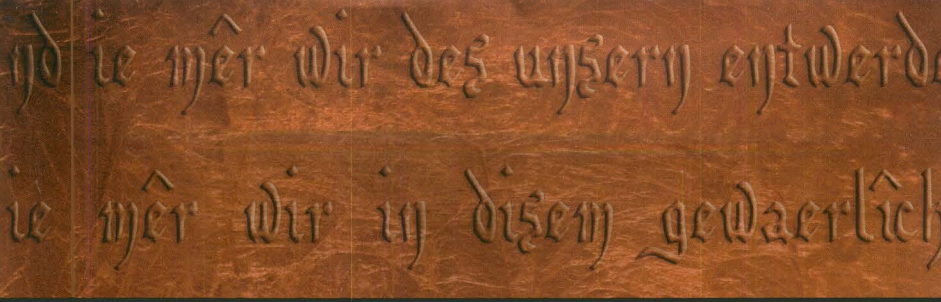
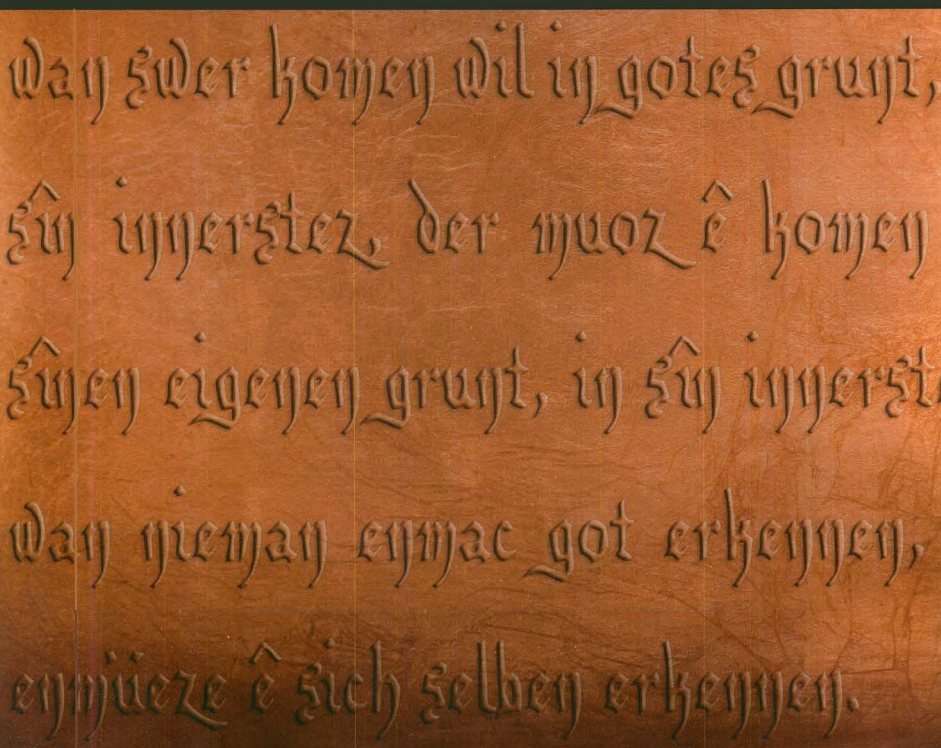


The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart

With Foreword by Bernard McGinn
Translated by Maurice O'C Walshe



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The Complete Mystical Works of

Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart, the great mystical writer and philosopher, presented his works in two forms. The Latin works introduce his thought in more analytic detail and precision. He used his German (vernacular) works, including popular sermons and treatises, to introduce his more personal reflections – what are considered his "mystical" writings on topics as varied as the poverty of spirit, the birth of Christ in the soul, and other influential themes.

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“In the midst of silence, there was spoken within me a secret word.

“But where is the silence, and where is the place where the word is spoken?

“It is in the purest thing that the soul is capable of, in the noblest part, the ground...

“Indeed, in the very essence of the soul which is the soul’s most secret part.”

Meister Eckhart
(c. 1260–c. 1328)
is one of the greatest mystics in Christianity. A theologian, philosopher, and spiritual seeker, he was hugely influential already in his own lifetime, known both for his technical and popular writings and for his skill as a teacher. Works such as the present English translation have brought Meister Eckhart's thought to a new generation of readers.

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THE COMPLETE MYSTICAL WORKS OF MEISTER ECKHART

Translated and Edited by
Maurice O'C. Walshe

Revised with a Foreword by
Bernard McGinn

A Herder & Herder Book
The Crossroad Publishing Company
New York

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In Memoriam Josef Quint
1898–1976

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FOREWORD

Eckhart's Middle High German Writings: Editing and Translating

In 1857 the German scholar Franz Pfeiffer began the modern study of Meister Eckhart (d. 1328) with his groundbreaking edition of 110 sermons, 18 treatises, and a variety of sayings and other materials attributed to the famous Dominican.[1] Over the next eighty years other scholars of medieval German literature added more texts and discussed the authenticity of those produced by Pfeiffer. Finally, in the 1930s the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft began the monumental edition of both the Latin and German works, a project that is only now in its final stages.[2] Josef Quint (1898–1976) took on the task of editing the German sermons and published three large volumes (DW I in 1958, DW II in 1971, and DW III in 1976) containing the first eighty-six sermons (Q 1–86 in the enumerations used in this volume). Quint also edited three treatises that he considered authentic products of Eckhart in DW V (1963). All this is described in more detail in the three prefaces that Maurice O'Connell Walshe put at the head of his three volumes of translations, which appear below on pp. xxiii–xxx.

Quint left behind materials regarding sermons that he considered doubtfully authentic. The editorial team that took over after his death, headed by Georg Steer, studied these and other sermons, both the previously known and the newly discovered, before beginning the publication of DW IV. (These editors argue for the full authenticity of the homilies considered doubtful by Quint.)[3] DW IV.1 appeared in 2003 and contained sermons numbered from 87 to 105 (which I shall enumerate with the letter Q, following Walshe's system). The first fascicle of DW IV.2 also appeared in 2003, containing Q 106–110. The exact number of sermons in the remaining fascicles

is still under discussion, but it will probably be about 120. Nevertheless, given the large number of sermons doubtfully attributed to the Dominican, Walshe's observation that "anything like a complete 'Eckhart canon' is . . . an obvious impossibility" may remain close to the mark.[4]

Translation of Eckhart into English began in the first decade of the twentieth century. The earliest translations of 1909 and 1917 are now almost totally forgotten.[5] It is different in the case of the two volumes published by Miss C. de B. Evans in 1924 and 1931 under the title *Meister Eckhart by Franz Pfeiffer: Translation with some Omissions and Additions.* The first volume rendered 104 of the 110 sermons in Pfeiffer, as well as the treatises and other materials, while volume two contained sermons and treatises edited after Pfeiffer. Walshe began his version, as he tells us, as a revision of Evans's translation, but he soon realized that despite her "skill and enthusiasm," "she chose to take liberties with the text."[6] Many of his notes to the sermons highlight her errors, though he was also happy to give her credit for a telling phrase. More widely known due to its subsequent reissue in paperback form was Raymond B. Blakney's *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation,* first published in 1941. Blakney's volume contains four treatises, twenty-eight sermons, miscellaneous texts, and the first translation of Eckhart's Latin "Defense" of 1326. Walshe knew Blakney's versions and judged them "useful," but less well done than others. Walshe had a more positive evaluation of the translations made by James M. Clark, a professor of Medieval German Literature, published in 1957 and 1958.[7] He consulted Clark's versions often and generally praised his efforts.

Translating Eckhart moved into high gear in the late 1970s as a number of versions appeared in rapid succession. Reiner Schürmann's 1972 study, *Maître Eckhart ou la joie errante: Sermons allemands traduits et commentés,* translated into English as *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* in 1978, has versions of seven German sermons translated from Schürmann's French. The year 1980 saw the publication of *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation,* introduction and commentaries by Matthew Fox, which contains thirty-seven sermons by a variety of translators set within the context of expositions based on Fox's notion of "creation spirituality." In 1981 the first volume devoted to Eckhart in the

Paulist Press Classics of Western Spirituality series appeared under the title *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense,* translation and introduction by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and Bernard McGinn. Colledge rendered the three German treatises and nine sermons in this volume. A second volume appeared in 1986 under the title *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher,* edited by Bernard McGinn with the collaboration of Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstadt, in which Tobin translated another twenty-four German sermons and I provided versions of six Latin sermons. This same period witnessed the appearance of Walshe's three volumes, which were published in 1979, 1981, and 1987.

The past two decades have seen continued effort to make Eckhart's German mystical writings available in English. The most notable collection is *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings,* selected and translated by Oliver Davies, and published in the Penguin Classics series in 1994. This book contains a new version of the familiar three treatises, as well as thirty German and four Latin sermons. In 2002 Bruce Milem's *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart's German Sermons* contained new renditions of four of the Meister's most important vernacular sermons. Obviously, the work of making available the Dominican's difficult sermons is an ongoing task.

Maurice O'Connell Walshe and His Eckhart Translation

In the continuing process of making Eckhart's German works available to contemporary readers the translations of Maurice O'Connell Walshe occupy a special place, not only because Walshe's versions are the most complete collection in any language (ninety-eight sermons, three treatises, and some ancillary materials),[8] but also because of the English scholar's ability to capture the energy and flow of Eckhart's Middle High German in readable English. Translation is always more an art than a science, and translating Eckhart seems to demand a diviner's art: an inner affinity with a difficult thinker and his novel style that is more a gift than something to be attained by effort. Walshe's love for Eckhart and his impressive command of Middle

High German and its literature give him a special status among the English translators of the Dominican.[9] He was a true Eckhartian "diviner."

Maurice O'Connell Walshe was born in 1911 and devoted himself to the study of German literature from his student days at University College, London. He pursued German studies in Berlin, Göttingen, Vienna, and Freiburg-im-Breisgau. His academic career in England included positions as Reader in German at Nottingham University and Bedford College, as well as a time as professor of German language and literature at the University of Leeds. Walshe's prowess with languages was not restricted to Middle High German. He knew Russian and Thai, among others, and was especially noted for his mastery of Pāli, translating a number of Buddhist classics written in that language.[10] In 1951 Walshe become an active and dedicated adherent of Theravada Buddhism.[11] He served as vice president of the English Buddhist Society and later was chairman and director of the Sangha Trust for many years, to which group he bequeathed much of his legacy, including the rights to his Eckhart translations. Walshe even lived for a time as full-fledged Buddhist monk, taking the name Mahānāmo Bhikku.

Walshe retired from teaching in 1979 and became the deputy director of the Institute of Germanic Studies at the University of London. It was during this period in the late 1970s and 1980s that he brought his long-term interest in Eckhart to fruition in the publication of his versions of the Meister's German mystical writings. My suspicion is that he worked on these translations for many years, but I have no exact knowledge of the process of the preparation of the three volumes originally published by Dulverton and Element Books. In the late 1980s Walshe became involved with the Eckhart Society, which had been founded by Ursula Fleming (1930–92) in 1987. Although in declining health, he served as a Patron of the Society for a number of years before his death in 1998. He also attended several of the August conferences of the Society usually held at Plater College in Oxford, and it was there that I had the opportunity of meeting him several times. It is a personal privilege for me to be able to write this brief foreword to the reissuing of the work of this great Eckhart scholar.

Remarks on Reading Walshe's Versions of Eckhart

At the beginning of his introduction to part 1 Maurice O'Connell Walshe describes his intention in translating Eckhart in the following way: "I seek only to allow him to speak for himself in an authentic translation, as far as this is possible."[12] In the preface to the first volume, describing the style of his translations, he says, "I have made accuracy the first consideration without, I hope, sacrificing elegance."[13] Judging the success of any effort at translation, especially in the case of an author as difficult as Eckhart, will always be subjective to some extent, but it has been the judgment of many readers of Eckhart that Walshe's versions are readable and attractive to a degree not often attained in other translations. Furthermore, Walshe was not only a stylist of some elegance, but he had a command of Middle High German language and literature second to none of Eckhart's English translators. This is not to say that he was always right (no translator ever is), but it does underline his privileged position among those who have sought to English Meister Eckhart. It may still, however, assist the reader if I make a few comments about the nature of Walshe's translation, especially by noting some anomalous features of the text and mentioning the changes introduced here.

The first anomaly concerns the numbering of Eckhart's German sermons. In his first volume of 1979 Walshe adopted Pfeiffer's order and numbers for his collection (with the siglum of W for his own translations) — this despite the fact that he was using Quint's critical texts from DW. By the time he wrote the "Preface" to the third volume in 1987, however, he had changed his mind: "I now regret that I did not preserve Quint's original numbering for the first eighty-six. . . ."[14] One advantage of using the Pfeiffer order is that it allowed Walshe to begin his work with a splendid introduction, the four sermons on the birth of the Word in the soul that Eckhart preached during the Christmas season and that constitute a unique mini-treatise in his sermonic corpus.[15] It also gave Walshe the advantage of not being bound by Quint's too-rigid distinction between the definitely authentic first eighty-six sermons and the supposedly doubtful sermons to come, a distinction no longer in force in recent scholarship. Nevertheless, this now outmoded numbering system may produce some confusion in the reader who tries to find how Walshe's

versions compare to the critical edition in DW and to the other translations that use this standard enumeration. The confusion, however, is not hard to overcome. Walshe prefaced each of his sermon translations with a series of sigla referring to other numbering systems. The only one of importance today is the Q number (=Quint, i.e, the numbers in DW I–III). I have updated this system to include Q numbers for the sermons found in DW IV and have also corrected the concordance to reflect this numbering.[16] If the reader looks for the Q numbers, he or she will easily be able to consult the original text of each sermon in DW I–IV or to consult other versions.

A second issue concerns the exact tally of sermons composed by Eckhart. As pointed out above, the final number is still under review, and it may remain so even when DW IV is complete, given the possibility of new manuscript discoveries. Therefore, Walshe's translations, while more extensive than those found in any language, are not an exact match for the best current estimates of how many sermons truly belong to the Dominican, and they do not even include all the pieces currently seen as authentic. The largest gap is the exclusion of seventeen sermons that have now appeared in DW IV, but that Walshe chose not to translate from earlier versions, although many of these were familiar to him. Five of these sermons are in Pfeiffer,[17] and twelve come from the collection of vernacular sermons known as the *Paradisus anime intelligentis,* a group of sixty-four homilies of which half are now judged to be by Eckhart.[18] There are also a few other sermons not in Walshe on which final judgment has yet to be made. Among these is one of the supreme pieces of "Eckhartian-style" preaching, the sermon on the "three deaths of the soul," first edited by Franz Jostes and partially translated by Oliver Davies.[19] (Although this piece has been accepted as authentic by a number of Eckhart scholars, it has yet to appear in DW IV.) Finally, we should note that Walshe includes four sermons in Pfeiffer (W 37, 61, 75, 90) that have not yet appeared in DW IV.2 (and perhaps may not). The bottom line is that while there may be no complete agreement yet concerning the full number of Eckhart's vernacular sermons, Walshe's translation is the fullest presently available.

In his volume 3 Walshe translated the three treatises that Josef Quint edited and ascribed to Eckhart in DW V. These include the early *Talks of Instruction* (German: *Die rede der underscheidunge*),

which were delivered by Eckhart to Dominican novices while he was prior of his home convent at Erfurt ca. 1295–98. While *Talks of Instruction* is sometimes thought to be a juvenile product, recent scholarship has emphasized how many of Eckhart's key themes make their first appearance here. *The Book of Divine Comfort* (German: *Daz buoch der götlichen troestunge*) has long been recognized as a mystical masterpiece and one of the most original examples of the medieval literature of consolation. This three-part meditation on dealing with adversity is accompanied by a model sermon, "The Nobleman," summarizing the Meister's preaching.[20] Walshe also translated the short treatise entitled *On Detachment* (German: *Vom abegescheidenheit*). Quint accepted this work as authentic in DW V, but more recent scholarship has doubted Eckhartian authorship (e.g., Kurt Ruh and Georg Steer).[21] All would agree, though, that the work is a profound treatment of one of the central motifs in Eckhart's thought.

Walshe's three prefaces and two introductions were not meant to provide a full account of Eckhart's mysticism, but only helpful access to the translations. They also were composed two to three decades ago, and Eckhartian scholarship has progressed greatly in the intervening years. It would be possible to add much to what Walshe provides in these introductions, but here I only wish to note a few factual errors.[22] The same is true with regard to the endnotes that Walshe provides throughout the work. The critical edition in DW I–V gives an immense apparatus of sources and correlative passages. Walshe chose to be highly selective, and, one must say, somewhat idiosyncratic in his notes. He often compares his readings with those of his predecessors (especially to highlight their mistakes), and he depends on Quint's notes in identifying some sources (he usually marks these with a Q). With a few exceptions that seemed of major import, I have resisted adding any further notes identifying sources or giving further discussion of controversial issues. However, I have tried to regularize the style of the notes, particularly in terms of the identification of sources, and I have corrected a number of errors.

With regard to the actual text of Walshe's translations, one could well argue for leaving the originals to stand without alteration, as a witness to an impressive one-person effort. Nevertheless, after consultation with the editors at Crossroad–Herder & Herder, especially

John Jones, I have decided to introduce some corrections. In studying Walshe's translations over the years, comparing them with the edition in DW and other versions, I marked my copy with a growing list of corrections and improvements. Some of these are merely a case of fixing typographical errors. Others, however, are more significant and these fall into three groups.

The first involves improved texts. Based upon the readings in the critical edition in DW IV not available to Walshe, I have introduced a few changes. For example, in W 3 Walshe, following Pfeiffer's text, translated "St. Thomas says that the active life is better than the contemplative . . . " (see below on p. 48), thus indicating that the sermon was delivered after Thomas's canonization in 1323. However, the critical edition produced by Steer and his associates shows that the better manuscripts read "Master Thomas teaches . . . ,"[23] demonstrating that the sermon is before 1323, and probably an early one. A second group of corrections involves supplementing Walshe's versions in cases where his eye slipped and he left out passages, even sentences, in the text he had before him.[24] Finally, in a few cases, using new research and/or the virtually unanimous agreement of other translations, both in English and in modern German, I decided to change a word or a phrase when I judge Walshe to have fudged Eckhart's point. Thus, Walshe translated Eckhart's noted neologism *istichkeit* sometimes as "isness," and sometimes as "beingness." On the basis of the recent research of Alessandra Beccarisi,[25] however, it seems clear that the term is derived from *istic* (that) rather than *ist* (is) and therefore it means the "thatness," or self-identity, of an intellectual nature, since Eckhart uses it to refer to the pure intellectuality of God and human.[26] An example of a place where I have changed a term that appears only in one context is at the beginning of W 23 (on p. 155) where Eckhart is contrasting two kinds of emanation, one by birthing after the model of the procession of the Son from the Father, and the other by what he terms "in einer gemeinender wîse."[27] Walshe translated this "by way of union," but I have substituted "by way of connection," because Eckhart is talking about the bond of love that exists between the producer and what is produced after the model of the love between Father and Son that is the source and reality of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity.

Since Walshe's overriding concern was to make available to the English reader the best and most accurate rendering of Eckhart, I believe that my relatively minor adjustments are in accord with his intentions. I hope that the reissuing of this classic work will continue to spread the message of the great Dominican mystic.

Bernard McGinn
Feast of Christ the King 2007

Notes

1. For a listing of the various editions and translations of Meister Eckhart, as well as secondary literature up to late 1980s, see Niklaus Largier, *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart* (Freiburg Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1989).

2. *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke, Herausgegeben im Auftrag der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936–). The edition is divided into two parts: *Die lateinischen Werke* (hereafter LW), consisting of five volumes; and *Die deutschen Werke* (hereafter DW), also of five volumes. Index volumes for each series are planned.

3. For a brief summary of the principles used in DW IV, see Georg Steer, "Echtheit und Authentizität der Predigten Meister Eckharts. Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten einer kritischen Edition," in *Germanistik — Forschungsstand und Perspektiven. 2 Teil: Ältere Deutsche Literatur; Neuere Deutsche Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 41–50.

4. Walshe, see below p. 484.

5. *Meister Eckhart's Sermons,* translated into English by Claud Field (London, 1909); and *Meister Eckhart: After Supper in the Refectory. A Series of Instructions . . .*, translated by N. Leeson (London, 1917).

6. These quotations are taken from Walshe's reflections on his work and its predecessors in an essay entitled, "On Translating Eckhart," *German Life and Letters* 30 (1977): 150–58.

7. James M. Clark, *Meister Eckhart: An Introduction to the Study of his Works, with an Anthology of His Sermons* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1957) contains about a quarter of Q 1–86, while *Treatises and Sermons of Meister Eckhart: Selected and Translated from Latin and German with an Introduction and Notes* by James M. Clark and John V. Skinner (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958) has the three treatises found in Walshe, two German and nine Latin sermons, and selections from two of the Meister's Latin commentaries.

8. Eventually, when DW IV is complete, there will be modern German versions of all Eckhart's sermons. In the meantime the translations for the first eighty-six sermons in DW I–III, along with the original MHG, are most readily available in the excellent annotated text prepared by Niklaus Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Werke,* vol. 1: *Predigten*; vol. 2: *Predigten, Traktate und lateinische Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1993).

9. Walshe wrote a major textbook on German literature, *Medieval German Literature: A Survey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); he also

produced a Middle High German reader (1974), an edition of *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen* (1951, 1982), the revised fourth edition of Joseph Wright's primer of Middle High German (1951), and an *Introduction to Scandinavian Languages* (London: Deutsch, 1965).

10. Not all of these appear to have been published. Among the most notable of those that did appear in print is *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nakāya* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987). Walshe also wrote a brief introduction entitled *Buddhism for Today* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962).

11. Some of Walshe's essays on Buddhism, including one entitled "Buddhism and Meister Eckhart," are available in *Contemplations: Essays by M. O'C. Walshe* (n.p.: Amaravati Publications, n.d.). This volume includes a brief biography that has been helpful in composing these remarks.

12. See below p. 3.

13. See below p. xxvi.

14. See below p. xxix.

15. Walshe was wrong in following Pfeiffer's order for these four sermons. The critical edition in DW IV shows that they need to be read in the order of W 1, 2, 4, 3 (i.e., Q 101, 102, 103, 104). For more on this sermon treatise, see Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), chap. 4.

16. See below pp. 591–594.

17. The five sermons Walshe did not translate from Pfeiffer, but that are now judged authentic are Pf. 26 (=Q 106), Pf. 44 (=Q 110), Pf. 51 (=Q 100), Pf. 53 (=Q 107), and Pf. 108 (=Q 108).

18. Although Walshe knew the *Paradisus* collection, intensive investigation in recent decades has shown how important the collection is for understanding Eckhart's sermonic corpus. For brief comments in English and an access to the literature, see Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: Crossroad-Herder, 2005), 321–23. The sermons included in DW IV, but not translated by Walshe are Q 87 (=*Paradisus anime* 1), Q 88 (=*Par. an.* 8), Q 89 (=*Par. an.* 10), Q 90 (=*Par. an.* 15), Q 91 (=*Par. an.* 16), Q 92 (=*Par. an.* 27), Q 93 (=*Par. an.* 37), Q 94 (=*Par. an.* 42), Q 95 (=*Par. an.* 46), Q 96 (=*Par. an.* 47), Q 97 (=*Par. an.* 50), and Q 98 (=*Par. an.* 55).

19. The sermon was first edited by Josef Jostes, *Meister Eckhart und seiner Jünger: Ungedrückete zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1895), as no. 82. A translation of the second half may be found in *Meister Eckhart. Selected Writings,* selected and translated by Oliver Davies (London: Penguin, 1994), as his no. 30 (241–51).

20. These two works are edited together as the two-part *Liber "Benedictus"* and appear in DW V: 1–136.

21. Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländische Mystik,* Band III: *Die Mystik der deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), 349–51.

22. I here note the most evident errors: (1) there is now evidence that Eckhart died on January 28, 1328, at Avignon (see p. 6); (2) the date of the *Book of Divine Comfort* is more likely ca. 1318 than the 1308 given by Walshe (p. xxvi); (3) Eckhart did not have a formal teaching position upon his return to Cologne in 1323 (p. 8); (4) Heinrich von Virneburg, the archbishop of Cologne, was not a Franciscan

and recent scholarship downplays the role of Franciscan vs. Dominican tensions in Eckhart's condemnation (pp. 11–12); and (5) good evidence now exists that Eckhart was not "half-forgotten" after his death (p. 13).

23. Q 104 in DW IV.1: 579.155–56: Meister Thomas sprichet: dâ sî daz würkende leben bezzer dan daz schouwende leben....

24. Examples of such supplements can be found in W 93 (p. 453 below), where Walshe skipped the phrase "...because everything that is in God is a present Now without renewal" (see Q 50 in DW II: 460.2–3); and in W 97 (p. 469 below) where there is a missing sentence: "God's property is oneness; it is on this basis that God is God; otherwise God would not be" (see Q 21 in DW I: 368.8–9).

25. See Alessandra Beccarisi, "Philosophische Neologismen zwischen Latein und Volkssprache: 'istic' und 'isticheit' bei Meister Eckhart," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévale* 70 (2003): 328–58.

26. For examples, see W 49 (p. 263) and W 70 (p. 358). The term is rare, but important, also occurring in W 6, 57, 58, 65, 78, and 96.

27. See Q 47 (DW II: 395.1–5).

PREFACE TO VOLUME 1 (1979)

The figure of the greatest of German mystics, the Dominican Meister Eckhart, has been the object of so much speculation and controversy, often on the basis of unreliable translations or wrong attributions, that the publication of a new extended selection of his works in English translation calls for no excuse. What the translator has to do, however, in presenting such a selection, is to justify his choice and the textual basis from which he works. This is especially true in Eckhart's case, since the question of the very authenticity of many works ascribed to him has formed no small part of the general debate.

The present translation replaces that by the late Miss C. de B. Evans, which appeared in two volumes in 1924 and 1931. Her work was conscientious and — though sometimes a little free — generally accurate. But its style, whimsically adorned with archaisms, is not always to the modern taste, and the translation was based (though far from uncritically) on the pioneer but now entirely outdated edition of Franz Pfeiffer (1857). At the time she wrote, this was inevitable. However, Eckhart scholarship has made immense progress since then, and my aim has been to incorporate the main results of the vast labors of German and other scholars in this new version. I have, however, not hesitated to retain Miss Evans's renderings whenever, as often, I felt I could not better them. The basis of this translation has been what is now the only possible one, namely, the monumental Kohlhammer edition, *Meister Eckhart, die deutsche Werke,* edited by Josef Quint, of which the four principal volumes, namely, those containing all the sermons and treatises considered by Professor Quint to be certainly authentic, have now appeared. These volumes represent an achievement — carried out virtually single-handedly — which has few equals even in the illustrious annals of German scholarship. The parallel

series of Latin works, also incomplete and no less impressive, is the production not of one man but of a team. The debt of all who are in any way seriously interested in Eckhart to all of these scholars is quite incalculable. I am grateful to the Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, for permission to use these editions.

Eckhart's vernacular language is the Middle High German of the early fourteenth century, which is perhaps slightly further removed from present-day German than is Chaucer's English from our own. His native dialect was that of Thuringia, but he must have considerably modified his linguistic forms during his extensive travels. In the two hundred-odd manuscripts painstakingly compared by Quint (Pfeiffer, a century previously, knew only forty-five), a wide variety of dialectal forms appear. These have been standardized by Quint except in a few cases where he is following a unique manuscript. The result, though artificial, is convenient, and eases the translator's task at times. As stated, the textual basis of this translation is, wherever possible, that of Quint in the Kohlhammer edition. In the case of a few German sermons not included in that edition, I have followed Pfeiffer's text as emended by Quint in his book *Die Überlieferung der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts* (1932), or his modern German translation, *Meister Eckehart, Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* (1955), for kind permission to use which I am grateful to the Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich. In a few cases (indicated in the notes) I have ventured to differ from Quint's readings or interpretations.

Editions apart, there is a vast secondary literature on Eckhart, of very varying value, and — naturally — most of it in German. I have not thought it worthwhile to take up space by listing all these works, as probably the vast majority of readers of this translation will not know enough German to read them, and anyway would not have access to most of them. Some, indeed, have eluded me. However, in the bibliographical note I have mentioned the most important German works as well as those in English which seemed to me to be of value. With the aid of these, and in particular of Ernst Soudek's convenient little Metzler volume, further references can be looked up by those wishing to do so. Several other partial English translations exist, by far the best being that by the late Professor James Clark, whose work is extremely accurate. His introductions to the subject are most useful and informative, even if at times perhaps a shade pedestrian. The

selection translated by Raymond Blakney is rather less reliable, but has some useful notes, and it also includes a nearly complete, though not entirely accurate, version of Eckhart's detailed reply to charges of unorthodoxy.

As regards the name of our author, I have followed established English practice in referring to him by the German designation Meister Eckhart, although there is perhaps no very good reason which we should not call him Master Eckhart in English. The name is also spelled Eckehart, and even Quint shows some hesitation (for reasons obscure to me) between these two forms. Occasionally, for some reason, one finds him referred to as Johannes Eckhart, but there is absolutely no warrant for this: his full name was in fact Eckhart von Hochheim.

Eckhart's works are in German and Latin. The German works now considered authentic consist of nearly a hundred sermons (with perhaps another fifty probably authentic), and three so-called treatises. Reference will be made in a special note to the question of the spurious and doubtful works (see p. 23). Volume 1 of the three-volume original English edition contains the first part of the sermons. So as to maintain some continuity with Miss Evans's translation, they follow as far as possible the same order, which is virtually that of the Pfeiffer edition. As regards their selection, I have included all those which seemed to me to be certainly or probably authentic, i.e., all those verified by Quint, together with a few others, some or all of which may yet appear in the Kohlhammer edition. Quint's principle of verification is based on the quotations in the trial documents (for which see Blakney); where these are lacking, he is guided by other criteria such as references back or parallels in the Latin works. In this way he has established an objective scale of decreasing certainty: thus Quint's Sermon 1 (our Sermon 6, as in Pfeiffer and Evans) occupies pride of place simply because on all such grounds it is the best attested, and so on. While this procedure was methodologically unimpeachable for the purpose of establishing a valid Eckhart 'canon,' so far as that can be done, the order so arrived at has perhaps no particular merit for other purposes. In the almost total absence of reliable chronological indications,[1] then, it seemed justified to retain as far as possible Pfeiffer's order, which has a certain amount of manuscript support. In particular, it has seemed to me that the first few sermons in the

order of Pfeiffer's edition provide an excellent general introduction to Eckhartian thought. And all but a handful of definitely authentic Eckhart sermons are included in Pfeiffer, even though sometimes in garbled form.

The sermons may be followed by the *Collations,* or *Talks of Instruction,* which can be dated before 1298, and then by the two treatises properly speaking, which are now recognized as genuine, namely, *The Book of Divine Comfort* (1308?) with its appendix *The Nobleman,* and *On Detachment.* The remaining treatises ascribed by Pfeiffer to Eckhart have been convincingly shown by Adolf Spamer to be of other authorship. This is of some importance since, as Clark rather acidly remarks, 'British and American writers have an unfortunate predilection for the spurious works.'

With the translation I have supplied a basic minimum of notes to help the reader with technicalities, biblical and patristic references, and so on. For these notes I have, naturally and gratefully, drawn heavily on Quint and the editors of the Latin works. As regards the style of this translation, I have made accuracy the first consideration without, I hope, sacrificing elegance. I have tried to avoid quaintness or unnecessary archaisms. I would draw attention to three particular points: The pronouns 'He,' etc., when referring to God the Father (only), are capitalized for clarity, and this has on occasion proven a neat way of indicating my interpretation of a particular passage. Secondly, at the risk of preciosity, the feminine pronoun 'she' is also retained, for clarity's sake, when referring to the soul. Finally, biblical references are translated directly from Eckhart's German and marked by double quotation marks, all other passages cited being in single quotes.

M.O'C. Walshe
Institute of Germanic Studies
University of London, April 1978

Notes

1. In many cases the day in the church calendar, on which a particular sermon was preached, can be established, but not the year.

PREFACE TO VOLUME 2 (1979)

It is fitting to open this Preface with a tribute to the late Professor Josef Quint (1898–1976), without whose monumental labors this translation could never have been attempted. Josef Quint devoted some fifty years of his life to the study of Eckhart, and was in sole charge of the German section of the great Kohlhammer edition of Eckhart's German and Latin works, which was begun in 1936 and is still incomplete. He was undeterred by the total loss of his materials during World War II, and subsequently continued to work virtually single-handed, collecting, collating, and publishing, despite a serious accident and much illness, almost to the end. When he died in December 1976 he had completed the first three volumes of the *Deutsche Werke,* together with Volume V containing the three genuine 'Traktate.' The vastness of this achievement can be imagined by anyone who even glances at the massive volumes with their meticulous scholarship. And at least he lived to complete the most essential part of his task. The first three volumes contain the eighty-six sermons which Quint considered unquestionably authentic. The fourth volume was destined to contain a further series of German sermons which Quint, a cautious man, considered 'probably genuine.'

Of the 110 sermons in Pfeiffer's 1857 edition, Quint included 71 (Nos. 5–14, 19–25, 27, 29–36, 38, 40–43, 45–49, 52, 55, 58–60, 62–66, 69, 72–74, 79–91, 94–100, 102) in his edition, most of them in much improved form, together with 15 from other sources. In his modern German selection published in 1955, Quint also included Pfeiffers's Sermons 1, 2, 4, 15, and 56. In the absence of any definite information as to what he intended to include as 'probably genuine' in Volume IV, I have added these, together with another four (Pfeiffer Sermons 3, 37, 61, and 75). It may be noted that Miss Evans in her

Volume I replaced Pfeiffer's Sermons 9, 10, 12, 15, 32, 34, 43, 46, 58, and 89.2 (all, except possibly Sermon 15, considered genuine by Quint!) from other sources, though in Volume II she included translations of Sermons 10, 43, 58 and part of 89.

Volume 2 of the original three-volume work (first published in 1979 and reissued in 1987) concludes with a small extract from the commentary on the Book of Wisdom, which shows Eckhart the scholastic, illustrated by a text (Wisd. 1:14; *LW* II, 362–69), which is of importance for understanding his doctrine of analogy, on which many things depend. It will probably convince most readers that Eckhart's Latin works are really only for the specialist. At any rate, if there is to be an English translation of these, I give due notice that it must be by another hand than mine.

M.O'C. Walshe
St. Albans, September 1980

PREFACE TO VOLUME 3 (1987)

The final volume of translations from Meister Eckhart includes the remaining German works, apart from his sermons, which modern scholarship considers genuine, i.e., the early *Talks of Instruction* and the genuine treatises (*The Book of Divine Comfort* with its appendage *The Nobleman,* and *On Detachment*). As before, my translation is based on the Kohlhammer edition by Josef Quint (*DW* V), and it goes without saying that I am once again heavily indebted to him for most of the notes. With this, I have in fact translated all the German texts which have, up to the present, been ascribed to Eckhart with a high degree of certainty. As regards the sermons which formed the matter of Volumes 1 and 2, my original stated intention was to present 'an extended selection' of these. In any event, I can claim to have done this and more, since I have provided versions of all the eighty-six sermons which Quint included in the first three volumes of *DW* as certainly genuine, together with the additional ones he provisionally included in his 1955 volume of translations for the Hanser Verlag, and one or two others. I now regret that I did not preserve Quint's original numbering for the first eighty-six of these, since in any case a chronological ordering is impossible. Quint died without being able to publish his Volume IV, which was to contain further sermons cautiously regarded by him as 'probably genuine,' and I understand, without surprise, that the production of this volume by other hands is fraught with great difficulties. I am, however, reliably informed that Sermons 1–4 of the present translation (Pfeiffer/Evans 1–4), which Quint did not see fit to include among the eighty-six, are considered genuine by leading scholars. The appended concordance will facilitate comparison with other editions, while the biblical index will also serve as a guide to Eckhart's favorite texts — perhaps

a matter of some interest. In both concordance and index I have corrected a few errors and inconsistencies.

As an appendix to the treatises translated here I have included some matter attesting to what it is now fashionable to call 'Eckhart-reception,' namely, four delightful (and profound) 'legends' which accrued, among others, around the Master's name, and which Quint appended to his 1955 translation, and finally the 'tailpiece' from Pfeiffer's 1857 edition, which perhaps really does contain the gist of the Master's parting words to his disciples. Since it will probably be some years before any further material becomes available in suitably edited form, I feel that my obligation as a translator is hereby discharged. Perhaps in due course another translator will come forward to present whatever new material later research brings to light. That this is always a real possibility was strikingly illustrated by the fact that as I was about to dispatch this typescript to the publisher, I came across a newly discovered fragment of an unknown sermon of Eckhart's published by Kurt Ruh in the latest number of the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*. I have been able to include a tentative translation of this as Sermon 98 here. It raises a number of important points which are discussed in the Introduction.

This translation was completed in 1982. Circumstances have unfortunately delayed publication till now. The delay at least allows me to record here *Eckhart's Way* by Richard Woods, O.P., Wilmington, Delaware, 1986, an excellent book with good bibliography, which also records the active steps now happily being taken to get the condemnation of 1329 rescinded.

Finally, in concluding my labors I would like to emphasize that my task as translator has been by far the easiest part: it is others who have done the really hard work.

M. O'C. Walshe
St. Albans, January 1987

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Note: This is primarily intended for the English-speaking reader who knows little or no German. However, some German items have been included. These are either important textual sources or works which can be considered milestones in Eckhart research. The reader who seeks more can now be conveniently referred to Ernst Soudek, *Meister Eckhart* (Sammlung Metzler 120), Stuttgart, 1973. A useful bibliography (though marred by too many misprints!) by O'Meara et al. is to be found in *The Thomist* 42 (1978): 313–42.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AHDL	*Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéaire du moyen âge,* Paris 1926ff.
ALKM	*Archiv für die Litteratur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters,* Berlin and Freiburg, 1885ff.
BBG	Bäumkers *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters,* Münster 1891ff.
DTM	*Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters.*
DW	*Deutsche Werke*=Eckhart's German works in the Kohlhammer edition 1936ff.
Jostes	Jostes, 1895.
Jundt	Jundt, 1875.
LW	*Lateinische Werke*=Eckhart's Latin works in the Kohlhammer edition 1936ff.
MHG	Middle High German.
Par. an.	Strauch, 1919.
PBB	Paul und Braunes *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* Halle, 1874ff.
Pf	German sermons in Pfeiffer, 1857.
Q	German sermons ed. Quint in *DW* (I, 124; II, 25–59; III, 60–86).
QT	German sermons translated by Quint, 1955.
ZfdA	*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum,* Berlin 1841ff.

Part One

SERMONS

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

There are many definitions of 'mysticism,' some of which may seem more helpful than others. It is not my purpose here to propound views, whether my own or those of others, on the subject of mysticism in general or Eckhart's mysticism in particular. I seek only to allow him to speak for himself in an authentic translation, as far as this is possible, while providing such guidance by way of introductory matter and commentary as seems necessary and possible. Ideally this would, no doubt, involve an elaborate discussion of both mysticism and scholastic thought, together with a broad survey of the historical background. But for any full treatment of these matters the reader will have to turn elsewhere. Here, the barest minimum must suffice.

Mysticism, or something akin to it, is very ancient and is found in the religious traditions of the whole world. The specifically Christian mystical tradition can be traced back with some certainty to Alexandria. Its direct source was the Neoplatonism of Plotinus (ca. 204–70), who in his *Enneads* taught that all things emanate from the One, the return to which can be achieved by the contemplative path of detachment from all compounded things and a turning to 'pure simplicity.' Neoplatonism was incorporated into Christian thought by the anonymous writer who called himself Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. 500), who pretended to be St. Paul's Athenian disciple (Acts 17:34), and by his Latin translator John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 810–80). It was brought into prominence by the German Hugo of St. Victor in Paris (d. 1142), who in turn influenced the famous St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), counselor of kings and instigator of the Second Crusade.

In Germany, the so-called *St. Trudperter Hohelied* (ca. 1140) is the first work to show true mystical tendencies. The influence of

St. Bernard is clearly visible in this prose paraphrase of the Song of Solomon which, written probably by a nun and certainly for nuns, combines theological learning with lyrical warmth. Whereas in earlier interpretations of the Song the bride is understood as being the church, here the bride is interpreted as the Virgin Mary and, through her mediation, every individual soul. God can be found by turning away from the world, whereby the soul is purified and made ready for the divine embrace, the *unio mystica,* which may be glimpsed 'as in a dream.' Other mystical writings by nuns followed, of which we need only mention here the Latin *Scivias* ('Know the Ways') of the rather formidable abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1090–1179), which is adorned with gravely hieratic illustrations of her own visions, and above all the highly poetic *Flowing Light of the Godhead* of the Beguine Mechthild von Magdeburg (ca. 1250–65).

The other religious trend of the age, scholasticism, is often contrasted with mysticism, but the two are in fact, in medieval Christianity, complementary and indeed combined almost inextricably in the thought of Eckhart and others — who, by the way, never actually used the word 'mysticism.' The aim of scholasticism is, in brief, the philosophical clarification and justification of the Christian faith. Highly formalized, it developed a peculiar Latin style of its own. Its categories were originally those of Aristotle, but it was also enriched from Jewish and Arab sources. Of the two mendicant orders founded in the early thirteenth century, the Dominicans, to whom Eckhart belonged, were the more specifically 'learned' order, though the Franciscans also made a considerable contribution to scholastic thought. In 1300 these two orders were in a state of intense rivalry. One major point at issue between them was that the Franciscans regarded the will (and hence love) as the highest 'power' of the soul, while the Dominicans assigned priority to the intellect. In the great debate on the so-called 'universals' (i.e., the Platonic ideas as they came to be understood) they likewise took opposite sides. Is a general concept such as 'whiteness' something real, or merely a name? The Realists asserted the reality of such concepts, whereas their opponents, the Nominalists, declared 'whiteness,' for example, to be a mere name or label. The Dominicans such as St. Thomas Aquinas were moderate Realists, while an extreme form of Nominalism arose in Franciscan circles, being urged most strongly by Eckhart's

brilliant English contemporary William of Ockham (d. 1349), who comes briefly into the story of Eckhart's life. It has been said that the rise of Nominalism was a necessary precondition for the development of the modern scientific outlook. It is, in any case, a comment on changing views of 'reality' that the word 'Realism' today suggests a viewpoint almost diametrically opposed to what was meant by the term in the Middle Ages.

Scholastic systematizing reached its peak in the thirteenth century with the Dominicans Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus), bishop of Regensburg (d. 1280), and his greater pupil, St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), whose *Summa theologica* is its most impressive monument. One particular outcome of the scholastic method should be mentioned here: the *ars praedicandi* or 'how to construct a sermon.' Medieval sermons, including those of Eckhart, are usually built up according to a definite plan. They begin, as is still usual, with a scriptural text, and this is analyzed and explained in a particular way. The most essential feature is the fourfold interpretation of scripture. The first sense is the *literal* or historical. This is usually heavily subordinated to one or more of the other three, spiritual, senses: the *allegorical,* the *tropological* or moral, and the *anagogical,* which deals with eternal life. This scheme enabled a preacher to depart very far, sometimes, from what might seem the literal and obvious meaning of a text — a privilege of which Eckhart made the fullest use, sometimes even to the extent of reading into the text words which were not there at all!

While it would be altogether wrong — though it has been done — to attempt to explain the growth of mystical thought at this period entirely by reference to social conditions, there is little doubt that such conditions did to a certain extent provide a soil favorable to its development. The period round about 1300 was felt by many to be a terrible time. In fact, the 'Middle Ages' were passing away. The growth of big cities was creating entirely new socioeconomic problems and conflicts. Old-established values were being called into question, and established institutions too — the empire and the papacy alike — were imperiled. The long Interregnum (1254–73) in the Holy Roman Empire had brought with it times of anarchy and baronial rapacity which the strong rule of Rudolf von Habsburg

(1273–91) did much to mitigate but could not entirely overcome. At the same time the papacy, owing to its conflict with the French crown which culminated in 1303 with the humiliating death of Boniface VIII at the hands of agents of the king of France, was at a low ebb; and during the greater part of the fourteenth century the popes resided at Avignon as virtual pawns of the French king (the so-called Babylonian Captivity, 1309–77). In such times of weakened authority the search for spiritual consolation and security took on new and sometimes unorthodox forms. Despite brutal suppression, heresies of various kinds abounded. This was also partly due to the fact that, in the course of the struggles of the day, the normal sacraments and consolations of the church were often not available. Popes and bishops would place cities and regions under an interdict, sometimes for years. During this time the sacraments were not allowed to be dispensed. It was no wonder then that people turned in despair to such unofficial groups as the Beghards and the Brethren of the Free Spirit. 'Heresy' was often nothing more than a desperate form of self-help.

A particular feature of the times was, further, the growth of large numbers of nunneries, a fact which has been associated with the great loss of life among the knights in this troubled period. Many of the new nuns were certainly the widows and daughters of such knights, and often of aristocratic birth. As such they were frequently educated women whose spiritual needs rose above elementary levels. As we have seen, too, these had their predecessors, in Germany, from at least the twelfth century. In the new situation it was of great significance that the instruction of nuns was entrusted to the Dominicans — a task which the latter did not always welcome. And one of those on whom this particular burden fell was Meister Eckhart.

Concerning the details of Eckhart's life a considerable amount of information has been gradually accumulated by scholars. He was born, possibly of knightly stock, at Hochheim near Gotha (or perhaps at another Hochheim near Erfurt — at any rate in Thuringia), about the year 1260, and the date of his death can be fixed between February 1327 and April 1328. The most important of the established facts of his life (if we do not go into the details of his journeyings) are soon told, and they can be enriched with a few probabilities. He must have joined the Dominican priory at Erfurt, which was near his home, in

about 1275, and quite obviously he soon gained the recognition of his superiors for his outstanding gifts. He was most probably sent to the famous Dominican Studium Generale at Cologne, possibly just in time to hear the aged Albert the Great, who had taught Aquinas. If so, this must have been before 1280, when Albert died. In 1293 he was taking part in disputations in Paris. Eckhart's earliest datable German work is the *Collations,* or *Talks of Instruction,* which must have been delivered by him to the novices in his charge not later than 1298, for the heading given to these talks in the manuscripts describes him as being prior of Erfurt and vicar of Thuringia — two posts which by a decision of that year were not allowed to be combined in one hand. About 1300 he was again in Paris, having been selected to study at the Studium Generale of St. Jacques — a great honor which clearly attests to the esteem in which he was held. During his stay in Paris he debated with the Spaniard Gonsalvus, a formidable opponent who later became General of the Franciscans. In Paris Eckhart gained the degree of master of theology after going through the prescribed course, which included lecturing on the twelfth-century *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, still regarded as the standard theological textbook at this time. This was in 1302, and he was henceforth always known as Meister Eckhart, an honorable designation which served effectually to distinguish him from the various other Eckharts (including members of his order) whom we hear of at this time.

When Germany was divided into the two Dominican provinces of Saxony and Alemannia, Meister Eckhart was elected by the Erfurt chapter in 1303 to be the first provincial of Saxony (which covered most of north Germany and Holland), and in 1307 there was added to this a second, and certainly burdensome office, that of vicar-general of Bohemia, with the special task of restoring order in the convents of that province, where discipline was notoriously lax and 'heresy' rife. It is at least clear that at this time nobody can have thought Eckhart's views unorthodox, although, ironically, it was in all probability at this period, about 1308, that he composed *The Book of Divine Comfort* for the widowed Queen Agnes of Hungary — a work which his accusers were later to draw upon heavily. But even this appointment was not all, for in 1310 yet another onerous post was very nearly thrust on him, when he was chosen to be provincial of the southern

German province of Alemannia. However, this election was not confirmed by the general chapter of the order, meeting at Naples, and instead, Eckhart was sent to Paris yet again, in order, it seems, to defend the interests of his order in the ever-sharpening conflict with the Franciscans. Precisely how long he stayed in Paris this time we do not know, but in 1314 we find him in Strassburg[1] in charge of the convent there. Strassburg was at this time a great center of religious activity, and open to mystical ideas, and it is clear that Eckhart was extremely active here as a preacher and teacher. In fact his association with Strassburg was so close that at one time it was even thought to have been his birthplace. It seems probable, certainly, that many of his preserved German sermons were written down in Strassburg by nuns. But he also traveled widely in the course of his official duties, and we hear of his presence at various places in Alsace, in Switzerland, and elsewhere. It is however not true that he was at one time, as sometimes stated, prior of Frankfurt, for the Eckhart who is recorded as holding that office was a somewhat disreputable character, whereas the records confirm that Meister Eckhart's personal life was, as we should expect, entirely above suspicion. Then, at some date unknown, but probably not earlier than 1322, Eckhart, who was by now a famous man, was called to the Studium Generale at Cologne to hold the chair once adorned by Albert the Great.

But this great honor proved Eckhart's undoing. The archbishop of Cologne, the grim and aged Heinrich von Virneburg, was bitterly hostile to anything smacking of 'mysticism,' which he associated with the various semi-heretical sects then flourishing, and which he had long been attempting to put down by burnings and drownings. In 1326, the archbishop instituted proceedings against Eckhart before the Inquisition for spreading dangerous doctrines among the common people. Such a step, taken against so distinguished a teacher, was quite unprecedented. Eckhart declared that in accordance with the privileges of his order he was answerable only to the University of Paris or the pope. Nevertheless, for the sake of his order's good name he was prepared to appear before the appointed inquisitors and defend himself. A manuscript in the municipal library at Soest (Westphalia) preserves a record of a large part of the proceedings. The story is rather complicated, and its presentation in some of the published literature does not necessarily help in clarifying it. One document (A)[2]

contains forty-nine allegedly incriminatory articles: fifteen are from *The Book of Divine Comfort* along with six points from an otherwise unknown reply of Eckhart's concerning these; there are twelve articles from the Latin commentary on Genesis and other Latin sources, and, finally, sixteen passages taken from the German sermons. Another document (B) contains Eckhart's defense on all these points, and a further document (C) gives Eckhart's replies to a further list of fifty-nine articles taken this time entirely from his German sermons. Thus 108 statements by Eckhart, or ascribed to him, are impugned, though this number must be somewhat reduced as there is some overlap between lists A and C. There is, however, evidence that at least one further list existed which has now been lost. Blakney's paperback volume contains a translation of these documents, not entirely accurate and made in ignorance of the modern German translation and commentary by Karrer and Piesch (1927). More recently, the subject has been investigated by Josef Koch (1960). The value to us of these documents is twofold: they show Eckhart's replies to certain objections, and in addition they contain a series of actual extracts, in Latin translation or, in some cases, in Eckhart's own Latin, which confirm the genuineness of sermons and treatises attributed to him.

The names of three inquisitors appointed to deal with Eckhart's case are known. Two were Franciscans. One, Albert of Milan, was clearly an Italian and one, Dr. Rainer, was a Frisian or a Dutchman, while the third, Petrus de Estate (Sommer), who was either the predecessor or the successor of Albert, was apparently a native of Cologne. Karrer identified the author of document A with Albert of Milan, drawing attention to his seemingly imperfect understanding of German. However this may be, it is clear that neither he nor the other censors had the necessary scholarly equipment for the task, as Eckhart, who had little difficulty in showing up their ignorance, gleefully noted. Many of the statements they objected to were certainly entirely orthodox.

At this point there is a gap in our documentation. It seems that heavier guns were now brought to bear on Eckhart. Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus (1401–64) knew of another list of incriminating passages, together with Eckhart's replies, taken this time from his commentary on St. John's Gospel, and in fact several of the articles which were

finally condemned by the pope are taken from this commentary, and therefore probably figured in the third list.

At all events, the case soon took a complicated turn. Nicholas of Strassburg, who was vicar-general of the order and visitor of the German province, intervened in Eckhart's defense, but was overruled by the archbishop, who even took proceedings against him. As Koch points out, Nicholas's own position in the matter was a delicate one: as lector in Cologne he was a subordinate of Eckhart's, but as vicar and visitor he was his superior. In any case he was, of course, an eminent man, and it is recorded that Albert of Milan behaved offensively toward him. We also know that many prominent members of Eckhart's order ostentatiously supported their beloved teacher, but eventually two Dominicans of notoriously bad repute, one of whom had actually been excommunicated, were found to testify against him. Finally Eckhart himself protested at the dilatory nature of the inquiry and appealed to the pope, and on February 13, 1327, he made a solemn declaration in the Dominican church that he was not a heretic, though much that he had said had been (as he had also declared in replying to his accusers) distorted or misunderstood. If any error in faith or morals should be discovered in anything he had said or written, publicly or privately, this should be considered retracted and not said or written. The declaration was read out in Latin by Konrad of Halberstadt, who was probably Eckhart's amanuensis, and translated sentence by sentence by Eckhart himself, and the declaration itself then attested by a notary.

Eckhart's appeal to the pope was disallowed by the archbishop. It seems, however, that the papal authorities had already begun to intervene. At any rate Eckhart made his way to Avignon, where a fresh hearing took place. Here the situation was very different. Pope John XXII appointed a commission of theologians to review the case, and they produced a new short list of articles. Eckhart's principal judge here was the learned theologian Cardinal Jacques Fournier, who later became Pope Benedict XII. The cardinal was also investigating the rather different case of the famous English Franciscan William of Ockham. Ockham, who shortly afterward succeeded in making his escape from Avignon, shows exact knowledge of some of the charges against Eckhart, with whom, however, he had no sympathy — indeed he declared Eckhart's ideas to be mad! He was, however, at the

time laboring under a sense of violent grievance at the real or alleged favored treatment accorded by the papacy to the Dominicans, and this may have colored his judgment. Early in 1328 the archbishop of Cologne wrote to the pope urging a decision in Eckhart's case, and from the pope's reply we learn that by April 30 of that year, Eckhart was dead.[3] Almost a year later, on March 27, 1329, the pope issued a bull, *In agro dominico* (the title is probably a play on the name of the Dominican order), in which twenty-six articles from Eckhart's Latin works were listed, of which the first fifteen were declared heretical and the remaining eleven termed 'dangerous and suspect of heresy,' though just capable of an orthodox interpretation. A further two articles which Eckhart was said to have preached (in German) were also condemned. The bull ended with the statement that Eckhart had before his death revoked and denounced all statements of his which were heretical or might convey such an impression. This in fact he had already done in Cologne in 1327, and his Avignon statement was probably made in similar terms.

Incidentally, it is ironic that Eckhart should have been condemned, even posthumously, for heresy by John XXII, for that pope was accused himself, and not only by Ockham and his supporters, of holding heretical views. As one of the chief architects of the church's wealth, who left an enormous fortune behind him, he was understandably opposed to the belief of the 'spiritual Franciscans' that the church should emulate the poverty of Christ. In this point he prevailed, and some unfortunate Franciscans suffered at the stake for their views. But when he put forward the doctrine that the Beatific Vision would not be vouchsafed to the souls of the just until the Day of Judgment he aroused so much opposition that he had to withdraw it, and this view was expressly condemned as heretical in 1336 by his successor.

The whole case has been the subject of much controversy among modern scholars. The nineteenth-century Protestant scholar Wilhelm Preger and the Catholic scholar already mentioned, Otto Karrer, were both convinced that the entire proceedings had their roots in the rivalry between Franciscans and Dominicans. The Franciscans were certainly at loggerheads with the pope at the time, and were bitterly aggrieved at the canonization of Thomas Aquinas in 1323 — very shortly before the date of Eckhart's trial. Josef Koch on the other hand considered that the root of the matter did in actual fact lie in

Eckhart's teachings, as was claimed. This is almost certainly true in one sense, but the whole matter was unquestionably inflamed and aggravated by the passions of inter-order rivalry, but for which proceedings might well never have been instituted in the first place. At best we can say that the case against the Franciscans for virtually 'framing' Eckhart is, as the wonderfully cautious Scottish verdict has it, not proven. We can also assume it as highly probable that no action would have been taken against Eckhart had he stayed in Strassburg instead of going to Cologne.

Archbishop Heinrich von Virneburg has sometimes been represented as a monster of iniquity. This is an exaggeration, though it is difficult for us to warm to him. He was a hard man who made full use of the harsh treatment then customary in dealing with heretics. He was also at this time an old man, set in his ways, and was genuinely worried at the spread of heretical ideas — and, it must be admitted, from his point of view, not without reason. He was also, incidentally, a Franciscan. Eckhart, as a distinguished preacher and scholar and a leading light of his order, was probably in little danger of the stake — which was generally reserved for humbler folk — but at least his accusers hoped to silence him and destroy his reputation. And in this they were, after all, not entirely unsuccessful. It is true his treatment at Avignon was different from that at Cologne. The two renegade Dominican witnesses against him were not even given a hearing, and all the impugned clauses were carefully reconsidered, most of them being rejected. Nevertheless, the verdict went against him. The final condemnation, about a year after Eckhart's death, was possibly deliberately delayed — doubtless to the archbishop's annoyance — until the heat had died down somewhat, and may have been meant by the pope as a sop to the Franciscans. Eckhart himself, it has been suggested, may never even have known that his case had failed. In any case it is certainly not true, as is sometimes stated, that Eckhart was formally excommunicated.

All the same, the condemnation of Eckhart's views as heretical had a fatal effect on his posthumous reputation. His two chief disciples, Suso and Tauler, kept his memory alive for a time, and the vast number of manuscripts (over two hundred) containing sermons and treatises attributed to him still attests his fame; but the dead hand of the church was nevertheless able to prevent his influence from

spreading as much as it might otherwise have done. In the fifteenth century the great Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus studied his writings with care and interest, though not endorsing them uncritically; and the seventeenth-century mystic Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius) drew inspiration from him. Otherwise, he remained half-forgotten till the nineteenth century.

To what we know of Eckhart's life from the records we may add a comment and three more speculative items. The comment is this: one may be inclined to think of Eckhart as a gentle cloistered sage, devoting his life quietly to contemplation and instruction. But in fact he must have been intensely active and energetic, not only a great preacher but also a busy administrator, up to his neck in practical affairs whether he wished it or not. He must also have spent an enormous amount of his time on the road, traveling on foot as was the custom of his order, from one place to another — to Cologne, Paris, Strassburg, Switzerland, throughout north Germany, Holland, and Bohemia and, finally, when approaching seventy, to Avignon, facing all the dangers and discomforts of such travel on bad roads and through mountains and robber-infested forests. Life was not easy, comfortable, or safe on such journeys which he undertook at frequent intervals as a matter of course. His periods of solitary contemplation in a quiet cell must often have been severely rationed, and indeed he must have been a man of considerable stamina and physical endurance.

The three more speculative items which may perhaps be added to his biography are a poem, a possible vision of Eckhart's own, and a vision of his pupil Suso. A mystical poem of some merit has been preserved in several manuscripts to which the Latin title *Granum sinapis* ('The Grain of Mustard Seed') was given, though the relevance of this title is not immediately obvious. A Latin commentary has also been found which shows that the poem was taken very seriously by somebody, and indeed it has great mystical depth. While there is absolutely no proof, some scholars have considered that this poem might possibly be by Eckhart himself. It certainly seems to be entirely in keeping with his thought. Though it would be rash to assume his authorship, it was in all probability at least composed under his influence, direct or indirect. Moreover, the dialect is his native Thuringian.[4] The

following attempt at a metrical rendering therefore deserves a place at least in this introduction:

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

When all began
(beyond mind's span)
the Word aye *is*
Oh what bliss
When source at first gave birth to source!
Oh Father's heart
from which did start
that same Word:
yet 'tis averred,
the Word's still kept in womb perforce.

From both doth flow
a loving glow:
in double troth known to both
comes forth from them the Holy Ghost,
of equal state
inseparate
The three are one:
who grasps it? None!
Itself it knows itself the most.

The threefold clasp
we cannot grasp,
the circle's span
no mind can scan:
for here's a mystery fathomless.
Check and mate,
time, form, estate!
The wondrous ring
holds everything,
its central point stands motionless.

The peak sublime
deedless climb
if thou art wise!

Thy way then lies
through desert very strange to see,
so deep, so wide,
no bound's descried.
This desert's bare
of *Then* or *There*
in modeless singularity.

This desert place
no foot did pace,
no creature mind
ingress can find.
It *is,* yet truly none knows what.
'Tis there, 'tis here,
'tis far, 'tis near,
'tis high, 'tis low,
yet all we know
is: *This* it's not and *That* it's not.

It's clear, it's bright,
it's dark as night;
no name or sign
can it define,
beginningless, of ceasing free.
Immobile, bare,
'tis flowing there.
Where it may dwell,
whoso can tell,
should teach us what its form may be.

As a child become,
both blind and dumb.
Thy own self's aught
must turn to naught.
Both aught and naught thou must reject,
without a trace
of image, time, or space.

Go quite astray
the pathless way,
the desert thou mayst then detect.

My soul within,
come out, God in!
Sink all my aught
in God's own naught,
sink down in bottomless abyss.
Should I flee thee,
thou wilt come to me;
when self is done,
then Thou art won,
thou transcendental highest bliss!

The second item is this: Eckhart was emphatically not the type of mystic who was given to visions: he certainly never speaks of any. But in one sermon (Sermon 19) he does tell us of an experience which seems to be autobiographical. He says, 'It seemed to a man as in a dream — it was a waking dream — that he became pregnant with Nothing, like a woman with child. And in the Nothing God was born: He was the fruit of Nothing.' This little story seems to have a peculiar significance. The impersonal mode of narration is probably due to modesty and also perhaps to the influence of St. Paul, but in view of Eckhart's frequent references to the birth of the Son in the soul, we may well assume that he is here telling us of a personal experience. If this is so, it is especially precious to us precisely because of his general reticence about *how* he came to experience his mystical insights.

The third item is taken from the autobiography of his disciple Heinrich Suso, who *was* given to visions. Sometimes those who were passing away appeared to Suso at the time of their death, and he tells us that Eckhart so appeared to him. This is of course a well-attested phenomenon, and we need not doubt its authenticity. Suso's very brief account of the incident is as follows:

'Among others there appeared to him the blessed master Eckhart and the saintly friar Johannes der Fuotrer of Strassburg. He was told by the master that he lived in transcendent glory in which his purified

soul was deified in God. Then the servant [Suso] wanted to know two things of him; the first was, how those persons stand in God who strove to attain the highest truth by self-abandonment without any falsehood. Then it was shown to him that the absorption of these men into the formless abyss cannot be expressed in words by anyone. Then he asked further, what was the most profitable exercise for a man who would fain achieve this. The master replied, "He should sink away from himself, according to his selfhood, in profound abandonment [*gelassenheit*], and accept all things from God and not from creatures, and establish himself in quiet endurance in the face of all wolfish men." '[5] The last remark would seem to be an obvious reference to Eckhart's persecutors.

Only the briefest sketch of Eckhart's thought will be attempted here. In the first place, we should not be misled by references to Eckhart as a 'speculative mystic.' This does not mean, in its context, that his thought is the result of purely intellectual speculation, like that of most philosophers today, or even of his own time.[6] It is based on mystical *experience* whereby his ratiocinative processes are, as it were, illumined from above. He puts into intellectual terms, as far as that is possible, that which he has seen and in a profounder sense experienced. 'Seeing' does not, of course, refer here to visions, for Eckhart unlike Suso was not the type of visionary mystic, which is why his kind of mysticism is, for want of a better word, termed 'speculative.' He would not have been particularly moved, except probably to mirth, by the suggestion of some modern philosophers that this kind of suprarational seeing or experiencing had no validity. He would merely have pitied those who were unable to perceive what he could see so clearly. He was far more worried by the fact that some things he said were held to conflict with the orthodox assumptions of his day and his church. Here we are faced with a real problem. Whether he was worried about this because he truly felt inwardly that the church *had* to be right, or rather because he had to conform, is perhaps to a certain extent open to question. We might tentatively put it that Eckhart, being utterly convinced of the truth of what he was saying, *hoped* it was after all fundamentally orthodox or at least would pass for such, but felt he had to say it just the same. This is not a very satisfactory answer, and admittedly begs several questions.

But since we can neither penetrate into the depths of Eckhart's insight nor see into his conscience, it is probably best to leave it at that.

In the so-called *Quaestiones Parisienses,* which date from his first stay in Paris, Eckhart discusses the question of whether Being and Knowing are identical in God, and he says (contrary to Aquinas), that God does not know because He *is,* but rather *is* because He knows: *est ipsum intelligere fundamentum ipsius esse.* Knowledge, understanding, wisdom, are for Eckhart always paramount. It is true that he later seems sometimes to shift his ground, and declares in his sermons that 'God is pure Being.' But this is not a real contradiction. God is pure Being in relation to *creatures,* who are in themselves nothing but only derive their being from God. In the Trinity, Eckhart maintains, the Father represents Knowledge, the Son Life, and the Holy Ghost Love. But God is in reality a Unity (*Unum*) in which all these things are without distinction. He continually stresses that God is Unity, not one Person: *unum non unus.*

God, or the Godhead, is pure unity and pure being. Therefore there is no true being except in God, and all creatures are, strictly speaking, nothing. Creatures gain their being from God. This is one of the fundamental tenets of Eckhart's teaching. The subject is dealt with particularly by a Japanese scholar, Shizuteru Ueda.[7] Professor Ueda is one of the few Japanese scholars who know not only Middle High German well but are also well-read in medieval Latin scholastic texts. His 'confrontation' of Eckhart with Far Eastern thought (which he undertakes in a final chapter of his book) is based on a thorough acquaintance, such as few other scholars can lay claim to, with both fields. Other writers have of course tried to compare Eckhart's mysticism with aspects of Oriental thought, notably Rudolf Otto, who compared it with Vedanta, and D. T. Suzuki, who compared it with Zen Buddhism, as Ueda does. But as Ueda's very important book has not been translated into English, some account of it will be given here.

Ueda sees as the decisive point in Eckhart's doctrine of the Trinity its application to the relation between God and the individual human soul. Eckhart's regular formula for expressing this relation is God begets His Son in the soul. Eckhart develops this theme further by asserting, 'God begets me as His Son and as the same Son.' In this

way the soul is, as it were, drawn into the dynamic process of the Trinity, which is God's Being or Essence. At the same time, as we have seen, the unity of God is strongly stressed: *unum non unus.*

With the birth of the Son we come to Meister Eckhart's specific doctrine of the Incarnation, interpreted not historically but mystically (not, of course, that Eckhart in any way denied the historical Incarnation). Here especially we must bear in mind the thought of God as *unum,* the One, pure simplicity. In his commentary on St. John's Gospel, Eckhart says, 'God the Word [i.e., Christ] assumed the *nature,* not the *person* of a man.' Human nature is universal, and so is not the property of individual man. Christ therefore became *man,* not *a man.* There is therefore a real sense in which man can become Christ, or God.

This birth of Christ that Eckhart speaks of is not a historical event that occurred in Bethlehem on a particular date, once for all — it is in the Eternal Now.[8] God begets His Son in the soul continually and without interruption. It is possible for Christ to be born in any man's soul because human nature is one, and is therefore the same in Christ as in every man. Of course this birth of Christ does not in fact occur in every human soul, but the potentiality is there. It is only necessary to create the right conditions.

What, then, is the essential prerequisite for the birth of Christ in my soul? It is detachment, self-abandonment (*gelassenheit, abegescheidenheit*). 'The eternal Word did not put on a human being, and so, go out of whatever is a human being in you and whatever *you* are, and take yourself just as bare human nature, and *then* you will be the same to the eternal Word as human nature is to him. For between your human nature and his there is no difference: it is one, for it is in Christ what it is in you' (Sermon 92).

It follows that there must be something in the soul wherein this mystical birth of the Son can take place. This is variously referred to as the peak of the soul, the castle (*bürgelin*), the spark (*viinkelin*), and so on. Occasionally the Greek term *synteresis* is used.[9] The idea of the 'spark in the soul' was not Eckhart's own invention. But he got into trouble for saying that there is in the soul something uncreated. This is the ground or essence of the soul, which Eckhart sharply distinguishes from its 'powers.' The powers of the soul work in the world, and as long as they are operative, their functioning excludes

the operation of the divine birth in the soul. Thus Christ has to drive the merchants from the Temple (i.e., the soul) in order to be alone therein. But this 'castle' in the soul is so lofty that even God must shed all His attributes before He can enter into it. The pure oneness of the highest peak of the soul is reserved for God in His pure unity. If the soul is too distracted by outward things, all possibility of a return to God — of becoming the receptacle for God's birth in the soul — may be lost. That is the danger that threatens the soul with spiritual death.

One merit of Ueda's book, and one reason for citing it here, is its complete detachment from the various sectarian interpretations put forward by Western scholars. At the same time there is no attempt made to over-strain Eckhart's views in the direction of Eastern thought. The resemblances, in some respects, to Zen Buddhism, which have been noted by others, are admitted and given full weight, but the differences are not glossed over. If mysticism in the traditional Western sense implies communion with God, then there is a real sense in which Eckhart may be said to go beyond this, for according to him the soul has to proceed beyond 'God' to the nameless Oneness of the 'Godhead.' Nevertheless, the theistic 'substructure' remains an essential part of Eckhart's thought, and this, in Zen as in other schools of Buddhism, is wholly lacking.[10] Ueda illustrates the difference by quoting Eckhart's statement that 'God is nothing.' Since he still attributes 'substance' to the Godhead, he means that God is 'no thing' for man, or in terms that man can understand. But in Zen there might be a *mondo* (question-and-answer): 'What is God? — Nothing!' and in this the 'nothing' would not mean, as with Eckhart, 'God is nothing,' but would rather be a total negation of the question itself, thus dissolving the dichotomy still present in Eckhart's statement.

The question of whether Eckhart's views were compatible with Catholic orthodoxy is probably of less general interest today than it was even quite recently. Ironically, the very pope who condemned him was himself alleged to hold unorthodox views. What we can say is (despite certain voices which have declared the contrary), that Eckhart speaks with authority born of personal experience. But the 'object' of that experience is strictly indescribable and ineffable. It can be hinted at and to some extent defined by what it is *not*. This, of course, is the way of the so-called negative (or apophatic) theology.

At the same time Eckhart had necessarily to conform to acceptable dogmatic expressions. Yet he *has* to give utterance to what fills him, whether he is understood or not. As he says in one sermon (Sermon 56), 'Whoever has understood this sermon, good luck to him. If no one had been here, I would have had to preach it to this offertory box.'

Meister Eckhart remains a great, and for many a perplexing, figure. Attempts at interpreting his thoughts are legion. The first task, however, is to try to present as clearly as possible what he *said,* not forgetting the context of his historical situation. Only when this has been done, can we hope to understand his message — if even then we are capable of doing so. The original texts have been and are being made available in Germany by the erudite and self-sacrificing editors of his works. Apart from one or two technical notes, the translator has nothing further to say, but simply and humbly to offer his version.

Notes

1. I use the German form Strassburg rather than Strasbourg, as this city was at the time, and for long afterward, purely German.

2. A, B, and C are not in this order in the manuscript, but this, as Karrer points out, is their logical order.

3. Presumably he died at Avignon. He was probably not actually imprisoned, but kept under some form of surveillance like that from which Ockham succeeded in escaping. Eckhart was in fact dead by the date of Ockham's escape, but Ockham clearly did not know this, and indeed never seems to have heard of the bull *In agro dominico.*

4. Kurt Ruh, ed., *Festschrift für Josef Quint* (Bonn, 1964), pp. 169–85. Cf. Maria Bindschedler, *Der lateinische Kommentar sum Granum Sinapis* (Basle, 1949); A. M. Haas, 'Sermo mysticus. Bemerkungen zur Granum sinapis-Sequenz,' *Verbum et Signum* II (Munich, 1975), pp. 389–412. A version by Father John Gray is included in *The Oxford Rook of English Mystical Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917 etc.), pp. 574–75, on the apparent assumption that it is a piece of original English verse. The ascription elsewhere of the original to one Konrad Immendorfer (1423) is incorrect: he was merely the scribe of one manuscript. The poem is about a century older.

5. Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften,* ed. K. Bihlmeyer, 1907, pp. 22–23. 'Seuse' is a rather unfortunate modernization of the medieval *Süs* or *Süse,* latinized as *Suso.*

6. It might have seemed unnecessary to have to state categorically that Eckhart is a mystic — indeed one of the greatest of Christian mystics. But in 1960 Heribert Fischer (in *Meister Eckhart der Prediger,* ed. U. M. Nix and R. Öchslin) claimed that this designation was the invention of literary scholars, and Fischer's view is echoed by J. Margetts in *Die Satzstruktur bei Meister Eckhart,* 1969, p. 167. A crushing

rejoinder was given by the greatest of all Eckhart specialists, Josef Quint, 'Textverständnis und Textkritik in der Meister-Eckhart-Forschung,' *Festschrift für Fritz Tschirch,* 1972, pp. 170–86. Cf. also Alois M. Haas, 'Das Verhältnis von Sprache und Erfahrung in der deutschen Mystik,' *Deutsche Literatur des späten Mittelalters,* ed. W. Harms and L. P. Johnson, 1975, pp. 240–64.

7. See Bibliography, Ueda 1965.

8. Similarly with the question of whether the world had (historically) a beginning. Eckhart got into trouble for denying the creation in time. For him, time and all things temporal are seen from the standpoint of eternity, from which the question of whether the world had a beginning or not is of no consequence. Only when Eckhart was compelled to go into this question did he give the traditional answer. Joachim Kopper, *Die Metaphysik Meister Eckharts,* Saarbrücken, 1955, pp. 71–72.

9. See below Note A: *Synteresis.*

10. See H. von Glasenapp, *Buddhism, a Non-Theistic Religion,* trans. Irmgard Schloegl, London, 1970.

Note A
SYNTERESIS

The place in the soul where the mystical birth of the Son takes place is referred to by various names including, occasionally (as in Sermons. 32a and b), the Greek word *synteresis* (sometimes written, according to late Greek pronunciation, *synderesis* or even *sinderesis*).

Synteresis (*synderesis*) is used by St. Thomas Aquinas for 'the habitual knowledge of the primary moral principles,' or the light of conscience which never dies out, even in the damned, and the term goes back to St. Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel. Some scholars consider that it is here a mere scribal error for *syneidesis,* which is the usual Greek word for 'conscience.' This is improbable. Warner Allen[1] suggests that it may be a parallel formation to *parateresis,* as in Luke 17:20, meaning 'observation' directed to external objects. He says, '*Synteresis* may have been formed antithetically to express the intuitive and inward observation which belongs to reflexive consciousness and which as we have shown discloses in the spiritual experience the immanent kingdom of God.' Eckhart himself ventures on two alternative, typically medieval etymologies: either 'without heresy' (*sine haeresi*) or *syn-*=Latin *con-* + *haereo,* thus 'co-herent,' as being that which always adheres to the good (*LW* I, p. 672, *Liber parabolarum Genesis,* note 199). Dom Justin McCann[2] quotes a commentator, Vercellensis,[3] on the mystical theology of 'Dionysius the Areopagite,'

who says, 'They [the pagan philosophers] thought that the highest cognitive faculty was the intellect, whereas there is another which as far excels the intellect as the intellect does the reason, or the reason the imagination; and this is the higher will (*principalis affectio*), and the same is the spark of conscience (*scintilla synderesis*) which alone may be united to the divine Spirit.... In this exercise sense, imagination, reason, and intellect are suspended... and the point of the higher will (*apex affectionis principalis*) is united to the divine Spirit itself.' This comes close to Eckhart's teaching, though the assertion of the primacy of the will over the intellect is Franciscan.

Notes

1. Warner Allen, *The Uncurtained Throne* (London, 1951), p. 112.
2. *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Treatises,* 6th ed. (London, 1951), p. xiii; ibid., p. 140.
3. Properly Thomas of St. Victor, Abbot of Vercelli (d. 1246).

Note B
SPURIOUS AND DOUBTFUL WORKS

Pfeiffer's edition of 1857, on which Miss C. de B. Evans's translation was mainly based, is divided into four parts: I. Sermons (*Predigten*), pp. 1–370, with an additional one on pp. 685–86; II. Treatises (*Traktate*), pp. 371–593; III. Sayings (*Sprüche*), pp. 595–627; and IV. the so-called *Liber Positionum,* pp. 629–84. The complex problems relating to the authenticity of all this material were discussed at length in the very important article by Adolf Spamer, 'Zur Überlieferung der Pfeifferschen Eckeharttexte' (1909: see Bibliography). Spamer's pioneer work on the problem of the Sermons (I) has been continued by Quint and others, and need not be further considered here. The following notes will serve to indicate the present view on the remaining material contained in Pfeiffer and translated by Miss Evans.

II. Treatises (*Traktate*). Of the eighteen 'Traktate' in Pfeiffer, only two were accepted by Spamer as genuine: *The Book of Divine Comfort* (V), and *The Talks of Instruction* (XVII), to which more recent scholars have added *On Detachment* (IX). Of the rest, many are curious 'mosaic' compilations of varied character, and though they do in

places contain genuine Eckhartian thoughts or quotations, they can in any case quite certainly not be regarded as authentic works by him as they stand. Here, reference will only be made to three of these spurious 'treatises' (the term is, for some, a misnomer). The first is *Swester Katrei* or 'Sister Cathy' (VI), a work known to be spurious long before Spamer's article, but which, as Professor Clark has remarked, seems to be a favorite source of 'Eckhartian' quotations among British and American writers. It is, as Spamer points out, a conglomerate from various sources which has been attached to Eckhart's name. The fact that Eckhart himself appears as a figure in the narrative should alone suffice to show that he is not the author, even though some of his ideas are reflected in it. In fact it belongs to a well-known type of pious submystical tale in which a young girl or an unlettered woman shows herself superior in wisdom and understanding to her confessor. Indeed, it is a fairly typical example of the often rather unorthodox lay piety of the times, as found among the Beguines,[1] the 'Friends of God,'[2] and even in some convents. The name of the 'heroine,' Katrei or Catherine, is possibly a reminiscence of the legend of St. Catherine, who as a wise young virgin confounded the doctors of divinity. Though its true spiritual content has been overrated in some quarters, it is not without interest.

