

[THE UNITIVE WAY]

[*Via Unitiva*]

[1] Now that we have spoken about what the *illuminative* way is and about how through it one ascends actually unto union [with God], we speak of what the *unitive* way is. Secondly, [we will speak] about the inducements to the unitive way and, thirdly, about the spiritual activities [*industriæ*] by which the mind is most firmly established in it. And [all of] this [discussion] pertains to practice, i.e., to use. If someone who is simple cannot follow this sequential order, then let him at least grieve in some manner or other. Secondly, even if he does not know how to meditate on the Scriptures, as has [just] been discussed, let him at least yearn for love, always saying in his prayers and petitions: “O Lord, when will I embrace You with most sweet love?” And, in this way, no matter how simple or laical he is, he will be able through grief over his sins (as if through a kissing of the foot), through a recalling of his benefits (as if through a kiss on the hand), [to progress] all the way to a kiss-on-the-mouth, which occurs by means of the desires of love, when he importunes: “Let him kiss me with a kiss of His mouth.”¹ And this [request] will no longer be deemed presumptuous if first of all he engages in kissing the foot and the hand and subsequently, at another time, yearns for a kiss on His mouth.

Authoritative Bases of the Unitive Way

[2] However, this unitive way is taken from the following words, where it is said: “O Wisdom, You that have sprung from the mouth of the Most High, reaching mightily from end to end and arranging all things sweetly, come in order to teach us the way of practical wisdom.”² For [these] are the words of the Church, yearning and desiring to be instructed by Him who is the Fount and Origin of all goodness. For although these words are properly about Uncreated Wisdom itself, which is the Son of God, in whose eternal issuing-forth the Supreme Father’s emanation of goodness has appeared, nevertheless the present meaning in the present context is about wisdom itself according as it is sent forth temporally, manifesting itself to the rational spirit. This meaning is described by the distinguished teacher Blessed Dionysius, speaking as follows in *De Divinis Nominibus* VII: “Wisdom is the most divine knowledge of God. It is known through ignorance (in accordance with a union that is above the mind) when the

mind, withdrawing from all other things and subsequently taking leave [even] of itself, is united to super-resplendent rays and is illumined by an inscrutable and profound light of wisdom.”³ This is that wisdom of Christians; it has flowed divinely to believers by means of a sacred diffusion that is inclusive of the entire Trinity. By means of this diffusion the minds-of-those-who-love, minds perfused with celestial moisture, desire not some temporal benefit and not any gifts of the Bridegroom—viz., grace, power, or glory—but to attain Him, who is the Beginning of all Godlike emanation. By means of glowing affections, insatiable desires, and unitive yearnings [they desire to attain] Him alone—desiring nothing other [than] to be united to Him.

Unitive Wisdom qua Mystical Theology

[3] Therefore, the rising upwards by means of flaming affections of unitive love—a rising upwards that is effected in the summit of the affections, above every operation of the intellect—is the wisdom being referred to at present. This wisdom is the same thing as mystical theology, by which the mind, kindled by the expressions of the affections, most secretly addresses the Beloved. Thisⁿ¹ wisdom is not disclosed by the spiritual activity [*industria*] of any mortal; rather, only by divine mercy does it make itself appear manifestly to the mind. It is praised in the foregoing words [of Scripture]⁴—is praised with respect to its being eternal (insofar as by virtue of its immensity it stretches from end to end) and is praised with respect to its likewise being temporal (insofar as it arranges all things, viz., rational spirits, sweetly).

The Orderedness of the Mind

[4] By means of the divine light illumining [us] from on high, we will show—first with respect to things supercelestial—how through the aforesaid wisdom the rational spirit, having been reliably instructed by that wisdom, is sweetly disposed with respect to all things. For in the Most Blessed Trinity the Son goes out from the Father; and the Holy Spirit, who is true Love, proceeds from them both, uniting the Father and the Son. Similarly, unitive wisdom proceeds unitively from the Fount of supernal goodness and (having entered the mind, which is still journeying here below) unites the mind to the Uncreated Spirit. Accordingly, just as although the Father and the Son are distinct they are called *one* by reason of a Uniting Love, so too although the mind is nothing, nevertheless by means of the wisdom by which alone it is joined to the Supreme Spirit it is rewarded with the enjoyment of such nobility that it is said to be one

with Him. In the words of the Apostle: “He who is joined to God is one spirit.”⁵

But this ordering, which is acquired through the wisdom of unitive love, appears not only by reason of the order of the Persons but also by reason of the Divine Acts. For the following are two co-eternal Acts, consubstantial with the Blessed God: viz., knowing Himself and loving Himself. Therefore, in that the mind is lovingly aflame in God and through its fervor knows with highly reliable knowledge (as if it were lying in the mid-day heat of glowing love and were aglow therein), it loves God as with an unspeakable fervor. And knowing God more intimately through this fervent love—[i.e.,] knowing Him not only by way of perceptible creatures—the mind is conformed to Him as far as is possible. And the mind is even transformed into Him by means of a deifying love. In this way the most expressly disposed mind is an imitator of the eternal Acts.

[5] But [the mind is disposed] not only as is the order of the [Divine] Persons and not only as is the eternity of the Divine Acts but also according as the Most Blessed God is the Originating Fount of every creature—both of the angelic mind and of the human mind, both of the creature that is capable of perceiving and of the creature that is incapable of perceiving. Hence, when the creature is returned unto that Beginning from which it has its primal origin: even in this respect, the excellence of the creature is alone indicated. Therefore, because the rational spirit is created by the Creator *immediately* and is marked with the image of the Trinity, it excels other, lower creatures by virtue of its fuller dignity. And it is perfected and reformed by divine judgment when, by means of extensive love that compels it to transcend its natural limits, it is united by an ecstatic elevating of love—united to Him from whom it primordially went forth—so that now a circle begins to appear with respect to the rational spirit, as it returns unto Him from whom it went out at the beginning.

[6] But not only is the Eternal Creator Himself the Beginning and the Origin of every creature but all things, too, by means of their own eternal forms are governed by so immutable an ordering that all things whatsoever, being under the governance of Divine Providence, come to rest in a final way in their own orderings. In this way the mind, rising up by means of imploring-affections or intimate affections, besprinkles its flesh, moistening it in a certain wonderful manner. [It does so] at least with respect to the following end: that the innate corruption be gradually weakened in the flesh to the extent that the mind,

by means of quite fervent exercise, is so stretched forth unto things supernal that by means of divine mercy it enjoys the following victory: that the more it submits itself to its Creator by means of intact love, the more the flesh, being subjected to the spirit by a natural edict, obeys the mind's command. By means of Divine judgment it may happen that just as the harmonious mind is conveyed to its Superior through love, so too there results harmony between the mind and the subjected body, so that the mind—in its own body, as in its kingdom—presides and says with the Psalmist: “My soul has thirsted for You; in very many ways my flesh has thirsted for You.”⁶

Divine Governance

[7] But the Most High Creator of all things not only willed to have pre-eminence over creatures, as being their Creator, and to govern all things, as being their Ruler, but at the end of time He also undertook, as if being an exile from Majestic Highness, to journey with the wretched. And, at length, at the end of His journeyings, He ascended unto Heavenly mansions. Now, the mind, when disposed through ecstatic love, is conformed to Him who thus existed in the flesh and returned into Heaven. But the mind, which in its primordial creation goes forth from its Creator as free, is adapted to existing in the foregoing way in the flesh and to returning unto Heaven when disposed through ecstatic love. But being conjoined to the corruption of corporeal necessity and being subjected to servitude in various ways, the mind is made impoverished. But in the future, when the mind is elevated by a supercelestial infusion of, and by the lengthy exercise of, fervent yearnings, it will in a certain way attain the pledged gift of eternal happiness. For where its love is placed, there it dwells; and it finds rest in Him—as in a natural endⁿ²—unto whom it tends in terms of a disquieting tendency of its desires. And so, the mind, through unitive wisdom, is conformed to Him who has appeared—who in the beginning exists as the Most High, who, secondly, with respect to His earthly state exists as poor, and who, thirdly, ascends into Heaven as glorified. Thus, in the [Book of the] Apocalypse it is rightly saidⁿ³ of these same true lovers, to whom in a certain way childlike innocence has now been returned by way of the purification of flaming love: “They follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”⁷

[8] The mind living in loveⁿ⁴ is disposed through the aforesaid wisdom in the aforesaid ways—disposed not only in respect to the Creator but also in respect to the blessed, who rejoice in glory. [It is

disposed] with respect to the fact that one Eternal Rest, viz., the Most Blessed God, is established as the unique, immediate, and most desired End for each [of these states].⁸ However, there is a difference, in that the glorified mind is already presently at rest in God by way of His actual presence; but the earthly mind yearns, with insatiable desires and as absent, to be elevated by means of ineffable fervor, in order to be intimately united only to Him and to speak the following words: “Draw me. We will run after You in the odor of Your ointments.”⁹ Butⁿ⁵ let that [mind] say: “The King has brought me into the cellar of wine.”¹⁰ Likewise, that mind, after having obtained most perfectly Heavenly union with the Bridegroom, is delighted by unspeakable happiness.

But the [earthly] mind, united [to the Bridegroom] by the aforementioned wisdom, to be sure tends upwards; but with respect to its anagogical motions it exists amid their actual exercise and without any agreeable anointing or without any delight. Instead, bodily affliction is present there in a marvelous manner. But from this affliction comes only joy over the fact that in its actual direction the mind is rising directly and without swerving—just as a stone moves [directly] downwards toward the center—unto its Most Blessed [God], who is the unique locus that naturally corresponds to the mind’s dignity.

Disparity of Body and Soul

[9] Hence, many who are less experienced in this philosophy are deceived, thinking that the mind that rises upwards is, in the course of its anagogical movements, besprinkled in many respects with celestial sweetness. Yet, on the contrary, [this] mind is moved by a most effortful upward movement; and because of the spirit’s stretching forth there is a certain weakening of the body and a separating from it of the spirit and also a straining of the bodily members as a result of the impetuosity of the anagogical movements—in accordance with that word of Job: “My soul chooses hanging, and my bones choose death.”¹¹ Hence, the body could not sustain the anagogical impulses without [experiencing] great affliction, unless the spirit’s joy moderated [the affliction] by means of its unswerving direction. Likewise, the happy, [glorified] mind is affected, as by eternal sweetness, because of continual and indivisible exercise in the Supreme Good. But this [earthly mind] rises upward unto the Supreme Good in intense and step-by-step fashion. Its movement most properly imitates the emission of a sparkling star—were it the case that the star’s emissions pro-

ceeded from free will. For the mind's anagogical movements are, as it were, sudden. Thus, the mind, immediately after its being elevated, slips downward below itself; again and again it rises upward, and again and again it lapses beneath itself.

Glorified and Non-glorified Minds

Similarly, the glorified mind is united by a most fervent union to Him whose beauty it contemplates face to face. Thus, although knowledge and love are present together there, nevertheless knowledge naturally precedes delight. But this [earthly, non-glorified] mind, which is actively aiming at this rising upwards, completely repeals (with respect to this aim) the operations of all reason and of all intellect in regard to these movements. (For the intellect, because of the communication of the corrupted flesh, is mixed with images.) And so, intellectual activity ought to be removed during love's uplifting; but in Heaven, where the corruption of the flesh will be set aside, the mind will be purified. And so, the mind is raised upwards only through the uplifting of inflamed affection; for in that situation the affective power incomparably excels the intellectual power—as will be demonstrated very soon. And although in the foregoing respects, as well as in many others, the mind that is ascending upwards anagogically is incomparably surpassed by glorified minds, nevertheless by means of this wisdom [that is being discussed] both [kinds of] minds are enlivened by the same supercelestial life, and both are fed by the same appetizing bread.

The Mind's Likeness to Angels

[10] But also through this same wisdom the mind is disposed in an orderly way toward conformity (as far as is possible for a journeying, [earthly] spirit) to angelic minds. For angels are immaterial and intellectual substances that are altogether free from all corporeal oppression, since they are altogether absorbed by the unchangeable brightness of the joys of eternal light. Accordingly, when divine wisdom, by the free gift of its indisputable goodness, announces its presence to the journeying mind—announces it by means of the experiential knowledge of the extended affections—it opens the eyes of the intellect because of its nearness to the intellect. For in itself the intellect is most properly light and brightness. And because through the contact of love the [human] spirit is quite closely united to Him who is higher, the carnal affections are deservedly the more nullified. And thereby, the intellect—while in the flesh, but extended above the flesh—is more and more absorbed [by light]. And so, leading an an-

gelic life of love by way of its desires, let it say with the Apostle: “For me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain.”¹² [11] Therefore, the more the mind, through the feet of the affections, yearns fervently to find rest in Him who is True Life, the less it is united to carnal affection, since it perceives those things that are of the spirit and, as a result, is more and more absorbed within God. And, thus, in a certain manner it imitates by means of this wisdom angelic life—[imitates it] not at a great distance, even though the three aforesaid¹³ miseries [remain].

[12] But also through this wisdom, at length, the rational spirit is disposed within itself in a most orderly way. For the highly reliable sign of human neediness is made evident when the rational spirit, going outside itself, expects to find in some other creature rest from its inclination and its appetite. For since the human mind is judgedⁿ⁶ to be more excellent than are other visible creatures, supercelestial wisdom dwells in it more fully and more eminently, because the human mind is an *image*, whereas other things are [but] *vestiges*. Therefore, when the human mind perceives within itself the previously hidden treasure of divine wisdom as opened by divine goodness, the mind is no longer sustained by its impoverished need of some other delight and is no longer inclosed within itself, degenerating away from its primordial nobility. Rather, having left behind a certain agreeableness, it is [now] delighted with continual joy as a result of its more intimate union with God. And it says with Blessed Job, not wanting to be separated from God by anything else: “I shall die in my nest, and as a palm tree shall I multiply my days.”¹⁴

The Nobility of Unitive Wisdom

And not only does [divine wisdom] dispose the soul insofar as it makes it to rest within divine wisdom itself, removing its alien neediness, but it disposes the soul also by reason of the preciousness of that wisdomⁿ⁷ that is [now] present in the mind. For the more noble or [the more] sound is the *habitus* that is possessed, the more the spirit is angelic. For if reason considers to investigate, or intellect to perceive, all treasures, all that is precious and delightful, and whatever the eye can see, then the mind regards them as nothing in comparison with this wisdom by which alone God is possessed in the heart. Instead, the mind affirms before every wise man that “in comparison with that wisdom gold will be esteemed as clay.”¹⁵ Why? Because in that wisdom there is such great nobility and dignity and attractiveness that what-

ever things are desired cannot be compared with it.

