ² will be made like Eternal Wisdom.

Three Modes of Divine Illumination

[3] But with regard to what light are we to understand that the mind, rising upwards anagogically, is raised unto the third way, viz., the unitive way? We must realize that just as the material sun (1) is seen in an inferior way in a delimited material object (e.g., we see it [reflected] on a wall), (2) is seen also in a ray (viz., in the air), and (3) is seen also in itself (as in the solar source), so too the divine ray appears in a threefold way to the spirit of the pilgrim. [4] For example, [the divine ray] appears in Sacred Scripture when by means of a gift of understanding we find the *anagogical meaning* that lies beneath the becloaking letters. By means of this meaning the mind, instructed in multiple and marvelous ways, is directed, as by means of a certain ray, unto love for its Creator. About this ray, which makes the spirit super-resplendent, Blessed Dionysius says in *The Divine Names*: “As we reverence in chaste silence things ineffable, we both occupy ourselves withⁿ³ the bright rays that shine forth to us from within the Holy Scriptures and are illumined by them.”⁴

[5] The *second ray*, sent forth from the spiritual Sun, shines in the spirit; and by means of these rays the mind, elevated unto eternal spectacles alone, is instructed for meditating, with a certain sense of wonder, on things super-celestial, viz., on the eternal forms, on eternal begottenness, on the bond of the Holy Spirit, and on the likes. For just as by means of very bright solar rays in the air and not by means of any other sensible light the material eye is raised up unto a viewing of the [material] sun, so the eye of the understanding is elevated unto a knowledge of hidden super-celestial things—elevated by means of rays sent forth from the spiritual Sun and not by means of any other field of learning or field of knowledge or any other activity of a mortal teacher. Blessed Dionysius writes to Titus about this point, saying: “Turn toward the ray.”⁵ It is as if he were to say: ‘Do not take another teacher or another exemplar in order to perceive divine things; rather, enter into yourself and exercise yourself very concentratedly (by means of the rays granted to you from above) in regard to contemplating things divine. For just as the rational spirit is nobler than are the other

more lowly creatures, so divine wisdom appears in the rational spirit more nobly through the [divinely] introduced rays of goodness.

[6] But I will leave aside discussion of the third ray, where the very Source of all goodness and beauty appears—something that occurs in a rapture. This [appearing] occurs when the mind, while in the body, is raptured. Separated (as much as is possible) from sensing by way of the bodily members, and with grace drawing the nature by the free gift of the Creator, the mind is caught up unto heavenly things, contemplating face to face the Creator, in whose glorious countenance the Heavenly court takes delight. [7] It is my present intention [to discuss] the first ray, which is hidden beneath [the words of] Scripture. By means of this ray we ascend unto unitive love. Very often the second ray accompanies unitive love, because the more closely the mind by means of the affections of love approaches the Source of light, the more effectively it is filled (being nearer to the Source) with the very divine rays—just as we see in the case of the coming of dawn, which illumines the nearer parts [of the earth] first.

When by means of the third way the mind yearnsⁿ⁴ with insatiable sighs to be wholly united with its Beloved, it is divinely elevated unto the *third illumining*, in which it is more acted upon than acting. And its Beloved says to it as it yearns at length: “Friend, ascend higher.”⁶ Blessed Dionysius [spoke] of this in his *Mystical Theology*, after having said, “Rise up ignorantly unto a union with Him—a union that is above all cognition, mind, and understanding.” There Dionysius gives instruction about the practice of unitive love—there, viz., where the affections rise up unto that of which the intellect is ignorant. Afterwards, he adds, speaking to Timothy: “Removing all these things from yourself, being unable to be held back by anything and being cleanly free from everything, you will be taken up unto the ray of divine darkness.”⁷ Hence, too,ⁿ⁵ with regard to our rising up together in unitive love Dionysius says, “Rise up together”; for *there* nature and grace work together. And afterwards he says, “You will be taken up”; for not by nature but by grace the mind is there elevated unto experiential and immediate knowledge of Heavenly things, and through grace the mind is disposed to this [knowledge].

Anagogical Interpretation

[8] But because my present intent is [to discuss] the illuminative way, I must say how it is that light appears in the Scriptures and how it is that, at length, we ascend by means of that light unto the third

way, viz., the unitive way. And that it may be evident to all that this ray is hidden in all Scripture, as a light is hidden in an earthen vessel, I add an example in regard to one thing, viz., in regard to the Lord's Prayer, so that something similar may be proven from the entire Old and New Testament—proven by all studentsⁿ⁶ of truth—and so that there may not be any word that is not inwardly filled with discourse of the Bridegroom and the bride.

[9] “Night [shall be] my illumination amid my delights.”ⁿ⁸ Here “night” refers to Scripture's outer, darkening overlayer; it refers also to every perceptible creature by means of which the mind is inwardly illumined to the end that it find rest anagogically in the delights of unitive love. For the illuminative wayⁿ⁷ corresponds to the order of angels that is called [the order of] Cherubims. For the first [way], viz., the purgative [way], corresponds to the order of Thrones; for, first of all, the soul is purified so that God may dwell in it as in a clean place. However, this second [way], as was said, corresponds to the Cherubims. The word “Cherubims” is understood to mean fullness of knowledge. But so much light is acquired through the art of this theological knowledge, and so much increase of wisdom is acquired by means of the Scriptures, that Scripture has as many understandings and meanings as there are words in the Old and the New Testament and as there are creatures in the world—the whole [of the Testaments] referring to God as to a point of love, as will become evidentⁿ⁸ later. The third [way], viz., the unitive way, corresponds to [the order of] Seraphims, a word that is understood to mean *fervent*. On that pathway the soul is borne unto God with such intense fervor that, at some moment, the body is especially and astonishingly impaired by the stretching of the affections and of the movements.

[10] We must know that anagogical interpretation of Scripture is threefold. *One interpretation* has to do with God in and of Himself insofar as He makes heavenly minds happy as they contemplate [Him] in glory. For example, it is said of David that he was, according to the letter of the word, “a perfect warrior.” This [expression] signifies, from a moral viewpoint, the soul, which ought to war so strongly against the Devil—indeed, rebelling against him and despising him—that it not permit itself to be subject to so vile a master and to be separated forever from most sweet Jesus Christ. Moreover, David is said to have slain Goliath—“David” signifying allegorically the Lord Jesus Christ, who on the gibbet of the Cross vanquished the arrogant Devil and obtained peace for His people. This is an allegorical exposition.

Furthermore, David is called beautiful in countenance⁹—[an expression that] signifies the measureless beauty of the Divine Substance, a beauty that by means of a vision of its beauty delights with ineffable joy (and with the restfulness of eternal beauty) every angelic and human mind. For “this is life eternal: that they know [You],” etc. (in John).¹⁰ This interpretation is anagogical, as far as concerns God’s beatifying.

[11] *Another anagogical interpretation* is one that concerns the church militant insofar as it is totally and undeviatingly at rest in the embracing arms of its Bridegroom. For example, a certain city is literally called Jerusalem. For the city Jerusalem was said to be perfectly fortified and perfectly circumscribed by very sturdy walls. But “Jerusalem” signifies, morally, a faithful soul that ought to be inwardly fortified with the weapons of the virtues, of grace, and of love. Without these weapons no one ever was able or ever will be able to resist the opposing Devil. The soul ought to be circumscribed outwardly, too, by strong walls; and this [circumscription occurs] by means of honorable conduct and by means of the mortification of the five outer senses, by which senses the integrity of love that reigns is impreguably preserved. But inasmuch as Jerusalem is called the seat of the kingdom, [this expression] befigures the future church-of-believers under Christ as Ruler. In this church there reigns the King of Peace Himself, in whose name Isaiah once said: “Our God, our Lawgiver will come and will save us.”¹¹ He will rule over the church militant by the example of His life and by the word of His teaching.