The case of Treatise XII, entitled *Von dem Überschalle,* is also interesting. The title has been translated, misleadingly, by Miss Evans as 'The Drowning,' and while it is difficult to render adequately, 'The Supernal Sound' would be more literal — meaning the transcendent harmony in which all that is creaturely is 'drowned.' The text as printed by Pfeiffer is in prose except for three lines of verse at the end, and as prose it is translated by Miss Evans. A simple inspection, however, borne out by reference to better MSS than Pfeiffer was able to use, shows the original to have been in verse. As poetry it is unpretending, but it is not without some mystical depth, and its thought is by no means alien to Eckhart's, which explains why it has attracted some attention. It has however been conclusively shown that this poem is based on chapter 52 of Suso's mystical autobiography.[3] It was felt by somebody to be sufficiently important for it to be supplied with a 'gloss,' or brief prose commentary, which follows it in Pfeiffer's edition.

Mention should be made further of Sermon XVIII, *The Commentary on St. John's Gospel.* This brief German treatise has in fact nothing to do with the elaborate Latin commentary which Eckhart did write on that Gospel. As Spamer notes, Denifle had already pointed out that Pfeiffer's ascription of it to Eckhart was based on conjecture: where the Stuttgart MS has 'Wherefore Meister Eckhart affirms.... Pfeiffer's text reads (in Miss Evans's translation), 'Wherefore I, Meister Eckhart, do affirm,...' and in fact the author is named in one MS as a certain Bruder Hans, or Johannes, who is also named in connection with another spurious treatise (No. XI).

III. The so-called 'Sayings' (*Spüche*), arranged by Pfeiffer under seventy numbers, are a very mixed collection of fragments, aphorisms, etc., ascribed in various sources to Eckhart. In many cases they are actually extracts from his German sermons or, as regards Nos. 31–48, translated extracts from his Latin writings. The last five (66–70) are of a different character, being little tales of Eckhart which seem to have circulated in the convents, and which are not lacking in charm and a certain profundity.

IV. The title 'Liber Positionum' given by Pfeiffer to this whole section is completely unjustified, being based on an ill-founded guess. Pfeiffer did not know Eckhart's Latin works, which include an *Opus propositionum* (!), of which Pfeiffer's title looks like a garbled version. But in fact there is no connection between this work and the collection of problems and sayings (some similar to those in III) here put together by Pfeiffer. The provenance of most of these passages is somewhat obscure, but they appear to contain little to connect them with Eckhart.

Notes

1. Beguines. Members of sisterhoods founded in the Netherlands in the twelfth century. They led a semireligious life but without vows. Later they were established in Paris, the Rhineland, and elsewhere.

2. The 'Friends of God' (*Gottesfreunde*), a group founded in Strassburg in the fourteenth century by Rulman Merswin, who invented a mysterious figure called 'Der Gottesfreund von Oberland,' and produced much submystical literature. See Clark (1957), pp. 122–24.

3. Translated by J. M. Clark as *The Life of the Servant* (London, 1952).

Note C
ARTICLES CONDEMNED IN THE BULL OF JOHN XXII
IN AGRO DOMINICO, MARCH 27, 1329

1. On being asked why God did not create the world earlier, he answered then as now that God could not have created the world earlier because nothing can operate before it is. Therefore, as soon as God was, He created the world.
2. Likewise, it may be admitted that the world has existed from all eternity.
3. Likewise: At once, and as soon as God was, when He begot His coeternal Son as God fully equal to Himself, He also created the world.
4. Likewise: In every act, even evil, in the evil of punishment just as much as in the evil of guilt, God's glory is equally revealed and shines forth.
5. Likewise: Whoever reviles anyone with abuse, he praises God through this very abuse, and the more he abuses and the worse he sins, the more he praises God.
6. Likewise: Even he who blasphemes against God praises God.
7. Likewise: Whoever prays for this or that, prays for something evil and in evil wise, for he prays for the denial of good and the denial of God, and he prays for God to deny Himself to him.
8. Those who seek nothing, neither honor nor profit nor inwardness nor holiness nor reward nor heaven, but who have renounced all this, including what is their own — in such men God is glorified.
9. I recently wondered whether I should accept or desire anything from God. I will consider this very carefully, because if I received anything from God I would be beneath Him or below Him like a servant or slave, but He in giving would be like a master — and it should not be thus with us in eternal life.
10. We are fully transformed and converted into God; in the same way as in the sacrament the bread is converted into the body of

Christ, so I am converted into Him, so that He converts me into His being as one, not as *like*. By the living God it is true that there is no difference.

11. All that God the Father gave His only-begotten Son in human nature He has given me: I except nothing, neither union nor holiness; He has given me everything as to him.
12. Everything that Holy Scripture says of Christ is entirely true of every good and holy man.
13. All that is proper to the divine nature is also proper to the just and godly man; therefore such a man performs everything that God performs, and he has created heaven and earth together with God, and he is a begetter of the eternal Word, and God could do nothing without such a man.
14. The good man should so conform his will to the divine will that he wills everything that God wills. And since God in a certain sense wills that I should have sinned, I should not wish to have committed no sins. And that is true penitence.
15. If a man had committed a thousand mortal sins, and if that man were in a proper state, he should not wish not to have committed them.
16. God does not expressly command external works.
17. An external work is not really good and divine, and God does not really perform and beget it.
18. Let us not offer up the fruits of external works, which do not make us good, but those of internal works which the Father dwelling within us does and performs.
19. God loves souls, not external works.
20. A good man is the only-begotten Son of God.
21. A noble man is that only-begotten Son of God whom the Father begets from eternity.
22. The Father begets me as His Son and as the same Son. Whatever God performs is one: therefore He begets me as His Son without any distinction.

23. God is in every way and in every respect One, so that in Him no multiplicity can be found, either in the intellect or outside the intellect. For whoever sees duality or distinction does not see God, since God is One outside all number and above all number, and does not coincide with anything. It therefore follows that in God no distinction can exist or be discerned.
24. Every distinction is alien to God, both in His nature and in the Persons. The proof: since His nature itself is one (*una*) and this very One (*unum*), and each Person is one and this same One as the nature.
25. When it says, "Simon, do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15), the meaning is: more than you love these, i.e., well, but not perfectly. For where there is first and second, there is more and less, or rank and degree; but in the One there is neither rank nor degree. Therefore he who loves God more than these loves Him well, but not perfectly.
26. All creatures are pure nothing. I do not say that they are a little something, or anything at all, but that they are pure nothing.
27. There is something in the soul that is uncreated and uncreatable. If the whole soul were of such a nature she would be uncreated and uncreatable. This is the intellect.
28. God is neither good nor better nor best. When I call God good I speak as falsely as if I were to call white black.

◆ ◆ ◆

Of these articles (reduced from the 108 and more to which the Cologne inquisitors had objected), the first 15 were declared, both as to their literal sense and in context, to be erroneous or tainted with heresy. The same applied to the last two (nos. 27 and 28), which Eckhart was 'alleged to have preached.' The remaining 11 (nos. 16 to 26) were described as 'having a very bad sound and suspect of heresy, though capable, with many explanations and additions, of being interpreted in a Catholic sense.'

SERMON ONE

(Pf 1, Q 101, QT 57)[1]

DUM MEDIUM SILENTIUM TENERENT OMNIA
ET NOX IN SUO CURSU MEDIUM ITER HABERET, ETC.
(Wisdom 18:14)

Here, in time,[2] we are celebrating the eternal birth which God the Father bore and bears unceasingly in eternity, because this same birth is now born in time, in human nature. St. Augustine[3] says, 'What does it avail me that this birth is always happening, if it does not happen in me? That it should happen in me is what matters.' We shall therefore speak of this birth, of how it may take place in us and be consummated in the virtuous soul, whenever God the Father speaks His eternal Word in the perfect soul. For what I say here is to be understood of the good and perfected man who has walked and is still walking in the ways of God; not of the natural, undisciplined man, for he is entirely remote from, and totally ignorant of this birth. There is a saying of the wise man, "When all things lay in the midst of silence, then there descended down into me from on high, from the royal throne, a secret word." This sermon is about that Word.[4]

Three things[5] are to be noted here. The first is, *where* in the soul God the Father speaks His Word, where this birth takes place and where she[6] is receptive of this act, for that can only be in the very purest, loftiest, subtlest part that the soul is capable of. In very truth, if God the Father in His omnipotence could endow the soul with anything more noble, and if the soul could have received from Him anything nobler, then the Father would have had to delay the birth for the coming of this greater excellence. Therefore the soul in which this birth is to take place must keep absolutely pure and must live in noble fashion, quite collected and turned entirely inward, not running out through the five senses into the multiplicity of creatures, but all

inturned and collected and in the purest part — there is His place; He disdains anything less.

The second part of this sermon has to do with man's conduct in relation to this act, to God's speaking of this Word within, to this birth: whether it is more profitable for man to co-operate with it, so that it may come to pass in him through his own exertion and merit — by a man's creating in himself a mental image in his thoughts and disciplining himself that way by reflecting that God is wise, omnipotent, eternal, or whatever else he can imagine about God — whether this is more profitable and conducive to this birth from the Father; or whether one should shun and free oneself from all thoughts, words, and deeds and from all images created by the understanding, maintaining a wholly God-receptive attitude, such that one's own self is idle, letting God work within one. Which conduct conduces best to this birth? The third point is the profit, and how great it is, which accrues from this birth.

Note in the first place that in what I am about to say I shall make use of natural proofs, so that you yourselves can grasp that it is so, for though I put more faith in the scriptures than in myself, yet it is easier and better for you to learn by means of arguments that can be verified.

First we will take the words, 'In the midst of silence there was spoken within me a secret word.' — 'But sir,[7] where is the silence, and where is the place where the word is spoken?' — As I said just now, it is in the purest thing that the soul is capable of, in the noblest part, the ground[8] — indeed, in the very essence of the soul which is the soul's most secret part. There is the silent 'middle,' for no creature ever entered there and no image, nor has the soul there either activity or understanding; therefore she is not aware *there* of any image, whether of herself or of any other creature.

Whatever the soul effects, she effects with her powers.[9] What she understands, she understands with the intellect. What she remembers, she does with memory; if she would love, she does that with the will, and thus she works with her powers and not with her essence. Every external act is linked with some *means*. The power of sight works only through the eyes; otherwise it can neither employ nor bestow vision, and so it is with all the other senses. The soul's every external act is effected by some means. But in the soul's essence there is no

activity, for the powers she works with emanate from the ground of being. Yet in that ground is the silent 'middle': here nothing but rest and celebration for this birth, this act, that God the Father may speak His word there, for *this* part is by nature receptive to nothing save only the divine essence, without mediation. Here God enters the soul with His all, not merely with a part. God enters here the ground of the soul. None can touch the ground of the soul but God alone. No creature can enter the soul's ground, but must stop outside, in the 'powers.' Within, the soul sees clearly the image whereby the creature has been drawn in and taken lodging. For whenever the powers of the soul make contact with a creature, they set to work and make an image and likeness of the creature, which they absorb. That is how they know the creature. No creature can come closer to the soul than this, and the soul never approaches a creature without having first voluntarily taken an image of it into herself. Through this presented image, the soul approaches creatures — an image being something that the soul makes of (external) objects with her own powers. Whether it is a stone, a horse, a man, or anything else that she wants to know, she gets out the image of it that she has already taken in, and is thus enabled to unite herself with it.

But for a man to receive an image in this way, it must of necessity enter from without through the senses. In consequence, there is nothing so unknown to the soul as herself. Accordingly, one master says that the soul can neither create nor obtain an image of herself. Therefore she has no way of knowing herself, for images all enter through the senses, and hence she can have no image of herself. And so she knows all other things, but not herself. Of nothing does she know so little as of herself, for want of mediation.

And you must know too that inwardly the soul is free and void of all means and all images — which is *why* God can freely unite with her without form or likeness. Whatever power you ascribe to any master, you cannot but ascribe that power to God without limit. The more skilled and powerful the master, the more immediately is his work effected, and the simpler it is. Man requires many means for his external works; much preparation of the material is needed before he can produce them as he has imagined them. But the sun in its sovereign mastery performs its task (which is to give light) very swiftly: the instant its radiance is poured forth, the ends of the earth

are full of light. More exalted is the angel, who needs still less means for his work and has fewer images. The highest Seraph has but a single image: *he* seizes as a unity all that his inferiors regard as manifold. But God needs *no* image and has no image: without any means, likeness, or image God operates in the soul — right in the ground where no image ever got in, but only He Himself with His own being. This no creature can do.

'How does God the Father give birth to His Son in the soul — like creatures, in images and likenesses?'

No, by my faith, but just as He gives birth to him in eternity — no more, no less.

'Well, but how *does* He give birth to him then?'

Now see: God the Father has a perfect insight into Himself, profound and thorough knowledge of Himself by Himself, and not through any image. And thus God the Father gives birth to His Son in the true unity of the divine nature. See, it is like this and in no other way that God the Father gives birth to the Son in the ground and essence of the soul, and thus unites Himself with her. For if any image were present there would be no real union, and in that real union lies the soul's whole beatitude.

Now, you might say, there is by nature nothing in the soul but images. Not at all! If that were so, the soul could never become blessed, for God cannot make any creature from which you can receive perfect blessedness — otherwise God would not be the highest blessing and the final goal, whereas it is His nature to be this, and it is His will to be the alpha and omega of all things. No creature can constitute your blessedness, nor can it be your perfection here on earth, for the perfection of *this* life — which is the sum of all the virtues — is followed by the perfection of the life to come. Therefore you have to be and dwell in the essence and in the ground, and *there* God will touch you with His simple essence without the intervention of any image. No image represents and signifies itself: it always aims and points to that of which it is the image. And, since you have no image but of what is outside yourself (which is drawn in through the senses and continually points to that of which it is the image), therefore it is impossible for you to be beatified by any image whatsoever. And *therefore* there must be a silence and a stillness, and the Father

must speak in that, and give birth to His Son, and perform His works free from all images.

The second point is, what must a man contribute by his own actions, in order to procure and deserve the occurrence and the consummation of this birth in himself? Is it better to do something toward this, to imagine and think about God? — or should he keep still and silent in peace and quiet and let God speak and work in him, merely waiting for God to act? Now I say, as I said before, that these words and this act are only for the good and perfected people, who have so absorbed and assimilated the essence of all virtues that these virtues emanate from them naturally, without their seeking; and above all there must dwell in them the worthy life and lofty teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. They must know that the very best and noblest attainment in this life is to be silent and let God work and speak within. When the powers have been completely withdrawn from all their works and images, *then* the Word is spoken. Therefore he said, 'In the midst of the silence the secret word was spoken unto me.' And so, the more completely you are able to draw in your powers to a unity and forget all those things and their images which you have absorbed, and the further you can get from creatures and their images, the nearer you are to this and the readier to receive it. If only you could suddenly be unaware of all things,[10] then you could pass into an oblivion of your own body as St. Paul did, when he said, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or out of the body I cannot tell; God knows it" (2 Cor. 12:2). In this case the spirit had so entirely absorbed the powers that it had forgotten the body: memory no longer functioned, nor understanding, nor the senses, nor the powers that should function so as to govern and grace the body; vital warmth and body-heat were suspended, so that the body did not waste during the three days when he neither ate nor drank. Thus too Moses fared, when he fasted for forty days on the mountain and was none the worse for it, for on the last day he was as strong as on the first. In this way a man should flee his senses, turn his powers inward and sink into an oblivion of all things and himself. Concerning this a master[11] addressed the soul thus: 'Withdraw from the unrest of external activities, then flee away and hide from the turmoil of inward thoughts, for they but create discord.' And so, if God is to speak His Word in the soul, she must be at rest and at peace, and *then*

He will speak His Word, and Himself, in the soul — no image, but Himself!

Dionysius[12] says, 'God has no image or likeness of Himself, for He is intrinsically all goodness, truth and being.' God performs all His works, whether within Himself or outside of Himself, in a flash. Do not imagine that God, when He made heaven and earth and all things, made one thing one day and another the next. Moses describes it like that, but he really knew better: he did so for the sake of people who could not conceive or grasp it any other way. All God did was this: He willed, He spoke, and they *were!* God works without means and without images, and the freer you are from images, the more receptive you are for His inward working, and the more introverted and self-forgetful, the nearer you are to this.

Dionysius[13] exhorted his pupil Timothy in this sense saying, 'Dear son Timothy, do you with untroubled mind soar above yourself and all your powers, above ratiocination and reasoning, above works, above all modes and existence, into the secret still darkness, that you may come to the knowledge of the unknown super-divine God.' There must be a withdrawal from all things. God scorns to work through images.

Now you might say, 'What does God do without images in the ground and essence?'

That I cannot know, because my soul-powers receive only in images; they have to know and lay hold of each thing in its appropriate image. They cannot recognize a horse when presented with the image of a man; and since all things enter from without, that knowledge is hidden from my soul — which is to her great advantage. This *not-knowing* makes her wonder and leads her to eager pursuit, for she perceives clearly *that* it is, but does not know *how* or *what* it is. Whenever a man knows the causes of things, then he at once tires of them and seeks to know something different. Always clamoring to know things, is forever inconstant. And so this unknown-knowing keeps the soul constant and yet spurs her on to pursuit.

About this, the wise man said, "In the middle of the night when all things were in a quiet silence, there was spoken to me a hidden word. It came like a thief by stealth" (Wisd. 18:14–15). Why does he call it a word, when it was hidden? The nature of a word is to reveal what is

hidden. It revealed itself to me and shone forth before me, declaring something to me and making God known to me, and therefore it is called a Word. Yet what it *was,* remained hidden from me. That was its stealthy coming in a whispering stillness to reveal itself. See, just because it is hidden one must and should always pursue it. It shone forth and yet was hidden: we are meant to yearn and sigh for it. St. Paul exhorts us to pursue this until we espy it, and not to stop until we grasp it. After he had been caught up into the third heaven where God was made known to him and he beheld all things, when he returned he had forgotten nothing, but it was so deep down in his ground that his intellect could not reach it; it was veiled from him. He therefore had to pursue it and search for it in himself and not outside. It is all within, not outside, but wholly within. And knowing this full well, he said, 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor any affliction can separate me from what I find within me" (Rom. 8:38–39).

There is a fine saying of one pagan master[14] to another about this. He said, 'I am aware of something in me which shines in my understanding; I can clearly perceive that it is something, but what it may be I cannot grasp. Yet I think if I could only seize it I should know all truth.' To which the other master replied, 'Follow it boldly! for if you could seize it you would possess the sum total of all good and have eternal life!' St. Augustine[15] spoke in the same sense: 'I am aware of something within me that gleams and flashes before my soul; were this perfected and fully established in me, that would surely be eternal life!' It hides, yet shows itself; it comes, but like a thief with intent to take and steal all things from the soul. But by emerging and showing itself a little it aims to lure the soul and draw her toward itself, to rob her and deprive her of herself. About this, the prophet says, 'Lord, take from them their spirit and give them instead thy spirit' (Ps. 103:29–30). This too was meant by the loving soul when she said, "My soul dissolved and melted away when Love spoke his word" (Song 5:6). When he entered, *I* had to fall away. And Christ meant this by his words, "Whoever abandons anything for my sake shall be repaid a hundredfold, and whoever would possess me must deny himself and all things, and whoever will serve me must follow me and not go any more after his own" (Mark 10:29, etc.).

But now you might say, 'But, good sir, you want to change the natural course of the soul and go against her nature! It is her nature to take things in through the senses in images. Would you upset this ordering?

No! But how do you know what nobility God has bestowed on human nature, not yet fully described, and still unrevealed? For those who have written of the soul's nobility have gone no further than their natural intelligence could carry them; they had never entered her ground, so that much remained obscure and unknown to them. So the prophet said, "I will sit in silence and hearken to what God speaks within me" (Ps. 84:9). Because it is so secret, this Word came in the night and in darkness. St. John says, "The light shone in the darkness, it came into its own, and as many as received it became in authority sons of God; to them was given power to become God's sons" (John 1:5, 11–12).

Now observe the use and the fruit of this secret Word and this darkness. The Son of the heavenly Father is not born alone in this darkness, which is his own: you too can be born a child of the same heavenly Father and of none other, and to you too He will give power. Now observe how great the use is! For all the truth learned by all the masters by their own intellect and understanding, or ever to be learned till Doomsday, they never had the slightest inkling of this knowledge and this ground. Though it may be called a nescience, an unknowing, yet there is in it more than in all knowing and understanding without it, for this unknowing lures and attracts you from all understood things, and from yourself as well. This is what Christ meant when he said, "Whoever will not deny himself and will not leave his father and mother, and is not estranged from all these, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37), as though he were to say, he who does not abandon creaturely externals can be neither conceived nor born in this divine birth. But divesting yourself of yourself and of everything external does truly give it to you. And in very truth I believe, nay, I am sure, that the man who is established in this cannot in any way ever be separated from God. I say he can in no way lapse into mortal sin. He would rather suffer the most shameful death, as the saints have done before him, than commit the least of mortal sins. I say such people cannot willingly commit or consent to even a venial

sin in themselves or in others if they can stop it. So strongly are they lured and drawn and accustomed to *that,* that they can never turn to any other way; to this way are directed all their senses, all their powers.

May the God who has been born again as man assist us to this birth, eternally helping us, weak men, to be born in him again as God. Amen.

Notes

1. This sermon epitomizes some of the most important aspects of the whole of Eckhart's teaching.

2. Christmas Day. But Eckhart is not interested in 'real' time, and goes straight on to speak of the Eternal Birth. See Introduction, note 8.

3. Quotation untraced, as often. Eckhart's quotation from authorities are often very free, obviously from memory, and therefore hard to verify. Where this has been done, usually by Quint, the source is given in these notes. See also note 15.

4. Eckhart now combines Wisd. 18:14 and Job 4:12. The Word for Eckhart is the *Logos* of St. John's Gospel, i.e., the Son in the Trinity. The text, from the *Wisdom of Solomon,* is freely chosen by Eckhart to express his ideas, which are paralleled in his Latin commentary on this work. The preamble provides the link between the text and Eckhart's real theme, which is in fact, as Quint remarks, his sole theme: the birth of the Word in the soul.

5. These three points are in accordance with the fourfold principle of interpretation (see Introduction, p. 5 above). The first or literal sense Eckhart omits: the first point here represents the allegorical interpretation of the text, the second is the moral, and the third is the anagogical, which deals with eternal life. These points are then developed in turn.

6. I call the soul 'she' for clarity in accordance with the preliminary note, but in the present context 'she' is particularly appropriate.

7. A fictitious question from the audience.

8. The 'ground of the soul,' where the birth takes place, to which Eckhart constantly refers under a variety of names: the 'spark,' the 'castle,' and so on. It is sharply distinguished from the 'powers.'

9. The 'powers' of the soul are the agencies through which it operates. The higher powers are intellect, memory, and will, and the lower powers are the (lower) intellect, anger, and desire, as well as the senses. The 'higher intellect' is not the ratiocinative faculty, but the intuitive in the highest sense of that term.

10. A possible clue to the nature of Eckhart's own meditative experience.

11. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* 1.

12. The so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* 9.6.

13. *De mystica theologia* 1. See the modern English rendering of the fourteenth century *Denis Hid Divinity,* in *The Cloud of Unknowing and other Treatises by a 14th Century English Mystic,* rev. ed. and introduced by Abbot Justin McCann, O.S.B. (London, Burns Oates, 6th ed., 1952). It is remarkable that the introduction

mentions Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck and St. Catherine of Siena as fourteenth-century contemplatives, but not Eckhart! There are of course many parallels to Eckhart's thought in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

14. Untraced.

15. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.27. There may be something wrong in the text here, as the (untraced) Augustine quotation virtually duplicates the story told immediately above. Probably the listener who recorded the sermon muddled the quotations. This well illustrates the difficulty of establishing the exact wording of the sermons.

SERMON TWO

(Pf 2, Q 102, QT 58)

UBI EST QUI NATUS EST REX JUDAEORUM?
(Matthew 2:2)

"Where is he who is born king of the Jews?" Now observe, as regards this birth, *where* it takes place: "*Where* is he who is born?" Now I say as I have often said before, that this eternal birth occurs in the soul precisely as it does in eternity, no more and no less, for it is *one* birth, and this birth occurs in the essence and ground of the soul.

Now certain questions arise. First of all, since God is in all things as intelligence, and is more truly in them than they are in themselves, and more naturally, and since wherever God is there He must work, knowing Himself and speaking His Word — in what special respects, then, is the soul better fitted for this divine operation than are other rational creatures in which God also is? Pay attention to the explanation.

God is in all things as being, as activity, as power. But He is fecund in the soul alone, for though every creature is a vestige of God, the soul is the natural image of God. This image must be adorned and perfected in this birth. No creature but the soul alone is receptive to this act, this birth. Indeed, such perfection as enters the soul, whether it be divine undivided light, grace, or bliss, must enter the soul through this birth, and in no other way. Just await this birth within you, and you shall experience all good and all comfort, all happiness, all being and all truth. If you miss it, you will miss all good and blessedness.

Whatever comes to you in that will bring you pure being and stability; but whatever you seek or cleave to apart from this will perish — take it how you will and where you will, all will perish. This alone gives being — all else perishes. But in this birth you will share in the

divine influx and all its gifts. This cannot be received by creatures in which God's image is not found, for the soul's image appertains especially to this eternal birth, which happens truly and especially in the soul, being begotten of the Father in the soul's ground and innermost recesses, into which no image ever shone or (soul-)power[1] peeped.

The second question is, Since this work of birth occurs in the essence and ground of the soul, then it happens just as much in a sinner as in a saint, so what grace or good is there in it for me? For the ground of nature is the same in both — in fact even those in hell retain their nobility of nature eternally.

Now note the answer. It is a property of this birth that it always comes with fresh light. It always brings a great light to the soul, for it is the nature of good to diffuse itself wherever it is. In this birth God streams into the soul in such abundance of light, so flooding the essence and ground of the soul that it runs over and floods into the powers and into the outward man. Thus it befell Paul when on his journey God touched him with His light and spoke to him: a reflection of the light shone outwardly, so that his companions saw it surrounding Paul like the blessed (in heaven). The superfluity of light in the ground of the soul wells over into the body which is filled with radiance. No sinner can receive this light, nor is he worthy to, being full of sin and wickedness, which is called 'darkness.' Therefore it says, "The darkness shall neither receive nor comprehend the light" (John 1:5). That is because the paths by which the light would enter are choked and obstructed with guile and darkness: for light and darkness cannot co-exist, or God and creatures; if God shall enter, the creatures must simultaneously go out. A man is fully aware of this light. Directly he turns to God, a light begins to gleam and glow within him,[2] giving him to understand what to do and what to leave undone, with much true guidance in regard to things of which before he knew or understood nothing.

'Where do you know this from, and in what way?'

Just pay attention. Your heart is often moved and turned away from the world. How could that be but by this illumination? It is so charming and delightful that you become weary of all things that are not God or God's. It draws you to God and you become aware of many a prompting to do good, though ignorant of whence it comes.

This inward inclination is in no way due to creatures or their bidding, for what creatures direct or effect always comes from without. But by this work it is only the ground (of the soul) that is stirred, and the freer you keep yourself the more light, truth, and discernment you will find. Thus no man ever went astray for any other reason than that he first departed from *this,* and then sought too much to cling to outward things. St. Augustine says there are many who sought light and truth, but only outside where it was not to be found. Finally they go out so far that they never get back home or find their way in again. Thus they have not found the truth, for truth is within, in the ground, and not without. So he who would see light to discern all truth, let him watch and become aware of this birth within, in the ground. Then all his powers will be illuminated, and the outer man as well. For as soon as God inwardly stirs the ground with truth, its light darts into his powers, and that man knows at times more than anyone could teach him. As the prophet says, "I have gained greater understanding than all who ever taught me."[3] You see then, because this light cannot shine or lighten in sinners, that is why this birth cannot possibly occur in them. This birth cannot coexist with the darkness of sin, even though it takes place, not in the powers, but in the essence and ground of the soul.

The question arises, Since God the Father gives birth only in the essence and ground of the soul and not in the powers, what concern is it of theirs? How do they help just by being idle and taking a rest? What is the use, since this birth does not take place in the powers? A good question. Listen well to the explanation.

Every creature works toward some end. The end is always the first in intention but the last in execution. Thus too, God in all His works has a most blessed end in view, namely, Himself: to bring the soul and all her powers into that end — Himself. For this, all God's works are wrought, for this the Father bears His Son in the soul, so that all the powers of the soul shall come to this. He lies in wait for all that the soul contains, bidding all to this feast at His court. But the soul is scattered abroad among her powers and dissipated in the action of each: the power of sight in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, the power of tasting in the tongue — thus her ability to work inwardly is enfeebled, for a scattered power is imperfect. So, for

her inward work to be effective, she must call in all her powers and gather them together from the diversity of things to a single inward activity. St. Augustine says the soul is rather where she loves than where she gives life to the body. For example, there was once a pagan master[4] who was devoted to an art, that of mathematics, to which he had devoted all his powers. He was sitting by the embers, making calculations and practicing this art, when a man came along who drew a sword and, not knowing that it was the master, said, 'Quick, tell me your name or I'll kill you!' The master was too absorbed to see or hear the foe or to catch what he said: he was unable to utter a word, even to say, 'My name is so-and-so.' And so the enemy, having cried out several times and got no answer, cut off his head. And this was to acquire a mere natural science. How much more then should we withdraw from all things in order to concentrate all our powers on perceiving and knowing the one infinite, uncreated, eternal truth! To this end, then, assemble all your powers, all your senses, your entire mind and memory; direct them into the ground where your treasure lies buried. But if this is to happen, realize that you must drop all other works — you must come to an *unknowing,* if you would find it.

The question arises, Would it not be more valuable for each power to keep to its own task, none hindering the others in their work, nor God in His? Might there not be in me a manner of creaturely knowing that is not a hindrance, just as God knows all things without hindrance, and so too the blessed in heaven?[5] That is a good question. Note the explanation.

The blessed see God in a single image, and in that image, they discern all things. God too sees Himself thus, perceiving all things in Himself. He need not turn from one thing to another, as we do. Suppose in this life we always had a mirror before us, in which we saw all things at a glance and recognized them in a single image, then neither action nor knowledge would be any hindrance to us. But we have to turn from one thing to another, and so we can only attend to one thing at the expense of another. For the soul is so firmly attached to the powers that she has to flow with them wherever they flow, because in every task they perform the soul must be present and attentive, or they could not work at all. If she is dissipated by

attending to outward acts, this is bound to weaken her inward work. For at this birth God needs and must have a vacant free and unencumbered soul, containing nothing but Himself alone, and which looks to nothing and nobody but Him. As to this, Christ says, "Whoever loves anything but me, whoever loves father and mother or many other things is not worthy of me. I did not come upon earth to bring peace but a sword, to cut away all things, to part you from sister, brother, mother, child, and friend that in truth are your foes" (Matt. 10:34–36; cf. 19:28). For whatever is familiar to you is your foe. If your eye wanted to see all things, and your ear to hear all things and your heart to remember all things, then indeed your soul would be dissipated in all these things.

Accordingly a master says, 'To achieve an interior act, a man must collect all his powers as if into a corner of his soul where, hiding away from all images and forms, he can get to work.' Here, he must come to a forgetting and an unknowing. There must be a stillness and a silence for this Word to make itself heard. We cannot serve this Word better than in stillness and in silence: *there* we can hear it, and there too we will understand it aright — in the unknowing. To him who knows nothing it appears and reveals itself.

Another question arises. You might say, 'Sir, you place all our salvation in ignorance. That sounds like a lack. God made man to know, as the prophet says, "Lord, make them know!" (Tob. 13:4). Where there is ignorance there is a lack, something is missing, a man is brutish, an ape, a fool, and remains so long as he is ignorant.' Ah, but here we must come to a *transformed* knowledge, and this unknowing must not come from ignorance, but rather from *knowing* we must get to this unknowing.[6] Then we shall become knowing with divine knowing, and our unknowing will be ennobled and adorned with supernatural knowing. And through holding ourselves passive in this, we are more perfect than if we were active. That is why one master declares that the sense of hearing is nobler than that of sight, for we learn more wisdom by hearing than by seeing, and in it live the more wisely. We hear of a pagan master who lay dying. His disciples discussed in his presence some noble art, and, dying though he was, he lifted up his head to listen, saying, 'Oh let me learn this art now, that I may rejoice in it forever!' Hearing draws in more, but seeing

rather leads outward — the very act of seeing does this. Therefore in eternal life we shall rejoice far more in our power of hearing than in that of sight. For the act of hearing the eternal Word is within me, but the act of seeing goes forth from me: in hearing, I am passive, but in seeing I am active.

But our bliss lies not in our activity, but in being passive to God. For just as God is more excellent than creatures, by so much is God's work more excellent than mine. It was from His immeasurable love that God set our happiness in suffering,[7] for we undergo more than we act, and receive incomparably more than we give; and each gift that we receive prepares us to receive yet another gift, indeed a greater one, and every divine gift further increases our receptivity and the desire to receive something yet higher and greater. Therefore some teachers say that it is in *this* respect the soul is commensurate with God. For just as God is boundless in giving, so too the soul is boundless in receiving or conceiving. And just as God is omnipotent to act, so too the soul is no less profound to suffer; and thus she is transformed with God and in God.[8] God *must* act and the soul must suffer, He must know and love Himself in her; she must know with His knowledge and love with His love, and thus she is far more with what is His than with her own, and so too her bliss is more dependent on His action than on her own.

The pupils of St. Dionysius asked him why Timothy surpassed them all in perfection. Dionysius replied, 'Timothy is a God-suffering man. Whoever is expert at this could outstrip all men.'

In this way your unknowing is not a lack but your chief perfection, and your suffering your highest activity. And so in this way you must cast aside all your deeds and silence your faculties, if you really wish to experience this birth in you. If you would find the newborn king, you must outstrip and abandon all else that you might find. That we may outstrip and cast behind us all things unpleasing to the newborn king, may He help us who became a human child in order that we might become the children of God. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 1, note 9.
2. Cf. Sermon 1, notes 14 and 15.
3. Cf. Eccles. 1:16 (Q).
4. Archimedes, who is said to have been killed by a Roman soldier while making geometrical drawings in the dust in his own garden at Syracuse (212 B.C.E.).
5. I.e., those in heaven, not the 'saints,' as Miss Evans translates.
6. This is, as Quint points out, the same as the *Docta ignorantia* of Nicholas Cusanus (1401–64).
7. MHG *lîden* means both 'suffering' and 'passivity.'
8. *In gote* (dative), not, as Miss Evans translates, 'into God.'

SERMON THREE[1]

(Pf 3, Q 104)

IN HIS QUAE PATRIS MEI SUNT, OPORTET ME ESSE
(Luke 2:49)

"I must be about my Father's business." This text is most appropriate to what we have to say concerning the eternal birth which took place in time[2] and still happens daily in the innermost part of the soul, in her ground, remote from all adventitious events.[3] In order to become aware of this interior birth it is above all necessary for a man to be concerned with his Father's business.

What are the Father's attributes? Power is ascribed to Him more than to the other two Persons. And so, none assuredly can experience or approach this birth without a mighty effort. A man cannot attain to this birth except by withdrawing his senses from all things. And that requires a mighty effort to drive back the powers of the soul and inhibit their functioning. This must be done with force; without force it cannot be done.[4] As Christ said, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

A question arises about this birth of which we have spoken: Does it happen continuously, or at intervals, when a man applies himself to it and exerts himself with all his might to forget all things and be conscious in this alone? Now note the explanation. Man has an active intellect, a passive intellect, and a potential intellect.[5] The *active* intellect is ever ready to act, whether it be in God or in creatures, for it exerts itself rationally in creatures in the way of ordering the creatures, and bringing them back to their source, or in raising itself, to the honor and glory of God. All that is in its power and its domain, and hence its name *active.* But when God undertakes the work, the mind must remain *passive.* But potential intellect pays regard to both, to the activity of God *and* the passivity of the soul, so that this

may be achieved as far as possible. In the one case there is activity, where the mind does the work itself; in the other case there is passivity, when God undertakes the work, and then the mind should, nay, must, remain still and let God act. Now before this is begun by the mind and completed by God, the mind has a prevision of it, a potential knowledge that it can come to be thus. This is the meaning of 'potential intellect,' though often it is neglected and never comes to fruition. But when the mind strives with all its might and with real sincerity, then God takes charge of the mind and its work, and then the mind sees and experiences[6] God. But since this enduring and vision of God places an intolerable strain on the mind while in this body, God accordingly withdraws at times from the mind, and that is why he said, "A little while you shall see me, and again a little while you shall not see me" (cf. John 16:16).

When our Lord took his three disciples with him up the mountain and had shown them privately the illumination of his body which he had through union with the Godhead, and which we too shall have at the resurrection of the body, St. Peter at once, on seeing it, wished to remain there always. Indeed, when a man finds the good he cannot easily part from it insofar as it is good. Where this is recognized by knowledge, love must follow, and memory, and all the (powers of) the soul. And our Lord, well knowing this, is constrained to hide at times, for the soul is a simple form of the body, and wherever she turns, she turns as a whole. Were she always conscious of the good which is God, immediately and without interruption, she would never be able to leave it to influence the body.

Thus it befell Paul: if he had remained for a hundred years at the spot where he came to know the Good,[7] he would never have returned to the body; he would have forgotten it completely. And so, because that is not conducive to this life and alien to it, God in His mercy veils it when He will and reveals it when He will and when He knows, like a trustworthy physician, that it is most useful and helpful for you. This withdrawal is not yours, but His who does the work: He can do it or not as He will, well knowing when it avails you best. It is in His hands to reveal or conceal, according as He knows you can endure it. For God is not a destroyer of nature: rather He perfects it, and God does this ever more and more, the more you are fitted for it.

But you might say, 'Oh sir, if this requires a mind free of all images and all works (which lie in the powers by their very nature[8]), then how about those outward works we must do sometimes, works of charity which all take place without, such as teaching or comforting the needy? Should people be deprived of this? As our Lord's disciples were so much occupied with such things, as (according to St. Augustine) St. Paul was so burdened and preoccupied with people's cares as if he were their father — shall we then be deprived of this great good because we are engaged in works of charity?'

Now note the answer to such questions. The one thing is noblest, the other very profitable. Mary was praised for choosing the best; but Martha's life was of very great profit, for she served Christ and his disciples.[9] Master Thomas says the active life is better than the contemplative, insofar as in action one pours out for love that which one has gained in contemplation. It is actually the same thing, for we take only from the same ground of contemplation and make it fruitful in works, and thus the object of contemplation is achieved. Though there is motion, yet it is all one; it comes from one end, which is God, and returns to the same, as if I were to go from one end of this house to the other; that would indeed be motion, but only of one in the same. Thus too, in this activity, we remain in a state of contemplation in God. The one rests in the other, and perfects the other. For God's purpose in the union of contemplation is fruitfulness in works: for in contemplation you serve yourself alone, but in works of charity you serve the many.

To this Christ admonishes us by his whole life and those of all his saints, every one of whom he drove forth into the world to teach the multitude. St. Paul said to Timothy, "Beloved, preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Did he mean the outward word that beats the air? Surely not. He meant the inwardly born and yet hidden Word that lies secreted in the soul. That was what he bade him preach aloud, that it might be made known to and might nourish the (soul's) powers, so that a man might give himself out in all those aspects of external life in which his fellow men had need of it — and that all this may be found in *you* to accomplish to the best of your ability. It must be within you in thought, in intellect, and in will, and it must shine forth, too, in your deeds. As Christ said, "Let your light shine forth before men" (Matt. 5:16). He had in mind those who care only for

the contemplative life and neglect the practice of charity, which, they say, they have no further need for, having passed that stage. It was not these that Christ meant when he said, "The seed fell on good soil and yielded fruit a hundredfold" (Matt. 13:8). He meant *them* when he said, "The tree that bears no fruit shall be cut down" (Matt. 3:10, 7:19).

Now you might say, 'But sir, what of the silence you told us so much about? For *this* implies images galore. Every act must accord with its appropriate image, whether the act is internal or external, whether I am teaching one or comforting another, or arranging this or that, so what quiet can I get?[10] For if the mind sees and formulates, and the will wills, and memory holds it fast, are not all these images?'

Now observe. We spoke just now of an active intellect and a passive intellect. The active intellect abstracts images from outward things, stripping them of matter and of accidents, and introduces them to the passive intellect, begetting their mental image therein. And the passive intellect, made pregnant by the active in this way, cherishes and knows these things with the aid of the active intellect. Even then, the passive intellect cannot keep on knowing these things unless the active intellect illumines them afresh. Now observe: what the active intellect does for the natural man, that and far more God does for one with detachment: He *takes away* the active intellect from him and, installing Himself in its stead, He Himself undertakes all that the active intellect ought to be doing.

Indeed, when a man is quite unpreoccupied, and the active intellect within him is silent, then God *must* take up the work and must be the master workman who begets Himself in the passive intellect. See if it is not so. The active intellect cannot give what it has not got: and it cannot entertain two images together; it has first one and then the other. Though the air and light show many forms and color all at once, you can only observe them one after the other. So too does the active intellect, which is similar. But when God acts in place of the active intellect, He engenders many images together in one point. For if God prompts you to a good deed, at once all your powers proffer themselves for all good things: your whole mind at once tends to good in general. Whatever good you can do takes shape and presents itself to you together in a flash, concentrated in a single point. Surely, this demonstrates and proves that it is not the intellect's work, for it has

not the perfection or the resources for this: rather it is the work and the offspring of Him who has all images at once in Himself. As Paul says, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13); in Him I can do not merely this or that but all things in undivided unity. You must know, then, that the images of these acts are not yours. Neither are they from nature: they belong to the author of nature, in which He has implanted act and image. So do not lay claim to it, for it is His, not yours. Though conceived by you in time, it is begotten and given by God beyond time, in eternity beyond all images.

You might ask, 'Since my intellect is divested of its natural activity and no longer has any image or action of its own, where is its support? For it must always find lodgement somewhere: the powers always seek to fasten on something and act on it, whether it be memory, intellect or will.'

Now note the explanation of this. Intellect's object and lodgement is essence, not accident[11] but pure unmixed being in itself. When the intellect discerns true being it descends on it, comes to rest on it, pronouncing its intellectual word about the object it has seized on. But, so long as the intellect does not find true being and does not penetrate to the ground, so as to be able to say, 'this is this; it is such and not otherwise,' so long does it remain in a condition of questing and expectation; it does not settle down or rest, but labors on, seeking, expecting, and rejecting. And though it may perhaps spend a year or more investigating a natural truth, to see what it is, it still has to work long again to strip off what it is *not*. All this time it has nothing to go by and makes no pronouncement at all, as long as it has not penetrated to the ground of truth with full realization. Therefore, the intellect never rests in this life. However much God may reveal Himself in this life, yet it is still as nothing to what He really *is*. Though truth is there, in the ground, it is yet veiled and concealed from the intellect. All this while, the intellect has no support to rest on in the way of a changeless object. It still does not rest, but goes on expecting and preparing for something yet to become known, but so far hidden. Thus there is no way man can know what God *is*. But one thing he does know: what God is *not*. And this a man of intellect will reject. Meantime the intellect, finding no real object to support it, waits as matter awaits form. Just as matter will never rest until it is filled with all forms, so the intellect cannot rest except in the

essential truth that embraces all things. Only the essence will satisfy it, and this God withdraws from it step by step, in order to arouse its zeal and lure it on to seek and grasp the true, groundless good, so that it may be content with nothing but ever clamor for the highest good of all.

Now you might say, 'Oh sir, you said so much about how all our faculties should be quiet, and now you go setting up a great clamor of yearning in this quietness. That would be a great moaning and outcry for something we haven't got, and that would be the end of this peace and quiet. Whether it were desire or purpose or praise or thanksgiving, or whatever else the mind might beget or imagine — it would not be perfect peace or absolute stillness.'

Let me explain. When you have completely stripped yourself of your own self, and all things and every kind of attachment, and have transferred, made over, and abandoned yourself to God in utter faith and perfect love, then *whatever* is born in you or touches you, within or without, joyful or sorrowful, sour or sweet, that is no longer yours, it is altogether your God's to whom you have abandoned yourself. Tell me, whom does the spoken word belong to? To the speaker or the hearer? Though it falls to the hearer, it really belongs to the speaker who gave it birth. Here is an example. The sun casts its light into the air; the air receives the light and gives it to the earth, thus enabling us to distinguish different colors. Now, though the light is *formally* in the air, *essentially* it is in the sun: the light actually comes from the sun, where it originates, and not in the air. It is received by the air which passes it on to anything that is receptive to light. It is just the same with the soul. God bears the Word in the soul, and the soul conceives it and passes it on to her powers in varied guise: now as desire, now as good intent, now as charity, now as gratitude, or however it may affect you. It is all His, and not yours at all. What God thus does, you must accept all that as His and not as your own, just as it is written, 'The Holy Ghost makes intercession with countless mighty sighs' (Rom. 8:26). He prays within us, not we ourselves. St. Paul says, "No man can say 'Lord Jesus Christ' but in the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3).

This above all else is needful: you must lay claim to nothing! Let go of yourself and let God act with you and in you as He will. This work is His, this Word is His, this birth is His, in fact every single

thing that you are. For you have abandoned self and have gone out of your (soul's) powers and their activities, and your personal nature. Therefore God must enter into your being and powers, because you have bereft yourself of all possessions, and become as a desert, as it is written, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Matt. 3:3). Let this eternal voice cry out in you as it listeth, and be as a desert in respect of yourself and all things.

Now you might say, 'But sir, what must a man do to be void as a desert in respect of himself and all things? Should a man wait all the time for God to work and do nothing himself, or should he do something in the meantime, like praying or reading or some other good occupation such as listening to sermons or studying scripture? Since such a man is not supposed to take anything in from without, but only from within, from his God, does he not miss something by not doing these things?

Now listen. All outward works were established and ordained to direct the outer man to God and to train him to spiritual living and good deeds, that he might not stray into ineptitudes: to act as a curb on his inclination to escape from self to things outside; so that when God would work in him He might find him ready and not have to draw him back from things alien and gross. For the greater the delight in outward things the harder it is to leave them; the stronger the love the sharper the pain when it comes to parting.

See then: All works and pious practices — praying, reading, singing, vigils, fasting, penance, or whatever discipline it may be — these were invented to catch a man and restrain him from things alien and ungodly. Thus, when a man realizes that God's spirit is not working in him and that the inner man is forsaken by God, it is very important for the outer man to practice these virtues, and especially such as are most feasible, useful, and necessary for him; not however from selfish attachment, but so that, respect for truth preserving him from being attracted and led astray by what is gross, he may stay close to God, so that God may find him near at hand when He chooses to return and act in his soul, without having to seek far afield. But if a man knows himself to be well trained in true inwardness, then let him boldly drop all outward disciplines, even those he is bound to and from which neither pope nor bishop can release him. From the vows a man has made to God none can release him, but they can be

turned into something else: for every vow is a contract with God. But if a man has taken solemn vows of such things as prayer, fasting, or pilgrimage, if he then enters some order, he is released from them, for in the order he is vowed to goodness as a whole, and to God Himself.

And so I say the same here: Whatever a man's vows to manifold things, by entering into true inwardness he is released from them. As long as this inwardness lasts, be it a week, a month, or a year, none of this time is lost by the monk or nun, for God, who has captured and imprisoned them, must answer for it. On returning to himself, a man should perform his vows for the time present; but as for what you may think you have neglected in the preceding time, you need not bother to make it up, for God Himself will make it up for the period during which He caused you to be idle. You should not wish to make it up by any act of creatures, for the least act of God outweighs all the works of creatures.

This is said to learned and illumined people, who have been taught and illumined by God and scripture. But how is it with a simple layman who knows and understands nothing but corporal discipline, and who has taken on some vow, whether of prayer or the like? To him I say this: If he finds it hampering and that he draws nearer to God without it, let him boldly give it up. For any work that brings you nearer to God and God's embrace is the best. That is what Paul meant when he said, "When wholeness comes, the partial vanishes" (1 Cor. 13:10). There is a big difference between a vow taken before a priest and vows taken in simplicity to God Himself. If a man vows anything to God it is with the laudable intention of binding himself thus to God, which at the time a man thinks to be for the best. But if he learns of a better way, then, knowing by experience that it is better, let him be quite free of the first, and content.

This is easy to prove, for one should consider the fruits and the inward truth rather than the outward act. As Paul says, "The letter [that is, all outward practices] kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6), that is, an inward realization of truth. You should take good note of this and follow above all whatever befits you best for this. Your spirit should be elevated, not downcast, but rather ardent, and yet in a detached, quiet stillness. No need to tell God what you need or desire: He already knows. Christ said to his disciples, "When you

pray, do not use many words in your prayers like the Pharisees, for they think to be heard with much speaking" (Matt. 6:7).

That we may here so seek this peace and inward silence, that the eternal Word may be spoken within us and understood, and that we may become one therewith, may the Father help us, and that Word, and the Spirit of both. Amen.

Notes

1. In the critical edition (DW 4) this sermon is Q104 and thus the last of the sermon treatise on the Birth of the Word.
2. The historical birth of Jesus as distinct from the 'eternal birth.'
3. *zuoval,* i.e., 'accidentals' in the scholastic sense.
4. This stress on force (*gewalt*) seems rather un-Eckhartian.
5. Eckhart as a Dominican places the intellect above the will, as opposed to the Franciscans. He had debated this question in Paris with the Franciscan General Gonsalvus.
6. *lîdet,* lit. 'suffers': cf. Sermon 2, note 7.
7. On the road to Damascus.
8. I.e., the eye cannot help seeing, and so on. The word Walshe translates as 'mind' is MHG *gemüete,* which can also mean 'heart' and 'essential inclination.'
9. In the commentary to St. John's Gospel (*LW* III, 112), Eckhart places Mary above Martha, according to tradition (Clark). The contradiction is more apparent than real.
10. Eckhart the busy administrator must have been acutely aware of this problem.
11. See note 3.

SERMON FOUR

(Pf 4, Q 103, QT 59)

ET CUM FACTUS ESSET JESUS ANNORUM DUODECIM ETC.
(Luke 2:42)

We read in the Gospel that when our Lord was twelve years old he went with Joseph and Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem, and when they left, Jesus stayed behind in the Temple without their knowing; when they reached home and missed him, they sought him among acquaintances, among their kindred and amidst the throng, and they could not find him. They had lost him in the crowd. And so they had to go back to where they had come from. And when they got back to their starting point, the Temple, they found him.

And so in truth, if you would find this noble birth,[1] you must leave the crowd and return to the source and ground whence you came. All the powers of the soul, and all their works — these are the crowd. Memory, understanding, and will, they all diversify you, and therefore you must leave them all: sense perceptions, imagination, or whatever it may be that in which you find or seek to find yourself. After that, you *may* find this birth but not otherwise — believe me! He was never yet found among friends, nor among kindred or acquaintances: there, rather, one loses him altogether. Accordingly the question arises, whether a man can find this birth in any things which, though divine, are yet brought in from without through the senses, such as any ideas about God as being good, wise, compassionate, or anything the intellect can conceive in itself that is in fact divine — whether a man can find this birth in all these. In fact, he cannot. For although all this is good and divine, it is all brought in from without through the senses. But all must well up from within, out of God, if this birth is to shine forth truly and clearly, and all your activity must cease, and all your powers must serve His ends,

not your own. If this work is to be done, God alone must do it, and you must just suffer it to be. Where you truly go out from *your* will and *your* knowledge, God with His knowledge surely and willingly goes in and shines there clearly. Where God will thus know Himself, there *your* knowledge cannot subsist and is of no avail. Do not imagine that your reason can grow to the knowledge of God. If God is to shine divinely in you, your natural light cannot help toward this end. Instead, it must become pure nothing and go out of itself altogether, and *then* God can shine in with His light, and He will bring back in with Him all that you forsook and a thousand times more, together with a new form to contain it all. Of this we have a parable in the Gospel. When our Lord had spoken in such friendly fashion to the Gentile woman at the well, she left her pitcher and ran to the town announcing to the people that the true Messiah had come. The people, not believing her words, went out with her and saw for themselves. *Then* they said to her, "Now we believe, not because of your words: we believe rather because we have seen him ourselves" (John 4:42). So in truth, no creaturely skill, nor your own wisdom nor all your knowledge can enable you to know God divinely. For you to know God in God's way, your knowing must become a pure unknowing, and a forgetting of yourself and all creatures.

Now you might say, 'Well sir, what use *is* my intellect then, if it is supposed to be empty and functionless? Is *that* the best thing for me to do — to raise my mind to an unknowing knowledge that can't really exist? For if I knew anything at all it would not be ignorance, and I should not be empty and bare. Am I supposed to be in total darkness?'

Certainly. You cannot do better than to place yourself in darkness and in unknowing.

'Oh sir, must everything go then, and is there no turning back?'

No indeed, by rights there is no returning.

'But what *is* this darkness? What do you call it? What is its name?'

The only name it has is 'potential receptivity,' which certainly does not lack being nor is it deficient, but it is the *potential* of receptivity in which you will be perfected. That is why there is no turning back from it. But if you do turn back, that is not on account of any truth, but because of something else — the senses, the world, or the devil. And if you give way to the impulse to turn back, you are bound

to lapse into sin, and you may backslide so far as to fall eternally. Therefore there is no turning back, but only a pressing forward, so as to attain and achieve this possibility. It never rests until it is filled with all being. Just as matter never rests till it is filled with every possible form, so too intellect never rests till it is filled to its capacity.

On this point a pagan master says, 'Nature has nothing swifter than the heavens, for they surpass all else in swiftness.' Yet surely the mind of man outstrips them by its speed! If only it were to retain its potentiality intact, remaining undefiled and unrent by base and gross things, it would outstrip the highest heaven, never ceasing till it reached the summit, there to be fed and cherished by the Greatest Good.

As for what it profits you to pursue this possibility, to keep yourself empty and bare, just following and tracking this darkness and unknowing without turning back — it contains the chance to gain Him who is all things. And the more barren you are of self and unwitting of all things, the nearer you are to Him. Of this barrenness it is said in Jeremiah, "I will lead my beloved into the wilderness and will speak to her in her heart."[2] The true word of eternity is spoken only in solitude, where a man is a desert and alien to himself and multiplicity. For this desolate self-estrangement the prophet longed, saying, "Who will give me the wings of a dove that I may fly away and be at rest?" (Ps. 55:6). Where does one find peace and rest? There, truly, where there is rejection, desolation, and estrangement from all creatures. Therefore David says, "I would rather be rejected and spurned in the house of my God than dwell with great honor and wealth in the tavern of sinners" (Ps. 84:10).

Now you might say, 'Oh sir, is it really always necessary to be barren and estranged from everything, outward and inward: the powers and their work, must that all go? It is a grievous matter for God to leave a man without support, as the prophet says, "Woe is me that my exile is prolonged" (Ps. 120:5), if God prolongs my exile here, without either enlightening or encouraging me or working within me, as your teaching implies. If a man is in such a state of pure nothingness, is it not better to do something to beguile the gloom and desolation, such as praying or listening to sermons or doing something else that is virtuous, so as to help himself?'

No, be sure of this. Absolute stillness for as long as possible is best of all for you. You cannot exchange this state for any other without harm. That is certain. You would like to partly prepare yourself and partly let God prepare you, but this cannot be. You cannot think or desire to prepare yourself more quickly than God can move in to prepare you. But even if it were shared, so that you did the preparing and God did the working or the infusion — which is impossible — then you should know that God *must* act and pour Himself into you the moment He finds you ready. Do not imagine that God is like a human carpenter, who works or not as he likes, who can do or leave undone as he wishes. It is different with God: as and when God finds you ready, He has to act, to overflow into you, just as when the air is clear and pure the sun has to burst forth and cannot refrain. It would surely be a grave defect in God if He performed no great works in you and did not pour great goodness into you whenever He found you thus empty and bare.

In the same sense the masters write that in the very instant the material substance of the child is ready in the mother's womb, God at once pours into the body its living spirit which is the soul, the body's form. It is one instant, the being ready and the pouring in. When nature reaches her highest point, God gives grace: the very instant the spirit is ready, God enters without hesitation or delay. In the Book of Secrets it says that our Lord declared to mankind, "I stand at the door knocking and waiting; whoever lets me in, with him I will sup" (Rev. 3:20). You need not seek Him here or there, He is no further than the door of your heart; there He stands patiently awaiting whoever is ready to open up and let Him in. No need to call to Him from afar: He can hardly wait for you to open up. He longs for you a thousand times more than you long for Him: the opening and the entering are a single act.

Now you might say, 'How can that be? I can't feel Him.' — Pay attention. Your being aware of Him is not in your power but in His. When it suits Him He shows Himself, and He can hide when He wishes. This is what Christ meant when he said to Nicodemus, "The spirit breathes where it will: you hear its voice but do not know where it comes from, or where it is going" (John 3:8). In so speaking he contradicted himself: "You hear, yet know not." By hearing we come to know. Christ meant that by hearing it is imbibed or absorbed, as

if to say, you receive it, but unawares. You should know, God cannot leave anything void or unfilled, God and nature cannot endure that anything should be empty or void. And so, even if you think you can't feel Him and are wholly empty of Him, that is not the case. For if there were anything empty under heaven, whatever it might be, great or small, the heavens would either draw it up to themselves or else, bending down, would have to fill it with themselves. God, the Lord of nature, does not allow that anything be empty or void. Therefore, stand still and do not waver from your emptiness; for at this time you can turn away, never to turn back again.

Now you might say, 'Well sir, since you are always assuming that some day this birth will occur in me, that the Son will be born in me — now, can I have any sign by which to recognize that this *has* taken place?'

Yes indeed! There are three certain signs. I will tell you just one of them. I am often asked if a man can reach the point where he is no longer hindered by time, multiplicity, or matter. Assuredly! Once this birth has really occurred, no creatures can hinder you; instead, they will all direct you to God and this birth. Take lightning as an analogy. Whatever it strikes, whether tree, beast, or man, it turns at once toward itself. A man with his back toward it is instantly turned round to face it. If a tree had a thousand leaves, they would all turn right side up toward the stroke. So it is with all in whom this birth occurs, they are promptly turned toward this birth with all they possess, be it never so earthy. In fact, what used to be a hindrance now helps you most. Your face is so fully turned toward this birth that, no matter what you see or hear, you can get nothing but this birth from all things. All things become simply God to you, for in all things you notice only God, just as a man who stares long at the sun sees the sun in whatever he afterward looks at. If *this* is lacking, this looking for and seeking God in all and sundry, then you lack this birth.

Now you might ask, 'Ought anyone so placed to practice penance? Does he lose anything by dropping penitential exercises?'

Pay attention. Penitential exercises, among other things, were instituted for a particular purpose: whether it be fasting, watching, praying, kneeling, being disciplined,[3] wearing hair shirts, lying hard, or whatever it may be, the reason for all that is because body and

flesh are always opposed to spirit. The body is often too strong for the spirit, and there is a real fight between them, an unceasing struggle. Here in the world the body is bold and strong, for it is at home, the world helps it, the earth is its fatherland, it is helped by all its kin: food, drink, soft living — all is opposed to spirit. The spirit is an alien here, but in heaven are its kin, its whole race: *there* it has good friends, if it strives for there and makes its home there. And so, in order to succor the spirit in this alien realm, and to impede the flesh somewhat in this strife lest it should conquer the spirit, we put on it the bridle of penitential practices, thus curbing it so that the spirit can resist it. All this is done to bring it under control; but if you would capture and curb it in a thousand times better fashion, then put on it the bridle of love! With love you overcome it most surely, with love you load it most heavily. Therefore God lies in wait for us with nothing so much as with love. For love resembles the fisherman's hook. The fisherman cannot get the fish till it is caught on the hook. Once it takes the hook, he is sure of the fish; twist and turn as it may, this way or that, he is assured of his catch. And so I say of love: he who is caught by it has the strongest of bonds, and yet a pleasant burden. He who has taken up this sweet burden fares further and makes more progress than by all the harsh practices any men use. And, too, he can cheerfully bear and endure all that befalls him, whatever God inflicts on him, and can also cheerfully forgive whatever evil is done to him. Nothing brings you closer to God or makes God so much your own as the sweet bond of love. A man who has found this way need seek no other. He who hangs on this hook is caught so fast that foot and hand, mouth, eyes, and heart, and all that is man's, belongs only to God.

Therefore you cannot better prevail over this foe[4] and prevent him from harming you, than by love. Therefore it is written, "Love is as strong as death and as hard as hell" (Song 8:6). Death separates soul from body, but love separates all things from the soul — it will not tolerate what is not God or God's. Whoever is caught in this net, whoever walks in this way, whatever he does is all one: whether he does anything or nothing is of no account. And yet the least action or practice of such a man is more profitable and fruitful to himself and all men, and more pleasing to God, than all the works of others who, though free from mortal sin, are inferior to him in love. His rest is

more useful than another's labor. Therefore, just watch for this hook, so as to be blessedly caught: for the more you are caught, the more you are free.

That we may be thus caught and freed, may He help us who is love itself. Amen.

Notes

1. The transition is a little abrupt: we are back with Eckhart's constant theme of the birth of the Word in the soul. cf. Sermon 1, note 4.
2. Actually Hos. 2:14.
3. I.e., scourged.
4. The body.

SERMON FIVE

(Pf 5, Q 65)

DEUS CHARITAS EST ET QUI MANET IN CHARITATE
IN DEO MANET ET DEUS IN EO
(1 John 4:16)

"God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Let us take the first phrase, "God is love." That is so, because whatever can love and is capable of loving, that He pursues with His love, to love Him. "God is love," secondly, because everything God ever created and that is capable of loving, that pursues *Him* by its love to love *it,* whether He will or no. Thirdly, "God is love" because with His love He drives everything that is capable of loving out of all plurality. As far as God is lovable in plurality, the love that He is drives this out of all plurality into His own oneness. "God is love," fourthly, because with His love He gives all creatures their being and life, and maintains them with His love.

Should anyone ask what God is, this is what I should now say, that God is love, and in fact so loveable that all creatures seek to love His loveableness, whether they know it or not, or whether they wish to or not. So much is God love, and so loveable, that everything that *can* love *must* love Him, whether it will or no. There is no creature so worthless that it could love anything evil; for whatever one loves must either seem good or be good. Now if we gather up all the good that all creatures can do — that is pure badness compared with God. St. Augustine says, 'Love what you can gain with love, and keep that which can satisfy your soul.'

"God is love." Now, my children, I beg you to mark my words. God loves my soul so much that His life and being depend on His loving me, whether He would or no. To stop God loving my soul would be to deprive Him of His Godhead; for God is as truly love

as He is truth; and as truly as He is goodness, He is love. That is the bare truth, as God lives. There were certain masters[1] who declared that the love that is in us is the Holy Ghost, but that is not true. The bodily food we take is changed into us, but the spiritual food we receive changes us into itself; therefore divine love is not taken into us, for that would make two things. But divine love takes us into itself, and we are one with it. The paint on the wall[2] is maintained by the wall; thus all creatures are maintained in existence by love, which is God. If you took the paint from the wall, it would lose its existence: so all things would lose their existence if deprived of love, which is God.

"God is love and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God dwells in him."

There is a difference between spiritual things and bodily things. Every spiritual thing can dwell in another; but nothing bodily can exist in another. There may be water in a tub, and the tub surrounds it, but where the wood is, there is no water. In this sense no material thing dwells in another, but every spiritual thing does dwell in another. Every single angel is in the next with all his joy, with all his happiness and all his beatitude as perfectly as in himself; and every angel with all his joy and all his beatitude is in me, and so is God Himself with all His beatitude, though I know it not. Take the lowest angel in his pure nature: the smallest splinter or spark that ever fell from him would suffice to light up the whole world with bliss and joy. Just see how splendid he is in himself! Now I have sometimes said further that the angels are beyond all number and quantity. But now I will leave aside love and come to knowledge: if only we knew them,[3] it would be easy to abandon a whole world. Whatever God ever made or shall yet make — if God were to give all that entire to my soul and God with it, and if so much as a hair's breadth remained behind, it would not satisfy my soul; I should not be happy. If I am happy, then all things are in me, and God. Where I am, there God is; and then I am in God, and where God is, there I am.

"He who dwells in love dwells in God, and God dwells in him." If then I am in God, then where God is, I am and where I am, there God is, unless the scriptures lie. Where I am, there God is: that is the bare truth, and is as truly true as that God is God. "Faithful servant, I will set you over all my goods" (Matt. 25:21). That is to

say, inasmuch as God is good in all creatures, so, in accordance with their manifoldness I will "set you over all my goods." Secondly, "I will set you over all my goods" means, whence all creatures derive their blessedness, in the pure unity that is God Himself, whence He draws His own felicity, that is to say, inasmuch as God is good, He will "set us over all His goods." Thirdly, He will set us over all His goods, that is to say, over everything that He is *called,* over everything one can put into words and over everything that one can understand. *Thus* He will set us over all His goods.

"Father, I pray Thee to make them one, as I and Thou are one" (John 17:21). Where two are to become one, one of them must lose its being. So it is: and if God and your soul are to become one, your soul must lose her being and her life. As far as anything remained, they would indeed be *united,* but for them to become *one,* the one must lose its identity and the other must keep its identity: then they are one. Now the Holy Ghost says, "let them be one as we are one."[4] "I pray Thee, make them *one* in us."

'I pray Thee.' When I pray for aught, my prayer goes for naught; when I pray for naught, I pray as I ought.[5] When I am united with That wherein all things are existent whether past, present or future, they are all equally near and equally one; they are all in God and all in *me.* Then there is no need to think of Henry or Conrad.[6] If one prays for aught but God alone, that can be called idolatry or unrighteousness. They pray aright who "pray in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). If I pray for someone, for Henry or Conrad, I pray at my weakest. When I pray for nobody and for nothing, then I am praying most truly, for in God is neither Henry nor Conrad. If we pray to God for aught else but God, that is wrong and faithless and a kind of imperfection, for it is to set up something beside God. As I said recently, that is wanting to make a nothing of God, and to make God out of nothing.[7] "God is love, and he who dwells in love is in God, and God is in him."

May we all attain this love of which I have spoken. So help us our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Notes

1. E.g., Peter Lombard (Q).
2. Miss Evans translates 'the color from the cloth.' This is a mistranslation, though the more intimate penetration of cloth by the dye would seem a better image. In another sermon (Sermon 77), Eckhart in fact uses both images.
3. The angels.
4. I.e., as the three Persons of the Trinity are one — a point Eckhart frequently stresses.
5. I have followed Miss Evans's nice play on words here: though not in the original, it hits the sense most happily.
6. Or Tom, Dick and Harry. In modern German 'Hinz und Kunz.'
7. I.e., to make God out of creatures (Q).

SERMON SIX

(Pf 6, Q 1, QT 1)

INTRAVIT JESUS IN TEMPLUM DEL ET EJICIEBAT
OMNES VENDENTES ET EMENTES
(Matthew 21:12)

We read in the holy Gospel that our Lord went into the Temple and cast out those that bought and sold, and said to them that sold doves and the like, "Take these things hence! Take these things away!" Why did Jesus cast out those that bought and sold and bid those that sold doves take them hence? His intention was none other than to have the Temple cleared, just as if he had said, I have a right to this temple and I want it to myself to be lord therein. What is the meaning of this? This temple, in which God would rule with authority, according to His will, is man's soul, which He has made exactly like Himself, just as we read that the Lord said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). And this He did. So like Himself has God made man's soul that nothing else in heaven or on earth, of all the splendid creatures that God has so joyously created, resembles God so much as the human soul. For this reason God wants this temple cleared, that He may be there all alone. This is because this temple is so agreeable to Him, because it is so like Him and He is so comfortable in this temple when He is alone there.

Now then, consider, who were they who bought and sold there, and who are they still? Take proper note: I will speak now in this sermon of none but *good* people. Yet even so, I will now point out who the merchants were — and still are — that thus bought and sold, whom our Lord struck and cast out. He still does so to those who buy and sell in this temple: he would not leave a single one of them therein. See, those are all merchants who, while avoiding mortal sin and wishing to be virtuous, do good works to the glory of God, such

as fasts, vigils, prayers, and the rest, all kinds of good works, but they do them in order that our Lord may give them something in return, or that God may do something they wish for — all these are merchants. That is plain to see, for they want to give one thing in exchange for another, and so to barter with our Lord. But they are mistaken in the bargain, for if they gave all that they have and have the power to do, for God's sake, and exhausted themselves purely for God's sake, God would not have to give them anything or do anything for them, unless He did it freely and for nothing. For what they are, they are from God, and what they have, they get from God and not from themselves. And so God is in no way bound to requite them for their acts or gifts, unless He freely does so of His grace, and not for what they do or give; for they give not of their own, nor do they act of themselves; as Christ himself says, "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). They are very foolish folk who would bargain thus with our Lord; they know little or nothing of the truth. That is why God cast them out of the Temple and drove them away. Light and darkness cannot exist together. God is the truth, He is the light in Himself. When God enters the Temple He drives out ignorance, which is darkness, and reveals Himself in light and in truth. The merchants must go when truth is revealed, for truth needs no merchandising. God seeks not His own: He is perfectly free in His acts, which He does out of true love. So does that man who is at one with God: he is perfectly free in all his deeds, he does them for love, without 'why?'[1] — solely to glorify God and not seeking his own therein, and God works in him.

I say further: as long as a man, in all his doings, desires anything at all that God can or will give, still he ranks with these merchants. If you would be free of any taint of trading, so that God may let you enter this temple, then you must do all that you can in all your works, solely to God's glory, and be as free of it as Naught is free, which is neither here nor there.[2] You should ask nothing whatever in return. Whenever you act thus, your works are spiritual and godly, and the merchants are driven right out of the temple, and God is in there alone, for one is thinking only of God. See, that is how your temple is cleared of merchants! The man who considers neither himself nor anything else but God alone and God's glory, he is truly free from all

taint of commerce in his deeds, and seeks naught of his own just as God is entirely free in all His works and seeks not His own.

I have also told how our Lord said to those that sold doves, "Take this away! Take this hence!" He did not drive these people out or rebuke them harshly, but said quite mildly, "take this away!" as though to say it is not wrong, but it is a hindrance to the pure truth. These are all good people; they work purely for God's sake, not for themselves, but they work with attachment,[3] according to time and tide,[4] before and after. These activities hinder them from attaining the highest truth, from being absolutely free and unhindered as our Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely free and unhindered, and conceives himself ever anew without pause and out of time from his heavenly Father, and in that same Now is perpetually born back with praise and thanksgiving, perfect, into the Father's majesty with an equal glory. Thus, to be receptive to the highest truth, and to live therein, a man must be without before and after, untrammeled by all his acts or by any images he ever perceived, empty and free, receiving the divine gift in the eternal Now, and bearing it back unhindered in the light of the same with praise and thanksgiving in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the 'doves' would be gone, that is the hindrance and the attachment to works, good in themselves, in which a man seeks anything of his own. Therefore our Lord said kindly, "Take this hence, take this away!" as if to say, 'It is good, yet it stands in the way.'

When the temple is thus free of obstructions (that is attachment and ignorance), then it glistens with beauty, shining out bright and fair above the whole of God's creation, and through all God's creation, so that none can equal its brilliance but the uncreated God alone. In very truth, there is none like this temple but the uncreated God Himself. Nothing below the angels is the equal of this temple. The very highest angels are like this temple of the noble soul in many ways, but not in all. Their partial likeness to the soul lies in knowledge and in love. But there is a limit set them which they cannot pass. The soul can go further. If a soul, that of a man now living in time, were equal to the highest angel—still that man would have the potential freedom to soar infinitely far above that angel, ever anew, in every Now without number, and that means without mode: above the angelic mode and every created intelligence. God alone is free and uncreated, and thus He alone is like the soul in freedom, though not

in uncreatedness, for she is created. And when she emerges into the unmixed light, she falls into her Nothingness[5] and in that Nothingness so far from the created Something, that of her own power she cannot return to her created Something. God with His uncreatedness upholds[6] her Nothingness and preserves her in His Something. The soul has dared to become nothing and so cannot of herself return to herself, for she has departed so far from herself before God comes to the rescue. That must be so, for, as I said, Jesus went into the Temple and cast out those who were buying and selling, and said to the others, "Take this hence!"

See, now I have come to the text: "Jesus went in and began saying, 'Take this hence.' " Observe that there was no one there but Jesus when he began to speak in the Temple. Be sure of this: if anyone else would speak in the temple (which is the soul) but Jesus, Jesus is silent, as if he were not at home — and he *is* not at home in the soul, for she has strange guests to talk to. But if Jesus is to speak in the soul, she must be all alone, and she has to be quiet herself to hear what he says. Well then, in he comes and starts speaking. What does the Lord Jesus say? He says what he *is*.[7] What is he, then? He is a Word[8] of the Father. In this same Word the Father speaks Himself, all the divine nature and all that God is, just as He knows it, and He knows it as it *is*. And, being perfect in knowledge and power, so too He is perfect in speech. In speaking the Word, He utters the Word and all things in another Person to whom He gives the same nature that He has himself. And he utters all rational spirits in that Word as equal to that Word according to their image as it dwells within (Him). Yet each image as it radiates forth, existing by itself, is not the same in all respects as the Word. Rather, they have received the power to attain to likeness by the grace of the same Word;[9] and this Word as it is in itself was spoken by the Father — the Word, and all that is in that Word.

Since this is spoken by the Father, then what is Jesus saying in the soul? As I have said, the Father speaks the Word; He speaks in this Word and not otherwise, and Jesus speaks in the soul. His manner of speaking is to reveal himself and what the Father said in him, according to the manner in which the spirit is able to receive it. He reveals the Father's authority in the spirit in an equal, immeasurable power. Receiving this power in the Son and through the Son, the

spirit waxes mighty in everything it undertakes, so that it becomes equal and mighty in all virtues and in perfect purity, so that neither joy nor sorrow, nor anything God has created in time, can destroy that man, but he stands mightily there as if with divine power, in face of which all things are puny and futile.

Secondly, Jesus reveals himself in the soul in infinite wisdom, which is himself; in that Wisdom the Father knows Himself with all His paternal authority, and that same Word, which is Wisdom itself, and all that is therein, just as it is One. When this Wisdom is united with the soul, all doubt, all error, and all darkness are entirely removed; she is set in a bright pure light which is God Himself, as the prophet says, "Lord, in Thy light shall we know the light" (Ps. 36:9). Then God is known by God in the soul; with this Wisdom she knows herself and all things, and this same Wisdom knows her with itself; and with the same Wisdom she knows the power of the Father in fruitful travail, and essential self-identity in simple unity void of all distinctions.

Jesus reveals himself, too, in infinite sweetness and richness, welling up and overflowing and pouring in from the power of the Holy Ghost, with superabundant richness and sweetness into all receptive hearts. When Jesus reveals himself with this richness and this sweetness, and is united with the soul; the soul flows with this richness and this sweetness into herself and beyond all things, by grace and with power, without means[10] back into her primal source. Then the outer man will be obedient to his inner man until death, and will be at all times at peace in the service of God forever.

And that Jesus may come into us and clear out and cast away all hindrances of body and soul and make us one, as he is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, that we may become and remain eternally one with Him, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Following Pfeiffer's text. Cf. in a Latin sermon (*LW* IV, note 21): 'Deus et per consequens homo divinus non agit propter cur aut quare' (God, and consequently the divine man, does not act on account of why or wherefore). See Sermon 43, and cf. Ueda, p. 155.

2. This is the more difficult (and therefore probably authentic) reading adopted by Quint (*als daz niht ledic ist, daz noch hie noch dât enist*). Miss Evans, following Pfeiffer, has 'as though thou wert not.' See note 5.

3. Eckhart's word is *eigenschaft,* which, as Quint (QT 470) notes, is difficult to render, though perhaps more so into modern German than into English. Literally something like 'own-ness,' it is not apparently used by Eckhart in the modern sense of 'quality, characteristic,' but rather in that of 'possessiveness.' The idea is, I think, that of *appropriating* what is not really one's own.

4. Lit. 'time and number' (*mit zît und mit zal*). I have adopted Clark's rendering, using an equivalent phrase that keeps the alliteration.

5. Middle High German *niht* (pronounced like modern German *nicht*)-'nothing,' intensified *nihtes niht.* The positive form *iht*='something.' The soul both 'is' and 'is not.' Quint explains that 'Nothing' here is not absolute nullity, but 'not being the soul,' i.e., the negation of existence *as soul.*

6. *understât*-Latin *substat:* in scholastic terms, 'gives *substance* to' (Q).

7. Clark renders, 'He says that He is,' and refers to Exodus 3:14. This is grammatically possible, but is less likely in the context. I follow Evans and Quint.