[13] Moreover, the nobility of the [wisdom] appears not only by reason of its presence in the [rational] spirit but also by reason of many other gifts—whether things freely given or things acquired—that are judged more delectable in comparison with other things. For through that wisdom faith is confirmed, hope is reinforced, and love is inflamed. [14] For faith is herein confirmed: viz., that by way of the senses the mind perceives that it is drawn by a highly reliable knowledge unto Him who alone satisfiesⁿ⁸ its desire. And the mind knows this [Being] very truly—even more truly than the physical eye sees a physical object. Therefore, if the mind so very reliably knows Him unto whom it tends by means of these upward movements, there is now confirmed in a certain manner the fact that He is the only true God and true Lord, whom [the mind] worships by faith. Moreover,ⁿ⁹ since those who are beginners and starters must arrive at this wisdom by way of the benefits of the Incarnation and the Passion [of Christ], and since the affections are more and more inflamed through a consideration thereof,ⁿ¹⁰ as regards the divinity: it is necessary (when the mind is now actually elevated unto this wisdom) that by a right ordering the mind arrive at that [destination] and in this way know, as a result, the union of divinity and humanity.

The Certitude of Faith

[15] But, moreover, the mind by means of this wisdom is fully made certain regarding many things that pertain to faith (although the mind is still unhappy). Therefore, let each believing soul know that from the mind's attaining this wisdom, then if all the wise men of the world, all the philosophers, were to protest, to declare, and to say, "Your faith is not true faith, but, rather, you are deceived," that believer should reply in a contrary manner to his opponents: "You are all mistaken, and I alone am holding the true faith." [He is holding it] much more reliably than by way of reasons and of investigations, since through the union of love he has in his heart an unshakeable foundation. Thus, he may say with the Apostle: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain"¹⁶

[16] Not only is faith confirmed through this wisdom but also hope is reinforced. For since hope is a certain expectation of future happiness, it is reinforced through this wisdom to such an extent that now it has no fear with regard to [not-]obtaining future glory. For we see, for example, squires render service in a rather intimate way to some

prince through daily execution of duty. Thus, [as regards] him whom at first they feared, the fear altogether vanishes and rebounds to a reverence for the majesty, because of a certain friendly relationship. Accordingly, trusting in the prince's friendliness and goodness, they do not at all believe that they will be separated from him by anyone else. So, too, in this way (if we transfer to the anagogical meaning) the mind, at first fearful, obtains through its affections and desires such great unitive intimacy that by the gift of the Beloved a certain wonderful confidence remains in it, so that all afflicting fear—except fear in the mode of precaution—is uprooted from it. Thus, it says with the Apostle: "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall famine or the sword?... Yea, not even things present or things future!"¹⁷

Love's Making Perfect

[17] Moreover, through this wisdom love is inflamed, made whole, and perfected. For since our Blessed God is a consuming fire,¹⁸ He expels from the journeying spirit all manner of coldness insofar as that spirit approaches more intimately unto Him through the stretchings-forth of love. For when the spirit thus yearns, through anagogical movements, for a more intimate union with Him, it exposes itself to the spiritual, consuming rays of the Sun. And like oakum when exposed to solar rays, it is kindled by a Fire sent from on high. Hence, this Sun is said to kindle mindsⁿ¹¹ in three ways. For (1) through itself it increases the fervor that is in the spirit; and by means of the fervor it removes obstacles that hinder love—removes them in order that the spirit may be more fervently inflamed. (2) Moreover, it abundantly adds spiritual benefits by which love is perfected in the spirit; likewise, it causes the mind to yearn for God's being loved uniquelyⁿ¹² and most fervently. (3) Furthermore, this wisdom sets the mind afire, so that the mind is ablaze with this love for each of its neighbors, just as for itself—so that it does not once again languidly cease from yearning, with insatiable desires, for the fullest union.

Mystical Wisdom's Making Perfect

[18] Through this wisdom not only do the virtues obtain perfect pre-eminence but also through it the mind is given pre-eminence over all philosophy, all investigation on reason's part, all theologicalⁿ¹³ speculation, and all theoretical inquiry. For the natural philosopher,¹⁹ through that which appears in perceptible creatures, knows the Cause, the Creator, and affirms by means of highly reliable considerations that the very great goodness of creatures, their so marvelous ordering, their

very great immensity, sprang into being only from one altogether omnipotent Creator. In the words of the Apostle: “The invisible things of God, things understood by means of those things that have been made, are clearly seen from mundane creatures—even God’s eternal power and divinity.”²⁰ And in this way a philosopher arrives at knowledge. But since in comparison with the rational spirit the entire world is nothing (according to the declaration of Uncreated Wisdom, which says: “I was playing in the world, and my delights consisted of being with the children of men”²¹), the entire world is as a small game in which beauty appears a bit, as regards [the beauty] of angelic and human minds. Hence, because the philosophers have possessed nothing of the intimate states of mind, their strict and impoverished natural knowledge is incomparably inferior to this wisdom—as inferior as the East is distant from the West.

The case is similar with regard to metaphysical knowledge and theological knowledge, both of which apprehend the Most Simple God, [doing so] under the concept of being and of its differences and of its potencies, or under the concept of its mental representations—i.e., under the concepts of the one, the true, andⁿ¹⁴ the good. However, through this wisdom the mind—apart from any of the aforementioned concepts and without any conceptualization accompanying or preceding the movement of love—has to apprehend in an unspeakable manner Him who is the Supreme Good, [doing so] by way of the summit of its affective power. The intellect does not ascend unto apprehending this Good, nor does the intelligence contemplate it. But how it is that this [apprehending] occurs, and how it is that the intellect can be separated from the affections, is shown in the theory of this practice and from those things that pertain to this [apprehending]. In the words of [Dionysius’s] *Mystical Theology*: “Rise us ignorantly.”²²

[19] We must now see how the mind is agreeably disposed with regard to lower things. For I explained earlier [*Via Unitiva* 6]—with regard to [the topic of] the subjected body—how it is that the mind, through the wisdom now being discussed, is conformed to Supreme Wisdom, which governs the world. However, subsequently, we must take note of the following: Just as a rider seated on a horse turns the horse (which is subjected to him) at will to the right or to the left by virtue of the reins, so sinceⁿ¹⁵ the mind, straightened through this wisdom, is present uncurved in the body, then by the power of the mind’s love, as if by means of certain spiritual reins, the mind restrains the disorderednesses of the outer senses. Accordingly, at the pleasure of,

and the command of, Him toward whomⁿ¹⁶ the mind tends as best it can, the mind's entire kingdom (with regard to both its powers and its senses) is equally governed. And the mind makes of its own self a tabernacle, in accordance with the model that was shown to it on the mount—the model with respect to which, in a type, God gave commandment to the divine Moses, as is taught in Exodus.

[20] But, furthermore, through this wisdom the mind is disposed with respect to all the world's objects, over which it most truly rules by means of wisdom. This fact is manifest as follows: If some earthly prince were to preside over the world and were to have as many pleasures, riches, and honors as all mortals possessed at the beginning of the world, and if he were disposed to take delight in them, then he would be subject to them, because he would desire to obtain from them rest and a certain degree of happiness and perfection that he would not haveⁿ¹⁷ from himself. Now, he who is delighted by these things is truly subjected to them. Therefore, he alone is lord who so despises all baser things that it is not the case that anything earthly disquiets [him] on account of his love [for it]. For then all things are trod under his feet because of the despising. Therefore, the soul reigns in this kingdom when, not seeking rest elsewhere, it extends itself by means of Heavenly desires—saying with the Apostle: "I have counted all things as dung in order to gain Christ."²³ Hence, Peter and Paul are called glorious princes of the earth. Moreover, in terms of a symbolic type, it was said to the children of Israel by Truth itself, promising clearly: "The entire earth upon which your foot shall treadⁿ¹⁸ will be yours."²⁴ Thus, if someone despises and treads under foot all things, then he rules over all things much more truly than do the princes of the world.

[21] Moreover, through this wisdom [the mind] is agreeably disposed against the snares of its enemies—both against the snares' deceptiveness and against their strength. For the enemy, quite insistent-ly and with cunning craftiness, watchfully seek after how they may separate, from its own Beloved, the mind united to God. But through this wisdom the mind is freed, because by the imbibing of love it draws near to the Fount of light; and because of this drawing near, it is, necessarily, illumined by the divine rays. By means of these rays the mind quickly and wisely detects the temptations, which are very cunning and are cloaked and set forth with the appearance of goodness. Thereupon the shrewdness of the enemy is thwarted, because (according to what is said in Proverbs) "a net is spread in vain before

the eyes of them that have wings,"²⁵ those who through affectional desires (as we read in Isaiah) "fly as clouds and as doves to their windows."²⁶

[22] Furthermore, [through this wisdom the mind] is disposed [agreeably] with respect to its strength. For the mind clings so forcefully to Him whom it loves, Him whom it knows truly, that it would rather allow itself to be put to death one thousand times than once to offend intentionally against its Beloved. And in order to obtain indelibly this degree of strength, the mind has the following two aids. (1) It is protected (as if it belonged to the very family of its Beloved) by the directing right-hand of its Creator, in accordance with the words of [the Book of] Wisdom: "The souls of the just are in the hand of God."²⁷ And (2) [it has an aid] from itself, because if it were to be intensely thrust by the enemy intoⁿ¹⁹ very strong temptations, then just as a child flees to his mother when he is afraid of being harmed by another, so the mind, amid very strong temptations, recurs to the help of Him whom it loves, yearning quite intensely for Him. And this mode of vanquishing demons stands out among the other modes.

Mystical Wisdom's Further Making Perfect

[23] Through this wisdom the virtue of moderation is brought to perfection. For human immoderation arises from the fact that when true delight, which comes from the union of God and the soul, is left aside, a man wretchedly takes delight in gluttony and in lust and in other allurements of the flesh. For the delight that there is in God is much greater than the delight that there is in the flesh, even as God is better than is that creature in which carnal men take delight. For the more the mind sensibly experiences this true delight, the more strongly it repudiates carnal delight. And finding in the bed of love Him who is true gladness, it speaks as follows: "It is good for me to cling to God."²⁸ Therefore, when the mind possesses this gladness, it easily despises delights other than that one.

[24] Moreover, through mystical wisdom perfect justice is acquired, because true justice is this: to render to God what is His own, to render to oneself what is one's own, and to render to one's neighbor what is his own.²⁹ First of all, through this wisdom *there is rendered to God what is His own*; for through each upward movement the soul is situated in the presence of God. Furthermore, through the affection of love the soul seeks what is God's, not what is its own. For love is not true love unless the lover loves the beloved more than him-

self. Again, love does not allow the soul to rest except in Him whom the soul loves, because just as the weight of a stone does not allow it to rest until it reaches the earth (its own natural locus), so neither does spiritual love allow [the soul] to rest in anyone other than in God alone, who is the natural terminus of all spirits—a terminus beyond whom nothing further is desired.

[25] Through this unitive wisdom not only is there rendered to God that which is His own but also *there is rendered to the soul that which is its own*. For through this wisdom the soul is perfected in itself, because according to a human philosopher the soul is perfected by the virtues and by the scholarly fields of study. Therefore, supreme perfection is present in the loving soul when He who is the Fount of all wisdom (To be sure, all created wisdom and knowledge, both as regards higher things and as regards lower things, has emanated from Him) deigns to dwell in the mind spiritually in accordance with His own nature. Hence, more truly than anyone is situated in any physical place, God dwells in the soul that loves Him; and this [presence] occurs by means of a spiritual indwelling, because “God is Love, and he who abides in love” that is true love “abides in God and God in him.”³⁰

[26] Through this wisdom *there is also rendered to one’s neighbor what is his own*; and by means of the same love by which the Father is loved, the Son too is loved. From the fact that the soul loves its Creator, it also loves every rational creature, which is imprinted with the image of its Eternal Father. From the fact that the Father is loved, there derives souls’ fervent love, and from this latter state of affairs prayers are multiplied for the freeing of lost souls. This same love multiplies groanings to the end that souls may be returned to their Creator, so that although they are dead because of sin, they are resuscitated through the life of divine grace, even as Jeremiah exclaims, saying: “Who will give water to my head and a fount of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night over the slainⁿ²⁰ among my people?”³¹

[27] Moreover, it is evident how through this wisdom the mind is disposed, with respect to merit, in accordance with all contemplative affection—evident [from the fact] that the mind is deserving of eternal lifeⁿ²¹ as often as it is immediately moved unto God. And because the soul, thus disposed, can, as often as it wishes, be actually affected by very swift (but interrupted) movements, it deserves (more than I can say) to be elevated unto glory by means of each of these

upliftings. And because a singular glory corresponds to every single merit (except for the substantive crown of beholding the Divine Beauty), it is evident that by means of this wisdom innumerable crowns are stored up for the mind. [28] We may infer, then, from the aforesaid things the following conclusion: Through this wisdom the kindled mind is perfected, so that (after the fashion of a circle, which is a perfect figure among other figures) at present and in the future the mind, having come from sublime conditions, goes backⁿ²² by way of a most direct ordered-route in returning unto that very same state (as if being conveyed from one point back again to that very same point). [29] Therefore, O Eternal Wisdom, because no one among mortals can manifest this wondrous and uncreated Wisdom that proceeds mostⁿ²³ immediately from You, the Fount of life: come in order to teach us the way of practical wisdom. Therefore, because (as was said) men can speak persuasively of this wisdom but cannot teach it, You, Blessed God, You who are by nature invariable and unchangeable, existing *per se*, You who are a Power creative, in a principal way, of all goods, You who nourish the angels by Your countenance, You who are Uncreated Wisdom that illumines angelic and celestial minds by Your resplendent rays: being an Enlivening Power, fill to such an extent us who love You that You raise us up (as separated from the lowest things) unto a desire for You and a knowledge of You. And with all distractions of our mind removed, turn us toward the oneness of the uniting Father, who gathers into the kingdom of eternal brightness the dispersed of Israel.³² Amen.

Mystical Wisdom as Immediate Knowledge

[30] “Draw near to Him and be enlightened.”³³ For since (according to what the divine Apostle says) Most Blessed God inhabits light inaccessible,³⁴ and since every rational creature is distant from that light by infinite degrees: in order that the soul be illumined with the super-beautiful rays of Eternal Light, it must take leave of itself, as it were, and be elevated more highly by the free gift of the Creator, so that there may be a certain approximation and a certain assimilative conformity between the creature that receives and the most gracious Creator, who imparts Himself. And so, the divine Prophet says: “Draw near to Him and be enlightened.” Thus, drawing-near comes first, and enlightenment immediately follows. Here, then, [the Prophet] fully touches upon the subject-matter of that book, in which by means of a different pathway (a pathway contrary, as it were, to

all the divine and theologicalⁿ²⁴ authors) he teaches us to arrive at immediate knowledge—to arrive not by way of mirrorings from creatures or by means of the mind’s investigations or the intellect’s exercises but through the fiery yearnings of unitive love. By means of these yearnings we who are still living in wretchedness very reliably foretaste—as regards Most Blessed God, the Beginning and Source of all happiness—not only *that* He is but also *what* He is. This immediate knowledge excels rational knowledge (as will be discussed later) as much as the sun is more beautiful than all the other planets and as much as the morning star is brighter than all other gleaming stars. By means of this immediate knowledge hidden matters are revealed; by means of it secret matters are disclosed. It causes the one-who-loves not to aim at things human and earthly but rather to pursue, above his immediately elevated self, divine and celestial disciplines.