Thirdly, “Jerusalem” is understood to mean *vision of peace*—[an expression] that designates the church triumphant, wherein dwell inhabitants of peace. For they rejoice in His happy presence, marveling at the superabundant rewards of the joys of the eternal city, saying and shouting: “Better is one day in Your courts above thousands [elsewhere].”¹² And this is the anagogical interpretation.

[12] But speaking most properly, “*anagogia*” means the same thing as “*sursumactio*,”¹³ where, indeed, a remoteⁿ⁹ distance is connoted between the one who is elevated and him unto whom he is elevated, beyond himself, as he intently yearns. Hence, properly speaking, there is not any extensive *sursumactio* between the Beatifying Most High and those whom True Peace Himself beatifies—nor between the beatified and the Beatifying. Rather, in Him the beatified are happily at rest with wondrous tranquility, like those who exist in a chamber with a king; and like those who already exist in Him beyond them-

selves, they no longer yearn further for the desirable union with Him.

But this [imagery], properly speaking, befits a bride who is still wandering at a distance from her bridegroom. Being distant, she still desires, with unquenchable sighs, to be united to him. She will most fully obtain this union, with a tranquility of life, when she is separated from the bodily state. With this anagogic wisdom the Canticle of Canticles agrees, when the bride says, “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth,”¹⁴ and when she says this: “Draw me after you,” etc.¹⁵ And again: “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,” etc.¹⁶ These requests are nothing other than inflamed desires and restless affections, very fervently inciting the beloved in order that the bride may quite happily obtain from him her elevation. Something similar occurs on the part of the bridegroom with respect to the bride, when he says, “Open to me, my sister, my bride,”¹⁷ and again, “Come from Lebanon, come,”¹⁸ and again, “Rise up, make haste, my love,” etc.¹⁹ These articulations of the bridegroom are nothing other than sparkling beams sent forth by him—beams that more insistently arouse the bride’s affections unto more fervent desires and unto restless sighs. For this anagogical art is better acquired by means of the union-of-love, a discussion of which, as I said, is my present aim.

Anagogical Interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer

[13] In order to show this [art] to be everywhere included in the Sacred Page, let us take an example with respect to one passage, so that, likewise, the same point may be exhibited most truly also with regard to other locations in the Sacred Page. And in order not to protract this discussion too long, I will take an example in regard to the Lord’s Prayer. For just as by proceeding with the literal sense in accordance with the rules of interpretation, so, too, by proceeding with the anagogical sense, [we conclude that] the loving-favor of the bestower is first sought and, secondly, the bride multiplies her requests. Now, first of all, the beloved bridegroom is praised by the bride in three principal ways, in order to capture his loving-favor by means of her petitions. Thus, when the bride ascribes to her conferring lord all of her benefits, he is made more favorable.ⁿ¹⁰ First, [he is praised] as the source of perfect and spiritual life, secondly as being exceedingly diffusive of his goodness, and thirdly with respect to the worthiness of his habitation and mansion; as being a king excelling others, he deigns to dwell only where there is a sturdy habitation or tabernacle, one inwardly adorned with multiple adornments. [God] is first importuned

[in the Lord's Prayer] by the word "*Father*," secondly by the word "*our*," and thirdly by "*in Heaven*." And we anagogically transfer the proper [and literal] meaning of the words to their mystical meaning.

[14] For example, a father, literally, is nothing other than one who begets an offspring by emitting something from himself. Thus, transferring the meaning anagogically, He is most truly called Father who—not naturally but adoptively—begets many offspring by emitting from Himself a deifying²⁰ germ-of-love. Through this germ a mind is begotten by means of a perfect birth when that mind begins to live in true life. Without this germ nothing at all exists naturally as far as concerns its true being. When through love it is born from the true God, who is true life, the mind progresses more truly and effectively than when, from nothing, it had its primordial origin (with respect to its natural being) in a sin-stained birth. From this Beginning the mind is begotten in a heavenly manner, by means of a most abundant emitting of life. From this Beginning the mind not only receives spiritual senses and spiritual movement (things which attest to the beginnings of true life); but also all the way unto the perfect [future] lifetime of eternal brightness, when God will be seen face to face, the mind is mercifully reared by the Father's affection and receives morsels of the bread of inward consolation—morsels that confirm [the Father's] love. And all of this is meant by the word "*Father*," [which names] Him who is mystically hidden insofar as He is the Originating Fount of all life.

[15] "*Our*" is the next word. Here the diffusion of God's inclusive goodness is praised. It is as if the word meant: "You are He who, by reason of Your very wide-spread goodness, do not consider individual persons²¹ but consider all rational spirits. As concerns You Yourself, You draw [men] unto Yourself through the rays sent forth by You. Thus, it is not the case that [only] some [individuals]—however superior they are and however distinguished they are by virtue of their excellent religion—are able to appropriate You, who are the Original Fount of goodness. Rather, it is the case that there is no angelic or human mind that is hidden from Your naturally abstract [i.e., immaterial] warmth." This is what is meant anagogically by "*our*."

Lord's Prayer: Analogy with the Heavens

[16] "... *who are in Heaven*" comes next. Here loving-favor is sought because the mansion is very lofty. Now, the heavens excel other things by virtue of three properties: they are continually in motion,

they are steady [in their movements], and they are adorned with various stars that gleam in them. If we transfer these [properties] to a mystical meaning, [we see that] the bride, placing the bridegroom in her chamber, in the most secret compartment of her heart, ought to be adorned with these three properties. First, [it is necessary] that she be steady; and, accordingly, she speaks as follows: “O my most Beloved, You who are in Heaven”—meaning ‘You who now inhabit the inner chamber of those minds not only by Your presence, Your power, and Your essence (as You do in the case of other creatures) but also You who presentⁿ¹¹ Yourself (who are the Host of joy and solace) perceptively and intimately to them.’ In order more effectively to obtain Your love, they have given a writ of divorce to misdeeds and other delights; and having been bound to You alone (who quiet the minds that live in love) by a bond of most agreeable love and through continual sighs and with hindrances removed, they have clung to You steadfastly and most tenaciously. Accordingly, even in them there is a love that is as strong as death, as [is said] in the Canticle of Canticles.²²

With a view to being more steadily rooted, the bride cries out for the assistance of her bridesmaids, viz., the angels, by whom she is aided as by companions. She speaks as follows: “Prop me up with flowers; surround me with apples.”²³ That is, prop me up, I pray, with unblinded affection. I desire to obtain this support not from you but from my Beloved by means of your help. You who see Him face to face, surround me with your consolations, and call upon Him to assist me more fully. For languishing and burning with excessive heat-of-love, I desire to embrace completely Him whom I, still poor and in misery, know by experience to be so pleasing a Lord.”