8. This is of course the *Logos* (John 1:1), i.e., the Son in the Trinity.

9. The *Logos* or Word is of one nature with the Father. Insofar as the 'images' (or Platonic ideas) of all rational beings are in God, they are one with the Word. In being 'radiated forth' — in the Creation — they are differentiated, but by grace they may regain the likeness with the Word (Q).

10. *âne mitel* (modern German *ohne Mittel*)='im-mediately,' with no mediation.

SERMON SEVEN

(Pf 7, Q 76, QT 35)

VIDETE QUALEM CHARITATEM DEDIT NOBIS PATER,
UT FILII DEI NOMINEMUR ET SIMUS
(1 John 3:1)

You must know that this is in reality one and the same thing — to know God and to be known by God, to see God and to be seen by God. In knowing and seeing God we know and see that He makes us know and see. And just as the luminous air is not different from the fact of illuminating, for it illumines because it is luminous, so do we know by being known, and because He makes us know. Therefore Christ said, "Again you will see me" (John 16:22). That is to say, by making you see, you know me; and then follows, "Your heart will rejoice," that is in the vision and knowledge of me, and "no one shall rob you of your joy" (John 16:22).

St. John says, "See how great is the love that the Father has shown us, that we are called and are the children of God" (1 John 3:1). He says not only "we are called" but "we *are*." So I say that just as a man cannot be wise without wisdom, so he cannot be a son without the filial nature of God's Son, without having the same being as the Son of God has — just as being wise cannot be without wisdom. And so, if you *are* the Son of God, you can only be so by having the same being of God that the Son has. But this is "now hidden from us"; and after that it is written, "Beloved, we are the sons of God." And what do we know? — That is what he adds, "and we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2), that is, the same as he is: the same being, experiencing and understanding — everything that he is, when we see him as God. So I say God could not make me the son of God if I had not the nature of God's Son, any more than God could make me wise if I had no wisdom. *How* are we God's sons? We do not know yet: "It

does not yet appear" to us; all we know is that he says we shall be like Him. There are certain things that hide this knowledge in our souls and conceal it from us.

The soul has something in her, a spark of intellect, that never dies; and in this spark, as at the apex of the mind we place the 'image' of the soul. But there is also in our souls a knowing directed toward externals, the sensible and rational perception which operates in images and words to obscure this from us. How then are we God's sons? By sharing one nature with Him. But to have any realization of thus being God's Son, we need to distinguish between the outward and the inward understanding. The inward understanding is that which is based intellectually in the nature of our soul. Yet it is not the soul's essence but is, rather, rooted there and is something of the life of the soul. In saying the understanding is the life of the soul we mean her *intellectual* life, and that is the life in which man is born as God's son and to eternal life. This understanding is timeless, without place — without Here and Now. In this life all things are one and all things are common: all things are all in all and all in one.

I will give you an example. In the body, all members are united and one, such that eye belongs to foot and foot to eye. If the foot could speak, it would say that the eye which is in the head was more its own than if it were in the foot, and the eye would say the same in reverse. And so I think that all the grace which is in Mary is more, and more truly an angel's and more in *him* — that which is in *Mary!* — than if it were in him or in the saints. For whatever Mary has, a saint has: the grace in Mary is more his, and he enjoys it more, than if it were in him.

But this interpretation is too gross and carnal, for it depends on bodily imagery. So I will give you another sense, which is more subtle and spiritual. I say that in the heavenly realm all is in all, and all is one, and all ours. The grace of our Lady exists in me (if I am there), not as welling up and flowing out of Mary, but rather as in me and as my own, and not of foreign origin. And so I say that what *one* has there, another has, not as *from* the other or *in* the other, but in *himself,* so that the grace that is in one is entirely in another as his *own* grace. Thus it is that spirit is in spirit. That is why I say that I cannot be the son of God unless I have the very same nature the Son of God has; and having this same nature makes us like him, and we see

him as he is God. "But it is not yet revealed what we shall be." And so I say that in this sense there is no *likeness* and no *difference,* but rather, wholly without distinction we shall be the same in essence, in substance and in nature as he is in himself. But that is "not yet revealed": it will be revealed "when we see him as he is God."

God makes us knowing Him, and His being is His knowing, and His making me know is the same as my knowing; so His knowing is mine just as in the master; what he teaches is one and the same as, in the pupil, what be is taught. And since His knowing is mine, and since His substance is His knowing and His nature and His essence, it follows that His essence and His substance and His nature are mine. And if His substance, His being and His nature are mine, then I am the son of God. "See, brethren, what love God has bestowed on us that we should be called and should be the Son of God!"

Note *how* we are the Son of God — by having the same essence that the Son has.

'How can one be the Son of God, or how can one know it, since God is not like anybody?'

That is true, for Isaiah says, "To whom have you likened Him or what image will you give Him?" (Isa. 40:18). Since it is God's nature not to be *like* anyone, we have to come to the state of being *nothing* in order to enter into the same nature that He is. So, when I am able to establish myself in Nothing and Nothing in myself, uprooting and casting out what is in me, *then* I can pass into the naked being of God, which is the naked being of the spirit. All that smacks of *likeness* must be ousted that I may be transplanted into God and become one with Him: one substance, one being, one nature, and the Son of God. Once this happens there is nothing hidden in God that is not revealed, that is not mine. *Then* I shall be wise and mighty and all else as He is, and one and the same with Him. Then, Sion will become truly seeing, and true Israel, a God-seeing man, from whom nothing in the Godhead is hidden. Then man is directed into God. But so that nothing may be hidden in God that is not revealed to me, there must appear to me nothing *like,* no image, for no image can reveal to us the Godhead or its essence. Should any image or any *likeness* remain in you, you would never be one with God. To be one with God, there must be in you nothing imagined or imaged forth, so that nothing is covered up in you that is not discovered or cast out.[1]

Observe the nature of defect. It comes from *no thing*.[2] So, what comes of nothing must be expunged from the soul: for so long as there is such defect in you, you are not God's son. Man laments and is sorrowful, solely on account of deficiency. And so, for man to become the Son of God, all *that* must be expunged and driven out, so that there is no more sorrow and lamentation. A man is not stone or wood, for that is all deficiency and nought. We shall not be like Him until this *nothing* is expelled so that we are all in all as God is all in all.

Man has a twofold birth: one *into* the world, and one *out of* the world, which is spiritual and into God. Do you want to know if your child is born, and if he is naked — whether you have in fact become God's son? If you grieve in your heart for anything, even on account of sin, your child is not yet born. If your heart is sore you are not yet a mother — but you *are* in labor and your time is near. So do not despair if you grieve for yourself or your friend — though it is not yet born, it is near to birth. But the child is fully born when a man's heart grieves for nothing: *then* a man has the essence and the nature and the substance and the wisdom and the joy and all that God has. *Then* the very being of the Son of God is ours and in us and we attain to the very essence of God.

Christ says: "Whoever would follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24, Mark 8:34). That is, cast out all grief so that perpetual joy reigns in your heart. *Thus* the child is born. And then, if the child is born in me, the sight of my father and all my friends slain before my eyes would leave my heart untouched. For if my heart were moved thereby, the child would not have been born in me, though its birth might be near. I declare that God and the angels take such keen delight in every act of a good man that there is no joy like it. And so I say, if this child is born in you, then you have such great joy in every good deed that is done in the world that this joy becomes permanent and never changes. Therefore he says, "None will deprive you of your joy" (John 16:22). If I am fully transported into the divine essence, then God, and all that He has, is mine. Therefore He says, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2). That is when I have true joy, when neither pain nor sorrow can take it from me, for *then* I am installed in the divine essence, where sorrow has no place. For we see that in God there is no anger

or sadness, but only love and joy. Though He seems sometimes to be wrathful with sinners it is not really wrath, it is love, for it comes from the great divine love: those He loves He chastens, for He is love, which is the Holy Ghost. And so God's anger springs from love, for His anger is without passion. And so, when you have reached the point where nothing is grievous or hard to you, and where pain is not pain to you, when everything is perfect joy to you, *then* your child has really been born.

Strive therefore to ensure that your child is not only being born, but is brought to birth, just as in God the Son is always being born and is brought to birth. And that this may be our lot, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. This presumably means that the entire contents of the unconscious must be cleared.
2. Cf. Sermon 6, note 5.

SERMON EIGHT

(Pf 8, Q 2, QT 2)

INTRAVIT JESUS IN QUODDAM CASTELLUM
ET MULIER QUAEDAM EXCEPIT ILLUM ETC.
(Luke 10:38)

I have first quoted this saying in Latin; it is written in the Gospel, and in German it means, "Our Lord Jesus Christ went up into a citadel and was received by a virgin[1] who was a wife."[2]

Now mark this word carefully. It must of necessity be a virgin, the person by whom Jesus was received. 'Virgin' is as much as to say a person who is void of alien images, as empty as he was when he did not exist.[3] Now the question may be asked, how a man who has been born and has reached the age of rational understanding can be as empty of all images as he was when he was not; for he knows many things, all of which are images: so how can he be empty of them? Note the explanation which I shall give you. If I were possessed of sufficient understanding so as to comprehend within my own mind all the images ever conceived by all men, as well as those that exist in God Himself—if I had these without attachment, whether in doing or in leaving undone, without before and after but rather standing free in this present Now ready to receive God's most beloved will and to do it continually, then in truth I would be a virgin, untrammeled by any images, just as I was when I was not.

And yet I say that being a virgin by no means deprives a man of works that he has done: he yet remains virgin free, offering no hindrance to the highest Truth, even as Jesus is empty and free and virginal in himself. Since according to the masters union comes only by the joining of like to like, therefore that man must be a maiden, a virgin, who would receive the virgin Jesus.

Now attend, and follow me closely. If a man were to be ever virginal, he would bear no fruit. If he is to be fruitful, he must be a wife. 'Wife' is the noblest title one can bestow on the soul — far nobler than 'virgin.' For a man to receive God within him is good, and in receiving he is virgin. But for God to be fruitful in him is better, for only the fruitfulness of the gift is the thanks rendered for that gift, and herein the spirit is a wife, whose gratitude is fecundity, bearing Jesus again in God's paternal heart.

Many good gifts, received in virginity, are not reborn back into God in wifely fruitfulness and with praise and thanks. Such gifts perish and all comes to naught, and a man is no more blessed or the better for them. In this case his virginity is useless because to that virginity he does not add the perfect fruitfulness of a wife. Therein lies the mischief. Hence I have said, "Jesus went up into a citadel and was received by a virgin who was a wife." It must be thus, as I have shown you.

Married folk bring forth little more than one fruit in a year. But it is other wedded folk that I have in mind now: all those who are bound with attachment to prayer, fasting, vigils, and all kinds of outward discipline and mortification. *All* attachment to any work that involves the loss of freedom to wait on God in the here and now, and to follow Him alone in the light wherein He would show you what to do and what not to do, every moment freely and anew, as if you had nothing else and neither would nor could do otherwise — *any* such attachment or set practice which repeatedly denies you this freedom, I call a *year;* for your soul will bear no fruit till it has done this work to which you are possessively attached, and you too will have no trust in God or in yourself before you have done the work you embraced with attachment, for otherwise you will have no peace. Thus you will bring forth no fruit till your work is done. That is what I call 'a year,' and the fruit of it is paltry because it springs from attachment to the task and not from freedom. These, then, I call 'wedded folk,' for they are bound by attachment. They bring forth little fruit, and paltry at that, as I have said.

A virgin who is a wife is free and unfettered by attachment; she is always as near to God as to herself. She brings forth many and big fruits, for they are neither more nor less than God Himself. *This* fruit and *this* birth that virgin bears who is a wife, bringing forth daily a hundred and a thousandfold! Numberless indeed are her labors

begotten of the most noble ground or, to speak more truly, of the very ground where the Father ever begets His eternal Word: — it is thence she becomes fruitful and shares in the procreation. For Jesus, the light and splendor of the eternal heart (as St. Paul says [Heb. 1:3], he is the glory and splendor of the Father's heart and illumines the Father's heart with power), this same Jesus is made one with her and she with him; she is radiant and shining with him in one single unity, as one pure brilliant light in the paternal heart.

Elsewhere I have declared that there is a power in the soul[4] which touches neither time nor flesh, flowing from the spirit, remaining in the spirit, altogether spiritual. In this power, God is ever verdant and flowering in all the joy and all the glory that He is in Himself. *There* is such heartfelt delight, such inconceivably deep joy as none can fully tell of, for in this power the eternal Father is ever begetting His eternal Son without pause, in such wise that this power jointly begets the Father's Son and itself, this self-same Son, in the sole power of the Father. Suppose a man owned a whole kingdom or all the goods of this world; then suppose he gave it up purely for God's sake, and became one of the poorest of the poor who ever lived on earth, and that God then gave him as much suffering as He ever imposed on any man, and that he bore all this to his dying day, and that God then gave him one fleeting glimpse of how He is in this power — that man's joy would be so great that all this suffering and poverty would still be insignificant. Yea, though God were never to vouchsafe him any further taste of heaven than this, he would yet be all too richly rewarded for all that he had ever endured, for God is in this power as in the eternal Now. If a man's spirit were always united with God in this power, he would not age. For the Now in which God made the first man and the Now in which the last man shall cease to be, and the Now I speak in, all are the same in God and there is but one Now. Observe, this man dwells in one light with God, having no suffering and no sequence of time, but one equal eternity. This man is bereft of wonderment and all things are in him in their essence. Therefore nothing new comes to him from future things nor any accident, for he dwells in the Now, ever new and without intermission. Such is the divine sovereignty dwelling in this power.

There is another power,[5] immaterial too, flowing from the spirit, remaining in the spirit, altogether spiritual. In this power God is fiery,

aglow with all His riches, with all His sweetness and all His bliss. Truly, in *this* power there is such great joy, such vast unmeasured bliss that none can tell of it or reveal it fully. Yet I declare that if ever there were a single man who in intellectual vision and in truth should glimpse for a moment the bliss and the joy therein, then all his sufferings and all God intended that he should suffer would be a trifle, a mere nothing to him — in fact I declare it would be pure joy and comfort to him.

If you would know for certain whether your suffering is your own or God's then you can know by this: If you suffer for yourself, in whatever way, that suffering hurts and is hard to bear. But if you suffer for God and God alone, your suffering does not hurt and is not hard to bear, for God bears the load. In very truth, if there were a man willing to suffer purely for God's sake and for God alone, then although he were suddenly called upon to bear all the suffering that all men have ever endured, the collective sufferings of all the world, it would not hurt him or bear him down, for God would bear the burden. If they put a hundredweight burden on my neck and another were to bear it on *my* neck, I would as willingly bear a hundred pounds as one, for it would not burden me or cause me pain. In brief, whatever a man suffers for God and God alone, He makes light and pleasant. As I said in the beginning, in the opening words of this sermon, 'Jesus went up into a citadel and was received by a virgin who was a wife.' Why? It had to be so, that she was a virgin *and* a wife. Now I have told you that Jesus was received, but I have not yet told you what the citadel is, as I shall now proceed to do.

I have sometimes said that there is a power in the soul which alone is free. Sometimes I have called it the guardian of the spirit, sometimes I have called it a light of the spirit, sometimes I have said that it is a little spark.[6] But now I say that it is neither *this* nor *that;* and yet it is a *something* that is more exalted over 'this' and 'that' than are the heavens above the earth. So now I shall name it in nobler fashion than I ever did before, and yet it disowns the nobler name and mode, for it transcends them. It is free of all names and void of all forms, entirely exempt and free, as God is exempt and free in Himself. It is as completely one and simple as God is one and simple, so that no man can in any way glimpse it. This same power of which I have spoken, wherein God ever blooms and is verdant in all His Godhead, and the

spirit in God, in this same power God ever bears His only-begotten Son as truly as in Himself, for verily He dwells in this power, and the spirit gives birth with the Father to the same only-begotten Son, and to itself as the selfsame Son, and is itself the selfsame Son in this light, and is the Truth. If you could know with my heart, you would understand, for it is true, and Truth itself declares it.

Now pay attention! So one and simple is this citadel in the soul, elevated above all modes, of which I speak and which I mean, that that noble power I mentioned is not worthy even for an instant to cast a single glance into this citadel; nor is that other power I spoke of, in which God burns and glows with all His riches and all His joy, able to cast a single glance inside; so truly one and simple is this citadel, so mode- and power-transcending is this solitary One, that neither power nor mode can gaze into it, nor even God Himself! In very truth and as God lives! God Himself never looks in there for one instant, insofar as He exists in modes and in the properties of His persons. This should be well noted: this One Alone lacks all mode and property. And therefore, for God to see inside it would cost Him all His divine names and personal properties: all these He must leave outside, should He ever look in there. But only insofar as He is one and indivisible, without mode or properties, (can He do this):[7] in that sense He is neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, and yet is a Something which is neither this nor that.

See, as He is thus one and simple, so He can enter that One that I here call the citadel of the soul, but in no other mode can He get in: only thus does He enter and dwell therein. In *this* part the soul is the same as God and not otherwise. What I tell you is true: I call the Truth as a witness and offer my soul as pledge.

That we may be such a citadel to which Jesus may ascend and be received to abide eternally in us in such wise as I have said, may God help us to this! Amen.

Notes

1. Eckhart's rendering is very free here: the Latin says nothing about a virgin!
2. The play on the two meanings of *enpfangen,* 'received' and 'conceived,' cannot be rendered into English.
3. When he was a (Platonic) idea in God.
4. The higher intellect: cf. Sermon 1, note 8.

5. The will. The Franciscans gave the will supremacy, the Dominicans (and therefore Eckhart) the intellect.
6. See Introduction, Note A: *Synteresis,* p. 22
7. Supplied (after Miss Evans) to complete the sense.

SERMON NINE

(Pf 9, Q 86, QT 28, Evans II, 2)

INTRAVIT JESUS IN QUODDAM CASTELLUM, ET MULIER QUAEDAM, MARTHA NOMINE, EXCEPIT ILLUM ETC. (Luke 10:38)[1]

St. Luke says in his Gospel that our Lord Jesus Christ went into a little town, where he was received by a woman named Martha, and she had a sister named Mary who sat at the feet of our Lord and listened to his words, but Martha moved about, waiting on our Lord. Three things made Mary sit at our Lord's feet. One was that the goodness of God possessed her soul. The second was unspeakable longing: she desired she knew not what, and wanted she knew not what. The third was the sweet solace and joy she gained from the eternal words that flowed from the mouth of Christ.

With Martha too there were three things that made her move about and wait on the beloved Christ. One was her mature age and the ground of her being that was so fully trained that she thought none could do the work as well as she. The second was wise understanding, which knew how to do outward works perfectly as love ordains. The third was the great dignity of her beloved guest.

The masters say that God is ready to give every man full satisfaction of all he desires, both of reason and of the senses. That God gives us satisfaction of mind *and* of the senses can be clearly distinguished in regard to the dearest friends of God.[2] Satisfaction of the senses means that God gives us comfort, joy and contentment — and over-indulgence in these things does not occur in God's true friends in their inner senses. But mental satisfaction is of a spiritual nature. I call that mental satisfaction, when the summit of the soul is not brought so low by any joys as to be drowned in pleasure, but rather rises resolutely above them. Man enjoys mental satisfaction only when creaturely

joys and sorrows are powerless to drag down the topmost summit of the soul. 'Creature' I call whatever a man experiences under God.

Now Martha says, "Lord, tell her to help me." This was said not in anger, but it was rather affection that constrained her. We can call it affection or teasing. How so? Observe. She saw how Mary was possessed with a longing for her soul's satisfaction. Martha knew Mary better than Mary knew Martha, for she had lived long and well, and life gives the finest understanding. Life understands better than delight and light (can) whatever, under God, man can attain to in this body, and in some ways more clearly than the eternal light can.[3] For the eternal light makes known oneself and God, not oneself apart from God; but life makes one known to oneself, apart from God. When one sees oneself alone, it is easier to tell what is like and unlike. St. Paul makes this plain, and so do the pagan masters. St. Paul in his ecstasy saw God, and himself in spiritual fashion, in God, and yet each virtue did not there present itself clearly to his vision, and that was because he had not practiced them in deeds.

By practicing the virtues, the masters came to such profound discernment that they recognized the nature of each virtue more clearly than Paul or any saint in his first rapture.

Thus it was with Martha. Hence her words, "Lord, tell her to help me," as if to say, 'my sister thinks she is able to do what she *wishes* to do, as long as she sits and receives solace from you. Let her see if it is so: bid her get up and go from you.' The latter part was kindly meant, though she spoke her mind. Mary was filled with longing, longing she knew not why and wanting she knew not what. We suspect that she, dear Mary, sat there a little more for her own happiness than for spiritual profit. That is why Martha said, "Bid her rise, Lord," fearing that by dallying in this joy she might progress no further. Christ answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about many things. One thing is needful. Mary has chosen the best part, which shall never be taken away from her." Christ said this to Martha not by way of rebuke, but answering and reassuring her that Mary would become as she desired. Why did Christ say, "Martha, Martha," naming her twice? Isidore[4] says there is no doubt that prior to the time when God became man He never called any man by name who was lost; but about those whom He did not call by name it is doubtful. By Christ's 'calling' I mean his eternal knowing: being

infallibly inscribed, before the creation of creatures, in the living book of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Of those named therein and whose name Christ uttered in words, none was ever lost. This is attested by Moses, who was told by God Himself, "I know thee by name" (Exod. 33:12) and by Nathaniel, to whom our beloved Christ said, "I knew you when you lay under the fig tree" (John 1:50). The fig-tree denotes a spirit that rejects not God and whose name is eternally inscribed in God.[5] Thus it is demonstrated that no man ever was or will be lost, whom Christ ever named by human mouth out of the eternal Word.

Why did he name Martha twice? He meant that every good thing, temporal and eternal, that a creature could possess was fully possessed by Martha. The first mention of Martha showed her perfection in temporal works. When he said 'Martha' again, that showed that she lacked nothing pertaining to eternal bliss. So he said, "You are careful," meaning, 'You are among things, but they are not in you,' for those who are careful are unhindered in their activity.[6] They are unhindered who organize all their works guided by the eternal light. Such people are with things and not in them. They are very close, and yet have no less than if they were up yonder on the circle of eternity. 'Very close,' I say, for all creatures are means. There are two kinds of means. One means, without which I cannot get to God, is work or activity in time, which does not interfere with eternal salvation. 'Works' are performed from without, but 'activity' is when one practices with care and understanding from within.[7] The other means is to be free of all that.[8] For we are set down in time so that our sensible worldly activity may make us closer and more like to God. St. Paul meant this when he said, "Redeem the time, for the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). "Redeeming the time" means the continual intellectual ascent to God, not in the diversity of images but in living intellectual truth. And "the days are evil" should be understood thus: Day presupposes night, for if there were no night, it would not be or be called day — it would all be one light. That was Paul's meaning, for a life of light is too little, being subject to spells of darkness that oppress a noble spirit and obscure eternal bliss. Hence too Christ's exhortation "Go on while you have the light" (John 12:35). For he who works in the light rises straight up to God free of all means: his light is his activity, and his activity is his light.

Thus it was with dear Martha, and so he said to her, "*One* thing is needful," not two. When *I* and *you* are once embraced by the eternal light, that is *one*. Two in one is a fiery spirit, standing over all things, yet under God, on the circle of eternity. This is two, for it sees God but not immediately. Its knowing and being, or its knowing and the object of knowledge will never be one. God is not seen except where He is seen spiritually, free of all images. Then one becomes two, two is one: light and spirit, these two are one in the embrace of the eternal light.

Mark now what the circle of eternity means. The soul has three ways into God. *One* is to seek God in all creatures with manifold activity and ardent longing. This was the way King David meant when he said, "In all things have I sought rest" (Sir. 24:7). The *second* way is a wayless way, free and yet bound, raised, rapt away well-nigh past self and all things, without will and without images, even though not yet in essential being. Christ meant that when he said, "You are blessed, Peter, flesh and blood have not illumined you, but being caught up in the higher mind. When you call me God, my heavenly Father has revealed it to you" (Matt. 16:17). St. Peter did not see God unveiled, though indeed he was caught up by the heavenly Father's power past all created understanding to the circle of eternity. I say he was grasped by the heavenly Father in a loving embrace, and borne up unknowingly with tempestuous power, in an aspiring spirit transported beyond all conceiving by the might of the heavenly Father. Then Peter was inwardly called from above in sweet creaturely tones, yet free from all sense enjoyment, in the single truth of the unity of God and man in the person of the heavenly Father-Son. I make bold to say, if St. Peter had seen God unveiled in His own nature, as he did later, and as St. Paul did when he was caught up into the third heaven, the most exalted angel's voice would have sounded harsh to him. But thus he spoke many sweet-sounding words, which Jesus had no need of, for *he* sees into the heart and ground of the soul, standing as he does unmediated before God in the freedom of actual unity.[9] *This* is what St. Paul meant when he said, "a man was caught up and heard such words as may not be uttered by men" (2 Cor. 12:2). You should understand therefore that St. Peter stood on the circle of eternity, but was not in unity beholding God in His own being.

The *third* way is called a way, but is really being at home, that is: seeing God without means in His own being. Now Christ says, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6): one Christ as one Person, one Christ, one Father, one Christ, one Spirit, three in one: three as way, truth, and life, one as the beloved Christ, in which he is all. Outside of this way all creatures circle, and are *means*. But led into God on this way by the light of His Word and embraced by them both in the Holy Spirit — that passes all words. Now listen to a marvel! How marvelous, to be without and within, to embrace and be embraced, to see and be the seen, to hold and be held — *that* is the goal, where the spirit is ever at rest, united in joyous eternity!

But to return to our argument, how Martha and all the friends of God are 'with care' but not 'in care'; there temporal work is as noble as any communing with God, for it joins us to Him as closely as the highest that can happen to us except the vision of God in His naked nature. And so he said, "You are with things and with care," meaning that she was troubled and encumbered by her lower powers, for she was not given to indulge in spiritual sweetness: she was with things and not in things....[10]

Three things especially are needful in our works: to be orderly, understanding, and mindful. 'Orderly' I call that which corresponds in all points to the highest. 'Understanding' I call knowing nothing temporal that is better. 'Mindful' I call feeling living truth joyously present in good works. When these three points are one, they bring us just as near and are just as helpful as all Mary Magdalene's joy in the wilderness.[11]

Now Christ says, "You are troubled about *many* things" — not just one thing. That means when, perfectly simple, wholly unoccupied, she is transported to the circle of eternity, she is troubled if any 'means' intervene to spoil her joy up there. Such a person is troubled by this thing, and is anxious and distressed. But Martha stood maturely and well grounded in virtue, with untroubled mind, not hindered by things, and so she wished her sister to be equally established, for she saw that she was not grounded in her being. *Her* desire came from a mature ground, wishing her all that pertains to eternal bliss. That is why Christ said, "One thing is needful." What is that? It is the One that is God. That is what all creatures need, for if God took back what is His, all creatures would perish. If God were to

withdraw His own from the soul of Christ, where her spirit is united with the eternal Person, Christ would be left merely creature. Therefore that One is truly needful. Martha feared that her sister would stay dallying with joy and sweetness, and wished her to be like herself. Therefore Christ spoke as if to say, 'Never fear, Martha, she has chosen the best part: this will pass. The best thing that can befall a creature shall be hers: she shall be blessed like you.'

Now let me instruct you about virtue. Virtuous living depends in three points on the will. One thing is to resign one's will to God, for it is needful to do fully what one then knows, whether in taking or in leaving. There are three kinds of will.[12] The first is *sensible* will, the second is *rational* will, the third is *eternal* will. The sensible will seeks guidance, so that one needs a proper teacher. The rational will means following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the saints, that is, so that words, deeds and way of life are alike directed to the highest end. When all this is accomplished, God will give something more in the ground of the soul, that is, an eternal will consonant with the loving commands of the Holy Ghost. Then the soul says, 'Lord, tell me what thy eternal will is.' And then, if she has satisfied the condition we have just mentioned, and if God so pleases, the Father will speak His eternal Word into the soul.

Now our good people declare that we must be so perfect that no joy can move us, we must be untouched by weal and woe.[13] They are wrong in this. I say never was there a saint so great but he could be moved. Yet on the other hand I hold that it is possible for a saint, even in this life, to be so that nothing can move him to turn from God. You may think that as long as words can move you to joy or sorrow you are imperfect. That is not so. Christ was not so, as he showed when he cried, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). Words wounded Christ so sorely, that if the collective woe of all creatures were to fall on one single creature, it would not be so grievous as Christ's woe was, owing to his exalted nature, to the blessed union of divine and human nature. Therefore I declare that no saint ever lived or ever will attain to the state where pain cannot hurt him nor pleasure please. Now and then it happens, through love and favor and divine grace, that though a man's faith be impugned or the like, if he were suffused with grace, he would be indifferent to joy and sorrow. But with the saints it may well occur that nothing whatever

can bring them from God, so that, although the heart be wrung while a man is not in a state of grace, yet the will remains solely with God, saying, 'Lord, I am thine and thou art mine.' Whatever then occurs cannot impede eternal bliss, so long as it does not invade the summit of the soul up yonder where it is at one with God's sweet will.

Now Christ says, "You are troubled with many things." Martha was so well grounded in her essence that her activity was no hindrance to her: work and activity she turned to her eternal profit. This was somewhat mediated, but nobility of nature, industry, and virtue in the above sense help greatly. Mary was a 'Martha' before she was a 'Mary,' for when she sat at the feet of our Lord, she was not 'Mary': she was so in name, but not in her being, for she was filled with joy and bliss and had only just entered school, to learn to live. But Martha stood there in her essence, and hence she said, "Lord, bid her get up," as if to say 'Lord, I do not like her sitting there just for joy. I want her to learn life and possess it in essence: bid her arise that she may be perfect.' She was not called Mary when she sat at Christ's feet. Mary I call a well-disciplined body, obedient to a wise soul. By obedient I mean that, whatever understanding dictates, the will accepts.

Now our good people imagine they can reach a point where sensible things do not affect the senses. That cannot be: that a disagreeable noise should be as pleasant to my ear as the sweet tones of a lyre is something I shall never attain to. But this much *can* be attained: that when it is observed with insight, a rational God-conformed will submits to the insight and bids the will stand back from it, and the will answers, 'I will, gladly.' Lo and behold, *then* strife changes to joy. For what a man has gained by heavy toil brings him heart's delight, and *then* it bears fruit.

Again, some people hope to reach a point where they are free of works. I say this cannot be. *After* the disciples had received the Holy Ghost, they began to do good works. And so, when Mary sat at the feet of our Lord, she was learning, for she had just gone to school to learn how to live. But later on, when Christ had gone to heaven and she received the Holy Ghost, she began to serve: she traveled overseas and preached and taught, acting as a servant and washerwoman to the disciples. Only when the saints become saints do they do good works, for then they gather the treasure of eternal life. Whatever is

done before, repays old debts and averts punishment. For this we find evidence in Christ. From the very beginning when God became man and man became God, he began to work for our salvation, right to the end, when he died on the cross. Not a member of his body but practiced particular virtues. That we may follow him faithfully in the practice of true virtue, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Based on the same text as Sermon 8, but Eckhart's translation of the text is different, as well as his interpretation. The two sermons were probably preached at quite different times. This one, which is probably late in date, treats in typically Eckhartian fashion of Martha and Mary. The text seems to be corrupt in places.

2. This is not, of course, a reference to the later sect known as the 'Friends of God.' Cf. Clark, pp. 122ff.

3. A difficult sentence which I am not sure I have understood. The general sense seems to be that life (experience) teaches us best about worldly things. The meaning of 'delight and light' (*lust unde liebt*) is not totally clear. According to Quint (*DW* III, 494, note 10), life is a better teacher than they are. I suspect the text is still corrupt, even in the version followed by Quint and here translated. The words may mean 'ecstatic vision,' since the sense of what follows is that such vision, even that of St. Paul, is insufficient for the development of the virtues if they have not previously been practiced. The *visa activa* must precede the *visa contemplativa.*

4. (St.) Isidore of Seville (d. 636). Quotation untraced (Q).

5. Following QT, p. 282. But in *DW* III, p. 484 and note 21, p. 495, Quint agrees with the rendering given by Miss Evans (against Pfeiffer): 'The fig tree being God in whom his name was inscribed eternally.'

6. Quint has again changed his mind between QT, p. 283, and *DW* III, p. 484 and note 24, p. 496. I originally rendered this, following QT, 'People who are hindered in their activities are oppressed by care.' The sense of Miss Evan's rendering agrees with that given above.

7. This passage, in Pfeiffer and Evans, follows 'eternal light' above. Transposed by Quint, following better MSS.

8. Miss Evans renders 'selflessness,' but *des selben* simply means 'of the same.'

9. *Iresbeit,* lit. 'theyness' or 'theirness': the unity of Father and Son.

10. This passage seems corrupt.

11. As narrated in the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus a Voragine (ca. 1263–73), ed. Graesse, Leipzig 1846. Caxton's translation in Temple Classics, 1900.

12. Are these the *three points* in connection with the will? There seems some confusion here.

13. But Eckhart himself had declared this in Sermon 7!

SERMON TEN

(Pf 10, Q 25, QT 38)

MOYSES ORABAT DOMINUM SUUM
(Exodus 32:11ff., Evans II, 11)

I have quoted a text in Latin which is from the lesson appointed for today.[1] In German it means, "Moses besought the Lord his God saying, 'Lord, why is thy wrath kindled against thy people?' Then God answered him, saying, 'Moses, let me alone, grudge not, permit, consent that my wrath be kindled and that I take vengeance on the people.' And God promised Moses, saying, "I will exalt thee and magnify thee and multiply thy seed and make thee ruler over a great nation." Moses said, 'Lord, blot me out of the book of life, or forgive the people.' "

What does he mean by saying, "Moses besought the Lord his God"? Truly if God is your Lord, then you must be His servant, and if you then work for your own good or your own pleasure or your own salvation, then indeed you are not His servant, for you seek not only God's glory but your own profit. Why does he say, "the Lord his God"? If God wills you to be sick and you want to be well; if God wills that your friend should die and you want him to live contrary to God's will, then God is not your Lord. If you love God and are sick 'In God's name'; if your friend dies 'In God's name'; if he loses an eye 'in God's name,' with such a man it would indeed be well. But if you are sick and pray to God for health, then health is dearer to you than God, and He is not *your* God. He is the God of heaven and earth, but not your God.

Now see how God says, "Moses, let my wrath be kindled." You may ask why God is angry. Solely at the loss of our salvation, for He seeks nothing of His own: God is so distressed because we jeopardize our salvation. No greater sorrow could befall God than the

martyrdom and death of our Lord Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, which he suffered for our salvation. Note then, God says, "Moses, suffer my indignation." Just see what a righteous man can do with God! It is a certain and necessary truth that he who resigns his will wholly to God will catch God and bind God, so that God can do nothing but what that man wills. He who makes his will over wholly to God, to him God gives His will in return, so wholly and so genuinely that God's will becomes that man's own, and He has sworn by Himself to do nothing but what that man wills, for God will never be anyone's own who has not first become His own: St. Augustine says, 'Lord, thou wilt be no man's own till he has become thine own.'

We deafen God day and night with our cries, 'Lord, thy will be done,' and when God's will *is* done, we are angry, which is wrong. If our will is God's will, that is good, but if God's will is our will, that is far better. If your will is God's will, then if you are sick you will not desire, against God's will, to be better — though you *would* wish it were God's will that you were better. And when things went wrong with you, you would wish it were God's will that they should go aright. But when God's will is *your* will, then if you are sick 'In God's name'; if your friend dies 'in God's name,' it is a certain and necessary truth that though it should entail all the pains of hell, of purgatory, and the world, the will in union with God would bear all this eternally, forever in hellish torment, and take it for its eternal bliss; and resigning in God's will our Lady's bliss and all her perfection and that of all the saints, it would remain forever in eternal pain and bitterness, not wavering for an instant and with no thought of wishing things were otherwise. When the will is so unified that it forms a single *one*, then the heavenly Father bears His only-begotten Son in Himself — in me. Why in Himself, in me? Because then I am one with Him, He cannot shut me out, and in that act the Holy Ghost receives his being, his becoming, from me as from God. Why? Because I am *in* God. If he does not receive it from me, he does not receive it from God: he cannot in any way exclude me.

Moses' will had become so fully God's will that God's honor with the people was dearer to him than his own felicity. God held out promises to Moses which Moses brushed aside: had He promised him His whole Godhead, Moses would not have consented. But Moses besought God, saying, "Lord, blot me out of the book of life." The

masters ask, 'Did Moses love the people more than himself?' They answer, No! For Moses well knew that by seeking God's honor among the people, he came closer to God than by being careless of God's honor and seeking his own salvation. And so it behooves a righteous man not to seek his own in all he does, but only God's honor. While in all your doings you are turned more toward yourself, or toward one person more than another, God's will has not truly become your will.

Our Lord says in the Gospel, "My teaching is not mine but His who sent me" (John 7:16). And so it should be with a good man: 'my work is not my work, my life is not my life.' And if I am thus, then all the perfection and bliss that St. Peter has, and that St. Paul stretched out his head (in martyrdom), and all the felicity they gained thereby, this *I* enjoy as well as they, and I look to enjoy it eternally as if it had been my own doing. More: all the works that all the saints and all the angels and Mary, God's mother, too, ever did, from this I hope to reap eternal joy as if I had done it all myself.

I say humanity and man are different.[2] Humanity in itself is so noble that the highest peak of humanity is equal to the angels and akin to God. The closest union that Christ had with the Father, that is possible for me to win, could I but slough off what there is of *this* and *that,* and realize my humanity. All that God ever gave His only-begotten Son He has given me as perfectly as him, no less. He has given me more: He gave more of my humanity in Christ than to him, for to him He gave nothing: he had it eternally in the Father. If I hit you, I hit first a Burkhard or a Heinrich, and only then a man. But God did not do thus. He *first* took on humanity. Who is a man? One who has his name from Jesus Christ. Hence our Lord says in the Gospel, "He that touches one of these, touches the apple of my eye" (Zech. 2:8; cf. Matt. 25:40).

Now I repeat, "Moses besought the Lord his God." Many people pray to God to do all He can for them, but they do not want to give God all *they* can. They want to share with God and give Him the worst part, and not much at that! But the first thing God gives is Himself. And when you have God, you have all things *with* God. I have sometimes said, he who has God and all things with God, has no more than one who has God alone. I say too, a thousand angels in eternity are no more than two or one, for there is no number in eternity, it transcends number.

"Moses besought the Lord his God." Moses means one who was lifted out of the water. But now I will speak again of the will. To give a hundred marks of gold for God is a noble deed, and appears as such. Yet I declare that if I have the *will* that I should give a hundred marks if I had them — if the will is perfect, then in fact I have paid God and He must give account to me as if I had really given Him a hundred marks. I say further, If I had the will to give up a whole world did I possess it, then I *have* made over to God a whole world, and He must render account to me as if I had given a whole world to Him. I say, if the pope had been slain by my hand, and if it had not occurred with my will, I would go up to the altar and say Mass as usual. I say humanity is as perfect in the poorest and most wretched as in pope or emperor, for I hold humanity more dear in itself than the man I carry about with me.

That we may be thus united with God, may the truth of which I have spoken help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Eckhart's scriptural quotation is, as often, free. It is also exceptionally lengthy. This is the lesson for the Tuesday after the fourth Sunday in Lent.

2. Human nature as distinct from the individual man. Christ assumed human nature, not a person (see Sermon 13a).

SERMON ELEVEN

(Pf 11, Q 26, QT 49)

MULIER, VENIT HORA ET NUNC EST, QUANDO VERI ADORATORES ADORABUNT PATREM IN SPIRITU ET VERITATE
(John 4:23)

This is found in St. John's Gospel. I take one sentence from a long story. Our Lord said, "Woman, the time shall come and now is, when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and such the Father seeks."

Take note of the first thing he says: "The time shall come and now is." He who would worship the Father must betake himself into eternity in his desires and hopes. There is one, the highest peak of the soul which stands above time and knows nothing of time or of the body. All that happened a thousand years ago, the day that was a thousand years ago, is in eternity no further off than this moment I am in now; or the day which shall be a thousand years hence, or in as many years as you can count, is no more distant in eternity than this moment I am in.

Now he says, "That the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." What is truth? The truth is such a noble thing that if God were able to turn away from truth, I would cling to truth and let God go; for God is truth, and all that is in time, and that God created, is not truth.

Now he says, "they shall worship the Father." Alas, how many are there who worship a shoe or a cow and encumber themselves with them — they are foolish folk! As soon as you pray to God for creatures, you pray for your own harm, for creature is no sooner creature than it bears within itself bitterness and trouble, evil and distress. So they get their deserts, these people who reap distress and bitterness. Why? They prayed for it.

I have sometimes said whoever seeks God and seeks anything *with* God, does not find God; but he who seeks God alone in truth finds God but he does not find God alone — for all that God can give, that he finds with God. If you seek God and seek Him for your own profit and bliss, then in truth you are not seeking God. And so he says that true worshippers worship the Father, and that is well said. Ask a good man, 'Why do you seek God?' and he will answer, 'Because He is God.' — 'Why do you seek truth?' — 'Because it is truth.' — 'Why do you seek righteousness?' — 'Because it is righteousness.' With such, all is well.

All things that are in time have a 'Why?' Ask a man why he eats: 'For strength.' — 'Why do you sleep?' — 'For the same reason.' And so on with all things that are in time. But if you should ask a good man, 'Why do you love God?' — 'I don't know — for God's sake.' — 'Why do you love truth?' — 'For truth's sake.' — Why do you love righteousness?' — 'For righteousness' sake.' 'Why do you live?' — 'Indeed I don't know — I *like* living!'

A master says, 'He who has once been touched by truth, justice, and goodness, though it entailed all the pangs of hell, that man could never turn from them even for an instant.' He goes on, 'That man, whoever he may be, who is touched by these three — truth, justice, and goodness — can no more quit these three than God can quit His Godhead.'

A master says goodness has three branches. The first branch is utility, the second enjoyment, the third seemliness. Hence he says, "They worship the Father." Why does he say "the Father"? When you seek the Father, that is God alone, you will find with God all that He has to give. It is a certain and necessary truth, a declared truth — and if it were not declared it would still be true — that if God had still more He could not hide it from you, He would *have* to show it to you and give it to you, and I sometimes say that He *does* give it to you, and gives it to you as a birth.

The masters[1] say the soul has two faces: her upper face gazes at God all the time, and the lower face looks down somewhat and guides the senses. The upper face, which is the apex of the soul, is in eternity and has nothing to do with time: it knows nothing of time or of the body. I have sometimes said that in this lies hidden the fount, as it were, of all goodness, as a shining light that is always shining, a

burning brand that is ever burning, and the brand is none other than the Holy Ghost.

The masters say that out of the peak of the soul there flow forth two powers. The one is will, the other intellect, and her powers' perfection lies in the highest power, which is the intellect.[2] This never rests. It does not want God as the Holy Ghost nor as the Son: it flees the Son. Nor does it want God, as He is God. Why? There He has a name, and if there were a thousand Gods it would go on breaking through, it wants to have Him there where He has no name: it wants a nobler, better thing than God as having a name. What does it want, then? It does not know: it would have Him as He is Father. And so St. Philip says, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be content" (John 14:8). It wants Him as the marrow from which goodness comes, it wants Him as the kernel from which goodness flows, it wants Him as a root, as a vein whence goodness springs: only there is He Father.

Now our Lord says, "None knows the Father but the Son, nor the Son but the Father" (Matt. 11:27). In truth, to know the Father we must be the Son. I have once spoken three words: now take them like three bitter muscat seeds, and then drink. First, if we are to be the Son, we must have a Father, for none can say he is a son unless he has a father, and no one is a father unless he has a son. If his father is dead, he says, 'He was my father.' If his son is dead, he says, 'He was my son.' For the son's life depends on the father and the father's on the son, so no man can say 'I am a son' unless he has a father, and that man is truly a son whose every work is done for love. The second thing that most makes a man a son is equanimity. If he is sick, he would as lief be sick as well, well as sick: If his friend dies 'In God's name!' If he loses an eye 'In God's name!' — The third thing a son should possess is that he can bow his head to none but the Father. Oh, how noble is that power that transcends time and transcends place![3] For, being above time it both contains all time and is all time, and however little a man might have of that which transcends time, he would be rich indeed, for what lies beyond the sea is no more distant to this power than what is here present. And therefore he says, "such the Father seeks."

See, God loves us so, God importunes us so, and God cannot wait till the soul has turned away and stripped off all creatures. It is a certain and necessary truth that God must seek us, as though His

Godhead were at stake — which it is! And God can no more do without us than we without Him, for even if we were able to turn from God, God still could not turn from *us*. I declare that I will not pray to God to give to me, nor praise Him for what He has given me, but I will pray to Him to make me worthy to receive, and I will praise Him because He is of such nature and essence that He *must* give. He who would deprive God of this would deprive Him of His own being, of His very life.

That we may thus in truth become the Son, may that truth help us, of which I have spoken. Amen.

Notes

1. St. Augustine and Avicenna (Q).
2. Cf. Sermon 8, note 5.
3. Cf. Sermon 1, note 8.

SERMON TWELVE

(Pf 12, Q 27, QT 50)

HOC EST PRAECEPTUM MEUM, UT DILIGATIS
INVICEM SICUT DILEXI VOS
(John 15:12ff.)

I have quoted three words in Latin from the Gospel. The first word that our Lord says is, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." The second is, "I have called you my friends, for all the things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." The third is, "I have chosen you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain."

Now observe the first word that he says, "This is my commandment." I would say a word to you about this, that "should remain with you." "This is my commandment, that you love." What does he mean when he says, "that you love"? He wants to say one thing that you should note: Love is quite pure, quite bare, quite detached in itself. The greatest masters[1] say that the love with which we love is the Holy Ghost. There were some[2] who would dispute this. That is eternally true: in all the motion with which we are moved to love, we are moved by nothing but the Holy Ghost. Love at its purest and at its most detached is nothing but God. The masters say that the goal of love, toward which love does all its works, is goodness, and goodness is God. Just as my eye cannot speak and my tongue cannot recognize colors, so love cannot incline to anything but goodness and God.

Now pay attention. What does he mean when he so earnestly enjoins us to love? He means that the love with which we love must be so pure, so bare, so detached that it is not inclined toward myself nor toward my friend nor anywhere apart from itself. The masters say we cannot call any work a good work, or any virtue a virtue, unless

it is performed in love. Virtue is so noble, so detached, so pure, so bare in itself that it knows nothing better than itself and God.

Now he says: "This is my commandment." If anyone commands me to do that which is pleasant, which avails me or on which my bliss depends, that is exceedingly sweet to me. When I am thirsty, the drink commands me; when I am hungry, the food commands me. And God does the same: He commands me to such sweetness that the whole world cannot equal. And if a man has once tasted this sweetness, then indeed he can no more turn away with his love from goodness and from God, than God can turn away from His Godhead: in fact it is easier for him to divest himself of self and all bliss and to remain with love close to goodness and God.

Now he says, "that you love one another." Oh, what a noble and blessed life that would be! Would not that be a noble life, if every man were devoted to his neighbor's peace as well as to his own, and his love were so bare and pure and detached in itself that its goal was nothing but goodness and God? If you were to ask a good man, 'Why do you love goodness?' — 'For goodness' sake.' 'Why do you love God?' — 'For God's sake.' And if your love really is so pure, so detached and so bare in itself that you love nought but goodness and God, then it is a certain truth that all the virtuous deeds performed by all men are yours as perfectly as if you had performed them yourself, and even purer and better. For the pope has often tribulation enough for being pope. But you have *his* virtues more purely and with greater detachment and peace, and they are more yours than his, if your love is so pure and bare in itself that you desire and love nothing but goodness and God.

Now he says, "As I have loved you." How has God loved us? He loved us when we were not,[3] and when we were His foes. God needs our friendship so much that He cannot wait for us to pray to Him: He approaches us and begs us to be His friends, for He desires of us that we should want His forgiveness. That is why our Lord rightly says, "It is my will that you beg them that harm you" (cf. Luke 6:27). That is how important it is that we should beg them that harm us. Why? That we may do God's will, that we should not wait till they beg us: we should say, 'Friend, forgive me that I have made you sad.' And that is how serious we should be in our practice of virtue: the greater our pain, the more seriously we should strive for virtue. So

much should your love be *one,* for love does not wish to be anywhere but where there is likeness and oneness. Where there is a master and servant there is no peace, for there is no likeness. A woman and a man are unlike, but in love they are alike. And so scripture rightly says that God took woman from the man's rib and side and not from the head or from the feet; for where there are two, there is a lack. Why? One is not the other, for the *not* that makes the difference is nothing but bitterness, because there is no peace. If I hold an apple in my hand, that delights my eyes, but my mouth is deprived of the sweetness. But if I eat it, I deprive my eyes of the pleasure I have from that. Thus two cannot coexist, for one must lose its being.

That is why he says, "Love one another," that is, *in* one another. Scripture expresses this very well. St. John says, "God is love, and whoever dwells in love, is in God and God is in him" (1 John 4:16). He speaks very truly: for if God were in me and I were not in God, or if I were in God and God were not in me, there would be two. But if God is in me and I am in God, then I am not meaner and God is not higher. Now you might say, 'Sir, you bid me love, but I *can't* love!' Our Lord put this well when he said to St. Peter, "Peter, do you love me?" — "Lord, you know well that I love you" (John 21:15). If you have given it to me, Lord, I love you; if you have not given it to me, then I do not love you.

Now note the second text: "I have called you friends, for all the things I have heard from the Father I have made known to you." Note that he says, "I have called you my friends." In the same source where the Son takes rise, where the Father speaks His eternal Word, and from the same heart, the Holy Ghost also takes rise and flows forth. And if the Holy Ghost had not flowed forth from the Son (and from the Father),[4] there would have been no distinction between the Son and the Holy Ghost. When I preached at Trinity,[5] I quoted a text in Latin that the Father gave His only-begotten Son all that He has to offer, all His Godhead, all His bliss, holding nothing back. The question then arose, did God give him His true nature? And I said, 'Yes,' for the nature of God, which is to give birth, is not different from God, and I have said that He holds nothing back. In fact I declare, He utters the root of the Godhead completely in the Son. And so St. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will suffice us" (John 14:8). A tree that bears fruit gives forth its fruits. Whoever

gives me the fruit does not give me the tree. But whoever gives me the tree and the root and the fruit has given me more.

Now he says, "I have called you my friends." Truly, in that selfsame birth in which the Father bears His only-begotten Son and gives him the root and all His Godhead and all His bliss, holding nothing back, in that selfsame birth He calls us His friends. Even if you hear and understand nothing of His speaking, yet there is a power in the soul (I mentioned it when I recently preached here),[6] which is so detached and pure in itself and is akin to the divine nature, and in *that* power it is understood. Therefore he truly says, "All the things I have heard from the Father I have made known to you." Now he says, "that I have heard." The Father's speaking is His giving birth; the Son's hearing is his being born. Now he says, "All that I have heard from my Father." Truly, all that he has eternally heard from his Father, he has revealed and not concealed from us. I say if he had heard a thousand times more, he would have revealed it and not concealed it from us. And so we should conceal nothing from God, we should reveal to Him all that we can do. For if you were to hold back anything for yourself, you would thereby lose your eternal bliss, for God has withheld nothing of His own from us. This seems to some a hard saying. But nobody should despair on that account.

The more you give of yourself to God, the more God gives Himself to you in return, and the more you divest yourself of self, the greater your eternal bliss. It occurred to me just now as I was saying my Paternoster (which God Himself taught us), that when we say 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,'[7] we are praying to God to deprive us of ourselves.

Concerning the third text I will not now speak, when he says, "I have chosen you, fed you, stilled you, established you that you may go forth and bring forth fruit and that your fruit shall remain."[8] And the fruit is known to none but God alone. And that we may come to this fruit, may the eternal truth help us, of which I have spoken. Amen.

Notes

1. Peter Lombard among others.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas held that the Holy Ghost is the *cause* of our love.
3. Cf. Sermon 8, note 3.
4. Supplied from the Basle Tauler print, not in the MSS.
5. *LW* IV, 5.
6. See Sermon 11, note 2.
7. Eckhart's rendering of *Fiat voluntas tua* as 'may (my) will be thine' recurs in Sermon 18 and elsewhere.
8. I have not rendered the strange repetitions of verbs in this sentence. For discussion of this third point, see Sermon 17.

SERMON THIRTEEN (a)

(Q 5a)

IN HOC APPARUIT CARITAS DEI IN NOBIS, QUONIAM FILIUM SUUM UNIGENITUM MISIT DEUS IN MUNDUM UT VIVAMUS PER EUM (1 John 4:9)[1]

St. John says, "God's love was disclosed to us in this, that He sent His Son into the world that we should live through him," and with him. And thus our human nature has been immeasurably exalted because the Highest has come and taken on human nature. A master says, 'When I consider that our nature is exalted over all creatures and sits in heaven above the angels, and is adored by them, I must ever rejoice in my heart, for Jesus Christ, my dear Lord, has made mine all that he has himself.' He says further that in all that the Father ever gave His Son Jesus Christ in human nature, He meant it more for me, and loved me more, and gave it to me rather than to him. How is this? He gave it to him for my sake, for I needed it. Therefore, whatever He gave him, he meant for me and gave it to me as well as to him. I except nothing, neither union nor the holiness of the Godhead nor anything else. All that He ever gave him in human nature is no more alien or distant from me than from him, for God cannot give a little: He must give either everything or nothing. His giving is utterly simple and perfect, undivided, and not in time but all in eternity. Be assured of this as I live: if we are to receive thus from Him, we must be raised up in eternity, above time. In eternity all things are present. That which is above me is just as near and present to me as that which I have here by me, and *there* we shall receive whatever we are to get from God. God knows nothing[2] outside of Himself; His eye is always turned inward into Himself. What He sees, He sees entirely within Himself. Therefore God does not see us when we are in sin. Therefore, in as far as we are *in* Him, God knows us; that is, in as far

as we are without sin. And all the works that our Lord ever did he has given me for my own, to be as meritorious to me as the works I did myself. Now since all his nobility belongs equally to us all and is equally near to us, why do we not receive equally? Ah, this you must understand! Whoever wants to come to this giving so as to receive this good equally, to receive that human nature which is common and equally close to all men, then, just as in human nature nothing is strange and nothing is further or nearer, so it is necessary that you should make no distinction in the family of men, not being closer to yourself than to another. You must love all men equally, respect and regard them equally, and whatever happens to another, whether good or bad, must be the same as if it happened to you.

Now this is the second meaning: "He sent him into the world." By this we must understand the great world into which the angels look. How should we be? We should be there with all our love and all our desire. St. Augustine says, what a man loves, that he becomes in love. Should we now say that if a man loves God he becomes God? That sounds as if it were contrary to faith. In the love that a man gives there is no duality but one and unity, and in love I am God more than I am in myself. The prophet says, 'I have said you are gods and children of the Most High' (Ps. 82:6). That sounds strange, that man can become God in love, but so it is true in the eternal truth, and our Lord Jesus Christ possesses it.

"He sent him into the world [*mundum*]." *Mundum* means in one sense 'pure.' Note this: God has no place more His own than a pure heart and a pure soul. *There* the Father begets His Son, just as He begets him in eternity — neither more nor less. What is a pure heart? That is pure which is separated and parted from all creatures, for all creatures produce impurity, because they are nothing[3] and nothing is a lack and tarnishes the soul. All creatures are mere nothing, neither angels nor creatures are anything. They touch everything (?)[4] and soil it, for they are made out of nothing; they are and were nothing. Whatever is opposed to all creatures and displeases them, is nothing. If I placed a burning coal on my hand it would hurt. That is purely from nothing, and if we were free of nothing, we would not be soiled.

Now: "We live in him," with him. We desire nothing more than life. What is my life? That which is moved from within by itself. What is moved from without is not alive. So if we live with him, we must

also co-operate with him from within, so that we do not work from without, we must be moved from that out of which we live, which is by him. We can and must work from our own power from within. If then we are to live in him and through him, he must be our own, and we must work from our own: just as God does all things of His own and through Himself, so we must work from our own, which is He, in us. He is altogether our own, and all things are our own in Him. Whatever all angels and all saints and our Lady have, that is my own in Him, and is no stranger or further from me than what I have myself. All things are equally my own in him, and if we are to come to the very own, in which all things are our own, we must take Him equally in all things, in one not more than in another, for He is alike in all things.

We find people who like the taste of God in one way but not in another, and they want to have God only in one way of contemplation, not in another. I raise no objection, but they are quite wrong. If you want to take God properly, you should take Him equally in all things, in hardship as in comfort, in weeping as in joy, it should be all the same to you. If you think you have no devotion or earnestness, and have not caused this through mortal sin, when you want to have devotion and earnestness, and that therefore you have not got God — then, if you regret this lack of devotion and earnestness, that *is* devotion *and* earnestness. So you should not bind yourself to any mode, for God is not in any mode, neither this nor that. So those who take God this way are wrong. They take the mode and not God. So remember this: love and seek God purely, and whatever the way of it, be content. For your intention should be purely God and nothing else. What you then like or dislike, that is right, and you must know that anything else is wrong. Those who want so many ways push God under the bench: whether it is weeping or sighing or anything of the sort — it is all *not God*. If it comes so, take it and be content — if it does not come, be likewise content and take whatever God wants to give you at the time, and remain always in humble self-naughting and rejection, considering always that you are unworthy of any good that God could do you, if He would.

Now I have explained to you the words of St. John, "God's love was disclosed to us in this." If we were in such case, this good would be revealed in us. That it is hidden from us has no other cause than

ourselves. We are the cause of all our hindrances. Guard yourself against yourself, then you will have guarded well. And if it is the case that we do not want to take it, still He has chosen us for this. If we do not take it, we shall regret it and we shall be sorely punished. If we do not come to where this good may be got, that is not His fault, but ours....[5]

Notes

1. This somewhat fragmentary text was discovered by Quint. Its relation to 13b is discussed by him in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 60 (1935): 173–92.

2. Clark (p. 234) makes one of his rare mistakes in translating here. He has rendered *nútz* as 'what is useful'; it is in fact a dialect form of *niht*, 'nothing.'

3. Cf. Sermon 6, note 5. This 'nothing' is therefore not 'seen' by God (note 2).

4. *Sy hand all in all* seems to mean, as Clark translates, 'they have all in all,' but this makes little sense and Quint is probably right in believing the text to be corrupt.

5. The normal conclusion of a sermon is lacking. It is not possible to say how much more may be missing.

SERMON THIRTEEN (b)

(Pf 13, Q 5b, QT 6)

IN HOC APPARUIT CARITAS DEI IN NOBIS
(1 John 4:9)[1]

"God's love was disclosed and revealed to us in this, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live with the Son and in the Son and through the Son," for all who do not live through the Son are indeed in the wrong.

Suppose there were a mighty king who had a beautiful daughter, if he gave her to the son of a poor man, all those who belonged to that family would thereby be raised up and ennobled. Now a master says, 'God became man, and thereby the whole human race is raised up and ennobled. We must all rejoice that Christ, our brother, has risen of his own power above all the choirs of angels and sits at the right hand of the Father.' This master has spoken truly, but still I care little about it. What good would it do me to have a brother who was a rich man if I were a poor man? What good would it do me to have a brother who was a wise man if I were a fool?

I say something different and more to the point: God not only became man, but he took on human nature.

The masters agree in saying that all men are equally noble by nature. But I say in truth, all the goodness that all the saints have possessed, and Mary, God's mother, and Christ according to his humanity — that is *my own* in this nature. Now you might ask me, since I have everything in this (human) nature that Christ can perform according to his humanity, why then do we praise and magnify Christ as our Lord and our God? That is because he was a messenger from God to us and has brought our blessedness to us. The blessedness he brought us was our own. Where the Father bears His Son in the innermost ground, *this* nature flows in there. This nature is one and

simple. Something may here peep out or hang on it, but that is not this One.

I say something else, and even harder. Whoever would exist in the nakedness of this nature, free from all mediation, must have left behind all distinction of person, so that he is as well disposed to a man who is across the sea, whom he never set eyes on, as to the man who is with him and is his close friend. As long as you favor your own person more than that man you have never seen, you are assuredly not right and you have never for a single instant looked into this simple ground. You may indeed have seen a derived image of the truth in a picture, but it was not the best! And secondly, you must be pure of heart, for that heart alone is pure that has abolished creatureliness.

Thirdly, you must be free of *nothing*. The question is asked, what burns in hell. The masters generally say it is self-will. But I declare in truth: *nothing*[2] burns in hell. Here is a simile. Take a burning coal and put it on my hand. If I said the coal burnt my hand, I would do it injustice. Were I to say truly what burns me, it is negation, for the coal contains something that my hand has *not*. It is this *not* that burns me. But if my hand contained all that the coal has or can effect, it would be all of the nature of fire. Then, if anyone were to take all the fire that ever burnt, and poured it out on to my hand, that could not hurt me. In the same way, I say, just because God and all those who stand before His face have on account of their true blessedness something which they who are separated from God have *not*, this very *not* torments the souls in hell more than self-will or any fire. I say truly, insofar as *not* adheres to you, to that extent you are imperfect. Therefore, if you want to be perfect, you must be rid of *not*.

This is what the text I have given you is concerned with: "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world." You should not take this to mean the external world, as when he ate and drank with us, but you should understand it of the inner world. As surely as the Father in His simple nature bears the Son naturally, just as surely He bears him in the inmost recesses of the spirit, and *this* is the inner world. Here God's ground is my ground and my ground is God's ground. Here I live from my own as God lives from His own. For the man who has once for an instant looked into this ground, a thousand marks of

red minted gold are the same as a brass farthing. Out of this inmost ground, all your works should be wrought without Why. I say truly, as long as you do works for the sake of heaven or God or eternal bliss, from without, you are at fault. It may pass muster, but it is not the best. Indeed, if a man thinks he will get more of God by meditation,[3] by devotion, by ecstasies, or by special infusion of grace than by the fireside or in the stable — that is nothing but taking God, wrapping a cloak round His head and shoving Him under a bench. For whoever seeks God in a special way gets the way and misses God, who lies hidden in it. But whoever seeks God without any special way gets Him as He is in Himself, and that man lives with the Son, and he is life itself. If a man asked life for a thousand years, '*Why* do you live?' if it could answer it would only say, 'I live because I live.' That is because life lives from its own ground, and gushes forth from its own. Therefore it lives without *Why,* because it lives for itself. And so, if you were to ask a genuine man who acted from his own ground, 'Why do you act?' if he were to answer properly he would simply say, 'I act because I act.'

Where creature stops, God begins to be. Now all God wants of you is for you to go out of yourself in the way of creatureliness and let God be within you. The least creaturely image that takes shape in you is as big as God. How is that? It deprives you of the whole of God. As soon as this image comes in, God has to leave with all His Godhead. But when the image goes out, God comes in. God desires you to go out of yourself (as creature) as much as if all His blessedness depended on it. My dear friend, what harm can it do you to do God the favor of letting Him be God in you? Go right out of yourself for God's sake, and God will go right out of *Himself* for your sake! When these two have gone out, what is left is one and simple. In this One the Father bears His Son in the inmost source. Out of that the Holy Ghost blossoms forth, and *then* there arises in God a will which belongs to the soul. As long as this will stands untouched by all creatures and all that is created, this will is free. Christ says, "No man comes to heaven but he who came from heaven" (John 3:13). All things are created out of nothing, therefore their true source is nothing, and as far as this noble will inclines to creatures, it is dissipated with creatures in their nothing. The question arises, whether this noble will can be so dissipated that it can never return. The masters generally declare

that it can never return insofar as it is dispersed in time. But *I* say, whenever this will turns back from itself, and from all creation for a moment into its primal source, then the will has its true birthright of freedom and is free, and in this moment all time lost is recovered.[4]

People often say to me, 'Pray for me.' And I think, 'Why do you go out? Why do you not stay within yourself and draw on your own treasure? For you have the whole truth in its essence within you.' That we may thus truly stay within, that we may possess all truth immediately, without distinction, in true blessedness, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Quint considers this to be a toned-down version of 13a, to which the censors had taken exception. It might, however, be an independent reconstruction, from notes, of the same sermon.

2. Cf. Sermon 6, note 5, and Sermon 13a, note 2. Eckhart plays on the two senses of Middle High German *niht* which means both 'not' (modern *nicht*) and 'nothing' (modern *nichts*).

3. *Innerkeit,* 'inwardness.'

4. Cf. Sermon 15.

SERMON FOURTEEN (a)

(Q 16a)[1]

A master says, if all mediation were gone between me and this wall, I would be *on* the wall, but not *in* the wall. It is not thus in spiritual matters, for the one is always in the other: that which embraces is that which is embraced, for it embraces nothing but itself. This is subtle. He who understands it has been preached to enough. But now a little on the image of the soul.[2]

There are many masters who claim that this image is born of will and intellect, but this is not so. I say rather that this image is an expression of itself without will and without intellect. I will give you a simile. Hold up a mirror before me, and whether I want to or not, without will and without intellectual knowledge of myself I am imaged in the mirror. This image is not of the mirror, and it is not of itself, but this image is most of all in him from whom it takes its being and its nature. When the mirror is taken away from me, then I am no longer imaged in the mirror, for I am myself the image.

Another simile. When a branch grows out of a tree, it bears both the name and the essence of the tree. What comes out is what stays within, and what stays within is what comes out. Thus the branch is an expression of itself.

Thus too I say of the image of the soul: what comes out is what stays within, and what stays within is what comes out. This image is the Son of the Father, and I myself am this image, and this image is wisdom. Therefore God be praised now and evermore. Whoever does not understand, let him not worry.

Notes

1. This fragment from the British Library (formerly British Museum) MS. Egerton 2188, f. 104^{v} was printed by Priebsch in his *Deutsche Handschriften in England* II (Erlangen, 1901), p. 82. It was shown by Brethauer to be in close agreement with art. 8 of the Supplementary Accusation.
2. For further notes, see Sermon 14b.

SERMON FOURTEEN (b)

(Pf 14, Q 16b)

QUASI VAS AUREUM SOLIDUM ORNATUM
OMNI LAPIDE PRETIOSO
(Ecclesiasticus 50:10)

I have quoted a text in Latin which is read today in the epistle,[1] that can be applied to St. Augustine or to any virtuous and holy soul. Such are likened to "a gold vessel which is strong and firm and is adorned with the noble nature of all precious stones." It is on account of the noble nature of the saints that we cannot do justice to them with any one likeness, and therefore they are likened to trees, to the sun and the moon.[2] So here St. Augustine is likened to a golden vessel, strong and firm, adorned with the noble nature of all precious stones. Indeed, the same may be said of any virtuous and saintly soul who has abandoned all things to possess them where they are eternal. Whoever leaves things insofar as they are contingent, possesses them there, where they are pure being and eternal.

Every vessel has two properties: it receives and it contains. Spiritual vessels are different from physical vessels. The wine is in the cask, the cask is not in the wine. And the wine is not in the cask as it is in the staves, for if it were in the cask as it is in the staves, we could not drink it. With a spiritual vessel it is different. Whatever is received in *that* is in the vessel and the vessel in it, and it is the vessel itself. Whatever the spiritual vessel receives, is its own nature. God's nature is to give Himself to every virtuous soul, and the soul's nature is to receive God, and this can be said in regard to the soul's noblest achievement. *There,* the soul bears God's image and is like God. There can be no image without likeness, but there *can* be likeness without images. Two eggs are equally white, but one is not the image of the

other, for that which is the image of another must have come from its nature and be born of it and be like it.[3]

Every image has two properties. One is that it takes its being immediately from that of which it is the image, involuntarily, for it is a natural product, thrusting forth from nature like the branch from the tree. When a face is cast before a mirror, the face must be imaged in it whether it will or not. But its *nature* does not appear in the mirror image, though the mouth and eyes and all the features of the face appear in the mirror. God has reserved this to Himself that, in whatever reflects Him, there His nature and all that He is and can perform, is at once involuntarily reflected. For the image precedes the will and the will follows the image, the image first breaking forth from His nature and drawing into itself all that nature and essence can perform: all His nature pours out into His image while yet remaining intact within itself; for the masters locate this image not in the Holy Ghost but rather in the middle Person; for the Son is the first issue of His nature, and therefore he is properly called an image of the Father, but the Holy Ghost is not this — he is simply an efflorescence of the Father and the Son, yet having one nature with them. But the will is not a mediator between image and nature; indeed, neither understanding nor knowledge nor wisdom can be a mediator here, for the divine image breaks forth from the fecundity of nature without mediation. But if there is any mediator of wisdom, that is the image itself. Therefore, in the Godhead the Son is called the Wisdom of the Father.

You should know that this simple divine image which is impressed on the soul's inmost nature is received without means. It is the inmost and noblest part of the (divine) nature that is most truly patterned in the image of the soul, and here neither will nor wisdom is a means; as I have said, if wisdom is a means, it is the image itself. God is here in the image without means, and the image is without means in God. But God is in far nobler fashion in the image than the image is in God. The image does not receive God as the creator, but as He is a rational being, and the noblest part of the divine nature is most truly patterned in the image. This is a natural image of God which God has impressed by nature in every soul. More than this I cannot ascribe to the image; to ascribe more to it would make it God Himself, which is not the case, for then God would not be God.

The second property of the image is to be observed in the image's likeness. And here especially note two things: an image is, firstly, not *of* itself, and (secondly), not *for* itself. In the same way that the image received in the eye is not the eye's and has no existence in the eye, but merely depends on and is attached to that of which it is the image, therefore it is not *of* itself or *for* itself, but really belongs to that of which it is the image, is its property, takes its being therefrom and is the same being.

Now listen carefully. What an image really is can be seen from four things, or maybe there will be more. An image is not of itself or for itself; it is solely that thing's whose image it is, and all that it is belongs to that. Whatever is alien to that which it represents, it is not and does not belong to. An image takes its being solely from that of which it is the image without means, has one essence with it and is the same essence. I am not speaking here of matters discussed in the schools, but they can well be spoken of from the pulpit as doctrine.[4]

You often ask how you ought to live. Now pay close attention. Just as I have told you about the image — that is the way you should live! You should be His and for Him, you should not be your own or for yourself, or belong to anyone. When I came to this convent yesterday, I saw sage and herbs on a grave, and I thought, here lies someone's dear friend, and he loves this plot of earth the more on that account. Whoever has a very dear friend, loves whatever belongs to him, and can do nothing against his friend's interests. Take the dog, an irrational beast, as an example. He is so faithful to his master that he hates whatever opposes his master, and whoever is his master's friend he likes, taking no heed of riches or poverty. If a blind beggar were his master's bosom friend, the dog would like him better than a king or emperor who was his master's foe. In fact, I tell you that if it were possible for half the dog to be unfaithful to his master, he would hate half himself.

But now some complain that they have no inwardness nor devotion nor rapture nor any special consolation from God. Such people are still not on the right way: one can bear with them but it is second best. I declare truly that, as long as *anything* is reflected in your mind which is not the eternal Word, or which looks away from the eternal Word, then, good as it may be, it is not the right thing. For he alone is a good man who, having set at naught all created things, stands

facing straight, with no side glances toward the eternal Word, and is imaged and reflected there in righteousness. That man draws from the same source as the Son, and is himself the Son. Scripture says, "No man knows the Father but the Son" (Matt. 11:27). Therefore, if you would know God, you must not merely be *like* the Son, you must *be* the Son yourself. But some people want to see God with their own eyes as they see a cow, and they want to love God as they love a cow. You love a cow for her milk and her cheese and your own profit. That is what all those men do who love God for outward wealth or inward consolation — and they do not truly love God, they love their own profit. I truly assert that *anything* you put in the forefront of your mind, if it is not God in Himself, is — however good it may be — a hindrance to your gaining the highest truth.

And as I said before that St. Augustine is compared to a gold vessel, closed at the bottom and open at the top — see, that is how *you* should be! If *you* would stand with St. Augustine and in the sanctity of all the saints, your heart must be closed to all created things and receive God as He is in Himself. Thus men are compared to the higher powers because they always go bareheaded, and women to the lower powers because their head is always covered. The higher powers transcend time and space, springing immediately from the soul's essence, so they are compared to men, who always go uncovered. Hence their activity is eternal. A master[5] says that all the lower powers of the soul, insofar as they are touched by time and space, have to that extent lost their virginal purity, and can never be so finely attenuated or sifted that they can reach the highest powers. Yet they *can* receive the imprint of a similar image.

You should be firm and steadfast; that is, you should be the same in weal and woe, in fortune and misfortune, having the noble nature of precious stones;[6] that is, all virtues should be enclosed in you and flow out of you in their true being. You should traverse and transcend all the virtues, drawing virtue solely from its source in that ground where it is one with the divine nature. And, inasmuch as you are more united to the divine nature than are the angels, *they* must get it from you. That we may be One, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. St. Augustine's Day (August 28).
2. In the Dominican missal (Q).
3. If B is derived from A, it is the image of A. But if C is also derived from A, it may resemble B, but is the *image* of A, not B.
4. I.e., this is not just a point for academic discussion, but has a practical value for instruction. This follows.
5. Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980–1037), *On the Soul* 4.2.
6. Precious stones were believed to have magic powers.

SERMON FIFTEEN

(Pf 15, Q 105, QT 44)

MORTUUS EST ET REVIXIT, PERIERAT ET INVENTUS EST
(Luke 15:32)

"He was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and has been found again." I have said in a sermon that I wanted to teach a man who had done good works while in mortal sin, how these works come to life again with the time in which they were done.[1] And this I will now show as it truly is, because I have been asked to make my meaning clear. I will do so, although it is in opposition to all masters now living.

The masters all say that as long as a man is in a state of grace, all his works are worthy of eternal reward, and that is true, for God does the works in grace, and I agree with them. But the masters concur in saying that if a man falls into mortal sin, all the works that he does while in mortal sin are dead, just as he himself is dead, and they are not worthy of eternal reward, because he is not living in a state of grace. And in this sense it is true, and I agree with them. Now the masters say: if God restores to grace a man who repents his sins, all the works he ever did in a state of grace before he fell into mortal sin — these all arise again in the new state of grace and live, as they did before. And I agree with them. But, they say, those works the man did while he was in mortal sin are eternally lost — the time and the works together. And *that* I, Master Eckhart, totally deny, and I say this. Of all the good works that a man did while he was in mortal sin, not a single one is lost, nor the time in which they occurred, if he is restored to grace. Observe, this is contrary to all masters now living!

Now pay close attention to what my words imply; then you will grasp my meaning. I declare roundly: *all* good works that man ever

did or ever will, as well as the time in which they occurred or ever will occur — works *and* time are totally lost, works as works, time as time. I say further, *no* work was ever good or holy or blessed. I say also that time was never holy or blessed or good, nor ever will be, neither the one nor the other. How then could it be preserved, since it is not good, blessed, or holy? And so, since *good* works, and also the time in which they occurred, are altogether completely lost, how could those works be preserved that took place in mortal sin and the time in which they occurred? But I declare: they are lost altogether, works *and* time, evil *and* good, works as works, time as time — they are altogether lost eternally.

Now the question arises: *Why* is a work called 'a holy work,' 'a blessed work,' and 'a good work,' and likewise the time in which the work occurred? Note, as I said: the work and the time in which it occurred is neither holy, nor blessed, nor good. Goodness, holiness and blessedness — that is a *name attached* to the work and the time, and not its possession. Why? — A work *as* a work is not of itself, it is not there for its own sake, it does not occur of its own accord, or for its own sake, and it knows nothing of itself. And therefore it is neither blessed nor unblessed: rather, the spirit out of which the work proceeds rids itself of the 'image,' and that never comes in again.[2] For the work, as work, perished at once, and likewise the time in which it occurred, and is neither here nor there, for the spirit has nothing more to do with the work. If it is to work any more, it must be with other works, and in another time. Therefore works and time are altogether lost, evil and good are equally lost, for they have not resting place in the spirit, nor have they any being or place in themselves, and God too has no need of them. And so, in themselves, they are lost and perish.

If a good work is done by a man, he *rids* himself with this work, and by this *ridding* he is more like and closer to his origin than he was previously, before the ridding occurred, and by that much he is the more blessed and better than previously, before the ridding occurred. *That* is why the work is *called* holy and blessed, as well as the time in which the work occurred; but it is not really true, for the work has no being, nor has the time in which it occurred, since it perishes in itself. Therefore it is neither good nor holy nor blessed, but rather the *man* is blessed in whom the *fruit* of the work remains, neither as time nor

as work, but as a good disposition which is eternal with the spirit as the spirit is eternal in itself, and it *is* the spirit itself. Observe, in *this* way no good deed was ever lost, nor the time in which it occurred; not that it was preserved *as* work and as time, but rather as being *freed* of work and time with the disposition in the spirit, in which it is eternal as the spirit is eternal in itself.

Now let us consider those works done while in mortal sin. As you have heard (those of you who have understood me), as works and as time, those good works done in mortal sin are lost, works and time together. But I have *also* said that works and time are nothing in themselves. But if works and time are nothing in themselves, then, see, he who loses them loses *nothing*. That is true. But I have said further: Works and time have no being and place in themselves; as a work it has been *dropped* by the spirit in time. If the spirit is to perform further, this must be another work and in a different time. And therefore it can never enter the spirit, as far as it was work and time. And it can in no way enter God, for *no* time or temporal work ever came into God. And therefore it must perish and be lost.

And *yet* I have said that all good works a man does while he is in mortal sin are none of them lost, neither time nor works. And that is true, in the sense which I shall explain. And, as I said before, it is contrary to all masters now living.