Nearness, Illumination, Union

[31] Because, then, ardent love yearns for union with the Beloved, that love more fervently elevates the spirit so that it approaches the Fount of true light. And that love alone causes us to draw near to Him who is “the East from on High,”³⁵ illumining those who are situated in darkness and in the shadow of death.³⁶ Accordingly, through Him the moving power and the cognitive power obtain most fully and most completely their perfections. Hence, the mind is mercifully adorned by its Beloved—adorned with the fervor of love and with the loveliness of light. For through unitive love not only is the glory of eternal happiness possessed when the spirit withdraws from the body, and not only does it happen that [the spirit] leads a celestial life [here] on earth, and not only do lower things stimulate the human mind with regard to its actions of reaching upwards, but also through the desires of unitive love there is left in the soul the perfectionⁿ²⁵ of incomparably fuller knowledge than is acquired by studying or by hearing or by the exercise of reason.

Goal of the Present Writing

[32] Therefore, in this present work, which is put into writing by me in order to expound Blessed Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology*, my present intent is to exhibit the theory that is included there—the theory about how the soul is joined to its Creator and is intimately and very efficaciously united to Him as to a most dear beloved one. (Very

few words [are used] there, but their meaning is unlimited, as will be seen to be the case in what will now follow.) For by means of this unitive wisdom—not from the fact that it is recorded in visible writing but from the fact that it is perceived inwardly—the extensive union of the mind that is desiring to attain unto its Beloved receives an increase by the Beloved’s free gift.

[33] However, the style of this present book and work is purely and simply anagogical (except whenever for a while [the exposition] descends more lowly to certain items in order to explain more patently the anagogical meaning), so that only those who love purely will perceive in themselves this supreme unitive wisdom, whereas it will not at all be grasped—neither with respect to the intellect nor with respect to the affections—by the wise of this world or by those who love worldly things. [34] But the goal [of this present work] is to take note of how it is that the soul is to yearn wholeheartedly for union with the Bridegroom in order at present to be able to receive the promised reward of glory and diadem of a regal wedding. Every rational spirit ought to desire these as constituting its own happiness—[ought to desire them] for *five reasons* that are premised (prior to the principal rationale that is to be seen) in order to receive more avidly those statements that will be made more at length in what follows. (1) The first reason, then, is taken with respect to creatures’ mundane and irrational acts. (2-4) Three others concern the perfection of the powers themselves—a perfection that is delightfully obtained in the present through the union of love. (5) The last reason concerns the continuance of the progress and of the increase by means of which the mind itself is made ever stronger and by means of which it desires to extend itself to ever-greater things out of love for its Beloved. [It has these desires] until, at the time of its withdrawal from the body, the Sun of Justice—Him whomⁿ²⁶ it will see face to face as He is—appears unto it.

First Reason: First Example

[35] The foolishness of all mortals and especially of those who are religious is shown in the first reason. For as a certain saint says, “the zealous pursuer of any art imperturbably and willingly sustains all labors, dangers, and costs.”³⁷ And this point is proven by means of an illustrative example in the case ofⁿ²⁷ farmers, businessmen, and soldiers. “For example, a farmer at one time, not turning away from the scorching rays of the sun, at another time not turning away from the winter’s snow and ice, tirelessly plows the land and breaks up un-

manageable clods of soil with frequent plowing. [He does all this] so that he may crush the soil (once freed from all thorns and all weeds), working it into the mode of loose sand. He intends this final end alone, viz., the harvesting of abundant grains and the plenitude of crops; for he believes that otherwise he will not obtain the means whereby to live a more comfortable life and to increase his substance."³⁸

The farmer toils unceasingly under such many laborious tasks and amid such many hardships in order that, being someone earthly, he can harvest earthly things and can find rest in them for a brief time. If so, then every soul, being imprinted with the image of the entire Trinity, can rightly—and especially the religious soul, which in order more effectively to obtain union with the Eternal God prepares itself more strictly than do the others—draw from God (as from the Fount of happiness) joy in the present and glory in the future, by means of unitive desires. And if at the beginning there perhaps seems to be some hardship and seems to be something unbearable imposed on the flesh (because at the entrance the way is very narrow), nevertheless the soul can quickly find its desired rest in so pleasing a Beloved, according to the divine [writer] speaking in the Book of Wisdom: “Afflicted in a few things, they shall be well rewarded in manyⁿ²⁸ things.”³⁹ And this is rightly said, because very quickly is there found Him from whom all joy and all gladness have emanated.

First Reason: Second Example

[36] Secondly, we see that “those who are accustomed to engage in commercial enterprises do not fear the uncertain perils of the sea, do not tremble at any dangers when while carefully considering the goal of profit they alwaysⁿ²⁹ contend with all these dangers mockingly. But if such [merchants] unceasingly subject their body and soul to such great danger, how much ought a rational spirit to be aflame with unceaseable desire to find that Most Pleasant One, who by His joyous presence—obtained through the union of love—would eliminate from that spirit all need and would remove from it all indigence. And He would not permit that spirit to wander any longer, and it would no longer beggingly pursue adulterous pleasures in other creatures; for the Most Blessed One has been foundⁿ³⁰ experientially as a Guest who is the most sufficient Rest-Giver for the striving of every mind. Of Him the soul utters, when it experiences His presence, the words of Job: “I shall die in my nest, and as a palm tree shall I multiply my days.”⁴⁰ For the soul no longer wishes to recur to its usual

[delights], no longer needs human consolation; for it is now united to Him in whom it finds the most health-giving remedy for all its ailments, both physical and spiritual.

First Reason: Third Example

[37] Thirdly, we also see that “when those who are fired up with the lustful ambition of worldly warfare envision the goal of honors and of power, they are insensitive to the journeying, the exiles, and the dangers. Nor are they crushed by present hardships and combats all the while that they desire to obtain their purposed end, viz., high rank.”⁴¹ These men, then, are so enveloped by miseries that for a while they are boosted up by men’s praises and by the wind of vain-glory, thinking these to be a sufficient reward for all the [distresses] endured in many ways while they are vexed both in body and in soul. If so, then what a worthwhile thing could be accomplished, [to the following ends], by the rational mind (the most noble of creatures, yet impoverished with respect to its Creator)!: viz., (a) to the end that it would *obtain*ⁿ³¹ *the rewards* of so great a rank and (b) to the end that it would be *united* by the desires of unitive love *to Him* from whom it had its primordial origin, having been created from nothing, and (c) to the end that it could *be deemed worthy* (in the sight of the Creator) of such great honor that, being less than a fly, less than nothing, it could altogether properly be called the well-loved bride of the Princeⁿ³² of life, the King of angels, and being least of all would be called forth unto such great honor by the Most Exalted Creator, who says in the Canticles: “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove.”⁴²

Second Set of Reasons

[38] Having spoken of how it is that the mind is called forth to the joys of so great a Beloved by means of [reflection on] the actions of those with worldly and secular occupations, we must now explain how it is that through rational and non-rational creatures the mind is stimulated in multiple ways to find rest in its Creator. First, [let me say something] in regard toⁿ³³ creatures that are incapable of sensing, secondly in regard to plants, thirdly in regard to animals, fourthly in regard to rational creatures.

*Second Set of Reasons: Point 3**

[39] We see that a brute animal hurries towardⁿ³⁴ that piece of food which on the basis of some experiential knowledge it regards as

*In what follows, Hugh takes up the 3rd point first and the 1st point third.

delicious, running toward it post-haste and without discrimination. Accordingly, since the mind, on the basis of the aforesaid reasoning, has only one delectable object, in which true rest and all satisfaction are both combined, the mind is judged by divine judgment to be wretched, seeing that it lacks the enjoyment of so delectable an object that is presently and unchangeably right in front of it. For brutes hurry post-haste to obtain their sensibly delicious food, but the mind does not will to raise its face toward that true unitive wisdom, about which in the Book of Wisdom it is said by Uncreated Wisdom: “All good things came to me together with her.”⁴³ [40] [Divine Wisdom] uses the word “all” since in the presence of Divine Wisdom there remains nothing lacking to the mind. [The plural expression] “good things,” and not the [singular expression] “good thing,” is used in order to indicate the multiplicity of divine benefits in the loving mind. The word “came” is used, thereby signifying that the mind obtains all these things not from itself but from the Most High, i.e., from an infusion on the part of the Beloved, who mercifully infuses. The word “together”ⁿ³⁵ is used since the mind has no good thing from itself and since if the mind previously was something good, the mind was, [nevertheless], possessed of manifold bitterness. The words “with her” are used, [signifying] that not only is the mind inwardly enriched by the possession of unitive wisdom and inwardly sprinkled from the fountains of wisdom’s resources but also many gifts from the Beloved (viz., multiple splendors and sparklings and distillations) accompany the presence of unitive wisdom, so that both through that wisdom and with that wisdom the mind may presently obtain samples of glory. Hence, our soul ought to be deemed unhappy if we who are rational do not do that which we see to be the case as regards [non-rational] perceiving-creatures and if, moving slowly with respect to momentary delights and being deplorably occupied with lower things, we are unhappily and imprudently in a drowsy state, contrary to the excellence of the human heart.

Second Set of Reasons: Point 2

[41] This [pathway to the Creator] is also evident in the case of plants, e.g., in the case of trees, which in order to be stable and to remain steadfastly immovable amid the pounding of the winds, send forth roots more deeplyⁿ³⁶ into the earth and receive from the moisture of the earth, in which they themselves are fixed, strengthening nourishment—receive it to the end that as they sprout branches up-

wardly they may continue on in their place (most fixedly and without splitting asunder) because of their very strong rootedness. In a similar way the mind, being elevated above itself through unitive love, is rooted fixedly—through penetrating roots of affection—in Him to whom it is united by love. In this fixed union small drops of eternal moisture that are drawn forth through love (especially because of the superabundance of the Fount of all delights and of [all] plenitude) descend downwards, as if by certain roots, to the trunk of the affections because of the importuning movements of love. Thereby they so strengthen the mind in love that it ascends undeflectibly unto the Bridegroom without swerving, making continuous progress. Thus, through the strengthening movements of love (which are here called roots) the branches of all the other powers are made moist and herefrom are so strengthened that the mind is no longer shaken, after the fashion of a reed, by the tempest of spiritual winds. [42] And just as inner moistness makes trees blossom, sprout green leaves, and bear fruit, and just as a physical tree would not at all arrive at any of these states without the power of the inner moistness, so the inner moistness of love causes [the mind] to blossom with very many higher conceptions (in order more greatly to please its Beloved) and to produce as the fruit of its work and without diminution a foliage of words—words not about the desiccated mundane things (except to vilify them) but about those things that please Him whom it loves. Love makes [these conceptions] become visible with everlasting greenness, so that in themselves they perceive, with experiential knowledge, the truth of that promise which the Beloved—a long time ago, while being on earth and dwelling with [us] wretched ones—promised, saying: “They shall give into your bosom good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over.”⁴⁴ For here the Most High promises to the yearning soul—which, after the fashion of insensible, physical trees, is fixed in Him through fiery movements of love—that that which it sees in a creature that it knows to be devoid of, and incapable of, delight and joy, this He is conferring onⁿ³⁷ that wretched soul, to whom so many delightful rewards are promised by the Conferer⁴⁵ of all things.

[43] And what these [conferred] things are [the Beloved] indicates in the aforesaid verse. He says “measure” because love (i.e., the perfect union-of-love, which is properly called measure, by which measure alone there is measured the quantity of the soul) is given to each soul that concernedly positions itself for being infixed [in God].

Thus, the soul apprehends—quite quickly and quite perfectly—the desired, more perfect union; and the soul also desires to love more fervently. And in accordance with the measure of the soul’s desires the Most High brings with Him gifts and infuses Himself to the impoverished soul. This measure is truly good. It elevates the mind’s affections and unites to the Eternal God the mind that loves—unites it not to what is good through participation but to the Supreme Good. And it deifies with a more abundant goodness the mind that is united to God. Hence, every angelic and every human mind in which very abundant love, transforming the creature into the Creator, super-abounds is called good and quite good for this reason alone: viz., that only that most noble *habitus* which (according to God’s own teaching) causes the soul to be transformed into God (into Him who alone is good) by means of its own deifying extending [of itself] ought to be called good *par excellence*. It imbues the soul with strengths and powers by the multiplying, and the super-abundance, of its fruits, so that because of this overflowing nothing [in the soul] remains empty; and so, [the measure] is immediately thereafter called *pressed down (conferta)*.

[44] But because also of the unitive presence of love (from which presence the whole human being is besprinkled), there is there a certain struggle among the powers, so that the one power desires to prevent the movement of another power. And so, [the measure] is called “shaken together.” And because it is true love: as a raging fire cannot be covered over with ashes if care is taken [to maintain it]—covered over so that it does not always excel other things in some respect by emitting heat—so too love works its exuberance outwardly with respect to words, for words are freely produced about those things on which the mind’s affection is set. The mind, inclining because of a certain determining love, produces things divine not human, things celestial not earthly—even as does the mouth, which is the messenger by which the mind produces what it thinks inwardly. Hence, the love according to which the affections are guided can be called a *measure*. [That love] strengthens its powers by multiple imbibings; it arouses its powers to strive for accomplishing things, so that extending itself by its own nobleness and deliberation to those things that are outward, [that love] does not at all permit speaking about anything or doing anything except as regards things pertaining to its own possessor. For from that love the soul ought to be lamentably aroused to labor-more-intently to approach more boldly the beginning of the undertaking in which is present the entire difficulty of

unitive wisdom, so that, remaining unmovable, it may soon be rooted very firmly in the place that is natural for it and that naturally benefits its primordial origin.

