Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

169 Prayer is like incense (*Oracio est incensum*)

Prayer is incense to be offered to divine mercy, Psal. [140:2]: “Let my prayer be directed as incense,” Lord.

¶ It is even like the shield opposed to divine indignation, Wis. 18[:21]: “Moses bringing forth the shield of prayer, withstood the wrath.” It is even like a tribute for loosening divine domination, Matt. 17[:24].

¶ Again,[[1]](#endnote-1) he who prays ought to cry like a child because he wants the breasts, Can. 1[:1]: “Your breasts are better than wine.” Again, like the cub when it feels the breasts, Psal. [106:6]: “They cried to the Lord in their tribulation.”

¶ Again, like the people when they see precipitous dangers against three things: fire, water, and enemy. The first is carnal desire. The second is worldly avarice. The third is diabolical cunning. About which, the Psal. [82:4]: “A malicious counsel” besieged me.

¶ Again,[[2]](#endnote-2) prayer is like the arms arming the soldier, just as the lantern showing the way. Like the dove bringing the olive branch. Concerning the first, the soldier does not go out to war without arms,

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so neither do we go to the conflict of temptation without prayer. In the figure of which it is said, Exod. 17[:11]: “When Moses lifted up his hands,” to pray, “Israel overcame,” etc. Concerning the second, just as a lamp is necessary in the darkness, so prayer in matters of doubt, in the figure of which the “woman” of the gospel, that is, the devout soul, “lights a candle,” that is, an instance of prayer, “and finds the groat,” that is, the lost grace, Luke 15[:8]. Wherefore Jerome in *Ad Paulinum*,[[3]](#endnote-3) in the beginning of any good work begins with the sign of the cross on his forehead with the Lord’s Prayer.

¶ Concerning the third, just as the dove with the branch announced the peace and cessation of the flood, so prayer petitions for divine reconciliation, Gen. 8[:8]. And like the dove has two wings, so prayer has fasting with alms.

1. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 2.5 (8:269b-270a): Item qui orat debet clamare sicut clamat parvulus, qui vult ubera; sicut clamat catulus, cum sentit verbera; et sicut clamat populus, cum videt pericula. Est itaque homo qui orat sicut parvulus volens ubera; nam sicut parvulus clamat pro desiderio lactis; sic viri spirituales debent emittere ululatum orationis devotæ pro uberibus consolationis divinæ, juxta illud quod dicitur: *Meliora sunt ubera tua vino*. Est etiam homo qui orat, sicut catulus sentiens verbera: nam sicut catulus, sentiens verbera, clamat plus, cum plus percutitur; sic plus debet clamare orando, qui a Domino tribulationis verbere castigatur; nam dicitur: *Ad Dominum cum tribularer,* etc. Est insuper homo qui orat, sicut populus videns pericula: sicut enim consuevit populus clamare præcipue propter tria, scilicet contra aquam, ignem, et hostes; sic homo debet emittere clamorem contra triplex genus tentationis, scilicet contra carnalem concupiscentiam, quæ per ignem figuratur; contra concupiscentiam terrenam seu mundanam, quæ per aquam effluentem intelligitur; contra diabolicam guerram, quæ proprie hostis appellatur.... [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 2.5 (8:270a-b): Item oratio est sicut armatura militem ornans, sicut lucerna viam demonstrans, et sicut columba olivam portans. Est itaque oratio sicut armatura: nam sicut miles non exit sine armis ad bellum, ita sine armis orationis nullo modo debemus intrare tentationis conflictum. In cujus figura dicitur, quod *Moyse elevante manus* ad orationem, *vincebat Israel; et cum remitte manus, superabat Amalech,* id est diabolus. Est autem oratio sicut lucerna viam demonstrans: nam sicut lucerna est necessaria in tenebris, sic oratio in rebus dubiis. In cujus figura *mulier* illa evangelica, id est anima devota, *accendit lucernam, et invenit drachmam,* ut dicitur in *Luca* Lucerna est orationis instantia; drachma vero est gratia divina, quae quasi perdita fuerit, reperitur cum oratione devota. ... Unde dicit Hieronymus *ad Paulam*: “In principio cujuslibet operis boni, præmitte signum crucis in fronte cum Oratione Dominica.” Est insuper oratio sicut columba, quæ reversa est ad arcam cum oliva, ut habetur in *Genesi.* Nam sicut illa denuntiavit pacem, et jam cessasse diluvium; sic oratio denuntiat pænitentiam, reconciliationem, et veniam peccatorum. Ei sicut columba illa portavit ramum olivæ, sic oratio ramum divinæ gratiæ. Et sicut columba habet duplicem alam, sic oratio habet duplices alas, scilicet jejunium et eleemosynam.... [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jerome, cf. Peter Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum* 125 (PL 205:319-320): Item Hieronymus Paulae: In principio, inquit, cujuslibet [Col.0320A] operis, praemitte Dominicam Orationem et signum crucis in fronte.

Cf. Jerome, *Epistola* 22.25 (PL 22:411): In oratione ad Deum loquimur, etc.---Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant, semper tecum sponsus ludat intrinsecus. Oras, loqueris ad Sponsum: legis, ille tibi loquitur: et cum te somnus oppresserit, veniet post parietem, et mittet manum suam per foramen, et tanget ventrem tuum: et expergefacta consurges, et dices: «Vulnerata caritate ego sum»: et rursus ab eo audies, «Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa: hortus conclusus, fons signatus» **(Cant. 4. 12)**.  [↑](#endnote-ref-3)