[17] The second property comes next: “continuously moving.” For the eternal, most true Bridegroom most assuredly visits the mind and inhabits it when the mind, in elevating itself, is no longer afflicted with tiring slowness in regard to its unitive movements, as occurred when it was at the outset of its beginning state [of ascent]. Rather, by prolonged exercise the mind merits to obtain (by the beneficence and grace of its most abundant Benefactor) such great mobility of affections that as often as it wills to it is disposed to rise up fervently to its Beloved, without any restless torment from its desires. At that moment the God-of-might spiritually inhabits the mind. The mind does not, however, by means of a continuous *action* elicit the movements of love (something that is beyond the powers of the human condition

because of the weakness of human powers) but does so by means of a continuous *ability* according as it wills to. Hence, the mind is easily likened to the movement of the firmament.

Consequently, the mind which at first was walking like a turtle, with a slow, weak, directionless, and languid pace, now runs swiftly, so that it leaps over hills and mountains, despising, that is, both ecclesiastical and worldly positions-of-influence. And this is the case because its request was partly granted, when it called out repeatedly with an inner voice of sighs, saying: “Draw me after You.”²⁴ Therefore, having been drawn by Him who alone can elevate it more loftily above itself, the mind (at first being slow) now runs “unto the odor of His ointments.”²⁵ [It runs] (1) because by virtue of its desires, exceedingly more fervent than usual, it is raised unto embracing the Bridegroom and (2) because it has tasted of the gifts of the heavenly city of Jerusalem as of certain morsels falling from the table of its masters—morsels which are an experiential foretaste. The mind, then—despising, on account of love for the Bridegroom, worldly joys that bedarken it—has not just opened itself to the Bridegroom but has opened itself to the Bridegroom who is knocking at the door and desiring to enter. Accordingly, the mind, rising upward by means of its fiery affections, has arrived at an encounter [with God], who, entering into [the mind], dwells within it not for His own sake but for the mind’s sake. God brings with Him the solid food of affection, so that He may sup with the mind and the mind with Him. In this way the Beloved is at rest in a place that is continually moving.

[18] Thirdly, the heavens are adorned with diverse stars. Since [the mind’s] powers need to be stronger and more purified, the beautiful and resplendent Beloved does not yet fully inhabit it. For [the mind’s] disordered powers and its immoderate sensual delight darken it with a beclouding darkness. And because the mind still has bleary eyes, it is not received with a most pleasing welcome by the Eternal Jacob, who is the Most High God, to whose feet all things are subjected—not received so as to be taken by God into an individual bond of betrothal. Why not? It is because there is no suitability of light to darkness. Rather, [the mind’s] powers are cleansed from their inner uncleanness by a very powerful light, so that the mind shines with a splendor of powers (just as the firmament shines forth with stars). Thus, by the manifold brightness of the mind’s beaming and by the excellence of its light it moves the countenance of the Bridegroom to a peaceful viewing of it, so that the radiant brightness of grace in the

mind and the intensified brightness of the mind's powers cause [the mind] to appear pleasing in men's eyes. When this occurs, the mind, by its beauty, is appealing to the Most High Beloved, so that He deigns to dwell in it more intimately.

There immediately follows—since the Beloved Himself desires it more than does the mind—that what formerly was a beggar is now a queen, what formerly was seated at the left hand and was wretchedly intent on earthly pleasures now crosses over to the right-hand side by means of a transforming love. Moreover, that which formerly was darkened and enveloped by the sin of levity now is indued with garments made with the gold of very precious and very weighty love. That which formerly was besmirched with diverse vices now shines forth with the adorning and manifold color of radiant virtues. It shines forth to such an extent that the groomsmen—i.e., the friends of the Bridegroom, viz., the angels—welcoming the triumphant cleansing [of the bride], say to the Bridegroom: “The queen stood at Your right hand in gilded clothing.”²⁶

The Mind's Seven Requests

[19] Once favor has been obtained, [the mind] next makes its requests. “*Hallowed be Thy name,*” etc. It requests seven things, the first four of which aim at the acquiring of a good, the other [three aiming] at the removal of an evil. First of all among the four, [the mind] requests that it possess its Beloved without a delaying drawback. Secondly, it requests that, not dissembling itself in any respect, it not exceed the boundaries of the rules of truth. Thirdly, [the mind requests] that its most blessed Bridegroom, through His mercy, make known not only to it but also to all other sinners that which it itself is sensing. Fourthly, [it requests] that through His guiding sustenance it undeviatingly persevere in all respects in the benefits obtained from Him.

[20] First, as was said, the literalness of the word is accepted. Then when we switch over to the anagogical sense, the word “holy” has the same meaning as “apart from the earthly.” Apart from the earthly, then,ⁿ¹² let Your name, which is “Wonderful,” be accomplished in me. [This interpretation] is founded on the following [verse]: “Why do you ask my name, which is ‘Wonderful’?”²⁷ For at that time the soul of the one living evilly in love—a soul imbued with disfiguring worldly delights and with earthly desires—could not at all lovingly understand (or even sense) peaceful tranquility that brings joy of heart. For it was a man, not God; it was carnal, not divine, not sep-

arated from all men by a deifying love, since it was drawn with earthly horses, i.e., with unsuitable affections and with sensible and carnal desires, in accordance with the word of Isaiah: “Egypt is a man, not God.”²⁸ But when with fiery stretchings-forth the mind of the lover attains a little bit unto the experiential and quite divine joy, when it knows that it itself is not yet unimpeded by earthly affections, because its own power does not suffice for this [unimpededness], when it knows that it cannot at all possess firmly and at the same time two opposing things, then it seeks from its Beloved immediately to be freed from the earthly weightiness drawing it downwards on account of the corruptible flesh. For the prior delight now becomes worthless in comparison with the worthiness of the subsequent joy, since by reason of its oppositeness the spiritual enjoyment unmask the bitterness of the prior joy, since now the inner ray more openly manifests, although not in perfect fullness, the deceitfulness and the shamefulfulness of the flesh, or the world, so that in this way the soul—with its rust consumed by the fire of love, and with it itself being rendered light, and being elevated more highly with the wings of the affections, and being amazed—senses in the present the Wonderful One whom it, being a stranger, did not know. Accordingly, when by means of many affections and by means of continued desires it finds the object of its long-time desires: it says admiringly for joy: “Truly You are a hidden God.”²⁹ For then the name, viz., “Marvelous,”ⁿ¹³ is sanctified when the mind is hearkened to with regard to its request, so that with the earth, i.e., carnality, removed [from the mind], the Bridegroom alone wondrously appears in the presence of the bride alone.

The Mind's Second Request

[21] There follows the second request: “*Thy Kingdom come.*” For the Kingdom of God, established with a perpetual dominion, comes into the soul when the power of fervent love prevails in the spirit to such an extent that not only does the soul appear as the queen of the whole spiritual Kingdom, restraining firmly disorders of the inner powers by means of a very swift combative response, but also by the power of her love all her acts are presented to the judgment of reason. Accordingly, that which the queen discerns to be the more pleasing to her beloved, she always practices in her every action. Aspiring to obey her Beloved with her [entire] physical being, and anticipatorily conceiving, in the light of rays sent out from Him, what things are well-pleasing to Him, she pursues [these things] unswervingly with

discernment. And if not indeed *always*, nevertheless at an accustomed time she prays—unless she is hindered by some external cause or by an obedience that is of more importance. Nevertheless, in the presence of her Beloved her will appears not as empty-handed and as destitute; thus, it now seeks in every respect not what things are its own but what things are God’s, in accordance with [the words of the] Apostle.³⁰

Accordingly, in the queen God alone now reigns, since now her will offers itself as an abundant sacrifice. For it is *just* that she rest ultimately in Him by whom she was created and that He alone dwell in her, so that in His Kingdom she is preserved undefiled and in Him she finds sweet consolation and exults for joy: “I sat down under the shadow of Him whom I was desiring.”³¹ And she adds a reason: “His fruit is sweet to my palate.”³² For the kingdom of God comes truly when the queen sits under the shadow of the Most High, who is the “King of kings and the Lord of lords.”³³ She obtains this Kingdom perfectly when, as was said, she has consecrated her will totally to God, according as befits human frailty, not at all subjecting it to any other creature.