Second Set of Reasons: Point 1

[45] By means of examples of plants and of [creatures] capable of perception we have spoken of how it is that the mind is to be aroused in the direction of its own delightful object and is to be rooted inavertibly in its own natural place.ⁿ³⁸ We must now, by means of examples of inanimate objects, say how it is that the mind is more effectively aroused toward that same object. For just as all corporeal things are conserved by places that are suitable to them, so spiritual things—viz., angelic and human minds—have their proper place. [They have this place] not after the fashion of physical dimensions but after the fashion of their own tendency; and they are prevented by God's own right hand from being reduced to nothing. So, then, a material object, by reason of its weightiness, is naturally and immediately conveyed to its natural place in order to find rest in it. Similarly, until the mind—which through the weight of its love is directed toward union with God on high—perfectly embraces Him who because of His own worthiness cannot fail to be desired, it will beg as one who is wandering, famished, without food, and without rest. Even though it may be occupied with extraneous pleasures and honors, nevertheless it will not at all be satisfied unless through the contact of love it obtains Him of whom it is the imitative image, Him whom alone it naturally seeks. And unless by a sign of perpetual joy God announces Himself as present in the mind, the mind's imploring tendency does not find rest.

[46] And we have the foregoing point indicated in [the Gospel of] John by Blessed Peter, when, loving more fervently than the others, he speaks as follows (for he saw neediness everywhere but found perfect rest only in Him to whom he was then speaking): "Lord," he said, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."⁴⁶ He calls Him *Lord* because he worships Him, having set aside every creature. Heⁿ³⁹ can call Him *Lord* because his love is not directed toward anything else but is turned toward Him from whom he has primordially emanated as from a Fount. And he speaks as follows: "To whom shall we go?" But in the person of those who love, he adds a very strong reason as to why he was not going to turn back from Him: "You have the words of eternal life." For You do not send forth, out-

wardly, words of the mouth, but You send forth, inwardly, words of the mind, [which are] Your fluent outpourings. By means of these [inner words] You manifest much more efficaciously than through arguments or by reference to creatures or by means of any other words the unknown joys of eternal life—manifest them to those who love You. Hence, according to the Apostle, those who experience these joys count all other things as dung in order that they may gain You.⁴⁷

Second Set of Reasons: Point 4

[47] Fourthly, [let us consider the pathway to the Creator] by way of rational beings. Since the soul naturally desires to be perfected in its powers by means of suitable objects—i.e., naturally yearns for the challenging, the true, and the pleasant—it reaches upwards in order to be united with the Ineffable One, who is Supreme Majesty, Unchangeable Truth, Unfailing Goodness. I will now say something [only] briefly about these matters, because later it will be necessary to detail something more at length about them. However, for now, let not the soul think that on this account a true difficulty occurs with regard to the creature. In those respects in which the soul might possibly be elevated to higher honors, it is necessary that the soul, however much it excels other things, be subject to impoverishment and to manifold subjugation—both of body and of mind—as we confirm by our experience.

[48] However, the mind rejoices over the obtaining of true challenging-difficulty—rejoices only when through the intimate union of love it enjoys such great freedom ([a state-of-freedom] which cannot be known except by those who sense it in advance through experiential knowledge) that the mind does not fear the Devil and has no fear at all of mortal men. As a further result, the mind does not sense the pangs of eternal punishment, and it rejoices in embracing the undergoing of death, so that the mind (which through the union of love immediately submits itself, as freeⁿ⁴⁰ in all respects, to its Creator) obtains the promise of Him who says [in the Gospel of] John: “If the Son shall make you free, you shall truly be free.”⁴⁸ For the Son of God truly frees when He extendingly offers the right hand of love in order that the mind may cling to it and in order that, with every creature subjected, nothing penal under God may rule over the one who loves [God] with unitive desires.

[49] And the reason [for the foregoing] is the following: Because [the mind] has established itself firmly in a secure place, in fixed at-

tachment of love, it fears nothing from without and also does not fear Him in whom it dwells, since intimate love causes it to forget the threatsⁿ⁴¹ of Him whom it loves. Hence, Truth itself states in [the Gospel of] John: “I have spoken these words to you in order that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress.”⁴⁹ For when the Lord speaks to the mind and by means of infused spiritual words announces His presence, peace immediately ensues; for the spirit is completely freed from all servitude. Being the Most High He also promises to worldly citizens the having of distress. For it is fitting that he who does not through true love subject himself to the Majestic One, who is worthy of worship, be wretchedly trampled on by every creature, so that every creature vindicates its Creator by treading with manifold affliction upon him who—being unwilling to subject himself to the Creator in love and forsaking his Lord and clinging to worthless things—despises Him as if the Creator were not the true God. Hence, the more intimately the soul clings to God through more fervent love, the more effectively, being free from all subjection, it takes happier delight in its own kingdom.

Third Reason

[50] Its having been said how it is that true love is situated there in the union-of-love, in which there is an absence of all subjugation, we must [now] say how it is that reason finds truth in Him alone. But because it is the claim of the present speculation that true illumination is bequeathed from love, we must speak of how it is that the will is most perfectly satisfied in Him, not in another, when (although the will is a pilgrim in this present life) it arrives at most blessed union with Him. Nevertheless, as will be stated more extensively later on: Since the mind does not find rest in what is less noble than itself, no carnal delight or earthly consolation satisfies it (even though it is deplorably occupied with them), because they are opposed to the things that are natural for it. The reason for this [lack of satisfaction] is that every enjoyable thing, if it is a true thing, stills the desire, or the inclination, of the desirer; but everything earthly, no matter how pleasurable it can be thought to be, leaves the appetite famished and totally restless (except, perhaps, for a short time), as is patently evident with regard to all things. Therefore, the inclination of the appetite never finds rest inⁿ⁴² worldly delights. What, then, will the aforesaid mind do? There remains but one thing for it [to do: namely,] to hasten toward actual union with Him whom alone the mind finds to be

better than itself, Him who alone has hidden in Himself the treasure of joy, Him whom when someone finds by means of experiential knowledge, “he goes out and joyfully sells all [his possessions] and buys that field.”⁵⁰

[51] For the level-ground of unitive love is called a field. In this field the mind, being supported by the feet of the affections, runs by means of inflamed desires. In it the hidden treasure is found when through the exercises of love He who is true Joyfulness is shown to be detectably present—shown by means of a knowledge of spiritual thingsⁿ⁴³ or by means of a certain special gift. In order to attain its Love, the mind mirthfully despises all other things, since it has perceived by means of the affections who, or of what kind, is He whom it loves. [It perceives this] when it extends itself, beyond itself, directly unto Him. The affections are elevated by the right hand of the Beloved, so that those things which the mind previously had heard are confirmed more truly and more manifestly than are the things which it sees visibly. On account of this fact the word of David rightly says: “Better is one day in Your courts above thousands [elsewhere].”⁵¹ For when the mind, in yearning, runs swiftly through the courts of the level-ground of love, it experiences more mental joy in one day than in thousands of days it could experience in the case of the tasteless delights of vain things. And David specifies a *day* in His court because when the mind does not run throughout that level ground, it knows that it is bedarkened by manifold obscuring darkness.

[52] There follows [now something] about the rational object, which is also spoken of as truth.⁵² For the truth that is correlated with the rational spirit is not viewed in created truth, because all truth is altogether removed from falsity, deception, and opinion. Indeed, mention is not [here] being made of Uncreated Truth, but here we are speaking of created truth. For because of the fact that [created] truth is not known, falsity is accommodated; and so, deception follows; and, hence, opinion is multiplied. And this [result] occurs because the hidden [aspects] of truth cannot be known except by means of the light from on high that illumines the spirit. By means of this light we understand hidden divine things—just as by means of [ordinary] light and just as by means of the outer sense (with the light directing the visual ray to the perceptual object) external sensible objects are grasped without deception. If, then, the divine light is missing, created truth is turned into a lie, not because of created truth’s being defective but on account of the residual obscuring that is due to the

blinded mind, which is unable to perceive in itself the ray of intelligible truth.

Fourth Reason

[53] Since, then, in accordance with what we see perceptually, all truth, as it were—and especially truth about divine matters, except for those things to which we consent by faith—is turned into doubt and opinion: the rational spirit no longer apprehends truth in a pure manner through human teaching. Therefore, in order to discover truth, let the mind hasten to the union of love. Through the kiss of love the mind is united to Him who, according to the Divine Apostle, dwells inⁿ⁴⁴ inaccessible light⁵³—united more truly than a material object is joined to another material object by means of a material bond or an artificial glue. And then will comeⁿ⁴⁵ the promise of the prophet Malachias to him who loves his Beloved and likewise fears Him with a filial fear—Malachias speaking as follows: “Unto you who fear God, the Sun of Justice shall arise.”⁵⁴ [54] Thereupon he will mercifully obtain the divine illumination previously spoken of in the words “Draw near to Him and be enlightened.”⁵⁵ In *The Divine Names* VII Dionysiusⁿ⁴⁶ gives the reason for this [enlightenment]—viz., that when the mind merges the affections with those things that are to be learned about created truth, then the mind is, in the end, united to Him who makes the sun rise upon the good and the bad⁵⁶—united so that it is adorned with His multiplex splendor. Dionysius speaks as follows: “When the mind withdraws from all other things and subsequently takes leave even of itself, it is united to the super-resplendent rays and is illumined by a profound and inscrutable [degree] of wisdom.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, Dionysius says “united” before [he says] “illumined with inscrutable wisdom,” so that he indicates, for every mind, that only by means of the union-of-love (when one is present in the Supreme and inaccessible Being and has his eyes darkened) is truth—insofar as it is profound andⁿ⁴⁷ inscrutable—at all known.

Fifth Reason

[55] There follows something about the last point, viz., about the advance of the loving mind—of the mind that desires, out of love for its Beloved, to extend itself unto greater things. For [the situation is] not as it is with human philosophers, who, being inflated with ostentation of pride, despise attributing those things which in any way they have been able to grasp with their intellect—despise attributing them to the Beginning Fount, from whom the ray of all truth has

flowed forth unto the minds of all rational spirits. But, rather, according as by means of perceptible objects the mind is inflamed with greater desire (because, having been instructed by true Wisdom, it knows that by means of the merits that it itself possesses it cannot at all obtain an understanding), it breaks forth unstintingly in praises for the Bestower of all graces. Thus, the greater and more abundant [goods] that it receives from Him, the more it abjectly regards itself as insignificant in its own eyes, so that if while ascribing to itself [only] those respects in which it has nothing, it is empty of self-praise, then it is not blamed by the Divine Judgment for theft.⁵⁸

[56] These, then, are two arms by means of which the upward movement of the mind receives an increase of manifold affections. For, on the one hand, the mind prepares itself by disposing itself, while, on the other hand, by evoking a divine influx the mind attains, by His free gift, unto arriving at rewardsⁿ⁴⁸ that are greater and more abundant than those previously possessed. For in that the mind does not attribute to itself the things which it has but refers all things to praise of the Bestower-of-all, it fashions a lower plane within itself and struggles more truly against itself. Because of this lower plane the abundant rain of the divine graces, streaming through the mountains and the hills, flows into [these] lower places, so that the larger the plane of humility, the more the mind can be receptive of greater grace. And this fact obtains because every creature to the extent that it acknowledges its beginning and makes itself to be as nothing—just as it was created from nothing—to that extent it acknowledges the grandeur of the Creator, since it attributes to Him alone *being* and every *good*. Not incorrectly is there now said: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”⁵⁹

[57] The other arm is on the right side; by means of it the desires of the mind are assisted, so that the mind engages in its exercises more fervently than usual. For when through the union of love the soul senses the things of God, it breaks forth into multiform praise of God. This praise—more than all other things except for the exercises of love—moves the Bestower to confer greater things on the one who is praising. Hence, in the guise of such extollers Blessed John states in the Apocalypse: “Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving . . .,” etc.⁶⁰ Hence, the frequent acknowledgement of benefits is like a trumpet intoning in the ears of the Beloved for more abundant benefits to be conferred on the intoner. For this frequent meditation on the divine benefits arouses the spirit, so that it devotes

itself completely to stricter obedience to the most abundantly-giving Creator. Hence, in the guise of such obedient ones David says: “In my meditation a fire shall flame out.”⁶¹ For when in meditating he acknowledges the divine benefits, his mind becomes aflame for embracing greater benefits because of his love for the Bestower.

Enumeration of Industries

[58] Having stated that unless the rational spirit clings to the Supreme Good it cannot find rest in anything else, we must now speak of the human industries⁶² through which love is more fervently aroused and unitive desire is aided—aided to the end that the Beloved, raising up the rational spirit, look upon it with an eye of graciousness.⁶³ In order to recognize this point—given that a good habituation is the tranquil initial-beginning of every difficult acquisition—four things must concur in order that [the Beloved] be perfectly and divinely seen and that [the mind] obtain the most desired union [of love]. One of these things is within the mind; a second has to do with the body; the third has to do with time; the fourth has to do with place.⁶⁴

First Industry

[59] First of all [consider the following]: We are aware that when the sun shines with its [full] strength at noon, our eyes are repelled by its rays and are even bedarkened. Hence, in order to gaze directly at the sun’s source [the eye] must follow a certain order. To begin with, [it must look at] something bright—or look even at the sun itself at the beginning of daybreak. Then [it must look at the sun] at the third hour and, finally, having become habituated, it can gaze upon the sun even at noon. In a similar way the mind, after having left behind all things earthly and after having completely separated itself even from worldly delights, is still surrounded by a multi-layered bedarkening cloud which still does not permit the spirit to be borne by expeditious movements unto its proper object. Therefore, an industriousness is necessary for it. For no spirit is *suddenly* made to be highest. Accordingly, whether a spirit has devoutness or not, whether it feels itself to be hot or cold, it (as will be stated more at length later) pounds at the door, beseeching the most abundant mercy of divine graciousness and goodness that it itself may sense, by means of a burning love, the Beloved One who has created it in His own image—created it for rendering acts of reverence to Him alone. Therefore, let the spirit not fail to persist in its purpose; rather, let it keep knocking (in accordance with the

measure of its smallness) until through the quietude of love it hears the Beloved's sweetly consoling voice: "Lo, I am He"—as is contained in the [Gospel of] John.⁶⁵

Second Industry

[60] The second industry is the following: At the beginning, [the soul] senses that it is far removed from the fervor of unitive love, through which it is supposed to be joined to its Beloved. For the following is beyond the capability of mortal man: viz., that being wretched and infinitely distant he seek a union of such great love. Therefore, it is necessary that, by adoring them with all his heart, he favorably dispose those who in glory are rejoicing with him in nuptial song—favorably dispose them so that by means of the supplication of those who now not only love the Beloved but totally love Him with fervor, he himself, who is still existing in unhappiness, may merit the receiving of a spark of fervor. He does not desire [now to possess] *their* fervor; rather, he desires to [have his hunger] satisfied by the crumbs that fall from the table of his Master—after the fashion of a puppy. [And he desires this] especially when he gives [attention to] the following two considerations: [when he recognizes that] it accords with the instruction of the Psalmist, who after saying, "I have lifted up my eyes unto the mountains," immediately adds "from whence help shall comeⁿ⁴⁹ to me"⁶⁶ and when he remembers the instructive words of Job, who says, "And turn to some one of the saints."⁶⁷

[61] And although all angelic minds and all the more excellent saints—being, as it were, royal comrades—are to be implored with special attention, nevertheless let [the soul] have one special [such individual] to whom it gives special reverence, so that since [the soul] cannot always attend to divine matters, that [celestial mind] makes up for the [soul's] defects. Being in celestial glory that [comrade] always stands near to the glances of the Beloved and views with unveiled face Him whom he praises with an incessant hymn of joy. [That comrade] desires, by means of these intercessions, to obtain love for him who in and of himself is not worthy to place a kiss on the sole of his Beloved's foot.