Now observe, in brief, the true sense of the matter. If a man does *good* works while he is in mortal sin, he does not do the works from out of that mortal sin, for these works are *good* and mortal sins are *evil*. He does them rather out of the ground of his spirit, which is good in itself by nature, although he is not in a state of grace, and the works do not, in themselves, merit heaven at the time of their occurrence. Nevertheless, it does not harm the spirit, for the *fruit* of the work, free from work and time, remains with the spirit and is spirit with the spirit, and perishes as little as the essence of the spirit perishes. But the spirit frees its being by working out these images, which are *good,* just as truly as it would were it in a state of grace (even though it does not gain heaven by these works, as would be the case in a state of grace), for in this way it creates the same readiness for union and likeness, work and time being of use only to enable man to work himself *out*. And the more a man frees himself and works himself out, the more he approaches God, who is free in Himself;

and inasmuch as a man frees himself, to that extent he loses neither works nor time. And when grace returns, whatever was in him by nature is now entirely in him by grace.

And to the extent that he has freed himself with good works while he was in mortal sin, just so far does he leap forward to unite with God — which he would not have been able to do unless he had freed himself with these works while he was in mortal sin. If he had to work them off now, he would have to take time for this. But since he freed himself in the previous period while in mortal sin, he has gained for himself the time in which he is now free. Accordingly, the time in which he is now free is not lost, because he has gained this time and can do other works in this time, which will bring him into still closer union with God. The fruits of the works that he did in the spirit remain in the spirit, and are spirit with the spirit. Although the works and the time have passed away, the spirit, out of which they were done, still lives, and the fruit of the works, free from works and time, full of grace as the spirit is full of grace.

See, thus we have proved the truth of my assertion, as it truly is. And all those who contradict it, I contradict them and care not a jot for them, for what I have said is true, and truth itself declares it.[3] If they understood what spirit is, and what work and time are *in themselves,* and in what manner the work corresponds to the spirit, then they would certainly not declare that any good deed or disposition would or could ever be lost. Although the work passes away with time and perishes, yet in that it corresponds to the spirit in its essence, it never perishes. The correspondence consists just in this, that the spirit is freed[4] by the disposition which takes effect in the works. That is the power of the work, for the sake of which the work occurred. *This* remains in the spirit and has never come out, and it can no more perish than the spirit in itself, because it *is* that spirit. Now see, if a man were able to understand this, how could he say that any good work could ever perish as long as the spirit has its being and lives in the new grace?

That we may become one spirit with God, and that we may be found in a state of grace, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 13, note 4.
2. The mind that conceived the idea has thereby become *'free'* of it.
3. This expression normally means that there is biblical confirmation for a statement. But no text is quoted, and Quint does not adduce any.
4. Reading *gelediget* with Quint. Pfeiffer has *geedelt* 'ennobled.'

SERMON SIXTEEN

(Q 29, Pf 74)

CONVESCENS PRAECEPIT EIS, AB IEROSOLYMIS
NE DISCEDERENT ETC.
(Acts 1:4)

These words which I have quoted in Latin are read in the Mass for this feast day.[1] St. Luke writes here how our Lord, when he was about to ascend into heaven, ate with his disciples and bade them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father which they had heard from his lips, for within a few days they would be baptized in the Holy Ghost.

No one can receive the Holy Spirit because he lives above time in eternity. In things temporal, the Holy Ghost can be neither received nor given. When a man turns from temporal things and into himself, he there perceives a heavenly light, a light that comes from heaven. It is beneath heaven, but it comes from heaven.[2] In this light man finds satisfaction, and yet it is corporeal: they say it is material. A piece of iron, whose nature is to fall, will rise against its nature and hang suspended to a lodestone in virtue of the master force the stone has received from heaven. Wherever the stone turns, the iron will turn with it. The spirit does the same: not fully satisfied with this light, it presses right through the firmament and drives through heaven till it reaches that spirit that revolves the heavens, and from the revolution of the heavens all things in the world grow and green. Still the mind is not satisfied till it pierces to the apex, to the primal source where spirit has its origin. This (human) spirit knows neither number nor numberlessness: there is no numberless number in the malady of time. No one has any other root in eternity, where there is 'nobody' without number.[3] This spirit must transcend number and break through multiplicity, and God will break through him: and just as He breaks

through into me, so I break through in turn into Him. God leads this spirit into the desert and into the unity of Himself, where He is simply One and welling up in Himself. This spirit is in unity and freedom.

Now the masters declare that the will is so free that none can bind it except God alone. God does not bind the will; He sets it free in such a fashion that it wills naught that is not God Himself, and that is real freedom. And the spirit *cannot* will otherwise than as God will, and that is not its bondage but its true liberation.[4] Some people say, 'If I have God and the love of God, then I can do what I like.' They have not grasped this aright. So long as you are capable of doing anything that is against God and His commandment, you have not the love of God, though you may deceive the world into thinking you have.[5] The man who is in God's will and in God's love is fain to do whatever is pleasing to God and to leave undone whatever is opposed to God; and he can no more leave undone a thing that God wants done than he can do a thing that God abhors, just like a man whose legs are tied so that he cannot walk, so a man who is in the will of God can do no wrong. Someone said, 'Though God should bid me do evil and shun virtue, yet I would be incapable of wrongdoing.' For none loves virtue but he who is virtue itself. He who has abandoned self and all things, who seeks not his own in any thing, and does all he does without Why and in love, that man being dead to all the world is alive in God and God in him.

Here some folk will say, 'You are telling us wondrous things, but we perceive them not.' I regret that too. This state[6] is so noble yet so common, that you have no need to purchase it for a penny or a halfpenny. If your intention is right and your will is free, you have it. He who has thus abandoned all things on the lower plane where they are mortal, will recover them in God, where they are reality. Whatever is dead here is alive there, and all that is dense matter here is spirit there in God. Just as, if one were to pour clean water into a clean basin, absolutely bright and clean, and stood it quite still, then, if a man held his face over it, he would see it at the bottom as it was in itself. That is because the water is pure and clean and still. It is just the same with all people who are in a state of freedom and unity in themselves. If they can receive God in peace and quiet, they should receive Him too in turmoil and disquiet, and then all is well. But if they receive Him less in turmoil and disquiet than in peace and

quiet, that is not right. St. Augustine says, 'When you are weary of the day and the time is long, turn to God where no "long" exists and all things are at rest.' Whoever loves justice is possessed with justice, and he becomes justice itself.

Now our Lord said, "I have not called you servants, I have called you friends, for the servant does not know his master's will" (John 15:15). My friend, too, may know something I am ignorant of, if he did not want to reveal it to me. But our Lord said, "All that I have heard from my Father, I have revealed to you." I marvel how some priests, learned men with pretensions to eminence, are so easily satisfied and are misled by these words, that our Lord spoke, "All that I have heard from my Father, I have revealed to you." They want to take it this way and declare that he has revealed to us 'on the way' just so much as is needful to our eternal bliss. I do not accept this interpretation, for it is not the truth. Why did God become man? That I might be born God Himself. God died that I might die to the whole world and all created things. It is in this sense that we should understand the saying of our Lord, "All that I have heard from my Father, I have revealed to you." *What* does the Son hear from his Father? The Father can only give birth, the Son can only be born. All that the Father has and is, the profundity of the divine being and the divine nature, He brings forth all at once in His only-begotten Son. *That* is what the Son "hears" from the Father, that is what he has revealed, that we may be the same Son. All that the Son has he has from his Father: essence and nature, that we may be the same only-begotten Son. No one has the Holy Ghost unless he is the only-begotten Son. Father and Son inspire the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit is inspired, for that is essential and spiritual.

It is true that you may receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, or the *likeness* of the Holy Ghost, but it does not abide with you — it is impermanent. In the same way a man may blush for shame or blanch, but that is accidental and it passes. But a man who is by nature ruddy and fair, remains so always. So it is with a man who is the only-begotten Son; the Holy Ghost remains in his being. Therefore it is written in the Book of Wisdom, "This day I have born you in the reflection of my eternal light, in the fullness and glory of all the saints" (Psalm 2:7+109:3). He bears him now, today. There is 'childbed in

the Godhead'; there they are baptized in the Holy Ghost, that is the promise made by the Father. "After these days, which are not few or many," that is the 'fullness of the Godhead' wherein is neither day nor night. In that, what is a thousand miles away is as near to me as the place where I stand now. There is fullness and full enjoyment of the Godhead; there is one unity. As long as the soul perceives any distinction, that is not right. As long as anything peeps out or peeps in, there is no oneness. Mary Magdalene sought our Lord within the tomb; seeking one dead man she found two living angels, but still was unconsoled. Then the angels said, "Why are you troubled? Whom do you seek? One dead man, and you find two living." And she said, "That is just my disappointment, that I find two where I sought only one." As long as any distinction of any created things can look into the soul, she is disconsolate. I say, as I have often said it before, so far as the soul's created nature goes, there is no such thing as truth. I say there is something higher than the soul's created nature. But some priests cannot understand how there can be anything so nearly akin to God, and so *one*. It has naught in common with anything. All that is created or creaturely is alien. It is a single one in itself, and takes in nothing from outside.

Our Lord ascended into heaven, beyond all light, beyond all understanding and all human ken. The man who is thus translated beyond all light, dwells in eternity.[7] Therefore St. Paul says, "God dwells in a light to which there is no approach" (1 Tim. 6:16), and that is in itself pure unity. Therefore a man must be slain and wholly dead, devoid of self and wholly without likeness, like to none, and then he is really God-like. For it is God's character, His nature, to be peerless and like no man.

That we may be thus one in the oneness that is God Himself, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Ascension Day.
2. The light of the highest peak, or spark of the soul (Q).
3. The text is corrupt. I follow Quint's reconstruction. The general sense, that multiplicity must be transcended, is clear.
4. The seeming paradox was not invented by Eckhart; it is orthodox Thomism.

5. According to Karrer (quoted by Quint), an allusion to St. Augustine's "Love, and do what you will." The people referred to may be the so-called Brethren of the Free Spirit.

6. Reading *wesen* with Quint, who considers Pfeiffer's reading *wizzen* 'knowing' as meaningless. This is not quite true, but Quint's reading is the more pregnant.

7. Following Quint's reading *êwicheit,* against Pfeiffer's *einekeit,* 'unity,' which, however, would also make sense.

SERMON SEVENTEEN

(Pf 81, Q 28, QT 31)

EGO ELEGI VOS DE MUNDO
(John 15:16)

These words which I have quoted in Latin are read today in the holy Gospel for the feast of a saint, Barnabas by name,[1] who is commonly referred to in the scriptures as being an apostle. And our Lord says, "I have chosen you, I have selected you from all the world, picked you out from the entire world and from all created things, that you should bring forth much fruit and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16), for it is very delightful to bring forth fruit and for the fruit to remain, and the fruit *does* remain to him who dwells in love. At the end of this Gospel our Lord says, "Love one another as I have ever loved you; and as my Father eternally loved me, so I have loved you. Keep my commandments, then you will remain in my love" (John 15:12+9–10).

All God's commandments come from love and from the goodness of His nature, for if they did not come from love they would not be God's commandments. For God's commandment *is* the goodness of His nature, and His nature is His goodness in His commandment. Now, whoever dwells in the goodness of his nature, dwells in God's love: but love is without Why. If I had a friend and loved him for benefits received and because of getting my own way, I should not be loving my friend, but myself. I ought to love my friend for his own goodness, for his virtues and for all that he is in himself. Only then would I love my friend aright, if I loved him as I have said. It is just the same with the man abiding in God's love, seeking not his own in God or in himself or in any thing, but loving God solely for His goodness and for the goodness of His nature, and for all that He is in Himself. That is genuine love.

Love of virtue is a flower, an ornament, the mother of all virtue, of all perfection, of all blessedness, for it is God; for God is the fruit of virtues (God begets all virtues and is a fruit of the virtues), and it is this fruit that remains to man. A man who should work for the fruit would rejoice greatly if the fruit remained with him. If a man had a vineyard or a field, and made it over to his servant to till, letting him keep the produce, at the same time giving him all that was necessary, the servant would be very pleased to have the fruits at no expense. Thus too a man rejoices who dwells with the fruit of virtue, for he has no worries or vexations because he has relinquished himself and all things.

Now our Lord says, "Whoever abandons anything for me and for my name's sake, I will return it to him a hundredfold, with eternal life to boot" (Matt. 19:29). But if you give it up for the sake of that hundredfold and for eternal life, you have given up nothing; even if you give it up for a thousandfold reward you are giving up nothing. You must give up yourself, altogether give up self, and then you have really given up.

A man once came to me — it was not long ago — and told me he had given up a great deal of property and goods, in order that he might save his soul. Then I thought, Alas! how little and how paltry are the things you have given up. It is blindness and folly, so long as you care a jot for what you have given up. But if you have given up self, then you have really given up.

The man who has resigned himself is so purified that the world will have none of him. I said here once — it was not long ago — he who is devoted to justice is taken up by justice, seized of justice, becomes one with justice.[2] I once wrote in my book,[3] The just man serves neither God nor creatures, for he is free, and the closer he is to justice, the closer he is to freedom, and the more he is freedom itself. Whatever is created, is not free. So long as there is anything at all above me, that is not God, that oppresses me, however small it may be or whatever its nature; even though it were reason and love, as long as this is something created and not God Himself, it oppresses me, for it is not free. The unjust man is the servant of truth,[4] whether he likes it or not, and he serves the world and creatures, and is a bondman of sin.

I once thought — it was not long ago — That I am a man is something other men share with me; that I see and hear and eat and drink, that is the same as with cattle; but that *I am,* that belongs to no man but myself, not to a man, not to an angel, not even to God except insofar as I am one with Him. It is one purity and one unity. All God works, He puts into the *one* that is like Himself. God gives equally to all things, though their works are unequal, yet they tend in their operation to reproduce themselves. Nature wrought in my father the work of nature. Nature's intention was that I too should be a father as he was. He performs all this work for the sake of his own likeness and his own image, so that his work shall be himself. The intention is always the man.[5] But when nature is shifted or hindered so as not to operate with full power, the result is woman; and when nature ceases her operation, God begins to work and create, for without women, there would be no men. When the child is conceived in the mother's womb, it has image, form and material being: that is the work of nature.[6] That lasts for forty days and nights, and on the fortieth day God creates the soul in less than an instant, so that the soul is form and life for the body. Now ends the work of nature with all that nature can contrive in form, image and material being. The work of nature goes out altogether, and as nature's activity withdraws, it is fully replaced in the rational soul. This is now a work of nature *and* a creation of God.

In created things — as I have said before — there is no truth. There is something that transcends the created being of the soul, not in contact with created things, which are nothing; not even an angel has it, though he has a clear being that is pure and extensive: even that does not touch it. It is akin to the nature of deity, it is one in itself, and has naught in common with anything. It is a stumbling-block to many a learned cleric. It is a strange and desert place, and is rather nameless than possessed of a name, and is more unknown than it is known. If you could naught yourself for an instant, indeed I say less than an instant, you would possess all that this is in itself. But as long as you mind yourself or any thing at all, you know no more of God than my mouth knows of color or my eye of taste: so little do you know or discern what God is.

Now Plato, that great priest[7] begins to speak and would discourse on weighty matters. He speaks of something pure that is not in the

world, it is neither in the world not out of the world, neither in time nor in eternity, having neither inside nor outside. Out of this God, the eternal Father, derives the plenitude and depth of all His Deity. This He bears here in His only-begotten Son, so that we are that very Son, and His birth is His indwelling and His indwelling is His birth. It remains ever the One, that continually wells up in itself. *Ego,* the word 'I,' is proper to none but God in His oneness. *Vos,* this word means 'you,' that you are one in unity, so that *ego* and *vos,* I and you, stand for unity.

That we may be this same unity and remain this unity, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. June 11.
2. See Sermon 16.
3. What book this was is unknown.
4. Quint has restored the MS reading *wârheit,* instead of Pfeiffer's conjecture *unwârheit:* Eckhart means that the unjust man cannot help serving truth.
5. Woman was considered an 'incomplete man.'
6. Nature is conceived as the handmaid of God. She can make the body, but not the soul.
7. Cassiodorus called Plato the 'theologian,' Aristotle the 'logician' (Q).

SERMON EIGHTEEN

(Q 30, Pf 66)

PRAEDICA VERBUM, VIGILA, IN OMNIBUS LABORA
(2 Timothy 4:2)

We read a text today and tomorrow for my lord St. Dominic,[1] which St. Paul writes in the epistle, and in German it means "Speak the Word, publish it, proclaim it, bring it forth and propagate it." It is a remarkable thing that anything should pour forth and yet remain within. That the Word should pour forth and still remain within is very wonderful;[2] that all creatures should pour forth and remain within is very wonderful; what God has given and has promised to give is most wonderful, incomprehensible, incredible. And that is right so, for if it were comprehensible and credible, it would not be fitting. God is in all things. The more He is in things, the more He is out of things: the more in, the more out, and the more out, the more in. I have often said, God is creating the whole world now this instant. Everything God made six thousand years ago and more when He made this world, God is creating now all at once. God is in all things; but as God is divine and intelligible, so God is nowhere so truly as in the soul, and in the angels if you will, in the inmost soul, in the summit of the soul. And when I say the inmost, I mean the highest, and when I say the highest, I mean the inmost part of the soul. In the inmost and the highest part of the soul — there I mean them both together in one. Where time never entered, where no image ever shone in, in the inmost and highest part of the soul, God is creating the whole world. All that God created six thousand years ago, when He made the world, and all that God will create in the next thousand years, if the world lasts so long, is being wrought by God in the inmost recesses, at the apex of the soul. All that is past, all that is present and all that is to come, God creates in the inmost

part of the soul. All that God works in all the saints, that He works in the inmost part of the soul. The Father bears His son in the inmost part of the soul, and bears you with his only-begotten Son, no less. If I am to be the Son, then I must be Son in the same essence as that in which he is Son, and not otherwise. If I am to be a man, I cannot be a man in the essence of an animal. But if I am to be this man, then I must be this man in this essence. Now St. John says, "You are the children of God" (1 John 3:1).

"Speak the Word, tell it abroad, pronounce it, bring forth and propagate the Word." "Tell it forth!" What is spoken in from without is gross, but *that* Word is spoken within. "Tell it forth!" implies that you have it within you. The prophet says, "God spoke one, and I heard two" (Ps. 61:12). That is true: God spoke but once. His utterance is but one. In His Word He speaks His Son and the Holy Ghost and all creatures, which are all but one utterance in God. But the prophet says, 'I heard two,' that is, I heard God and creatures. There where God speaks it, it is God, but here it is creature. People think God only became man *there,* but that is not true, for God became man here as well as there,[3] and the reason why He became man was that He might bear *you* as His only-begotten Son, no less.

Yesterday I sat in a certain place and quoted a text from the Lord's Prayer, which is "Thy will be done." But it would be better to say, "Let will be thine,"[4] for what the Lord's Prayer means is that my will should become His, that I should become He. This text means two things. One is 'Be asleep to all things,' that is, to know nothing of time or creatures or images. The masters declare that if a man truly slept for a hundred years, he would have no knowledge of creatures, he would know nothing of time or of images — and *then* you would understand what God wrought in you. Therefore it says in the Book of Love, "I sleep but my heart wakes" (Song 5:2). And so, when all *creatures* are asleep in you, you can know what God works in you.[5]

The words "Labor in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5) has three meanings. It means 'Turn all things to your advantage,' that is, see God in all things, for God is in all things. St. Augustine says God made all things, not that He might let them come into existence while He went His way, but He stayed in them. People imagine they have more if they have things together with God than if they have God without the things. That is wrong, for all things with God are no more than God

alone. Anyone who thought that if he had the Son and the Father with him he had more than if he had the Son without the Father would be wrong. For the Father with the Son is no more than the Son alone, and the Son with the Father is no more than the Father alone. Therefore, accept God in all things, and that is a sign that He has born you as His only-begotten Son, no less.

The second sense of "Turn all things to your advantage" is "Love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). This is a commandment from God. But I say it is not only a commandment, but it is also what God has given and has promised to give. And if you love a hundred marks more in yourself than in another, you are wrong. If you prefer one person to another, that is wrong; if you love your father and mother and yourself more than another, that is wrong; if you love blessedness for yourself more than for another, that is wrong. "God bless us! What are you saying? Should I not love blessedness for myself more than for another?" There are many learned folk who cannot grasp this, and it seems hard to them, but it is not hard, it is quite easy. See, nature has two purposes for every member to fulfil in every man. The first purpose of its activities is that it should serve the body as a whole, and after that, each particular member separately, just like itself and no less than itself, not being concerned in its activities for itself any more than for any other member. All the more should this apply to grace! God should be a rule and a foundation of your love. The first object of your love should be God alone, and after that your neighbor as yourself, and no less than yourself. And if you love blessedness in yourself more than in another, that is wrong; for if you love blessedness in yourself more than in another, you love yourself; and if you love yourself, then God is not your sole love, and that is wrong. For, if you love the blessedness in St. Peter and St. Paul as much as in yourself, then you will possess the same blessedness that they have. And if you love the blessedness in the angels as much as in yourself, and if you love the blessedness in our Lady as much as in yourself, you will enjoy in truth the same blessedness that they do; it will be yours as much as theirs. Hence it says in the Book of Wisdom, "He made him like His saints" (Sir. 45:2).

The third sense of "Turn all things to your advantage" is "Love God equally in all things," that is, Love God in all things equally:

Love God as much in poverty as in riches, love Him as much in sickness as in health; love Him as much in temptation as without temptation, love Him as much in suffering as without suffering. Indeed, the greater the suffering, the lighter the suffering, just as with two buckets: the heavier the one, the lighter the other, and the more a man gives up the easier it is to give up. A man who loves God could give up the whole world as easily as an egg. The more he gives up, the easier it is to give up, as it was with the Apostles: the more they had to suffer, the easier it was to bear.

"Labor in all things" means When you stand on manifold things and not on bare, pure, simple being, let this be your labor, strive in all things, and fulfil your service. This means as much as "Lift up your head!" which has two meanings. The first is: Put off all that is your own, and make yourself over to God. Then God will be your own, just as He is His own, and He will be God to you just as He is God to Himself, no less. What is mine I have from nobody, but if I have from another, it is not mine but belongs to him from whom I got it. The second meaning of "Lift up your head" is "Direct all your works to God." There are many who cannot understand this, and this does not surprise me, for he who would understand this must be very detached and raised above all things. That we may attain to this perfection, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. August 5.
2. See Sermon 17, at end.
3. 'There' refers to the historical birth of Jesus, 'here' to the birth of Christ in the soul. (Q).
4. This is Eckhart's own particular rendering of *fiat voluntas tua.*
5. 'God's working' seems to be the second meaning. But Quint considers the second meaning is what follows.

SERMON NINETEEN

(Pf 19, Q 71, QT 37)

SURREXIT AUTEM SAULUS DE TERRA
APERTISQUE OCULIS NIHIL VIDEBAT
(Acts 9:8)

This text which I have quoted in Latin is written by St. Luke in Acts about St. Paul. It means "Paul rose from the ground and with open eyes saw nothing."

I think this text has a fourfold sense. One is that when he rose up from the ground with open eyes he saw Nothing, and the Nothing was God; for when he saw God he[1] calls that Nothing. The second: when he got up he saw nothing but God. The third: in all things he saw nothing but God. The fourth: when he saw God, he saw all things as nothing.

He previously told how a light came suddenly from heaven and felled him to the ground. Note, he says that a light came from heaven (Acts 9:3). Our best masters[2] say that heaven has light within itself, and yet does not shine. The sun also has light within itself, and does shine. The stars too have light, though it is conveyed to them.[3] Our masters say fire in its simple, natural purity gives no light at its highest place. Its nature (there) is so pure that no eye can see it in any way. It is so subtle and so alien to the eyes, that if it were down here before the eyes, they could not touch it by the power of sight. But in an alien object one can easily see it, where it has been caught by a piece of wood or a lump of coal.

By the light of heaven we mean the light that is God, to which no man's senses can attain. Hence St. Paul says, "God dwells in a light that no man can approach" (1 Tim. 6:16). He says God is a light to which there is no approach. There is no way in to God. No man still on the way up, still on the increase in grace and light, ever yet got

into God. God is not a growing light, yet one must have got to Him by growing. During the growing we do not see God. If God is to be seen, it must be in the light that is God Himself. A master says, 'In God there is no less or more, no this or that.' As long as we are on the approaches, we cannot get in.

Now he says, "A light from heaven shone about him." That means that everything pertaining to his soul was enveloped. A master says that in this light all the soul's powers are lifted up and exalted: the outer senses we see and hear with, and the inner senses we call thoughts. The reach of these and their profundity is amazing. I can think as easily of a thing overseas as of something close at hand. Above thoughts is the intellect which still seeks. It goes about looking, spies out here and there, picks up and drops. But above the intellect that seeks there is another intellect which does not seek, but stays in its pure, simple being, which is embraced in that light. And I say that it is in this light that all the powers of the soul are exalted. The senses rise up into the thoughts. How high and how fathomless these are, none knows but God and the soul.

Our masters say — and it is a knotty question — that even the angels know nothing about thoughts unless they break out and rise into the questing intellect,[4] and this seeking intellect springs up into the intellect that does not seek, which is pure light in itself. This light embraces in itself all the powers of the soul. Therefore he says, "The light of heaven shone about him."

A master says that all things that have an emanation receive nothing from things below them. God flows into all creatures, and yet remains untouched by them all. He has no need of them. God gives nature the power to work, and her first work is the heart. And so some masters held that the soul is entirely in the heart and flows out thence, giving life to the other members.

That is not so. The soul is entire in every single member. It is true that her first work is in the heart. The heart lies in the middle, and needs protecting on all sides, just as heaven suffers no alien influence and receives nothing from anywhere, for it possesses all things. It touches all things and remains untouched. Even fire, exalted as it is in its highest part, cannot touch heaven.

In the encircling light he fell to earth and his eyes were opened, so that with open eyes he saw all things as naught. And when he saw all

things as naught, he saw God. Now note a word spoken by the soul in the Book of Love: "In my bed at night I have sought him whom my soul loves, and not found him" (Song 3:1). She sought him in her bed, which means that whoever clings or hangs on to anything less than God, his bed is too narrow. All that God can create is too narrow. She says, "I sought him all through the night." There is no night that is without light, but it is veiled. The sun shines in the night, but is hidden from view. By day it shines, and eclipses all other lights. So does the light of God; it eclipses all other lights. Whatever we seek in creatures, all that is night. I mean this: whatever we seek in any creature is but a shadow and is night. Even the highest angel's light, exalted though it be, does not illumine the soul. Whatever is not the first light is all darkness and night. Therefore she cannot find God. "I arose and sought him all about, and ran through the broad ways and the narrow. Then the watchmen — they were the angels — found me, and I asked them if they had seen him whom my soul loves. But they were silent" (Song 3:2–3). Perhaps they could not name him. "When I had passed on a little further, I found him that I sought" (Song 3:4). The little, the trifle that she missed him by is a thing I have spoken of before. He to whom all transient things are not trivial and as nothing will not find God. Hence she said, "Having passed on a *little* further, I found him that I sought." When God takes form in the soul and infuses it, if you then take Him as a light or a being or as goodness — if you recognize anything of Him — that is not God. See, we have to pass over that *little* and discard all that is adventitious and know God as One. Therefore she says, "When I had passed on a little further, I found him that my soul loves."

We very often say, 'Him my soul loves.' Why does she say, 'Him my soul loves'? For He is far above the soul, and she did not name Him she loved. There are four reasons why she did not name Him. One reason is that God is nameless. Had she given Him a name, that would have had to be imagined.[5] God is above all names; none can get so far as to be able to express Him. The second reason why she gave Him no name is that when the soul swoons away into God with love, she is aware of nothing but love. She thinks that everyone knows Him as she does. She is amazed that anyone should recognize anything *but* God. The third reason is, she had no time to name Him. She cannot turn away from love for long enough to utter another

word but 'love.' The fourth is, perhaps she thinks He has no other name but 'love.' With 'love' she pronounces all names. Therefore she says, "I rose up, I went through the broad ways and the narrow. And when I had passed on a little further, I found him I sought."

"Paul rose from the ground and with open eyes saw nothing." I cannot see what is one. He saw nothing, that is: God. God is a nothing and God is a something.[6] What is something is also nothing. What God is, that He is entirely. Concerning this the illumined Dionysius, in writing about God, says, 'He is above being, above life, above light.' He attributes to Him neither this nor that, but makes Him out to be I know not what that far transcends these. Anything you see, or anything that comes within your ken, that is not God, just because God is neither this nor that. Whoever says God is here or there, do not believe him. The light that God is shines in the darkness. God is the true light: to see it, one must be blind and must strip from God all that is 'something.' A master says whoever speaks of God in any likeness, speaks impurely of Him. But to speak of God with nothing is to speak of Him correctly. When the soul is unified and there enters into total self-abnegation, then she finds God as in Nothing. It appeared to a man as in a dream — it was a waking dream — that he became pregnant with Nothing like a woman with child, and in that Nothing God was born; He was the fruit of nothing. God was born in the Nothing.[7] Therefore he says, "He arose from the ground with open eyes, seeing nothing." He saw God, where all creatures are nothing. He saw all creatures as nothing, for He has the essence of all creatures within Him. He is an essence that contains all essence.

A second thing he means by saying "He saw nothing." Our masters say that whoever perceives external things, something must enter into him, at least an impression. If I want to get an image of anything, such as a stone, I draw the coarsest part of it into myself, stripping it off externally. But as it is in the ground of my soul, there it is at its highest and noblest, *there* it is nothing but an image. Whatever my soul perceives from without, an alien element enters in. But when I perceive creatures in God, nothing enters but God alone, for in God there is nothing but God. When I see all creatures in God, I see nothing. He saw God, in Whom all creatures are nothing.

The third reason why he saw nothing: the nothing was God. A master says, all creatures are in God as naught, for He has in Him

the essence of all creatures. He is the essence that contains all essence. A master says there is nothing under God, however near it may be to Him, but has some alien taint. A master says an angel knows himself and God without *means.* But into all else he knows, there comes an outside element — there is an impression, however slight. If we are to know God it must be without means, and then nothing alien can enter in. If we do see God in this light, it must be quite private and indrawn, without the intrusion of anything created. *Then* we have an immediate knowledge of eternal life.

"Seeing nothing, he saw God." The light that is God flows out and darkens every light. The light in which Paul saw revealed God to him and nothing else. Therefore Job says, "He commands the sun not to shine and has sealed up the stars beneath Him as with a seal" (Job 9:7). Being enveloped in this light, he could see nothing else, for all pertaining to his soul was troubled and preoccupied with the light that is God, so that he could take in nothing else. And that is a good lesson for us, for when we concern ourselves with God we are little concerned with things from without.

Fourthly, why he saw nothing: the light that is God is unmingled, no admixture comes in. This was a sign that it was the true light he saw, which is Nothing. By the light he meant quite simply that with his eyes open he saw nothing. In seeing nothing, he saw the divine Nothing. St. Augustine says: 'When he saw nothing, he saw God.' He who sees nothing else and is blind, sees God. Concerning this, St. Augustine says, 'Since God is a true light and a support for the soul, and closer to her than the soul is to herself, when the soul turns from things become, it must be that God gleams and shines within her.'

The soul cannot experience love or fear without knowing their occasion. If the soul does not go out into external things, she has come home, and dwells in her simple, pure light. There she does not love, nor does she know anxiety or fear. Understanding is a foundation and support of all being. Love has no anchor except in understanding. When the soul is blind and sees nothing else, she sees God, and this must be so. A master says, 'The eye at its clearest, where it is colorless, *there* sees all colors.' Not only where it is in itself bare of all colors, but in its place in the body it must be without color if we are to recognize colors. Whatever is without color, with that we can see

all colors, even if it were down in our feet. God is an essence that embraces all essence. For God to be perceived by the soul, she must be blind. Therefore he says, "He saw the Nothing," from whose light all lights come, from whose essence all essence comes. And so the bride says in the Book of Love, "When I had passed on a little further, I found Him that my soul loves." The *little* that she passed by was all creatures. Whoever does not put them behind him will not find God. She also means that however subtle, however pure a thing is that I know God by, yet it must go. Even the light that is truly God, if I take it where it touches my soul, that is still not right. I must take it there, where it wells forth. I could not properly see the light that shines on the wall unless I turned my gaze to where it comes from. And even then, if I take it where it wells forth, I must be free of this welling forth: I must take it where it rests in itself. And yet I say even that is wrong. I must take it neither where it touches nor where it wells forth nor where it rests in itself, for these are still all modes. We must take God as mode without mode, and essence without essence, for He has no modes. Therefore St. Bernard says, 'He who would know thee, God, must measure thee without measure.'

Let us pray to our Lord that we may come to that understanding that is wholly without mode and without measure. May God help us to this. Amen.

Notes

1. St. Luke. Like other writers of the period, Eckhart frequently leaves the reader to sort out the reference of personal pronouns.
2. E.g. Albertus Magnus.
3. Albertus Magnus again: the stars were not clearly distinguished from the planets. The ultimate source for this and the following remarks about fire is Aristotle.
4. Because angels do not have the lower 'soul powers.'
5. An imaginary, arbitrary name.
6. Quint supplies *iht* 'something' after *ein*. The sense requires it, as was perceived by Lasson in 1868.
7. Quint, while rightly denying any connection with the anecdote of the 'pregnant monk,' thinks this story is an *ad hoc* illustrative invention of Eckhart's. I think it is the record of a personal experience. Eckhart probably uses the third person form just as St. Paul does in 2 Cor. 12:2ff.

SERMON TWENTY

(Pf 20, Q 44)

POSTQUAM COMPLETI ERANT DIES.
PUER JESUS PORTABATUR IN TEMPLUM.
ET ECCE, HOMO ERAT IN JERUSALEM,
CUI NOMEN SIMON ETC.
(Luke 2:22, 25)

St. Luke writes in the Gospel, "When the days were accomplished Christ was brought into the temple. And behold, there was a man called Simeon in Jerusalem. He was just and God-fearing, waiting for the consolation of the people of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him."

"And behold": this little word *et* in Latin denotes union, binding together and inclusion. Whatever is wholly bound together and included, that implies union. Here I mean that man should be bound together, included and united with God. Our masters say union presupposes likeness. Union cannot be without likeness. Whatever is bound together and included is what makes union. It does not constitute likeness that a thing is near me, as when I sit beside it or am in the same place. Accordingly St. Augustine says, 'Lord, when I found myself far from thee, it was not due to remoteness of place, it came from the *unlikeness* in which I found myself.' A master says, 'He whose being and work is altogether in eternity, and he whose being and work is altogether in time, they are never in accord, they never come together.' Our masters say that between those things whose being and work is in eternity and those things whose being and work is in time, there must be a go-between. If God and the soul are to be united, this must come from likeness. Where there is no unlikeness, there must be unity; it is not merely united by inclusion, but it becomes one, not merely likeness but alike. Therefore we say the Son

is not *like* the Father, but rather: he is the likeness, he is one with the Father.

Our best masters say, if an image in stone, or painted on a wall, had nothing added to it, then, taken as an image, that image would be one with him of whom it was an image. That is a fitting doctrine for when the soul enters the image, where there is nothing alien but just the image, with which it is one image. If a man is placed in that image where he is like God, then he receives God, then he finds God. Where there is a splitting-up, God cannot be found. When the soul enters her image and finds herself in the image alone, in that image she finds God; and the finding of herself and God is one and the same act, and is timeless — there she finds God. So far as she is therein, so far is she one with God. He means, as far as one is included there where the soul is God's image. As far as he is in there, so far is he divine — so far therein, so far in God, not included, not united, but *one*.

A master says all likeness means birth. He says further that like is not found in nature unless it is born. Our masters say that fire, however powerful it might be, would never burn unless it hoped for birth. However dry the wood placed in it, if it could not conceive (in) its likeness, it would never burn. What the fire wants is to be born in the wood, to become all one fire and to be maintained and last. If it went out and perished, it would no longer be fire; therefore it desires to be maintained. The nature of the soul would never give birth to her like if she did not desire God to be born in her. The soul would never have entered into her nature, would never have wanted to enter there, but that she expects this birth which God works; and God would not work it but that He wishes the soul to be born in Him. God works and the soul desires. God has the work and the soul has the desire and the power to have God born into her and herself into God. God performs this that the soul may become like Him. She must wait for God to be born in her, that her support may be in God, and she must desire union so that she may be supported in God. The divine nature flows into the light of the soul, and in that she is sustained. In this it is God's intention to be born in her, to be united with her and to be sustained in her. How can that be? For surely we say that God is His own support. When He draws the soul in there, she finds that God *is* His own support, and there she stays; otherwise she would not stay. Augustine says, 'As you love, so

you are. If you love the earth, you will be earthly; if you love God, you will be divine. Then if I love God, shall I become God? I do not say that, I refer you to holy scripture. In the Prophets God said, "You are gods and the children of the Most High" (Ps. 81:6).' And therefore I say it is in His *like* that God gives this birth. If the soul had no expectation of this, she would never desire to enter there. She wants to be sustained in Him — her life depends on Him. God has a support, an abiding-place, in His being. Therefore there is nothing for it but to peel off and shed all that belongs to the soul: her life, her powers, her nature — all must go, and she must stand in the pure light where she is one single image with God: *there* she will find God. It is characteristic of God that nothing alien enters Him, nothing is superimposed on Him or added to Him. Therefore the soul should have no alien impressions, nothing superimposed, nothing added. So much for the first word.[1]

"And behold": *ecce. Ecce,* this little word contains within itself all that belongs to the Word, and nothing can be added to it. The Word, that is God, God is a Word, God's Son is a Word. He[2] means that all our life, our whole desire, should be altogether included in, dependent on and directed toward God. Therefore Paul says, "I am what I am by the grace of God" (1 Cor. 15:10), and he says further, "I live, yet not I but God lives in me altogether" (Gal. 2:20). What comes next?

"*Homo erat.*" He says, "Behold, a man." We use the word *homo* for women as well as for men, but the Latins refuse it to woman because of her weakness.[3] *Homo* means as much as 'what is perfect,' and 'lacking nothing.' *Homo* 'a man' means 'he who is of earth,' and signifies humility.[4] The earth is the basest element and lies in the middle, and is entirely surrounded by heaven and is fully exposed to the influence of heaven. Whatever heaven performs and pours forth is received in the middle, in the ground of earth. *Homo* in yet another sense means 'moisture,'[5] and signifies 'he who is watered with grace,' meaning that the humble man receives at once the influx of grace. In this inflowing of grace the light of intellect climbs up straightway, and there God shines with unquenchable light. Anyone powerfully seized by this light would be as far superior to another man as a living man is compared to one painted on a wall. This light is so potent that it is not merely in itself free of time and space, but whatever it falls on it

robs of time and space and all corporeal images and whatever is alien to it. I have said before, if there were no time or place or anything else, all would be one being. If a man were one like this and would cast himself into the ground of humility, he would there be watered with grace.

Thirdly: this light takes away time and space. "There *was* a man." Who gave him this light? Purity. The word *erat* belongs most expressly to God.[6] In the Latin tongue there is no word so proper to God as *erat*. That is why John in his Gospel comes to say so frequently *erat* 'there was,' signifying naked essence. All things are additive, but it (*erat*) adds only in thought — a thought not of addition but of subtraction. Goodness and truth add, at least in thought, but naked essence with nothing added is the meaning of *erat*. Secondly, *erat* signifies birth, a perfect becoming. I have now come, today I was coming,[7] and if time were eliminated from my coming and having come, then the coming and having come would be drawn into one and would be one. Where the coming and having come coincide in one, there we are born and remade and re-formed into the primal image. I have also said before, as long as anything remains *of* a thing in its essence, it will not be re-created; it may be repainted or renewed like a seal that is old, which is renewed by restamping. A pagan master says what is *there,* no time can stale: there is blessed life in the evermore, where nothing is distorted, nothing is covered over, where there is pure being. Solomon says, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:10). This is seldom understood in its proper sense. All that is under the sun grows old and declines, but *there* all is new. Time brings two things: age and decrescence. Whatever the sun shines on, is in time. All creatures are *now* and are from God. But there, where they are *in* God, they are as different from what they are here as the sun is from the moon, and far more so. Therefore he says, *erat in eo,* 'the Holy Ghost was in him,' where being is and where coming-to-be is.

"There was a man." Where was he? "In Jerusalem." 'Jerusalem' denotes 'a vision of peace.' In short, it means that man should be at peace and well established. It may mean more. Paul says: "I wish you the peace that passes all understanding. May this guard your hearts and minds" (Phil. 4:7).

Let us pray to our Lord that we may be 'man' in this sense and established in this peace, which is himself. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. All this about the word *et!* In this sermon we see something of Eckhart the scholastic, arguing much as he does (though at even greater length) in his Latin works. But in so doing he never loses sight of the mystical goal.

2. St. Luke. Pfeiffer has *et* instead of *er,* but as Quint points out, the discussion of *et* concluded with the previous paragraph.

3. Actually, *mensche* (modern *Mensch*) denotes a human being like Latin *homo,* whereas *man* (modern *Mann*) refers to the male only. French *homme,* like English *man,* can indeed have the wider sense in suitable contexts.

4. Latin *homo* is related by modern etymologists to *humus* 'earth,' from which *humilis* 'humble' is derived.

5. Latin *humor* 'liquid' is not related to *humus,* but is by medieval standards a reasonable guess. In any case, all such derivations are used for their symbolic meaning.

6. In explanation, Quint quotes from Eckhart's commentary on St. John's Gospel (*LW* III, 9). According to Latin grammar, *erat* denotes 'substance' (being from the 'substantive verb' *esse!*), 'preterite,' and 'imperfect.' The word (*verbum*), as preterite (or past), is always 'born' (*natum est);* as imperfect, it is always 'being born' (*nascitur*). Grammar is here turned to symbolic account just as etymology above.

7. Eckhart's *was komende* is literally as in English 'was coming': impossible in modern German.

SERMON TWENTY-ONE

(Pf 21, Q 17)

QUI ODIT ANIMAM SUAM IN HOC MUNDO ETC.
(John 12:25)

I have quoted a text in Latin which our Lord says in the Gospel, "He that hates his soul in this world shall keep it in eternal life."

Now mark what our Lord means by these words, when he says a man should hate his soul. Whoever loves his soul in this mortal life and as she is in this world, shall lose her in eternal life; but whoever hates her as she is mortal and in this world will keep her in eternal life.

There are two reasons why he says 'soul' here. A master says the word 'soul' does not mean the 'ground' and does not apply to the nature of the soul.[1] Accordingly a master says, whoever writes of things in motion does not deal with the nature or the ground of the soul. Whoever would name the soul according to her simplicity, purity, and nakedness, as she is in herself, he can find no name for her. They call her 'soul'; that is like when we speak of a carpenter: we do not call him a man, or Henry, or truly according to his being, but according to his work. What our Lord means here is this: whoever loves his soul in the purity which is the soul's simple nature, hates her and is her foe in this dress; he hates her and is sad and distressed that she is so far from the pure light that she is in herself.

Our masters say the soul is called a fire because of the power and because of the heat and the radiance that is in her. Others say she is a spark of the celestial nature. A third school calls her a light. A fourth says she is a spirit. A fifth says she is a number. We can find nothing so bare and pure as number. And so they wanted to name the soul after something that was bare and pure. There is number among the angels — we say one angel, two angels — and in light there is number as well. And so they called her after the barest and purest, but still

this falls short of the ground of the soul. God, who has no name — He has no name — is ineffable, and the soul in her ground is also ineffable, as He is ineffable.

There is yet another reason why he says she hates.[2] The word that denotes the soul[3] means the soul as she is in the prison of the body, and therefore he means that whatever the soul is in herself, that she can think of, refers to her as she is in her prison. As long as she has any regard to these inferior things and draws them into herself at all through the senses, she is at once constricted; for words cannot give a name to any nature that is above her.

There are three reasons why the soul should hate herself. The first reason: as far as she is mine I should hate her, for as far as she is mine, she is not God's. The second: because my soul is not wholly set and implanted and re-formed in God. Augustine says whoever wants God to be his own must first become God's own, and that must be so. The third reason is this: if the soul savors herself as soul, and if she savors God with the soul, that is wrong. She should savor God in Himself, for He is entirely above her. This is what Christ meant by saying, "Whoever loves his soul shall lose it." Whatever of the soul is in this world or looks into this world, whatever is attached to her and looks out, that she should hate. A master says that the soul at her highest and purest is above the world. Nothing brings the soul into this world but love alone. Sometimes she has a natural love which is for the body. Sometimes she has a voluntary love which is for creatures. A master says the soul in her own nature has as little to do with all that is in the world as the eye has to do with song, or the ear with color. Accordingly, our natural philosophers say that the body is much more in the soul than the soul is in the body. As the vat contains the wine more than the wine the vat, so the soul keeps the body in her more than the body the soul.[4] Whatever the soul loves in this world she is bare of in her own nature. A master[5] says the nature and natural perfection of the soul is when she becomes in herself a rational world in which God has in-formed the images of all things. Whoever declares that he has 'attained to his nature' must find all things formed in him in the same purity as they are in God — not as they are in their own nature but as they are in God. Neither spirit nor angel touches the ground of the soul, or the soul's true nature. In it she comes into the first, into the beginning whence God bursts forth

with goodness into all creatures. *There* she receives all things in God, not in that purity which is the purity of their own nature, but in the pure simplicity as they are in God. God has made all this world as if out of coal. An image made of gold is more solid than one made of coal. And so, all things in the soul are purer and more noble than they are in this world. The material which God has made all things from is baser than coal compared with gold. A man who wants to make a pot takes a little clay; that is the material he works with. Then he gives it a form, which is in himself, and is finer in him than the material. By this I mean that all things are immeasurably nobler in the intellectual world, where the soul is, than they are in this world. Just like an image that is chased and engraved in gold, so the images of all things are simple in the soul. A master says the soul has the potentiality in herself for the images of all things to be impressed in her. Another says, never did the soul get to her bare nature without finding all things formed in her in the intellectual world, which is incomprehensible, for no thought can reach it. Gregory says whatever we say of things divine we must stammer, because we must use words.

One more word about the soul, and then no more. "You daughters of Jerusalem, pay no heed because I am brown! The sun has discolored me, and the children of my mother have striven against me" (Song 1:4–5). Here she means the children of the world, to whom the soul says: Whatever of the sun, that is the joy of the world, shines on me and touches me, that makes me dark and brown. Brown is not a pure color; it has something light and something of darkness. Whatever the soul thinks or does with her powers, however light that may be in her, is still mixed. And so she says, "The children of my mother have striven against me." The children are all the lower powers of the soul; they all strive against her and attack her. The heavenly Father is our father, and Christendom is our mother. However fair and however adorned she is, and however useful her works, yet all is imperfect. Therefore he says: "O thou fairest among women, go forth and depart!" (Song 1:7). This world is like a woman, for it is weak. But why does he say 'fairest among women'? The angels are fairer, and are high above the soul. Therefore he says, 'fairest' — in her natural light[6] — 'go forth and depart': go out of this world and leave everything your soul still inclines to. And wherever she is still attached to anything, let her hate it.

Pray to our dear Lord that we may hate our soul under the cloak in which she is our soul, that we may preserve her in eternal life. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Miss Evans, misled by Pfeiffer's text, has got this badly wrong. The 'master' twice mentioned is Avicenna (Q).
2. There seems to be something wrong here: the text does not say the *soul* hates. Quint does not comment, but Clark translates freely 'the soul hates herself' (as stated in the next paragraph).
3. '*Anima* as opposed to *spiritus*' (Clark).
4. Cf. Sermon 14b.
5. Avicenna.
6. The intellect or higher reason.

SERMON TWENTY-TWO

(Pf 22, Q 53)

MISIT DOMINUS MANUM SUAM ET TETIGIT OS MEUM ET DIXIT MIHI ETC... ECCE CONSTITUI TE SUPER GENTES ET REGNA (Jeremiah 1:9–10).

"The Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth and said to me."

When I preach it is my wont to speak about detachment, and of how man should rid himself of self and all things. Secondly, that man should be in-formed back into the simple good which is God. Thirdly, that we should remember the great nobility God has put into the soul, so that man may come miraculously to God. Fourthly, of the purity of the divine nature, for the splendor of God's nature is unspeakable. God is a word, an unspoken word. Augustine says, 'All scripture is vain. If we say God is a word, He is spoken; if we say God is unspoken, He is ineffable.' Yet He is something, but who can utter this word? None can do so but He who is this Word. God is a word that utters itself. Where God is, He utters this Word — where He is not He does not speak. God is spoken and unspoken. The Father is a speaking work, and the Son is the speech at work. Whatever is in me has to come out: as soon as I think of it, my word makes it known, but it remains within. Thus the Father speaks the Son unspoken, and he remains within. I have also said before, God's outgoing is His ingoing. In proportion to my nearness to God does He speak Himself in me. It is thus with all rational creatures, that, the more they go out of themselves with their work, the more they go into themselves. This is not the case with physical things[1]; the more they work, the more they go out of themselves. All creatures wish to speak God in all their works; they all speak as well as they can, but they cannot speak Him. Willy-nilly, whether

they like it or not, they all want to speak God, and yet He remains unspoken.

David said, "The Lord is His name" (Ps 67:5). 'Lord' means one set in authority: 'servant' is an underling. Some names belong to God to the exclusion of all other things, such as *God*. *God* as a name most proper to God, as *man* is the name for man. A man is always a man, whether he is foolish or wise. Seneca says, "That man is contemptible who does not rise above man." Some names are attached to God, such as *fatherhood* and *sonhood*. When we speak of a father, we understand a son. A father cannot be without having a son; a son cannot be without having a father, but they bear within them, beyond time, one eternal essence. As to the third, some names imply a reference upward to God as well as a pointing to time.[2] Also, God is called by many names in scripture. I say, if one knows anything in God and affixes any name to it, that is not God. God is above names and above nature. We read of a good man who was praying to God and wanted to give Him names. Then a brother said, 'Be silent, you dishonor God!' We can find no name that we could give to God, but we are permitted the names the saints called Him by, whose hearts were consecrated by God and flooded with His divine light. And here we should learn, firstly, how to pray to God. We should say: 'Lord, in the same names which thou hast thus consecrated in the hearts of thy saints and flooded with thy light, we pray to thee and extol thee.' Secondly, we should learn not to give God any name with the idea that we had thereby sufficiently honored and magnified Him: for God is above names and ineffable.

The Father speaks the Son out of the fullness of His power, and all things in him. All things speak God. What my mouth does in speaking and declaring God, is likewise done by the essence of a stone, and this is understood more by works than by words. The work wrought by the highest nature in its sovereign power cannot be grasped by the lower nature. If it did the same work then it would not be lower, but the same. All creatures would like to echo God in all their works. But it is precious little that they are able to reveal. Even when the highest angels climb up and touch God, they are as different from what is in God as black is from white. What all creatures have received is quite unequal, though they would all gladly speak the most they can. The prophet says, "Lord, thou speakest one, and I hear two" (Ps. 61:12).[3]

When God speaks into the soul, he and she are one; when this (one) falls away, it is divided. The higher we rise in our understanding, the more we are one in Him. Therefore the Father always speaks the Son in unity and pours forth all creatures in him. They all have a call to return whence they flowed forth. All their life and being is a calling and a hurrying back to what they came out of.

The prophet says, "The Lord put forth His hand," meaning the Holy Ghost. He says, "He touched my mouth," and adds immediately, "He spoke to me." The soul's mouth is the highest part of the soul, and she[4] means this when she says, "He has put His word into my mouth"; that is the kiss of the soul, where mouth has come to mouth: there the Father bears His Son in the soul, and there He has "spoken to her." And now He says, "Behold, I have today chosen you and have set you over nations and kingdoms." In a 'today' God promises to choose us, where nothing is, where yet in eternity there is a 'today.' "And I have set you over nations," that is, over all the world, which you must be rid of, and "over kingdoms," that is: whatever is more than one is too much, for you must die to all things and be again in-formed in the height, where we dwell in the Holy Ghost. May God the Holy Ghost help us to this. Amen.

Notes

1. Quint has 'creatures' here again. I do not understand this and follow Pfeiffer's text.
2. Not very clear. I think the 'third' refers to the 'eternal essence' just mentioned, whereas the 'pointing to time' refers to the normal everyday meanings of *father* and *son*.
3. Cf. Sermon 18.
4. The soul.

SERMON TWENTY-THREE

(Pf 23, Q 47)

SPIRITUS DOMINI REPLEVIT ORBEM TERRARUM ETC.
(Wisdom 1:7)

"The spirit of the Lord has filled the circle of the world." A master says all creatures testify to the divine nature from which they pour forth by their will to work according to the divine nature they have flowed from. Creatures proceed forth in two ways. The first way of coming forth is at the roots, as the roots produce the tree. The second way of coming forth is by way of connection. See, the emanation of divine nature is also in two ways. The first emanation is that of the Son from the Father, which occurs in the way of birth. The second emanation is that of the Holy Ghost by way of connection: this emanation is by the love of the Father and the Son. This is the Holy Ghost, for they love one another in him. Observe that all creatures prove that they have emanated and flowed forth from the divine nature, and they testify to this in their works. Concerning this a Greek master[1] says that God keeps all creatures on a leash, to work in His likeness. Hence nature continually works the highest that she can. Nature would fain make not only the Son, but if she could, she would make the Father. Accordingly, if nature worked timelessly, she would not have any accidental deficiencies. Concerning this, a Greek master says, 'Because nature works in time and space, the Son and the Father are different.' A master[2] says, 'A carpenter who builds a house has already formed it in himself, and if the timber were sufficiently subject to his will, then as soon as he willed it, it would come to be, and, but for the material, there would be no other difference than between the bearing and the suddenly born; observe that with God it is not so, for in Him there is no time or place: therefore they are

one in God and the only difference is that between outpouring and outpoured.

"The spirit of the Lord." Why is He called 'Lord'? That He may fill us. Why is He called 'spirit'? That He may unite with us. Lordship is known by three things. The first, that He is rich. Rich is whatever has all things without lack. I am a man and am rich, but I am not therefore another man. If I were all men, I still would not be an angel. Even if I were an angel *and* a man, I still would not be all angels. And so none is really rich but God alone, who embraces in simplicity all things in Himself. Therefore He can always give, and this is the second point about riches. A master says God hawks Himself to all creatures and each takes as much as it wants. I say, God offers Himself to me as He does to the highest angel, and if I were as ready as he, I should receive as he does. I have also said before that God has always behaved just as if He were at pains to be pleasing to the soul. The third point about riches is, that one gives without expecting any return, for he who gives in exchange for anything is not really rich. Therefore God's richness is shown in this, that He gives all His gifts for nothing. Hence the prophet says, "I said to my Lord, thou art my God, for thou needest not my possessions" (Ps. 15:2). This alone is 'lord' and 'spirit.' I say that He is spirit, for our bliss lies in His union with us.[3]

The noblest thing that God works in all creatures is being. My father can give me my nature, but he does not give me my being: God alone does that. That is why all things that exist take rational delight in their being. See, that is why, as I said once before and was not properly understood, Judas in hell would not want to be another in heaven. Why? Because if he were to become another, he would have to become nothing in his own being. But that cannot be, for being does not deny itself. The being of the soul is receptive to the influence of the divine light, though not as limpid and pure as God can send it, but rather obscured. We can see the sun's light well enough when it falls on a tree or any other object, but in the sun itself we cannot apprehend it. See, thus it is with divine gifts: they must be measured according to him who is to receive them, not according to him who gives them.

A master says God is the measure of all things, and insofar as a man has more of God in him than another, to that extent he is wiser, nobler and better than the other. To have more of God simply

means being more like Him: the more likeness to God there is in us, the more spiritual we are. A master says where the lowest spirits end, the highest material things begin. The meaning of all this is that since God is a spirit, so the least thing that is spirit is nobler than the highest that is material. Therefore a soul is nobler than all material things, however noble they may be. The soul is created as if at a point between time and eternity, which touches both. With the higher powers she touches eternity, but with the lower powers she touches time. Thus, observe, she works in time not according to time but according to eternity. This she has in common with the angels. A master says the spirit is a sledge[4] which bears life into all the members by virtue of the close union of soul and body. But although the spirit is rational and does the entire work that is wrought in the body, yet we should not say, my *soul* knows or does this or that, but rather we should say, I do or know this or that, on account of the close union between the two: for both together make up a man. If a stone were to absorb fire into itself, it would work by the power of the fire; but when the air takes up the sun's light, there is nothing radiant but the air. This comes from the air's great receptivity to light, though there is more air in a mile than in half. So I make bold to state, for it is true: because of the close union that the soul has with the body, the soul is in the least member as perfectly as in the entire body. Concerning this, St. Augustine says, if the union is close between body and soul, that union is much closer that links spirit to spirit. See, that is why He is 'Lord' and 'spirit,' that he may beatify us by uniting with us.

It is a question difficult to answer, how the soul can endure it without perishing when God presses her into Himself. I say that whatever God gives her, He gives her in Himself for two reasons. Firstly, if He gave her anything outside of Himself, that would be intolerable to her. Secondly, since He gives to her within Himself, she is able to receive and endure in His own and not in her own, for what is His is hers. As He has brought her out of her own, therefore His must be hers, and hers is truly His. In this way she is enabled to endure the union with God. This is 'the spirit of the Lord that has filled the circle of the world.'

Why the soul should be called a "circle of the world," and how the soul should be that is to be chosen, I have not said, but just note this much about that: just as He is 'Lord' and 'spirit,' so we should

be a spiritual 'earth' and 'a circle' which is to be "filled with the spirit of the Lord."[5]

We pray to our beloved Lord that we may be thus filled with this spirit that is 'Lord' and 'spirit.' Amen.

Notes

1. Not identified.
2. Avicenna, *On the Soul* 5.6.
3. Our salvation lies in the recognition that God is pure spirit, pure intelligence, thus making it possible for us, as spiritual beings, to be united with Him (Q).
4. A strange metaphor! Pfeiffer, following one MS, has *slihte,* which means 'level or slippery place.' All other MSS have *slite* 'sledge' (Q). Miss Evans dodges the issue with her rendering 'a subtle thing.' The master quoted is unknown. The passage may be corrupt.
5. Here, as in some other places, Eckhart seems to have run out of time before making all the points he intended.

SERMON TWENTY-FOUR (a)

(Q 13)

VIDI SUPRA MONTEM AGNUM STANTEM ETC.
(Revelation 14:1–4)

St. John saw a lamb standing on Mount Sion, and he had written on his forehead his name and his Father's name, and he had standing with him a hundred and forty-four thousand. He says they were all virgins and sang a new song, which none but they could sing, and they followed the lamb wherever he went.

Pagan masters say that God has so ordered all creatures that one is always above the others, and that the highest touch the lowest and the lowest the highest. What these masters have declared in obscure words, another[1] states openly, saying that the golden chain is pure and bare nature, which is raised up to God and which relishes nothing that is outside of Him, and which touches God. Each creature affects the other, and the foot of the highest is set on the crown of the lowest. No creatures can reach God in their capacity of created things, and what is created must be broken for the good to come out. The shell must be broken for the kernel to come out. All this implies a growing out. For outside of this pure nature an angel knows no more than this piece of wood; in fact without this nature an angel has no more than a midge has without God.

He says, "On the mountain." How is it possible to attain to this purity? They were virgins and were upon the mountain, they were affianced to the lamb and estranged from all creatures, and they followed the lamb wherever he went. Some people follow the lamb as long as it suits them; but when it does not suit them, they turn away. This is not what it means when it says, "They followed the lamb wherever he went." If you are a virgin and affianced to the lamb and estranged from all creatures, then you will follow the lamb wherever

he goes: thus, if suffering comes to you through your friends or from yourself because of some temptation, you are not disturbed.

He says, "They were above." What is above does not suffer on account of what is below it, unless there is something above it which is higher than it is. A pagan master[2] says as long as a man is with God, it is impossible for him to suffer. A man who is high above, estranged from all creatures, and wedded to God, does not suffer: if he should, it would strike God to the heart.

They were on Mount Sion. *'Sion'* means 'visions. *Jerusalem* means 'peace.' As I said recently at St. Margaret's,[3] these two compel God, and if you have them in you, He *must* be born in you. I will tell you half a story. Our Lord was once walking in a large crowd. Then a woman came and said, 'If only I could touch the hem of his robe, I would be cured!' Then our Lord said, 'I have been touched.' 'God bless us!' said St. Peter, 'What makes you say, Lord, that you have been touched? There is a great crowd surrounding you and pressing on you.'

A master[4] says we live on death. If I am to eat a chicken or an ox, it must be dead first. We must take suffering upon ourselves and follow the lamb in sorrow as in joy. The apostles took joy and sorrow upon themselves equally, and so whatever they suffered was sweet to them: death was as dear to them as life.

A pagan master likens creatures to God.[5] Scripture says we shall become like God. 'Like' is bad and deceitful. If I am like a man, or if I find a man who is like me, that man acts as if he were myself, but he is not and that is a deception. Many a thing is like gold, but it lies and is not gold. So too, all things liken themselves to God, but they lie, for they are not like at all. Now a pagan master,[6] who arrived at this by his natural understanding, says God can no more endure likeness than He can endure not to be God. Likeness is something that does not exist in God. There is oneness in the Godhead and in eternity, but likeness is not oneness. If I were one, I should not be *like*. In unity there is nothing alien: it gives me oneness in eternity, not *like*ness.[7]

He says, "They had their name and their Father's name written on their foreheads." What is our name and what is our Father's name? Our name denotes that we are to be born, and the Father's name means giving birth, there where the Godhead flashes forth out of the

primal brightness, which is the plenitude of brightness, as I said at St. Margaret's. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffice us" (John 14:8). He means, first, that we should be a father, secondly, that we should be grace,[8] for the Father's name is 'giving birth': He bears His like me. If I see some food that is like me, I am attracted; I see a man who is like me, I am attracted. Thus it is: the heavenly Father bears His like in me, and from the likeness rises love, which is the Holy Ghost. He who is the father begets the child naturally; he who lifts the child out of the font is not its father.

Boethius says God is an unmoving good that moves all things.[9] The fact that God is steadfast makes all things move. Something is so joyous that it moves and pursues and sets all things in motion, so that they return to the source whence they flowed, and yet it remains motionless in itself. And the nobler anything is, the more steadily it moves. The ground sets them all moving. Wisdom and goodness and truth add something; oneness adds nothing but the ground of being.

Now he says, "In their mouth no lie was found." As long as I have a creature and as long as a creature has me, that is a lie, and *that* was not found in their mouths. It is the sign of a good man that he praises good people. So if a good man praises me, then I am truly praised, but if a bad man praises me, then in truth I am blamed. But if a bad man blames me, then in truth I am praised. "Of that which fills the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). It is always the sign of a good man that he likes to speak of God, for people like to speak of what they are concerned with. Those who are concerned with tools like to talk about tools, those who are concerned with sermons like to talk about sermons. A good man likes to speak of nothing so much as God.

There is a power in the soul, of which I have spoken before. If the whole soul were like it, she would be uncreated and uncreatable, but this is not so.[10] In its other part it has a regard and a dependence on time, and there it touches on creation and is created. To this power, intellect, nothing is distant or external. What is beyond the sea or a thousand miles away is as truly known present to it as this place where I am standing. This power is a virgin, and follows the lamb wherever he goes. This power seizes God naked in His essential being. It is one in unity, not like in likeness.

May God help us to come to this experience. Amen.

Notes

1. Macrobius, *Commentary on Dream of Scipio* 1.14.
2. Aulus Gellius, according to Eckhart's Genesis commentary.
3. The Dominican nunnery in Strassburg? But it may be St. Maccabaeorum in Cologne (Q).
4. Seneca, Letter 10.
5. Not traced by Quint. Clark refers to Cicero's *De natura deorum.*
6. Avicenna, quoting the Koran (Sura 112) (Clark).
7. Cf. the discussion of this theme in Sermon 7.
8. One MS has *name* 'name' instead of *gnâde* 'grace.' Quint finds 'name' unintelligible, and 'grace' difficult. He hazards the guess that it may be a reference to the name John (*Johannes* 'grace of God'), as in the parallel passage in Sermon 24b.
9. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* III, m.9 (Q).
10. This statement was denounced in article 27 of the papal bull of 1329.

SERMON TWENTY-FOUR (b)

(Pf 24, Q 13a)[1]

St. John saw in a vision a lamb standing, and with him were forty-four[2] who were not of this world and had not the name of wife. They were all virgins and stood as close as possible to the lamb. And wherever the lamb turned, they followed, and they sang a special song with the lamb, and had their names and the name of their father written on their foreheads.

Now John says he saw a lamb standing on the mountain. I say John was himself the mountain on which he saw the lamb. And whoever wants to see the lamb of God must himself be the mountain, and ascend into his highest and purest part. Secondly, when he says he saw the lamb standing on the mountain: whatever stands on anything else, its lowest part touches the highest part of that which is below. God touches all things and remains untouched.[3] God is above all things an instanding in Himself, and this standing in Himself sustains all creatures.[4] All creatures have an upper and a lower part, but God has not. God is above all things and is touched by none. All creatures seek outside of themselves: each seeks in the other what it lacks. God does not do this. God seeks nothing outside of Himself. What all creatures have God has entire within Him. He is the ground and the encirclement of all creatures. It is true that one is before the other, or at that one is born of[5] the other. But she does not give it being: it retains something of its own.[6] God is a simple instanding, an insitting, in Himself. With every creature, according to the nobility of its nature, the more it indwells in itself, the more it gives itself out. A simple stone, such as limestone, points to nothing more than that it is a stone. But a precious stone, which has great power,[7] because it has an instanding, an indwelling in itself, thereby raises its head and looks abroad. The masters say no creature has such close indwelling

in itself as body and soul, yet nothing has such a great sallying-forth as the soul in her highest part.

Now he says, "I saw the lamb standing." From this we can draw four good lessons. First: the lamb gives food and clothing, and does this most readily. That should be a spur to our understanding that we have received so much from God and He provides it so kindly. This should cause us to seek nothing in all our works but His honor and glory. Second: "The lamb stood." It is very good when friend stands by friend. God stands by us, and remains standing by us, constant and unmoved.

Now he says, "By him stood a great multitude, and each of them had written on his forehead his name and his father's name." Let at least God's name be written in us. We must bear God's image in us, and His light must shine in us, if we would be John.[8]

Notes

1. This fragmentary sermon is a parallel to Sermon 24a. Pfeiffer printed it from a Basle MS, and Quint has not discovered any other copies. It may have originally ended similarly to Sermon 24a.
2. This is a scribal mistake for the biblical 144,000, as in Sermon 24a.
3. Or 'God *moves* all things.' The verb *tileren* can mean both 'touch' and 'stir into activity.' Cf. Sermon 24a, note 9.
4. God is both transcendent and immanent.
5. Quint accepts Lasson's conjecture (1868) of *von* instead of *vor,* which makes the best sense. Miss Evans has gone hopelessly wrong here.
6. The child does not derive all its being from the mother (or the parents).
7. See Sermon 14b, note 6.
8. *John* means 'grace of God.' See Sermon 24a, note 8.

SERMON TWENTY-FIVE

(Pf 25, Q 3)

NUNC SCIO VERE QUIA MISIT DOMINUS ANGELUM SUUM
(Acts 12:11)[1]

When Peter was released by the power of the supreme God from the bonds of his imprisonment, he said, "Now I know truly that God has sent me His angel and has freed me from the power of Herod and from the hands of the enemy."

Now let us turn this phrase round and say, 'Because God has sent me His angel, therefore I know truly.' *Peter* is as much as to say 'knowledge.'[2] I have said before, knowledge and intellect unite the soul with God. Intellect penetrates into the pure essence; knowledge runs ahead, preceding and blazing a trail so that God's only-begotten Son may be born. Our Lord says in Matthew that none knows the Father but the Son (Matt. 11:27). The masters say knowledge resides in likeness. Some masters say the soul is made of all things, because she has the potentiality of understanding all things. It sounds stupid, but it is true. The masters say that for me to know anything, it must be fully present to me and like my understanding. The saints say potentiality is in the Father, likeness in the Son, and unity in the Holy Ghost. Therefore, since the Father is wholly present in the Son and the Son is wholly like Him, none knows the Father save the Son.

Now Peter says, "Now I know truly." How does one know truly here? It is because it is a divine light which deceives nobody. Secondly, because there one knows barely and purely with nothing veiling it. Therefore Paul says, "God dwells in a light which is inaccessible" (1 Tim. 6:16). The masters say the wisdom which we acquire here will remain with us yonder, though Paul says it will fall away.[3] One master says pure knowledge, even in this life, takes such great delight in itself that the joy of all created things is a mere nothing compared

to the joy that pure knowledge brings.[4] And yet, however noble it may be, it is but contingent, and just as one little word is insignificant compared to all the world, so insignificant is all the wisdom we can acquire here, compared to the naked, pure truth. That is why Paul says it must fall away. Even if it remained, it would be like a foolish virgin and as nothing to the naked truth we shall know there. The third reason why we shall truly know there is this: the things we see here as mutable we shall know there as unchanging; we shall apprehend them there in undivided form and close together: for that which here is distant, there is near, for *there* all things are present. That which happened on the first day and that which is to happen on the last day, *is* there all in the present.

"Now I know truly that God has sent me His angel." When God sends His angel to the soul, she becomes truly knowing. It was not for nothing that God entrusted the key to Peter, for Peter denotes knowing, and knowledge has the key and opens up and breaks through and finds God naked, and then she says to her companion, will, what she has obtained, though she had the will already: for what I will, I seek. Knowledge goes before. She is a princess, seeking her dominion in the highest and purest realms, and she conveys it to the soul and the soul to nature and nature to all the bodily senses. The soul is so noble at her highest and purest that the masters cannot find any name for her. They call her 'soul' as giving essence to the body. Now the masters declare that, after the first emanation of the Godhead, where the Son breaks out of the Father, the angel is formed most like God. This is true: the soul is made in God's image in her highest part, but the angel is a closer copy of God. All that belongs to the angel is modeled on God. That is why the angel is sent to the soul, so that he may bring her back to the same image after which he was formed, for knowledge comes from likeness. And since the soul has the potentiality of knowing all things, therefore she never rests till she gains the primal image where all things are one; and there she rests, there she is in God. In God, no creature is nobler than another.

The masters say being and knowing are all one, for what does not exist is not known; whatever has most being is best known. And since God has transcendent being, therefore He transcends all knowledge, as I said the day before yesterday in my last sermon, that the soul is in-formed in the highest purity, in the impress of pure essence, where

she tastes God before He assumes truth or cognizability, where all naming has been dropped: *there* she knows Him most purely — there she receives being on an equal footing. Therefore Paul says, "God dwells in a light which is inaccessible." He is an indwelling in His own pure essence, where there is nothing that is contingent. Whatever is accidental must drop away. He is a pure presence in Himself, where there is neither this nor that, for whatever is in God, is God.[5] A pagan master says the powers that hover below God have a dependence on God, and though they have a pure subsistence in themselves, yet they have a dependence on Him who has neither beginning nor end: for nothing alien can enter God. Heaven illustrates this, for it can never receive an alien impression in alien wise.

Thus it happens that whatever comes to God is transformed: however base it may be, if we bring it to God, it sheds itself. Here is an example: if I have wisdom, I am not wisdom myself. I can gain wisdom, and I can also lose it. But whatever is in God, is God: it cannot drop away from Him. It is implanted in the divine nature, for the divine nature is so powerful that whatever is proffered to it is either firmly implanted in it, or else it remains wholly outside. Now observe a wondrous thing! Seeing that God transforms such base things into Himself, what do you think He does with the soul, which He has dignified with His own image?

That we may attain to this, may God help us.[6] Amen.

Notes

1. Preached on the feast of St. Peter's Chains (in English: Lammas Day), August 1.

2. According to St. Jerome (Clark). The real meaning, of course, is "rock." The association with Peter is through the 'key' of knowledge (see below).

3. 1 Cor. 13:8.

4. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 7:11.

5. Clark notes: 'This is Scholastic doctrine.' True, but the censors misread this passage as 'whatever is, is God,' which would be pantheism.

6. The conventional conclusion is found only in the Basel print. This text is a poor witness, but Quint does not think it likely that anything has been lost at the end.

SERMON TWENTY-SIX

(Q 57, Evans II, 45)

VIDI CIVITATEM SANCTAM JERUSALEM
DESCENDENTEM DE CAELO ETC.
(Revelation 21:2)

St. John saw a city. A city denotes two things: firstly, it is fortified so that none can harm it, and secondly, the concord of the people. "This city had no prayer-house: God Himself was the temple. There is no need of light, whether of sun or of moon: the glory of our Lord illumines it." This city denotes each spiritual soul; as St. Paul says, "The soul is a temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16), and is so strong, as St. Augustine says, that none can harm it unless by its own wilfulness.

First we should note the peace there should be in the soul. Therefore she is called 'Jerusalem.' St. Dionysius[1] says divine peace pervades and orders and ends all things; if peace did not do this, all things would be dissipated and there would be no order. Secondly, peace causes creatures to pour themselves out and flow in love and without harm. Thirdly, it makes creatures serviceable to one another, so that they have a support in one another. What one of them cannot have of itself, it gets from another. Thus one creature derives from another. Fourthly, it makes them turn back to their original source, which is God.

In the second place, he says that the city is 'Holy.' St. Dionysius says that holiness is complete purity, liberty, and perfection. Purity means that a man is separated from sin, and this makes the soul free. Likeness is the chief delight and joy there is in heaven; if God were to enter the soul and she were not like Him, she would suffer torments, for St. John says, "Whoever commits a sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). Of the angels and the saints we may say that they are perfect, but the saints not wholly so, for they still feel affection for their bodies

which now lie in ashes.[2] In God alone is complete perfection. I marvel that St. John ever dared to say, if he had not seen it in the spirit, that there are three Persons, how the Father empties Himself completely into the birth, into the Son, and pours Himself with goodness in a flow of love into the Holy Ghost.[3] Again, 'holiness' denotes 'what is withdrawn from the world.' God is something and is pure being, and sin is nothing and draws us away from God. God made the angels and the soul after something, that is: God. The soul is created, so to speak, under the shadow of the angels, yet they have a common nature, but all material things are created after nothing, far from God. By being poured into the body, the soul is darkened, and must together with the body be raised up again to God. When she is free from earthly things the soul is holy. Zaccheus, while he was on the ground, could not see our Lord.[4] St. Augustine says, 'If a man would be holy let him forsake mundane things.' I have often said that the soul cannot be pure unless she is reduced to her original purity, as God made her, just as gold cannot be made from copper by two or three roastings: it must be reduced to its primary nature. For all things which melt on heating or solidify on cooling are altogether of a watery nature.[5] They must therefore be wholly reduced to water and get quite rid of their present nature; then heaven and science combine to transmute it all into gold. Iron can be compared to silver, and copper to gold: but the more we equate it without subtraction, the more false it is.[6] It is the same with the soul. It is easy to make show of virtues, or to talk of them: but to have them in reality is extremely rare.

In the third place, he calls the city 'new.' *New* denotes what is unused or near to its beginning. God is our beginning. When we are united with Him we shall be new. Some folk foolishly think that God has forever been making or keeping the things we now see, and gives them forth in time. But we must understand that divine acts are effortless,[7] as I shall tell you. I am standing here and suppose I had been standing here for thirty years with my face showing, though nobody had seen it, I should have stood here all the same. Now if there were a mirror handy, if it were held before my face my face would cast an image in it with no effort on my part; and if that happened yesterday then it would be new, and again today, it would be newer still, and so on for thirty years or for all time, it would be ever new; and if there were a thousand mirrors, that would cost me

no effort. Thus, God has eternally in Him all images, not as the soul and other creatures, but as God. With Him there is nothing new, no image, but as I was saying of the mirror, so with us there is new and eternal as well.