The Mind’s Third Request

[22] The third request comes next: “*Thy will be done.*” For since she does not love truly unless she also wishes Him-whom-she-loves to be worshiped by all, the bride (who is signified by [the word] “heaven”) asks that that which she experiences be mercifully made known to other sinners (who are designated by [the word] “earth”)—be made known (1) so that He who alone is to be worshiped and insatiably adored may disclose Himself to sinners as gracious in the uncovering of their sins and (2) so that He may distribute impartingly to their minds a spark of truth and a bit of the reason that pertains uniquely to Him. [This disclosure and this distribution are to the following end]: that all inner speech of fervent affection (by which speech the created spirit alone addresses the Uncreated Spirit) may confess [Him] when [this spirit] knows by experience wherein consists the ineffable judgment that “Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father”³⁴ conferring on those who love Him and who abandon earthly joys gifts that are much more precious than these joys. [23] There is a second reason why Christ is said to be in the glory of the Father: [viz.,] so that He may place permanently in His own bosom the one who through the desires-of-love truly loves Him and so that He may mercifully elevate him unto a union of wholeness with Him,

[doing so] out of compassion for [him in his] solitude. As the Lord said: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; and so, I have drawn you, taking compassion upon you.”³⁵

[24] “Thy will be done, as *in Heaven ...*” (i.e., as was previously said, and when interpreting anagogically: with respect to what is constant, continually moving, and adorned with diverse lights) “... so *on earth*” (i.e., among sinners, who not without justification are properly named “earth,” since they are situated far from the region of fire). Through this consuming fire the purged soul is made lighter, so that while existing on earth, but loving and desiring, it may obtain celestial mansions; for where its love is, there it properly [is said to] dwell. For the name “earth” cannot be expounded anagogically with respect to its essence but only with respect to its cause. For just as love is the cause of the mind’s obtaining all good things through love, so the absence of love is the cause of all its deficiencies: viz., venial deficiency and mortal deficiency, penal deficiency and culpable deficiency. And this is what is meant [by calling] the sinner “earth”; for he is quite far removed from the lighter-making presence of inflamed love.

And with regard to such things as are called guilt *per se* or deficiency *per se*, there is another art of expounding anagogically; for these things do not have from themselves the property which the bride regards as an inclination toward her Beloved; for they are expounded in terms of the absence of love. For example, another creature or another Scripture has, included in itself, some property by which the bride is elevated unto the Bridegroom. [This means], when we switch over to the anagogical sense, that just as the presence of love is, properly speaking,ⁿ¹⁴ the cause of all good, so the absence of love is the occasion of all evil. [It is] not [the case] that the lack is something in the spirit. Rather, through the lack of love the soul now fails to have a restraining tether, as it were; being now unbridled, as it were, it roams about aimlessly, and it incurs all [manner of] wretchedness. And [all this] occurs not undeservedly, for “its face is made blacker than coals.”³⁶ And deprived of its diadem (viz., the Omnipotent God, its Lover), its status has become so worthless that all its friends (viz., the angels) have spurned it and have become its enemies. For it is no longer conformed to the celestial minds by the affinity of its love. And so, these minds are said to be inimical, inasmuch as it—being deprived of the regal seal—is far removed from its Succor, viz., the Omnipotent God. Therefore, the soul is, not unjustifiably, said to lack all good

when it is deprived of love, because its iniquities have divided between itself and God,³⁷ i.e., [between itself and] Him whom eye hath not seen nor ear heard.³⁸

Let these matters be meditated upon carefully and diligently and more clearly, with respect to the fact that they are manifestly confirmed by reference to cause or to essence or to love springing up unto eternal life³⁹ and obtaining joy and a quite full ray of eternal brightness.⁴⁰ [And let there be meditation] also upon howⁿ¹⁵ it is that the things that have just been said are manifestly confirmed.

The Mind's Fourth Request

[25] "... *our daily bread*," etc. [The soul] desires, for itself and for others, to be elevated through an increase of love. [It desires this] in order that having been elevated beyond itself and being now nearer to the Fount of all beauty, it may so take its fill of the refectible Word that, having been confirmed unchangeably in the Word, it not seek beggingly from another the wretched delight of lower [goods], as if it were in need of them. For the soul knows that it will straightway lapse into seeking forⁿ¹⁶ creaturely and fleshly comfort unless [it proceeds] by means of supercelestial refection, viz., by means of the bread-of-angels, which is love—[proceeds by] sucking continually on these delights obtained in the Fount of eternal beauty, so that it may be made full to some extent. And so, it seeks "bread," i.e., an increase of love, by which alone things infirm are made whole, things weak are made strong, and the hungry are made full.

[26] The soul seeks breadⁿ¹⁷ *today*; but it uses the word "daily" and proceeds in an orderly way. It says "daily" because not for a day or for an hour or for an instant can the mind live by means of true life unless it is continually moistened by a drop of living dew. For just as the soul is the life of bodies, so love is the life of spirits. As regards that dewdrop—and also as regards those things with respect to which the soul is not fully capable—the groomsmen, giving thanks to the Beloved, say to Him: "She sought life from You, and You granted it to her, O Lord."⁴¹ That life will continue not for a momentary time (as does corporeal life) but will continue unto the length of days, unto the ages, and without end. For the love by which the bride has totally loved the Bridegroom in the course of her life will not fail in the future; rather, it will be increased to such an extent that the prophetic word will be fulfilled—the word which the Most High uttered through the mouth of Isaiah, saying: "... the Lord, whose fire is

in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.”⁴² Or the point can be put in another way, in accordance with the fact that the present meaning is the anagogical meaning for *mind*. For just as unless the animal body were fed with perceptible bread once daily, the body would lose the vigor of bodily strength, so unless the mind by means of the movements of unitive love extends itself once a day by yearning for a kiss (except perhaps at a time when the mind goes out into a field in order to exercise or for the purpose of some modest bodily rest or for some other special reason), it is scarcely the case that in itself it is not rendered lukewarm and that it does not lose some of the perfection of its sublimity. This [fact] is not strange, since the Bridegroom awaits at the door, saying “Arise, hasten, my Love, and come.”⁴³

If, then, [the bride] absents herself with a very protracted delay, the Bridegroom, not unjustifiably, is displeased and withdraws Himself from her for a time. Quite often, too, although she loves Him with such intense feeling as previously, she will then say: “I sought at night Him whom my soul loves; I sought but did not find.”⁴⁴ The following is, properly speaking, to seek at night: [viz.,] at one time to rise up by reference to creatures, at another time to seek the Beloved by reference to creatures. As certain have wanted to say: to seek at night is to seek by reference to created things and by reference to created things’ traces. But this [meaning] does not befit anagogical and unitive movement, since [in unitive movement] the affections are joined to the Fount of eternal goodness with the support of love and apart from any mirror. Rather, the mind is said to seek by night when by some cause it is hindered in its upward activities, so that at times it feels that it is dark [in relation to Him] unto whom previously it was moved clearly, lucidly, and without impediment or darkness. Accordingly, the affections can scarcely be separated from an image-laden knowledge concerning Him unto whom they are moved. This separation occurs, at times, on account of [the mind’s] own neglect—or from other factors, as will be seen more clearly later. Therefore, “I sought but did not find”—[sought] in as great an agility of fervent affections as was usual for me.