[62] But seeing that we have just now stated that angelic minds and the blessed saints in glory are to be especially implored (for that happy state consists both of men and of angels): let [the soul] not neglect to revere the angels; instead, let it hearken to the voice of Raphael speaking to devout Tobias (who was still bedarkened) and

saying, “I have offered your prayer to the Lord”⁶⁸—saying these [words]ⁿ⁵⁰ to him qua soul desiring to ascend. These angels are most expedient groomsman who offer to the Beloved [those] minds’ devout affections so that by means of their merciful [intercessions], by means of their natural goodness, they may make up for [our] permanently included defect. These are they who render so many distinguished reverential acts for us, they who have been peaceful mediators of our blessed redemption in and through the incarnation of the Word. These are they who have afforded us peace from Heaven—a peace between Creator and creature, a peace reconstituted through the Prince of life, our Lord Jesus Christ. By praising Him for us, by giving thanks for us, by solemnly informing the human race of blessed joys, they have been present as pleasing messengers.

[63] And let [the one who ascends] revere his own angel, assigned by divine goodness—assigned from the time of the ascender’s primordial origin—for safeguarding him. Let him implore his angel quite attentively, so that he himself, being poor, can through love attain unto Him in whose embraces he himself [is to be] absorbed by inaccessible light. [The ascender] rejoices with utter happiness at being able to hear what is said to Daniel (in the Book of Daniel) qua loving soul: “... because you are a man of desires.”⁶⁹ What, then, can we render to that most beloved [angelic] consoler and guide of ours?⁷⁰ He admonishes very sweetly (1) that the soul cling perfectly to its Creator and (if the soul is weak in love and is cut off from God through sin) (2) that the soul now dead return to the Fount of life. In many ways this angel illumines the mind made perfect by so many splendors, placing before it the things that the angel himself perceives. The angel incites the mind by his arousings.ⁿ⁵¹ With great joy the angel rejoices together with his [human] partner; and he rejoices especially when the mind, in accordance with its smallness, is made more conformed to himⁿ⁵² when it desires to have the very same wisdom with which the angel is totally absorbed. For then there is an easy transition, so that the mind receives those things which the angel presents to it. At that time there is a proportional fittingness, not only in nature but also in grace. At that time there is an affinity of the same love, although the one love is less well-rooted than is the other. And just as it is impossible for the sand of the seashore or the stars of the sky to be counted by man, so the angel’s benefits to us are infinite. For example, the angel assists us when we pray, accompanies us on our journey, protects and defends us while we are sleeping.

Third Industry

[64] There follows [now something] about the third industry, which in its way of existing is as is a body with respect to those who are praying with unitive desires. Moreover, we see that manifold ways of praying are expressed for us in Scripture: viz., the way of Moses, who, while erect in body, raised his extended hands unto Heaven;⁷¹ the second way is that of Solomon (in the Book of Paralipomenon), who, with bent knees, and having his face toward the earth, raised his hands toward Heaven;⁷² the third way occurs in the New Testament in the case of Mary Magdalene, who, being prostrated, with her face toward the earth, shed tears on the blessed feet of our gracious Redeemer.⁷³ The fourth way is in sitting; we learn this way from Mary Magdalene in the [Book of] John, when she sat in silence at the feet of the Lord praying more inwardly with desire-of-heart than outwardly with the lips;⁷⁴ the fifth way we learn from the Lord Jesus Christ, who—falling on His face, on bended knee, and repeating it three times—prayed the Father that the chalice of suffering pass from Him, if it were possible;⁷⁵ the sixth way occurred on the Cross, when Jesus, erect in body and with hands spread out, commended His spirit to the Father;⁷⁶ the seventh way comes from the Apostles, when, with body erect and with face turned toward Heaven, they prayed inwardly with the desire of having returned unto them the Lord Jesus, who was ascending unto the Father.⁷⁷

[65] Therefore, although in accordance with the difference of affections and thoughts a different respective mode is found from considering those who pray, nevertheless the following mode is especially suitable: viz., that the body be totally erect and that the face be turned upward toward Heaven. For according to the disposition of the soul's affections it is necessary that there be conformity of body—a conformity that corresponds to the spirit in accordance with the spirit's disposition to act. Hence, if when the mind extends itself in the fervor of its movements while desiring union with the Beloved, it were to incline its face downward toward the earth, its actual tendency would be impeded or would be rendered ineffective, for the most part. For, in desiring, it would seek Him who is situated ineffably above it, according to Blessed Dionysius, when in his *Mystical Theology* he says to [a mind] that is expectingⁿ⁵³ its desired joys: "Ascend upwards unto Him who is beyond all substance and knowledge."⁷⁸ Hence, either while one is standing with his body totally erect or while he is

on bended knees, as is convenient: his mind must, through anagogical movements, rise upwards—as was said and as accords with what we see in the case of those who are pondering some matter, going deeply and subtly into it. Moreover, in the case of those who speak of difficult matters a disposing of the body is necessary, so that the body always correspond to the inner acts [of mind], so that what is outer always conform itself to what is inner.

[66] Nevertheless, when someone meditates or when he laments over his sins, there can be another bodily disposition, so that after the fashion of the Publican he looks downward toward the earth⁷⁹—he who has provoked to wrath against himself his own kindly Redeemer. Likewise, in accordance with other special exercises there can be different dispositions when one is meditating or reflecting. Moreover, in anagogical activity there is necessary such a disposition as was spoken of earlier. For when the one who desires union with his Beloved is affected with a state of fervor, he speaks to his Beloved attentively in the following way: as if he were to see the Beloved face to face. Although the Beloved is everywhere, nevertheless the utterances of the lover are directed [toward Him] as He is in Heaven. Therefore, since the lover speaks to Him whom he worships in Heaven above, he must turn to Him with raised face, since he then appeals desiringly to Him to be totally transformed into Him.

Fourth Industry

[67] Having spoken about the industry that there is in regard to the disposition of the body—having spoken to the end that [the ascending soul] be attended to sooner by Him whom alone [the soul] desires to please—we must now speak about the fourth industry, which has to do with time. For just as with regard to the body's needs we see that food which is suitable for the body is supplied to it once or twice a day, at a suitable time, so too let the soul which desires to live in love prepare itself by girding up its loins at a suitable hour and at a fitting time. And let the soul determine a time for prayer, so that, refected in such love by means of livingⁿ⁵⁴ bread, it not be deprived of a daily feast, since this feast is found by the lover to be much nobler, much more pleasant than refectation for the flesh is experienced to be in regard to food for the body. For it is not fitting that the governess grow faint because of abstinence from a meal of mellifluous love and that the carnal desire of her talkative handmaiden be satisfied at the proper hour and the suitable time.

[68] But it is evident that a suitable time is necessary. For just as a habit is left in the soul as a result of frequently doing good, so too when the soul chooses a time for prayer (especially a time designated at a special hour of the night, in accordance with the word of the Prophet:ⁿ⁵⁵ “Night shall be my light in my pleasures”⁸⁰), a certain agreeable pleasure remains in the mind, so that it always satisfyingly accompanies the soul’s exercise at the hour at which the soul is accustomed to raise itself unto God. And if on some occasion the soul delays, so that at the accustomed hour the mind does not extend itself in prayer because of an impediment, then the mind blames itself. And at those times the mind is afflicted in no small measure, especially if for a less honorable reason it happens that there has already passed the hour in which the mind was accustomed to cling to its Beloved, who ministers to it the abidingⁿ⁵⁶ repast of love and who sets before it fragrant goblets of spiritual joy. But if there is a question about the most suitable hour at which the mind may extend itself to praising God, then hear the Lord speaking through the Prophet: “In the daytime the Lord has commanded His mercy and at night His song.”⁸¹ This is said especially because less is seen by men at night, inasmuch as at night all disturbances are calm, as it were. For at night the Christian people sleep. Out of love for them the soul ought to have concern not only for the baptized among its relatives but also for the baptized among all men, so that it may watch over them at night, protecting them by means of its sincere prayers lest [the Devil], who “walks around as a lion, seeking whom he may devour”⁸² prevail over those whom the Father of all living things has conformed to the image of His Son.⁸³ For at night let the soul long to rise up into the embrace of its Lord—rising up at night as a guard ever-watchful over all his own, for whom his own Lord sacrificed Himself to the Father as a living sacrifice.

Fifth Industry

[69] There follows [now something] about the fifth industry, which has to do with place. For when the Old Seducer⁸⁴ sees that the mind, through a devout regard for work and through other tendencies, wishes to withdraw completely from his dominion and yearns for a much nobler kingdom and desires to be protected under the wings of the Beloved and to be transferred to the Beloved’s dominion, then the Seducer is envious of the mind’s happiness. And he goes around tempting, so that the one whom he cannot deceive under the aspect

of open wickedness he wretchedly deceives by presenting himself to that man under the aspect of the good while the man yearns for goods other [than the true Good]. Thus, in the Gospel, Truth cautions His disciples, saying: “Let your good works shine before men, so that they may be seen and so that Your Father who is in Heaven may be glorified.”⁸⁵ Therefore, you ought to engage in prayer in a public and open place, so that others who are more simple may be guided upwards by your example.⁸⁷ [The point is] not that by this holy practice you would desire your own profit but is rather that through you a not inconsiderable multitude may be more excellently aroused unto a spiritual exercise like unto yours—aroused much more by the example of your life than by your words of instruction.

[70] And so, let a hidden place be required [for prayer], so that [a man] not fall into ruin through the omission of a detail—fall because of [the perversion of] that through which he is supposed to obtain the glory of unitive love. But let him hearken not to his own opinion but to the Creator’s reliably giving instruction in the Gospel: “When you pray, enter into your chamber and, with the door closed, pray unto your Father who is in Heaven.”⁸⁶ For although during a short period of time the one praying in public is left peacefully alone by the wicked Enemy, with the result that the Creator’s aforementioned admonition becomes more amiably rooted in the heart of the one who prays, nevertheless at a later time let the one-who-prays-publicly worry (1) that he might be placing his prayer in the mouth of other men and (2) that, thinking himself better, as it were, than others and pre-judging himself to be holy, he might so shrivel up inwardly that the Lord says to him: “You have hated instruction,” not abiding by my Gospel’s⁸⁸ counsel, “and you have cast my words behind you.”⁸⁷ That is, speaking of the multiple consolations for those who pray earnestly—speaking as if to those to whom God alone is in their mind—the Lord announces His presence. But the result is that whereas that one, while rising upwards, was supposed to respond gratefully to the Bestower for the benefits procured not by his own merits but freely, he turns his back on the manifold acts of grace. And, seeking human favor, he grovels after the praise of men.⁸⁹

[71] And although this [period of prayer] ought to be observed with intent diligence because of the pressing and manifold dangers, nevertheless let a new lover, who desires to rise up for the first time, safeguard himself with great precaution. For he still has a fragile love, because much more or much greater danger threatens him than threat-

ens one who engages for a long time in a spiritual duel and who is protected by a shield of love—or who, with his eyes now opened, knows the contrivances of the enemy (even as a skilled soldier knows how to triumph quite skillfully over a pursuing enemy). For he who inwardly and with the weight of love and not without many efforts has established his heart in the Lord (his kind Protector) can now show himself more securely to others.

Sixth Industry: Reflection on Christ's Suffering

[72] Having spoken of the fifth industry, by means of which the mind on occasion merits the divine regard, we must speak about that industry which arises from the multiplication of spiritual foods. For as we observe with respect to the natural refection of animal bodies, if any food that is more tasty than othersⁿ⁶⁰ is continually set before one for eating, then because the sense of taste becomes tired from the continual and daily repetition of the same thing, it desires to be fed with new foods, even though the first food is judged by all to be very tasty in and of itself. And the more plentiful is the variety of new foods that supervenes, the more satisfyingly one is fed than by a single [unvaried] meal, and the more inwardly the meal is ingested. Thus, if the time that the mind dedicated for divine discourse were to be spent by the mind's totally yearning for extensive movements, for union with the Bridegroom, then because of the weariness of the body the spirit could not continue on. For, as was said, from love's beseeching tendency no small measure of affliction is conveyed especially to the head and the breast (in both of which the spirit is more fully located); and, as a result, pain is conveyed to the other members of the body as well.

[73] And so, let the mind multiply for itself new foods—and especially in three respects; one respect is the chief and foremost one, which the adjoining two othersⁿ⁶¹ accompany. Let the chief thing be most devout prayer and most chaste affection, by which [the mind] desires to be united to the Bridegroom for its own good. But to this end let there first be, especially for beginners, reflection on the Lord's suffering, on how the King of glory offered Himself for completely eradicating our sins. In obedience to the Father, [he offered Himself for us] to such an extent that He was condemned to a most cruel death, so that from the sole of His foot to the top of His head there was no soundness in Him.⁸⁸ And there was no part [of Him] that did not appear to all on-lookers to be sprinkled with His most sacred blood. Hence, reflection on His flesh is the doorway for entering unto the divinity of

inwardly concealed love. And as a sign of this love He willed that His most sacred side be pierced with the iron of a spear, so that only through His wounds is our mind situated in the intimate aspects of His divinity. For in accordance with what will be saidⁿ⁶² elsewhere, our reflecting on His suffering and our taking nourishment from His suffering do not satisfy a worthy soul. Rather, only He who concealed Himself from human eyes by means of the garb of the flesh [satisfies it].

[74] And so, the divine Apostle, admonishing every soul that yearns to rise above itself, said: “Since Christ has once suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought.”⁸⁹ For he now draws very near to the most blessed divinity—he who is inwardly conformedⁿ⁶³ to the humanity that is united to the divinity. [He is conformed] by meditating with imitative compassion on the very precious wounds of [Christ’s] suffering. For at that point he will be able, with abandon, to leave behind reflection on the suffering of the flesh. For having now obtained the goal in part, he desires to be rooted more intimately only in Christ, for the obtaining of whom he was reflecting on the wounds which are the doorway. This [reflecting] is the principal beginning of spiritual exercise.

