

THE DIALOGUE OF SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

Translated by Algar Thorold

A NEW AND ABRIDGED EDITION

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Scanned and edited by Harry Plantinga, planting@cs.pitt.edu, 1994.

The language has been modernized by replacing the archaic singular with the modern equivalent.

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How this Bridge has three steps, which signify the three states of the soul; and how, being lifted on high, yet it is not separated from the earth; and how these words are to be understood: "If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things unto Me." Then the Eternal God, to enamor and excite that soul still more for the salvation of souls, replied to her, and said: "First, as I have shown you that for which you wished, and ask Me, I will now explain to you the nature of this Bridge. I have told you, My daughter, that the Bridge reaches from Heaven to earth; this is through the union which I have made with man, whom I formed of the clay of the earth. Now learn that this Bridge, My only-begotten Son, has three steps, of which two were made with the wood of the most Holy Cross, and the third still retains the great bitterness He tasted, when He was given gall and vinegar to drink. In these three steps you will recognize three states of the soul, which I will explain to you below. The feet of the soul, signifying her affection, are the first step, for the feet carry the body as the affection carries the soul. Wherefore these pierced Feet are steps by which you can arrive at His Side, Which manifests to you the secret of His Heart, because the soul, rising on the steps of her affection, commences to taste the love of His Heart, gazing into that open Heart of My Son, with the eye of the intellect, and finds It consumed with ineffable love. I say consumed, because He does not love you for His own profit, because you can be of no profit to Him, He being one and the same thing with Me. Then the soul is filled with love, seeing herself so much loved. Having passed the second step, the soul reaches out to the third -- that is -- to the Mouth, where she finds peace from the terrible war she has been waging with her sin. On the first step, then, lifting her feet from the affections of the earth, the soul strips herself of vice; on the second she fills herself with love and virtue; and on the third she tastes peace. So the Bridge has three steps, in order that, climbing past the first and the second, you may reach the last, which is lifted on high, so that the water, running beneath, may not touch it; for, in My Son, was no venom of sin. This Bridge is lifted on high, and yet, at the same time, joined to the earth. Do you know when it was lifted on high? When My Son was lifted up on the wood of the most Holy Cross, the Divine nature remaining joined to the lowliness of the earth of your humanity. "For this reason I said to you that, being lifted on high, He was not lifted out of the earth, for the Divine nature is united and kneaded into one thing with it. And there was no one who could go on the Bridge until It had been lifted on high,

wherefore He said, -- 'Si exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad me ipsum,' that is, 'If I am lifted on high I will draw all things to Me.' My Goodness, seeing that in no other way could you be drawn to Me, I sent Him in order that He should be lifted on high

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on the wood of the Cross, making of it an anvil on which My Son, born of human generation, should be re-made, in order to free you from death, and to restore you to the life of grace; wherefore He drew everything to Himself by this means, namely, by showing the ineffable love, with which I love you, the heart of man being always attracted by love. Greater love, then, I could not show you, than to lay down My life for you; perforce, then, My Son was treated in this way by love, in order that ignorant man should be unable to resist being drawn to Me. "In very truth, then, My Son said, that, being lifted on high, He would draw all things to Him. And this is to be understood in two ways. Firstly, that, when the heart of man is drawn by the affection of love, as I have said, it is drawn together with all the powers of his soul, that is, with the Memory, the Intellect, and the Will; now, when these three powers are harmoniously joined together in My Name, all the other operations which the man performs, whether in deed or thought, are pleasing, and joined together by the effect of love, because love is lifted on high, following the Sorrowful Crucified One; so My Truth said well, 'If I am lifted on high,' &c., meaning, that if the heart and the powers of the soul are drawn to Him, all the actions are also drawn to Him. Secondly, everything has been created for the service of man, to serve the necessities of rational creatures, and the rational creature has not been made for them, but for Me, in order to serve Me with all his heart, and with all his affection. See, then, that man being drawn, everything else is drawn with him, because everything else has been made for him. It was therefore necessary that the Bridge should be lifted on high, and have steps, in order that it might be climbed with greater facility."