Moreover, [the mind] asks *today*, i.e., in the present life and by reason of eternity. Eternity is simple and unique; it begins in the present life for those living in love. For the love by which the Bridegroom is loved in this present life is the same in numerical degree as that love by which the mind will be united in an eternity-of-glory to the Beatifier of all. And this is what is called *today*, a word which signifies

oneness and brightness. And for this reason, as regards the presence: it is called one presence because of its continuation (as was said). For he who is joined to God through love is fed more truly and more immediately by living bread than any body is coupled with another perceptible body through any material rope or chain. And this is what the divine Apostle says, praising the unitive sighs of the yearning soul: “He who is joined to God is one spirit [with Him].”⁴⁵ Therefore, the [unitive] presence is rightly to be called *one* in the case where, in an actually present way, not only is the bride near to the Beloved’s glances but where she is also called one-with-Him by the divine Apostle, hierarch of this wisdom.

[27] “*Today*” also means *light*; for the Sun of Justice⁴⁶ truly arises for the bride when she is instructed on how to be elevated unto higher things by means of the Sun’s rays. And so, in the Canticle [of Canticles] she is rightly called *morning*, where it is said: “Who is she who comes forth as the morning rising?”⁴⁷ For she begins to be fed by the bread of life when, growing after the manner of the dawning day and being elevated unto love, she feels herself being caught upwards, experientially, by the power of that love in its outgoing movements. Lest the possibility of being wrong [in this regard] be ascribed to the uninstructed and childlike, the foregoing experience is nothing other than the furthering of one’s movements, as well as a most fervent rising upwards by means of these movements. This [phenomenon] is perceived by an exercised mind not any the less than the bodily eye views a perceptible cow crossing along a pathway. At present we presuppose this fact, since in [the considerations] that come later, it will be proved by irrefutable arguments.

[28] Therefore, because eternity and the Bridegroom’s presence and light now begin to shine inwardly for the bride, the great hierarch, the Apostle, says regarding such matters: “Our conversation [i.e., our abode] is in Heaven.”⁴⁸ For the movement of the Sun of Justice ascends above the earth, i.e., above the loving mind still associated with an earthly body. Hereby, although [the mind] is hindered in many ways because of its own tendency, nevertheless with the south wind blowing and by the guidance of divine inspiration and by means of divinely sent rays, [the mind] is admitted on high to more divine undertakings when especially its lower part is closed off from worldly delights. But the followingⁿ¹⁸ is its upper part: [viz.,] the part that is united to God and is fed by the bread of life and of love—even though being terrestrial and not celestial, because of its lower part, it very

often experiences troubles, even though unwilling to.

Therefore, as much as it can, let [the mind] close the door of the affections so as not to look at lower things; rather, let it faithfully yearn for elevation unto God, in order that the Beloved may say to it when dining with it: “My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed—is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.”⁴⁹ She is called a garden and a fragrant rose. And the garden is called enclosed because no adversary or no relative obtains a particle of her true love—no one except Him who is being spoken of. He alone, by reason of His beautiful honor, removes nothing at all but rather refreshes, giving pleasing witness of Himself in the *Canticle of Canticles*, speaking as follows: “I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys.”⁵⁰ He seeks a dwelling not outside the mind but rather within the mind; and in order to accomplish this [quest] more effectively, the Most High—inviting Himself into the impoverished mind so that He may feed it with living bread, i.e., with the consolation of divine joy—speaks as follows: “Open unto me, my sister, my love, my dove; for my head is full of dew.”⁵¹ Here He adds an inviting condition, rousing her multiply and sweetly, so that on the part of the Beloved a full indication is had that through the Beloved it has not happened that the mind is not fully filled with profound benefits, gifts, and splendors. The head’s being “full of dew” means that just as the power of movement and of sensing descends from the head down to the lower members, which bear witness truly of life, so from the Most High, who is the Head of the entire church, a life of love and the feeling of joy flow into unitive minds.

The Mind’s Fifth Request

[29] The fifth request comes next: “... and forgive us our debts ...,” etc. Here the bride seeks to be freed immediately from three things. First,ⁿ¹⁹ [she seeks to be freed] from the evil of *venial* guilt, because *mortal* evils have [already] been removed from her by her Beloved on account of her rootedness in God. Secondly, [she seeks to be freed] from the evil of danger as regards both the evil of guilt and the evil of punishment. Thirdly, [she seeks freedom] from the evil of punishment, contracted through the fact that we frequently fall into guilt.

[30] First, the bride earnestly asks to be free from the evil of *venial* things—something that can be totally obtained by her only through the gift of love. For the mind has no light except from its

own spiritual Sun, which sheds its radiance undeviatingly on one who prepares himself, insofar as he prepares himself. But when because of a disorder of inner powers or because of inappropriate delights of the senses, the mind, seeking rest elsewhere than in the Fount of beatifying blessedness, is turned aside from the Bridegroom for awhile, then having been turned aside, it is without focus, unless it is illumined by the Light, the Fount of clarity. For the soul is somewhat obfuscated because of things venial. Likewise, if the soul seeks to gain delight elsewhere—as if it were not satisfied with Him who only by the vision of His beauty and by the attractiveness of His sweetness feeds every mind, angelic and human—then it is hindered, not undeservedly, by its own desire. Therefore, the soul seeks most attentively to be freed, so that it not be kept back from sweet entreaties on the part of its desires as they call upon the Bridegroom for His aid.

And so, in the person of one groaning and unable to rid himself of his earthly thoughts, it is said in the Book of Wisdom: “The body that is corrupted weighs down the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses upon many things.”⁵² For when the mind thinks many thoughts concerning lower things, and when it perceives the voices of creatures by being inwardly affected, it is so far removed from heavenly assistance that it is the less united to the Fount of blessedness to the extent that it is the more distracted through thinking different thoughts. And at that time the body is said to weigh down the soul because each of these [viz., the body, the soul] tends to the place that naturally befits it. And so, there is there a continual struggle and aggravation of mind, because the soul tends toward God, who alone constitutes an abode that is sufficient for it. But the body, by reason of its heaviness, must delight always [only] in the terrestrial.

[31] Or the matter can be interpreted otherwise: [The bride seeks to be freed from the evil of venial things] so that she not—on account of her being obfuscated and turned aside from the adorning light in the presence of so great a Bridegroom, whom she desires to embrace most intimately—be judged by Him to be unseemly, since she appears less comely to Him who especially considers in her, to the end of taking her as His bride, only the inner beauty. For her entreaty is accepted when through an inner beauty of mind she is conformed to super-celestial beauty. The Bridegroom especially apprises her of this beauty, when He speaks pleasingly in the [Canticle of] Canticles, where He said: “Your voice is sweet, and your face is comely.”⁵³ That is, your affections are decorous, because your voice savors only celestial things

and because your face is not disfigured by a host of venial and carnal affections. And so, to me your entreaty is sweet when I proclaim these things, addressing you through the pulse of the affections. And your face is comely and is prepared for the dignity of a royal wedding, because “in you there is no stain,”⁵⁴ which, however, is totally expunged only by means of perfect love. For the mind, rising up unto a union that is obtained immediately through the movement of love, is rectified, after having been turned aside; and thereupon by means of this rectifying and this rising up of the affections, venial guilt, like a drop of water falling into a fire, can in no way causeⁿ²⁰ the mind grievous harm through its increase or addition.