Sixth Industry: Compassion

[75] There follows [now something] about a second [new food], which accompanies [the first one], viz., about that whichⁿ⁶⁴ will mercifully evoke no small measure of divine mercy or divine regard: i.e., [compassion] (1) for other sinners who are exposed to enemies, (2) for those who are asleep in their sins, (3) for those who are blinded by their impurities,ⁿ⁶⁵ (4) for those who are dead amid their delights. For in the following way filial love and amorous love are manifest: viz., when one has compassion for others, who have been created in the image of one’s own Father. Thus, those who imitate Christ in life will reign with Him, as saints, in glory.⁹⁰ Let [the yearning soul] mercifully see that some men are so torn up, and let it recognize that other men are so blinded, that, especially among adults, scarcely one in one hundred can be found who deserves to see Christ in glory—Christ “on whom the angels desire to look.”⁹¹ For Christ Himself issued this amazing decree: “Let him who ministers to me follow me.”⁹² For whichever living man has rendered diligent service either to the Most High by means of his good works or to the Devil by means of his sins will—by the just judgment of God after the departure of his soul from his body—be joined to the glorious armies or to the wretched

armies of the one or the other, whose will he fulfilled while still alive [on earth].

[76] Therefore, if I were to see someone physically slain or physically pierced-through with a material sword, or were I to see someone crushed by the feet of someone else who is stronger, I would be moved by a natural affection of sympathy for his misery. How, then, can my mind say that it loves the Father of all rational spirits, given that it sees so many sons who are marked with His image trampled on by the feet of utterly cruel enemies and given that it sees the Father lead those sons there, where all the drops of all the waters, and where the leaves of the trees, will be restored to a certain number more quickly than those sons will cease lamentably proclaiming the words that the Lord announced through Job, a just man: “Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said: a man child is conceived,” etc. And immediately afterwards: “Why was I taken into the lap? Why was I suckled at the breasts? Why when I left the womb did I not immediately perish?”⁹³ Now, the Prophet Isaiah gives a twofold reason for this [lamentation]. The first reason will be because of the miserable torment with which the body and the soul will be punished together for as long as God will be in glory; for both [the body and the soul] have transgressed.ⁿ⁶⁶ As Isaiah says: “Their worm shall not die, and their fire will not be quenched.”⁹⁴ This worm is conscience’s remorse over that for which the man merited forever to incur both the perceptible penalty of pain and the punishment of one-who-is-damned. He will grieve over things done in this world—things that are no longer of benefit to him but which in their own unique manner inflict pain, according to what is attested of such things in the Book of Wisdom: “What has pride profited us?” etc.⁹⁵

[77] But even the Most High Himself threatens to inflict the eternal punishment of damnation—[threatens] through Isaiah, who says: “Let him who is wicked be removed, so that he not see the glory of the Lord.”⁹⁶ Isaiah rightly calls that man “wicked”; for love alone induces the mind to lead a life of proper devoutness, by means of which true worship is given to the mind’s own Creator. Therefore, by the worthy judgment of God he who while he was alive in the body did not dispose and prepare himself in such a way that he would be joined to Uncreated Goodness by a bond of love is separated from, and removed from, most blessed enjoyment of God. He is truly removed when upon dying he remains in darkness and is separated from the happy vision of Divine Beauty, as his sins require. And what results

is this: viz., that he who has lived a bestial life on earth does not see the glory of God. Nor would the following be a just judgment: viz., that he rejoicingly enjoy an angelic life in the knowledge of Eternal Truth and in the love of Uncreated Goodness—wherein consists glory in Heaven.

[78] How, then, will he now be glad?—he who sees so many sons of his most kind Father being tormented by such undesired pains. Accordingly, the Divine Apostle, being concerned not for one person only but for the entire congregation of believers,⁹⁷ said to the Corinthians: “Who [among you] is weak, and I am not weak? Who [among you] is offended, and I am not on fire?”⁹⁸ For he who does not anticipatorily empathize with his fellow-members’ pains and with their unhealable wounds is seen himself not to be a living and effective member, united to Christ as his Head. The foregoing, then, is an industry that induces no small measure of heavenly mercy to turn toward oneself, so that the wisdom of the Dayspring is shed from on high downwards.⁹⁹ The one who [ascends] labors very intently with his whole heart in all respects: by means of supplications, by many pious affections, by the compassion of anointing, as also by passionate words in his preaching to the people. [He labors to the end] that by means of the infusion of wisdom, of instruction, and of faith the Divine Majesty show Himself mercifully willing that every creature for whom the Prince of glory deigned to appear on earth—every creature whatsoever, from East to West, from North to South, Christian, Jew, or pagan—attain such a true knowledge of the Truth (1) that no creature be deprived of the happy company of Him who on the altar of the Cross sacrificed Himself as an inestimable payment not for one individual only but for all andⁿ⁶⁷ (2) that no creature be deprived of the happy vision of Him whom alone he was created to contemplate and to love. Thus, the mind, desiring to follow the kind Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, bears the sins of all living men by means of its devout prayers and its attentive and kindled affections. [It does so] in order to be conformed to Him who has restored to His Father a lost sheep, carrying it on His shoulders into the sheepfold of eternal splendor.¹⁰⁰

[79] Indeed, the divine Prophet Jeremiah was not like a member of the dead but was a living and effective member. When he saw that his people were being quite horribly suffocated by a very wicked king, he asked: “Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night because of the slayingⁿ⁶⁸ of my people?”¹⁰¹ Nebuchodonosor represents the Devil; Baby-

lon represents infernal confusion; Jeremiah represents the soul most properly united to God by love. Similarly, Moses, raising his hand toward Heaven—a hand extended toward Heaven with a shield of inflamed prayer and with the spear of very strong love—merited to attain the God of Might so that by His power Israel would conquer Amalech.¹⁰² Likewise, too, by the power of the same love by which Moses was united to God, he so protected this same people that the Lord said to him: “Depart from me, so that I may destroy this people.”¹⁰³ For Moses had so bound Godⁿ⁶⁹ through the bond of affectionate prayer thatⁿ⁷⁰ the punishment that was fitting for the crimes would not be inflicted on the people of Israel.

For example, suppose that there were two men serving as men-of-commerce for some prince; and suppose that the one of them attentively conducted business for his own advantage, whereas the other, concernedly engaging himself, obtained what was of benefit to the entire family of his lord. In that case, the latter man would more quickly receive (because of the generosity of his lord) greater benefits than would he who, lacking devout feelings for the unfortunate, earned (because of his servant’s position of trust) special profits for his own benefit.

[80] The foregoing two things,¹⁰⁴ being as two harmonious co-existents, aid the tendency of the desiring mind, so that the mind is not deprived of its desire and of the end-goal of its tendency. As was previously said, the first and principal thing—viz., being affected with regard to [reflecting on] our Redeemer’s suffering and wounds, through both of which we arrive at perfect adherence—takes precedence. However, especially in the case of some individuals, there often ceases to be a time when the mind can—more perfectly than usual, and without any impeding obstacle, and with the way now opened because of fervent sighs that prepare the way—adhere to the Beloved in and through His divinity. But the [food] that has to do with compassion for one’s neighbor, compassion that is evocative of divine favor, never ceases. Instead, the more fervently the mind is affected, the more attentively it prays to God to apply the health-giving medicine of mercy and of graciousness to the wounded organs of so many wretched ones, so that when the mind is of consummate justice it may say with Blessed Job: “Mercy always grew up with me, and it came out with me from [my mother’s] womb.”¹⁰⁵ For mercy always increases not when it is continually directed toward merciful affections or spiritual joy but when it condescends to the misery of the unhappy. Mercy comes out of the womb with oneself at the moment when the mind

receives vital love from the emanation of the divine fruitfulness. By means of this love the newborn appeared to God's viewing and to the angelic powers to be transformed to a life similar to theirs.

Seventh Industry

[81] There follows [now something] about the final industry, which is known by means of anagogical wisdom to have to be embraced by lovers of God with all their might. For if everything confused and unordered is judged by this very fact to be corruptible and unstable, then, likewise, conversely, everything ordered, stable, and existing in the beauty of its ordering is judged to be thoroughly stabilized. And so, the disciples of Truth must labor wisely, in quite long exercise, to chant [*dicere*] their psalms or hymns or whatever else they recite [*dicere*], so that they may establish with respect to themselves the numerical order of the things to be recited. Moreover, unless there is some hindrance due to fraternal love or some necessity or obedience to a superior, they always quite diligently seek to complete what is first, what is second, what is third in the order in which this has been determined by them. For there remains from this happy exercise a certain enabling in their minds. In this regard, the mind is often made not a little sad if because of some negligence or inactivity it abandons the accustomed routine.

Indeed, attested by highly reliable experience is the fact that what at the beginning of a spiritual exercise seemed burdensome to the spirit, later when the exercise has become customary, attracts [one] by its charm (as does coldness when it is turned into warmth and as does slowness when it is turned into swiftness), especially because one is drawn by unitive love. Hence, in the [Canticle of] Canticles the bride seeks to be drawn, saying to the Beloved: "Draw me after you." And immediately thereafter is added: "We will run in the fragrance of your ointments."¹⁰⁶ For because love, which draws and which pulls upward, is infused into the summit of the affections in order to inflame it: the bride, in order to be established in the most desired bosom of her Beloved, now begins to run with wondrous agility. And as often as she desires to—desires with the desire-of-unitive-love, which is as a fragrance divinely sprayed upon her—she extends herself most fervently unto Him.

Wisdom as Immediately Infused

[82] Having spoken about the persuasions and industries by which the mind attains, above the intellect, unto perceiving unitive wis-

dom, we now add [a consideration of] the wisdom that is immediately taught by God.¹⁰⁷ [This consideration is] handed down by the great hierarch Paul the Apostle;¹⁰⁸ and by Blessed Dionysius the Areopagite it is written down in anagogical and occult style. Dionysius writes this to Timothy, fellow-disciple of truth, and speaks as follows: “As concerns mystical visions, dear Timothy: in great spiritual contrition leave behind the senses and the intellectual operations, as well as things perceptible and intelligible and all existing and non-existing things; and, as best as possible, rise up ignorantly unto union with Him whoⁿ⁷¹ is beyond all substance and knowledge. Indeed, by a taking leave of yourselfⁿ⁷² andⁿ⁷³ of whatever can entice you and everything that is independent,¹⁰⁹ you will be caught up purely—since you remove all things and are free of all things—unto the super-substantial ray of divine darkness. But see to it that none of the unlearned hear these words.”¹¹⁰ In this passage there is included (1) the supreme wisdom of the Apostle Paul and (2) the summit of all perfection (insofar as perfection is possible here on earth) and (3) the entire profundity of Dionysius the Areopagite’s books. When this passage is fully discerned, then whatever in the books of Dionysiusⁿ⁷⁴ is beyond understanding is made to be more accessible than [was previously] imaginable.

[83] Hence, this rising up, which is said to be through ignorance, is nothing but a being moved immediately through the fervor of love—a being moved without any creature’s mirroring and apart from any guiding knowledge and also without the accompanying movement of the intellect. Thus, the affection alone reaches the goal; and speculative knowledge knows nothing by means of the affection’s actual exercise. Moreover, the affection is the eye by which the Bridegroom is said in the [Canticle of] Canticles to be wounded by the bride. This eye is shown to be *one*—shown by the witness of him who says: “You have wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have wounded my heart with one of your eyes.”¹¹¹

Three Forms of Knowledge

[84] Hence, there is a triple knowledge. *One form of knowledge* is that which looks through the mirror of perceptible creatures. This form is taught by Richard of St. Victor in his *Mystical Ark*, where by means of forty-two considerations that are expressly symbolized by the Israelites’ formerly coming from Egypt to the Land of Promise he teaches [us] to come to the Creator of all things and to ascend [to Him] through six stages. *The second form of knowledge* is that which by

means of the exercise of the intellect through the infusion of spiritual rays teaches [us] (1) how to know the First Cause by way of His effects and (2) to arrive at immutable truth through a consideration, in regard to everything exemplified, of its Exemplar. About this form of knowledge the distinguished teacher Augustine—in his book on sacred teachingⁿ⁷⁵ and on true religion¹¹²—makes no small mention to one-who-understands. *The third form of knowledge* is much more excellent than these others. Through very fervent unitive love and apart from any intermediary, it makes the mind to be actually disposed to rise up very fervently unto its Beloved with extending upward-movements. This form of knowledge is handed down in [Dionysius’s] *Mystical Theology*, and it rises up in the summit of the affections. This rising up is said to be unknown or to occur through ignorance, so that when the exercise of all imagination, reason, intellect, or intelligence, is removed, then through the union of very fervent love [the affections] sense, in the present, that which the intellect is not capable of grasping. For the more noble the Seraphim is than the Cherubim, the more perfect is true love than is any *habitus* endowed from one’s primordial origin or given by grace or making one grateful.

Dionysius’s Words

[85] The more excellent the motive power is than is the cognitive power, the more lucid is knowledge through unitive love (with regard to penetrating the greatest secrets of God) than is any cognitive apprehension. Hence, in the following way, [knowledge through unitive love], which incomparably excels all other forms of knowledge, is defined by Blessed Dionysius: “Wisdom is our most divine knowledge of God—a knowledge that is known through ignorance.”¹¹³ And not only is [this wisdom] more lucid but it is also more universal and more useful than other fields of study, other forms of knowledge, and other kinds of apprehensions. For not only does it raise the affections beyond themselves and unite the creature perfectly to the most lofty Bridegroom by means of an ecstatic love but also it elevates the intellect to such an extent that with respect to all prudence and knowledge the intellect is illumined by the divine splendors much more than could be achieved by any exercise of the intellect’s genius.

[86] Hence, in *The Divine Names* VII Blessed Dionysius says about this wisdom: “Praising excellently this irrational and mindless and foolish wisdom, we say that it is the cause of all mind and rea-

son and of all wisdom and prudence. From it comes all counsel, from it comes all knowledge and prudence, and in it are hidden the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge."¹¹⁴ By "wisdom and knowledge" the complete perfectionⁿ⁷⁶ of both powers is there being referred to. For Dionysius calls that wisdom irrational because reason does not apprehend it, nor does it use reason when investigating. Moreover, he calls it mindless—i.e., without mind and without intellect—because in its own exercise it does not use intellect, nor is intellect able fully to arrive at such supreme perfection. Furthermore, he calls it foolish because without the use of any kind of intelligence this wisdom, which no intelligence at allⁿ⁷⁷ apprehends, rises up in the affections.