When the body is ready God pours a soul therein, formed like the body and having a likeness with it, and because of the likeness a liking. Hence there is no one free from self-love: they deceive themselves who think they have no love of self. They would have to hate themselves, and could not stay. We must love those things that further our progress to God: that alone is love with God's love. If I desire to cross the sea and want a ship, that is solely from wishing to be across: having crossed over, I have no more need of the ship. Plato says, 'What God *is*, I do not know' (he meant that as long as the soul is wrapped up in the body she cannot see God), 'but what He is not I know well enough,' as we can see by the sun, whose radiance none can endure unless it is first enwrapped in the air, and thus shines on the earth. St. Dionysius says, 'If the divine light shines in me, it must be shrouded, as my soul is shrouded.'[8] He further says the divine light appears to five kinds of people. The first are not alive to it. They are like cattle, not capable of receiving it, as a simile will show: if I am crossing the water and if it were rough and muddy, I would not be able to see my face in it on account of its roughness. To the second group a little light appears, like the flash of a sword being forged. The third get more of it, like a great flash of lightning, which is bright, and then immediately dark again. They are all those who fall away from the divine light again into sin. The fourth group receive more of it, but sometimes He withdraws Himself for no other purpose but to spur her[9] on and increase her desire. It is certain that if someone were ready to fill all our laps, then everyone would make his lap wide to receive a great deal. St. Augustine says to receive a great deal, a man must enlarge his capacity. The fifth are aware of a great light as bright as day, but still as it were through a chink. As the soul says in the Book of Love, "My beloved looked at me through a chink. His face was comely" (Song 2:9, 14). About this St. Augustine says, 'Lord, thou givest me sometimes such great sweetness that, if it were perfected in me, if this is not heaven I know not what heaven can be.' A master says, 'He who would see God, unless he is adorned with godly works, will be cast back among evil things.' Is there then

no way of seeing God quite clearly? Yes. In the Book of Love the soul says, "My love looked at me through the window" — that is, without hindrances — "and I knew him, he stood by the wall" — that is, by the body, which is perishable — and said, "Open up to me, my beloved" — that is because she is altogether mine in love, for "he is mine and I am his alone"; "my dove" — that is, simple in longing — "my beautiful" — that is, in act. "Arise, make haste and come to me. The cold is past," of which everything dies: all things live in the warmth. "The rain is over" — that is delight in temporal things. "The flowers are coming up in our land" — these are the fruit of eternal life. "Begone, O north wind, which withers up" — here God is forbidding temptation to hinder the soul any more. "Come, wind from the south, blow through my garden and make my spices to flow" — here God bids all perfections to enter the soul.[10]

Notes

1. 'Dionysius the Areopagite,' *De divinis nominibus* 9.1.
2. I.e., have not yet been resurrected.
3. Cf. Sermon 23.
4. Luke 19:2–3.
5. In terms of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air.
6. Without abstraction of its true nature, i.e., unless it has been (alchemically) changed.
7. Or 'timeless' (Q).
8. I.e., in the flesh.
9. The soul.
10. The usual concluding prayer is missing. Quint has slight doubts about the authenticity of this sermon, but concludes that it is probably genuine. The final paragraph contains a tissue of citations from the Song of Songs, specifically Song 2:9, 5:2, 2:16, 2:14, 2:10, 2:11, 2:12, 4:16.

SERMON TWENTY-SEVEN

(Pf 27, Q 34)

GAUDETE IN DOMINO, ITERUM GAUDETE
(Philippians 4:4)

St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always and have no more care: the Lord is here. Your thoughts are known to God in gratitude or prayer."

Now he says, "Rejoice!" Jerome says no man can receive skill, wisdom or joy from God unless he is a virtuous man.[1] He is not a virtuous man who has not changed his old ways: he cannot receive from God skill, wisdom, or joy. Now he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." He did not say 'in our Lord' but 'in the Lord.' I have said before that God's lordship does not consist merely in His being lord of all creatures, but His lordship consists in this, that He could create a thousand worlds and transcend them all in His pure essence: therein lies His lordship.

Now he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." Let us note two things here. The first is that we should remain all within the Lord, not seeking outside Him in knowledge or in joy but merely rejoicing *in* the Lord. The second thing: "Rejoice in the *Lord,*" in His inmost and first, from which all things receive though He receives from none. Now he says, "Rejoice in the Lord *always.*" The masters say that two hours cannot exist at the same time, nor two days. St. Augustine[2] says he rejoices *all the time* who rejoices *above* time. He[3] says, "Rejoice all the time," that is, above time, and "have no care: the Lord is at hand and is near." The soul that is going to rejoice in the Lord must of necessity cast off all care, at least during the time when she yields herself to God. That is why he says, "Have no care: the Lord is at hand and is near." That means in our inmost part, if He finds us at home and the soul has not gone out for a walk with the five senses.

The soul must be at home in her inmost and in the highest and purest, staying within and not looking out, and *then* "God is at hand and is near."

Another sense is: "The Lord is *by*" — He is *by* Himself and does not go far out. Now David says, "Lord, make my soul rejoice, for I have raised her up to thee!" (Ps. 85:4). The soul must rise with all her might above herself and be translated beyond time and place into the expanse and breadth where God is by Himself and near, not going far out and not touching anything alien. Jerome[4] says, 'It is as possible for a stone to have angelic wisdom as it is for God ever to give Himself in time or in temporal things.' Therefore he says, "The Lord is near by." David says, "God is near by to all who praise Him and speak Him and name Him, and that in truth" (Ps. 144:18). How one praises, speaks and names Him, that I will leave on one side. But he says, "in truth." What is truth? The Son alone is truth, not the Father or the Holy Ghost, except as they are one truth in their essence. That is truth, if I declare what I have in my heart, and say it with my mouth as I have it in my heart, without hypocrisy or concealment. The revealing of this is truth. And so the Son alone is truth. All that the Father has and can perform, He speaks fully in His Son. The revealing and the performance is the truth. Therefore he says, 'in truth.'

Now St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord," and adds, "Your thoughts shall be known by the Lord," that is, in *this* truth by the Father. Faith inheres in the light of intellect, hope inheres in the aspiring power which is ever striving upwards into the highest and purest — into truth.[5] I have sometimes said — note my words — that this power is so free and so aspiring that it will endure no restraint. The fire of love inheres in the will.

Now he says, "Your thoughts" — and all the powers — "shall be known by the Lord, thoughts of gratitude and prayer." If a man had no more to do with God than to be thankful, that would suffice.

That we may rejoice eternally in the Lord and by the Lord in the truth, and that our thoughts may be known to Him, and that we may be thankful to Him for all goodness and be blessed in Him, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Quotation untraced (Q).
2. Quotation untraced (Q).
3. Paul.
4. Quotation untraced (Q).
5. The three highest powers of the soul.

SERMON TWENTY-EIGHT

(Pf 28, Q 78)

MISSUS EST GABRIEL ANGELUS ETC.
(Luke 1:26)

St. Luke says in his Gospel, "An angel was sent from God into a land called Galilee, into a town called Nazareth, to a virgin called Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, who was of the house of David." Bede, a master, says this was the beginning of our salvation. I have said before and say again that everything our Lord has ever done he did simply to the end that God might be with us and that we might be one with Him, and that is why God became man. The masters say that God was born spiritually in our Lady before he was born of her in the flesh, and from the overflow of that begetting whereby the Heavenly Father begot his only-begotten Son in her soul, the eternal Word received its human nature in her, and she became physically pregnant.

Now he says, "An angel was sent from God." I say it had to be, that he was sent from God. The soul would have been demeaned by receiving the angelic light had it not been sent to her from God, and had the divine light not inhered concealed in it, which made the angel's light delectable; otherwise she would have had none of it.

Now he says, "An angel." What is an angel? Three teachers give three different explanations of what an angel is. Dionysius[1] says, An angel is a mirror without flaw, surpassing clear, receiving in itself the reflection of the divine light. Augustine[2] says, An angel is close to God, and matter is close to nothing. John Damascene[3] says, An angel is an image of God, and through all that is his there shines the image of God. The soul has this image in her summit, in her topmost branch, whereon the divine light forever shines. This is his first definition of an angel. Later on he calls him a sharp sword, aflame with divine desire,

and adds the angel is free of matter — so free that he is inimical to matter. See, that is an angel.

Now he says, "An angel was sent from God." What for? Dionysius says an angel has three functions. First, he purifies, secondly, he enlightens, and thirdly he perfects. He purifies the soul in three ways: first, he purifies her from stains that have accrued to her; secondly, he purges her from matter and makes her collected, and thirdly, he purifies her from ignorance, as one angel does another. In the second case, he enlightens the soul in twofold fashion. The divine light is so overwhelming that the soul is unable to bear it unless it is tempered and shaded in the angel's light, and so conveyed into the soul. Then he illumines her by likeness. The angel conveys his own understanding to the soul and so strengthens her to receive and endure the divine light. If I were in a wilderness alone and was afraid, the presence of a child would dissipate my dread and give me courage, so noble, so joyous and so mighty a thing is life itself. And failing a child, even a beast would comfort me. That is why those who practice magic by necromancy keep an animal, such as a dog, the animal's vitality invigorating them.[4] Likeness gives strength in all things. That is why the angel brings it to the soul, for he resembles her, and so strengthens and prepares her to receive the divine light.

Now he says: "An angel was sent from God." The soul must be like the angel in the ways I have named, if the Son is to be sent to her and born in her. But we cannot here go into the question of how the angel perfects her.[5]

May God send His angel to us to purify, illumine, and perfect us so that we may be eternally blessed with God. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. *De divinis nominibus* 4.2 (Q).
2. *Confessions* 12.7 (Q).
3. *De fide orthodoxa* 2.3 (Q).
4. A remarkable comparison!
5. As elsewhere, Eckhart does not expatiate on the final point. Since this is a very short sermon, the reason is not clear. Pahncke (quoted by Quint) may be right in thinking that the note-taker gave up at this point.

SERMON TWENTY-NINE

(Pf/Evans 29 (part), Q 38)[1]

IN ILLO TEMPORE MISSUS EST ANGELUS GABRIEL A DEO:
AVE GRATIA PLENA, DOMINUS TECUM
(Luke 1:26, 28)

These words are written by St. Luke, "At that time the angel Gabriel was sent by God." At what time? "In the sixth month"[2] that John the Baptist was in his mother's womb. If anyone were to ask me, Why do we pray, why do we fast, why do we do all our works, why are we baptized, why (most important of all) did God become man? — I would answer, in order that God may be born in the soul and the soul be born in God.[3] For that reason all the scriptures were written, for that reason God created the world and all angelic natures: so that God may be born in the soul and the soul be born in God. All cereal nature means wheat, all treasure nature means gold, and all generation means man. Therefore one master says no animal exists but has some likeness to man.

"In time." When the word is first conceived in my intellect, it is so pure and subtle that it is a true word, before taking shape in my thought. In the third place, it is spoken out loud by my mouth, and then it is nothing but a manifestation of the interior word. Thus the eternal Word is spoken inwardly, in the heart of the soul, in the inmost and purest, in the head of the soul of which I just spoke, in the intellect, and *therein* the birth takes place. He who has nothing but a firm conviction and hope of this would be glad to know how this birth occurs and what conduces to it.

St. Paul says, "In the fullness of time God sent His Son" (Gal. 4:4). St. Augustine says what this fullness of time is: 'Where there is no more time, that is the "fullness of time." ' The day is full, when there is no more day. That is a necessary truth: all time must be gone

when this birth begins, for there is nothing that hinders this birth so much as time and creatures. It is an assured truth that time cannot affect God or the soul by her nature. If the soul could be touched by time, she would not be the soul, and if God could be touched by time, He would not be God. But if it were possible for the soul to be touched by time, then God could never be born in her, and she could never be born in God. For God to be born in the soul, all time must have dropped away from her, or she must have dropped away from time with will or desire.

Another meaning of "fullness of time": if anyone had the skill and the power to gather up time and all that has happened in six thousand years or that will happen till the end of time, into one present Now, *that* would be the "fullness of time." That is the Now of eternity, in which the soul knows all things in God new and fresh and present and as joyous as I have them now present. I was reading recently in a book[4] — who can fully understand it? — that God is now making the world just as on the first day, when He created the world. Here God is rich, and this is the kingdom of God. The soul in which God is to be born must drop away from time and time from her, she must soar aloft and stand gazing into this richness of God's: there there is breadth without breadth, expanseless expanse, and there the soul knows all things, and knows them perfectly. As for what the masters say of the expanse of heaven, it would be unbelievable to say it. Yet the least of the powers of my soul is wider than the expanse of heaven. I do not speak of the intellect, which is expanse-less expanse. In the soul's head, in the intellect, I am as near to a place a thousand miles away across the sea as to the spot where I am standing now. In this expanse and in this richness of God's the soul is aware, there she misses nothing and expects nothing.

"The angel was sent." The masters declare that the multitude of angels is beyond all numbering. They are too numerous for number to contain; their number cannot even be conceived. But for anyone who could grasp distinctions without number and quantity, a hundred would be as one. Even if there were a hundred Persons in the Godhead, a man who could distinguish without number and quantity would perceive them only as one God. Unbelievers and some untutored Christian people wonder at this, and even some priests know as little about it as a stone: they think of three like three cows or three

stones. But he who can make distinction in God without number or quantity knows that three Persons are one God.[5]

Also, an angel is so exalted, that the best teachers declare each angel has a complete nature.[6] It is just the same as if there were a man who had everything that all men ever had, have now, or ever will have of power and wisdom and everything; that would be a miracle, and yet he would be no more than a man: for even though he had all things that all men have, yet he would be far from the angels. Thus every angel has a complete nature and is distinct from the other angels as one animal is from another that has a different nature.[7] In this multitude of angels God is rich, and whoever is aware of this is aware of the kingdom of God.[8] It proclaims God's kingdom just as a lord is proclaimed by the number of his knights. Therefore He is known as the "Lord God of Hosts." All this multitude of angels, however lofty they are, co-operate and help when God is born in the soul. That is to say, they have pleasure and joy and delight in the birth, but they do not act. No work is done there by creatures, for God performs the birth alone, but the angels minister to this. Whatever ministers thereto is a work of service.

The angel was called Gabriel. He did what he was called.[9] He was no more called Gabriel than Conrad. No one can know an angel's name. No master and no understanding ever got to where an angel received his name: perhaps he is nameless. The soul, too, has no name. Just as no one can find a true name for God, so none can find the soul's true name, although mighty tomes have been written about this. But she is given a name according as she has a regard to her activity. 'Carpenter' is not a man's name, but the name is taken from the work of which he is a master. He took the name 'Gabriel' from the work of which he was a messenger, for *Gabriel* means 'power.' In this birth God works powerfully or exerts power. What is the object of all the power of nature? To effect herself. What does all nature intend in generation? To effect herself. The nature of my father wanted to produce a father in his nature. When that could not be, she wanted to produce one who was in all respects like him. When the strength for this was lacking, she produced one that was as like as possible — a son. But when the power is still less strong, or some other accident occurs, then she produces a human being still less alike.[10] But in God there is plenitude of power; therefore in *His* birth He produces His

like. All that God is in power, truth, and wisdom, He bears altogether in the soul.

St. Augustine says, 'What the soul loves she grows to be like. If she loves earthly things she becomes earthly. If she loves God (one might ask), does she then become God?' If I said that, it would sound heretical to those whose intelligence is weak and who cannot understand it. But St. Augustine says, 'I do not say it, but I refer you to scripture, which says, "I have said that you are gods" (Ps. 81:6).' Anyone possessing anything of the riches I have spoken of, a glimpse, a hope or an inkling, would quite understand this. Never was there born anything so akin, so like, so one with God as the soul becomes at this birth. If it so happens that there is any hindrance, so that she does not become like in all respects, that is not God's fault: just as far as all her failings drop away from her, just so far does God make her like Himself. That a carpenter is unable to build a fine house out of worm-eaten wood is not his fault; the trouble lies in the wood. And thus it is with God's work in the soul. If the least of the angels were able to take shape or be born in the soul — the whole world would be as nothing to that, for in a single spark of the angel there grows, flourishes and shines forth everything that is in the world. But God performs this birth Himself: the angel can do no work here except ministering.

"Ave": that means 'without woe.'[11] Whoever is without creaturehood is without woe and without hell, and he who is least creature and has least of it, has the least woe. I once declared that he who has the world least, has it most. No one possesses the world so truly as he who has abandoned all the world. Do you know why God is God? He is God because He is without creature. He did not name Himself in time. In time are creatures and sin and death. These are in a certain sense akin, and inasmuch as the soul has dropped away from time, there is there no woe or pain; even distress is turned for her to joy. All that could ever be conceived of delight and joy, of happiness and pleasure, is no joy at all when set against the bliss which is in this birth.

"Full of grace." The least work of grace is loftier than all angels in their nature. St. Augustine says that a work of grace performed by God, such as that He converts a sinner and makes a good man of him, is greater than if God created a new world. It is as easy for

God to turn round heaven and earth as it is for me to turn round an apple in my hand. Where grace is in the soul, that is so pure and so like and akin to God, and grace is without works just as in the birth of which I spoke before there is no work. Grace performs no works. St. John "performed no sign" (John 10:41). The work that an angel has in God is so lofty that no master and no intelligence ever came to an understanding of it. But from that work there falls a chip, just as a chip might fall from a plank that is being cut — a lightning flash, which is where the angel touches heaven with his lowest part — and from that there shoots and blossoms and springs into life everything that is in the world.

I sometimes mention two springs. Though this may sound strange, we must speak according to out understanding. One spring, from which grace gushes forth, is where the Father bears forth His only-begotten Son. From that source grace arises, and there grace flows forth from that same spring. Another spring is where creatures flow out of God. This one is as far from the spring whence grace flows as heaven is from earth. Grace does not perform works. Where fire is in its own nature, it does no harm and burns nothing. The heat of the fire burns here below. But where the heat is in the nature of fire, it does not burn and is harmless. Yet when the heat is in the fire it is as far from the fire's true nature as heaven is from earth. Grace performs no works, it is too delicate for this, work is as far from grace as heaven is from earth. An indwelling, an attachment and a union with God, — *that* is grace, and God is 'with' that, for there immediately follows:

"God be with you" — and there the birth occurs. Let no one think this is beyond him. What matters the hardship to me, if He does the work? All His commandments are easy for me to keep. Let Him bid me do what He will, I care not at all, it is all a trifle to me, if He gives me His grace with it. Some people say they have not got it. I say, 'I am sorry. Do you want it?' — No! — 'Then I am sorrier still.' If you cannot have it, you should at least have a desire for it. If you can't have a desire for it, you should at least desire to desire it. David says, "I have desired a desire, Lord, for thy justice" (Ps. 118:20).[12]

That we may so desire God that He may be willing to be born in us, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Pfeiffer's Sermon 29 is from a fragmentary text. Miss Evans translates this in vol. 1 as Sermon 29, but gives the full text as Sermon 27 in vol. II, following Sievers.
2. This is what the Gospel actually says, but Eckhart has quoted it differently because he wants to talk about time.
3. See Sermon 2, note 8.
4. Probably St. Augustine's *Confessions* 11.13 (Q).
5. The Trinity.
6. According to St. Thomas, each angel is a species in himself (Q).
7. Or belongs to a different species.
8. A play on *rîche* 'rich' and *rîche* 'kingdom' (modern *reich* and *Reich*).
9. *Gabriel* 'the power of God.'
10. A daughter (Q).
11. Eckhart explains this pseudo-etymology in *LW* II, 267: *'Ave,' sine vae* (Q).
12. A literal rendering of the Vulgate *Concupivit anima mea desiderare justificationes tuas.*

SERMON THIRTY

(Pf 30, Q 45)

BEATUS ES, SIMON BAR JONA, QUIA CARO ET SANGUIS ETC.
(Matthew 16:17)

Our Lord says, "Simon Peter, thou art blessed; flesh and blood have not revealed that to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." St. Peter has four names: he is called Peter, and is called Bar-Jona, and is called Simon, and is called Cephas.

Now our Lord says, "Thou art blessed." All people desire blessedness. And a master[1] says all people desire to be praised. But St. Augustine says a good man desires no praise, he desires to be worthy of praise. Now our masters say virtue is so pure, so wholly abstract and detached from all corporeal things in its ground and true nature that nothing whatever can enter into it without defiling the virtue and making it a vice. A single thought or any seeking of one's own advantage, and it is not a true virtue, it is turned to vice. Such is virtue by nature.

Now a pagan master[2] says if a man practices virtue for the sake of anything else but virtue, then it never was a virtue. If he seeks praise or anything else, he is selling virtue. One should never give up a virtue by nature for anything in the world. Therefore a good man desires no praise, but he desires to be worthy of praise. A man should not be sorry if people are angry with him, he should be sorry to deserve the anger.

Now our Lord says, "Blessed art thou." Blessedness lies in four things: in having everything that has essence, that is delightful to desire and brings appetite; to have it all undivided with one's whole soul; further, received in God in the purest and highest, bare, unconcealed, in the primal breaking forth and in the ground of being; and all taken whence God Himself takes it — that is blessedness.[3]

Now he says, "Peter," which is to say 'he who sees God.'[4] The masters ask whether the kernel of eternal[5] life lies more in the intellect or in the will. Will has two operations: desire and love. The intellect's work is onefold, and therefore it is better.[6] Its work is knowing, and it never rests till it touches nakedly that which it knows. And thus it goes ahead of will and declares to it what to love. As long as one desires things, one has not got them. When we have them, we love them, then desire falls away.

How should a man be who is to see God? He must be dead. Our Lord says, "No man can see me and live" (Exod. 33:20).[7] Now St. Gregory says he is dead who is dead to the world. Now judge for yourselves what a dead man is like and how little he is touched by anything in the world. If we die to the world we do not die to God. St. Augustine prayed a variety of prayers. He said, 'Lord, grant me to know thee and me'; 'Lord, have mercy on me and show me thy face and grant me that I may die, and grant me that I may not die, so that I may eternally behold thee.' This is the first point: that one must be dead if one would see God. This is the first name, Peter.

One master[8] says if there were no 'means,' we could see an ant in heaven. But another master[9] says if there were no means, we could see nothing. They are both right. The color that is on the wall, if it is to be transmitted to my eye, must be filtered and refined in the air and in the light and thus spiritually conveyed to my eye. Thus too the soul must be strained by light and by grace, in order to see God. Therefore that master was right who said if there were no means we should see nothing. But the other master is also right who said if there were no means we could see an ant in heaven. If the soul were without means, she would see God naked.

The second name, Bar-Jona, means as much as 'son of grace,'[10] in which the soul is purified and borne aloft and prepared for the divine vision.

The third name is Simon, which means as much as 'that which is obedient,' or 'that which is submissive.' He who would hear God must be far removed from people. Accordingly David says, "I will be silent and hear what God speaks in me. He speaks peace to His people and over all His saints and to all those who have turned again toward their hearts" (Ps. 84:9). Blessed is that man who diligently listens to what God is saying in him, and he will be directly exposed

to the ray of divine light. The soul that is turned with all her powers under the light of God becomes fired and inflamed with the love of God. The divine light shines directly above him. If the sun were to shine directly above our heads, few could survive it. Thus the highest part of the soul, which is the head, should be raised used up directly under the ray of divine light, so that the divine light can shine into that place I have often spoken of: this is so pure and transcendent and lofty that all lights are darkness and nothing compared with this light. All creatures, as such, are as nothing; but when they are illumined from above with the light from which they receive their being, they are something.[11]

Therefore the natural mind can never be so noble as to be able to touch or seize God without means, unless tie soul has these six things of which I have spoken: — First, to be dead to all that is unlike; second, to be well purified in light and in grace; third, to be without means; fourth, to be obedient to God's word in the inmost part; fifth, to be subject to the divine light; the sixth is what a pagan master says: blessedness is when one lives according to the highest power of the soul, which should be always striving upward and receiving her blessedness from God. Where the Son himself receives it in the primal source, there too we should receive it from God's highest part, and so we too must keep our highest part erect toward this.

Cephas means the same as 'head.'[12] The intellect is the head of the soul. Those who put the matter roughly say that love has precedence, but those who speak most precisely say expressly — and it is true — that the kernel of eternal life lies in understanding more than in love. You should know why. Our finest masters — and there are not many of them — say that understanding and intellect go straight up to God. But love turns to the loved object and takes there what is good, whereas intellect takes hold of what makes it good. Honey is sweeter in itself than anything made from it. Love takes God as He is good, but intellect presses upward and takes God as He is being. Therefore God said, "Simon Peter, thou art blessed." God gives the righteous man divine being and calls him by the same name that belongs to that being. And so he says after that, "My Father, who is in heaven." Of all names there is none more proper than 'He who is.' For if a man should seek to indicate something by saying 'it is,' that would seem silly, but if he said, 'it is a piece of wood or a stone,' then

we should know what he meant. And so we say that when everything is removed, abstracted and peeled off so that nothing at all remains but a simple 'is' — *that* is the proper characteristic of His name. Therefore God said to Moses, "Say 'He that is has sent me' " (Exod. 3:14).[13] Therefore our Lord calls his own with his own name. Our Lord said to his disciples, "Those who are my followers shall sit at my table in my Father's kingdom and eat my food and drink my drink which my Father has prepared for me; thus I have also prepared it for you."[14] "Blessed is the man who has attained to this, that he shall receive with the Son just where the Son receives. Right there we too shall find our bliss, there whereon *his* bliss depends, and whence he receives his being; in that same ground, there all his friends shall find their bliss and draw it from there. That is the "table in God's kingdom."

That we may come to this table, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Ennius, quoted by St. Augustine (Q).
2. Seneca (Q).
3. The reference is not to material, sensual pleasures. These for Eckhart have no essence.
4. Cf. Sermon 25, note 2. Eckhart stretches the alleged meaning a little further here!
5. Miss Evan's 'external' is obviously a misprint.
6. The Dominican view. The Franciscans gave priority to the will (see Sermon 8, note 5). But Eckhart is not merely scoring a debating point.
7. Note that Eckhart says, 'our Lord,' though the words are attributed to God in the Old Testament.
8. Democritus (Q). Miss Evans has 'the beloved' instead of 'an ant.' She was thinking of *amîs* 'lover,' from French *aim.*
9. Aristotle, *On the Soul* 2.7 (Q).
10. St. Jerome says it means either 'son of the dove' or 'son of grace' (Q).
11. This modifies the more extreme position, 'all creatures are nothing,' condemned in art. 26 of the bull of 1329.
12. Isidore of Seville derived this from Greek *kephale* 'head'; but as Albertus Magnus knew, Bede was aware of the true meaning: 'rock' (Q).
13. This text is dealt with at length in Eckhart's Exodus commentary (*LW* II, 20ff.).
14. A combination of Matt. 19:28 and Luke 22:29–30 (Q).

SERMON THIRTY-ONE

(Pf 31, Q 37)

VIR MEUS SERVUS TUUS MORTUUS EST
(2 Kings 4:1ff.)

"A woman said to the prophet, 'Sir, my husband your servant is dead. And now the creditors have come and taken my two sons and made them bondsmen for the debt, and I have nothing but a little oil.' The prophet said, 'Just borrow some empty vessels and pour a little into each, that will grow and increase; sell it and pay off your debt and release your sons. With what is left over, keep yourself and your two sons.' "

The spark of intellect, which is the head of the soul, is called the husband[1] of the soul, and is none other than a tiny spark of the divine nature, a divine light, a ray and an imprint of the divine nature. We read of a woman who requested this gift from God.[2] The first gift that God gives is the Holy Ghost. Therein God gives all His gifts: that is the "living water; to whom I give that, he shall never thirst again." This water is grace and light, and it wells up in the soul, surging up within and thrusting upward, "leaping into eternity." "Then the woman said, 'Sir, give me of the water.' Then our Lord said, 'Bring me your husband,' and she said, 'Sir, I have none.' Then our Lord said, 'You are right, you have none. But you have had five, and the one you have now is not yours.' " St. Augustine says, 'Why does our Lord say, "You are right"? He means to say "the five husbands are the five senses: they had you in your youth according to all their will and desire. Now you have one in your old age and he is not yours: that is the intellect, that you do not obey." When this 'husband' is dead, it bodes ill. When the soul departs from the body, that is very painful, but when God departs from the soul, the pain is immeasurable. As the soul gives life to the body, so God gives life to the soul. As the

soul flows into all members, so God flows into all the powers of the soul and suffuses them so that they overflow with goodness and love over all about them, so that all things become aware of Him. Thus He flows all the time, that is, above all time, in eternity and in that life in which all things live. Therefore our Lord said to the woman, "I give the living water. Whoever drinks of it will never thirst again and he will live in eternal life."

Now the woman says, "Sir, my husband, your servant, is dead." 'Servant' means one who receives and keeps things for his lord. If he kept them for himself, he would be a thief. Intellect is more truly the 'servant' than will or love. Will and love fall on God as being good, and if He were not good, they would ignore Him. Intellect penetrates right up into the essence without heeding goodness or power or wisdom, or whatever is accidental. It does not care what is added to God, it takes Him in Himself, sinks into the essence and takes God as He is pure essence. Even if He were not wise nor good nor just, it would still take Him as pure being. Here intellect is like the highest rank of angels, of which there are three choirs. The Thrones receive God into them and keep God among themselves, and God rests among them; the Cherubim know God and persist therein; Seraphim means 'burning fire.'[3] Intellect is like these and keeps God in itself. With these angels the intellect receives God in His robing room, naked, as He is One without distinction. Now the woman says, "Sir, my husband your servant is dead. The creditors have come and taken my two sons." What are the 'two sons' of the soul? St. Augustine speaks — and with him another, pagan master[4] — of the two faces of the soul. The one is turned toward this world and the body; in this she works virtue, knowledge, and holy living. The other face is turned directly to God. There the divine light is without interruption, working within, even though she does not know it, because she is not at home. When the spark of intellect is taken barely in God, then the 'husband' is alive. *Then* the birth takes place, then the Son is born. This birth does not take place once a year or once a month or once a day, but all the time, that is, above time in the expanse where there is no here or now, nor nature nor thought. Accordingly we say 'son' and not 'daughter.'[5]

Now we will speak of the 'two sons' in another sense, that is, understanding and will. Understanding bursts forth first out of intellect, and will then proceeds from them both. But no more of this.

Now we will speak in another sense of the 'two sons' of intellect. One is potentiality, the other is actuality.[6] A pagan master[7] says, 'The soul has in this power the potentiality to become all things spiritually.' In her active power she is like the Father, making all things into a new being. God would gladly have impressed the nature of all creatures on her, but before the world was she did not exist. God had created all this world spiritually in every angel, before the world was made in itself. An angel has two understandings. The one is morning light, the other is evening light. The morning light means that he sees all things in God. The evening light means that he sees all things in his natural light. If he went out among things, it would be night. But he stays within, and therefore it is called evening light. We say the angels rejoice when a man does a good deed.[8] Our masters ask whether the angels are sad when a man commits sin. We say No, for they see into God's justice and accept all things therein, as they are in God. Therefore they cannot be sad. Now, intellect in its *potential* power is like the natural light of the angels, which is the evening light. With the *active* power it bears all things aloft into God, and is all things in the morning light.

Now the woman says, "The creditors have come to take my two sons into their service." The prophet says, "Borrow some empty vessels from your neighbors." These neighbors are the five senses and all the powers of the soul — the soul contains many powers which work in great secrecy — and also the angels. From all these "neighbors" you should "borrow empty vessels."

That we may "borrow many empty vessels," and that they may all be filled with divine wisdom, that we may "pay our debts" with this and live eternally from "what is left over," so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. *Man* can mean either 'husband' or 'man.'
2. The woman of Samaria (John 4:7ff.).
3. The enumeration of the nine choirs of angels, of which these are the first three, goes back to 'Dionysius the Areopagite.' Quint gives references in Isidore, Peter Lombard, etc.
4. Avicenna, *On the Soul* 1.5.
5. See Sermon 17, note 5.
6. See Sermon 3.
7. Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 9.7.
8. See Sermon 7.

SERMON THIRTY-TWO (a)

(Pf 32, Q 20a)[1]

St. Luke writes for us in his Gospel, "A man had made a great supper or evening feast." Who made it? A man. What does he mean by calling it a supper? One master[2] says that it means great love, for God admits none to it but him who is intimate with God. Secondly, he means to say how pure they must be who enjoy this supper. Now it never becomes evening but a full day has gone before. If there were no sun, there would never be any day. When the sun rises that is morning light, then it shines more and more until midday arrives. In the same way the divine light breaks forth in the soul to illuminate the soul's powers more and more, until it becomes midday. It never becomes spiritually day in the soul, unless she has received a divine light. Thirdly, he means that whoever would worthily receive this meal must come in the evening. When the light of this world fades away, it is evening. Now David says, "He climbs up in the evening, and His name is the Lord" (Ps. 67:5). Just as Jacob, when it was evening, lay down and slept (Gen. 28:11). This denotes the repose of the soul. Fourthly, he means it as St. Gregory says, that after the evening meal there is no more food. He to whom God gives this food finds it so sweet and delicious that thereafter he hankers after no other food. St. Augustine[3] says God is of such nature that he who understands it can never repose on anything else. St. Augustine says, 'Lord, if thou takest thyself from us, give us another thee, or we shall never rest: we want nothing but thee.' Now one saint[4] says that a God-loving soul forces God to do whatever she wants, making Him completely infatuated so that He can deny her nothing that He is. He withdrew Himself in one way and gave Himself in another way: He took Himself away as God and man and gave Himself as God and man, as another self in a secret vessel. A very precious relic

is not willingly allowed to be touched or seen. Therefore He clothed Himself in the cloak of the likeness of bread, just as my bodily food is transformed by my soul, so that no corner of my nature is not united with it. For there is a power in nature that separates the basest part and throws it out, and it carries up the noblest part, so that there is not so much as a needle's point that is not united with it. What I ate a fortnight ago is as much one with my soul as what I received in my mother's womb. So it is that whoever receives this food purely becomes as truly one with it as my flesh and blood are one with my soul.

There was a man. That man had no name, for that man is God. Now a master[5] says of the first cause, that it is beyond words. The deficiency lies in language. This comes of the surpassing purity of its essence. We can only speak of things in three ways: first, of what is above things; second, of the likeness of things; and third, of the operation of things. I will give you a simile. When the power of the sun draws the noblest sap from the root up into the branches and turns it into blossom, the power of the sun yet remains above it. This, I say, is how the divine light works in the soul. When the soul pronounces God, this utterance does not comprise the real truth about His essence: no one can truly say of God what He is. Sometimes we say one thing is like another. Now since all creatures contain next to nothing of God, they cannot declare Him. We can judge the skill of a painter who has made a perfect picture. And yet we cannot fully judge it from that. All creatures cannot fully express God, for they are not receptive to what He really is.

This God now man has prepared the supper — the inexpressible man for whom there are no words. St. Augustine says whatever we say of God is not true, and what we do not say of Him is true. Whatever we say God is, He is not; what we do not say of Him He is more truly than what we say He is.[6]

Who prepared this feast? A man: the man who is God. Now King David says, "O Lord, how great and how manifold is thy feast, and the taste of the sweetness that thou hast prepared for those that love thee, not those that fear thee" (Ps. 30:20). St. Augustine thought of this food and felt revulsion and he had no taste for it. Then he heard a voice near him, from above: 'I am the food of great people. Grow and become great and eat me. But you should not suppose that I shall

be turned into you. You will be turned into me.'[7] When God works in the soul, whatever is unlike in the soul is purified and cast out by the burning heat. By the pure truth, the soul enters more into God than any food into us — in fact it turns the soul into God. And there is one power in the soul that splits off the coarser part and becomes united with God: that is the spark in the soul. The soul becomes more one with God than the food with my body.

Who prepared this feast? A man. Do you know what his name is? The man who is unuttered. This man sent out his servant. Now St. Gregory says this servant means the preachers. In another sense this servant means the angels. Thirdly, it seems to me, this servant means the spark in the soul which is created by God and is a light, imprinted from above, and an image of the divine nature, which is always striving against whatever is ungodly, and it is not a power of the soul, as some masters would have it,[8] and it is always inclined to the good — even in hell it is inclined to the good. The masters say this light is so natural that it is always striving, it is called *synteresis*,[9] which means to say a binding and a turning away from. It has two functions. One is to bite against that which is impure. Its other task is that it ever attracts to the good — and that is directly impressed in the soul — even those who are in hell. Therefore it is a splendid feast.

Now he said to the servant, "Go out and bid those come who are invited; everything is now ready." The soul receives everything that He is. Whatever the soul desires is now ready. Whatever God gives has been eternally becoming: its becoming is now new and fresh and altogether in one eternal Now. A great master[10] says, 'Something that I see is purified and made spiritual in my eyes, and the light that enters my eye would never enter my soul but for the power which is above it.' St. Augustine says that the spark is more akin to the truth than anything man can learn. A light burns. People say one is lit from the other. If that is to happen, then that which burns must necessarily be above the other. Just as if one were to take a candle which had gone out but was still glowing and smoking, and hold it up to the other, then the light would flash down and kindle the other. People say one fire kindles another. I deny this. A fire kindles itself. But that which kindles the other must be above it. Just so heaven does not burn and is cold, nevertheless it kindles the fire, and that takes place by the touch

of the angel. Likewise the soul prepares herself by exercises. Then she is kindled from above. This comes from the light of the angel.

Now he says to the servant, "Go out and bid them come who are invited; everything is now ready" (Luke 14:17). Then one said, "I have bought a village, I cannot come." These are the people who are still somewhat bound by worldly cares. They will never taste this supper. Another says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen" (Luke 14:18–19). The five yokes, it seems to me, really refer to the five senses, for each sense is double, and the tongue is twofold in itself. And so, as I said the day before yesterday, when God said to the woman, 'Bring me your husband,' she said, 'I have none.' Then he said to her, 'You are right. But you have had five, and the one you have now is not your husband' (John 14:17).[11] That means in truth that those who live according to the five senses will never taste this supper. The third one said, "I have taken a wife, I cannot come" (Luke 14:20). The soul is wholly male when she turns to God. When the soul faces downward, she is called 'woman,' but when one knows God in Himself and seeks Him at home, the soul is a man. It was forbidden in the old law for any man to put on women's dress, or a woman man's dress. She is a man when she penetrates simply into God without means. But when she looks out here at all, then she is a woman.

Then the Lord said, 'In truth, they shall never taste my supper!' and he said to the servant, 'Go out into the narrow and broad streets and by the hedges and the main roads' (Luke 14:21). The narrower, the wider. "By the hedges": some powers are hedged in at one place. I do not hear with the power by which I see, and I do not see with the power by which I hear. And so, too, it is with the others. Nevertheless the soul is entire in every member, and some powers are in no way bounded.

Now, what is the 'servant'? The angels and the preachers. But as it seems to me, the servant is the spark. Now he said to the servant, 'Go out into the hedgerows and drive in these four kinds of people: the blind and the lame, the sick and the feeble' (Luke 14:21). Of a surety, no one else shall taste my supper.'

That we may cast off these three things, and thus become man, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. This and Sermon 32b are closely related, so much so that some have held them to be different versions of one and the same sermon. Miss Evans translates the first of these with the incorporation (marked by asterisks) of some doubtful additions from Spamer, which Quint rejects. They are omitted here.
2. Unidentified.
3. *Conf.* I, 1 (Q).
4. Unidentified, but Eckhart himself says something very similar in Sermon 91. Cf. also Sermon 10.
5. Proclus, *De causis* prop. 6.
6. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.2.3.
7. *Conf.* 7.10 (Q).
8. In Sermon 80 Eckhart explains that it is more than a 'power of the soul.'
9. See Introduction, Note A: *Synteresis,* p. 22.
10. Aristotle, unidentified.
11. See Sermon 31.

SERMON THIRTY-TWO (b)

(Q 20b)[1]

HOMO QUIDAM FECIT CENAM MAGNAM ETC.
(Luke 14:16)

"A man had made a great supper or evening feast." Whoever makes a feast in the morning invites all sorts of people, but to an evening feast one invites great people, people one likes, and especially intimate friends. Here in Christendom we celebrate today the evening feast that our Lord prepared for his disciples, his intimate friends, when he gave them his blessed body for food. That is the first point. The supper has another meaning. Before it comes to evening there must be a morning and a midday. The divine light rises in the soul and makes morning, and the soul ascends in the light into an expanse and height to midday; after that comes the evening. Now let us speak in a different sense about the evening. When the light fades it is evening; when the whole world fades away from the soul, it is evening, and the soul attains to repose. St. Gregory says of supper: when one eats in the morning, another meal follows, but after supper there is no other meal. When the soul tastes the food at the evening feast, and the spark of the soul comprehends the divine light, then it needs no more food, it does not seek outside things and cleaves entirely to the divine light. Now St. Augustine says, Lord, if thou takest thyself from us, give us another thee; nothing else satisfies us but thou, for we want nothing but thee. Our Lord withdrew from his disciples as God and man, and gave himself to them again as God and man, but in another guise and another form. Just as we do not let a precious relic be handled or seen bare, but we enclose it in crystal or something else, so did our Lord when he gave himself as another self. God gives Himself, all that He is, *in* the supper as food to His dear friends. St. Augustine felt revulsion at this food, and so a voice spoke to him

in spirit, 'I am the food of great people, wax and grow and eat me. You will not transform me into you, but you will be transformed into me.' Of the food and drink I consumed a fortnight ago, one power of my soul took the purest and subtlest part and carried that into my body and united it with everything that is in me, so that there is not the least part of me, not so much as one could put on a needle's point, that is not united with it. It is as much one with me as what I received in my mother's womb when my life was first poured into me. Just as truly does the power of the Holy Ghost take the purest and the subtlest and the highest, the spark of the soul, and bear it all aloft in the brand of love, in the same way as I now say of a tree: the power of the sun seizes on the purest and subtlest in the root of the tree and draws it right up into the branch, where it becomes a blossom. Thus in every way the spark in the soul is borne up in the light and in the Holy Ghost and carried right up into the primal source, and it becomes so wholly one with God, and seeks so wholly the One, and is more truly one with God than the food is with my body — indeed far more, inasmuch as it is much more pure and noble. And so he said, "A great evening feast." Now David says, "Lord, how great and how manifold is the sweetness and the food which thou hast hidden from all those that fear thee" (Ps. 30:20). And he who receives this food with fear, he never gets the true taste of it, for one must receive it with love. Therefore a God-loving soul conquers God, so that He must give Himself wholly to her.

Now St. Luke says, "A man made a great evening feast." That man had no name, that man had no equal, that man is God. God has no name. A pagan master[2] says that no tongue can produce a true word to speak of God, on account of the loftiness and purity of His being. As we say of the tree, so we say concerning the things which are superior to the tree, like the sun, which works in the tree. Therefore it is impossible to speak truly of God, for nothing is superior to God, and God has no cause. Secondly, we speak of things in terms of equality, and therefore we cannot truly speak of God, for God has no equal. Thirdly, we speak of things in regard to their works: as we speak of the skill of the master, so we speak of the picture he has made: the picture reveals the master's skill. All creatures are too base to be able to reveal God, they are all nothing compared with God. Therefore no creature can utter a single word about God in His works.

Accordingly Dionysius says all who wish to declare God are wrong, for they do not declare Him. Those who do not try to declare Him are right, for no word can declare God; yet He declares Himself in Himself. Therefore David says, "We shall see this light in thy light" (Ps. 35:10). Luke says, "A man." He is one and is a man, like none, transcending all.

The Lord sent forth His servants. St. Gregory says these servants are the order of preachers.[3] I speak of another servant, who is the angel. But we will speak of yet another servant of whom I have spoken before: That is the intellect in the circuit of the soul,[4] where it touches the angelic nature and is an image of God. In this light the soul has community with the angels — even with those angels who sank into hell and have yet retained the nobility of their nature. There, this spark stands bare, untouched by any pain, directed to God's essence. She is also like the good angels who continually work in God and bear all their works back to God and receive God from God in God. The spark of intellect resembles these good angels, being created without distinction by God, a transcending light and an image of the divine nature and created by God. The soul bears this light within her. The masters say this is a power in the soul called *synteresis*,[5] but this is not so. It means that which always hangs on God, and it never wills any evil. Even in hell it inclines to the good; it always strives within the soul against whatever is not pure and divine, and continually invites to the feast.

Therefore he says, "He sent forth his servants that they should come, for all was ready." Nobody need ask what he is to receive in our Lord's body. The spark, that stands ready to receive our Lord's body, stands evermore in God's essence. God gives Himself to the soul ever anew in one becoming. He does not say 'it has become' or 'it will become,' but it is all new and fresh as in one becoming without cessation.

Therefore he said, "It is now all ready."

Now a master says that one power in the soul lies above the eye, which is wider than all the world and wider than the heavens. This power takes in everything that is presented to the eyes, and bears it all up into the soul.

Another master contradicts this, saying, 'No, brother, it is not so. Whatever is brought by the senses into that power does not enter the

soul, but rather it purifies and prepares and overcomes the soul, so that she may receive barely the light of the angel and the divine light.' Therefore he says, "It is now all ready."

And those who are invited do not come. The first says, 'I have bought a village, I cannot come.' By the village is to be understood all that is earthly. As long as the soul has anything earthly about her she does not come to the feast. The second said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, I cannot come, I must see to them.' The five yoke of oxen are the five senses. Each sense has two aspects, that is five yoke. As long as the soul follows the five senses, she will not come to the feast. The third said, 'I have taken a wife, I cannot come.' I have said before, the man in the soul is the intellect. When the soul is directly pointed up toward God, the soul is a man and is one and not two, but when the soul turns down here below, she is a woman. With a single thought and a single downward glance she puts on woman's dress. These too do not come to the feast.

Now our Lord says a hard thing: "I tell you truly, none of these will ever taste my supper." Then the Lord said, "Go forth into the narrow and wide roads." The more the soul is collected, the narrower she is, and the narrower, the wider. "Now go out into the hedges and the main roads." Part of the soul's powers are hedged in, in the eyes and the other senses. The other powers are free, they are unbounded and unhindered by the body. All these he invites in, and he invites the poor and the blind and the lame and the feeble. These come to the feast and no one else. Therefore St. Luke says, "A man had made a great feast." That man is God and has no name.

That we may come to this feast, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. See Sermon 32a, n. 1. Miss Evans prints extracts from this version, under the heading *Synderesis,* together with parallel passages which were incorporated into a sermon by Nikolaus von Landau.
2. See Sermon 32a, note 5.
3. Eckhart's hearers will doubtless have thought, anachronistically, of the Dominicans.
4. See Sermon 31.
5. See Sermon 32a, note 9.

SERMON THIRTY-THREE

(Pf 33, Q 35)

SI CONSURREXISTIS CUM CHRISTO, QUE SURSUM SUNT ETC.
(Colossians 3:1)

St. Paul says, "If you are then raised up with Christ, then seek those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of his Father, and do not savor the things that are on earth." He then says further, "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God," in heaven. The third thing is that the women sought our Lord at the sepulcher. There they found an angel, "whose countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow." "And he said to the women, 'whom do you seek? If you seek Jesus who was crucified, he is not here" ' (Matt. 28:1ff.). For God is nowhere. Of God's lowest all creatures are full, and His greatest is nowhere. They did not reply, for they were disappointed at finding the angel and not God. God is not here or there, not in time or place.

Now St. Paul says, "If you are then raised up with Christ, then seek those things which are above." His first word expresses two things. Some people are half raised up: they practice one virtue but not another. Some, ignoble by nature, covet riches. Others of a nobler nature care nothing for possessions but are bent on honor. One master says the virtues are necessarily interdependent. Though a person may incline to the practice of one virtue rather than the others, yet they are all interconnected. Some people are fully raised up,[1] but are not raised up with Christ. Therefore, that which is his must rise up fully. Again, we find some people who rise with Christ for good and all; but he must be very wise who experiences a true resurrection with Christ. The masters say that alone is a true resurrection, when there is no more death. Now there was never any virtue so great but some might be found to have acquired it by their natural powers,

for natural powers work many signs and wonders; and all the outward works which have ever been found in the saints have also been found in the heathen. That is why he says, you shall be "raised up with Christ," for he is on high, where nature cannot reach. All that pertains to us must make the ascent.

There are three signs of our having fully risen. The first is if we "seek the things that are above." The second is if we savor the things above. The third is if we have distaste for the "things that are on earth." St. Paul says, "Seek those things that are above." But where, and in what way? King David says, "Seek the face of God" (Ps. 104:4). What is common to many things must come from above. The cause of fire must be above it, like heaven and the sun. Our best teachers hold that heaven is the locus of all things, and though it has itself no place, no natural place, yet it makes room for all things. My soul is undivided, yet it is entire in each member. Where my eye sees my ear does not hear; where my ear hears my eye does not see. What I see and hear physically, comes into me by spirit. My eye perceives color through light, but it is not present to the soul by reason of defect. All that the outward senses perceive, if the spirit is to take it in, must come from above, from the angel, who imprints it in the upper part of the soul. Now our masters say the above orders and places the below. On this St. James says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above" (James 1:17). One who is fully risen with Christ is known by his seeking for God above time. He seeks God above time who seeks Him timelessly.

Now he says, "Seek those things that are above." Where are we to look? "Where Christ is sitting on the right hand of his Father." Where is Christ sitting? He is sitting nowhere. Whoever seeks him anywhere will not find him. His least part is everywhere, his highest nowhere. A master says that whoever knows anything does not know God. *Christ* means the anointed, he who is anointed by the Holy Ghost. The masters say sitting denotes rest and implies timelessness. What turns and changes has no rest, and also, resting adds nothing. Our Lord says, "I am God and do not change" (Mal. 3:6).

"Christ is sitting on the right hand of his Father." The greatest good that God can give is His right hand. Christ says, "I am a door" (John 10:9). The first outburst and the first effusion God runs out into is His fusion into His Son, who flows back into the Father. I

said one day that the door was the Holy Ghost: there He is poured out in goodness into all creatures. Where there is a natural man, that is the beginning of His work with the right hand. One master says the heavens receive from God direct. Another denies this, for God is a spirit and pure light, therefore anything receiving direct from God must be spirit and pure light. A master says it is impossible that in the first eruption, when God bursts forth, any corporeal thing should receive it: it must be either light or pure spirit. Heaven is above time and the cause of time. One master says heaven is by nature too lofty to stoop to be the cause of time. In its nature it is not the cause of time, but in its revolution it is — being timeless — the cause of time, which is a product of heaven. My complexion is not my nature, but it is a product of my nature: our souls are far above, "hidden in God." And so I say not only above time, but hidden in God. Is that the meaning of heaven? Everything corporeal is a product, an accident and a descent. King David says, "A thousand years are in God's sight as a day that is past" (Ps. 89:4), for all the future and the past are there in one Now.

That we may attain to this Now, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. I.e., not 'half' like those just mentioned.

SERMON THIRTY-FOUR

(Pf 34, Q 55)

MARIA MAGDALENA VENIT AD MONUMENTUM ETC.
(John 20:1)

"Mary Magdalene went to the grave" seeking our Lord Jesus Christ, and she "bent forward and looked in. She saw two angels by the grave, and they said, 'Woman, whom do you seek?' — 'Jesus of Nazareth' — 'He has arisen, he is not here." ' And she was silent and did not answer them, "and she looked back and forth and over her shoulder and saw Jesus, and he said, 'Woman, whom do you seek?' — 'Oh sir, if you have lifted him up, show me where you have placed him, I will carry him away.' And he said, 'Mary!" ' And because she had often heard this word tenderly from him, she recognized him and fell at his feet and wanted to seize hold of him. And he moved away, saying, "Do not touch me. I have not yet gone to my Father!" Why did he say, "I have not yet gone to my Father"? For he had never left the Father! He meant, 'I have not yet truly arisen in you.' Why did she say, "Show me where you have carried him, for I want to take him"? If he had carried him to the judge's house, would she have taken him? 'Yes,' declared one master,[1] 'she would even have taken him from the judge's palace.'

Now you might ask why she ventured so close though she was a woman and those who were men — one who loved God and another whom God loved[2] — were afraid. To this the master says, 'It was because she had nothing to lose, for she had given herself to him, and because she was his, she had no fear.' As if I had given my cloak to someone, if another wanted to take it from him, it would not be my duty to prevent him, because it would be his,[3] as I have said before. She was not afraid for three reasons. First, because she was his. Second, because she was so far from the gate of the senses, and within.

Third, because her heart was with him. Where he was, her heart was. Therefore she was not afraid. The second reason the master gives,[4] why she stood so near, was because she desired that they should come and kill her, since she could nowhere find God alive, so that her soul might find God somewhere. The third reason why she stood so near was because of this: if they had come and killed her — for she well knew that none could get to heaven before Christ himself had gone there,[5] and her soul must have a resting place somewhere — so she desired that her soul should dwell in the grave and her body by the grave: her soul in it and her body beside it — because she had a hope that God had broken forth out of man, and something of God had remained in the grave. As if I had held an apple for some time in my hand, if I put it down, something would remain such as a slight odor. Thus she hoped that something of God had remained in the grave. The fourth reason why she stood so close to the grave was because she had lost God twice, living on the cross and dead in the grave, and so she was afraid that if she went away from the grave, she would lose the grave as well. For if she had lost the grave, she would have nothing left at all.

Now you might ask why she stood and did not sit. For she would have been as close to him sitting down as standing up. Some people think that if they are far out in a level, broad field where there is nothing to obscure their vision, they can see as far sitting down as standing up; but though they may think so, it is not so. Mary stood up so that she could see further round about, in case there were a bush anywhere under which God was hidden, so that she could seek him there. Secondly, she was inwardly so wholly upturned toward God with all her powers, that she stood up outwardly. Thirdly, she was so entirely penetrated with grief. Now there are some who, when their beloved superior dies, are so penetrated with grief that they cannot stand on their own and have to sit down. But since her grief was for God and was based on steadfastness, she had no need to sit. The fourth reason why she remained standing was, if she saw God anywhere she could catch him more quickly. I have sometimes said that a man standing up is more receptive to God. But now I say something different: that when seated one can receive with more true humility than standing, just as I said the day before yesterday that heaven can only work in the ground of the earth. Thus God

cannot work except in the ground of humility, for the deeper we are in humility, the more receptive to God. Our masters say if a man took a cup and put it under the ground, it could hold more than if it stood on the ground: even if it were so little that one could scarcely notice it, yet it would be something. The more a man is sunk in the ground of true humility, the more he is sunk in the ground of divine being.

One master says, 'Lord, what didst thou mean by withdrawing for so long from this woman? How had she deserved it, or what had she done? Since thou forgavest her her sins she had done nothing except love thee. If she did anything, forgive that in thy goodness. If she loved thy body, yet she well knew that thy Godhead was in it. Lord, I appeal to thy divine truth; thou hast said thou wilt never be taken from her. And that is true, for thou hast never left her heart and thou hast said that whoever loves thee thou wilt love in return, and to him who rises early thou wilt appear.' And St. Gregory says, if God had been mortal and had hidden from her for so long, it would have broken his heart.

Now the question is, why she did not see our Lord, since he was so near her. It may be that her eyes were so blinded with tears that she could not see him quickly. Secondly, perhaps love had blinded her, so that she did not believe he was so near her. Thirdly, she kept looking away further than he was, so that she did not see him. She was looking for a dead body, and found two[6] living angels. An angel means the same as a messenger, and a messenger means one who is sent. We find indeed that the Son is sent and the Holy Ghost is sent — but they are *like.* But it is a characteristic of God, as a master says, that nothing is like Him.[7] For she sought what was like and found what was unlike: "one at the head, the other at the feet." And the master[8] says again that it is characteristic of God that He is one. Because she sought *one* and found *two* she was disconsolate, as I have said before. Our Lord says, "That is eternal life, that they know thee, the one true God" (John 17:3).

That we may thus seek Him and also find Him, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Eckhart is here largely following a homily ascribed to Origen (Q), but actually a twelfth-century product.
2. Peter and John.
3. To whom I had given it.
4. Somewhat confusingly, after giving his own three reasons, Eckhart now reverts to quoting 'Origen's' reasons.
5. It was held that no one went to heaven before Christ.
6. 'Two' supplied by Quint to complete the sense.
7. See especially Sermon 7.
8. Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1.54.

SERMON THIRTY-FIVE

(Pf 35, Q 19)

STA IN PORTA DOMUS DOMINI ET LOQUERE VERBUM
(Jeremiah 7:2)

Our Lord says, "Stand in the gate of God's house and preach the word, declare the word!" The heavenly Father speaks one Word and speaks it eternally, and in the Word He expends all His might and utters His entire divine nature and all creatures in the Word. The Word lies hidden in the soul, unnoticed and unheard unless room is made for it in the ground of hearing, otherwise it is not heard; but all voices and all sounds must cease and perfect stillness must reign there, a still silence. But I shall not speak further about this sense.

Now, "Stand in the gate." Whoever stands there, his limbs are ordered. He means that the highest part of the soul should always stand erect. Whatever is ordered must be subordinated to that which is above it. All creatures are displeasing to God unless the natural light of the soul, from which they get their being, illumines them from above, and the angel's light illumines from above the light of the soul, preparing and fitting her so that the divine light may work within; for God does not work in corporeal things, He works in the eternal. Therefore the soul must be collected and drawn up straight and must be a spirit. There God works and there all works are pleasing to God. No work ever pleases God unless it is wrought there.

Now: "Stand in the gate of God's house." God's house is the unity of His being. What is one is best all alone. Therefore unity stands by God and keeps God together, adding nothing. There He sits in His best part, His *esse*,[1] all within Himself, nowhere outside. But where He melts, He melts outside. His melting-out is His goodness, just as I have now said of knowledge and love. Knowledge detaches, for knowledge is better than love. But two are better than one, for

knowledge includes love. Love infatuates and entangles us in goodness, and in love I remain caught up in the gate, and love would be blind if knowledge were not there. A stone also possesses love, and its love seeks the ground. If I am caught up in goodness, in the first effusion, taking Him where He is good, then I seize the gate, but I shall not seize God. Therefore knowledge is better, for it leads love. But love seeks desire, intention. Knowledge does not add a single thought, but rather detaches and strips off and runs ahead, touches God naked and grasps Him in His essence.

"Lord, it is meet that thy house be holy, in which we praise thee, and that it should be a house of prayer in the length of days" (Ps. 92:5). I do not mean the days here: when I say length without length, *that* is length; when I say breadth without breadth, *that* is breadth. When I say all time, I mean above time, more than this, altogether above *here,* where there is neither here nor now.

A woman[2] asked our Lord how we should pray. Then our Lord said, "The time shall come and is now, when true worshippers will worship in the spirit and in truth. For God is a spirit, therefore you should pray in the spirit and in truth" (John 4:23–24). That which is truth in itself, we are not; rather, we are true, but something of falsehood is mixed in us too. With God it is not so. But in the primal eruption where truth breaks forth and originates, there, in the doorway of God's house, the soul should stand and pronounce and declare the Word. Everything that is in the soul should speak His praise, yet none shall hear its voice. In the silence and peace — as I just said concerning the angels who sit beside God in the choirs of wisdom and fire[3] — *there* God speaks in the soul and utters Himself completely in the soul. There the Father begets His Son and has such joy in the Word and is so fond of it, that He never ceases to utter the Word all the time, that is to say timelessly. This fits well with our words when we say, "It is meet that thy house be holy," and that there should be praise therein and nothing there but what praises thee.

Our teachers ask, '*What* praises God?' Likeness does. Thus everything in the soul that is like God, praises God. Whatever is unlike God does not praise God; just as a picture praises the artist who has lavished on it all the art that he has in his heart, making it entirely like himself. The likeness of the picture praises the artist without words. That which one can praise with words is a paltry thing, and

so is prayer with the lips. For our Lord said once, "You worship you know not what, but true worshippers will come who will worship my Father in the spirit and in truth" (John 4:22–23). What is prayer? Dionysius[4] says a true ascent into God is prayer. A pagan says where spirit is, and unity and eternity, there God will work. Where flesh strives against spirit, where disruption opposes unity, where time opposes eternity, God does not work: He can do nothing with it. Further, all joy and satisfaction and pleasure and comfort that we have *here* must go. He who would praise God must be holy and collected and be one spirit and not be anywhere 'outside,' but rather all equally borne aloft into the everlasting eternity transcending all things. I mean not only all creatures that have been created, but all the things he could do if he wished — the soul must rise above them all. As long as anything remains above the soul and as long as anything stands before God that is not God, she can never enter the ground "in the length of days."

Now St. Augustine says when the light of the soul, in which they receive their being, shines over all creatures, it is morning. When the light of the angel shines over the light of the soul and embraces it, that he calls 'mid-morning.' David says, "The path of the just man waxes and grows to a full midday" (Prov. 4:18). The path is fair and easy and delightful and familiar. But when the divine light shines over the angel's light, and the light of the soul and the angel's light are embraced in the divine light, that he calls midday. Then the day is at its highest and longest and most perfect, when the sun stands at its zenith and pours its light into the stars and the stars pour their light into the moon, so that it is ordered under the moon. Thus the divine light has embraced the angel's light and the soul's light, so that it stands orderly and erect, and there it does nothing but praise God. Then there is nothing more that does not praise God, and everything is like God — the more like, the fuller of God — and everything praises God. Our Lord said, "I will dwell with you in your house" (Jer. 7:3, 7).

We pray to our dear Lord that he may dwell with us here, that we may eternally dwell with him. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. This is the Latin *esse* 'being'; it could also be a play on *esse* 'furnace,' which leads to the 'melting.'
2. The woman of Samaria (John 4:20).
3. The Cherubim and Seraphim: cf. Sermon 31, note 3.
4. Actually St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa* 3.24 (Q).

SERMON THIRTY-SIX

(Pf 36, Q 18)

ADOLESCENS, TIBI DICO: SURGE
(Luke 7:11ff.)

Our Lord went to a city called Naim, and with him went many people as well as his disciples. And when they came under the gate they were carrying out a dead youth, the only son of a widow. Our Lord went up and touched the bier on which the dead man lay, saying, "Young man, I tell you, stand up!" The young man arose and at once began to speak — this was on account of his *likeness* whereby he had arisen through the eternal Word.

Now I say, "He went into the city." This city is the soul, which is well ordered and fortified and protected from harm and which has excluded all multiplicity and is united, well established in Christ's salvation and walled round and embraced by the divine light. Therefore the prophet says, "God is a wall round Zion" (cf. Isa. 26:1). The eternal wisdom says: "In the holy and sanctified city I shall have like repose" (Sir. 24:15). Nothing gives rest and unity so much as likeness: therefore everything like is within and near by. That soul is sanctified in which God alone is and in which no creature finds a resting-place. Therefore he says, "In the holy and sanctified city I shall have like repose." All holiness comes from the Holy Ghost. Nature passes over nothing: it always begins to work in the lowest, thus working upward into the highest. The masters say that air never becomes fire unless it is first rarefied and hot. The Holy Ghost takes the soul and purifies her in the light and in grace and draws her up to the highest. Therefore he says, "In the holy and sanctified city I shall have like repose." God rests in the soul as much as the soul rests in God. If she partly rests in Him, He partly rests in her; if she rests

wholly in Him, He rests wholly in her. Therefore the eternal wisdom says, "I shall have *like* repose."

The masters say that the yellow and the green in the rainbow merge into one another so equally that no eye is so sharp-sighted as to distinguish them; so equally does nature work, being so like the first effusion, and this is so like the angels that Moses did not dare to write about this for fear of the weakness of men's hearts, lest they should pray to them, because they are so like the first effusion. A very great master[1] says that the highest angel is so close to the first effusion and has within him so much of divine likeness and divine power that he created all this world and also all the angels who are beneath him.[2] There is good doctrine in this, in that God is so lofty and so pure and so simple that He causes His highest creature to work by His power, just as a steward works by the king's power and rules his land. He says, "In the holy and sanctified city I find like repose."

I spoke recently[3] of the gate through which God melts outward, which is goodness. But essence is that which keeps to itself and does not melt outward — rather it melts inward. But that is unity, which remains one in itself, apart from all things, and does not communicate itself, while goodness is where God melts outward and communicates Himself to all creatures. Essence is the Father, unity is the Son with the Father, goodness is the Holy Ghost. Now the Holy Ghost takes the soul (the sanctified city) in her purest and highest and bears her into her source which is the Son, and the Son bears her further into his source which is the Father, into the ground, into the beginning, where the Son has his being, where the eternal wisdom is in like repose 'in the holy and sanctified city,' in the innermost.

Now he says, "Our Lord went to the city of Naim." *Naim* means 'son of a dove,'[4] and denotes simplicity. The soul should never rest in her potential power, but become one with God. It also signifies a flood of water, and means that man should be immovable toward sin and imperfection. The 'disciples' are the divine light which should flow in and flood the soul. The 'many people' are the virtues I spoke of recently. The soul must ascend with fiery aspiration and surpass the great merits of the angels in the highest virtues. Then we shall pass under the 'gate,' that is, into love and unity: the gate through which they carried out the young man, a widow's son. Our Lord went up and touched that on which the dead man was lying. How he went

up and how he touched, I will not dwell on, except for his words, "Stand up, young man!"

He was the son of a widow. Her husband was dead, and therefore her son was also dead. The only son of the soul is will and all the powers of the soul, which are all one in the inmost part of the intellect. Intellect is the man in the soul. Now that the man is dead, the son is also dead. To this dead son our Lord said, "I tell you, young man, stand up!" The eternal Word and the living Word in which all things live and which supports all things, spoke life into the dead, and "he arose and began to speak." When the Word speaks in the soul and the soul replies in the living Word, then the Son is alive in the soul. The masters discuss which is better: the power of herbs or the power of words or the power of stones.[5] Let us consider which to choose. Herbs have great power. I heard how a snake and a weasel were fighting. Then the weasel ran away and fetched a herb and wrapped something round it and threw the herb at the snake, and it burst asunder and fell dead. What gave the weasel this wisdom to know the power of the herb? Great wisdom resides in this. Words too have great power: we could work wonders with words. All words have their power from the first Word. Stones too have great power through the likeness wrought in them by the stars and the might of heaven. For like works in like so strongly, and therefore the soul should arise in her natural light into the highest and purest, and thus enter the angelic light, and with the angelic light come into the divine light, and thus stand between the three lights at the crossroads, at the peak, where the lights come together. There the eternal Word speaks life into her, there the soul becomes living and replies in the Word.

That we may thus reply in the Word, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 9.4.
2. Two MSS insert here: 'But this is not so.' However, the censors did not object to the passage, unorthodox though it is.
3. Cf. Sermon 35, note 1.
4. This is actually the meaning of *Bar-Jona,* Peter's patronymic. The second meaning, 'flood of water' (or 'commotion') is appropriate to *Naim.* But Quint thinks the confusion goes back to Eckhart.
5. Precious stones were held to possess magic power.

SERMON THIRTY-SEVEN

(Pf 37)[1]

ADOLESCENS, TIBI DICO: SURGE
(Luke 7:14)

We read in the Gospel that a woman came to our Lord Jesus Christ. She said, "Sir, I am a widow and had an only son who is dead." Our Lord said, "Young man, stand up!"

We should understand it like this. The woman who was a widow, whose husband and only child were dead: by the woman we should understand the understanding, by the husband the man in the soul, and by the youth the highest intellect, for that is the young man. This is how we should take it. When a man is dead in imperfection, the highest intellect arises in the understanding and cries to God for grace. Then God gives it a divine light, so that it becomes self-knowing. Therein it knows God. I say the intellect alone can receive the divine light. The other powers of the soul are tools and instruments to bring the intellect to its maximum lucidity.

It is a question among the masters, which ranks higher: understanding or love? Some say understanding, some say love, and there is great debate about this. Understanding says, 'How could you love what you do not understand?' Love says, 'What use is much understanding, if you do not love? If you have no love, you will never attain to eternal bliss.' Understanding says, 'I am born in the clear light in which I can understand myself.' Love says, 'Though you understand much and have no love, your understanding is of no avail.' Understanding says, 'You must give place, you are only my servant: you help me up and remain below.' Love says, 'I am the goodness that God is Himself.' Understanding says, 'You make yourself too high and mighty: when I am not there you can do nothing.' Love says: 'You should learn to know me better.' Understanding says: 'I have

risen higher when not fettered by you. Clear awareness shines in me: I do not need you. I have what I want as long as I know what I have known hitherto, into which I have now flowed in a perfect union in which I shall abide forever. Here I stand above love and all works. As long as I now have knowledge and true cognizance of all things, whatever I believed before I now find to be true. Faith and hope, and all the powers of the soul must stay behind; they can go no further.' True love says, 'I must stay with you, for I am eternal. That our sisters should stay without is meet, for they are our servants and have accompanied you to the actual true knowledge of eternal bliss.' Now comes the highest intellect, that which receives all things barely from God, and says, 'I have apprehended the highest good wherein naught can stand but unity.' Understanding says, 'I shall remain, you must let me stay with you.' Intellect says, 'Understanding and love, you must remain behind.' Understanding says, 'I claim the reward for having known.' Love says, 'I claim the reward for having loved.' The highest intellect says, 'He to whom you have led me, and whom I have hitherto known, He knows Himself now in me, and He whom I have loved, He loves Himself in me. Thus I realize that I need no one any more. All created things must remain behind and all that was ever made. I stand before my source.'

By these words you must understand what our Lord said, "Young man, stand up!" thus: whatever is close to its birth we call 'young.' Thus it happens to the intellect when, in face of its source, it forgets all that helped it in its ascent, for it deems it was always there and always will be there. That cannot be.

Now you are to understand the woman as understanding, the son as intellect, the husband as the man in the soul. You must also understand, when the man in the soul begins to rise up, the masters say it is another man. You should not take this as being another soul: it is another being of the soul, for the old habits are all gone and dead. The soul has assumed her true being and stands in her primal innocence. The man in the soul, transcending angelic being and guided by intellect, pierces to the source whence the soul flowed. There, intellect must remain outside, with all named things. There the soul is merged in pure unity. *This* we call the man in the soul, and you should understand it thus: the man in the soul is he who has accomplished all this, so that he needs no further help. What he did hitherto, God

now works in him. God knows him as he knew Him, God loves him as he loved Him. Thus God performs all works, and the man in the soul is bare and empty of all things.

You should know what a man is like who has come to this: we can well say he is God and man. Observe, he has gained by grace all that Christ had by nature, and that his body is so fully suffused with the noble essence of the soul, which she has received from God and the divine light, that we may well declare, That is a man divine! Alas, my children, you should pity these people, for they are strangers, unknown to anybody. All who ever hope to come to God may well be mistaken in these folk, for they are hard for strangers to perceive: none can truly recognize them but those in whom the same light shines. This is the light of truth. It may well be that those who are on the way to the same good but have not yet attained it, can recognize these perfected ones of whom we have spoken, at least in part. Indeed, if I knew one such man, I would give a minster full of gold and precious stones, if I had it, for a single fowl for that man to eat. I say further: if I owned everything God ever created, I would give it all for that man to consume all at once, and rightly so, for it all belongs to him. I say yet further: God is his with all His power, and if all sinners stood starving before me, I would not take away one wing from that man's fowl to feed all the people. For you should know that if a man is in sin, whatever he eats or drinks, that draws him down to sin and his sin becomes greater. But if the man remains in sin, whatever he has eaten remains in him in his sin. But it is not thus with the good man: whatever he eats or drinks bears him up in Christ to the Father. Therefore you should look well to yourselves.

Note Christ's words, "Where two are gathered together in my name I will be with them" (Matt. 18:20). You should understand it thus: Christ means the soul and the body in a true unity, so that the body wants nothing but what the soul wants. Know that God would be with these, for they are the people we have just spoken about. When the man of the soul is in true possession of his eternal bliss, when the powers[2] are cut off, then that man meets with no opposition from anything. But note, you must pay good heed, for such people are very hard to recognize. When others fast, they eat, when others watch, they sleep, when others pray, they are silent — in short, all their words and acts are unknown to other people; because whatever

good people practice while on their way to eternal bliss, all that is quite foreign to such perfected ones. They need absolutely nothing, for they are in possession of the city of their true birthright. I can call that my own which will eternally remain to me, and which none can take from me. You should know that these people perform the most valuable work. You should understand it thus: they practice inwardly in the man of the soul. Indeed that kingdom is blessed in which one such person dwells! They do more eternal good in an instant than all outward works that were ever performed externally. See to it that you withhold nothing that is theirs.

That we may come to recognize such people and, loving God in them, may enter into possession of the city they have won, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. On the same text as Sermon 36. Not included in Quint.
2. Of the soul.

SERMON THIRTY-EIGHT

(Pf 38, Q 36a)

STETIT JESUS IN MEDIO DISCIPULORUM
ET DIXIT: PAX ETC.
(John 20:19ff.)

St. John writes in his Gospel, 'On the first day of the week, when it was evening, our Lord came when the doors were shut, among his disciples and said, "Peace be with you!" and again, "Peace be with you!" and at the third time, "Receive the Holy Ghost!" '

Now it is never evening unless a morning and a midday have gone before. We say that midday is hotter than evening. But insofar as evening takes in midday and stores up its heat, it is hotter, for the evening is preceded by a perfect, pure day. But late in the year, as after the solstice when the sun approaches near to the earth, the evening grows warm. It can never be midday till morning is past, nor can it ever be evening till midday is past. The meaning of that is this: when the divine light breaks forth in the soul, more and more until a pure and perfect day comes, then morning does not give place to midday, or midday to evening, but all close up in one. That is why the evening is hot. There is a perfect and pure day in the soul when everything the soul is is filled with divine light. But it is evening in the soul, as I said before, when the light of this world fades and a man is indrawn and rests.[1] Then God said, "Peace," and again, "Peace" and "Receive the Holy Ghost."

"Jacob the patriarch came to a place, when it was evening, and he took some stones that lay in that place, put them under his head, and rested. As he slept, he saw a ladder ascending into heaven and the angels climbing up and down, and God was leaning down over the top of the ladder" (Gen. 28:11–13). The place where Jacob slept had no name. That means that the Godhead alone is the place of the

soul, and is nameless. Now our masters say that which is another's place must be above it, as heaven is the place of all things and fire is the place of air and air is the place of water and of earth, and water is, though not fully, the place of earth, and earth is not a place.[2] An angel is the place of heaven, and any angel who has got a drop more of God than another is the place, the position of the other, and the highest angel is the place, position, and measure of all the others, and is himself without measure. But though he is without measure, yet God is his measure.

"Jacob rested in that place," which is nameless. By not being named, it is named. When the soul comes to the nameless place, she takes her rest. There, where all things have been God in God, she rests. That place of the soul which is God, is nameless. I say God is unspoken. But St. Augustine[3] says that God is not unspoken, for if He were unspoken that would be speech, and He is more silence than speech. One of our most ancient masters,[4] who discovered the truth long, long before God's birth, ere ever there was a Christian faith as there is now, considered that whatever he could say about things contained in itself something alien and untrue, and therefore he wanted to keep silent. He did not want to say, 'Give me bread' or 'Give me a drink.' He would not speak of things because he could not express them as purely as they were when they sprang from the first cause. He therefore preferred to be silent, and made known his wants by pointing with his finger. If he could not speak of things, it beseems us all the more to preserve total silence about Him Who is the source of all things.

Now we say God is a spirit. That is not so. If God were really a spirit, He would be spoken. St. Gregory says we cannot truly speak of God. What we say of Him, we can but stammer. In that place which is nameless, all creatures bud and blossom in due order, and the location of all creatures is altogether taken from the ground of this place of due ordering, and the location of the soul proceeds from this ground.

"Jacob wanted to rest." Observe, he *wanted* to rest. Whoever rests in God, his rest is without his volition. Now we say the will is unpracticed. The will is free, taking nothing from matter. In that one point it is freer than knowledge, and some foolish people, stumbling over this, would place it above knowledge. That is not so. Knowledge is

also free, but knowledge takes from matter and from corporeal things in one point of the soul, as I said at Easter Eve,[5] that some powers of the soul are bound to the five senses, such as sight and hearing, which bring in what we have to learn. Now one master says, 'God forbid that anything should be conveyed within by eye or ear which could fill the noblest part of the soul, instead of by the 'nameless place' which is the place of all things.' It is a good preparation and is indeed useful in that way, being involved with color and sound and corporeal things. It is merely an exercising of the senses, and the soul is thereby awakened, and the image of knowledge[6] is imprinted by nature into her. Plato says,[7] and following him St. Augustine,[8] that the soul has within her all knowledge, and whatever we practice outwardly serves only to awaken that knowledge.

'Jacob rested in the evening.' We prayed before for the Now.[9] Now let us pray for a little thing—just for an 'evening.'

That it may be granted us, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. See Sermon 35.
2. The four elements: cf. *In Gen.* 49–50. (*LW* I, 221f.).
3. Sermon 117.
4. Heraclitus, according to Albertus Magnus.
5. See Sermon 33.
6. Of the Platonic ideas (Q).
7. *Meno.* esp. 15, 81C (Q).
8. *De civitate Dei* 8.7 (Q).
9. See Sermon 33, conclusion.

SERMON THIRTY-NINE

(Q 36b, Jostes 69, 2)[1]

VENIT JESUS ET STETIT IN MEDIO
(John 20:19)

"It was the evening of the day. Then our Lord came to his disciples and stood in the middle and said, 'Peace be with you!" '

Now he says, "It was the evening of the day." When the heat of midday penetrates the air and makes it hot, then the heat of the evening is added to it and it becomes hotter still: then it is hottest in the evening owing to the additional heat. In the same way the year has its evening, which is August, when it is the hottest time of the year. Thus in a God-loving soul it is evening. There there is nothing but repose, where a man is thoroughly penetrated and made incandescent with divine love. That is why he says, "It was the evening of the day." In that day morning, midday, and evening stay together and do not pass away, but in this temporal day morning and midday pass and evening follows. It is not thus in the day of the soul: there it remains one. The natural light of the soul is morning. When the soul breaks forth into the highest and purest part of that light, and thus enters the light of the angel, in that light it is midmorning; and then the soul rises up with the angelic light into the divine light, and then it is midday; and the soul remains in the light of God and in the silence of pure repose, and that is evening: then it is hottest in the divine love. Now he says, "It was the evening of the day." That is, the day in the soul.

"Jacob the patriarch came to a certain place and wanted to rest in the evening, when the sun had gone down" (Gen. 28:11). He says, "To a place"; he does not name it. The place is God. God has no name of His own, and is the place and position of all things and is the natural place of all creatures. Heaven has no place in its highest

and purest part, but in its descent, in its operation, it is the place and position of all corporeal things which are under it. And the fire is the place of the air, and the air is the place of water and the earth. That is a place, that surrounds me, in which I stand. Thus the air surrounds the earth and water. The subtler a thing is, the more powerful: therefore it can operate in things which are coarser and are beneath it. The earth cannot truly be a place, because it is too coarse and is the lowest of the elements. Water is in part a place, for it is subtler and hence more powerful. The more powerful an element is, and the subtler, the more it is the position and place of another. Thus the sky is the place of all corporeal things, and it has no corporeal place, but rather, the least of the angels is its place, its ordering, and its position, and so on, up and up: each angel who is more noble is the place and position and measure of the other, and the highest angel is place, position, and measure of all the other angels who are beneath him, and he himself has no place or measure. But God has his measure and is his place, and He is pure spirit. But God is not a spirit according to the words of St. Gregory, who declares that all the words we speak about God are just a stammering about God. Therefore he says, "He came to a place." The place is God, Who gives position and order to all things. I have said before that all creatures are full of the least of God, and grow and flourish therein, and His greatest is nowhere. As long as the soul is anywhere, she is not in the greatest of God, which is nowhere.