[32] Moreover, He calls *debts* those things by which we are rendered debtors, obligated justly by reason of some penalty, when the mind is less directed by Him who is true Blessedness and when rest from deliberation is desired elsewhere than in Him, who alone is the fullest and the sufficient Satisfier of the human mind’s desire. Thus, Truth itself speaks of its fullness and calls others to its sufficiency, saying: “come unto me allⁿ²¹ you who labor and are heavily laden”⁵⁵—come by means of the laborious but, nonetheless, pleasant exercise of the higher affections. For because of the continuing [earthly] dwelling and continuing unhappiness and the delay of glory, you say that you are heavily laden and are slowed down by the corporeal substance of the body’s burden.

“... andⁿ²² I will give you rest”—not *another* but *I*, who am Eternal Wisdom, appearing from on high, who imparts, not only in the future but even in the present, divine consolations that quiet your desires. For “because I am meek and lowly in heart,”⁵⁶ I incline myself toward those who through continual desirings call upon my abundance. I do not despise the poor, for I am humble in heart. The poorer the mind is with respect to its earthly riches, the more quickly I will elevate it—as being more like myself, above the limits of human nature—unto the regal marriage, uniting it with myself.ⁿ²³ To this [phenomenon] give heed not through speculation; but, rather, see it through an anticipatory taste; for you will not see unless you heed the word of the prophet, when he says: “Taste and see that the Lord is sweet.”⁵⁷ For rest will occur and the murmur of the yearning soul will properly cease when the soul will perceive in advance the Creator (who alone is greater than the soul) resting in the soul. And this is what is said subsequently: “... and you will find rest for your souls.”⁵⁸ And then the “yoke” of love “will be sweet and your burden light,”⁵⁹ for

by its worthiness and by its agreeable appealingness the yoke of love so inwardly binds the will that he who positions his neck for bearing this most pleasant yoke feels no discomfort.

[33] For contrary to the usual case as regards other yokes, this yoke is most obviously assented to by those who bear it. For as regards those bearing another yoke: under it their necks are inclined more lowly; but this yoke so elevates the one bearing it that it makes those dwelling on earth to live in Heaven; and by extending us above ourselves, it makes us fellow-citizens with the Heavenly spirits. And so, it is called *light* truly, because elevating the mind away from lower things and upwards toward higher things makes the mind light by situating it above itself. Moreover, [the yoke] is called sweet, because the one wearing it lives by the life of angels not by the life of men—a state that is [attained] more imperfectly now but one that will be obtained happily and most fully upon separation of soul and body.

[34] Or [the yoke] is called sweet because it causes this bitter life of the soul to lead to such great joy and inner agreeableness—because the life of glory now begins for it—that the agreeableness of mind, on account of its superabundance, prevails over the punitive miseries of the body, totally absorbing them. [The burden] is called light also because of the fattiness of the inner soul—like a fat bird, a bird filled with fattiness and situated on a perch near burning coals, so that the need for coolness (i.e., so that the excessive heat) does not cause it any harm. Thus, [the soul] rightly perceives in advance that which the Bridegroom previously promised, when He said: “I am your Protector”⁶⁰ when you are attracted by my sweet yoke, and “I am your exceedingly great reward”⁶¹ when you seeⁿ²⁴ me in glory and receive me (not any other thing) as the stipend for your former military service.⁶² But “exceedingly” [is said] because although I now withhold from you your joy until the time of complete knowledge: after you bear my yoke for awhile in your misery, I will mercifully communicate to you myself as I will be in glory.

The Mind's Sixth Request

[35] Next come [the words]: “*And lead us not into temptation.*” For the mind is led into temptation when it is overwhelmed, having been ensnared by such great allurements that now it partly consents to this wicked deed to which the very beguiling Seducer insistently prompts it to be inclined. Therefore, the bride—not losing confidence in the continual assistance of her Beloved but considering the weak-

ness of human flesh—asks that she be delivered from this danger. Hereupon she knows that she has been steadfastly freed from this danger: [viz.,] when she is presented to her most benevolent Protector by means of her most deeply rooted desires. And so, she alwaysⁿ²⁵ strenuously endeavors to be elevated by means of her affections, so that she may deserve to attain Him and to call upon Him by means of her affectional supplications. Relying on His mercy, she despises the military formations of the enemy, being contemptuous of the very strong tempters, because of her confidence in her Beloved, who long ago promised her through the Psalmist: “Becauseⁿ²⁶ he hoped in me I will deliver him ...,” etc.⁶³

[36] There is also *another reason* [why the bride prays for deliverance]: viz., because of the grievous ambushes of the enemy, who, according as they are permitted to be adversaries, concurrently rage against the bride to the extent that she, being subjected immediately to the Creator, has removed herself farther from the enemy’s dominion. And because the enemy do not prevail with a stronger temptation, they persecute the bride more furiously with multiple insolences and with frequency of multiple temptations. [Hereby] they hope that “the Jordan may flow into their mouth”⁶⁴ and that “gold may be strewed under them like mire.”⁶⁵ For the Jordan flows into the mouth of demons when the rivulet of love that goes out from the Fount of eternal blessedness (through which Fount life descends unto the spirit) is interrupted as if by a most secret aqueduct. [When this happens, then] throughout the parts of the body rivulets of mundane desires and waves of terrestrial cherishings are precipitated and fill the soul with violent flowings, once the balsam-tree of affectionate love is suffocated—the love through which the soul speaks in its desires. And gold is strewed like mire when the sweetest love for the Creator (a love that beautifies the soul by its decorousness and insignifies the soul with highly exalted worthiness) is, deplorably, changed into love for the creature (a love that besmirches the higher aspect of the soul).

[37] And so, she asks to be freed, calling upon Him with her desires, so that because of her having obtained His love more effectively, He not will to fail her. She has trodden under foot earthly joys and the kingdoms of the Devil. And so, through the prophet, the Beloved has promised her again, in her state of desiring, that not only will He hear her request but as a happy commander and comrade He will also free her totally by His agreeable presence; and on account of her vic-

tory and her fidelity, He will rewardⁿ²⁷ her with a crown of glory. [Through the prophet] He speaks as follows: “He shall cry to me, and I will hear him. [I am] with him . . .,” etc.⁶⁶

[38] The *third reason* on account of which [the bride] prays to be freed from danger is that the mind that is united with God no longer seeks the things that are its own.⁶⁷ [Rather,] it follows the Blessed Teacher, who causes Hisⁿ²⁸ sun to rise upon the good and the bad.⁶⁸ That is, He sends forth the rays of His goodness unto those who are good; and, at length, He draws [good men] unto Himself by means of these rays. Moreover, He hovers expectantly over evil men from outside them—just as the ray of the sun awaits expectantly at a closed window—without at all departing from the nature of His goodness. But He knocks continually in order that no rational spirit—Christian, infidel, or Jew—suffer a lack of divine love because of a failure on the part of the Conferrer[-of-love]. Therefore, when he who loves faithfully sees the infinite ruin of souls, he labors more intently—both in terms of inner prayer and in terms of a certain spiritual exercise—in order that all the [spiritually] dead may be aroused to a life of love and in order that all those who have been blinded may come to a knowledge of the most lucid Divine Truth. The mind that is united with God can, by reason of friendship, obtain from the Beloved very many benefits for sinners. For it is characteristic of faithful and true friends that in all respects they want the same things and do not want the same things;⁶⁹ and for this reason [a friend] grants the requested service. Therefore, by praying and beseeching the Beloved, [the loving soul] can remove much booty from the enemy, and in doing so it may incur their furious indignation. And for this reason the soul seeks, on behalf of all, that they be freed from their bonds.