[87] In the foregoing words set forth by holy Dionysius this wisdom is perfectly handed down. For there is stated, first, what must be removed and, secondly, how one is to rise up. And, moreover, in this rising-up the soul is in a double state, viz., as making progress and as perfected. Therefore, in that passage there is first added what must be removed with respect to the first state: "Leave behind the senses." Secondly, the rising-up is noted, when there is said "Rise up ignorantly" all the way to where [there is said] "For taking leave of yourself . . .," etc.¹¹⁵ [88] For Dionysius, throughout his entire philosophy, uses the term "mystical visions" for [a vision] that transcendsⁿ⁷⁸ the considerations of every being, when the intellective power knows on the basis of the preceding affections—and not conversely. And this is certain and most true knowledge, altogether removed from all error and opinion and from the deceptiveness of images. Hence, those things that have been said and that will be saidⁿ⁷⁹ as regards the directedness of the affections—whether they are said in theorizing about this wisdom or in practicing it—are affirmed irrefutably in the face of the whole world's philosophers and teachers. And this knowledge is called mystical (i.e., hidden) both because there are few people who are disposed to receive it and because it is present so hiddenly in the heart that it cannot be fully explained either orally or writtenly.

[89] In this mystical knowledge, where the affections dominate, bothⁿ⁸⁰ the senses and the intellect are supposed to be completely left behind—first, as regardsⁿ⁸¹ the powers of apprehending (where the text has the words "senses and intellectual operations"¹¹⁶) and, secondly, as regards the objects, viz., perceptible and intelligible objects (where the text says "perceptible things and intelligible things"¹¹⁷). But lest it seem absurd that the senses should be left behind, the reason is added: viz., because this wisdom is not like knowledge that de-

rives from a pre-existing acquaintance with perceptible objects; rather, it comes from on high, according to the authoritative declaration of the Blessed Apostle James, who says: “Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above,” etc.¹¹⁸ If every gift [is from above], then [such holds] all the more true for this wisdom, which is the best portion [chosen] by Mary,¹¹⁹ who, being inflamed with love for her Beloved, was fervent with kindled desire.

Unitive Apprehension

[90] Therefore, because this apprehending [of wisdom] is from on high and not from below, we are ordered to uproot the senses. This [command] must be understood not only as regards the office of the outer senses but also as regards the inner senses. For the Most Blessed God is not apprehended under the aspect of the sweet or of the fragrant¹²⁰ or of the beautiful or the melodious or the soft. For all these [judgments] are guided by a preceding apprehension on the part of reason, whereas the unitive apprehension is beyond reason and mind, as was said. Therefore, it is necessary that a disciple who speculates draw this [mystical] wisdom from elsewhere than from those things unto which the apprehenders of speculative knowledge look.

And the wondrous and prized nobility of this wisdom, and its divinity, and the reason why in Dionysius’s definition this wisdom is called very divine, appears in the following: that the soul must, as it were, despoil itself of itself and pursue, as a footman, the love that is divinely conferred on the affections. [And it is necessary that] through this divine movement-upwards the intellect be in-formed with a lasting and most divine knowledge that results from the contact of love.¹²¹ And [this despoiling] must be understood not only apropos of the simple apprehension of the senses but also apropos of the delight of the senses insofar as the senses look to a moving principle. For this is, as it were, the highest preparation for thisⁿ⁸² wisdom: viz., that the inordinate taking of delight in the creature be effectively eliminated (as best it can be) from the outer senses, so that in some way or other God is sought as the mediate or immediate End or as the Ultimate End. For the more [the soul] is immersed in the outer senses, the more feebly it rises up unto things divine so as to say with the Psalmist: “My soul refused to be comforted.”¹²² The reason for this refusal of delightsⁿ⁸³ is also given by the Psalmist, when he there says the following: “I remembered God and was delighted, and my spirit withdrew.”¹²³ & ⁿ⁸⁴ Add: When the mind exercises itself by means of an-

agogical movements toward divine things, and when it is delighted because of its direct tendency toward God, the spirit withdraws from other delights which are offered to it from the outer senses at the instigation of the Devil.

This [same thing] must also be said about the delight of the inner senses. For sweetness ought not to be loved by him who loves truly, nor ought agreeableness to be desired (for God alone is sought) except whenever he desires sweetness or agreeableness for the following reason: viz., in order that the affections yearn very efficaciously and importunately for more intimate union with God. Accordingly, this entire wisdom is gathered within fervent desire, where the entire being, strength, and operation of the intellectual power is commanded to be rooted out and left behind. To be sure, the intellectual power partakes at times of many of the divine things—especially when this power is illumined by very divine contemplations.

Scintilla Synderesis (Spark of Conscience)

[91] But there is in the mind another power, one that is much more excellent than is the intellectual power. By its movements the inflamed mind is raised up unto a higher wisdom—raised up at times by reason of the higher summit of the mind’s affective power and at times by reason of the fervor that raises it more highly. This fervor obtains, in the rational spirit, dominion over all bestowed and infused habits—[obtains dominion] by reason of its worthiness and its imploring reachings-out. Hence, the distinguished teacher, the Commentator (from Vercelli) on *The Mystical Theology*, speaks as follows: “In this book [Dionysius] has handed down another way, an incomparably higher way, of knowing God—a super-intellectual and super-substantial way that a pagan philosopher does not grasp, because he has not sought it out, has not believed it to exist, and has not apprehended the power according to which it is diffused in the soul. For the pagan philosopher believed that the highest cognitive power is present in the intellect, although there is another power, viz., the principal power of affection, which excels the intellect no less than the intellect excels reason or than reason excels the imagination. This other power is the spark of conscience, which alone is uniteable to the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁴

And for this reason—viz., because [the supreme affection of the mind] incomparably suspends the operation of the entire intellect—this [intellectual] operation is commanded [by Dionysius] to be ex-

cluded from the mind. He commands not only the exclusion of the [cognitive] operations according as they issue from the perceptual and the intellective powers but also the exclusion of the objects themselves—i.e., the exclusion of all things perceptual and intellectual. First of all, those things which are perceived by the outer senses [are to be excluded]. For since a rational creature consists of a twofold nature, viz., a corporeal and a spiritual nature, both [aspects] have an object that corresponds to them, since Eternal Truth is perceived in accordance with the capability of each of these [aspects].

[92] Therefore, those who are men-who-perceive and who know only perceptual things and who have, as it were, only their senses, while having a dulled intellect and distorted affections, do not (for these reasons) perceive either divine goodness or divine truth within themselves. But, nevertheless, in order that they not be altogether deprived of a knowledge of God, the Most High God fashioned perceptible creatures, so that (according to the Apostle) “the invisible things of God are clearly seen to be understandable in and through the things that have been made.”¹²⁵ Thus, in accordance with the word of David, no one has any excuse or “can hide himself from His heat.”¹²⁶ For the going forth of His goodness from peak to peak shines forth in all creatures. But Uncreated Wisdom willed for these perceptible things to be removed from His children, in order that inwardly in a most secret chamber of the affections they might sense, much more happily and much more truly, Him who is situated in the bed of love—Him for whom Jews and blind philosophers go begging as they make inferences, outwardly, by means of creatures.

[93] Hence, the true [believer] who prays in spirit is commanded by Truth itself to enter into his chamber,¹²⁷ where he will find a hidden treasure—not only a perceptible treasure that corresponds to the outer senses but also [one that is] the object of the inner senses. Let [this treasure] not be sought—through anagogical desires-of-mind—under the guidance of reasoning that apprehends the Most Blessed God according as He is pleasant, delightful, and most beautiful. [Let it not be thus sought] lest the soul—which, as a daughter, is supposed to cling [to its Creator] with a singular desire for Him—shamelessly seek its refection as does a hireling. [Let the treasure be thus sought] only for the previously mentioned reason: viz., in order that the soul may be more intensely and more insatiably aflame when drawn unto God by means of a nourishment of pleasantness and delightfulness. For, in general, intelligible objects are to be removed be-

cause (according to what is said elsewhere)¹²⁸ although by nature all men desire to know, nevertheless [this] tendency of the rational spirit finds rest in some knowledge¹²⁹ only when it delights in the agreeable knowledge of the First Truth, which alone it finds to correspond to the nobleness of the human intellect.

More Teachings from Dionysius

[94] Therefore, [even] if the rational spirit knows the entire nature of the elements, knows the combinations of physical objects and the powers of the stars, then since all these objects are quite base, the rational spirit is not at rest. Rather, it thereby dissipates or even luxuriates; for unless it harks back to the Ultimate End, it is entangled with the image-of-a-creature that is inferior to itself. Moreover, since the [rational] spirit is of such great nobleness that it disdains even the kinds of beings that angels are, it is altogether dissatisfied and errant, unless it somehow returns to a knowledge of Him from whom it originally went forth as a victor and as potentially triumphant. But even if the rational spirit wanted to know all created things, tracing them back to their due End, so that by means of created things the Creator of all things were known by the rational spirit, nevertheless in consideration of this wisdom the rational spirit must leave everything behind. For the mind knows the Creator *immediately*, by means of an ineffable knowledge that is a remnant of the union of love. And in *The Mystical Theology* (in accordance with the third translation)¹³⁰ the following is said about the just-mentioned knowledge: “Through a union-of-love, which brings about true knowledge, [the soul] is united to the intellectually unknown God—united by means of a much-better knowledge than is any intellectual knowledge.”

[95] There follows [in Dionysius’s *Mystical Theology* the words]: “not only intelligible things.”¹³¹ By means of this phrase, with respect to the exercise of mystical theology, we are urged to leave behind the pleasure of [having] a complete and final knowledge of every creature (lower as well as higher creatures). “... but both things existing and things not-existing.” By mention of these two [conjuncts] every speculative mode of apprehending the Divine Nature is excluded. “... things existing” Here the eternal forms in the Divine Mind are being spoken of—forms to which there corresponds something exemplified in the creature below. For, most assuredly, we find a most well-ordered way of proceeding unto divine things to be by means of human things—find it when the mind, elevated above itself, is moved

immediately unto God as unto its Center, or its End, without any admixing of any creatures, whether higher or lower. So, in considering the eternal forms: the more the mind considers the creatures that go forth from these forms, the more it is occupied in the opposite direction [with things] beneath itself, so that it is not completely and wholly elevated above itself. So unitive wisdom leaves behind all contemplation or consideration of creatures in their movements, and it yearns [to obtain], above itself, its own unique Lovable One. Therefore, with regard to things that exist: contemplation [of them], although it is noble, is commanded to be discarded. For in that contemplation there is a certain crookedness and a certain natural perception, so that because of that relational contemplation the mind does not leave behind every sort of *human* apprehending in order through *another kind* of apprehension, as it were, to be placed altogether above its own natural limitations.

[96] But, as concerns that wisdom's ascending, non-existent things, too, are commanded to be removed. Now, here "non-existent" is being said of things in accordance with which nothing is found to be exemplified in creatures—as, for example, every consideration of the Trinity and of the ordering of its Persons. For in creatures there never appears as exemplified someone's begetting someone else who is the same as himself, each of them being [the same] truly existing substance. Nor [is there] ever [found] the fact that the love which unites certain ones is of equal and existent substance with the ones who are doing the loving. Therefore, this contemplation which is the most excellent among speculative contemplations is commanded to be dispensed withⁿ⁸⁵—dispensed with not because it is not good and noble but because there is in the human mind a higher form of apprehension, through which, alone, the Supreme Spirit of spirits is most excellently attained. This form of apprehending is alone called 'the best portion, which is Mary's.'¹³²

Deifying Love

[97] One [form of contemplation] is symbolized by Rachel, whereas the contemplation in terms of perceptible creatures is symbolized by Leah. And here is why: viz., because mind more divinely and more eminently attains things supercelestial the more closely it approaches them and the more intimately it is transformed into God. And because except only for the expansive, deifying love there is no speculative contemplation which has the power of transforming, only

that [deifying] love apprehends divine things—[apprehends Him] to whose foot no cognitive contemplation reaches but, instead, only sees Him to some extent from afar, as it were. Hence, in [Dionysius's] *The Divine [Names]* VII the following is said: “Our mind must have a powerⁿ⁸⁶ of understanding. By means of this power it beholds invisible things. But [there must also be] a uniting that expands the mind's nature—a uniting by means of which the mind is joined to those things that are above it. Therefore,ⁿ⁸⁷ it is necessary to understand divine things in accordance with this [uniting]—to understand them not according to ourselves but according to ourselves as made whole and as deified wholes.”¹³³ And because it is difficult to dispense with [considerations of] these [existing and non-existing things], they are commanded to be severed [from us] with great contrition and with great effort of mind.¹³⁴

[98] Once [Dionysius] has spoken about the things that must be left behind, he must add something about the unitive rising-upwards. The condition of rising upwards is first noted in the text when the words “through ignorance”¹³⁵ occur. And the elevating extending is indicated where there is said “Rise up.” And that which “rising-up” means principally and exclusively is indicated by the words: “... to a uniting with Him who is ...,” etc.¹³⁶ Now, although the whole of the apprehension that has just been spoken of lies outside [the sphere] of mystical apprehension, nevertheless it is necessary that in mystical apprehending there be ignorance; i.e., it is necessary totally to inactivate the intellect's eye, which amid the rising upwards wishes always to apprehend that toward which the affections are inclining. Hence, amid this rising-upwards the greatest hindrance is the vigorous attachment, to the affections, of the intellect, whichⁿ⁸⁸ must be rendered inoperative through great effort. (The reasons for this rendering inoperative were mentioned earlier: viz., because the intellect apprehends either with the assistance of images or circumscribedly, i.e., in some limited way). And how this [rising-up] can be accomplished is stated in *The Mystical Theology* in the following way: “Rise up ignorantly.”¹³⁷ For in that case the elevating of, together with the forcefulness of, the affections' inclination leaves the intellect behind. Therefore, there is never a pure affectional rising up unless the eye of the intellect is rendered totally inoperative. And this [point] is one that is made at the outset of *The Mystical Theology*.

Mystical Apprehending

[99] By means of an ignorant dispensing with all knowledge [the soul] is better united [to God], because, having been elevated above the mind, the knowledge recognizes nothing. Hence, a necessary condition for this most elevated apprehending is that, amid the apprehending, all speculative knowledge is absent, since the apprehending is unknown to any intellect and since the intellectⁿ⁸⁹ must be left behind if the soul desires to arrive at supra-mental knowledge. And amid this rising upwards: the more the intellect is mingled with the affections, the less purity there is there; and the more the eye of the intellect is totally blinded (only by means of enormous exercise and effort), the more freely and the more incomparably eminently the eye of the affections is elevated in the course of extending itself.