Now he says, "He wanted to rest at that place." All wealth and poverty and bliss depends on the will. The will is so free and so noble that it takes nothing from corporeal things, but performs its work of its own liberty. Intellect takes from corporeal things: in that respect the will is nobler. But it is in a *part* of the intellect, in a downward glancing and a descent, that this understanding receives images from corporeal things: but in its highest the intellect works without adducing any corporeal things. A great master says that whatever is carried in by the senses does not enter the soul or the highest power of the soul. St. Augustine says, and Plato, a pagan master, says too, that the soul has in herself by nature all knowledge; therefore she has no need to draw knowledge into herself from without, but by the practice of outward knowledge that knowledge is revealed which is by nature concealed in the soul, just as a physician cleans my eye and

removes the obstruction which hindered vision, but he does not give sight to the eye. The power of the soul which works naturally in the eye, this alone gives sight to the eye when the obstacle is removed. Thus whatever is conveyed inward by the senses of images and forms does not give light to the soul, but merely prepares and purifies the soul so that in her highest part she may receive unveiled the angel's light and, with it, God's light.

Now he says, "Jacob wanted to rest at that place." The place is God and the divine essence, which gives a place, and life and being and order to all things. In that place the soul will rest, in the highest and inmost part of that place. And in the same ground, where He has His own rest, we too shall have our rest and possess it with Him. The place has no name, and no one can utter a word concerning it that is appropriate. Every word that we can say of it is more a denial of what God is *not* than a declaration of what He *is*.[2] A great master saw that and it seemed to him that, whatever he could say in words about God, he could not really say anything which did not contain some falsehood. And so he was silent and would not say another word, though he was greatly mocked by other masters. Therefore it is a much greater thing to be silent about God than to speak.

Now he says too, "It was the evening of the day; then our Lord stood in the midst of his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you!" ' That we may come to eternal peace and to the nameless place that is the divine essence, so help us the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Notes

1. A variant of Sermon 38.
2. A succinct definition of 'apophatic' or negative theology.

SERMON FORTY

(Pf 40, Q 4, QT 4)

OMNE DATUM OPTIMUM ET OMNE DONUM PERFECTUM
DESURSUM EST
(James 1:17)

St. James says in his epistle, "Every good gift and every perfection comes from above, from the Father of lights." Now you must know that people who resign themselves to God and diligently seek to do His will alone, whatever God sends them will be the best. As God lives, be sure that it must be the very best, and there could never be any better way. Though some other way may seem better to you, yet it would not be so good for you; God wills this way and no other, and so this way is bound to be best for you. Sickness or poverty, hunger or thirst, whatever God sends you or does not send you, what He grants you or withholds, that is best for you. Even should you lack fervor and inwardness — whatever you have or lack, be minded to honor God in all things, and then, whatever He sends you will be for the best.

Now you might say, 'How do I know whether it is God's will or not?' Be sure, if it were not God's will it would not be. You have neither sickness nor anything else unless God wills it. And so, knowing it is God's will, you should so rejoice in it and be content that pain would be no pain to you: even in the extremity of pain, to feel any pain or affliction would be altogether wrong, for you should accept it from God as the best of all, for it is bound to be best for you. For God's being depends on His willing the best. Let me then will it too, and nothing should please me better. If there were someone I tried hard to please and who I knew for certain liked me better in a gray coat than in any other, however good — assuredly that coat would delight and please me too more than any other, however good. If I

wanted to please anybody, whatever I knew that he liked, of words and deeds, I would do and that alone. So now, judge for yourselves of your love! If you loved God, you could rejoice in nothing more than in that which pleases Him best and that His will is done in us. However great may seem the pain or distress, unless you have an equal delight in it, it is wrong.

One thing I am wont to say and it is a fact, that we daily cry in our *pater noster,* 'Lord thy will be done!' and when His will is done, we are angry and discontented with it. But whatever He did should please us best. Those who do take it as best ever remain in perfect peace. But sometimes you think and say, 'Oh, it would be better if it had turned out differently,' or, 'If it had not been so, things might have been better.' As long as you think this way you will never find peace. You should accept it all for the best. This is the first meaning of our text.

There is another meaning, mark it well! He says, "Every gift." Only the very best and the very highest are true gifts in the truest sense. God gives nothing so gladly as great gifts. Once in this very place I said God likes forgiving big sins more than small ones. The bigger they are, the more gladly and quickly He forgives them. It is the same with graces, gifts, and virtues: the greater they are, the more gladly He bestows them, for His nature depends on giving great gifts. And so, the better the things, the more of them. The noblest creatures are the angels, who are purely spiritual and have nothing corporeal; their number is greatest and there are more of them than of all corporeal things. Great things are truly called gifts, and belong to Him most truly and inwardly.

I once said whatever can be truly put into words must come from within, moved by its inner form: it must not come in from without, but out from within. It truly lives in the inmost part of the soul. *There* all things are present to you, living within and seeking, and are at their best and highest. Why are you unaware of this? Because you are not at home there. The nobler a thing is, the more general it is. Feeling I have in common with beasts and life even with trees. Being is still more innate in me, and that I share with all creatures. Heaven is greater than everything that is under it, and so it is the nobler. The nobler things are, the greater and the more universal. Love is noble because it is universal. It seems hard to do as our Lord commands,

and love our fellow Christians as ourselves. The common run of men generally say we should love them for the good for which we love ourselves. Not so. We should love them exactly the same as ourselves, and that is not difficult. Properly considered, love is more a reward than a behest. The command seems hard, but the reward is desirable. Whoever loves God as he ought and must (whether he would or not), and as all creatures love Him, he *must* love his fellow man as himself, rejoicing in his joys as his own joys, and desiring his honor as much as his own honor, and loving a stranger as one of his own. This way a man is always joyful, honored, and advantaged, just as if he were in heaven, and so he has more joy than if he rejoiced only in his own good. And you should know in truth that if you take more pleasure in your own honor than in that of another, that is wrong.

Remember, if you seek anything of your own, you will never find God, for you are not seeking God alone. You are looking for something *with* God, treating God like a candle with which to look for something; and when you have found what you were looking for, you throw the candle away. That is what you are doing: whatever you look for *with* God is nothing, whatever it might be, whether profit or reward or inwardness or anything at all: you are looking for nothing, and so you will find nothing. The reason why you find nothing is simply because you seek nothing. All creatures are pure nothing. I do not say they are a trifle or they are anything: they are pure nothing.[1] What has no being, is not. All creatures have no being, for their being consists in the presence of God. If God turned away for an instant from all creatures, they would perish. I have sometimes said, and it is true, that he who possessed the whole world with God would have no more than if he had God by Himself. All creatures have nothing more without God than a midge would have without God — just the same, neither more nor less.

Now listen to a true saying! If a man gave a thousand marks of gold for building churches and convents, that would be a great thing. Yet that man would give far more who could regard a thousand marks as nothing; he would have done far more than the other. When God created all creatures, they were so poor and narrow that He could not move in them. But the soul He made so like Himself and so much in His own image, on purpose to give Himself to her; for whatever else He gave her she had no care for. God must give me Himself for my

own as He is His own, or I shall get nothing and nothing will be to my taste. Whoever shall thus receive Him outright must have wholly renounced himself and gone out of himself: he gets straight from God all that He has, as his own just as much as it is His, and our Lady's and all theirs who are in heaven. It belongs equally and as much to them. Those who have gone out of themselves and renounced themselves in equal measure will receive equally, and no less.

Thirdly the words "From the Father of lights." The word 'father' implies a filial relationship. The word 'father' implies pure begetting and means the life of all things. The Father begets His Son in the eternal intellect, and thus the Father begets His Son in the soul just as He does in His own nature, and begets him in the soul as her own, and His being depends on His bringing His Son to birth in the soul, whether He would or no. I was once asked what the Father is doing in heaven. I said, He is begetting His Son, an act He so delights in and which pleases Him so well that He does nothing else but beget His Son, and the two burgeon forth the Holy Ghost. When the Father bears His Son in me, I am the same Son and not another: true, we are different in humanity, but *there* I am the same Son and none other.[2] "Being sons, we are heirs" (Rom. 8:17). He who understands the truth knows well that the word 'father' connotes pure generation and the having of sons. Therefore, in this we are sons and are the same Son.

Now consider the words "They come from above." As I have clearly stated before, Whoever would receive from above must be below in true humility. Know this truly: he who is not fully below obtains and receives nothing, however small. If you have an eye to yourself or to any thing or person, you are not right under and will get nothing, but if you are right under, you will receive fully and perfectly. It is God's nature to give, and His being depends on His giving to us when we are under. If we are not, and receive nothing, we do Him violence and kill Him. If we cannot do this to Him, then we do it to ourselves, as far as in us lies. If you would truly give Him all, see to it that you put yourself in true humility under God, raising up God in your heart and your understanding. "Our Lord God sent His Son into the world" (Gal. 4:4). I once said here, God sent His Son into the world in the soul's fullness of time, when she had finished with time.[3] When the soul is free from time and place, then the Father

sends His Son into the soul. This is the meaning of the words "The best gift and perfection come from above, from the Father of lights."

That we may be made ready to receive this best gift, may God help us, the Father of lights. Amen.

Notes

1. This sentence was condemned in art. 26 of the bull of 1329: *Omnes creature sunt unum purum nichil: non dico quod sint modicum vel aliquid, sed quod sint unum purum nichil.*
2. Cf. Sermon 8.
3. Cf. Sermon 29.

SERMON FORTY-ONE

(Pf 41, Q 70, QT 53)[1]

MODICUM ET NON VIDEBITIS ME, ETC.
(John 16:16)

Our Lord said to his disciples, "A little, a tiny bit, a wee while, and you will not see me; again a little, and you shall see me." The disciples said, "We do not know what he is saying." This is written by St. John, who was there. When our Lord saw their hearts, he said, "A little while, and you shall see me, and your hearts will rejoice, and that joy shall never be taken from you." Now our Lord says, "A little, and you will not see me." The finest masters say that the kernel of salvation lies in understanding. A prominent theologian[2] recently came to Paris and opposed this with loud fulminations. Then another master[3] spoke up better than all those of Paris who held to the better doctrine, 'Master, you cry out and fulminate very positively. If it were not God's word in the holy Gospel, you would be making a great fuss.' Knowledge seizes on that barely which it knows. Our Lord says, "That is the eternal life, that we know thee alone as true God" (John 17:3). The perfection of blessedness lies in both, knowledge and love.

Now he says, "A little, and you will not see me." This has four meanings which sound much alike, but are very different. "A little, and you will not see me." All things must be little in you, and as nothing. I have said before that St. Augustine says, 'When St. Paul saw nothing, he saw God.'[4] Now I will turn the phrase round (which is better), and say, 'when he saw naught,[5] he saw God.' That is the first meaning.

The second meaning is this: Unless all the world and all time become little in you, you will not see God. St. John says in the Apocalypse: "The angel swore by the eternal life that time should be no more" (Rev. 10:5). St. John says openly,[6] "The world was made by

Him, and it did not know Him" (John 1:10). Also a pagan master says that world and time are small things. Unless you transcend world and time, you will not see God. "A little, and you will not see me."

The third meaning is this: As long as anything adheres to the soul, however little, of sin or akin to sin, you will not see God. The masters declare that heaven receives no alien impressions.[7] There are many heavens: each one has its spirit and its angel who is allotted to it.[8] If he were to operate in another heaven to which he was not allotted, he could do nothing with it. One priest said, 'I wish your soul were in my body.' Then I said, 'Truly, she would be foolish in there, for she could do nothing with it, nor could your soul in my body.' No soul can do anything except in the body to which she is allotted. The eye does not tolerate anything alien in itself. A master says, 'If there were no means, we could see nothing.' If I am to see the color on the wall, it must be made small in the light and in the air and its image must be conveyed to my eye. St. Bernard says the eye is like heaven, it receives heaven in itself. The ear does not do that: it does not hear it, nor does the tongue taste it. Secondly, the eye is shaped round like heaven. Thirdly, it stands high like heaven. Therefore the eye receives the impression of light, because it has the property of heaven.[9] Heaven receives no alien impressions. The body does receive alien impressions, and the soul also receives alien impressions, as long as she works in the body. If the soul is to know anything outside of herself, such as an angel, or anything, however pure, she must do this with a subtle glimpse without any image.[10] So too an angel, if he is to recognize another angel or anything that is under God, must do it with a subtle glimpse without any image such as the images here. But he knows himself without this subtle glimpse, without image and without likeness. So too the soul knows herself without glimpse, without image and without likeness, immediately. If I am to know God, that must occur without images and immediately. The greatest masters say that one knows God without means. That is how the angels know God, just as He knows Himself without image and without 'a little.'[11] If I am to know God without 'means' and without image or likeness, then God must become practically 'I,' and I practically God, so wholly one that when I work with Him it is not that I work and He incites me, but that I work wholly with what is mine. I work as truly with Him as my soul works with my body. That

is a great comfort for us, and if we had nothing else, that should be spur enough for us to love God.

The fourth sense is entirely opposite to these three. We must be great and lofty if we are to see God. The light of the sun is little compared to the light of the intellect, and the intellect is little compared to the light of grace. Grace is a light that transcends and soars above everything that God ever created or could create. Yet the light of grace, great as it is, is little indeed compared with the divine light. Our Lord rebuked his disciples and said, "In you is yet but a little light" (John 12:35). They were not without light, but it was small. We must ascend and grow great in grace. As long as we are growing in grace, it is grace and it is little, and in it we see God from afar. But when grace is perfected in the highest, it is not grace: it is a divine light in which one sees God. St. Paul says, "God lives and dwells in a light to which there is no access" (1 Tim. 6:16). There is no access, there is only an attainment. Moses says, "No man has seen God" (cf. Exodus 33:20). As long as we are men and as long as anything human attaches to us and we are approaching, we cannot see God; we must be raised up and set in pure rest, and thus see God. St. John says, "We shall know God as God knows Himself" (cf. 1 John 3:2). God's nature is that He knows Himself without 'a little' and without this or that. That is how the angels know God, as He knows Himself. St. Paul says, "We shall know God as we are known" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). And I say we shall know Him just as He knows Himself, in the reflection which is solely the image of God and the Godhead, but the Godhead only in as far as it is the Father.[12] Insofar as we are like *this* image, from which all images have flowed out and fled, and as we are reflected in this image and equally entered into the image of the Father — as far as He knows that in us, so far do we know Him as He knows Himself.

Now he says, "A little, and you will not see me; a little again, and you shall see me." Our Lord said, "That is the eternal life, that we know thee alone as true God."

That we may come to this knowledge, may God help us. Amen.[13]

Notes

1. This, according to Quint, is a better version of Pfeiffer's Sermon 41, which he reprints as an appendix to his Sermon 70, with variants from the Basle Tauler edition of 1521.

2. Probably the Franciscan Gonsalvus, with whom Eckhart debated in Paris in 1302 or 1303 (see Introduction).

3. The master who thus opposed Gonsalvus can scarcely be Eckhart himself. Quint thinks it may have been the distinguished Dominican Jean Quidort.

4. See Sermon 19.

5. The inversion is hard to bring out in English. At the first place Eckhart has *Dô Sant Paulus niht ensach,* and at the second place *dô er sach niht,* which is more emphatic and in which *niht* clearly means 'nothing.' For the meanings of *niht,* see Sermon 6, note 5, and Sermon 13b, note 2.

6. 'Openly' in the gospel, not in the 'secret' revelation of the Apocalypse.

7. This is Aristotelian doctrine, as taught by Albertus Magnus (Q).

8. Cf. John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions." As regards the spirits, Quint refers to the *substantiae separatae* of Neoplatonism, who are often identified with the angels.

9. Cf. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Cant. sermo* 31.2 (Q). As in modern German, *himel* means both 'heaven' and 'sky.'

10. *Mit einem kleinen bildelîn âne bilde,* lit. 'with a little (or subtle) imagelet without an image,' i.e., abstractly.

11. *'Kleine'* (in quotes) in Quint's edition. This is the same word as is used in the scriptural text for the sermon, where it renders *modicum.* It means not only 'little' as in modern German, but 'fine, subtle,' etc. (etymologically cognate with English *clean*). Here it means without the least, or subtlest thing intervening, without 'means.' Another example of the difficulty of translating this sermon.

12. The Son as image of the Father (Q).

13. I have not thought it necessary to translate the second version of this sermon which Quint appends (see note 1), as it is on the whole inferior and adds little of interest or importance. But attention may be drawn to an example of Eckhart's free use of scripture to express his meaning. In the last paragraph he says (Miss Evan's translation), 'As our Lord said to St. Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, I am not yet ascended *in thee* to my Father" ' (John 20:17), rendering the Vulgate *Noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum.* The words 'in thee' have no equivalent in the Latin, being inserted to give Eckhart's mystical interpretation of the passage. We may compare his treatment of the text to Sermon 8. Medieval exegesis was often pretty free, but Eckhart seems to go further than most. None of his inquisitors objected to these additions, and Quint too, more surprisingly, does not comment on them.

SERMON FORTY-TWO

(Pf 42, Q 69)

MODICUM ET IAM NON VIDEBITIS ME
(John 16:16)

I have quoted a text in Latin which is written in St. John's Gospel which we read on Sunday. It is what our Lord said to his disciples: "A little, a short while, and suddenly you will not see me."

Anything, however small, adhering to the soul, prevents us from seeing God. St. Augustine asked what eternal life was, and said by way of answer, 'If you ask what eternal life is, ask and listen to eternal life itself.' No one knows better what heat is than he who is hot; no one knows better what wisdom is than he who is wise; no one knows better what eternal life is than eternal life itself. Now the Eternal Life, our Lord Jesus Christ, says, "That is eternal life, that we know thee alone as true God" (John 17:3). If a man espied God from afar as by some medium or in a cloud, he would not depart from God for an instant for all the world. What do you think, then, how tremendous that is if one sees God without medium? Now our Lord says, "A little, a short while, and suddenly you will not see me." All creatures God ever created or might yet create, if He wished, are little or nothing compared with God. Heaven is so vast and so wide that if I told you, you would not believe it. If you were to take a needle and prick the heavens with it, then that part of heaven that the needle point pricked would be greater in comparison to heaven and the whole world, than heaven and the world are compared with God. Therefore it is well said, "A little or a short while, and you will not see me." As long as anything of creaturehood shines in you, however small, you cannot see God. Therefore the soul says in the Book of Love, "I have run around and sought him that my soul loves, and have not found him" (Song 3:2). She found angels and many things, but she did not find

him her soul loved. She goes on, "After that, when I had leapt over a little or a small space, I found him that my soul loved" (Song 3:4). It is as if she were to say, 'When I had leapt over all creatures (which are a little or a small thing), *then* I found him that my soul loved.' The soul that is to find God must leap over and pass beyond all creatures.

Know then that God loves the soul so mightily, it is a wonder. If anyone were to rob God of loving the soul, he would rob Him of His life and being, or he would kill God, if one may say so; for the self-same love with which God loves the soul is His life, and in that same love the Holy Ghost blossoms forth, and that same love *is* the Holy Ghost. Since God loves the soul so mightily, the soul must be a very important thing.

A master says in the book *On the Soul,* 'If there were no medium, the eye could see an ant or a midge in the sky,' and he was right, for he meant the fire and the air and other things that are between the sky and the eye. A second master says, 'If there were no medium, my eye could see nothing.' They are both right.[1] The first says, 'If there were no medium, the eye could see an ant in the sky,' and he is right. If there were no medium between God and the soul, she would at once see God, for God has no medium and brooks no intervention. If the soul were wholly stripped and denuded of all means, God would appear stripped and bare before her and would give Himself wholly to her. All the while that the soul is not entirely stripped and denuded of all means, however slight, she cannot see God; and if there were anything intervening, even of a hair's breadth, between body and soul, there would never be a proper union between them. Since this is so with corporeal things, how much more is it with spiritual things! Boethius[2] says, 'If you would know truth clearly, cast off joy, and fear, expectation, and hope, and pain.' Joy is a means, fear is a means, expectation and hope and pain are all means.[3] As long as you regard them and they regard you, you cannot see God.

The second master says, 'If there were no means, my eye would see nothing.'[4] If I put my hand over my eye, I cannot see the hand. If I hold it out before me, I see it at once. This is due to the dense nature of the hand; accordingly it must be clarified and rendered subtle in the air and light, and conveyed to my eye as an image. You can observe this with a mirror: if you hold it before you, your image appears in the mirror. The eye and the soul are such a mirror, in that whatever is held

before them appears therein. Hence I do not see my hand, or a stone, but rather I see an image of the stone. But I do not see that image in another image or in a medium. Rather, I see it without means and without image, for the image *is* the means and not another means. That is because an image is without image as motion[5] is without motion, though the cause of motion, and magnitude is without size, though the cause of size. Thus too an image is imageless, in that it is not seen in another image. The eternal Word is the medium and the image itself (which is without means or image), so that the soul may grasp God in the eternal Word, and know Him immediately and without any image.

There is a power in the soul, which is the intellect. From the moment that it becomes aware of God and tastes Him, it has five properties. The first is that it becomes detached from here and now. The second is that it is like nothing. The third is that it is pure and uncompounded. The fourth is that it is active and seeking in itself. The fifth is that it is an image.

The first point: it becomes detached from here and now. 'Here and now' means the same as place and time. *Now* is the minimum of time; it is not a portion of time or a part of time. It is just a taste of time, a tip of time, and end of time. Yet, small though it be, it must go: everything that touches or smacks of time must go. Again, it is detached from *here*. 'Here' means the same thing as place. The place where I am standing is small, but however small, it must still go before I can see God.

The second point: it is like nothing. A master says God is a being that nothing is like and nothing can become like.[6] Now St. John says, "We shall be called children of God" (1 John 3:1), and if we are God's children we must resemble God. How is it then that the master says God is a being whom *nothing* is like? This is how you must understand it: By virtue of being like nothing, this power is like God. Just as God is like nothing, so too this power is like nothing. You must know that all creatures strive and work naturally to become like God. The heavens would not revolve if they did not pursue or seek for God, or a likeness to God. If God were not in all things, nature would cease operation and not strive for anything; for, whether you like it or not, and whether you know it or not, nature secretly and in her inmost parts seeks and aims at God. No man was ever so thirsty

that, when offered a drink, he would not refuse it unless there were something of God in it. Nature seeks neither eating nor drinking, nor clothes nor comfort, nor anything whatsoever, unless God were in it; she seeks privily, struggling and striving ever more to find God in it.

The third point: it is pure and uncompounded. By nature God can tolerate no mingling or admixture. Thus too, this power has no mingling or admixture; there is nothing alien in it, nor can anything alien invade it. If I were to tell a handsome man that he was pale and black, I should do him an injustice. The soul should be entirely without admixture. If someone fixed anything to my hood or stuck anything on it, whoever pulled at the hood would pull all that with it. If I go away from here, all that is attached to me will go with me. Whatever the spirit rests on or is fastened to, whoever pulls that, pulls the spirit with it. If a man were to rest on nothing, and cling to nothing, then, if heaven and earth were overturned, he would remain unmoved, since he would cling to nothing, and nothing would cling to him.

The fourth point: it is ever inwardly seeking. God is a being such that He ever abides in the innermost. Therefore the intellect goes ever seeking within. But the will goes *out* to seek what it loves. So, when my friend comes to me, my will pours itself out over him with *its* love and he is gladdened. Now St. Paul says, "We shall know God as we are known by God" (1 Cor. 13:12). St. John says, "We shall know God as He is." If I am to have a color, I must have in me what pertains to color. I shall never have any color, unless I have the essence of color in me. I can never see God except in that in which God sees Himself. Speaking of this, St. Paul says, "God dwells in a light which is inaccessible." Let none despair on that account! One can dwell on the way or in the approaches, and that is good, and yet it is far from the truth, for it is not God.

The fifth point: that it is an image. Well now! Mark this well and remember it: here you have the whole sermon in a nutshell. Image and image are so fully one and joined, that no difference can be discerned. We can well understand fire without heat, and heat without fire. We can understand the sun without light and light without the sun. But we can understand no difference between image and image. I say further: God in His omnipotence can understand no difference between them, for they are born together and die together. Because

my father dies, I do not die too. When he dies, you can no longer say, 'He *is* his son,' but you have to say, 'He *was* his son.' If you whiten the wall, then, insofar as it is white, it is like all whiteness. But if you blacken it, it is dead to all whiteness. Now see, it is the same here: if the image should perish that is formed after God, then God's image would also disappear. I will say one word — or two or three! Now mark me well! Intellect peeps in and ransacks every corner of the Godhead, and seizes on the Son in the Father's heart and in the ground, and sets him in its own ground. Intellect forces its way in, dissatisfied with goodness or wisdom or truth or God Himself. In very truth, it is as little satisfied with God as with a stone or a tree. It never rests; it bursts into the ground whence goodness and truth proceed, and seizes it *in principio,* in the beginning where goodness and truth are just coming out, before it has any name, before it burgeons forth, in a much higher ground than goodness and wisdom. But its sister, the will, is well satisfied with God as He is good. But intellect strips all this off and enters in and breaks through to the roots, where the Son wells up and the Holy Ghost blossoms forth.

That we may understand this and attain eternal bliss, may the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit help us. Amen.

Notes

1. See Sermon 30. There are difficulties of translation here: *mitel* is 'medium' or 'means,' i.e., anything intervening; *himel* is both 'sky' and 'heaven.' There is confusion between the 'masters' here: Aristotle, *On the Soul* 2.7, says that if there were no medium we should see nothing. The other master is said to be Democritus. Eckhart refers to these two in his commentary on the *Book of Wisdom,* n. 285 (*LW* II, p. 619).

2. Clark (1957, p. 178) says, 'No such passage can be found in the works of Boethius, but Quint refers to *De Consolatione Philosophiae* I, *metrum* vii: *Tu quoque si vis / lumine claro / cernere verum / ... gaudia pelle, / pelle timorem / spemque fugato / nec dolor adsit.*'

3. I have followed Pfeiffer's text here against Quint, since this agrees with the order 'joy, fear, hope, pain' in Boethius. Eckhart inserts *zuoversiht,* 'expectation.' Clark renders this 'confidence,' and Evans 'trust' and 'faith,' all of which would do for the modern German *Zuversicht,* but in Eckhart's day the word could mean expectation of anything, good or bad.

4. Aristotle again.

5. The *principle* of motion.

6. See Sermon 24a.

SERMON FORTY-THREE

(Pf 43, Q 41, QT 46, Evans II, 12)[1]

QUI SEQUITUR JUSTITIAM DILIGETUR A DOMINO
(Proverbs 15:9)

BEATI QUI ESURIUNT ET SITIUNT IUSTITIAM,
QUONIAM SATURABUNTUR
(Matthew 5:6)

I have chosen a text from the epistle appointed for today for two saints,[2] and a second text from the Gospel. King Solomon says in today's epistle, "They who pursue justice are beloved of God." And my lord St. Matthew has another saying: "Blessed are the poor and those who hunger and thirst after justice, and pursue it."

Note the words "God loves"; this is a great reward for me, and indeed too great if, as I have said before, we should *wish* for God to love me. What does God love? God loves nothing but Himself and what is like Himself, insofar as He finds it in me and me in Him. In the Book of Wisdom it says, "God loves none but him that dwells in wisdom" (Wisd. 7:28). There is another text in scripture which is better still, "God loves those who pursue justice" — in wisdom. The masters are agreed that God's wisdom is His only-begotten Son. This text says, "who pursue justice in wisdom,"[3] and therefore He Loves those who pursue *Him,* for He loves us only insofar as he finds us in Him. There is a big difference between God's love and our love. We only love in as far as we find God[4] in what we love. Even if I had sworn it, I could not love anything but goodness. But God loves insofar as *He* is good (not as if He could find anything in man to love but His own goodness), and insofar as we are in Him and His Love. That is His gift, that the gift of His love, that we are *in* Him and "dwell in wisdom."

St. Paul says, "We are transformed in love."[5] Note the words: "God loves." A miracle! What *is* God's love? His nature and His being: that is His love. If God were deprived of loving us, that would deprive Him of His being and His Godhead, for His being depends on His loving me. And in this way the Holy Ghost comes forth. God bless us, what a miracle that is! If God loves me with all His nature — which depends on this — then God loves me rightly, as if His becoming and His being depended on it. God has only one love: with the same love with which the Father loves His only-begotten Son, He loves me.

Now for another meaning. Pay careful note: scripture is right for him who can disclose and reveal it. He says, "Who pursue justice in wisdom." The just man has such need of justice that he cannot love anything but justice. If God were not just — as I have said before — he would care nothing for God. Wisdom and justice are one in God, and he who loves wisdom also loves justice. If the devil were just, he would love him insofar as he was just, and not a hair's breadth more. The just man does not love 'this and that' in God. If God were to give him all His wisdom and all that He can perform outside of Himself, that man would not care for it or have any taste for it, because he wants nothing and seeks nothing; for he has no *why* for which he does anything, just as God acts without why and has no why.[6] In the same way as God acts, so the just man acts without why; and just as life lives for its own sake and asks for no why for which to live, so the just man has no why for which to act.

Now note the text which says, "They hunger and thirst after justice." Our Lord says, "They who eat me shall hunger again, they who drink me shall thirst again" (Sir. 24:21). How are we to understand this? For it is not so with physical things: the more you eat, the more sated you are. But with spiritual things there is no satiation: the more you have of them, the more you want. And therefore this text says, "They shall become more thirsty who drink me, and more hungry who eat me.' These people are so hungry for God's will, and it is so much to their taste, that whatever God sends them satisfies and pleases them so much that they could not wish or desire anything else. As long as a man is hungry he enjoys his food, and the greater the hunger, the greater the satisfaction in eating. So it is with those who hunger after God's will: His will tastes so good, and whatever

God wishes and sends them pleases them so much that, even if God wanted to let them off it, they would not want to be let off — so pleased are they with what God wanted in the first place. If I wanted to please someone, and make myself agreeable to him alone, whatever suited that person, through which I was pleasing to him, that I would wish more than anything else. And if I pleased him better in a poor dress than in velvet, then assuredly I should wear that poor dress rather than any other.[7] So it is with those who are pleased with God's will: whatever God gives them, sickness or poverty or anything else, they prefer that to anything else. Because it is God's will, it tastes better to them than anything else.

Now you might want to ask, 'How do I know if it is God's will?' I reply, 'If it were *not* God's will for a single instant, it would not be — it *must* always be His will.' Now if you really enjoyed the taste of God's will, you would be just as if you were in heaven, whatever happened or did not happen to you. It serves them right who want anything other than God's will, for they are always in sorrow and distress. They often suffer violence and oppression, and are always in trouble. And that is just as it should be, for they act as if they were to sell God, as Judas did. They love God for the sake of something else that is not God. And if they get something they love, they do not bother about God. Whether it is contemplation or rapture or whatever you welcome, whatever is created, is not God. Scripture says, "The world was made by Him, and what was made knew him not" (cf. John 1:10). If anyone should think that to gain a thousand worlds plus God were any more than to gain God alone, he would not know God or have the slightest idea of God and would be a boor.[8] Therefore a man should heed nothing but God. Whoever seeks for anything *with* God, as I have said before, does not know what he is looking for.[9]

Thus the Son is born in us, when we are without why, and are born again in the Son. Origen[10] writes something very splendid, and if I were to say it, you would think it incredible: 'We are not only inborn in the Son, we are born out and born in again, and are born anew and immediately in the Son. I say, and it is true, that in every good thought or good intent or good work we are ever born anew in God.' Therefore, as I said quite recently,[11] the Father has only the one Son, and the less we turn our aims or attention to anything other than God, and insofar as we look to nothing outward, so we are

transformed in the Son, and so far the Son is born in us and we are born in the Son and become the one Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Son of the Father, and he alone is man and God. But there is only one Son in one essence, and that is the divine essence. Thus we are one in him, when we have no thought but of him. God wishes always to be alone;[12] that is a necessary truth, and it cannot be otherwise: we must always have God alone in mind.

God has, it is true, poured out satisfaction and joy into creatures, but the root of all satisfaction, and the essence of all joy — these God has kept back in Himself. Here is an analogy: fire sends its roots out into water in the form of heat, and when the fire is removed, for a while the warmth remains in the water, and also in the wood; the fire having been present, the heat remains just so long, according to the strength of the fire that was there. But the sun illuminates the air and shines through it, but does not put forth roots into it: for when the sun is no more present there is no more light. And that is what God does with creatures: He casts the light of satisfaction upon creatures, but the root of all satisfaction He has reserved to Himself, for He would have us for Himself alone, and for no one else. God adorns Himself and proffers Himself to the soul, and has drawn on all the resources of His Godhead to make himself agreeable to the soul, because God wishes alone to please the soul, and will brook no rival. God will endure no jostling, and does not wish us to strive for or desire anything but Himself.

Now there are some people who consider themselves very holy and perfect, they make a great parade and use big words, and yet they seek and desire so many things, and want so many possessions and pay so much regard to themselves and to this and that; they claim to be contemplatives, and yet they can brook no contradiction. You can be sure they are far from God and have not attained that union. The prophet says, "I have poured out my soul within myself" (Ps. 41:5). But St. Augustine says something better; he says, 'I have poured out my soul over myself.' It must be so, that the soul rises above herself if she is to become one in the Son, and the more she goes out of herself, the more she will become one with the Son. St. Paul says, "We shall be transformed into the same image that he is" (2 Cor. 3:18).

It has been written that a virtue is no virtue unless it comes from God or through God or in God: one of these things must always be.[13]

If it were otherwise it would not be a virtue; for whatever one seeks without God is too small. Virtue is God or without mediation in God. But I am not going to tell you now which is the best. Now you might say, 'Tell us, sir, what is that? How could we be without mediation in God by striving and aiming for nothing but God? How could we be so poor and give up all things like that? That is a very hard saying, that we should desire no reward!'—Be assured, God will not fail to give us everything. Even if He had sworn it, He still could not refrain from giving to us. It is far more necessary for Him to give than for us to receive, but we should not seek it—for the less we seek or desire it, the more God gives. In this way God intends only that we may be the richer and receive the more.[14] Sometimes when I am to pray I say a word or two and then I say: 'Lord, it is so little that we ask of thee. If anyone were to ask it of me, I should do it for him, and for thee it is a hundred times easier and thou dost it more willingly. And if we were to ask thee for anything greater, thou couldst easily give it, and the greater it is, the more gladly thou givest.' For God is ready to give great things, if only we could leave all things in justice.

That we may thus 'pursue justice' 'in wisdom,' and 'hunger and thirst after it,' and that we may 'be sated,' may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Miss Evans has replaced this by Jostes Sermon 10, which is probably not by Eckhart; but has included it in vol. II as Sermon 12.
2. SS. Cosmas and Damian, September 27.
3. *In* is Quint's emendation for *and*: Eckhart has in fact conflated two texts here, Prov. 15:9 and Wisd. 7:28, both of which are ascribed to Solomon.
4. This follows the MS reading and is adopted by Quint in his edition; in QT he had conjecturally altered 'God' to 'goodness,' but later considered this unnecessary.
5. Cf. Col. 1:13 (Q); in QT Quint referred to 2 Cor. 3:18 and Col. 2:2.
6. See Sermon 11. Cf. Angelus Silesius: 'Die Ros ist ohn warum: sie blühet, weil sie blühet' ('The rose is without why: it blooms because it blooms').
7. Cf. Sermon 40.
8. Cf. Sermon 40.
9. Cf. Nos. 10 and 11.
10. Origen, *Homily on Jeremiah* 6 (see *LW* II, 295, n. 2).
11. See Sermon 14b.
12. Cf. Sermon 6.
13. Macrobius quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* Ia–IIae, q. 61, a. 5 (Q).
14. Cf. Sermon 11.

SERMON FORTY-FOUR

(Q 58, Jostes 77)

QUI MIHI MINISTRAT ME SEQUATUR, ET UBI EGO SUM,
ILLIC ET MINISTER MEUS ERIT
(John 12:24)

These words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ, "Whoever serves me, let him follow me, and where I am, there my servant shall be with me."

Three things are to be noted about these words. One is that we should follow our Lord and serve him, as he says, "Whoever serves me, let him follow me." Therefore these words apply to St. Secundus,[1] whose name means 'he who follows God,' for he left goods and life and all things for God's sake. Similarly all who want to follow God should leave whatever holds them back from God. Chrysostom[2] says this is a hard saying for those who are inclined to this world and to material things, the possession of which is sweet to them and their abandonment hard and bitter. Here we can see how hard it is for some people to leave all material things, who do not know spiritual things. As I have said before, why do not sweet things taste as nice to the ear as to the mouth? Because it is not adapted to them. And so a carnal man has no knowledge of spiritual things, because he is not ready for them. On the other hand, it is easy for a man with understanding to leave all material things, because he knows spiritual things. St. Dionysius[3] says God offers his heaven for sale. Nothing is so cheap as heaven, when it is for sale, and nothing is so glorious and precious a possession, when it has been earned. It is called cheap, because it is on sale to everybody for as much as he can afford. Therefore a man should give all he has for heaven — his own will. As long as he keeps any part of his own will, he has not paid for heaven. For him who has abandoned self and self-will, all

material things are easy to abandon. As I have said before, there was a master who was teaching his pupil how to attain to a knowledge of spiritual things, and the pupil said, 'Master, through your teaching I have been raised up, and I can see that all material things are like a little ship floating on the sea, and like a bird flying in the air.' For all spiritual things are raised above material: the higher they are raised, the more they expand and embrace material things. Therefore material things are small compared with spiritual things, and the loftier spiritual things are, the greater; and the more powerful they are in works, the purer they are in essence. I have also said before (and it is a certain and true saying), if a man were dying of hunger, and if he were offered the finest food, he would rather die of hunger than he would have a taste or a bite of it, unless God's likeness were in it.[4] And if a man were freezing to death, whatever clothes he might be offered, he would not touch them or put them on, unless God's likeness were in them. That is the first point, how we should abandon all things and follow God. The second is, in what way we should serve our Lord. St. Augustine[5] says, 'He is a true servant who seeks in all his works nothing but God's honor alone.' And my lord David says, "God is my Lord, I will serve Him" (Joshua 24:18) — for he has served me, and in all His service He had need of me only for my profit, therefore I ought to serve Him in return and seek His honor alone. Other lords do not do this: they seek their own profit in their service, for they only serve us in order that they may exploit us. Therefore we owe them no great service, for the reward should be according to the greatness and nobility of the service.

The third is, that we should observe the reward, for our Lord says, "Where I am, there my servant shall be with me." Where is the dwelling of our Lord Jesus Christ? It is in oneness with the Father. That is far too great a reward, that all who serve him shall dwell in this unity with him. And so St. Philip said, when our Lord had spoken of his Father, "Lord, show us your Father, and it will suffice us" (John 14:8), as if to say he would be satisfied with the seeing. We shall have much greater satisfaction at the indwelling. St. Peter spoke similarly when our Lord was transformed on the mountain and showed them a glimpse of the glory that is in heaven: he begged our Lord to remain there forever. We should have immeasurable longing for union with our Lord God. In this union of our Lord God we should

note a distinction: just as God is triple in the Persons, so He is single in nature. That is how we should understand the union of our Lord Jesus Christ with his Father and with the soul.

Just as white is distinguished from black — the one cannot abide the other, and white is not black — so it is with something and nothing. Nothing is that which can receive nought from anything: something is that which receives something from something. That is just how it is in God: whatever is anything is altogether in God, and there is no lack in it. When the soul is united with God, she has from Him everything that is anything in total perfection. There, the soul forgets herself and all things, as she is in herself, and knows herself divinely, in as far as God is in her, and insofar as she loves herself divinely in Him and is united with Him without distinction, so that she enjoys and rejoices in nothing but Him. What should a man desire or know more, if he is thus blessedly united with God? It was for this union that our Lord created man. When Adam broke the commandment, he was thrust out of paradise. Then our Lord put a twofold guard before paradise: an angel and a flaming sword, which was double-edged. That denotes two things through which man can return to heaven, as he fell from it. The first is through the angelic nature. St. Dionysius says the angelic nature is like the revelation of the divine light. With the angels and through the angels and by the divine light — that is how the soul must strive to return to God, till she returns to her first source.

The second thing, through the flaming sword, means that the soul must return to God by means of good and divine works, which are performed out of fiery love of God and one's fellow Christians.

May God help us to achieve this. Amen.

Notes

1. Secundus. This rather obscure saint and martyr is probably only mentioned because his name means 'following.'
2. *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum,* hom. 14 (Q).
3. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* 5.2 (Q).
4. Cf. Sermon 42.
5. Cf. *Conf.* 10.26 (Q).

SERMON FORTY-FIVE

(Pf 45, Q 60, QT 45)

IN OMNIBUS REQUIEM QUAESIVI
(Sirach 24:11)

These words are written in the Book of Wisdom. This time we shall interpret them in the form of a conversation in which Eternal Wisdom says to the soul,[1] "In all things I have sought rest," and the soul replies, "He who created me rested in my tent." And thirdly[2] Eternal Wisdom says, "My rest is in the holy city." If I were asked to say to what end[3] the Creator has created all creatures, I would say: rest. If I were asked secondly what the Holy Trinity sought altogether in all its works, I would answer: rest. If I were asked thirdly what the soul sought in all her agitations, I would answer: rest. If I were asked fourthly what all creatures sought in their natural desires and motions, I would answer: rest.

In the first place let us note and observe how the godly countenance of the divine nature makes all the soul's desires mad and crazy for Him, so as to draw her to him. For the divine nature tastes so well to God and pleases him so much — that is, rest — that He has projected it out of Himself to stir up and draw into Himself the natural desires of all creatures. Not only does the Creator seek his own rest by projecting it and informing all creatures with it, but He seeks to draw all creatures back with Him into their first beginning, which is rest. Also, God loves Himself in all creatures. Thus as He seeks His own love in all creatures, so He seeks His own rest.

Secondly, the Holy Trinity seeks rest. The Father seeks rest in His Son, in whom He has poured out and formed all creatures,[4] and they both seek rest in the Holy Ghost, who has proceeded from them both as eternal and immeasurable love.

Thirdly, the soul seeks rest in all her powers and motions, whether a man knows it or not. He never opens or shuts an eye without seeking rest by doing so: either he seeks to reject something that hinders him, or he seeks to draw in something on which to rest. These are the two motives of all human action. I have also said before that a man could never feel love or desire for any creature, unless God's likeness were in it. My love is placed where I most clearly see God's likeness, but nothing in all creatures so resembles God as rest. Thirdly, we should note how the soul must be for God to rest in her. She must be pure. How does the soul become pure? — By keeping to spiritual things, by which she is exalted: the more she is exalted, the purer her devotion; and the purer her devotion, the more powerful her works. One master says of the stars that the closer they appear to the earth, the less their effects, for they are not in their proper circle. But when they enter their proper circle, then they are at their highest; then they cannot be seen on earth, but their influence on the earth is the strongest.[5] St. Anselm[6] says to the soul, 'withdraw a little from the tumult of outward works.' Secondly, 'flee and hide from the storm of inward thoughts, which also perturb the soul.' Thirdly, 'man can indeed offer God nothing more precious than rest.' God does not heed or require fasting, praying, or any self-mortification nearly so much as rest. God wants nothing of man but a peaceful heart; then He performs within the soul such secret divine works as no creature can earn or see: even the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot look in there. The eternal wisdom is so delicate and so glorious that it cannot tolerate any creaturely admixture when God is working alone in the soul. Therefore the Eternal Wisdom cannot permit any creature to watch. Our Lord says, "I will lead my bride into the desert and will speak to her heart" (Hos. 2:14), that is into a solitude away from all creatures. Fourthly he[7] says, 'the soul must rest in God.' God cannot do divine works in the soul, for whatever enters the soul is ruled by measure. Measure means inclusion and exclusion. But it is not thus with divine works: they are unbounded, and are included but unenclosed in divine revelation. Therefore David says, "God sits above the Cherubim" (Ps. 79:2): he does not say He sits above the Seraphim.[8] *Cherubim* denotes wisdom, that is, understanding which brings God into the soul and guides the soul to God. But it cannot bring her

into God. Therefore God does not perform His works in the understanding, for this is bound in the soul by measure, but He performs them divinely as God. Then the highest power steps forth — which is love[9] — and breaks into God leading the soul with understanding and all her powers into God and unites her with God. Here God is acting above the power of the soul, not as in the soul, but divinely as in God. Here the soul is plunged into God and baptized in the divine nature, receiving the divine life therein and taking upon herself the divine order, so that she is ordered according to God. We can take an illustration from what the masters write about nature: when a child is conceived in its mother's womb, it has limbs and color. But when the soul is infused into the body, it loses the form and appearance it first had and becomes something simple — this by the power of the soul — and it receives another shape from the soul and another appearance according to the life of the soul.[10] So it is with the soul: when she is fully united with God and baptized in the divine nature, she loses all her hindrances, her debility and instability, and is totally renewed with divine life, and all her ways and virtues are ordered according to the divine ways and virtues, just as we can see with a candle. The closer the flame burns to the wick, the darker and denser it is, but as it springs up away from the wick, the brighter it becomes. The higher the soul is raised up above herself, the purer and clearer she is, and the more perfectly God can do in her His divine work in His own likeness. If a mountain rose up two leagues above the earth, and if one were to write characters on it in the dust or sand, they would remain intact, untouched by wind or rain. Just so a truly spiritual man should be raised up in true peace, entire and changeless in divine activity. Any spiritual man has good cause for shame at being so easily moved by depression, anger, or annoyance: such a man was never truly spiritual.

In the fourth place,[11] all creatures seek rest by a natural tendency: whether they know it or not, they prove it in their works. A stone is never free of motion as long as it is not on the ground — it always seeks the ground. The same applies to fire: it strives upward, and every creature seeks its natural place. Thus they confirm the truth of divine rest, which God has injected into all of them.

That we may thus seek the equality of divine rest, and find it in God, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. From the book of *Ecclesiasticus* or *The Wisdom of Jesus Sirach.* This type of conversation is fully developed in *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* by Eckhart's pupil Heinrich Suso (trans. J. M. Clark, London, 1953).

2. 'Thirdly' because it is the third of three quotations from Sirach: 24:11, 12, and 15 (Q).

3. I here follow Miss Evans against Quint in the rendering of *endeliche,* which he takes to mean 'exhaustively' (or in QT 'summarily').

4. The Son as the epitome of all (Platonic) ideas (Q). Cf. Sermon 6.

5. Cf. John Holywood (Johannes de Sacrobosco), *Tractatus de sphaera* (ca. 1230) and the commentary by Robert the Englishman (L. Thorndike, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators* [Chicago, 1949], p. 162) (Q).

6. *Proslogion* 1, ed. E. S. Schmitt, vol. 1, 1938, p. 97 (Q).

7. Anselm.

8. The Cherubim are associated with wisdom, the Seraphim with love.

9. Here Eckhart, contrary to his usual custom, puts love above wisdom.

10. This rather muddled piece of natural history goes back, via Albertus Magnus, to Aristotle.

11. Referring back to the fourth of Anselm's points above.

SERMON FORTY-SIX

(Pf 46, Q 54b)[1]

HAEC EST VITA AETERNA, UT COGNOSCANT TE, SOLUM DEUM VERUM, ET QUEM MISISTI, JESUM CHRISTUM
(John 17:3)

Our Lord said, "This is eternal life, that they should know thee as the one true God and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." Our Lord raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the time has come: glorify thy son that the son may glorify thee," and he prayed for those who had been given to him, saying, "give them eternal life, make them one with thee, as I and thou are one" (John 17:1–2).

"He raised his eyes up from below" (John 17:1).[2] Thus he instructs us that when we would pray, we should first descend in true downcast humility beneath all creatures. Only then should we ascend before the throne of wisdom, and as far as we have descended, so far shall we be granted what we have prayed for. Now it has been written by a pope[3] that, whenever our Lord raised up his eyes, he wished to perform a great work. And that was indeed a great thing when he said, "make them one with thee, as I and thou are one" (John 17:11). Now scripture says in the Book of Wisdom, "God loves none but him who dwells in wisdom" (Wisd. 7:28), and the Son is wisdom.[4] That purity in which the Father created the soul, we attain by the wisdom which is the Son. For, as I have said before, he is a gate through which the soul returns to the Father, for all that God ever created is nothing but an image and a sign of eternal life.

"He raised his eyes up from below," from the true ground of profoundest humility. Just as the power of heaven works never so effectively, and in no element, as in the ground of earth, although it is the lowest, for here it has the greatest opportunity to work, so too God works most in a humble heart, for He has the greatest

opportunity to work therein, and finds His like most therein. He thus teaches us to enter into the ground of true humility and true nakedness, to cast off everything that we do not have by nature (which is sin and defect), and also whatever we have by nature that is born of attachment. For whoever would enter God's ground, His inmost part, must first enter his own ground, his inmost part, for none can know God who does not first know himself. He must enter into his lowest and into God's inmost part, and must enter into his first and his highest, for there everything comes together that God can perform. Whatever is highest in the soul is in the lowest, for it is the innermost, just as if one were to squeeze some round object, so that the highest became the lowest.

The third thing that he teaches us with the words "he raised his eyes up from below," is that when we pray we should bear everything that we have received by grace into the goodness of God, and whatever we pray for our defects or the sins of others, we should bear into the mercy of God, for that prays itself. Whatever God finds cast down, He raises up and elevates in Himself. The fourth thing that he means with "he raised his eyes up from below" is that we should climb up with our whole hearts and with our desire to heaven and into heaven, and we should place all our desire on God and on the highest peak — not *under* God or *with* God, for all higher things have the greatest chance to influence that which is beneath them. Therefore all living creatures are a bait for the sun and the stars, whose power and likeness works in stones.[5] Just as the sun attracts to itself the moist air, so it gives to a stone its likeness and power, so that it emits an invisible mist and a power which draws some iron to it, and also some flesh and bones. Whoever comes near it must stick there. The divine mist does the same: it draws the soul into itself, joins with her and makes her godlike. It is just as if you were to take a small vessel with water and put it over a great vat of wine, close to, it would acquire the power and nature and color of wine. If the wine is red, it becomes red: if white, it becomes white, and wine. This comes from the emanation and bouquet of the wine. 'What do you mean?' — A good question! Just as the emanation of the wine breaks into the vessel of water, so in the same way God's power breaks into the soul. Whoever would become godlike must climb up with perfect desire.

A(Pf)[6]	B
Another sense of "he raised his eyes." He thereby teaches us that, just as the highest element works never so well as in the ground of earth — where it creates gold, silver and precious stones	Another sense of "he raised his eyes." Whatever is above the element, such as heaven and the stars, creates in the coarsest element, earth, where we cannot see it, such things as gold, silver and precious stones; for it is impossible that heaven can work except in the ground of earth and what is mixed with earth, such as leaves, grass and trees. Heaven is an example, for there is no creature that does not contain something of Him whose daughter she is. Our masters say what is above is never satisfied: thus trees and grass spread, circulate like heaven, and more than heaven, like the angel who rotates heaven.
and what is mixed with earth, such as leaves, grass and trees: this bears in it a likeness to heaven.	
and the angel who moves heaven, and stretches and spreads and forms a tabernacle so that the power of sun and stars may be strong in it, and embraces the angel's nature and operates in angel fashion, though much less —	It operates in angel fashion, though much less —

so too we should form a tabernacle, and spread and expand, so that God may work in us great things, so that we may be like Him and work like Him. Cattle know in the here and now, but angels know without here and now, and man, who is above other creatures, knows in a true light where there is neither time nor place, without here and now. According as the soul progresses, she moves further into the light.[7] That soul which is a light includes much of God.

"He raised his eyes to heaven." *Celum* (heaven) means 'tabernacle of the sun.'[8] It all encloses God, whatever we attribute to Him:

anything we ascribe to Him except pure being, encloses Him. Now he said, "Father, the hour has come: show the glory of thy son, that thy son may show thy glory, and I pray further that thou mayest give eternal life to all those thou hast given to me." You can ask anyone you like, and they will all say he meant, 'Father, give them all the eternal life thou hast given me.' But in reality the text means, 'Father, whatever thou hast given me: the fact that I am the Son, coming from thee, the Father — I beg thee, give them *that* that they may enjoy it: *that* eternal life is their eternal reward.' See, what it really means is this: that He should give them everything that He, the Father, gave the Son, all that He is.

"Eternal life." Now note for yourselves what that is: "Eternal life is that they should know thee alone as the one true God." What does he mean by saying, "thee alone"? That means that the soul should have no taste but for God alone. It is something different when he says, "to know thee alone is eternal life." He means that God is alone and has nothing with Him. He who knows anything *with* God does not know God alone. But he who knows God alone knows more in God. Our masters say one knows one in God, and another knows a thousand in God.[9]

A

Those who know one know more than those who know a thousand, for they know more *in* God, and those who know a thousand know more *with* God. Those who know a thousand are more blessed those who know one, for they know more of God therein than in the one. But they are more blessed who know a thousand, ever more one and yet with no God in it. Therefore, when I know something in God, whatever I know becomes one with me. Whoever knows God more as one, knows less *with* God. [10]

B

and he is more blessed who knows a thousand in God than he who knows one in God. But blessedness does not depend on his knowing a thousand in God: it depends on his knowing less *with* Him and *outside of* Him. And so he knows more *in* Him but not numerically, for all things are one in God, and there is nothing in God but essence.

Our eternal life depends on our knowing *one:* the less we know, the more we know "thee as one true God."

On this single knowledge our eternal life depends.

Why did he say: "thee as one true God," and not: 'thee as wise' or 'good' or 'almighty God'? Because truth denotes essence.

Now he says: "thee as one true God." He does not say: 'rich God' or 'almighty God' or 'wise God.' He means that truth overtops the highest and is pure essence.

Whatever can be put into words encloses God and adds to Him. But truth includes in one knowing and strips off (multiplicity).

That we may strip off everything in this knowing and become one, may the Trinity in one divine nature help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Not in Evans. Quint prints a parallel version (Jostes 15) as 54a. I have not included this.
2. Eckhart has translated *sublevatis oculis* very literally, reading his own meaning into the prefix *sub-*.
3. 'By a pope' added by Quint after 54a. Cf. Innocent III, *De sacro altaris mysterio* 4.5.
4. According to the scholastic formula the Father denotes power, the Son wisdom, and the Holy Ghost love.
5. The magnetic power of certain stones, and other powers thought to reside in precious stones, etc. Cf. Sermon 14b, note 6.
6. A is Pfeiffer's text, based on one MS, while B is the text of another MS discovered by Quint, who feels unable to choose between them with certainty.
7. Quint here follows a conjecture of Lasson's instead of meaningless readings in the MSS.
8. This expression occurs also in the Latin Sermon XLVIII, 1, n. 501 (*LW* IV, p. 416): *casa helios,* which derives from Honorius Augustodunensis (Q).
9. Which masters is not clear.
10. Quint's conjecture: Pfeiffer has 'never.'

SERMON FORTY-SEVEN

(Pf 47, Q 46)

HAEC EST VITA AETERNA
(John 17:3)

These words are written in the holy Gospel, where our Lord Jesus Christ says, "This is eternal life, that we should know thee alone as true God, and thy son whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ."

Now observe, no one knows the Father except His only Son, for he says himself, "No man knows the Father save the Son, and no man knows the Son save the Father" (Matt. 11:27). And so, if man is to know God — and therein consists his eternal bliss — he must be, with Christ, the only Son of the Father. So, if you would be blessed you must be one Son: not many sons, but one Son. True, you remain clearly distinguished in your carnal birth, but in the eternal birth you must be one, for in God there is no more than the one natural spring, and therefore there is but the single natural outlet of the Son: not two but one. Hence, if you are to be one with Christ, you must be the sole issue with the eternal Word.

How does a man come to be the only Son of the Father? Take note: The eternal Word did not take upon itself this man or that, but it took upon itself one free, indivisible human nature, bare and without image, for the impartible form of humanity is imageless.[1] And since, in this assumption,[2] the eternal Word took on human nature imagelessly, therefore the Father's image, which is the eternal Son, became the image of human nature. So it is just as true to say that man became God as that God became man. Thus human nature was transformed[3] by becoming the divine image, which is the image of the Father. Therefore, in order to be one Son, you must discard and depart from whatever makes for distinction in you. For man is an 'accident'[4] of nature: so, do away with whatever is an accident in you

and take yourselves in the freedom of your impartible human nature. But since this very nature wherein you take yourselves has become the Son of the eternal Father by the assumption of the eternal Word, thus you, with Christ, become the Son of the eternal Father by reason of taking yourselves by that same nature which has there become God. Beware therefore, lest you take yourselves as being either this man or that, but take yourselves according to your free, indivisible human nature. And so, if you would be one Son, you must get rid of *not,*[5] for *not* makes for division. How so? Observe! If you are not that man, the *not* makes a distinction between you and that man. And so, to be free of distinction, you must abandon *not*. For there is a power in the soul that is immune from *not,* having nothing in common with things: for there is nothing in that power but God alone:[6] He shines barely in that power.

Observe: a man who is thus one Son, his motion and activity and whatever he has, he has of his own. For the Son of the Father is the eternal Son as being descended from the Father. But what he has, he has in himself, since he is one with the Father in essence and nature. Therefore he has being and essence entirely in himself, and in this sense he prays, "Father, as I and thou are one, so I would that they should be one" (cf. John 17:21). And just as the Son is one with the Father in essence and nature, so too you are one with Him in essence and nature, and you have it all in you as the Father has it in Himself. You have not got it on loan from God, for God is your own. Therefore, whatever you have got of your own, and whatever works of yours are not the product of your own, they are all dead works in the sight of God. These are the works you are moved to from without, by extraneous things, not coming from life, and so they are dead: for whatever lives, takes motion from its own. Therefore: if a man's works are to live, they must come from his own, not from extraneous things or from without, but within himself.

Now observe! If you love justice as being justice toward or about yourself, then you do not love justice *qua* justice, and so you neither take it nor love it as it is, impartible, but divided. But since God is justice, therefore you do not take Him or love Him in His simplicity. Therefore, take justice as justice itself, and then you are taking it as being God. Then, where justice is at work, you will be working too, for you will be working justly all the time. Yea, though hell stood

in the way of justice you would still work justly, and it would be no hardship but joy to you, for you yourself would be justice and so must act justly. For the more a thing is raised up into one common state, the more it is one with the impartibility of that common state, and the simpler.

May God help us to the simplicity of truth! Amen.

Notes

1. 'Image' does not mean here the Platonic idea, but the individual characteristics of this or that man, unlike the 'Father's image' which immediately follows.

2. By Christ, who took on human nature, *not* the nature of an individual man. Therefore, says Eckhart, we must strive to take on this general nature instead of our own individual nature.

3. Or 'transfigured,' or 'trans-imaged' (*überbildet*).

4. 'Accident' in the scholastic (Aristotelian) sense of an entity whose essential nature it is to inhere in another entity as a subject. Contrast: 'substance.'

5. 'Not' or 'nothing' (*niht*=both modern German *nichts* 'nothing' and *nicht* 'not'). See Sermon 19, and Sermon 6, note 5.

6. The highest intellect. See Sermon 8 and Introduction: *Synteresis.*

SERMON FORTY-EIGHT

(Q 31, QT 47)

ECCE EGO MITTO ANGELUM MEUM ETC.
(Malachi 3:1)[1]

'Behold, I send my angel before thy face to prepare thy way. And at once he will be offered in his temple.[2] Who know the day of his coming? For he is as a fire that is. blown up." Now he says, "At once he whom we are awaiting will be offered in his temple."[3] The soul must offer herself up with all that she is and has, whether sins or virtues: she must take them all up together and sacrifice them with the Son to the heavenly Father. As great as is the love of the Father is the loveliness of the Son. The Father loves nothing but His Son, and whatever He finds in the Son. Therefore the soul must rise up with all her power and offer herself to the Father in the Son, and then she will be loved by the Father with the Son.

Now he says, 'Behold, I send my angel." The word 'behold' implies three things: something that is great, that is marvelous, or that is rare. "Behold, I send my angel to prepare" and refine the soul that she may receive the divine light. The divine light always inheres in angelic light, and the angelic light would be irksome and insipid to the soul if God's light were not enwrapped in it.[4] God wraps and conceals Himself in the angelic light and is only waiting for a chance to creep out and give Himself to the soul. I have said before, and would say again if asked what God does in Heaven, that He is begetting His Son, bearing him ever anew and fresh, and with such delight in this work that he does nothing else but this. Therefore He says, "Behold, I." Whoever says, 'I' must do the very best work.[5] No one can truly utter this word but the Father. The work is so peculiarly His that none can do it but the Father. In that work God performs all His works, and the Holy Ghost is in it with all creatures. For when God

does this work in the soul, that is His birth: His birth is the work, and the birth is the Son. God performs this work in the inmost part of the soul so secretly that neither angels nor saints know of it, and the soul herself can do nothing but suffer it to happen: it is God's province alone. Therefore the Father says truly, "I send *my* angel." But now I declare, 'We don't want him, we are not satisfied with that.' Origen says, 'Mary Magdalene sought our Lord: she saw one dead man and found two living angels,' and she was not satisfied. She was right, for she was looking for God.[6]

What is an angel?[7] Dionysius speaks of the sacred principality of the angels, wherein is divine order, divine activity, divine wisdom, and divine likeness or divine truth, as far as this may be. What is divine order? From divine power there bursts forth wisdom, and from them both there bursts forth love,[8] which is the brand of fire. For wisdom and truth and power and love, the brand, are all in the realm of essence, that is transcendental being, free of nature. It is its nature to be without nature. To think of goodness or wisdom or power dissembles the essence and dims it in thought. The mere thought obscures essence. Such is the divine order, and where God finds the like of this order in the soul, there the Father gives birth to His Son. Then the soul must burst into light with all her power. Out of this power, out of this light springs the flame of love. Thus the soul must burst forth with all her power into the divine order.[9]

Let us now speak of the order of the soul. A pagan master[10] says the supernal natural light of the soul is so bright and clear and so lofty, that it reaches the angelic nature. It is so faithful, and yet so faithless and hostile to the lower powers that it will not flow into them or illumine the soul unless these lower powers are ranged under the higher powers and the higher powers under supreme truth,[11] just as an army is ordered, the common soldier being under the knight, the knight under the count and the count under the duke. They all desire peace, and to that end they all help each other. Likewise each power should be subordinate to the rest, helping to ensure pure peace and rest in the soul. Our masters declare that perfect rest is freedom from all motion. In this the soul must rise above herself to the divine order.[12] There, in that perfect rest, the Father gives His only-begotten Son to the soul. That is the first point about the divine order.

Let us leave the others: just a little about the last. As I was saying about the angels, they have God's likeness in them and an inward illumination. In that illumination they soar above themselves into the divine likeness, all face to face with God in His divine light, so like that they can perform divine works. The angels who are so illumined and so like God, draw God to them and suck Him in. I have said before, were I void and had this fiery inner love and likeness I should absorb God altogether. Light streams out and lights up what it falls on. When we sometimes say a man is illumined, that means little. But when it bursts forth, that is far better: it breaks through into the soul and makes her like God and divine, as far as may be, and illumines her within. In this interior illumination she soars above herself in the divine light. Now she has come home and is at one with Him, and is a fellow worker. No creature works anything but for the Father, who works alone. The soul should never cease until she works as powerfully as God. Then she works all His works with the Father, working as one with Him, in wisdom and love.

That we may thus work with God, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. This according to Quint is the correct text, not Matt. 11:10, Luke 7:27 as given by Pfeiffer and Evans. It occurs in the epistle for Candlemas (February 2). But the text is conformed to Mark 1:2 *ante faciem tuam,* etc. All these New Testament passages are quoting from Malachi.

2. Eckhart has deliberately altered the text here. The MSS followed by Pfeiffer (Evans) have 'and he whom we seek shall suddenly come into this Temple,' which is close to the Latin but has probably, as Quint considers, been 'corrected' from the Bible.

3. At this repetition, Pfeiffer's text does not follow the Bible but retains Eckhart's formulation. This bears out Quint's contention (n. 2).

4. Not 'shaded therein' (Evans). Eckhart means that we do not like anything except for what there is of God in it: cf. Sermon 44, note 2.

5. Cf. Sermon 49, note 8.

6. Cf. Sermon 34.

7. Cf. Sermon 28. The whole subject is treated by (Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite in his *De caelesti hierarchia.*

8. This is the usual Trinitarian formula *potentia, sapientia, voluntas:* power denotes the Father, wisdom the Son, and will (or love) the Holy Ghost.

9. This double process, of the birth of God in the soul, and the soul's breaking through to God, is the theme of S. Ueda's book *Die Gottesgeburt in der Seele und der*

Durchbruch zur Gottheit (Gütersloh, 1965), in which Eckhart's teaching is compared with that of Zen Buddhism. Cf. Introduction, pp. 18–21.

10. Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum* ('Guide for the Perplexed') 3.53 (Q).

11. By being 'faithful' to truth, this light must be 'faithless' to the lower powers of the soul, unless they are properly disciplined.

12. *Not* 'the order of the gods' (Evans) — a strange aberration!

SERMON FORTY-NINE

(Pf 49, Q 77)

ECCE MITTO ANGELUM MEUM
(Malachi 3:1, Luke 7:27)[1]

This written in the gospel, and in German it means: "Behold, I send my angel."

First, we should know what an angel is, for a scriptural text says we should be like the angels.[2] A master[3] says an angel is the image of God. A second says he is fashioned like God. A third says he is a clear mirror which contains and carries within itself the reflection of God's purity, the divine purity of the stillness and mystery of God, as far as that may be. Yet another[4] says he is a pure intellectual light, detached from all material things. These are the angels we should be like. Perception always means seeing in the light that is in time, for whatever I think of I think of in a light that is in time and temporal. But an angel perceives in a light that is beyond time and eternal. He therefore perceives in the eternal Now. But man knows in the now of time. The now of time is the least thing there is. But take away the now of time, and you are everywhere and have the whole of time. This or that thing is not all things, for, as long as I am this and that or have this and that, I am not all things and have not all things. Cease to be this and that, and to have this and that, then you are all things and have all things and so, being neither here nor there, you are everywhere. Therefore, being neither this nor that, you are everything. An angel is and acts as an intelligence in his degree, gazing without cease, and his object[5] is an intelligible being. Hence his essence is far removed from all things. Whatever is multiplicity or number is remote from him.

Let us say a little more about the words "I send." One text omits the word "I," the other has the word "I." The prophet[6] says, "I

send my angel," but the evangelist[7] omits the word "I" and says, "Behold, send my angel."[8] What is the point of this omission in one text of the word "I"? It denotes, firstly, God's ineffability, for God is unnamable and transcends speech in the purity of His ground, where God can have no speech or utterance, being ineffable and wordless to all creatures. Secondly it means that the soul is ineffable and wordless: in her own ground she is wordless and nameless and without words, for *there* she is above all names and words. That is why the word "I" is suppressed, for there she has neither word nor speech. The third reason is that God and the soul are so entirely one that God cannot have a single distinctive feature separating Him from the soul and making Him different, so that He cannot say, "*I* send my angel," thus making Him out to be different from the soul. For if He said, "I," He would imply something different from the soul. Accordingly, the word "I" is suppressed because he and the soul are so entirely one that God cannot have any quality such that we can say anything, or nothing, about God that points to difference or otherness.

As regards the other sense: where the text says, "I," that means in the first place God's self-identity,[9] the fact that God alone *is,* for all things *are* in God and from Him, since outside of Him and without Him nothing truly is: all creatures are worthless[10] and a mere nothing compared with God. Therefore, what they are in truth they are in God, and thus God alone *is* in truth. And therefore the word "I" means the self-identity of divine truth, for it is the proof of one *is.* It thus testifies that He alone *is.*[11] Again, it means that God is unseparated from all things, for God is in all things and is more inwardly in them than they are in themselves. That is how God is unseparated from all things. And man too should be unseparated from all things, which means that a man should be nothing in himself and wholly detached from self: in that way he is unseparated from all things and is all things. For, as far as you are nothing in yourself, insofar you are all things and unseparated from all things. And therefore, as far as you are unseparated from all things, insofar you are God and all things, for God's divinity depends on His being unseparated from all things. And so the man who is unseparated from all things receives the Godhead from where God himself receives it. Thirdly, the word 'I' denotes a kind of perfection of the designation 'I,' for it is not a proper name: it stands for a name and for the perfection of that name

and denotes immutability and imperturbability, and so it denotes that God is immutable, imperturbable, and eternal stability. Fourthly, it indicates the bare purity of the divine being, which is bare of any admixture. For goodness and wisdom and whatever may be attributed to God are all admixtures to God's naked essence: for all admixture causes alienation from essence. And so the word 'I' denotes God's purity of essence, which is bare in itself, free of alien elements that make it strange and distant.

Let us now speak further of the angels, of whom I just said that they were an image of God, and that they are a mirror containing in itself the reflection of the goodness and purity of the stillness and mystery of God, as far as that is possible. We should be like the angels, and so we would be an image of God, for God made us in His own image. An artist who wants to make an image of a man does not copy Conrad or Henry. For if he made an image like Conrad or Henry, he would not be portraying man, he would be portraying Conrad or Henry. But if he made a picture of Conrad it would not be like Henry: for, if he had the skill and ability, he would portray Conrad perfectly himself, exactly as he was. Now God has perfect skill and ability, and therefore He has made you just like Him, an image of Himself. But 'like Him' denotes something foreign and aloof. But between man and God there is nothing foreign and aloof, and therefore man is not 'like him' but he is altogether identical with Him and the very same as He is.

More I do not know and cannot tell, so my sermon must end here. But I once thought on my way,[12] that a man should be so wholly detached in his intention that he had nobody and nothing in view but the Godhead in itself — neither salvation nor this or that, but just God as God, and the Godhead in itself. For whatever else you concern yourself with is an admixture to the Godhead. And so shed all admixtures to the Godhead, and seize it naked as it is in itself.

May God help us to come to this. Amen.

Notes

1. See Sermon 48, n. 1.
2. Luke 20:36.
3. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.22 (Q).
4. These are not really four different 'masters': the whole is a free rendering of *one* passage in Pseudo-Dionysius (Q).
5. God.
6. Mal. 3:1 reads: *Ecce ego mitto angelum meum.*
7. Luke 7:27 reads: *Ecce mitto angelum meum.*
8. This of course literally renders the Latin *mitto* as opposed to *ego mitto* in Mal. 3:1. Such an omission of the pronoun is not good English but is just possible in medieval German. Eckhart exploits the (fortuitous?) difference of reading — opportunistically, as we might think. But to him and his colleagues nothing in the Bible was fortuitous, and an explanation could be found for everything.
9. *Istikeit* (in modern German 'Istigkeit,' a word which scarcely exists outside of modernizations of Eckhart), from *ist* 'is.' Newer research indicates that *istikeit* is better translated as 'self-identity' and is derived from *istic.*
10. Not 'infernal' (!) as Miss Evans renders *snoede,* but of no account or value.
11. Cf. Sermon 40, where the formulation occurs which was condemned as art. 26 of the Papal bull: 'All creatures are a mere nothing. I do not say that they are trifling or a little something: they are a mere nothing.'
12. Perhaps not 'on my way here,' but once on one of the many long journeys which Eckhart had to undertake. Possibly many thoughts came to him on these lonely wanderings.

SERMON FIFTY

(Q 14)

SURGI: ILLUMINARI IHERUSALEM ETC.
(Isaiah 60:1)

The text I have quoted in Latin is found in the epistle that was read at Mass. The prophet Isaiah says, "Stand up, Jerusalem, arise and be illumined!" This can be understood in three senses. Pray to God for grace.

"Stand up, Jerusalem, arise and be illumined!" The masters and the saints commonly say that the soul has three powers, thus resembling the Trinity. The first power is memory,[1] meaning a secret, hidden art: this denotes the Father. The second is called intelligence, ever-presence,[2] knowing, wisdom. The third power is called will, a flooding of the Holy Ghost. But we will not stop at this, for it is nothing new.

"Stand up, Jerusalem, and be illumined!" The other masters who divide the soul into three say that the highest power is an angry power,[3] and this they compare to the Father. This constantly wages war and rages against evil. Anger blinds the soul and love conquers the senses. . . .[4] The first power works in the liver, the second in the heart, the third in the brain.[5] God has implanted in them a natural striving,[6] so that the first does not rest until it comes to the highest, and if there were anything higher than God, it would not want God. The second is satisfied with nothing but the best: if there were anything better than God, it would not want God. The third is satisfied with nothing but one good: were there any greater good[7] than God, it would not want God. It rests nowhere but in a steadfast good in which all goodness is included, that it may be united with this. God Himself does not rest there, where He is a beginning of all being: He rests where He is an end and a beginning of all being.

Jerusalem means a height,[8] as I said at St. Margaret's:[9] to that which is high, one says, 'Come down,' and to that which is low one says, 'come up.' If you are below and if I were above you, I would have to come down to you, and that is what God does: when you humble yourself, God comes down from above and enters you. The earth is furthest from heaven, and has crept into a corner and is ashamed, and would fain flee from the beauty of heaven from one corner to another. But where would she go?[10] If she flees downward, she comes to heaven, if she flees upward, she cannot escape him. He drives her into one corner, and presses his power into her and makes her fruitful.[11] Why? The highest flows into the lowest. There is a star above the sun, that is the highest star:[12] it is nobler than the sun and illumines the sun, and all the light that the sun has, it has from this star. Why is it then that the sun does not shine as brightly by night as by day? This is because the sun does not have supreme power of itself, that there is something lacking in the sun, as you can easily see, that it is dark in one part, and at night the moon and the stars take on its light, and drive it away elsewhere, so that it shines elsewhere in another country. This star does not only shine into the sun, it flows through the sun and through all the stars and flows into the earth and makes it fruitful. And it is just the same with a truly humble person who has subjected all creatures to himself and subjects himself to God: God in His goodness does not hold back, but pours Himself out fully into that man: He is compelled to do this and must do it. Now if you want to be high and exalted, then you must be lowly, far from the flow of blood and the flesh, for one root of all sins and defects is concealed and hidden pride, and this leads to nothing but sorrow and woe. But humility is a root of all good, and is followed by....[13]

I said in the schools of Paris that all things shall be accomplished in the truly humble man. The sun represents God: the All-Highest in its unfathomable Godhead corresponds to the all-lowest in the depth of humility. The truly humble man has no need to pray to God for anything: he can command God, for the height of the Godhead seeks nothing but the depth of humility, as I said at St. Maccabees.[14] The humble man and God are one, the humble man has as much power over God as He has over Himself,[15] and whatever is in the angels, that the humble man has for his own. What God performs,

the humble man performs, and what God is, he is: one life and one being. That is why our dear Lord said, "Learn from me, who am gentle and humble-hearted" (Matt. 11:29).

If a man were truly humble, either God would have to abandon all His Godhead and go right out of it, or He would have to pour Himself out and flow right into that man. Last night I thought, God's height lies in my lowliness: when I humbled myself, God would be exalted. Jerusalem shall be exalted, says scripture and the prophet. But I thought last night that God should be brought down, not absolutely but inwardly.[16] This phrase of 'God brought down' pleased me so much that I wrote it in my book.[17] This means God is brought down, not absolutely but inwardly, that we may be raised up. What was above has become inward. You must be internalized, from yourself and within yourself, so that He is in you. It is not that we should take anything from what is above us, but we should take it into ourselves, and take it from ourselves, and take it from ourselves into ourselves.

St. John says, "Those who received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God. They who are God's sons are so not from flesh and blood, but they are born of God" (John 1:12): not from without but inwardly. Our dear Lady said, "How can it be that I should be the mother of God?" and the angel said, "The Holy Ghost will come into you from above" (Luke 1:34–35). David said, "Today I have borne you" (Ps. 2:7). What is today? Eternity. I have borne me as you and you as me eternally. And yet the noble and humble man is not satisfied to be born as the only-begotten Son whom the Father has eternally borne,[18] but he wants to be also the Father and to enter into the same equality of eternal paternity and to bear him, from whom I am eternally born. As I said at St. Margaret's, then God comes into His own. Make yourself over to God, then God is your own, as He is His own. What is inborn in me, remains: God never departs from that man, wherever that man turns. Such a man can turn away from God, but however far he goes from God, God stops and waits for him, and stands in his path before he knows it. If you want God to be your own, you must be His own like my tongue or my hand, with which I can do as I will. Just as little as I can do anything without Him, so He can do nothing without me.

So, if you want God to be your own thus, you must make yourself His own and bear in mind nothing but Him: then he will be the beginning and the end of all your activity, just as His Godhead depends on His being God. To that man who thus in all his actions means and loves nothing but God, God gives His Godhead. Whatever that man performs, God performs,[19] for my humility gives to God His Godhead. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it" (John 1:5). This means that God is not only a beginning of all our acts and our being, He is also an end and a repose to all being.