[39] In accordance with what more greatly besuits the present treatise the *last reason* [for the bride’s petition] is [the following]: because she foreknows by experience how agreeable it is to love such a kindly Beloved, she thinks it more bitter than death to consent [to sinning] in any small degree, lest [by sinning] she be separated from so happyⁿ²⁹ a fellowship either now or forever. Instead, [she regards it as] an intolerable disgrace that a mind that senses in a holy way what that agreeableness is should lend its ear to the enemy’s counsels⁷⁰ and discourses and should value worldly joys and earthly riches—as if the mind did not know by experience what is truly good.

Since the mind has been maximally and happily instructed, it has rebuked, in the following way, sinful souls because they have

wretchedly departed from this Fount of goodness: “your wickedness shall reprove you, and your apostasy shall rebuke you.”⁷¹ [40] Afterwards, the reason therefor is added, in the words: “Know and see how bitter, how difficult, and how harsh it is for you to have leftⁿ³⁰ the Lord your God”⁷²—signifying that the soul has incurred a double unhappiness because on account of baseness it clung shamelessly to the lower creation on account of worldly delight. And so, by the just judgment of God it will obtain not delight but rather bitterness, so that by means of those things by which it wanted to be satisfied—by means of delights in creaturely things—the mind is filled with infinite bitterness. For the more that worldly delight enters into the hidden recesses of the spirit, the more the deplorable soul is filled with noxious poison. Not only does the baseness by means of which the soul, having spurned the Creator, clings to the creature render the soul blameworthy for its own inferior baseness, but also the soul’s turning away from the Fount of all blessedness reproves it. For that Fount is the supreme and only Good; and so, all things are called good insofar as they partake more fully of that Fount. But if they do not partake of it—something which, nevertheless, is impossible—none of them ought to be called good. In a similar way, the Fount of goodness, of agreeableness, and of joy imparts rivulets of its blessedness to minds. And according to the preparedness of the receiving minds it mercifully infuses itself—less to certain minds, more to other minds.

When, therefore, the soul [is separated] from that Fount, without which there is no joy at all except insofar as joy is derived farther down from that Fount, it is not strange if the soul is rendered sad, since the soul is separated from the Fount. For the aqueduct of love, through which the soul obtained from the Creator agreeableness and experiential joy, has been pierced through and is broken; and so, when with continual sluggishness the mind is composed within itself, it is reprovved because, being cut off, it does not sense Him from whom all agreeableness emanates and descends, [Him whom] unheard of delight surrounds and singular joy attends. From the foregoing danger the soul is totally freed and very victoriously liberated through its affections and desires for its Beloved. For because of that which it senses, it despises the [worldly] delights that are available to it. It triumphs over its enemies to such an extent that [it triumphs over] that which they believe they have inflicted on it unto its shame—triumphs thereupon through a manly uprising against them. And it obtains fuller grace from its Beloved and a

closer union with Him and a crown of glory.

The Mind's Seventh Request

[41] The seventh request comes next: "... *but deliver us from evil.*" Here [the bride] asks to be freed from the many propensities that urge [her] toward sinning. For although the mind, having been instructed by experience, yearns for a more intimate union (a union that is above all thought), and although the mind desires to be elevated unto its Beloved, nevertheless by reason of the earthly body and of the flesh that is inimical to the spirit, which is intent on being elevated, [the soul] is at some time turned aside from Heaven in the direction of seeking lustful things of the senses. And at some time the soul, by raising itself upwards through love, endeavors to dwell in Heaven; and at some time it finds itself in mire because of its thoughts.

[42] Therefore, because the mind execrably abhors the fact that what is the sacristy of the entire Trinity should heed lustful [inner] promptings and should shamelessly and deliberately be inclined toward something on account of which it is rendered contemptible to the Bridegroom, it asks out of manifold desire to be freed from these [promptings and inclinations]—to be freed not in order to avoid the punishment that is due it but in order not to incur a bedarkening vilification by which it can be judged by its Beloved to be in some respect less valuable. Hence, the mind must so incline its ear unto that most kind Father, through whom it has been begotten in a life of love, and must so open inwardly the eye of its intellect, that it cling to the Spiritual Father in total fervor of love. [And it must do this to such an extent] that it yearn for the Bridegroom's mansion⁷² and that out of love for the Bridegroom it forget its native land and its parents, so that without the contamination of any other caused or created thing, but adorned with virginal decorousness, it be rendered desirable to that Heavenly Bridegroom. Moreover, the Most High, desiring to communicate Himself to that mind, created it in His image from nothing—created it imprinted with the image of the entire Trinity and to the end that it give to Him alone, both in this life and in the life to come, the obedience of inflamed love.

[43] Therefore, let [the Bride] hearken continually to the very sweet counsel of the one issuing an invitation through the Prophet David: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear,"⁷⁴ and so on, up to [the words] "the Lord your God." And in this way, through the efficacy of her love and by means of her many sighs, the

bride can fully obtain [her request]. For just as by means of the first birth, the soul when it is infused [into the body] receives from the flesh those corruptions by which it often lapses to lower things, so, conversely, by means of the second birth, by which the soul is begotten perfectly in God, the flesh, by means of a retrograde and reverse ordering, is purified by the inner richness of the mind. Thus, in the first birth the soul was wounded by the flesh; but in the second birth the flesh, anointed by the consecrating affection of a fragrant and trickling love, receives health from the soul through things contrary [to the flesh]. Thus, the mind—now reformed in part by reason of the obedience of its lower powers, and now in harmony with its primordial beginning—rules over the flesh. After the mind has obtained victory from on high, it renders due praise to the Bridegroom. And, having been heard, it sings because of a double benefit: viz., because of the introducing of fire into the spirit and of moisture into the flesh—moisture that extinguishes the fetid penalties of the flesh. The mind now possesses the Bridegroom in the affection of freedom; it now walks in the light. By His help it now has been raised from the drowsiness of the flesh; now rising up to the Bridegroom, it is attentively watchful, saying: “O God, my God: for You do I watch at daybreak. My soul has thirsted for You.”⁷⁵ For after the soul is freed from penal defects, so that it is not subject to them, it begins to stand watchfully at its entrance, desiring more intently and with more fervent affections than now, as a result of this endeavor, the flesh begin to keep silent and to consent to the spirit, to which it was inimical all these past days.

Conclusion Drawn from Examining the Lord’s Prayer

[44] Thus, then, through an example given in one instance, [viz., the instance of the Lord’s Prayer], it is evident how marvelous a knowledge—how broad, how deep, how tasty, how noble—is hidden in the Scriptures. By means of this knowledge the bride is taught to separate herself from lower things in order subsequently to be regarded as pleasing and acceptable at the royal wedding. Therefore, let no one doubt that the entire text of the New Testament and of the Old Testament can be explained, according to the anagogicalⁿ³¹ way, from the conversations of the Bridegroom and the bride and from their discussions—can be explained if love leads the way and if there is accompanying light. And [let no one doubt that] not only the Scriptures but also all creatures whatsoever—be they from the lowest center of Hell—can most appropriately be adduced for this same [anagogic]

purpose, since hiddenⁿ³² in themselves they have, in accordance with their most noble properties, that wisdom which can be easilyⁿ³³ disclosed by light radiating from on high.