[100] The foregoing point can be discerned by means of a material example—viz., in terms of the breathing in and out associated with panting. For just as this breathing proceeds from internal factors without any reflective thought, so too, without reflective thought the inflamed affections stretch beyond all understanding unto Him with whom alone they desire to be more perfectly united. And the affections have their own activity, which is totally separated from all understanding. By the higher part [of the soul] they are assisted so extensively and promptly that with a marvelous swiftness-of-movement they rise upwards more quickly than can be thought, truly in imitation of breathing in and out. By means of the affections' swiftness-of-movement (as was said above) and by means of the extensive and very imploring fervor of these movements, the exercise of all speculative knowledge is repulsed and restrained as is a beggar of no worth, although he importunately mixes in. [101] This fact cannot be described, or sufficiently explained, in words—according to the text of *The Mystical Theology* 3: “Ascending now from lower things unto the Supreme [Being, our discourse] is contracted in accordance with the measure of the ascent. And at the end of the ascent our entire [discourse] will be without vocalization and will be united ineffably to ...,” etc.¹³⁸ Therefore, Uncreated Wisdom wanted to reserve for itself alone the teaching of this splendid wisdom, in order that every moral creature might know that in Heaven there is a Teacher who reveals the only true wisdom to His chosen scholars, [doing so] through heavenly infusions, and heavenly rays, of His splendor.

[102] A second reason [for the inexplicability] is in order that

[mystical wisdom] might put to silence all the wise men of the world. For if a simple elderly woman or a rural peasant prepares himself in the aforesaid manner, he can arrive perfectly at being elevated unto this wisdom—an arrival point that no natural knowledge or mortal industry apprehends. [103] A third reason is given in the Book of Wisdom: viz., because “by His own power He has trod upon the necks of all the proud and exalted.”¹³⁹ For howsoever distinguished a cleric is, howsoever more glorious than all othersⁿ⁹⁰ a cleric is, he does not attain unto [even] the fringes of this wisdom, which is known to be elevated above every mind. [He does not attain thereunto] unless by means of the childish way, viz., the purgative way, while having supposed himself to have sinned mortally, he prepares himself for the unitive way, grieving and mourning over the fact that he has provoked the Bestower-of-all-wisdom to indignation against him because of his previous sins. Therefore, it is necessary that the necks of the proud and exalted be bent down to the humility of beginning children. Hence, in that situation there is fulfilled the prophecy in which the wisdom of the wise is reproved.¹⁴⁰ And only the humbleness of purgative lowliness is required by that Supreme [Being], who “has deposed the mighty from their seat and has exalted the humble.”¹⁴¹

[104] But when [in that text] there is said “Rise up ignorantly,” that with respect to which that rising upwards occurs is also mentioned: viz., for the purpose of being united with the Most High, who is above mind and cognition. And the reason for [this ignorance] was mentioned, in part, earlier-on: viz., because there is required there neither grace nor glory nor the dismissal of punishment, nor any thing other than those desires of rising actively upwards.ⁿ⁹¹ But He alone, to whom the mind desires to be united—desiring it for its own sake and in terms of a trodding under of forceful desires—is attained beyond every human mind and all human cognition. He is attained, with respect to this [mystical] apprehending, according as He is perceived by the inclining affections. Thus, not only does the mind see Being itself in an absolute way, but, as was said, even the mode of apprehending Him when He is touched by the affections is extended above mind and reason.

God's Infusing of Himself

[105] Hence, the whole of this wisdom is perfected only by means of the following: viz., that the affections—established in their supreme summit—desire, through the cutting off of the entire intel-

lectual operation, nothing other than to be united to God alone.ⁿ⁹² And because this [cutting off] is difficult, there is added: "... as far as is possible," up to the point where [the soul] can say with the Psalmist: "Lord, You have broken my bonds; to You will I sacrifice a sacrifice of praise."¹⁴² For when, as being bonds preventing a perfect unitive reaching-forth, the aforementioned hindrances are removed with divine help—i.e., when all perceptible objects are removed, along with all intelligible objects and, especially, the intervening activity of the intellect, which always wishes to apprehend Him unto whom the affections are inclined—then the affections are free, like a small bird. The soul, being elevated only by the wings of fervent affections, enjoys such freedom that as often as it most fervently wills to, it is moved unto God.

So, too, as one who is praying with desirous affections by means of the affections of the mind (as far as is possible here below), let the soul pray very intently, as if it were to see God face to face. For the mind, which is thus raised up beyond itself by an elevating movement, seems to be completely, as it were, outside the body. Hence, the reason for saying "... as far as is possible" is that no mind, except by divine infusion, perceives this [face to face encounter]—[a fact] indicated in Chapter 1 of [Dionysius's] *The Divine Names*: "It is fitting to ascribe to the [Deity] a super-substantial knowledge of the unknown super-substantiality, which is above reason and intellect and substance. We [are to] look more highly upwards to the extent that the ray of speculative words infuses itself [and leads us] to the higher splendors," etc.¹⁴³

[106] The foregoing is the same as [saying] that the wisdom that comes through ignorance (as previously indicated) is received by the teaching of God alone. And the greater the number of speculative words that the affections receive—receive, viz., by divine influxes, by means of which the communicative mind is delighted very fully with the Beloved—the more intimately God alone infuses Himself into the mind, in order that He Himself who is true Wisdom may be known more clearly through the very divine rays.

Surpassing of All Things, including Oneself

[107] Afterwards, there are added [the words]: "For indeed, a surpassing of yourself" For not only does unitive wisdom urge that creatures be completely dispensed with but it also and especially mortifies the intellect and submits itself to divine influence alone. And regarding this surpassing [of oneself] the Apostle says to the Corinthi-

ans: “Whether we surpass in mind, [it is] to God ...,” etc.¹⁴⁴ And by means of this continued surpassing on the part of inflamed love, the soul obtains—through its fiery extendings, which consume the rust—a more effective separation and purgation, and the soul is more effectively deserving than when it first begins to rise upwards by means of this wisdom. For just as in the case of physical things there is a twofold purgation—viz., through water and through fire—the same holds true in the case of spiritual things. For the first purgative way purges through griefs, through frequent chastisings, and through tears; but much more efficacious is the purgation that comes by way of fervent love’s rising-upward. Hence, the affections are very easily conducted upwards, since through their fervor’s surpassing-[movements] they have now become much lighter than at the beginning of the exercise of rising upwards, and they have become free of all that holds them back (i.e., free of mundane delight). And being now free of all alien inclination and with all obstacles now completely removed, and being free from bonds, the affections are very easily conducted upwards unto the brightness of the Divine Incomprehensibility.

Hence, this is the order of rising upwards: First, it is necessary to leave behind the consideration and love of perceptible things and the contemplation of all intelligible things. And so that it may be united more intimately to Him, let pure affection, without any admixture of intellect, rise upward unto Him whom in its inclination it knows to be the only one to quiet its desire. And by means of this rising up on the part of longer-lasting anagogical movements, the affections are more and more extended; and, as if by certain fiery sparks the mind is purged more efficaciously, purged even of the love of carnal things. And finding rest elsewhere, without any trace of the flesh, necessarily the mind is much more secluded than previously. And hereupon the affections are made more easily movable with pure movements, so that as often as they wish, they are moved most fervently without any meditation on the part of a preceding act-of-intellect.

[108] Hence, [Dionysius] says at first: “Rise upwards ignorantly.” And [then] he says here, “You will be raised upwards.” It is as if he were saying that at the outset of the exercising of anagogical risings-upward the summit of the affections rises upwards with difficulty. But through love’s extending itself above itself, and through a quite efficacious purgation, the affections rise upwards at will, as if without difficulty. And by means of the ease of movements [the soul] is marvelously lightened, so that although within its anagogical move-

ment nature and love proceed in equal measure, nevertheless with hindrances now removed and, accordingly, with a greater infusion coming from on high, the fervor of love, much more than the strength of the natural affections, brings about incomparably and quite effectively the ease and the promptness of the movements. [109] And this is what was meant by "... removing all things," etc.¹⁴⁵ Here there are especially mentioned two things that it is necessary to leave behind: viz., anything that can entice and every discrete thing. The former of these has to do with the affections. For by whatever created thing [the soul] is influenced it has, necessarily, an attachment to it. And, as a result, it is ensnared; and then it is made less able to rise upward to things divine. But not only that which can entice but also every discrete thing [is to be left behind]. For "discrete thing" refers to everything that is known by means of its own form, everything that has distinct being. It is necessary that speculation on these distinct things, and contemplation of these distinct things, be removed. For just as everything that can entice renders the affections unclean when the affections are taking delight in creatures more base than themselves, so the intellect is made unclean by the second thing. That is, the intellect is darkened, for when it is filled only with human speculative knowledge—as compared with this wisdom, which comes through super-resplendent divine rays—it is dimmed as if by a certain be-darkening cloud.

Rapturous Vision of God

[110] But this last remark is not only about the quite easy rising upwards but is also about the intelligence's supreme knowledge. For according to Blessed Dionysius's wisdom, the only true knowledge of divine things is knowledge that results from the experiential acquaintance of an actual rising-upwards. Hence, as is fitting, it happens by divine mercy to one who is rising upwards that after his mind, throughout many cycles of time, has yearned to embrace its Beloved more intimately with a more fervent bond of love, then for a while, insofar as the mind is capable, a blessed vision (as occurs in a rapture) is granted to it. [It is granted] especially because the mind is cleansed of what can entice and of what is a discrete form.¹⁴⁶ And, thereupon, the mind is raised up unto the ray of divine darkness, i.e., unto the light of divine incomprehensibility, which *there* [in the passage under consideration] is called darkness. In accordance therewith it is said in [Dionysius's] *Letter to Timothy*: "Divine darkness is the inaccessible

light in which God is said to dwell; and [that light] is invisible because of its exceeding brightness,” etc.¹⁴⁷

[111] Hence, this wisdom is present immediately before the awareness of rapture. And in this way the Beloved says to the one who has been yearning for a long while: “Friend, go up higher.”¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, at first “Rise upwards” is commanded;¹⁴⁹ and then “you will be caught upwards” [is said].¹⁵⁰ For in the rising-upwards of unitive wisdom nature operates, along with grace. However, in this supreme elevation of the intelligence, grace alone works very immediately as it elevates. [This working occurs] with respect to the elevation that has to do with rapture, according as the mind is raised upwards in the body to such an extent that it is separated from the bodily senses. For in this ultimate elevation of the intelligence both the intellectual power and the affective power obtain, principally, the perfect functioning of their own acts. [They obtain perfection] not in the mode of their being acted upon but in the mode of their acting.

Those Who Are Arrogantly Unlearned

[112] Afterwards, it is said: “See that none of the unlearned hear these things.”¹⁵¹ And [Dionysius] gives this admonition at the end of the first book of *The Divine Names*. Writing as follows to Timothy and speaking of knowledge by way of a preceding love, he says: “Let us lend [holy ears] in the case of holy matters, settling holy matters in accordance with divine tradition and removing them from the practices and the derisionsⁿ⁹³ of the unlearned. But if there are at all some such men, let us rather free them from attacking God in this regard,” etc.¹⁵² [Dionysius] very frequently gives this same admonition in his other books. And here is the reason that he assigns immediately afterwards: viz., because “by means of the knowledge which accords with them, they think that they can know Him who has made darkness His hiding-place.”¹⁵³ For they cannot apprehend God except under the form of the good or the true or the delightful, etc.

[113] And this anagogical wisdom is a certain theoretical wisdom that (1) is distinct in and of itself and that (2) is different from all speculative *knowledge*, and that (3) transcends all rationalⁿ⁹⁴ apprehension. And because many wise men and many teachers are not able to recognize this [point], they scoff at this supreme wisdom. And, thus, in this way they attack the Most High God, the Bestower of this wisdom. And so, together with Blessed Dionysius—yea, rather, what is more, together with our Lord Jesus Christ—I ask whichever man sees

this present writing not to show it at all to the unlearned teachers, to the philosophers of the world, to those leading a carnal life. [I ask him not to show it] unless [those to whom it is shown] wish to begin with this childlike way, viz., the *via purgativa*. And sooner than would be [true of] any industrious worker not only in some one of the liberal arts but also in the mechanical art, those who ascend gradationally by means only of divine infusion will prove, within themselves, all the things that have been said [by me]—prove them in a much better way and by a quite delightful and most veracious experiential acquaintance.

Purpose of the Present Work

[114] But I wished to write this present work to this end: that those who are less experienced in this wisdom may direct their steps [to it] by means of an assured journey, knowing that [this wisdom] is found very quickly. But if at the beginning of the purification or of the ecstatic rising-upwards a surprising difficulty is experienced [by these individuals], nevertheless “though they are afflicted in a few respects, they will very quickly be well rewarded in many respects.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, they will see by experience “that which eye has not seen, which ear has not heard, and which has not entered into the heart of man.”¹⁵⁵ Here also in the present life they will cling to Him through a love of this supreme wisdom, so that their mind will say: “I am holding onto Him and will not let go of Him.”¹⁵⁶

Now, notwithstanding the fact that this wisdom is regarded by the unlearned as a foolish wisdom, there is appended¹⁵⁷ [by me] theoretical considerations, wherein I proceed by way of arguments and reasonings as to how the mind can rise upwards, how obstacles are to be removed, what the means of union are, and many other issues that in this regard pertain to the confounding of human philosophy. But also, lest the ascent of such great wisdom seem to be irrational, I dispute quite openly by means both of theological arguments and of arguments based on considerations of nature, as well as by means of analogical arguments taken from [a consideration] of eternal reasons.

Difficulty and Ease of Mystical Wisdom

[115] And so, the wisdom [spoken] of [by] Dionysius is seen to be very difficult, because its mode of proceeding is above all reasoning and because the wisdom is received only by an instilling from the Holy Spirit. [It is] especially [difficult] because of the procedure of *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*, according to what is

said at the outset of *The Divine Names*, where we are told that this teaching is declared not “in persuasive words of human wisdom” but “in the exhibiting of the theologians’ power—a power incited by the [Holy] Spirit. In accordance with this power we are ineffably and ignorantly joined to things ineffable and unknown—joined in accordance with a union better than our intellectual power and operation,” etc.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, when the Holy Spirit moves the summit of the affections (in accordance with the Psalmist,ⁿ⁹⁵ [who says] “Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke”¹⁵⁹), then the entire profundity of Dionysius’s wisdom, at the point where it exceeds the intellect, is proved to be very certain, very easy, and very lovable—more than is true of the easiness of any other discipline. For [that profundity] proceeds apart from all doubt and apart from [mere] opinion. And so, because practical knowledge must precede theoretical knowledge in order that the latter may be possessed very easily: theoretical knowledge follows after practical knowledge. Therefore, may peace and an influx of divine goodness be granted to all lovers of true wisdom. AMEN.