That we may learn from Jesus Christ the lesson of humility, may God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost help us all. Amen. *Deo gratias.*

Notes

1. The regular Augustinian formula for the Trinity: *memoria, intellectus, voluntas.*
2. *Intgegenwordichkeit*=(being eternally) present.
3. The three powers are not all named here: they are given, e.g., by Albertus Magnus as *irascibilis, concupiscibilis,* and *rationalis.*
4. There is something missing here.
5. The location of the 'powers' in various organs, given by Albertus Magnus, goes back to Galen (Q).
6. Quint thinks there is something missing here.
7. Literally something 'more good': it must be distinguished from the 'better' referred to just previously.
8. It is usually interpreted as 'peace': this rendering is isolated (Q).
9. Thought to be St. Margaret's convent in Strassburg. But cf. Sermon 14. The names are corrupted in the MSS, and their interpretation is doubtful.
10. Or: 'where would be her resting place?'
11. This makes it preferable to retain the feminine gender here.
12. Eckhart's source for this view is unknown. Quint refers to the view of Empedocles that the sun is not composed of fire but is the reflection of fire.
13. Again something is missing.
14. Quint considers this (*Sent Merveren*) refers to the St. Maccabees convent in Cologne. But see note 9; cf. also Sermon 83, note 21.
15. This was objected to by the Cologne censors.
16. Within the soul.
17. Not found in any book by Eckhart known to us. But perhaps Eckhart merely means his notebook.
18. This seems to be the source of article 22 of the bull of 1329.
19. 'God performs' supplied conjecturally by Quint.

SERMON FIFTY-ONE

(Q 15)[1]

HOMO QUIDAM NOBILIS ABIIT IN REGIONEM LONGINQUM
ACCIPERE REGNUM ET REVERTI
(Luke 19:12)

These words are in the Gospel and mean in German, "There was a nobleman who went of his own accord into foreign parts and returned home richer."[2] Now we read in one Gospel that Christ said, "None can be my disciple unless he follows after me" (Luke 14:27) — and unless he has abandoned self and kept nothing for himself: and he has all things, for to have nothing is to have all things.[3] But to submit to God with one's desire and one's heart, and to place one's will entirely in God's will and to have no regard for created things — if a man has gone out of himself in this way, he will truly be given back to himself again.

Goodness in itself, goodness does not calm the soul: it entices the soul...[4] and looks out. Good preparedness for everything that is good is fellowship, and grace remains with the desire.[5] If God gave me anything *outside* of His will, I would disregard it, for the least thing that God gives me *within* His will makes me blessed.

All creatures have flowed out of God's will. If I were able to desire God's goodness alone, that will is so noble that the Holy Ghost flows out of it without 'means.'[6] All goodness flows forth from the superfluity of God's goodness. But God's will has savor for me only in that unity wherein the repose of God's goodness is in all creatures, in which it[7] reposes with everything that ever had being and life, as in its final end: *there*[8] you should love the Holy Ghost, as he is in union — not on his own, but where he has the taste of God's goodness alone in unity, whence all goodness flows from the superfluity of God's goodness. This man returns richer than when he set forth. Whoever had

gone out of himself like that would be given back to himself in a truer sense; and all things, just as he had fully abandoned them in multiplicity, will be entirely returned to him in simplicity, for he finds himself and all things in the present 'now' of unity. And the man who went forth thus would return much nobler than when he departed. This man now dwells in unhampered freedom and pure nakedness, for he needs undertake and take on nothing small or great — for whatever belongs to God belongs to him.

The sun[9] corresponds to God in His highest part, and in His unfathomable depth in the depth of His humility. Indeed the humble man has no need to pray for it, for he can command Him. For the height of the Godhead cannot regard it otherwise than in the depths of humility, since the humble man and God are one and not two. This humble man has as much power over God as he has over himself, and all the good that is in all the angels and all the saints is as much his own as it is God's own.[10] For what God performs he too performs, and what God wills he too wills, and what God is he too is — one life and one being. In God's name — if that man were in hell, God would have to come to him in hell, and hell would needs be heaven for him. He would have to do this, He would be compelled to do it: for *then* this man is divine being and divine being *is* this man, for here the kiss[11] occurs between God's unity and the humble man. For that virtue which is called humility is a root in the ground of the Godhead, where it is so implanted that it has its being solely in the eternal One, and nowhere else. I said in the schools of Paris that all things shall be accomplished in the truly humble man:[12] and so I say that nothing can harm the truly humble man or lead him astray, for there is nothing that does not flee from what might destroy it; all created things flee from this, for they are nothing in themselves. Therefore a humble man flees from whatever might lead him astray from God. Likewise I flee from a burning coal because it would destroy me and deprive me of my being.

And he said, "A man went forth." Aristotle planned a book in which he would speak of all things.[13] Now note what Aristotle says of this man:[14] *'Homo* denotes a man to whom form is added, giving him being and life with all creatures, rational and irrational: irrational with all physical creatures, rational with the angels.'[15] He goes on to say that just as all creatures are contained rationally, as images and

forms, in the angels, and the angels know every thing rationally with distinctions (and an angel has such great joy of this that it would be a marvel for those who have not experienced or tasted it), so man understands the images and forms of all creature with distinctions. Aristotle said of man that he *is* man because he understands all images and forms. That is what makes a man, and this was the highest quality Aristotle could ascribe to a man.

Now I too will declare what a man is. *Homo* means a a man to whom substance has been added, giving him being, life, and rational being. A rational man is one who understands himself rationally, and is, in himself, detached from all matter and form. The more he is detached from all things and turned in on himself, the more clearly and rationally he knows all things within himself without turning outward, the more he is a man.

Now I say, How can it be that detachment of the understanding comprehends all things within itself without form or image, without turning outward or transforming itself? I say it comes from simplicity, for the more pure and simple a man is of himself in himself, the more simply he will understand all multiplicity in himself, while himself remaining immutable. Boethius says, 'God is an immovable good, remaining still in Himself, unmoved and motionless, yet moving all things."[16] The simple intellect is so pure in itself that it comprehends the pure bare divine being immediately, and in the inflowing it receives divine nature equally with the angels, at which the angels receive great joy. Just to see an angel it would be worth spending a thousand years in hell. This understanding is so pure and clear in itself that whatever a man could see in this light would turn to an angel!

Now attend carefully to what Aristotle says about the detached spirits in the book called *Metaphysics.*[17] The highest of the masters who ever dealt with natural science speaks of these detached spirits, and says that they are not the form of anything, and that they derive their being by immediate outpouring from God, and then they flow back in and receive the outpouring immediately from God, above the angels, and they gaze on the naked being of God without distinction. This pure naked being is called by Aristotle a 'something.'[18] That is the highest that Aristotle ever declared concerning natural science, and no master can say greater things unless prompted by the Holy Ghost. I say, however, that this noble man is not satisfied with the

being that the angels cognize without form and depend on without means — he is satisfied with nothing less than the solitary One.

I have spoken before of the first beginning and the final end. The Father is the beginning of the Godhead, for He comprehends Himself in Himself. From Him comes forth the eternal Word, yet remaining within, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, yet remains within, and the Father does not give birth to him, for he is the end of the Godhead, indwelling in it and in all creatures, and there is pure repose and a resting of all that ever obtained being. The beginning exists for the sake of the end, for in the final end everything rests that ever obtained rational being. The final end of being is the darkness or nescience of the hidden Godhead whose light illumines it, but this darkness comprehends it not.[19] Therefore Moses said, "He who is has sent me":[20] He who is nameless, who is a denial of all names and never had a name, wherefore the prophet said, "Truly thou art a hidden God" (Isa. 45:15), in the ground of the soul where God's ground and the soul's ground are one ground. The more we seek thee, the less we find thee. You must seek Him in such wise that you never find Him. If you do not seek Him, you will find Him.

That we may seek Him in such wise that we eternally remain in Him, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Preserved, like Sermon 14, in only one complete MS which is in a corrupt state. Translated by Clark, pp. 241–45.
2. As often with Eckhart, not a very literal translation of the text!
3. Cf. 2 Cor. 6:10 (Clark).
4. There is a corruption in the text here.
5. I have simply followed Clark's attempt at rendering this sentence: Quint despairs of finding a translation, though he compared a similar passage in Sermon 36.
6. Translated literally. The meaning is: 'then *my* will would be so noble that it would be God's will.'
7. =God's goodness.
8. 'In the mystical union' (Clark). Eckhart nowhere uses the term *unio mystica,* but this is what he means. See note 11.
9. Conjectured by Quint after a similar passage in Sermon 50. Clark seems to have gone astray here, but the whole passage is obscure.
10. Omitting the words 'God and this humble man are entirely one, not two,' which both Quint and Clark regard as interpolated. The passage is quoted in Latin in the 'defense' documents, and these words do not occur there.

11. See Sermon 22 and Song 1:1. The kiss as a symbol of the *unio mystica* is not often mentioned by Eckhart: it is a favorite theme of St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

12. As in Sermon 50.

13. His *Metaphysics.*

14. *De anima* 2.1 (paraphrased by Eckhart).

15. As Clark points out, Aristotle does not, of course, mention 'angels,' but 'movers of the stars': the Arab commentators refer to angels. In the scholastic teaching, man shares physical being with other earthly creatures, and reason with the angels.

16. *De cons. phil.* III, m. 9: *stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri* (Q).

17. *Metaphysics* 12.8.

18. Literally 'a what' (*ain was*): probably the Aristotelian and Thomist *quod quid est:* see *Summa theol.* I, Q 57, A 1 (Q).

19. Cf. John 1:5.

20. Exodus 3:14, a verse on which Eckhart expatiates in his Exodus commentary (*LW* II, 20–31, trans. Clark-Skinner, pp. 225–30).

SERMON FIFTY-TWO

(Q 32, QT 30)

CONSIDERAVIT SEMITAS DOMUS SUAE
ET PANEM OTIOSA NON COMEDIT
(Proverbs 31:27)[1]

"A good housewife illuminates[2] the paths about her house, and has not eaten her bread in idleness." This house means the entire soul, and the paths about the house are the powers of the soul.[3] An old master[4] says the soul is created in the middle between one and two. The one is eternity, which maintains itself ever alone and without variation. The two is time, which is changeable and given to multiplication. He means to convey that the soul with her higher powers touches eternity, which is God, while her lower powers being in touch with time make her subject to change and biased toward bodily things, which degrade her. If the soul were able to know God wholly as the angels do, she would never have entered the body. If she could know God without the world the world would not have been made for her sake. The world was created on her account for training and bracing the eye of the soul to endure the divine light. Just as the sunshine does not fall on the earth without first being caught up by the air and diffused on various things (for no human eye can support the sun), so the light of God is overstrong and bright for the soul's eye to bear, without being strengthened and borne up by matter and by parables which lead it on and accustom it to the divine light.

With her highest powers the soul touches God, and so she is formed after God. God is formed after Himself: he has His image from Himself and from no one beside. His image is perfect self-knowledge and nothing but light. When the soul comes in contact with Him in true understanding, she is like this image. If you press a seal into green wax or red, or into cloth, that is all an image. If the seal is stamped

right into the wax, so that none of the wax is left over but pressed right into the seal, then it is one and the same with the seal with no difference. In just the same way the soul is wholly united with God in image and likeness, when she is in contact with Him in true understanding. St. Augustine says the soul is so noble and is created so superior to all creatures that nothing transient and destined to perish at the latter day can speak to the soul or affect her save by means and messengers. These are the eyes and ears and the five senses: these are the soul's ways out into the world,[5] and by these ways the world gets back into the soul. A master[6] says, 'the powers of the soul return to the soul laden with great fruits': they never go out without bringing something back. Therefore a man should pay good heed lest his eyes bring back anything hurtful to his soul. I am sure of this: whatever a good man sees is to his benefit. If he sees anything evil, he thanks God for preserving him from it and prays God to convert him in whom the evil is. If he sees anything good, he desires it to be realized in himself.

This seeing[7] should be twofold: we should get rid of what is harmful, and remedy what we lack. I have said before: those who fast a lot and keep vigils and do fine works, if they fail to better their failings and mend their ways, on which true progress depends, they are cheating themselves and are the devil's laughingstock. A man once had a hedgehog[8] from which he grew rich. He lived near the sea. Whenever the hedgehog felt which way the wind was blowing, he arched his bristles and turned his back to it. Then the man went down to the fishermen and said to them, 'What will you give me if I tell you the way the wind is blowing?' Then he sold them the wind and became rich. In the same way a man might become truly rich in virtues by finding out his weakest points so as to mend them, and diligently striving to overcome them.

This St. Elisabeth did with much care. She "looked well to the ways of her house." And so she "feared not the winter, for her household was doubly clad" (Prov. 31:21). For she was on her guard against what might harm her. Whatever was lacking, she strove hard to make good. And so she did not "eat her bread in idleness." And she directed her higher powers to our God. The highest powers of the soul are three: the first is knowledge, the second is *irascibilis*, which is an upward striving power, and the third is will.[9]

When the soul gives herself to the knowledge of the very truth, to the onefold power in which God is known, then the soul is called a light.[10] And God too is light, and when the divine light is flooding the soul, then the soul becomes united with God like a light with light. Then that is called a light of faith, and that is a divine virtue. And where the soul is unable to go with her senses and powers, there faith carries her.

The second is the upward striving power, whose special function it is to strive aloft. Just as the eye is for seeing form and color, and the ear is for hearing sweet sounds and voices, so too the soul has a special task, which is to strive ceaselessly upward with this power; and if she glances aside she falls into pride, which is sin. She cannot tolerate that anything should be above her; I think she cannot even tolerate God's being above her: unless He is in her and she has as good as God Himself, she can never rest. With this power God is apprehended by the soul, as far as may be by a creature, and so it is called hope, which too is a divine virtue. Therein the soul has such great confidence in God that she thinks God has nothing in His whole being which is inaccessible to her. My Lord Solomon says that "stolen waters are sweeter" than other waters (Prov. 9:17). St. Augustine says, 'The pears I stole were sweeter than those my mother bought for me, because they were forbidden me and locked up.'[11] So is that grace far sweeter to the soul, that she has gained by special wisdom and striving, than that which is common to all.

The third power is the interior will, which is ever turned to face God in the divine will, and draws God's love into itself. There God is drawn by the soul, and the soul is drawn by God, and this is called divine love, and is another divine virtue. God's felicity lies in three things, that is, in knowledge, whereby He completely knows Himself, secondly in liberty, whereby He is ungrasped and uncompelled by all His creatures, and in complete satisfaction, whereby He satisfies Himself and all creatures. Therein, too, lies the soul's perfection: in knowledge and in apprehension, in that she has apprehended God, and in the union of perfect love.

Do you want to know what sin is? Turning away from felicity and virtue, that is the origin of all sin. Every blessed soul must "look to these paths."[12] Therefore "she has no fear of the winter, for her household is doubly clad," as scripture says of her. She[13] was clothed

with the strength to withstand all imperfection, and was adorned with truth. Outwardly, in the eyes of the world, this woman dwelt in riches and glory, but inwardly she worshipped true poverty. And when her outward comforts failed her, she fled to Him to whom all creatures flee, setting at naught the world and self. In that way she transcended self and scorned the scorn of men, so that it did not touch her and she lost none of her perfection. Her desire was to wash and tend sick and filthy people with a pure heart.

That we too may thus illumine the paths of our house and not eat our bread in idleness, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. From the epistle for November 19, the feast of St. Elisabeth of Hungary (d. 1231), the widow of Landgrave Ludwig of Thuringia, and perhaps especially close to Eckhart's heart as a Thuringian. The Elisabethkirche in Marburg is the oldest Gothic church in Germany.

2. As Quint notes, this translation of *consideravit* is surprising. He thinks Eckhart may have had Luke 15:8 in mind.

3. Cf. Sermon 6.

4. Quint refers to the twelfth-century *De spiritu et anima,* which was sometimes ascribed (as by Eckhart in Sermon 54) to St. Augustine.

5. The 'paths' of the text above.

6. Avicenna, *De anima* 1.5; cf. *LW* 1, 382 (Q).

7. The 'seeing' of the paths.

8. Eckhart also tells this story in his commentary on St. John (*LW* III, 227), where he ascribes it to Avicenna. Miss Evans, mysteriously, has 'arrow' for 'hedgehog.'

9. See Sermon 50 and Sermon 27. Elsewhere Eckhart, who is not always wholly consistent, describes these three as *lower* powers. But here he is obviously equating them with faith, hope, and love (Q).

10. Cf., e.g., Sermon 8.

11. Cf. *Conf.* 2.4 (Q).

12. Eckhart here returns to his text.

13. St. Elisabeth. After her husband's death she had to endure persecution. She tended the poor and the sick.

SERMON FIFTY-THREE

(Pf 88, Q 22, QT 23)

AVE GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS TECUM!
(Luke 1:28)

This text which I have said in Latin is found in the holy Gospel, and means in German, 'Hail to thee, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!" The Holy Ghost shall descend from above, from the lofty throne and shall come into thee from the light of the eternal Father. Here, there are three things to be understood. The first is the humility of the angelic nature, the second is that he knew himself unworthy to name God's mother, and the third that he addressed not her alone, but a great multitude: every good soul that desires God.

I say that if Mary had not first borne God spiritually, he would never have been born of her physically.

A woman said to our Lord, "Blessed is the womb that bore you" (Luke 11:27). And our Lord replied, "Not only is the womb blessed that bore me: blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." It is more worth to God to be born spiritually of the individual virgin or good soul, than that he was physically born of Mary.[1]

By this is to be understood that we are an only son, whom the Father has eternally borne. When the Father begot all creatures, he begot me, and I flowed forth with all creatures while remaining within the Father.[2] It is like what I am now saying: it springs up within me, then secondly, I pause in the idea, and thirdly, I speak it out, and all of you receive it, yet really it is in me all the time. Likewise I remain in the Father. In the Father are the primal images of all creatures. This bit of wood has a rational image in God. It is not only rational, it is pure reason.

The greatest good God ever did for man was that he became man himself. Here I shall tell you a story that is relevant to this. There

was once a rich man and a rich lady. The lady had an accident and lost one eye, at which she grieved exceedingly. Then the lord came to her and said, 'Wife, why are you so distressed?' You should not be so distressed at losing your eye.' She said, 'Sir, I do not mourn because I have lost my eye, I mourn for fear you might love me the less.' Then he said, 'Lady, I love you.' Not long afterward he put out one of his own eyes, and going to his wife, he said, 'Lady, so you may know I love you I have made myself like you: now I too have only one eye.'[3] This is like man, who could scarcely believe that God loved him so much, until God put out one of His own eyes and assumed human nature. This was "made flesh." Our Lady asked, "How can this be?" and the angel replied, "The Holy Ghost will come down into you from on high," from the highest throne from the Father of eternal light.

In principio. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa. 9:6): a child by the frailty of human nature, a son by the eternal Godhead. The masters say all creatures are striving to bring forth and to emulate the Father. Another master says every active cause works solely for the sake of its end, so as to find rest and peace in its end. One master[4] says all creatures work toward their primal purity and their highest perfection. Fire as fire does not burn: it is so pure and so fine that it does not ignite; rather, the nature of fire ignites and infuses into the dry wood its nature and its clarity according to its highest perfection. God has done the same. He has created the soul according to His own perfect nature, pouring into her all His own light in its pristine purity, while Himself remaining uncontaminated.

I said recently in one place that when God created all creatures, if God had not previously begotten something that was uncreated that bore within itself the images of all creatures — that is the spark, as I said at St. Maccabees if you were listening[5] — this spark is so akin to God that it is a single impartible one, and it contains in itself the images of all creatures, imageless images and images above images.[6]

Yesterday a question was debated in the schools[7] among the great theologians. I said I was astonished that scripture is so pregnant with meaning that no one can fully understand the least word of it. And so,[8] if you ask me, since I am an only son whom the heavenly Father has eternally begotten, whether I have eternally been that son in God,

my answer is: Yes and no. Yes, a son in that the Father has eternally begotten me, not a son by way of being unborn.

In principio. Here we are given to understand that we are an only son whom the Father has been eternally begetting out of the hidden darkness of eternal concealment, indwelling in the first beginning of the primal purity which is the plenitude of all purity. There I have been eternally at rest and asleep in the hidden understanding of the eternal Father, immanent and unspoken. Out of that purity He has been ever begetting me, his only-begotten son, in the very image of His eternal Fatherhood that I may be a father and beget him of whom I am begotten. Just as if one were to stand before a lofty mountain and call out, 'Are you there?' it would echo and resound, 'Are you there?' And if he said, 'Come out!' echo would reply, 'Come out!' In fact, seen in that light, any bit of wood would become an angel and would become rational, and not only rational — it would become pure intelligence in that primal purity which is the plenitude of all purity. And that is what God does: He begets His only-begotten Son in the highest part of the soul.[9] In the same moment that He bears His only-begotten Son into me, I bear him back into the Father. It is no different from God's bearing the angel,[10] and being born again by the Virgin. I used to wonder (it is many years ago) whether I should be asked why one blade of grass is so unlike another; and as it happened, I *was* asked why they are so different. Then I said it is more marvelous that all blades of grass are so much alike. One master says that the blades of grass are all different owing to the superfluity of the goodness of God, which He pours out superabundantly into all creatures to reveal His majesty the more. So I said, it is more wonderful how much the grass blades are alike, explaining that just as all angels are one in their original pure nature, so all blades of grass are one in their original pure nature, and there all things are one.

I used to think sometimes, when I came here, that man could come in time to compel God.[11] If I were up here, and said to someone, 'Come up here,' that would be hard for him, but if I said, 'Sit down here,' that would be easy. This is what God does. Whenever a man humbles himself, God is unable to withhold His own goodness; He is obliged to sink Himself, to pour Himself out into that humble man, and to the meanest of all He gives Himself most and gives Himself wholly. What God gives is His being, and His being is His goodness,

and His goodness is His love. All sorrow and all joy comes from love. I was thinking on the way, when I was supposed to come here, that I did not want to come here because I should become wet with love.[12] Perhaps you too have been wet with love, but we shall not discuss that. Joy and sorrow both come from love. A man should not fear God, for he who fears Him, flees Him. Such a fear is harmful fear. The right sort of fear is the fear of *losing* God. Man should not fear Him, he should love Him, for God loves man to the highest perfection. The masters say that all things strive to give birth, and to become like the Father. And they declare that the earth flees from the heavens: but if she flees downward, she comes downward to heaven, and if she flees upward, then she comes to the lowest of the heavens. The earth can never flee so low but heaven flows into her and impresses his power on her and fructifies her, whether she wishes it or not.[13] It is just the same with a man: he thinks he can get away from God, but he cannot escape Him, for every nook and cranny reveals Him. He thinks he is fleeing from God, and runs into His arms. God gives birth to His only-begotten Son in you whether you like it or not; whether you are asleep or awake, God does His work. I was speaking recently about whose fault it was if a man could not taste that, and I said it was because his tongue was coated with extraneous filth, that is to say, with creatures, just like a man to whom all food seems bitter and not to his taste. Why don't we like this food? The reason is for lack of salt. The salt is divine love. If we had divine love we should savor God, and all the works God ever performed, we should receive all things from God, and do all the works that He does. In this sameness we are all His only Son.

When God created the soul, He created her according to His own most perfect nature, so that she might be the bride[14] of His only-begotten Son, who, knowing this full well, decided to go forth out of the private chamber of his eternal Fatherhood in which he eternally slept, remaining unspoken within.[15] *In principio.* In the first beginning of the primal purity the Son set up the tent of his eternal glory and came forth from the Most High, so as to elevate his beloved, to whom the Father had eternally wedded him, and to bring her back into the Highest whence she had come.[16] And in another place it says, "Lo, your king is coming to you!" (Zech. 9:9). For this reason he went forth and came leaping like a young stag, and suffered the pangs of

love: and he did not come out except with the wish to return to the chamber with his bride. This chamber is the silent darkness of the mysterious Fatherhood. When he went forth from the Most High, he wanted to show her the hidden mystery of his secret Godhead, where he is at rest with himself and all creatures.

In principio:[17] this means when translated a beginning of all being, as I said in the schools, but I said further: it is an end of all being, for the first beginning is for the sake of the final end. Indeed, God Himself does not rest there, where He is the first beginning: He is at rest where He is an end and a repose of all being, not that this being is then brought to naught, rather it is there brought to completion in its final end, as total perfection. What is the final end? It is the hidden darkness of the eternal Godhead, which is unknown and never has been known and never shall be known. God abides there unknown in Himself, and the light of the eternal Father has ever shone in there, and the darkness does not comprehend the light.[18]

That we may come to this truth, may that Truth help us whereof I have spoken. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 8.
2. Cf. Sermon 17.
3. Eckhart also tells this story in his commentary on St. John. There is a medieval German version, *Diu getriuwe kone* ('The Faithful Wife'), by Herrand von Wildonje (ca. 1250), in which the ugly husband loses an eye in the wars, and his beautiful wife puts out one of hers.
4. These masters have not been identified.
5. See Sermon 50, note 9.
6. Eckhart does not complete the sentence, or at least the MSS do not.
7. Presumably the Dominican Studium Generale in Cologne. Cf. Sermon 83, note 4.
8. Eckhart means that just as all the learned theologians cannot fully interpret a single word of scripture, so too he cannot give a simple 'yes or no' answer to *this* question.
9. The intellect: cf. Sermon 54, note 7.
10. Of the Annunciation.
11. Cf. Sermon 24a.
12. Probably='wet with tears of love' (Q). Quint rejects an earlier explanation (which Miss Evans appears to follow) that Eckhart is making a little joke about having had to come in the rain.
13. See Sermon 50.

14. Quint reads *brût* ('bride') for the meaningless *geburt* ('birth') of the MSS and Pfeiffer's text. Miss Evans has independently adopted 'bride' in her translation. This is obviously correct in view of what follows.

15. Christ as the Word (*Logos*) as yet unspoken. For the theme of God 'speaking the Word,' cf. Sermon 1.

16. Quint refers to Psalm 18:6 and Song 2:8. This whole passage has been thought to smack more of Suso than of Eckhart, but Quint points out parallels in Eckhart's other works; and Suso was, after all, Eckhart's pupil. In earlier tradition the bride of the Song of Songs has been interpreted as the church, but long before Eckhart's time she was taken as the individual soul, as here.

17. These opening words of Genesis and St. John's Gospel run like a *Leitmotiv* all through this sermon. See the remarks by Clark and Skinner. *Meister Eckhart, Selected Treatises and Sermons,* 1958, p. 48, on the difficulty of adequately translating these words, which, as they say, are 'fraught with profound philosophical overtones.' Cf. Kelley, p. 250, n. 4.

18. Cf. John 1:5.

SERMON FIFTY-FOUR

(Q 23)

COMPULIT JESUS DISCIPULOS ASCENDERE IN NAVICULAM
ET PRAECEDERE EUM TRANS FRETUM
(Matthew 14:22)

"Jesus bade his disciples go up into a little boat and cross the turbulent sea."[1] Why does he call the sea turbulent? Because it rages and is restless. "He bade his disciples go up." Whoever would hear the Word and be a disciple of Christ, must rise up and raise his mind above all corporeal things, and must cross over the turbulence of the mutability of all transitory things. As long as there is anything of mutability, whether it is cunning or anger or sadness, that beclouds the reason, so that it cannot hear the Word.

A master[2] says whoever would understand natural things and even material things must strip his understanding bare of all extraneous matters. I have also said before, when the sun pours forth its radiance on corporeal things, whatever it can take hold of it turns to vapor and draws up to itself: if the sunshine were able, it would draw it into the ground from which it radiates. But when the sunshine draws this matter up into the air, so that it expands of itself and becomes warm from the sun, then, rising up into the region of cold, it suffers a setback from the cold, and is cast down to earth again as rain or snow.[3] Thus it is with the Holy Ghost: he lifts the soul and supports her and draws her up with him, and if she were ready, he would draw her into the ground from which he emanated. And so it comes that, when the Holy Ghost is in the soul, she ascends, for he draws her with him. But when the Holy Ghost falls away from the soul, she sinks down, for whatever is of the earth sinks downward; but whatever is of fire, that soars aloft. Accordingly it is necessary for man to have trodden under foot all things that are of the earth, and whatever may

becloud the understanding, so that nothing remains but what is akin to the understanding. If she works still with understanding, she is akin to it. This soul that has thus transcended all things, is lifted and supported by the Holy Ghost and borne with him into the ground whence he emanated. Indeed, he bears her into her eternal image, whence she has emanated, into that image after which the Father has shaped all things, into that image in which all things are but one, into the vastness and profundity wherein all things shall again find their end.[4] Whoever would come to this must first have trodden under foot all things that are unlike to this—and whoever would hear the Word and be a disciple of Jesus the Savior.

Now observe: St. Paul says that as we shall with unveiled face regard the splendor and glory of God, so we shall be transfigured and formed in that image, which is all one image of God and the Godhead.[5] When the Godhead gave itself totally into the mind of our Lady, because she was bare and pure, then she conceived God: and from the superabundance of the Godhead there broke forth and flowed over into our Lady's body and was formed a body in our Lady's womb from the Holy Ghost. And if she had not borne the Godhead in her mind, she could never have conceived him physically. One master[6] says that is a special grace and a great gift, that one may fly upward with the wing of understanding and raise the intellect up to God, being transported from clarity to clarity, and with clarity in clarity. The soul's intellect is the highest part of the soul.[7] When this is established in God it is transported by the Holy Ghost into the image and united therewith. And with the image and with the Holy Ghost it is carried through and inborne into the ground. There, where the Son is in-formed, the soul too will be in-formed. To that soul that is thus inborne and enclosed and locked up in God, all creatures shall be subservient as they were to St. Peter: as long as his thoughts were uniformly enclosed and locked up in God, the sea closed up under his feet and he walked on the water, but when his thoughts strayed, he sank at once.

It is indeed a great gift that the soul is thus inborne by the Holy Ghost, for, just as the Son is called a Word, so the Holy Ghost is called a Gift: thus it is said in scripture.[8] I have also said that love accepts God because He is good: if He were not good, love would not love Him or accept Him as God. Where there is no goodness,

love does not love. But the intellect of the soul takes God as He is pure being, transcendent being. But being, goodness and truth are coextensive, for as far as being extends it is good, and is true. Now people take goodness and put it on to being: that covers up being and gives it a skin, for it is something added. Or they take God as He is truth. Is being truth? Yes, for truth depends on being, for God said to Moses: "He that is has sent me" (Exod. 3:14). St. Augustine[9] says, 'Truth is the Son in the Father, for truth depends on being.' Is being truth? If you were to ask many a master, he would say 'Yes,' but if you were to ask me, I would have said, 'Yes,' but now I say, 'No!' for truth too is something added. Now they take God as He is one, for one is more truly one than that which has been unified. Whatever is one, from that all that is other has been removed: but precisely that which is removed, is something added, because it denotes otherness.

But if God is neither goodness nor being nor truth nor one, what then is He? He is pure nothing: he is neither this nor that. If you think of anything He might be, He is not that. So where will the soul find truth? Will she not find it there, where she is in-formed in one unity, in the primal purity, in the impress of pure beingness — will she not find truth even there? No, she will not be able to grasp truth there — rather does truth come thence and descend from there.

St. Paul was carried off into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). Observe which are the three heavens. The first is detachment from all bodily things, the second is estrangement from all imagery, and the third is a bare understanding in God without intermediary. Now the question is, If anyone had touched St. Paul during the period when he was enraptured, would he have felt it? I say, 'Yes.' When he was locked in the embrace of the Godhead, if anyone had then touched him with the point of a needle, he would have been aware of it, for St. Augustine says in his book 'Of the Soul and Spirit'[10] that the soul is created as if at the junction of time and eternity. With the lower senses, according to time, she embraces temporal things: through her highest power she embraces and intuits timelessly things eternal. Therefore I say that if anyone had touched St. Paul with the point of a needle during the time he was enraptured, he would have known it, for his soul remained in his body as the form in matter. And just as the sun illumines the air and the air the earth, so his spirit received pure light from God, and the soul from the spirit, and the body from the soul. Thus it is clear

how St. Paul was at once carried off and remained (where he was). In the spirit he was transported: in the soul he remained.

The second question is whether St. Paul understood outside of time or in time. I say he understood out of time, for he did not understand from the angels who are created in time; he understood from God, who was before time was, whom time never comprehended.

The third question is whether he was in God or God was in him. I say: God understood in him, and he understood, as not being in God. Here is an example. The sun shines through glass and draws the moisture out of a rose. That is because of the fineness of the material of the glass and the generating force of the sun: thus the sun engenders in the glass, not the glass in the sun. So it was with St. Paul: when the clear light of the Godhead pierced his soul, then from the bright rose of his spirit there was drawn out the loving flow of divine contemplation, of which the prophet says, "The flood of the river rejoices my city" (Psalm 45:5), that is, my soul; and this happened to him only on account of the translucency of his soul, through which love flowed by the generating power of the Godhead.

Association with the body prevents the soul from understanding as clearly as do the angels. But to the extent that we can comprehend without material things, we are angelic. The soul knows from without:[11] God understands within Himself by Himself, for He is the source of all things. And to this source may God eternally help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Eckhart translates *fretum* with *wuot* 'rage, turbulence,' thus seeming to combine the two meanings of the Latin word: 1. 'strait,' 2. 'turbulence.' Quint notes that this is in accordance with the derivation from *fervere* in Isidore's *Etymologies* (Isidore being right for once!). For Eckhart it denotes the turbulence of the world.
2. Aristotle, *De anima* 3.4 (Q).
3. Cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologia* 1.4, and Albertus Magnus, *Isagoge in Libros Meteorum* 4.6 (Q).
4. The world of Platonic ideas, in God.
5. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18.
6. Augustine, *Sermo* 311 (Q).
7. See Sermon 53, note 9.
8. Matt. 14:29.
9. *De vera religione,* 36.66 (Q).
10. Cf. *De spiritu et anima,* 47 (Q): see Sermon 52, note 4.
11. Through the senses.

SERMON FIFTY-FIVE

(Pf 55, Q 62, QT 48)[1]

God made the poor for the rich and the rich for the poor. Lend to God, and he will repay you. Some say they believe *in* God, but they do not believe God. It is a greater thing to believe in God than to believe God. If you lend a man five shillings you believe him, that he will pay you back, and yet you don't believe *in* that man. So, if a man believes in God, why does he not believe that God will repay him what he lends His poor? He who gives up all things gets back a hundredfold.[2] But whoever expects a hundredfold will get nothing, for he is not giving up all things but wanting his hundredfold back. But our Lord promises a hundredfold to those who leave all things, *then* he will get a hundredfold back and eternal life as well. It might be that a man, in the course of ridding himself, got back the very thing he had abandoned,[3] but if any should give up for this very reason, then, not giving all, he would get nothing. Anyone who seeks anything in God, knowledge, understanding, devotion, or whatever it might be — though he may find it he will not have found God: even though he may indeed find knowledge, understanding, or inwardness, which I heartily commend — but it will not stay with him. But if he seeks nothing, he will find God and all things in Him, and they will remain with him.

A man should seek nothing at all, neither knowledge nor understanding nor inwardness nor piety nor repose, but only God's will. The soul that is as she by rights should be would not want God to give her His whole Godhead: it would no more console her than if He were to give her a fly. Knowing God outside of God's will is naught. *In* God's will, all things are, and are something, they are pleasing to God and are perfect: outside of God's will, all things are naught, they are not pleasing to God and are imperfect. A man should never

pray for any transitory thing: but if he would pray for anything, he should pray for God's will alone and nothing else, and then he gets everything. If he prays for anything else, he will get nothing. In God there is nothing but one, and one is indivisible, and whoever takes anything but one, that is a part, not one. "God is one" (Gal. 3:20), and if a man seeks or expects anything more, that is not God but a fraction. Whether it is repose or knowledge or whatever else but God's will alone, that is for its own sake and so is nothing. But if a man seeks God's will alone, whatever flows from that or is revealed by that he may take as a gift from God without ever looking or considering whether it is by nature or grace or whence it comes or in what wise: he need not care about that. It is well with him and he need only lead an ordinary Christian life without considering doing anything special. He should take just one thing from God, and whatever comes, accept it as the best for him, having no fear that by this limitation he will be hindered in any way, inwardly or outwardly. Whatever he may do, if only he is aware of having the love of God within him, that suffices.

When it falls to some people to suffer or to do something, they say, 'If only I knew it was God's will, I would gladly endure it or do it!' Dear God! that is a strange question for a sick man to ask, whether it is God's will that he should be sick. He ought to realize that if he is sick, it *must* be God's will. It is just the same with other things. And so a man should accept from God, purely and simply, whatever happens to him. There are some people who praise God and have faith in Him when all goes well with them, inwardly or outwardly, as when somebody says, 'I have got ten quarters of corn this year and as many of wine: I put my trust in God.' 'Indeed,' I say, 'you put your trust in the corn and the wine.' The soul is created for a good so great and so high that she cannot rest in any mode: all the time she is hastening past all modes toward the eternal good which is God, and for which she was created. And this is not to be gained by storm, by a man's being obstinately determined to do this and leave that, but by gentleness and sincere humility and self-abnegation in that as in everything that befalls, not by a man saying to himself, 'You *will* do this at whatever cost!' — that would be wrong, for that is an assertion of self. If anything happens to him that causes him grief or trouble or disquiet, again he would be wrong, for he would

be giving way to self. If something were very repugnant to him, he should inwardly seek counsel of God, and, bending humbly before Him, accept with quiet faith from Him whatever might happen to him, and then he would be right. This is the gist of the matter, of all advice and teaching: that a man should let himself be advised and pay regard only to God, though this can be explained in many and various words. It promotes a properly ordered conscience to refuse attention to casual happenings, and for a man when he is by himself to give up his will wholly to God and then to accept all things equally from God: grace or whatever it may be, inward or outward.

Whoever sees anything *in* God does not see God. A righteous man has no need of God. What I have, I am not in need of. He serves for nothing, he cares for nothing: he has God, and so he serves for nothing. By so much as God is higher than man, so He is readier to give than man is to receive. Not by fasting and outward works can we gauge our progress in the good life: but a sure sign of growth is a waxing love for the eternal and a waning interest in temporal things. If a man had a hundred marks and gave them all for God's sake to found a cloister, that would be a fine deed. And yet I say, it would be greater and better to despise and naught himself for God's sake. In all a man does he should turn his will Godward and, keeping God alone in mind forge ahead without qualms about its being the right thing or whether he is making a mistake. If a painter had to plan every brush-stroke with the first, he would paint nothing. And if, going to some place, we had first to settle how to put the front foot down, we should get nowhere. So, follow the first step and continue: you will get to the right place, and all is well.

Notes

1. This sermon has no text. It is a *collatio* or evening discourse.
2. Cf. Matt. 19:29.
3. The text is confusing here. I have followed Quint's paraphrase.

SERMON FIFTY-SIX

(Pf 56, Q 109, QT 26)

NOLITE TIMERE EOS QUI CORPUS OCCIDUNT,
ANIMAM AUTEM OCCIDERE NON POSSUNT
(Matthew 10:28)

"Fear not those who would kill the body, for they cannot kill the soul," for spirit does not kill spirit: spirit gives life to spirit. Those who would kill you are flesh and blood, and whatever is flesh and blood, all that perishes. The noblest thing in man is blood, when it wills good. But the most evil thing in man is blood, when it wills evil.[1] When the blood rules the flesh, a man is humble, patient and chaste and has all the virtues. But when the flesh rules the blood, a man is haughty, angry, and lascivious and has all the vices.[2] We are here praising St. John.[3] I cannot praise him so much that God has not praised him more.

Now observe: I will now say something I have never said before. When God created heaven, earth, and all creatures, God did not work: he had no work to do, there was no work in Him. God said, "We will make a likeness" (Gen. 1:7). To create is easy: we do it when and as we will. But what I make, I make myself and in myself, imprinting my image expressly in it. "We will make a likeness," not Thou Father or Thou Son or Thou Holy Ghost, but rather We, the Holy Trinity in concert, We will make a likeness.

When God made man, He wrought in the soul His like work, His active work and His ever-enduring work. This work was so great that it was nothing other than the soul, and the soul was nothing less than the work of God. God's nature, His being and His Godhead depend upon His working in the soul. God be praised, God be praised! When God works in the soul, He loves His work. Where the soul is in which God performs His work, that work is so great that it is nothing but

love, and the love is nothing but God. God loves Himself and His nature, His being and His Godhead. In the love in which God loves Himself, He loves all creatures, not as creatures but creatures as God. In the love in which God loves Himself, He loves all things.

Now I will say what I have never said before. God savors Himself. In the savoring in which God savors Himself, therein He savors all creatures, not as creatures but creatures as God. In the savoring in which God savors Himself, therein He savors all things. And mark. All creatures tend toward their ultimate perfection. Now I beg of you to attend to my words by the eternal truth and by the everlasting truth and by my soul! Yet again I will say what I never said before: God and Godhead are as different as heaven and earth. I say further: the inner and the outer man are as different as heaven and earth. But God is loftier by many thousands of miles. God becomes and unbecomes.[4] But to return to what I was saying: God savors Himself in all things. The sun sheds its light on all creatures, and whatever the sun shines on absorbs the sunshine, yet the sun does not lose its brightness. All creatures give up their life in favor of being. All creatures enter my understanding that they may become rational in me.[5] I alone prepare all creatures for their return to God. Take care, all of you, what you do! Now I return to my inner and my outer man. I see the lilies in the field, their brightness, their color, and all their leaves. But I do not see their fragrance. Why? Because the fragrance is in me. But what I say is in me and I speak it forth from me. All creatures are savored by my outer man as creatures, like wine and bread and meat. But my inner man savors things not as creatures but as God's gift. But my inmost man savors them not as God's gift, but as eternity.

I take a bowl of water and put a mirror in it and set it under the disc of the sun. Then the sun sends forth its light-rays both from the disc and from the sun's depth, and yet suffers no diminution. The reflection of the mirror in the sun is a sun, and yet it is what it is.[6] So it is with God. God is in the soul with His nature, with His being and with His Godhead, and yet He is not the soul.[7] The reflection of the soul in God is God, and yet she is what she is. God *becomes* when all creatures say 'God'—then God comes to be.[8]

When I subsisted in the ground, in the bottom, in the river and fount of Godhead, no one asked me where I was going or what I was doing: there was no one to ask me. When I flowed forth, all creatures

said, 'God.' If anyone asked me, 'Brother Eckhart, when did you leave your house?' then I was in there. That is how all creatures speak of God. And why do they not speak of the Godhead? Everything that is in the Godhead is one, and of that there is nothing to be said. God works, the Godhead does no work: there is nothing for it to do, there is no activity in it. It never peeped at any work. God and Godhead are distinguished by working and not-working. When I return to God, if I do not remain there,[9] my breakthrough will be far nobler than my outflowing. I alone bring all creatures out of their reason into my reason, so that they are one with me.[10] When I enter the ground, the bottom, the river and fount of the Godhead, none will ask me whence I came or where I have been. No one missed me, for there God *unbecomes.*"[11]

Whoever has understood this sermon, good luck to him. If no one had been here I should have had to preach it to this offertory box. There are some poor people who will go back home and say, 'I shall settle down and eat my bread and serve God.' By the eternal truth I declare that these people will remain in error, and will never be able to strive for and win what those others achieve who follow God in poverty and exile. Amen.

Notes

1. Quoted out of context by the Nazi apologist Walter Lehmann (see J. Clark, *The Great German Mystics,* 1949, pp. 34–35).
2. Quint quotes from Plato's *Timaeus* in explanation of this theory.
3. The text is that for St. John the Baptist (August 29).
4. *Got der wirt und entwirt.* This refers, as Clark notes, to the difference between God and Godhead. See note 8 and note 11.
5. They are illumined by the active intellect (Clark).
6. I.e., a mirror.
7. As Clark notes, Eckhart here clearly shows he is no pantheist.
8. The explanation of the phrase 'God becomes and unbecomes" (note 4).
9. If I penetrate beyond 'God' to the 'Godhead.'
10. Cf. note 5.
11. The further explanation of 'God becomes and unbecomes' (note 4 and note 8).

SERMON FIFTY-SEVEN

(Pf 96, Q 12, QT 13)

QUI AUDIT ME NON CONFUNDETUR
(Sirach 24:30)

The text that I have quoted in Latin is declared by the eternal wisdom of the Father and it says, "Whoever hears me is not ashamed" — if he is ashamed of anything, he is ashamed of being ashamed. "He that works in me does not sin. He that reveals me and shines me forth shall have eternal life." Of these three sayings which I have quoted, each would be sufficient for a sermon. I will speak first of the words of the Eternal Wisdom: "Whoever hears me is not ashamed." Whoever would hear the eternal wisdom of the Father, he must be within, and at home, and must be one: then he can hear the eternal wisdom of the Father.

There are three things that prevent us from hearing the eternal Word. The first is corporeality, the second is multiplicity, the third is temporality. If a man had transcended these three things, he would dwell in eternity, he would dwell in the spirit, he would dwell in unity and in the desert — and there he would hear the eternal Word. Now our Lord says, "No one hears my word or my teaching unless he has abandoned self.'[1] For to hear the Word of God demands absolute self-surrender. The hearer is the same as the heard in the eternal Word. All that the eternal Father teaches, is His being and His nature and His entire Godhead, which He divulges to us altogether in His Son and teaches us that we are that same Son. A man who had gone out of self so far that he was the only-begotten Son would own all that the only-begotten Son owns. Whatever God performs and whatever He teaches, all that He performs and teaches in His only-begotten Son. God performs all His works that we may become the only-begotten Son. When God sees that we *are* the only-begotten Son, He is in such

haste to get to us and hurries so much as if His divine being would be shattered and destroyed in itself, that He may reveal to us the abysm of His Godhead and the plenitude of His being and His nature: God then hastens to make it our own just as it is His own. Here God has delight and joy in abundance. That man stands in God's ken and in God's love, and becomes none other than what God is Himself.[2]

If you love yourself, you love all men as yourself. As long as you love a single man less than yourself,[3] you have never truly learned to love yourself — unless you love all men as yourself, all men in one man, that man being God and man. It is well with that man who loves himself and all men as himself, with him it is very well. Now some people say, 'I love my friend, who is good to me, better than any other man.' It is not right so; it is imperfect. But it must be tolerated, just as some people sail across the sea with half a wind, and still get there. So it is with people who love one person better than another: it is natural. If I truly loved him as myself, then, whatever happened to him for good or ill, whether it were life or death, I would be as glad for it to happen to me as to him, and that would be *real* friendship.

Therefore St. Paul said, "I would be willing to be eternally separated from God for the sake of my friend and for God's sake."[4] To be separated from God for an instant is to be separated from God forever, and to be separated from God is hellish pain.[5] Now what does St. Paul mean by these words, when he says he would be separated from God?[6] The masters question whether St. Paul was on the way to perfection, or whether he was completely perfect. I say he stood in the fullness of perfection, otherwise he could not have said this.

I will put into plain words what St. Paul meant when he said that he would be separated from God. Man's highest and dearest leave-taking is if he takes leave of God for God. St. Paul left God for God: he left everything that he could get from God, he left everything that God could give him and everything he might receive from God. In leaving these he left God for God, and *then* God was left with him, as God is essentially in Himself, not by way of a reception or a gaining of Himself, but rather in a self-identity which is where God is. He never gave God anything, nor did he receive anything from God: it is a single oneness and a pure union. *Here* man is true man, and suffering no more befalls that man than it befalls the divine essence: as I have said before, there is something in the soul that is so near akin to God

that it is one and not united. It is one, it has nothing in common with anything, and nothing created has anything in common with it. All created things are nothing. But this is remote and alien from all creation. If man were wholly thus he would be wholly uncreated and uncreatable.[7] If everything that is corporeal and defective were to be comprehended in this unity, it would be no different from that which this unity is. If I were to find myself for a single instant in this essence, I would have as little regard for myself as for a dung worm.

God gives to all things equally, and as they flow forth from God they are equal: angels, men, and all creatures proceed alike from God in their first emanation. To take things in their primal emanation would be to take them all alike. If they are alike in time, in God in eternity they are much more like. If you could take a fly in God, it is in God far nobler than the highest angel in himself. Now all things are equal in God and are God Himself. Here God delights so in this likeness that He pours out His whole nature and being in this equality in Himself. He rejoices in it, just as if one were to turn a horse loose in a green meadow that was entirely smooth and level, and it would be the horse's nature to let himself go with all his strength in galloping about the meadow — he would enjoy it for it is his nature. In just the same way God finds joy and satisfaction when He finds likeness:[8] He rejoices, pouring out all His nature and His being into His likeness, for He is Himself this likeness.

A question arises about the angels: Do those angels who dwell here with us to serve and guard us suffer a diminution of their joys in comparison with those that abide in eternity: [9] is it in any sense a drawback to them to be engaged in serving and protecting us? I reply, No, not at all. Their joy is no less, and so too their equality: for the angel's work is God's will and God's will is the angel's work, and accordingly such an angel is not hindered in his joy, his likeness or his work. If God should tell an angel to fly to a tree and pick off the caterpillars, the angel would be ready to pick them off: being God's will it would be his happiness.

A man who is established thus in God's will wants nothing but what is God's will and what is God. If he were sick he would not want to be well. To him all pain is pleasure, all multiplicity is bare simplicity, if he is truly established in the will of God. Even though it meant the pains of hell it would be joy and happiness to him. He is

free and has left self behind, and must be free of whatever is to come in to him: if my eye is to perceive color, it must be free of all color. If I see a blue or white color, the sight of my eye which sees the color, the very thing that sees, is the same as that which is seen by the eye. The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me: my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing and one love.[10]

That man who is established thus in God's love must be dead to self and all created things, paying as little regard to himself as to one who is a thousand miles away. That man abides in likeness and abides in unity in full equality, and no unlikeness enters into him. This man must have abandoned self and all this world. If there were a man who possessed all the world, and if he gave it up barely, just as he received it, for God's sake, then our Lord would give him back all this world and eternal life as well.[11] And if there were another man possessing nothing but good will, who thought, Lord, were this whole world mine, and if I had another world and yet another, making three; if he were to wish, Lord, I will abandon these and myself as barely as I received them from you — then God would give that man just as much as if he had (really) given it away with his own hand.[12] Another man again, who had nothing physical or spiritual to resign or give, he would give up the most. A man who wholly resigned self for a single instant, to him all would be given. But if a man abandoned self for twenty years, if he took back self for a single instant, he would never have been self-abandoned. That man who both has and is resigned, and never again glances at what he has abandoned but remains firm, unmoved in himself and unchangeable, that man alone has left self.

That we may thus remain firm and unchangeable as the eternal Father, so help us God and eternal Wisdom. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Luke 14:26.
2. Practically all of this paragraph was objected to by the Cologne censors, but was not condemned by the pope.
3. Clark says of these words, 'I omit a meaningless sentence missing in three old manuscripts' (!). True, the grammar is awkward, but the phrase is far from meaningless.
4. Cf. Rom. 9:3.

5. This whole passage was also objected to by the censors. It is tempting to suppose that this is Eckhart's interpretation of the eternity of hell.

6. Eckhart apparently treated this question at length in a lost Latin work (Q).

7. This passage was condemned in the bull of 1329, but Eckhart had explained in his declaration in the Dominican church at Cologne in February 1327 that he meant it is 'concreated.' Cf. Sermon 84, note 9.

8. *Glîcheit (Gleichheit* in modern German) means both 'equality' and 'likeness,' as Clark notes.

9. Lit. 'do they have less equality of their joys.'

10. This was objected to by the Cologne censors. Eckhart replied by quoting St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 9.2 (Q). Cf. also Sermon 7.

11. Clark compares Luke 18:28–30.

12. Like the first man mentioned, who *really* owned the world.

SERMON FIFTY-EIGHT

(Pf 58, Q 66, Qt 27, Evans II, 13)

EUGE SERVE BONE ET FIDELIS ETC.
(Matthew 25:23)

We read in the Gospel the saying of our Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord: because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my possessions."

Well then, let us carefully examine the words used by our Lord when he said, "good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord: because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my possessions." Now in another Gospel our Lord said to a young man who addressed him and called him 'good,' "Why do you call me good? None is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18), and that indeed is true. Whatever is a creature, insofar as it depends on itself, is not good. Nothing whatever is good except God alone. Did God then contradict his own words? Not in the least! Now mark my words.

So far as man denies himself for God and is united with God, to that extent he is more God than creature. A man who makes himself wholly free of self for God's sake, who belongs to none but God and lives for none save God alone, is in truth by grace the same as God is by nature, and God for his part knows no difference between Himself and that man. However, I say 'by grace.' For God is and this man is, and just as God is good by nature, so this man is good by grace, for God's life and being is entire in this man. That is why he called this man 'good,' for the words our Lord used were 'good servant,' for this servant is good in the sight of God with no other goodness than that whereby God is good.[1] I have sometimes said before that God's life and God's being are in stone or in a bit of wood, or in other creatures that are not blessed. God is in this servant in a different way which makes him blessed and good, for He is in him joyously, living in and

with him as blissfully and as consciously as in and by Himself — and therefore he is blessed and good. That is why our Lord said, "good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord: because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my possessions." Now, having said something of his goodness, why this servant was good, I will instruct you concerning his faithfulness, for our Lord said, "good and *faithful* servant, you have been faithful over small things."

So now let us consider what that little is over which the servant had been faithful. Everything God has created in heaven and on earth, that is not Himself, is little in His eyes. Over all these things the good servant has been faithful. How that is, I will explain to you. God has set this servant between time and eternity. He was not pledged to either, being free in reason and will in every respect. With this reason he ran through all things God has created: with his will he abandoned all things including his own self and all that God has created which is not God Himself; with his reason he took them up, giving God praise and glory for them, surrendering them to God, to His unfathomable nature, and himself as well, insofar as he is created.[2] There he left himself and all things, never to touch himself or any created thing with his created will. In very truth, were anyone so faithful, God would have in him such ineffable delight that to rob Him of this joy would be to rob Him at a stroke of His life, His being, and His Godhead. But I say yet more (do not be afraid, for this joy is close to you and is in you[3]): there is not one of you who is so coarse-grained, so feeble of understanding, or so remote but he may find this joy within himself, in truth, as it is, with joy and understanding, before you leave this church today, indeed before I have finished preaching: he can find this as truly within him, live it, and possess it, as that God is God and I am a man. Be sure of this for it is true, and Truth herself declares it. I will show you this with a parable which is in the Gospel.[4]

Once our Lord was sitting on a well, for he was weary. Then came a woman who was a Samaritan (one of the heathen), bringing a pitcher and a line, meaning to draw water. And our Lord said to her, "Woman, give me to drink." And she answered him, saying, "Why do you ask me for a drink? You are one of the Jews and I am a Samaritan, and those of our faith and your faith have no dealings with each other." Then our Lord replied, saying, "If you but knew who it is who asks you for a drink, and if you knew the grace of

God, you might perhaps have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you from the living water. Whoever drinks of this water will again become thirsty, but whoever drinks of the water that I give will never thirst again, and from it shall spring up a fountain of eternal life." The woman was struck by our Lords's words, because she did not like going often to the well. So the woman said, "Sir, give me some of this water to drink, so that I may never be thirsty again." Then our Lord said, "Go and fetch your husband," and she said, "Sir, I have no husband." Then our Lord said, "Woman, you are right: you have had five husbands, but the one you have now is not your husband." At this she dropped her jug and line and said to our Lord, "Sir, who are you? It is written that when the Messiah comes whom men call Christ, he will teach us all things and make the truth known to us." Our Lord said, "Woman, I am he who is talking to you," and at these words her heart was full. "Lord," she said, "our fathers used to worship under the trees on the mountain, and your fathers the Jews worshipped in the Temple. Sir, which of these worship God most properly, and in which place? Tell me that." Then our Lord said, "Woman, the time shall come, and is now, when true worshippers shall worship not only on the mountain and in the Temple, but shall worship God in the spirit and in truth: for God is a spirit, and whoever worships Him must worship in the spirit and in truth, for such are the worshippers the Father seeks." At this the woman was filled with God, filled to overflowing, welling over with divine fullness, and she went preaching and crying out with a loud voice, wanting to bring to God everyone she saw, and make them full of God as she was full. Note that this occurred when she had her husband again.[5] God will never give Himself openly and wholly to the soul unless she brings her husband, that is, her free will.

That is why our Lord said, "Woman, you say truly that you have had five husbands who are dead, and the one you have now is not yours." Who were the five husbands? They are the five senses: she had sinned with them and therefore they were dead. "And the husband you have now is not yours" meant her free will, which did not belong to her, for it was bound in mortal sin and was not under her control. Therefore it was not hers, for what a man cannot control is not his: it is rather his who can control it. But now I say, when a man in grace has mastered his free will, if he is able to unite it with the will

of God, wholly and as a single one, then he need do no more than say, as this woman said, "Lord, instruct me how to pray, and what to do that is truly most pleasing to you." And Jesus will answer, that is, reveal himself truly and wholly and totally, as he is, filling that man to overflowing, so that it comes welling up and running over with the overfull fullness of God, as happened in a short space to this woman at the well, who before was quite unready for it. And so I say again, as I said before, there is no one here so coarse-grained, so ignorant, or unprepared but if, by the grace of God, he can unite his will purely and totally with the will of God, then he need only say with desire, "Lord, show me your dearest will and strengthen me to do it!" and God will do so as truly as he lives, and God will give to him in as bounteous fullness and in every way as perfectly as He ever gave to that woman. So you see, the most benighted of you, the most insignificant of you all might have got all this from God before he leaves this church today, in fact before I have finished preaching, in very truth as surely as God is God and I am a man. And so I say, do not be afraid, this joy is not far from you, if only you will seek it wisely. Now I return to our Lord's words: "Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord, because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my goods." Now note this important word: "over all my goods." What is meant by the Lord's goods?[6] I means goodness as it is scattered and divided up in all things, or in all creatures that are good with His goodness, in heaven or on earth. That is what is meant by the Lord's goods, for none is good, or has goods or goodness save only from Him. Therefore it is all His property,[7] and so is everything that we can say of God Himself or can grasp with the mind or in any way bring to light and prove or show. All that is the Lord's property, and over it all he will set this servant who has been good and faithful over little. But yet over and above this good the Lord is another good,[8] and yet He is the same, a something that is yet neither this nor that nor here nor there. And therefore He said, "Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord: because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my goods."

Now I have told you what the Lord's good means, and why he said, "Enter into the joy of your Lord: I will set you over all my goods," as if to say, 'Have done with all created good, all separate

good, all piecemeal good: above all this I will set you in the uncreated, undivided, and undismembered good that I am myself. He also said, "Enter into the joy of your Lord," just as if he were to say, 'Give up all joy which is partial, which is not of itself that which it is, and enter the undivided joy which is of itself and in itself that which it is — which is none other than the joy of the Lord.'

One word more: what is the joy of the Lord? That is a puzzle: how could one explain or speak of that which none can understand or know? Still — here is a little bit about it. The joy of the Lord is the Lord Himself and no other, and the Lord is living, essential, actual intellect which understands itself and is living itself in itself and is *the same.* (In saying this) I have attributed no mode to Him: I have taken from Him all mode, for He is Himself modeless mode, living and rejoicing in that which He is.[9] You see: *this* is the joy of the Lord and is the Lord Himself, and into this He bade His servant enter, as He Himself said, "Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord: because you have been faithful over small things, I will set you over all my possessions."

That we too may be good and faithful, so that our Lord will invite us too to enter in and dwell with him eternally, and he with us, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. The relation of 'good' to 'goodness' is discussed in the opening part of *The Book of Divine Comfort.*

2. This means not insofar as he is an idea in the mind of God, or else the 'something in the soul' that is uncreated (Q).

3. Quint refers to Sermon 13b: 'you have all truth essentially within you.' Cf. also Luke 17:21: "The kingdom of God is within you."

4. The woman of Samaria, John 4:6ff.

5. *Man* in Middle high German means both 'man' and 'husband.' Quint notes that the 'man in the soul' is for Eckhart usually the intellect, not, as here, the free will, but this interpretation was imposed by his text. Cf. Sermon 29, and Sermon 79.

6. There is a play on words here: *guot* corresponds to both 'good' and 'goods' in English.

7. According to Quint, Eckhart assigns three meanings to 'the Lord's goods': 1. All goodness scattered among creatures; 2. The goodness of God; 3. The Lord Himself in His inmost being, the 'desert of God': cf. also Sermon 78, note 6, and Sermon 92, note 4.

8. I follow Quint's interpretation of a difficult passage.

9. Or 'rejoices that He is.' Again I follow Quint.

SERMON FIFTY-NINE

(Pf 59, Q 39, QT 25)

JUSTUS IN PERPETUUM VIVET ET APUD DOMINUM EST MERCES EIUS
(Wisdom 5:16)

We read a text in the epistle today, where the wise man says, "The just man lives in eternity." I have sometimes said what a just man is, but now I speak differently and in another sense. That man is just who is informed with and transformed into justice. The just man lives in God and God in him, for God is born in the just man and the just man in God: for at every virtuous act of the just man God is born and is delighted at every virtue of the just man, and not only at every virtue, but at the just man's every work, however small it be, that is performed by the just man in justice; at that God is gladdened, gladdened through and through, for in God's ground[1] there is nothing that is not thrilled through and through with joy.[2] This is to be believed by the vulgar and known by the illumined.

The just man seeks nothing in his works: for those who seek anything in their works or work for any 'why' are thralls and hirelings. Therefore, if you would be informed with and transformed into justice,[3] have no ulterior purpose in your work, allow no 'why' to take shape in you, as regards either time or eternity, reward or blessedness, or this or that: for in truth *such* works are all dead.[4] Indeed, even if you create an image of God in your mind the works you do with that in view are all dead and your good works are ruined. And not only do you spoil your good works, you commit sin as well, for you act like a gardener who was to plant a garden, who should first root out the trees and then expect to be paid for it. In this way you ruin good works. And so, if you would live and have your works live, you must be dead to all things and reduced to naught.[5] It is the property of creatures to make something from something, but it

belongs to God to make something from nothing: therefore, if God is to make anything in you or with you, you must first be reduced to nothing. Therefore enter into your own ground and work *there:* the works that you perform *there* are all living.[6] Therefore he says, "The just man lives," for he works because he is just, and his works are living. Now it says, "His reward is with the Lord." Just a little on this: when he says, "with," that means that the just man's reward is where God Himself is, for the just man's blessedness and God's blessedness are one blessedness, since the just man is in bliss where God is in bliss. St. John says, "The word was with God" (John 1:1). He says *with,* and the just man is like God because God *is* justice. Therefore: whoever is in justice is in God and is God.

Now let us speak further about the word *just.* He does not say 'the just man' or 'the just angel,' he simply says, "the just." The Father begets His Son the just and the just His Son: for every virtue of the just, and every act performed by the virtue of the just is nothing but the Son begotten by the Father. And so the Father never rests: He is ever urging and striving to beget His Son in me, just as scripture says, "I will not hold my peace for Sion's sake, and for Jerusalem I will not rest till the just is revealed and shines forth like lightning" (Isa. 62:1). Sion denotes the height of life,[7] and Jerusalem is the height of peace. Not for the most exalted life or for the deepest peace will God desist from urging and striving continually until the just is revealed. In the just, nothing should work but God alone. For if it should happen that any outward thing prompts you to work, then truly all your works are dead: and if it happens that *God* prompts you from without to work, in truth, all *those* works are dead. For your works to live, God must prompt you in the inmost part of your soul, if they are to live, for there your life is, and there alone you are living. I say further: if it seems to you that one virtue is greater than another, and if you regard it more than another, then you do not love it as it is in justice, and God does not yet work in you. For as long as a man regards or loves one virtue more, he does not love or accept it as it is in justice, and he is not yet just. For the just man accepts and practices all virtues in justice, for they are justice itself.

One scripture says: "Before the created world, I *am*" (Sir. 24:14). He says, "Before, I am." This means that when man is in eternity, exalted above time, he does one work with God. Some people ask

how a man can do the work that God was doing a thousand years ago and will be doing a thousand years hence. They cannot understand it. In eternity there is no before and after. Therefore, what God did a thousand years ago, and what he does in a thousand years, and does now, is all but a single act. Therefore: a man who is in eternity, exalted above time, performs with God whatever God performs in the last thousand years or the next thousand years. This is to be known by the wise and believed by the vulgar. St. Paul said, "We are eternally chosen in the Son."[8] Therefore we should never rest until we become that which we have been in him eternally. For the Father is ever urging and striving that we may be born in the Son and become the same as the Son is.[9] The Father is begetting His Son, and in the begetting the Father finds such peace and joy that His entire nature is expended in it. For all that is in God moves Him to beget: His whole ground, His essence, and His being move the Father to generation.[10]

Sometimes a light is apparent to the soul and a man imagines it is the Son, but it is only a light.[11] For when the Son reveals himself within the soul the love of the Holy Ghost is revealed at the same time. Therefore I say, it is the nature of the Father to give birth to His Son, and it is the Son's nature for me to be begotten in him and according to his nature; it is the nature of the Holy Ghost that I should be burnt up therein and melted and reduced till I become nothing but love. One who is thus *in* love and is all love, will think God loves him alone, and he knows of none who loved, or was loved by any but Him alone.

Some teachers hold that the spirit finds its beatitude in love. Some make him find it in beholding God. But I say he does not find it in love, or in gnosis, or in vision.[12] But, it may be asked, has the spirit in eternal life no vision of God? Yes and no. Once born, he neither sees nor pays heed to God: but at the moment of birth, *then* he has a vision of God.[13] The spirit is in bliss then because it has been born, and not at being born, for then it lives as the Father lives, that is in the simple and naked essence. Therefore turn away from all things and realize yourself in your naked essence, for whatever is outside of essence is accident and the accidental makes for why.

That we may live in the eternal, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. The secret depths of God's being.
2. Eckhart has *durchkützelt* 'thoroughly tickled.' Regretfully I rejected this as a translation, as I do not think there is identity of tone, though Eckhart's expression does indicate a touch of playfulness.
3. Or 'righteousness': but the feeling-tone of this word today is perhaps inappropriate.
4. Cf. Sermons 11, 43, and 47.
5. Cf. Sermon 57.
6. Cf. Sermon 13b.
7. Some texts add 'the contemplative life': cf. Sermon 24a.
8. Cf. Eph. 1:4 (Q).
9. Cf. Sermon 35.
10. I follow Quint in omitting a passage which he considers an interpolation.
11. Quint thinks this is the light mentioned in Sermon 16 (note 2).
12. Cf. Sermon 41. In the great debate on the primacy of will (love) or intellect, Eckhart naturally supported the Dominican position in favor of the intellect. He now takes the question to a higher level.
13. This is of course the mystical birth previously mentioned. When this has been achieved, God is no longer an object of contemplation (Q).

SERMON SIXTY

(Pf 60, Q 48, QT 34)[1]

A master says, 'All like things love and unite with one another, and all unlike things shun and hate one another.'[2] Now according to one master[3] no two things are so unlike as heaven and earth. Earth realized that it was by nature alien and unlike to heaven. And so it fled from heaven to the lowest place, and that is why the earth remains motionless,[4] so as not to approach near to heaven. And the celestial nature grew aware that the earth had fled and occupied the lowest place. And that is how the heavens came to empty themselves out in fruitful fashion over the earth, indeed the masters declare that the broad expanse of heaven does not withhold so much as the breadth of a needle point, but brings itself forth totally as fruitfulness on earth. Therefore it is said that the earth is the most fruitful creature among all temporal things.

I say the same thing about the man who has brought himself to naught in himself and in God and in all creatures: that man has assumed the lowest place, and God is bound to empty Himself totally into him, or He would not be God. I declare in all truth, by the eternal and everlasting truth, that into any man who has abandoned self right down to his ground, God must pour out His whole self in all His might, so utterly that neither of His life, nor His being, nor His nature, nor of His entire Godhead does He keep anything back, but must pour out the whole of it as fruitfulness into that man who in abandonment to God has assumed the lowest place.

As I was coming here today I considered how to preach to you clearly so that you would understand me properly, and I hit on an analogy. If you can understand it, you will be able to grasp my meaning and get to the bottom of all that I have ever preached about. The analogy is with my eye and wood. When my eye is open it is an eye:

when it is shut it is still the same eye; and the wood is neither more nor less by reason of my seeing it. Now mark me well: Suppose my eye, being one and single in itself, falls on the wood with vision, then though each thing stays as it is, yet in the very act of seeing they are so much at one that we can really say 'eye-wood,' and the wood *is* my eye. Now, if the wood were free from matter and wholly immaterial as my eyesight is, then we could truly say that in the act of seeing the wood and my eye were of one essence. If this is true of material things, it is all the more true of spiritual. You should bear in mind that my eye is far more at one with that of some sheep away across the sea, that I have never seen, than it is at one with my ear with which it has unity of being.[5] The sheep's eye has the same function as my eye: and therefore I impute to them[6] more unity of action than I do to my eyes and ears, for they have their different functions.

I have sometimes spoken of a light that is in the soul, which is uncreated and uncreatable.[7] I continually touch on this light in my sermons: it is the light which lays straight hold of God, unveiled and bare, as He is in Himself, that is, it catches Him in the act of begetting. So I can truly say that this light is far more at one with God than it is with any of the powers with which it has unity of being. For you should know, this light is no nobler in my soul's essence than the humblest, or the grossest of my powers, such as hearing or sight or any other power which is subject to hunger or thirst, cold or heat, and that is because being is indivisible. And so, if we consider the powers of the soul in their being, they are all one and equally noble: but if we take them in their functions, one is much higher and nobler than the other.

Therefore I say, if a man turns away from self and from all created things, then — to the extent that you do this[8] — you will attain to oneness and blessedness in your soul's spark,[9] which time and place never touched. This spark is opposed to all creatures: it wants nothing but God, naked, just as He is. It is not satisfied with the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost, or all three Persons so far as they preserve their several properties. I declare in truth, this light would not be satisfied with the unity of the whole fertility of the divine nature. In fact I will say still more, which sounds even stranger: I declare in all truth, by the eternal and everlasting truth, that this light is not content with the simple changeless divine being which neither gives nor takes:

rather it seeks to know whence *this* being comes, it wants to get into its simple ground, into the silent desert into which no distinction ever peeped, of Father, Son or Holy Ghost. In the inmost part, where none is at home, *there* that light finds satisfaction, and there it is more one than it is in itself: for this ground is an impartible stillness, motionless in itself, and by this immobility all things are moved,[10] and all those receive life that live of themselves, being endowed with reason.

That we may thus live rationally, may the eternal truth of which I have spoken help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Like Sermon 55, this has no text.
2. Some MSS open: 'Meister Eckhart says,' which must be secondary. The 'master' quoted may be St. Thomas, or possibly Empedocles as cited by Albertus Magnus (Q).
3. Probably Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 2.27 (Q).
4. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* III Suppl., q. 91, a. 2 (Q).
5. This touches on the problem of universals, but Eckhart is not concerned with this.
6. Quint conjectures *in* ('to them') for *im* ('to it') of the MSS, because Eckhart is referring to both the sheep's eyes and his own.
7. Cf. Sermon 57, note 7
8. Change of subject as in the original.
9. Cf. Sermon 32, also Sermon 14.
10. Aristotle's 'unmoved mover.' Sermon 51, note 16.

SERMON SIXTY-ONE

(Pf 61)[1]

EGREDIETUR VIRGA DE RADICE JESSE ET FLOS DE RADICE EIUS
ASCENDET ET REQUIESCET SUPER EUM SPIRITUS DOMINI
(Isaiah 11:1–2)

We read today in the Mass that out of the root of Jesse there shall come forth a rod, and out of the rod shall come forth a flower, and on the flower the spirit of the Lord shall rest and repose. Jesse means a brand which is burning: it signifies love in its first purity, where it is not yet called love, where no nature can afford it, where nothing adventitious exists. And in this ground, where love is so pure that it has no nature, in the ground where it is so pure, *there* begins to grow forth, right there in the inmost part, out of the root, there a flower shall grow. Whatever grows forth from there must have three properties: first, it must have oneness with what it shoots from, second, it must be close to the same species, and thirdly, it must be free of additions, simply an emanation. Thus the Son goes forth from the Father, being another Person with the Father and yet the same in the Father as to essence. Therefore he says, "Out of the root shall come forth a rod, and out of the rod a flower." What I love must be maintained by a heavenly power in me, for likeness all ends in *one,* and sameness must be in the ground, thus whatever thing grows out of another is in all respects of the same species. If an apple is grafted on a pear-tree, the fruit tastes of both. But here it may not be so: this must taste of *one* alone, which is not in it and yet *is* in it. It could never be that it[2] could burst forth were it not first within in pure abstraction, in transcendent essence. The wine is in the vine: it is not in it and yet it is.

I say concerning God's freedom, that He can afford no nature other than pure being. The first eruption is the Son from the Father: the Son

is other than the Father but is yet one power with the Father, and from these two there blossoms forth the Holy Ghost. Our masters declare that the sun draws the flowers out of the roots through the stem, almost timelessly and too subtly for any eye to follow. The soul, which has no nature in her ground, in that ground of love which is not yet called love,[3] — this soul must emerge from her nature, and then God lies in wait for her to lead her home into Himself. Whatever is borne into this essence comes almost to share that essence.[4] When the bride has come home, God takes her and works with all the power He has in His ground, in the ground of the soul, in that inmost part where nothing is that does not work all together. The tree of the Godhead blossoms in this ground, and the Holy Ghost sprouts from its root. The flower that blossoms, delight, is the Holy Ghost. The soul, too, blossoms forth out of the Holy Ghost, who is the flower of the soul. And on that flower there shall repose the spirit of the Lord. The Father and the Son rest on the Spirit, and the Spirit reposes on them as on its cause. It might well rest on me, but if it should repose on me, I in turn would have to rest on it. What is rest? St. Augustine says rest is complete lack of motion and deprivation of its very nature. One Master says God's characteristic is immutability.[5] Mutability means all creatures. Man should transcend all motion. *Jesse* means a fire and a burning, and signifies the ground of divine love. Out of the ground the rod grows, which is the soul in her purest and highest. It shoots out of this primal ground at the breaking forth of the Son from the Father. Upon the rod there opens a flower; the flower is the Holy Ghost who will rest and repose there. Let us now pray to our dear Lord that we may so rest in Him, and He in us, as will redound to His praise and glory. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Not in Quint's edition. The translation is based on Pfeiffer's text as amended by Quint, 1932.
2. Love, i.e., the *one* just mentioned.
3. Pure love without attachment.
4. The 'almost' guards against possible charges of pantheism.
5. Cf. Sermon 60, note 10.

SERMON SIXTY-TWO

(Pf 62, Q 82, QT 54)

QUIS, PUTAS, PUER ISTE ERIT? ETENIM MANUS DOMINI CUM IPSO EST
(Luke 1:66)[1]

"What wonders shall come of this child? The hand of God is with him."[2] To this text, three things are to be noted. The first is the nobility of the master craftsman, when it says, "The hand of God is with him." The hand of God means the Holy Ghost, for two reasons. First, because work is done with the hand. Secondly, because it is one with the body and the arm: for all works that a man performs with his hand start in the heart, pass through the limbs and are carried out by the hand. And so we can see in these words a reference to the Holy Trinity. The Father is denoted by the heart and the body. Just as the essence of the soul is chiefly in the heart (for although she is equally perfect in all members, and as perfect in the least as in the greatest, still her essence and the mainspring of her activities is chiefly in the heart), so the Father is the source and mainspring of all divine activity. And the Son is represented by the arm, as it says in the Magnificat: "He has brought forth strength with His arm" (Luke 1:51). And thus divine power proceeds from the body and from the arm into the hand, by which is signified the Holy Ghost. For just as the soul is bound up with the body and material things, so whatever spiritual things are to be shown to her must be bound up in material things before she can recognize them. Therefore the Holy Ghost has to be denoted by the hand which performed this work in this child.

The first thing[3] to note is the state of that man in whom God performs his work. When it says, "a child," this means pure joy[4] which is unblemished. That is how the soul must be, pure and clean, if the Holy Ghost is to work in her. A wise master says, 'The eternal wisdom dwells in Sion, and her rest is in that pure city.' 'Sion' means a

height or a watch-tower.[5] Thus the soul must be elevated above all transitory things. Again, she must be withdrawn from mortal, impermanent things. And thirdly, she must be on the watch for coming hindrances.

The second point:[6] We should observe the working of the Holy Ghost in the soul. No one can work joyfully unless he finds likeness with himself in what he is working at. If I were to lead a man, unless he found likeness to me in himself, he would never follow willingly: for no motion or work is ever carried out joyfully without likeness. So it is with all who follow God: for all people *must* follow God whether they want to or not. If they follow Him willingly, it is a joy to them: but if they follow Him unwillingly, it is painful to them and brings nothing but distress. And so, because of the favor and love that He has for the soul, God has given her a divine light from the moment of her creation, so that He may work with joy in His own image.

No creature can do more than in it lies. Therefore the soul cannot surpass herself with the light that God has given her, for it is her own, presented to her by God as a bridal gift, into the soul's highest power.[7] Although this light is in the likeness of God, yet it is created by God, for the Creator is one and the light is another, and is creature: for before God created any creatures, God was there but no light and no darkness. Therefore God comes with love to the soul, in order that the soul may arise and surpass herself. Now love cannot be without finding its like or making its like. To the extent that God finds His likeness in the soul, to that extent God works in love transcending the soul. For since God is infinite, so too love must be infinite. If a man were to live a thousand years, or longer, he could increase in love, as we can see from the example of fire: as long as there is wood, the fire will burn. According to the size of the fire and the strength of the wind, so is the size of the flame. So we take love as the fire and the Holy Ghost as the wind, meaning the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul. The greater the love is that is in the soul, and the more the Holy Ghost breathes on it, the more perfect the flame: but this does not happen all at once, but gradually with the growth of the soul. For if a man were to catch fire too suddenly, that would not be a good thing. Therefore the Holy Ghost breathes gradually on the flame, so that a man, even if he were to live for a thousand years, would still increase in love.