Recapitulation of the Lord's Prayer

[45] There follows [a summarizing section] as regards the illuminative way, which is twofold: practical and theoretical. First, there must be said something about the practical [illuminative way] by means of which the mind actually ascends unto God through reflecting. Secondly, there will be said, as regards the theoretical [illuminative way], how it is that all Scripture leads one anagogically back to God. But having explained how the anagogical meaning is hidden in the Scriptures, we must explain how one ascends through this illuminative way unto the unitive way. And this explanation is based on the following word of the Psalmist: "In my meditation a fire shall flame out."⁷⁶ Because the mind that is still learning is unsuited for being brought expeditiously unto the Beloved by means of anagogical affections, it must first meditate for awhile in the aforesaid manner, in order that by means of guiding reflection it may begin a little to be brought glowingly unto Him unto whom the mind, in the third stage,⁷⁷ is elevated without hindrance and as often as it wills to be and without any guiding or accompanying reflection. Whenⁿ³⁴ the mind will be able to attain perfectly unto accomplishing this [drawing nigh]: in its being elevated, all reflection and meditation will be removedⁿ³⁵ from this wisdom, because there is no reflecting there; there is only the fact that the affections are now kindled by [the previous] reflecting.

[46] In this way, then, as a usual rule, let [the mind] proceed by means of the aforementioned meditating. First of all, as was stated, let it transfer the proper meaning of a word to the anagogical meaning. Next, let it refer that anagogical meaning to love. Thirdly, let it be affected by, God granting, what is in the meaning. For example, [let the mind consider the word] "*Father*": i.e., You are the one who begets spiritual sons by means of an enlivened seed of love. So, I will truly be Your son when I embrace You in true love. O when will I love You, when will I embrace You in my heart of hearts?

[Let the mind proceed] similarly by means of the fact that [the word] "*our*" is used: i.e., You are the one who most broadly diffuses Your goodness. If, then, I would love You truly, You would instill in me something of Your most broad diffusion. O when will I love You so fervently that Your wide-spread goodness will appear in me somewhat?

[Let the mind proceed] similarly by means of the uttered words “*in Heaven*”—and so on, as regards the other words, transferring [the meanings of] all of them anagogically.

[47] And in the foregoing way the affection of love is little by little inflamed through guiding-meditation and through these yearnings. For just as [a fuse] of hemp is first made dry by being exposed to the sun’s ray and then forthwith is lit, so through these yearnings that call forth the Beloved, the one who is affectionate is raised up unto elevation of mind. Therefore, let the following be said: “... *who art in Heaven.*” O my wretched soul, when will you be made bright and shining after the fashion of the heavens and be adorned by stars of diverse powers? For then, Good Father, you would gladly dwell in me. O when will I experience You? When will I embrace You with most fervent love? And when will my wretched soul, full of dross, be purified by the flames of love? Most assuredly, You would thereupon enter into me and would visit the clean abode of my conscience.

[48] “*Hallowed be Thy name*” comes next. O good Father, when will a knowledge of You be sanctified [in me]?—that is, be effected in wretched me apart from the earth? It will be when You alone are loved above all other things and when all carnality is pushed aside. O when, then, will I hold You fast?—for if I had only You, I would count myself as having all riches. For the earth would no longer have any place in wretched me if You, sweet Father, dwelt in me through love and grace.

[49] “*Thy Kingdom come.*” Woe unto me, a sinner! At times, vainglory wills to dwell in me and to reign in me; at times, gluttony; at times, licentiousness. But I want only You, Good Father, to reign in me. You would truly reign in me if I truly and fervently loved You, for You are at rest only in the love of the fervent soul, as in Your own abode. O when, then, will I hold You fast through the bond of most fervent love, so that You may begin to reign in me and so that You alone may come to reign in my shadowy kingdom?

[50] “*Thy will be done, as in Heaven so also on earth.*” For Your will shall be accomplished fundamentally in me when in accordance with human frailty I, who am wretched and earthly, consent in every respect to Yourⁿ³⁶ will—even as do those blessed spirits who contemplate You face to face in Heaven. But Most Sweet God, what would make me consent to You except the fervency-of-love that joins together opposing wills and that knows how to conform the loving man to You Yourself who are loved and who transforms that man in

a wonderful manner “from brightness to brightness.”⁷⁸ When, then, O Good [Lord], will I love You truly and whole-heartedly, and when will I, being united to You by a bond of love, consent only to You?

[51] “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” O Bread of angels, when will I be restoringly fed by your most pleasant refection? For angels and saints live blessedly in Heaven to the extent that they partake of You, Good Father, by means of flaming affections. O when will I have the bread of love, so that I may presently be nourished by the same food by which angels and saints are satisfyingly fed in Heaven and so that I may eat from the crumbs that fall from the table of my Lord? O Good Father, give me this bread today, not just tomorrow or afterwards, for my heart will be restless until it is soothed somewhat by this Heavenly bread. This bread is called *daily* because the more it is eaten, the more it is desired by desire that is daily.

[52] “*And forgive us our debts.*” O Good Creditor, when shall I know that the debts for my sins are forgiven me? For if I would love You truly, then I would know, by a certain intimate tasting, that they have been forgiven me. For just asⁿ³⁷ my sin has rendered me inimical to You by separating wretched me from You, so, necessarily, would love, by uniting me to You, bring it about that all [my sins] be forgiven and would cause me, once odious to You, to be reconciled unto You and would render me pleasing to You. O when, then, will I attain untoⁿ³⁸ You in love, so that with all my sin forgiven I will experience You, with an experiential knowledge, to be reconciled unto me?

[53] “*And lead us not into temptation.*” O Good Father, I ask this not because I distrust Your goodness. Rather, since because of so many sins I cannot avoid hidden dangers and snares, I seek to be bound to You by a bond of inseparable love. For I know that because the fragrance of Your love draws wretched me unto You, I may easily—once I am bound and restrained by so great a bond—despise all things that are opposed [to You] and may cling inseparably to You, once You alone have been found. O who, then, will help me to embrace You alone?—You who alone are the soul’s good and sweet guest and who alone will makeⁿ³⁹ disquieted me now to be at peace.

[54] “*But deliver us from evil*”—not only from the evil of Hell but also from that of Purgatory. However, Father, I ask this not in order to escape from physical pain but for the reason that there is sorrow in either situation. For if I were in Hell, I would never see You face to face; and if I will be in Purgatory, for a long time after my death, my

[unfulfilled] desire to see You will be exceedingly prolonged—[my desire to see] Your Face, which is full of grace and which the angels ever desire to gaze upon.⁷⁹ But were I to love You fervently, then reconciling-love would free [me] from punishment-in-Hell, which is owed for my offense. If I were to love You truly, the flame of love would so consume the rust of sins that in the final exit of death myⁿ⁴⁰ spirit, purified by flaming affections, would without any delay soar up unto long-desired You. O, then, Good Father, when will I love You with this fervor which both removes punishment in Hell and frees me from the protracted punishment of Purgatory's fire?