The third point to note[8] is the wondrous work that God performs in the soul, as it says, "What wonders shall come of this child?" It is needful that every tool is adequate to the work the craftsman performs, if that work is to be perfect: for man is God's instrument, and the tool works according to the nobility of the craftsman. Therefore it is not sufficient for the soul that the Holy Ghost works in her, because he is not of her nature. And as I have often said, he has given her a divine light which is like him and as it were of his nature, and he has given it to the soul so much for her own that it is a part of the soul, so that he may work joyfully within her: just as we can see in the case of light, that it works according to the quality of the material it falls on. In wood it performs its own work, creating heat and fire; in trees and moist things it produces growth, not heat or its own work, but it makes them green and bear fruit. In living creatures it produces life from dead matter, as when a sheep eats grass and that is turned into an eye or an ear. But in man it promotes blessedness.[9] This comes from God's grace which raises the soul up to God and unites her with Him and makes her God-conformed.[10] If the soul is to be divine, she must be raised up. If a man were to reach to the top of a tower, he would have to be raised as high as the tower: in the same way grace has to raise the soul up to God. The work of grace is to draw and draw completely, and whoever does not follow will come to grief. But still the soul is not satisfied with the work of grace, because even grace is a creature: she must come to a place where God works in His own nature, where the craftsman works according to the nobility of the instrument, and that means in His own nature, where the work is as noble as the craftsman, and He who is poured out and that which receives the outflowing are all one. St. Dionysius[11] says that the highest things flow into the lowest and the lowest into the highest, and they are united in the highest. Thus the soul is united and enclosed in God, and there grace slips from her: she works no longer by grace, but divinely in God. Then the soul becomes wondrously enchanted and loses herself, just as if you were to pour a drop of water into a butt of wine, so that she does not know herself and imagines she is God. I will tell you a story about this. A cardinal asked St. Bernard, 'Why should I love God and in what manner?' St. Bernard replied, 'I will tell you. God is the reason why we should love Him. The mode is without mode.'[12] For God is nothing:[13] not in the sense of having no

being. He is neither *this* nor *that* that one can speak of: He is being above all being. He is beingless being.[14] Therefore the mode of loving Him must be modeless. He is beyond all speech. That we may come to this perfect love, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24). Quint's version is from a much better and more complete text than that used by Pfeiffer and translated by Miss Evans.
2. Eckhart's translation is a little free, as so often.
3. The first of the three points mentioned at the beginning.
4. I follow Pfeiffer's text here in reading *lust:* Quint and the MSS he follows have *luft* 'air,' which seems to me to make little sense. The long *s* in the MSS is often confused with *f*. I take the meaning to be as in Sermon 61, note 3: childlike innocence.
5. Based on Isidore, *Etymologiae* 15.1 (Q). Cf. Sermon 24a.
6. Of the three points mentioned at the beginning.
7. This is the famous 'spark in the soul' which caused Eckhart so much trouble. Here he clearly says that it is *created.* Cf. Sermon 8. The whole formulation here seems to be carefully made to avoid any suspicion of unorthodoxy. This suggests that the sermon is a late one, perhaps delivered in Cologne when Eckhart had realized the need for caution.
8. Of the three points mentioned at the beginning.
9. As Quint points out, Eckhart is talking about different kinds of light here: the natural light of the sun for all subhuman things, but the light of grace in man.
10. *Got var,* lit. 'God-colored.'
11. Cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De caelesti hierarchia* 7.3 (Q).
12. St. Bernard de Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo,* 1.1 (Q).
13. Cf. Sermons 19, 47, and 67.
14. *Weselôs,* or according to another reading *wîselôos* 'modeless.'

SERMON SIXTY-THREE

(Pf 63, Q 40)

MANETE IN ME
(John 15:4)

BEATUS VIR QUI IN SAPIENTIA MORABITUR
(Sirach 14:22)[1]

"Abide in me," says our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and the other text from the epistle says, "Blessed is the man that dwells in wisdom." Both mean exactly the same thing: Christ's words, "Abide in me," and the words of the epistle, "Blessed is the man that dwells in wisdom."

Mark then what is required of a man to dwell in Him, that is, in God. He requires three things. First, he must have renounced himself and all things, and not remain attached to anything that is grasped by the senses within, not abiding in any creature existing in time or in eternity. Secondly, he must not love *this* good or *that* good, but he should love the good from which all goodness flows, for nothing is delightful or desirable except insofar as God is in it. Therefore we ought to love good things no more than as we love God *in* them; so too it is not right to love God for His heaven's sake nor for the sake of anything at all, but we should love Him for the goodness that He is in Himself. For whoever loves Him for anything else does not abide in Him, but abides in the thing he is loving Him for. If, therefore, you want to abide in Him, you must love Him for nothing but Himself. Thirdly, he must take God not as being good or just, but he must apprehend Him in the pure and naked substance where He is nakedly apprehending Himself. For goodness and justice are God's garment which covers Him. Therefore, strip God of all His clothing — seize

Him naked in his robing room, where He is uncovered and bare in Himself. *Then* you will "abide in Him."

Whoever abides in Him thus, has five things. The first is that between him and God there is no difference, they are one. Angels are many beyond number: they have no particular number; they are unnumbered because of their pure simplicity.[2] The three Persons in God are three not in number but in (transcendent) multiplicity.[3] But between man and God there is not only no difference, there is no multiplicity, only one. The second is that he gains his blessedness in that same utter purity where God gets it and maintains Himself. The third is that he has one knowing with God's knowing, and one action with God's action, and one awareness with God's awareness. The fourth is that God is all the time being born in that man. How is God all the time born in that man? Pay attention: Whenever that man lays bare and discloses the divine image which God has created in him by nature, then God's image in him stands revealed. Birth must here be understood in the sense of revelation of God, for when the Son is said to be born of the Father, that means that the Father paternally reveals to him His mysteries. Accordingly, the more, and the more clearly, God's image is revealed in a man, the more evidently God is born in him. Thus when it is said that God is all the time being born in him, it is to be understood that the Father lays bare the image and shines forth in him. The fifth thing is that this man is all the time being born in God. How can a man be always being born in God? Take note: As this image is revealed in a man, so that man grows in likeness to God, for in that image the man is like the image of God as He is according to His naked essence. And the more a man lays himself bare, the more like he becomes to God, and the more like he becomes to God, the more he is made one with Him. Thus a man's being ever born in God is to be understood to mean that that man is refulgent with his image in God's image, which is God in his bare essence, with which that man is one. Thus this oneness of man and God is to be understood as a likeness of image, for man is Godlike in his image. So, when we talk of man being one with God, and being God according to that unity, we refer to that part of the image in which he is Godlike, and not to his created nature. For when we consider him as God, we do not regard him according to creaturehood: in taking him as God, we do not deny his creaturehood in the sense

that such a denial would imply a negation of his creaturehood, but it implies an assertion about God, by denying it of God.[4] Thus Christ is God and man: when we consider his humanity, in so doing we deny his Godhead; not that we really deny his Godhead, but we deny it in this case.[5] This is how we should understand St. Augustine's words:[6] 'What a man loves, a man is. If he loves a stone, he is a stone, if he loves a man, he is a man. If he loves God — now I dare say no more: if I were to say that then he is God, you might stone me. But I refer you to scripture.' And therefore, when a man accommodates himself barely to God, with love, he is un-formed, then in-formed and transformed in the divine uniformity wherein he is one with God. All this man gets by abiding within. Now observe the fruits that that man brings forth: when he is one with God he brings forth all creatures with God, bestowing bliss on all creatures by virtue of being one with Him.

Now the other text, from the epistle, says, "Blessed is the man that dwells in wisdom." He says, "in wisdom." *Wisdom* is a maternal name,[7] for a maternal name has the property of passivity, and in God we posit both activity and passivity: for the Father is active and the Son is passive, this being the characteristic of being born. Since then the Son is the eternal born Wisdom, in which all things are distinguished, therefore it is said, "Blessed is the man that dwells in wisdom."

Now he says, "Blessed is the man." I have often said that there are two powers in the soul: one is the man and the other is the woman.[8] Now he says, "Blessed is the man." The power of the soul we call 'man' is the soul's highest power, wherein God is a naked light: for nothing other than God enters into this power, and this power is always in God. And so, if a man were to take all things in this power, he would not take them as being things, but as being in God. Therefore we ought to abide all the time in this power, because in this power all things are the same. Thus a man would dwell in all things alike and take them according as they are the same in God, and that man would then have all things. He would have discarded the grossest part of all things and would gain them in attractive and desirable form. That is how he has them there,[9] for God in His own nature is unable to hold back, but must give all that He ever created, and Himself. Therefore

that man is blessed who continually dwells in this power, for he is ever abiding in God.

That we may at all times abide in God, may our dear Lord Jesus Christ help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Joseph Koch has shown that these two texts are combined in the old Dominican missal for St. Vitalis's day (April 28). The texts are supplied by Pfeiffer in his edition.

2. Cf. Sermon 29. There is much curious lore on angels: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* Ia, qq. 50–54. On their numbers cf. Dan. 7:10.

3. St. Thomas makes this subtle distinction concerning transcendent multiplicity. See *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 30, a. 3, ad 2 (Q).

4. This awkward sentence causes difficulty. Quint interprets it to mean that when we take man as God, we do not deny man's creaturehood, but we deny that *this* feature also applies to God. The following passage about Christ helps to make this clear.

5. Or, as Miss Evans translates more freely, 'we simply ignore it for the nonce.'

6. Augustine, *In ep. Johannis ad Parthos,* tr. 2, n. 14 (Q). See Sermon 29.

7. In his commentary on the Book of Wisdom (*LW* II, 458), Eckhart discusses Wisd. 7:12: *[sapientia] horum (=bonorum) omnium mater est* ('Wisdom is the mother of all these good things') (Q). Miss Evans says, 'wisdom being a feminine noun.'

8. Cf. Sermon 29, and Sermon 58, note 5

9. In that power of the soul (the 'man').

SERMON SIXTY-FOUR

(Pf 64, Q 81)[1]

FLUMINIS IMPETUS LAETIFICAT CIVITATEM DEI:
SANCTIFICAVIT TABERNACULUM SUUM ALTISSIMUS
(Psalm 45:5)

"The sudden or swift river has gladdened the city of God." In this text we must note three things: First, "the swift stream" of God; second, "the city" which it serves; third, the benefit it brings.

St. John says of all who have faith — which is alive through divine love and proved by good works — "from all of them shall flow the living waters."[2] He refers with these words to the Holy Ghost; and the prophet[3] is astonished and does not know how to name the Holy Ghost from his swift and wondrous work. And so he speaks of a "rushing," meaning his[4] rapid gushing forth, for he pours himself into the soul in perfect measure, as she has broken through in humility and expanded her receptivity. I am sure of this: if my soul were as prepared, and if God could find as much room therein as in the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, He would fill her as perfectly with "this flood": for the Holy Ghost cannot hold back, but *must* flow in everywhere where he finds room, and to the extent that he finds room.

Secondly we must consider what this "city"[5] is: spiritually, it signifies the soul. A city means *civium unitas*:[6] that is to say, a city which is enclosed without and united within. And so must the soul be into which God flows: she must be protected from outward perils, and with her powers collected within. If I look a man in the eye, I see my image there, but really it is more in the air than in the eye. It could never enter the eye unless it were first in the air, and yet it cannot be seen in the air. It is because the air is tenuous and not drawn together in a compact mass that no image can appear in it: we can see this with the rainbow, for when the air is thick, the sun's image

appears in the rainbow in various colors. If I look in a mirror, my face is reflected. That would never happen but for the backing of lead.[7] Likewise the soul must be gathered together and made compact in the highest power she has, if she is to receive the divine stream which will fill her and delight her. St. John says the apostles were gathered together and enclosed when they received the Holy Ghost.[8]

I have sometimes said a beginner in the virtuous life should consider this likeness: a man who wants to make a circle, having once fixed a central point, keeps it steady until the round is completed, and then he gets a good circle. That is to say, let a man learn to have a steadfast heart, and then he will be steadfast in all his works. But whatever great things he may do — if his heart is not steadfast, it is no good. There was a difference of opinion among the masters. Some declared that a good man cannot be moved, and they argued this with many fine words. The others would not have it: they declared that a good man can be moved, and this is supported by holy scripture. He can be moved but not overthrown.[9] Our Lord Jesus Christ was often 'moved,' and so were his saints, but they were not flung from the path of virtue. It is the same as people have found who travel by water: when they want to sleep, they cast the anchor into the water and the ship stops; so they are rocked by the water but not carried away by it. I have said that a perfect man is not easily hindered: but if any things anger him, he is not perfected.

The third thing[10] is the benefit which comes from it.[11] This is, as the prophet says, "Our Lord dwells within her: she shall not be moved."[12] She wants nothing but absolute purity. In order that God's purity may work within her, she cannot tolerate anything mixed, any admixture of creatures. Some things our Lord God performs without co-operation, by Himself, other things with co-operation and assistance. If the grace which is bound in my words[13] could enter without (my) co-operation into your soul, as if it were spoken or wrought by God Himself, your soul would at once be converted and become holy, and could not hold back. But when *I* speak God's word, I am God's co-worker and the grace is mixed with creatureliness, and is not received intact in the soul. But the grace which the Holy Ghost brings to the soul is received without distinction, provided the soul is collected into the single power that knows God. This grace springs up in the heart of the Father and flows into the Son, and in the union

of both it flows out of the wisdom of the Son and pours into the goodness of the Holy Ghost, and is sent with the Holy Ghost into the soul. And this grace is a face of God and is impressed without co-operation in the soul with the Holy Ghost, and forms the soul like God. *This* work God performs alone, without co-operation. No angel is noble enough to aid in this, nor any virtue of man's. Indeed, even if an angel were able by the nobility of his nature to do this, God could not tolerate that any creature should help Him there, because at that moment God has raised the soul so high above her natural habitat that she is out of reach of any creature. In fact, even if an angel *could* do this work and if God were to let him be of service there, the soul would disdain this, for at that moment she rejects anything mixed with creaturehood. Even the very light in which she is atoned would be spurned by the soul if she did not know for certain that she received God in that light, for she rejects everything that is not God in Himself: for God leads His bride right out of all the virtues and nobility of creaturehood into a desert place in Himself, and speaks Himself in her heart, that is, He makes her like Himself in grace. For this exalted act the soul must collect herself and shut herself away. We can show this with the soul as an example: just as the soul truly gives life to the body without the intervention of the heart and all its members (for if she needed the aid of the heart, another heart would be needed to give her life), so God effects without means the pure life of grace and goodness in the soul. Just as all members rejoice in the life of the soul, so all the powers of the soul are filled with delight by this pure infusion of the grace of our Lord. For grace is to God as sunshine to the sun: it is one with Him and it carries the soul into the divine essence and makes her Godlike,[14] that she may taste divine perfection.

To the soul that has received the infusion of divine grace and tasted divine perfection, all that is not God has a bitter, nauseous savor. Secondly, she wants the very highest, so she cannot abide anything above her. In fact I say and dare maintain that she cannot even bear God's being above her. If the soul were drawn up far above all things to the highest state of freedom, so that she touched God in His bare divine nature, she would never rest until God came right into her and drew her into Him. Even though God is far above her in nobility and in

nature, she cannot rest till she has got hold of God as far as it is possible for any creature to grasp Him. Therefore Solomon says stolen waters are sweeter than other waters (Prov. 9:17), meaning that the perfected soul cannot remain bound up in anything, but must burst forth out of and over all things to get to divine freedom, in which she takes great delight. The third thing that the soul desires is the most delightful thing this (divine) nature can perform, which is to effect itself in the soul's highest part and make that part accord with it.[15] The greatest delight in heaven or earth lies in *likeness.* What the divine nature works in the highest part of the soul[16] is likeness. No man can wholly follow God without having God's likeness in him. It is for a man to see whether all the signs of grace he has received are divine, whether they smack of God's nobility, whether they are in common and out-flowing as God is outflowing with His goodness into whatever can receive one whit of it. Even so a man should be outflowing and free with all the gifts he has received from God. St. Paul says, "What is there that we have not received from Him?" (1 Cor. 4:7) If a man has anything that he begrudges another, he is not good. Any man who should begrudge another spiritual things or whatever pertains to this blessedness was never spiritual himself. He must not keep himself to himself: he must make free with himself and pour himself out with everything he has, with body and soul, as far as ever he can, and whatever anyone demands of him.

St. Paul says, "The highest good is that a man establishes his heart in grace" (Heb. 13:9). Three things are to be noted about these words. One is where to begin: in the heart. Next, with what? With grace. And why? In order to remain good. So we begin with the heart. That is the noblest organ in the body, lying in the middle so as to give life to the body: for the bourn of life springs in the heart and its operation is like that of heaven. For the heavens turn round and round without pause. That is why heaven must be round, so as to travel round the faster, since it gives being and life to all creatures. But if it were to stand still for an instant, then if a man took fire in his hand it would not burn him, the rivers would not flow, and all creatures would be without strength. Indeed, without the soul and the heavens all creatures would utterly perish as if they had never been. Heaven has not this power of itself, but from the angel who impels it. I have said before that all images and the likeness of all creatures were first created in the

angels, before being manifested bodily in creatures. For this reason the angel pours out his life and strength into the heavens and drives them round without a pause, and thus, with heaven, effects all life and strength in creatures. Just as I pour out the meaning that I have conceived in my heart, by forming letters with my pen, and send it to another man to read, so that he can know what I want — just so the angel, by spinning the heavens, pours out all the creativity that he has from God, with intent, into creatures.

Heaven too is in the middle, being equally near in all directions.[17] Thus too, a man's heart is nearly round and works continuously: it beats and moves without a pause. But if the heart breaks in two, or stops for a moment, straightway the man is dead. That is why, when a man is in distress, he becomes pale. This is because his nature and his blood withdraw from all the limbs and flow into the heart, to support the heart: for the fount of life is in the heart. That is why the heart is in the middle: so that if anything assails the body, it does not at first approach the heart. And if a man fears he may be struck or stabbed, he holds both hands in front of his heart, because he fears most for this. So it is with grace, which God imprints on the very inmost part of the soul, so that, whatever hindrances may befall a man's body or soul, this grace may be preserved and not lost. Therefore a man should place himself, and whatever is not God's, in front of this grace, so as not to lose the grace on which the life of his eternal bliss depends. As long as a man is so willed that nothing is so dear or so pleasing to him that he would not rather give it up than be bereft of grace — as long as this is the case, that man stands in perfection: for a good will makes a good man, and a perfect will makes a perfect man, and we love all things according to their goodness. Whoever would be the most beloved among all people should be the best among all people. The better he is, the more beloved of God.

May God help us to this truth. Amen.

Notes

1. Quint's text, which I translate, is much better than Pfeiffer's, which is abridged and incomplete.
2. Cf. John 7:38.
3. The Psalmist.
4. The Holy Ghost's.
5. A play on the word *stat,* translated above as 'room.' Middle High German *stat* means both 'room, place' and 'city.' modern German *Stadt* has only the latter meaning.
6. 'Unity of the citizens': *civitas* being taken as an abridgement of *civium unitas,* as in *LW* IV, 313.
7. The glass itself is clear and does not reflect.
8. Cf. Acts 4:31.
9. He can be tempted, but not overcome by sin.
10. Of the three things mentioned at the beginning.
11. The inflowing of the Holy Ghost.
12. A scriptural (?) quotation which even Quint was unable to trace: 'she' is the soul, as explicitly stated in the Pfeiffer/Evans versions.
13. Conveyed through listening to the words of the preacher.
14. Cf. Sermon 62, note 10.
15. Slightly paraphrased to render the sense of the highly compressed original.
16. The well-known 'spark' of the soul.
17. A remarkable statement! In Eckhart's cosmology the earth is the center of the universe. Only one, usually reliable, MS has a different reading, but this does not make much sense. Quint merely notes that the MS is corrupt here. The following words about the heart being nearly round refer back to the previous remark that the heavens are round. For a somewhat similar image, which has also caused trouble, see Sermon 88, note 4.

SERMON SIXTY-FIVE

(Pf 65, Q 6, QT 7)

JUSTI AUTEM IN PERPETUUM VIVENT
ET APUD DOMINUM EST MERCES EORUM
(Wisdom 5:16)[1]

"The just shall live forever and their reward is with God." Now let us look at this statement carefully: it may sound trite and commonplace, but in reality it is a noteworthy and valuable saying.

"The just shall live." Who are the just? One authority[2] says, 'He is just who gives to each what is his': who gives to God His due, and to the saints and angels theirs, and to his fellow man what is his.

God's due is glory. Who are they that glorify God? Those who, having gone out of themselves, seek not their own in anything whatever it may be, whether great or small, who look for nothing under them nor over them nor beside them nor inside them, not clinging to possessions, honors, comfort, pleasure, advantage, nor inwardness nor holiness nor reward nor heaven, having gone out of all this, all that is theirs: from these people God has glory, and they truly glorify God and render Him what is His due.[3]

We ought to give the saints and angels joy. Oh, wonder of wonders! Can a man in this life give joy to those in life eternal? Yes, indeed! Every saint has such great delight and such unspeakable joy at every good deed: they have so much joy at every good desire or intention that no tongue can utter it and no heart can conceive the joy they have. Why is that? Because their love of God is so immeasurably great, they hold Him so dear that His glory is more to them than their blessedness. Not alone the saints and angels, but God Himself is as much pleased at that as if it were His own felicity, and His being depends on it, His satisfaction and delight. So, remember then! Even if we would serve God for no other reason than for the exceeding

joy this gives to those in eternal life, and to God Himself, we should do this gladly and with all diligence. Also, we ought to give help to those in purgatory, and succor and good advice[4] to those still living.

Such a man is just in one way, but in another sense the just are they that take[5] everything alike from God no matter what it is, big or little, nice or nasty, all the same, no less and no more, one thing like another. If you count one thing more than another, that is not the right way. You must go right out of self-will.

I thought of something recently: if God did not want what I wanted, then I should want what He does. Some people want to have their own way in all things: that is bad; there is a fault in that. Those others are a little better who truly want what God wants and don't want anything against His will, but if they should fall sick they would wish it were God's will that they should be better. These people, then, would rather that God willed according to their will than that they should will according to His. This may be condoned, but it is not right. The just have no will at all: whatever God wills, it is all one to them, however great the hardship.

The just are so set on justice that if God were not just they would not care a bean for God: they are so firmly established in justice and so thoroughly self-abandoned that they reck not the pains of hell or the joys of heaven or anything at all. Indeed, were all the pains of those in hell, men or devils, and all the pain that has been suffered or ever will be suffered — were all this to be set beside justice, they would not care a jot, so firmly do they stand by God and justice. To the just man nothing gives more pain or distress than when, counter to justice, he loses his equanimity in all things.[6] How so? If one thing can cheer you and another depress, you are not just:[7] if you are happy at one time you should be happy at all times. If you are happier at one moment than another, that is not just. The true lover of justice is so established in what he loves that it is his very being: nothing can drag him from it, and he cares for nothing else. St. Augustine[8] says, 'Where the soul loves, there she is more truly than where she gives life.'

This sounds trite and commonplace, but few understand it though it is true. Whoever understands about the just man and justice understands all that I am saying.[9]

"The just shall live." There is nothing in all the world so dear and so desirable as life. No life is so miserable or so hard that a man would not want to go on living. One writer says, 'the nearer a thing is to death, the more painful it is.' And yet, however miserable life may be, it wants to live. Why do you eat? Why do you sleep? In order to live. Why do you desire goods or glory? You know that very well. But why do you live? For the sake of living, and yet you don't know why you live. Life is so desirable in itself that we desire it for itself. Those who are in hell in eternal pain would not wish to lose their life, neither devils nor souls, because their life is so noble that it flows direct from God into the soul. And so, because it thus flows immediately from God, they want to live. What is life? God's being is my life. If my life is God's being, then God's essence must be my essence, and God's self-identity my self-identity, neither more nor less. They live eternally "with God," just on a level with God, neither below nor above. They perform all their works with God, and God with them. St. John says, "The Word was with God" (John 1:1). It was altogether equal and side by side with Him, not below or above, but equal. When God made man, he made the woman from the man's side, so that she should be like him. He did not make her from the head or the feet, so that she would be neither woman nor man to him, but so that she should be his peer. And so the just soul will be equal with God and beside God, just equal, neither below nor above.

Who are they who are thus equal? They who are like nothing are Godlike. God's being is like nothing: in it is neither image nor form. To those souls which are thus His like, God gives equally and withholds nothing from them. Whatever the Father has to give He bestows on this soul, that is, if she is no more like to herself than to another, and she should not be closer to herself than to another.[10] Her own honor, her advantage, or anything that is hers, she should no more desire or heed than what is a stranger's. Whatever is anyone's property should not be distant or alien to her, be it bad or good. All the love of this world is based on love of self. If you had abandoned this, you would have abandoned the world.

The Father bears His Son in eternity like Himself. "The Word was with God, and God was the Word" (John 1:1): the same in the same nature. I say more: He has borne him in my soul. Not only is she with Him and He equally with her, but He is in her: the Father gives

birth to His Son in the soul in the very same way as He gives birth to him in eternity, and no differently. He must do it whether He likes it or not. The Father begets His Son unceasingly, and furthermore, I say, He begets me as His Son and the same Son. I say even more: not only does He beget me as His Son, but He begets me as Himself and Himself as me, and me as His being and His nature. In the inmost spring I well up in the Holy Ghost, where there is one life, one being and one work. All that God works is one: therefore He begets me as His Son without any difference.[11] My bodily father is not my real father except for one tiny bit of his nature, and I am distinct from him: he can be dead while I am still alive. Therefore the heavenly Father is truly my Father, for I am His son and get all that I have from Him, and I am that same Son and no other. Since the work the Father performs is one, so He makes me His only-begotten Son with no distinction.

"We are wholly transformed into God and changed" (2 Cor. 3:18). Here is an illustration. It is just the same as when in the sacrament bread is changed into our Lord's body: however many pieces of bread there were, there would still only be one body. In the same way, if all the bread were changed into my finger, there would still only be one finger. But if my finger were changed into the bread, there would be as many of the one as of the other, because whatever is changed into something else becomes one with it. I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me *one and alike* with His being.[12] By the living God it is true that there is no distinction.

The Father begets His Son unceasingly. When the Son is born he takes nothing from the Father, for he has everything, but in being begotten, he receives it from the Father.[13] This implies that we too should not ask anything of God as from a stranger. Our Lord said to his disciples, "I have not called you servants but friends" (John 15:14). To ask of another is to be a servant, and to pay a reward is to be a master. I recently wondered whether I wanted to accept or desire anything of God. I must consider this very carefully, for by accepting anything from God I should be under God as a servant, and He in giving would be like a master. But it should not be thus with us in eternal life.[14]

I once said here, and it is very true, Whatever a man draws into himself or receives from without is wrong. One should not receive

God nor consider Him as outside oneself, but as one's own[15] and as what is within oneself: nor should one work for any 'Why,'[16] neither for God nor one's honor nor for anything at all that is outside of oneself, but only for that which is one's own being and one's own life within oneself.[17] Some simple folk imagine they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. That is not so. God and I are one. Through knowledge I take God into myself, through love I enter into God. Some say blessedness lies not in knowledge but only in the will.[18] They are wrong, for if it lay in the will, it would not be one. The work and the coming to be are one. If the carpenter does not work, the house does not come into existence. When the axe rests, the process stops. God and I are one in this operation: He works, and I come into being. Fire changes into itself what is added to it, which becomes its own nature. The wood does not change the fire into itself, but the fire changes the wood into itself. Thus we are changed into God that we may know Him as He is. St. Paul says, "Then we shall know Him, I Him as He me,"[19] neither less nor more, but just equally. "The just shall live eternally with God, and their reward is with God," that is, equally.[20]

May God help us to love justice for its own sake and God without 'Why.' Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 59.
2. Not 'scripture' (Evans) but the *Institutions* of Justinian (Q).
3. Passage condemned in art. 8 of the bull of 1329.
4. Quint thinks something has dropped out here and supplies 'good advice' from a parallel passage in the Latin sermon Sermon X (*LW* IV, 103).
5. The first part dealt with *giving* justly: this refers to *receiving* (Q).
6. I follow Quint's interpretation: the just man should be even-minded in all circumstances. Cf. Sermon 43.
7. Eckhart says, 'they': the syntax of the original is awkward, but Miss Evans's use of 'you' makes it smoother.
8. Actually St. Bernard, *De praecepto et dispensatione*, 20 (Q).
9. Eckhart discusses this in *The Book of Divine Comfort*, as well as in his reply to the Cologne censors.
10. The problem of translating *glîch* becomes acute here: it means not only 'like' and 'equal,' but it also involves Eckhart's conception of justice outlined above. The 'just' man, as we have seen, does not choose and does not favor himself. Quint also notes the difficulty the Cologne censors, and even Eckhart himself, had in translating *glîch* into Latin (*similis, aequalis, par*).

11. Passage condemned in art. 22 of the bull.

12. Passage condemned in art. 10 of the bull. The difficult expression *ein unglîch* (lit. 'one unlike') in Q is actually *ein und glîch* in the manuscripts. Quint's change is based on the Latin of the bull: *unum, non simile* (Q).

13. The verb used is, as usual in this connection, *gebern* 'give birth': *Der vater gebirt . . . ; dâ der sun geborn ist . . . ; aber dâ er geborn wirt . . .* (lit. 'The Father gives birth . . . ; 'when the Son has been born . . . '; 'but when he is being born . . . ').

14. Passage condemned in art. 9 of the bull.

15. Eckhart confusingly says, 'my own.' But though grammatically wrong this actually makes the sense clearer by avoiding the ambiguity inherent in 'his' (cf. note 17).

16. Cf. Sermon 43, note 6.

17. Here ambiguity has not been avoided, as translations show. Clark translates: 'neither for God nor for His glory,' but refers the remaining pronouns to 'oneself,' as here. Miss Evans seems to relate them all to God. I have followed Quint's interpretation, which is more consistent than Clark's, and most in accord with the general tenor of the sermon.

18. This is the Franciscan doctrine, which Eckhart opposes in many places, e.g., Sermons 30, 31, 35, 41. But cf. Sermon 45, note 9, and Sermon 59, note 12.

19. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:12.

20. I.e., in the spirit of 'justice' defined above (cf. note 6 and note 10).

SERMON SIXTY-SIX

(Pf 83, Q 10, QT 11)

IN DIEBUS SUIS PLACUIT DEO ET INVENTUS EST JUSTUS[1]

The words I have quoted here in Latin are found in the epistle, and may be applied to a holy confessor. In German they mean, "In his days he has been found just within;[2] he has been well pleasing to God in his days." He found justice from within. My body is more in my soul than my soul is in my body.[3] My body and my soul are more in God than they are in themselves, and that is justice: the cause of all things in truth. As St. Augustine says, 'God is nearer to the soul than she is to herself.'[4] The nearness of God and the soul makes no distinction in truth. The same knowing in which God knows Himself is the knowing of every detached spirit, and no other.[5] The soul takes her being immediately from God: therefore God is nearer to the soul than she is to herself, and therefore God is in the ground of the soul with all His Godhead.

One master asks whether the divine light flows into the powers of the soul as purely as it exists in the essence, since the soul has her being immediately from God, and the powers derive without mediation from the essence of the soul. The divine light is too noble to have community with the powers, for whatever moves and is moved is far from God and alien to Him. Therefore, since the powers are moved and give motion, they lose their virginity. The divine light cannot shine into them, but with practice and renunciation they can become receptive. Concerning this, another master says that a light is given to these powers equal to the inner light: it is like the inner light but is not the same. From this light they receive an impression which makes them receptive to the inner light.[6] Another master says that all the powers of the soul that work in the body die with the body, except for knowledge and will: these alone remain to the

soul. But if the powers that work in the body die, they yet remain in the root.[7]

St. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied" (John 14:8). Now no one comes to the Father except through the Son. He who sees the Father sees the Son, and the Holy Ghost is their mutual love. The soul is so simple in herself that she can only take in one image at a time. When she perceives the image of a stone, she cannot perceive the image of an angel, and when she perceives the image of an angel, she perceives no other. And the image she perceives she must love at that moment. If she perceived a thousand angels it would be the same as two angels, and still she would perceive only one.[8] Now a man should be unified in himself. St. Paul says, "Now having become free from your sins, you have become servants of God" (Rom. 6:22). The only-begotten Son has freed us from our sins. But now our Lord says much more exactly than St. Paul, "I have not called you servants: I have called you friends" (John 15:15). "The servant does not know his master's will," but the friend knows all that his friend knows. "All that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you" (John 15:15), and all that my Father knows I know, and all that I know you know, for I and my Father have one spirit. Now the man who knows all that God knows is a God-knowing man.[9]

That man apprehends God in His own selfhood and in His own unity and in His own presence and in His own truth: with that man all is well. But as for the man who has no acquaintance with inward things, he does not know what God is, just as a man who has wine in his cellar: if he has not drunk it or tried it, he does not know that it is good. So it is with people who live in ignorance: they do not know what God is, and yet they think and imagine they are living. That knowing is not from God: a man must have a pure and clear knowledge of divine truth. If a man has right intention in all his works, the beginning of that intention is God and the work of that intention is God Himself and is the pure divine nature, and its outcome is in the divine nature in God Himself.

Now a master[10] says no man is so foolish that he does not desire wisdom. Why, therefore, do we not become wise? Much is required for this. The main thing is that a man must pass through and transcend all things, and the causes of all things, and a man becomes

weary of this, and so man stays in his pettiness. If I am a rich man, that does not make me wise, but if I am informed with the essence of wisdom and its nature, being wisdom itself, then I am a wise man.

I said once in a convent: that is the soul's true image, where nothing is imaged forth or within save what is God Himself.[11] The soul has two eyes, one inward and one outward.[12] The soul's inner eye is that which sees into being, and derives its being without any mediation from God. The soul's outer eye is that which is turned toward all creatures, observing them as images and through the 'powers.'[13] Any man who is turned in on himself, so as to know God by His own taste and in His own ground, that man is made free of all created things, and is enclosed in himself in a very castle of truth.[14] As I once said, our Lord came to his disciples on Easter day behind closed doors.[15] So it is with this man who is freed from all otherness and all createdness: God does not come into this man — He is essentially within him.

"He has been pleasing to God in his days." When we say "in his days," there is more than one day: the soul's day and God's day. The days that are past, six or seven days ago, and the days that were six thousand years ago,[16] are as near to today as the day which was yesterday. Why? Time there is in one present Now. Since the heavens revolve, the first turning of the skies causes day. There, in a moment, the soul's day arises; and in her natural light,[17] in which all things are, that is a complete day: there day and night are one. And there is God's day, in which the soul stands in the day of eternity in an essential Now: and *there* the Father bears His only-begotten Son in a present Now, and the soul is born again back into God. As often as this birth occurs, so often she bears the only-begotten Son. Therefore there are many more sons who are born to virgins than there are born to [married] women,[18] for they give birth beyond time, in eternity. But however many sons the soul bears in eternity, yet there is no more than one son, for it happens beyond time, in the day of eternity.

Now all is well with the man who dwells in virtue, for as I said a week ago, the virtues are in God's heart. It is well with him who lives in virtue and in virtuous deeds. He who seeks not his own in any thing, neither in God nor in creatures, he dwells in God and God dwells in him. That man delights in abandoning all things and spurning them, and he delights in bringing all things to their highest

perfection. St. John says, "*Deus caritas est*": "God is love," and love is God, "and whoever dwells in love, dwells in God and God dwells in him."[19] He who dwells in God is well housed and is an heir of God's, and he in whom God lodges has worthy housemates within. Now one master says that the soul receives a gift from God, whereby the soul is moved to inward things. And one master says that the soul is moved directly by the Holy Ghost, for in that love in which God loves Himself, in that same love He loves me, and the soul loves God in the same love wherein He loves Himself; and if there were not this love wherein God loves the soul, the Holy Ghost would not be. It is the heat, the effulgence of the Holy Ghost, wherein the soul loves God.[20]

Now one evangelist writes: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."[21] And the second evangelist writes, "This is my beloved Son, in whom all things please me."[22] And the third evangelist writes, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I please myself.'[23] Whatever pleases God is pleasing to Him in His only-begotten Son: whatever God loves, He loves in His only-begotten Son. So it behooves a man so to live that he is one with the only-begotten Son and he *is* the only-begotten Son. Between the only-begotten Son and the soul there is no difference. Between the servant and his master there can never be equal love. As long as I am a servant, I am far from the only-begotten Son and unlike him. If I were to see God with my eyes, with the eyes with which I see color, that would be all wrong, being temporal: for whatever is temporal is far from God and foreign to him. When we take time, even if we take the least moment, that is time and stands in itself. As long as a man has time and place, number and quantity and agglomeration, he is in the wrong way and God is remote and strange to him. Therefore our Lord says, "He who would be my disciple, must abandon self":[24] no one can hear my words or my teaching, unless he has abandoned self.[25] All things are nothing in themselves: that is why I have said to you, 'Abandon Nothing,' and take on perfect being, in which the will is just.[26] He who has abandoned all his will savors my teaching and hears my words. Now a master says that all creatures obtain their being immediately from God: it is therefore in their true nature that they love God more than themselves. If the spirit were aware of its pure detachment, it would

be unable to stoop to any thing, but must remain in its bare detachment. Therefore he says, "He has been well pleasing to God in his days."

The soul's day and God's day are different. When the soul is in her natural day, she knows all things above time and place: for her nothing is either far or near. That is why I have said that in this day all things are equal in nobility. I once said that God is creating the world *now,* and in *this* day[27] all things are equal in nobility. If we said that God created the world yesterday or tomorrow, we would be talking nonsense. God creates the world and all things in one present Now: and the time that passed away a thousand years ago is now as present and as near to God as this very instant. If a soul stands in this present Now, the Father bears in her His only-begotten Son, and in that same birth the soul is born back into God. It is one birth: as often as she is born back into God, the Father begets His only-begotten Son in her.

I have spoken of a power in the soul;[28] in her first breaking forth she does not lay hold of God in as far as He is good, she does not lay hold of God in as far as He is truth: delving deeper and ever seeking, she grasps God in His oneness and in his solitude, she seizes Him in His desert and in His proper ground. Therefore she does not rest content but quests on to find out what it is that God is in His Godhead and in the ownness of His own nature. Now it is said that there is no greater union than that of the three Persons being one God. Next to this, it is said, there is no greater union than that of God and the soul. When the soul receives a kiss[29] from the Godhead, then she stands in absolute perfection and bliss: then she is embraced by unity. In the first touch with which God touched the soul and continues to touch her as uncreated and uncreatable, there, through God's touch, the soul is as noble as God Himself is. God touches the soul like Himself. I once preached in Latin (it was on Holy Trinity Day), and I said[30] that the distinction in the Trinity comes from the unity. The unity is the distinction, and the distinction *is* the unity. The greater the distinction, the greater the unity, for that is distinction without distinction. If there were a thousand Persons, there would still not be more than one unity. When God contemplates a creature He gives it its being: when a creature contemplates God, it derives its being from Him. The soul has a rational, noetic being: therefore wherever God is the soul is, and wherever the soul is, God is.

Now he says, "He is found within."[31] That is *within* which dwells in the ground of the soul, in the inmost part of the soul, in the intellect, and it does not go outside and does not look at any other thing. There, all powers of the soul are equally noble:[32] It is in here that he has been "found just." Being just means being equable in joy and in sorrow, and in bitterness and sweetness, so that nothing whatever keeps one from being found one with justice. The just man is one with God. Likeness is loved. Love always loves its like: therefore God loves the just man as like Himself.

May we find ourselves in the day and the time of understanding, in the day of wisdom, in the day of justice and the day of blessedness: so help us the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Notes

1. From the old Dominican missal for St. Germanus's day (July 31). Text adapted there from Sir. 44:16–17 (Q). There is a large gap in Pfeiffer (Evans): see note 16.
2. Eckhart renders *inventus* by *inne vunden* 'found within' to accord with what he wants to say; cf. Sermon 92, note 1, for a similar rendering of Latin *in*.
3. Cf. Sermon 21.
4. *Enarratio in Psalmum 74* (Q).
5. This passage was objected to by the Cologne censors. Note that this knowing is that of the 'detached' soul.
6. The first of these masters is unknown. For the second, Quint refers to Witelo, author of a *Perspectiva* (ca. 1270) and the subject of a study by C. Baeumker (Münster, 1908).
7. This is presumably St. Thomas. Quint cites *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 77, a. 8; and Ia–IIae, q. 67, a. 1 and a. 3.
8. As Quint notes, the soul's problem is especially difficult with angels because they are uncountable: cf. Sermon 63, note 2.
9. Cf. Sermon 7, note 1.
10. Aristotle, *Metaphys.* 1.1.
11. There should be no mental images of anything, within or without.
12. Augustine, *In Johannem,* tr. 13, n. 2. (Q).
13. The 'powers' of the soul.
14. The play on 'beslozzen in einem wâren slozze' cannot be reproduced in English.
15. Cf. Sermon 38 and John 20:19.
16. I.e., probably the time of the Creation, dated by St. Jerome at 5199 B.C.E. The Pfeiffer (Evans) text recommences with this paragraph.
17. The intellect: cf. Sermon 73.
18. Cf. Sermon 8 and Isaiah 54:1.
19. 1 John 4:16.
20. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I d. 17 (Q). Cf. Sermon 42.

21. Mark 1:11.
22. Luke 3:22, inaccurately rendered, as Clark notes.
23. Matt. 3:17.
24. Cf. Luke 9:23.
25. Cf. Sermon 47, note 5.
26. Cf. Sermon 65, note 20.
27. God's day, the eternal Now.
28. Cf. note 17.
29. Cf. Sermon 22, and Sermon 52 note 11.
30. Cf. esp. *LW* IV, 15 (Q).
31. See note 2.
32. Cf. Sermon 42.

SERMON SIXTY-SEVEN

(Pf 84, Q 9, QT 10)

QUASI STELLA MATUTINA IN MEDIO NEBULAE
ET QUASI LUNA PLENA IN DIEBUS SUIS LUCET
ET QUASI SOL REFULGENS, SIC ISTE REFULSIT IN TEMPLO DEI
(Sirach 50:6–7)

"Like a morning star in the midst of the mist, and like a full moon in his days, and like a bright sun, so did he shine in the Temple of God." Now I will take the last words: "the temple of God." What is God, and what is the temple of God?

Twenty-four masters came together[1] to decide what God was. They came at the appointed time and each one brought his answer; I will pick out two or three. One said, 'God is something compared with which all transitory and temporal things are nothing, and all that has being is trifling before Him.' The second said, 'God is something that is necessarily above being, that in itself needs none and that all things need.' The third said, 'God is an intellect that lives solely by understanding itself.'

Passing over the first and the third, I will speak of the second, that God is something that necessarily transcends being. Whatever has being, time, or place, cannot reach God: He is above it. God is in all creatures, insofar as they have being, and yet He is above them. By being in all creatures, He is above them: what is one in many things must be above those things. Some masters would hold that the soul is only in the heart. That is not so, and some great masters have erred in this. The soul is whole and undivided, at once in the foot, in the eyes and in every member. If I take a moment of time, it is neither today nor yesterday. But if I take Now,[2] it includes all time. The now in which God made the world is as close to this time as the now in

which I am just speaking, and the last day is as close to this now as the day that was yesterday.

One master says, 'God is something that works in eternity, undivided in itself, needing no one's help or instrument and remaining in itself, that needs nothing but that all things need, to which all things strive as to their final goal.' This goal has no modes, it outgrows all modes and spreads far and wide. St. Bernard says, 'To love God is a mode without a mode.'[3] A physician who wants to cure a sick man has no 'mode' of health, of just *how* healthy he wants to make the sick man. He has modes of making him well, but as to how well he wants to make him, that is without 'mode' — as well as ever he can! And there is no 'mode' of how much we should love God — as much as ever we can, that is, without 'mode.' Everything works in [its] being, nothing can work except in its being. Fire cannot work except in wood. God works beyond being, in breadth, where He can move, and He works in nonbeing: before there was being, God was working: He wrought being where no being was. Masters of little subtlety say God is pure being. He is as high above being as the highest angel is above a midge. I would be as wrong to call God a being as if I were to call the sun pale or black. God is neither this nor that. And one master says, 'Whoever thinks he has known God, if he has known *anything,* it was not God he knew.' But when I have said God is not a being and is above being, I have not thereby denied Him being: rather I have exalted it in Him. If I get copper in gold, it is there and it is there in a nobler mode than it is in itself. St. Augustine says, 'God is wise without wisdom, good without goodness, powerful without power.'[4]

Junior masters teach in the schools that all beings are divided into ten modes,[5] all of which they deny to God. None of these modes affects God, but He lacks none of them. The first, which has most being, in which all things take their being, is *substance,* and the last, which has least being, is called *relation,* and in God this is equal to the greatest, which has most being: they have a like image in God. In God the images of all things are alike, but they are images of unlike things. The highest angel, the soul, and the midge have an equal image in God. God is not being or goodness. Goodness adheres to being and does not go beyond it: for if there were no being there would be no goodness, and being is even purer than goodness. God is not 'good,'

or 'better' or 'best.' Whoever should say God is good would do Him as much injustice as if he called the sun black.[6]

Yet God says, "None is good but God alone" (Matt. 19:17). What is good? That is good which shares itself. We call him a good man who shares himself and is helpful. Hence a pagan master says a hermit is neither good nor bad in this sense, for he neither shares himself nor is helpful. God shares Himself most of all. No thing shares of its own, for all creatures are nothing in themselves. Whatever they share, they have from another. Nor do they give themselves: the sun gives its radiance but remains where it is, the fire gives its heat but remains fire; but God shares His own, for He is of Himself what He is, and in all the gifts He gives, He first of all gives Himself. He gives Himself, God, as He is, in all His gifts, to the extent that one is able to receive Him. St. James says, "All good gifts descend from above, from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

When we receive God in being, we receive Him in His forecourt, for being is the forecourt of His dwelling. Where is He then in His temple, where He shines in holiness? Intellect is the temple of God. God dwells nowhere more truly than in His temple, in intellect, just as the second[7] master said, that 'God is an intellect that lives solely by understanding itself' — remaining alone in Himself where nothing ever touched Him, for He is there alone in His stillness. God in His own knowing knows Himself in Himself.

Now let us consider the soul, which has a tiny drop of intellect, a little spark, a twig. She has powers which work in the body. One is the power of digestion, which works more by night than by day, whereby man waxes and grows. The soul also has a power in the eye, on account of which the eye is so delicate and sensitive that it does not take in things in their crudity as they are in themselves: they must first be sifted and made fine in the air and in the light — that is because it has the soul within it. There is another power in the soul, with which she remembers. This power is able to picture in itself things which are not present, so that I can recognize things as well as if I saw them with my own eyes, and even better — I can easily think of a rose in winter — and with *this* power the soul works in nonbeing and follows God, who works in nonbeing.

A pagan master says the soul that loves God takes hold of Him under the garment of goodness — all the sayings I have quoted so

far are from pagan masters, who knew only by the light of nature: I have not yet come to the words of the saintly masters, who knew by a much higher light — he says the soul that loves God takes hold of Him under the garment of goodness. Intellect draws this garment of goodness off God and takes Him bare, where He is stripped of goodness and being and of all names.

I stated in the school that intellect was higher than will, but they both belong to this light.[8] Then a master in another school[9] said will was nobler than intellect, for will takes things as they are in themselves, whereas intellect takes things as they are in it. That is true. An eye is nobler in itself than an eye which is painted on a wall. But I say that intellect is nobler than will. Will takes God under the cloak of goodness. Intellect takes God bare, when He is stripped of goodness and being. Goodness is a cloak under which God is hidden, and will takes God from under the cloak of goodness. If there were no goodness in God, my will would not want Him. If anyone wanted to clothe a king on the day of his coronation, and were to clothe him in gray, he would not have clothed him well. I do not become blessed because God is good. I will never entreat God to make me blessed with His goodness, for He could not do so. I am blessed only because God is intellectual and I know it. A master says God's intellect is that on which an angel's essence chiefly depends. The question is, where the essence of an image is most truly to be found: in the mirror or in the object it proceeds from. It is more truly in that which it proceeds from. The image is in me, of me, mine. As long as the mirror is on a level with my face, my image is in it. If the mirror were to fall, the image would be destroyed. An angel's being depends on God's intellect being present to him, in which he knows himself.

"Like the morning star in the midst of the mist." I refer to the little word *quasi,* which means 'as,' and is what the children at school call a 'by-word.'[10] This is what I mean in all my sermons. The truest thing that one can say of God is 'Word' and 'Truth.' God called Himself a Word. St. John said, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1), meaning that beside the Word, man was a 'by-word.' It is like the 'free star,' after which Friday is named, Venus,[11] which has many names. When it precedes the sun and rises before the sun, it is called a morning star; when it follows the sun, so that the sun sets first, it is called the evening star. Sometimes it is above the sun, sometimes

below the sun. More than all [other] stars, it is always equally close to the sun, never going further from it or nearer to it. It signifies the man who aims always to be near God and present to Him, in such a way that nothing can alienate him from God, whether fortune, misfortune, or any creature.

He says also, "Like a full moon in his days." The moon is the ruler of moist nature. The moon is never nearer to the sun than when it is full, and when it first gets its light from the sun. And because it is nearer to the earth than any star, it has two disadvantages: that it is pale and mottled, and that it loses its light. It is never so powerful as when it is furthest from the earth: then it draws the sea out furthest. The more it wanes, the less it can draw the sea out.[12] The more the soul is raised above earthly things, the stronger she is. A man who knew nothing but creatures would never need to attend to any sermons, for every creature is full of God and is a book. But the man who would come to that of which I have been speaking — and this is the whole burden of my discourse — he should be like the morning star: forever present to God and by Him, at an equal distance, and raised above all earthly things, a 'by-word' beside the Word.

There is one uttered word: that is the angel, man, and all creatures. There is another word, thought but unuttered,[13] through which it can come that I imagine something. There is yet another word, unuttered and unthought, which never comes forth but is rather eternally in Him who speaks it: it is evermore in conception in the Father who speaks it, remaining within. Intellect always works inward. The subtler and more spiritual a thing is, the more strongly it works inwardly; and the stronger and finer the intellect is, the more is that which it knows united with it, the more it becomes one with it. It is not thus with physical things: the stronger *they* are, the more they work outward. God's blessedness lies in the inward-working of the intellect in which the Word is immanent. *There* the soul should be a 'by-word' and perform one work with God, to gain her happiness in that self-contained knowledge, there where God is blessed.

That we may ever be a 'by-word' to this Word, may the Father and this same Word and the Holy Ghost help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. *Liber XXIV Philosophorum,* ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. The first and second definitions are not explicit in the *Liber;* the third definition is proposition 20.
2. The eternal Now.
3. *De diligendo Deo* 1.1 (Q).
4. Cf. *De Trinitate* 5.1.
5. Aristotle's ten categories, which were taught by the *baccalaurei.*
6. Condemned in the bull, art. 28.
7. Actually the third (see above). Cf. Sermon 94, note 8.
8. The higher light mentioned above, of revealed truth (available, of course, only to Christians).
9. The Franciscan general Gonsalvus. This is the usual debate between Dominicans and Franciscans.
10. Adverb: *bî-wort=ad-verbium.*
11. Cf. French *vendredi* (*Veneris dies*). This etymology of 'Friday' is wrong: Friday is the day of Fria or Frigg, the goddess of love who was equated with Venus.
12. The opposite is in fact true: the moon's attraction is strongest when it is nearest to the earth.
13. I read *unvürbrâht* with Clark, as against Quint's *vürbrâht* 'uttered.' Miss Evans has silently corrected Pfeiffer's reading, which agrees here with Quint, in the same sense. Both readings have manuscript support, and both make sense, but the one chosen shows a logical progression. The three 'words' are, according to Quint:

> The word objectified outside of God in creatures,
> The word by which man thinks and imagines,
> The Word (Christ, *Logos*) in God.

SERMON SIXTY-EIGHT

(Pf 90, Q 11, QT 12)

IMPLETUM EST TEMPUS ELIZABETH

(Luke 1:57)

"Elizabeth's time was fulfilled and she bore a son. John is his name. Then the people said, What wonders shall come of this child, for God's hand is with him?" One scripture says, "The greatest gift is that we are God's children,"[1] and that He bears His Son in us. The soul should give birth to nothing inside herself, if she wishes to be the child of God in whom God's Son shall be born — in her nothing else should be born. God's chief aim is giving birth. He is never content till He begets His Son in us. And the soul, too, is in no way content until the Son of God is born in her. And from that there springs forth grace. Grace is thereby infused. Grace does not work: its work is its becoming. It flows out of God's essence and flows into the essence of the soul and not into her powers.

When the time was fulfilled, grace was born.[2] When is the fullness of time? When time is no more. If anyone has, in time,[3] set his heart on eternity so that in him all temporal things are dead, *that* is "the fullness of time." I once said, 'He will not always rejoice who rejoices in time.'[4] St. Paul says, "Rejoice in God all the time" (Phil. 4:4). He rejoices all the time who rejoices above time and apart from time. One writer says there are three things that so hinder a man that he cannot know God at all: the first is time, the second corporeality, the third multiplicity.[5] As long as these three things are in me, God is not in me, nor is He properly at work in me. St. Augustine says it comes from the greed of the soul, because she wants to have and hold so much, that she reaches into time and corporeality and multiplicity, thereby losing what she has.[6] For as long as you want more and more, God cannot dwell or work in you. These things must always go out

if God is to go in, unless you have them in a higher and better way, so that multiplicity has become one in you. *Then,* the more there is of multiplicity in you, the more there is of unity, for the one is changed into the other.

I once said, 'Unity unites all multiplicity, but multiplicity does not unite unity.'[7] When we are lifted above all things, and everything within us is raised up, nothing can oppress us. What is beneath me cannot weigh on me. If my attention were fixed on God alone, so that there was nothing above me but God, then nothing whatsoever would bother me, and I should not be easily distressed. St. Augustine says, 'Lord, when I turn to thee, all heaviness, sorrow, and distress is taken from me.'[8] When we have got beyond time and temporal things, then we are free and always happy, and *then* there is the "fullness of time," and then God's Son is born in you.[9] I once said, 'In the fullness of time, God sent His Son.'[10] If anything is born in you except the Son,[11] then you do not have the Holy Ghost, and grace is not at work in you. The origin of the Holy Ghost is the Son. If it were not for the Son there would be no Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost cannot have his outflowing or his blossoming forth anywhere but from the Son. When the Father begets the Son, He gives him all that He has of essence and nature. In that giving the Holy Ghost gushes forth. In this way it is God's intention to give Himself entirely to us. It is like when fire seeks to draw the wood into itself, and to penetrate the wood, finding the wood unlike itself. Therefore it takes time. First it makes it warm, then hot, then it smokes and crackles on account of its unlikeness: and the hotter the wood gets, the more still and quiet it becomes, and the more like the fire, the more peaceful it is, until it becomes all fire. If the fire is to press the wood into itself, all unlikeness must be cast out.

In the truth which is God, if you aim at anything but God alone, or if you seek anything but God, then the work you do is not yours, and it is certainly not God's work. That which tends to your purpose in the work is the work. That which works in me is my father, and I am subject to him. It is impossible in nature that there should be two fathers: there must always be one father in nature. When other things are finished and complete, then this birth takes place. A thing that fills is everywhere in contact with its boundary and nowhere falls short: it has breadth and length, height and depth. If it had height

and no breadth, length or depth, it would not fill. St. Paul says, "Pray that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, the height, the length and the depth" (Eph. 3:18).

These three things stand for three kinds of knowledge.[12] The first is sensible. The eye sees from afar things outside it. The second is rational, and is much higher. The third denotes a noble power of the soul, which is so high and so noble that it takes hold of God in His own being. This power[13] has nothing in common with anything: it makes anything and everything out of nothing. It knows no yesterday or the day before, or tomorrow and the day after, for in eternity there is neither yesterday nor tomorrow, there is a present *now:* that which was a thousand years ago, and that which will occur in a thousand years, is present there, and so is what is beyond the ocean. This power seizes God in His robing room. One scripture says, "In Him, by Him, through Him."[14] "In Him" means in the Father, 'by Him" means in the Son, "through Him" means in the Holy Ghost. St. Augustine says something that sounds quite different from this but is very similar: 'There is no truth but it contains in itself all truth.'[15] This power grasps all things in truth. Nothing is hidden from this power. According to scripture men's heads should be bare, and women's covered.[16] The women are the lower powers, which should be veiled. The man is this power, which should be bare and unveiled.[17]

"What wonders shall come of this child?" Speaking recently to some people who are very likely here too, I said nothing is so hidden but it shall be revealed. All that is naught shall be put away and so covered up that it is never thought of again. We should have no knowledge of nothing, and should have nothing in common with nothing. All creatures are pure nothing.[18] That which is not here or there and is a forgetting of all creatures, embraces fullness of all being. I said then that nothing within us should be hidden: we should reveal it all to God and give it all to Him. Whatever state we find ourselves in, whether in strength or in weakness, in joy or in sorrow, whatever we find ourselves attached to, we must abandon. In truth, if we reveal all to Him, He in return will reveal to us all that He has; in truth He will conceal absolutely nothing of all that He can perform: neither wisdom nor truth nor mystery nor divinity nor anything else. This is in truth as true as that God lives, provided we reveal ourselves. But if

we do not reveal ourselves, then it is no wonder if He reveals nothing to us, for it must be on equal terms: we to Him as He to us.

It is lamentable how some people think themselves very lofty and quite one with God, and yet have not abandoned self, and cling to such petty things in joy and sorrow. They are a long way from where they imagine themselves to be. They have great notions and desires to match. I once said, 'If a man seeks nothing, to whom should he complain if he finds nothing?'[19] He has found what he was seeking. Whoever seeks or aims at *something* is seeking and aiming at nothing, and he who prays for something will get nothing. But he who seeks nothing and aims at nothing but God alone, to him God will reveal and give everything He has concealed in His divine heart, so that it becomes his own just as it is God's own, neither less nor more, provided his aim is God alone, without means. If a sick man does not relish food and wine, is that surprising? For he does not get the true taste of the wine or the food. The tongue has a coating and a cover with which it tastes, and that is bitter through the disorder of the disease. It never reached the place where it could be properly savored; it seems bitter to the sick man, and he is right, because it must be bitter on account of the coating that intervenes. Unless this hindrance is removed, it cannot taste according to its proper flavor. As long as that which intervenes has not been removed in us, we will never get the proper flavor of God, and our life will often be harsh and bitter.[20]

I once said, 'The virgins follow the lamb, wherever he goes, not lagging behind.'[21] Some of these are virgins and some are not virgins, though they think they are. Those who are true virgins follow the lamb wherever he goes, in joy and sorrow. Some follow the lamb as long as he goes in sweetness and ease: but as soon as the going leads to sorrow and discomfort and suffering, they turn back and cease to follow him. Assuredly, they are not virgins, whatever they seem to be. Some say, 'Well now, Lord, I can well come to this in honor, riches, and comfort.' All right, if the lamb has lived that way and has led you that way, I wish you well in following in his footsteps. But the maidens scramble after the lamb through narrow places and broad, wherever he scrambles.

"When the time was fulfilled, grace was born." May all things be fulfilled in us so that God's grace may be born in us, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. 1 John 3:1. This is the text of Sermon 7 (q.v.).
2. *John*='grace.'
3. 'In this world' (Clark).
4. Cf. Sermon 27, on the text referred to.
5. Cf. Sermon 57.
6. Cf. *Conf.* 10.41 (Q).
7. Quint cannot trace the self-quotation. But cf. the opening of Sermon 60 for a similar idea.
8. Cf. *Conf.* 4.15 (Clark).
9. Change of pronoun as in the original.
10. Cf. Sermon 29.
11. This passage was objected to by the Cologne censors. Their Latin text adds the words, which have probably dropped out of the German manuscripts: 'or if there is the image of anything else in you except the Son.'
12. Cf. St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.34 (Q).
13. The highest intellect.
14. Cf. Rom. 11:36.
15. A quotation hard to identify. Quint, following Skutella, compares *De libero arbitrio* 1.2.12; Clark thinks of *Conf.* 10.24, last sentence.
16. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:6–7.
17. Cf. Sermon 16b.
18. Cf. Nos. 7 and 13a. A fuller formulation of this was condemned in the bull of 1329.
19. Cf. Sermon 40.
20. Cf. Sermon 53.
21. Cf. Sermon 24a: 'not lagging behind' here freely renders *âne mitel* 'without "means" or "anything intervening." '

SERMON SIXTY-NINE

(Pf 69, Q 68, QT 36)[1]

SCITOTE, QUIA PROPE EST REGNUM DEI
(Luke 21:31)

Our Lord says, "Know that the kingdom of God is close to you." Indeed, the kingdom of God is within us,[2] and St. Paul says that our salvation is nearer to us than we think.[3] Firstly we should know in what way the kingdom of God is close to us, and secondly, when the kingdom of God is close to us. Accordingly we should know the sense of this. If I were a king and did not know it, I should be no king. But if I had the firm conviction that I was king, and if everybody believed it with me, and if I knew for certain that that was everybody's belief, then I would be king and all the king's treasure would be mine, and I should lack none of it. These things are necessary conditions for my being a king. Failing any one of these three things, I could not be a king. A master declares — and the best of our masters with him — that blessedness depends on our understanding and *knowing*, and we have a compulsive urge to know the truth.[4] I have a power in my soul which is ever receptive to God.[5] I am as certain as that I am a man, that nothing is so close to me as God. God is closer to me than I am to myself: my being depends on God's being near me and present to me. So He is also in a stone or a log of wood, only they do not know it. If the wood knew God and realized how close He is to it as the highest angel does, it would be as blessed as the highest angel. And so man is more blessed than a stone or a piece of wood because he is aware of God and knows how close God is to him. And I am the more blessed, the more I realize this, and I am the less blessed, the less I know this. I am not blessed because God is in me and is near me and because I possess Him, but because I am aware of how close He is to me, and that I *know* God. The prophet says in the Psalter,

"Do not be without understanding like a mule or a horse" (Ps. 31:9). Again, the patriarch Jacob says, "God is in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16). We should *know* God and be aware that God's kingdom is near to hand.

When I think about God's kingdom, I am often dumbfounded at its greatness: for God's kingdom is God Himself in all His richness. It is no small thing, God's kingdom. If one were to consider all possible worlds God might make, that constitutes God's kingdom.[6] Sometimes I declare that in whatever soul God's kingdom dawns, which knows God's kingdom to be near her, is in no need of sermons or teaching:[7] she is instructed by it and assured of eternal life: for she knows and is aware how near God's kingdom is, and she can say with Jacob, '"God is in this place, and I knew it not" — but *now* I know it.'

God is equally near in all creatures. The wise man says in (?) Sirach:[8] God has set his nets and lines out over all creatures, so that we may find Him in any of them: if this net [full of creatures] were to be cast over a man, he could find God there and recognize Him.[9] A master says he knows God aright, who is equally aware of Him in all things. I once said, to serve God in fear is good; to serve Him in love is better; but to be able to grasp the love in fear, that is best.[10] For a man to have a peaceful life is good, but for a man to have a life of pain in patience is better; but that a man should have peace in a life of pain is best.[11] A man may go out into the fields and say his prayers and know God, or he may go to church and know God: but if he is more aware of God because he is in a quiet place, as is usual, that comes from his imperfection and not from God: for God is equally in all things and all places, and is equally ready to give Himself as far as in Him lies: and he knows God rightly who knows God equally [in all things].[12]

St. Bernard says, 'Why is it that my eye sees the sky, and not my foot? That is because my eye is more like the sky than my foot is.' For my soul to see God, she must be of heavenly nature. What is it that makes the soul aware of God, so that she knows how close He is to her? The masters say that heaven permits no alien intrusion: no fierce assault can penetrate to do it outrage. So too the soul that is to know God must be fortified and established, so that nothing can penetrate into her, neither hope nor fear nor joy nor grief nor suffering or anything that could disturb her. Heaven is at all points

equidistant from earth. Likewise the soul should be equally distant from all earthly things, no nearer to the one than to the other. Where the noble soul is, she must maintain an equal distance from all earthly things, from hope, from joy, and from sorrow: whatever it is, she must rise superior to it. Heaven is also pure and clear, free from all impurity but for the moon.[13] The masters call the moon a midwife of heaven, being the lowest thing above the earth.[14] Heaven is untouched by time and place. Corporeal things have no place there, and whoever is able to read the scriptures aright is well aware that heaven contains no place. Nor is it in time: its revolution is incredibly swift. The masters say its revolution is timeless, but from its revolution, time arises. Nothing hinders the soul so much from knowing God as time and place. Time and place are fractions, and God is *one*. Therefore if the soul is to know God, she must know him above time and place: for God is neither this nor that as these manifold things are: God is one. If the soul is to know God, she must not regard anything in time, for as long as the soul is regarding time and place or any such idea, she can never know God. Before the eye can see color, it must be rid of all color. A master says, if the soul is to know God, she must have nothing in common with anything. He who knows God knows that all creatures are nothing. If we compare one creature with another, it may well be fair and have some existence: but if we compare it with God, it is nothing.

Sometimes I say, if the soul is to know God, she must forget herself and lose herself: for if she were aware of herself, she would not be aware of God: but she finds herself again in God. By the act of knowing God, she knows herself and in Him all things from which she has severed herself. To the extent that she has abandoned them, she knows herself totally. If I am truly to know goodness, I must know it there where it is goodness in itself, not where goodness is divided. If I am truly to know being I must know it where being subsists in itself, undivided: that is, in God. There she[15] knows total being. As I have perchance said before, not all humanity exists in one man, for a single man is not all men.[16] But *there* the soul knows all humanity and all things at their highest, for she knows in accordance with being. If a man dwelt in a house that was beautifully adorned, another man who had never been inside it might well speak of it: but he who had been inside would *know*. I am as certain as that I

live and God lives that for a soul to know God, she must know Him above time and place. And the soul that gets so far and has these five things,[17] that soul knows God and knows how near God's kingdom is, that is, God with all His wealth, which is God's kingdom.[18]

There is great discussion among the masters in the schools about how it is possible for the soul to know God. It is not due to God's justice or His severity, that He demands much of man, rather it comes from His great bounty, for He wants the soul to be capacious, so as to hold the largesse He is ready to bestow.

No one should think it is hard to come to this, even though it sounds hard and a great matter. It is true that it is a little difficult in the beginning in becoming detached. But when one has got into it, no life is easier, more delightful or lovelier: and God is at great pains to be always with a man and to lead him inward, if only he is ready to follow. No man ever wanted anything so much as God wants to bring a man to knowledge of Himself. God is always ready, but we are unready. God is near to us, but we are far from Him. God is in, we are out. God is at home (in us), we are abroad. The prophet says, "God leads the just through narrow paths to the highway, that they may come out into the open."[19]

May we all follow His lead and let Him bring us to Himself where we shall truly know Him, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. From the Gospel for the second Sunday in Advent (now used for the first Sunday) (Q). Pfeiffer's text, followed by Miss Evans, is from KT, the Cologne Tauler print of 1543, which contains some sermons by Eckhart. Quint follows Ms. 11 of University College, London, identified by him. It presents a better text than KT.

2. Cf. Luke 17:21.

3. Rom. 13:11.

4. The master may be Aristotle, but the 'best masters' are the Dominicans, who stress the priority of intellect over will. For the latter part of the sentence I follow Quint and the London Ms. as against Pfeiffer-Evans: 'Our awareness of the sovran good, which is God himself.'

5. Doubtless the 'spark in the soul' so often referred to (Q).

6. Following the London Ms. with Quint and omitting the negative in Pfeiffer's text ('these make not up his kingdom,' Evans).

7. Cf. Sermon 67.

8. This is not in Ecclesiasticus: Quint suggests either Hosea 7:12 or Ezekiel 12:13.

9. Following Quint's tentative rendering of an obscure passage found only in the London Ms.

10. Cf. Sermon 75.

11. Cf. Sermons 41, 76.

12. Cf. Sermon 25.

13. This somewhat obscure remark finds some explanation in Latin Sermon XLVIII, 1, n. 500 (*LW* IV, 414): *Nota: caelum (infimum est caelum) lunae; quia propinquat terrae, luna est maculosa. Item ipsa eclipsatur* (Q).

14. 'Midwife' is Quint's conjecture for an obscure word in the London Ms. Isidore in his *Etymologies* 3.71 says that *Luna* is short for *Lucina,* which is another name for Juno, the goddess of childbirth (Q). Cf. *LW* 1, 261.

15. The soul.

16. Cf. Sermon 10.

17. The five points mentioned: (1) the soul must be equally far from all things, (2) she must know nothing of time and place, (3) she must know that all creatures are nothing, (4) she must forget herself, and (5) she will find herself and all things again in God.

18. The play on *rîchtuom,* 'riches,' and *rîche,* 'kingdom,' cannot be reproduced in English.

19. This passage cannot be traced with certainty. Quint's reference to Wisd. 10:10 is somewhat far-fetched. After these words Pfeiffer has 'that is, to the true freedom of the spirit become one spirit with God' (Evans). This is not in the London Ms. and is probably a gloss, and so is omitted by Quint.

SERMON SEVENTY

(Q 67, Jundt 9)

DEUS CARITAS EST

(1 John 4:16)

"God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). God dwells in the soul with everything that He is and all creatures are. Therefore, where the soul is, there God is, for the soul is in God. Therefore the soul is also where God is, unless scripture lies. Where my soul is, there God is, and where God is, there too my soul is: and that is as true as that God is God.

An angel is so noble by his nature that if a chip or a tiny spark of him were to drop down, it would fill all this world with joy and bliss. Now observe how noble an angel is by his nature (there are so many of them that they cannot be numbered): I declare that everything about an angel is noble. If a man had to slave away till the day of judgment and the end of the world, merely in order to see an angel in his brightness, that man would be well rewarded. In all spiritual matters we find that the one thing is in the other, one and undivided.[1] Where the soul is in her pure nature, detached and freed from all creatures, there she would have in her nature and by nature all the perfection, all the joy and delight, which all angels have without[2] number and quantity from nature: all these I have completely, with all their perfection and with all their joy and blessedness, just as they have these things in themselves, and I have each one of them separately in me, just as I have myself within me, each unhindered by the other, for no spirit gets in the way of another. The angel remains enclosed in the soul, and accordingly he gives himself completely to every single soul, unhindered by any other, or by God Himself. Not only by nature but transcending nature too my soul rejoices in all the joy and all the blessedness in which God Himself rejoices in His

divine nature, whether God would or no: for *there* is nothing but one, and where one is, there is all, and where all is, there is one. That is a certain truth: where the soul is, there God is, and where God is, there the soul is, and if I were to say otherwise I would not be speaking truly.

Now take note of a saying which I consider very fine: when I think how one He[3] is with me, [it is] as if He had forgotten all creatures and nothing existed but I alone.[4] Now pray for those who are entrusted to me! Those who pray for anything but God or to do with God, pray wrongly: when I pray for nothing, then I pray rightly, and that prayer is proper and powerful. But if anyone prays for anything else, he is praying to a false God, and one might say this was sheer heresy.[5] I never pray so well as when I pray for nothing and for nobody, not for Heinrich or Konrad. Those who pray truly pray to God in truth and in spirit, that is to say, in the Holy Ghost.[6]

That which God is in power, we are in the image: what the Father is in power, the Son in wisdom, and the Holy Ghost in goodness, we are in the image.[7] "There we shall know as we are known,"[8] and we shall love as we are loved. But this is not without working, for the soul is borne up in that image, and works in that power *as* that power; she is also borne up in the Persons[9] in accordance with the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the goodness of the Holy Ghost. All this is the work of the Persons. Above this is being that does not work, but here alone is being *and* work. Truly, where the soul is in God,[10] just as the Persons are suspended in being, *there* work and being are one, in that place where the soul grasps the Persons in the very indwelling of being from which they never emerged, where there is a pure essential image. This is the essential mind[11] of God, of which[12] the pure and naked power is *intellect,*[13] which the masters term receptive. Now mark my words! It is only *above all this* that the soul grasps the pure absoluteness[14] of free being, which has no location,[15] which neither receives nor gives: it is bare 'self-identity'[16] which is deprived of all being and all self-identity. *There* she grasps God nakedly as in the ground, where He is above all being. Were there still being there, she would take being in being; but nothing else but one ground is there. This is the highest perfection of the spirit to which man can attain spiritually in this life.

Yet this is not the highest perfection:[17] that which we shall possess forever with body and soul.[18] Then the outer[19] man will be entirely maintained through the supportive possession of personal being, just as humanity and divinity are one personal being in the person of Christ. Therefore I have in that the same support of personal being in such a manner that I myself *am* that personal being while totally denying my awareness of self, so that I am spiritually[20] one according to my ground, just as the ground itself[21] is one ground. Thus according to the outer[22] being I should be the same personal being, [but] entirely deprived of *my own* support. This personal man-God-being outgrows and soars above the outer man altogether, so that he can never reach it. Relying on himself he indeed receives the influx of grace from the personal being in many manifestations of sweetness, comfort, and inwardness, and that is good: but it is not the best. Therefore if he remained thus in himself yet unsupported by himself, then, although he would receive comfort through grace and the co-operation of grace, which however is not the best thing, the inner man, who is spiritual, would have to come out from the ground where he is *one*, and would have to be directed by the gracious being by which, through grace, he is supported. Therefore the spirit can never be perfect unless body and soul are brought to perfection. Thus, just as the inner man, in spiritual wise, loses his own being by his ground becoming one ground,[23] so too the outer man must be deprived of his own support and rely entirely on the support of the eternal personal being which is this very personal being.

We have now therefore two kinds of being. One 'being' is according to the Godhead, bare substantial being,[24] the other is personal being,[25] and yet both are one 'substance.'[26] Now since the same substance whereby Christ is a person, as the bearer of Christ's eternal humanity, is also the substance of the soul, and yet there is one Christ as regards substance, as regards both being and person, so too we must be the same Christ, following him in his works, just as he is one Christ as regards his humanity. For, since by my humanity I am of the same genus,[27] therefore I am so united to his personal being that, by grace, I am one in that personal being and *am* that personal being. So, since God[28] dwells eternally in the ground of the Father, and I in him, *one* ground and the same Christ, as a single bearer of my humanity, then this (humanity) is as much mine as his in one

substance of eternal being, so that the being of both, body and soul, attain perfection in one Christ, as one God, one Son.

May the Holy Trinity[29] help us so that this may come to pass in us.[30] Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 5.
2. Reading *âne* 'without' for Quint's *an* 'in respect of': as stated above and elsewhere, the angels are innumerable, and Eckhart is declaring that he has all of these in himself.
3. Jundt read *êre* 'honor' instead of *er* 'he.' I agree with Quint in considering Jundt's reading meaningless.
4. If God were to 'forget' creatures, they would simply cease to exist.
5. Is Eckhart having a dig at his critics here? This looks like a late sermon, and he may have been already aware of the attacks being made on him. If so, too, in the latter part of the sermon he certainly gave his critics some difficult matters to reflect on.
6. Cf. Sermon 58.
7. The Trinitarian formula not of Augustine but of Peter Lombard (*Sent.* I d. 34 c. 3 n. 309) (Q). Man is made in the image of God, and there is an image of God in the soul (cf. Sermon 14b).
8. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:12.
9. Of the Trinity.
10. God as *one* (Q).
11. I have ventured to use this term here for *vernünfticheit,* 'intellect' or 'reason.'
12. In contradistinction to Quint, I have taken *der* as a genitive referring back to *vernünfticheit.* This seems logical as well as grammatically correct.
13. Eckhart here uses the Latin word *intellectus.* Quint refers to the Parisian Questions (*LW* V, 45), especially 'Utrum in Deo sit idem esse et intelligere?' (trans. Maurer, pp. 43–50).
14. Eckhart uses the Latin word *absolucio,* but not, of course, in the sense of 'absolution.'
15. *Sunder dâ,* lit. 'without *there.*'
16. *Istigeit:* cf. Sermon 49, note 9.
17. From here on I am very dependent on Quint's tentative rendering of an exceptionally difficult passage *(DW* III, 135–36.). As Quint remarks too, the manuscript evidence is not very reliable, thus making interpretation even more perilous.
18. *After* this earthly life: see end of preceding paragraph.
19. Physical man. To achieve a little more clarity I have broken this long sentence up.
20. See end of preceding paragraph.
21. The first 'ground' here is 'my ground,' while 'the ground itself' refers to 'God's ground' (Q).
22. Physical man as in note 19.
23. Cf. note 21.

24. Of Christ (Q).

25. Christ's being as a person (Q).

26. *Understôz,* which according to Quint renders a scholastic Latin *suppositum,* i.e., 'an individual which subsists in the genus of substance, which is called *hypostasis* or primary substance' (St. Thomas Aquinas, II *Quaest. Quodlib.,* a 4). Quint's modern German rendering here is *Personhaftigkeit* or 'being-a-person.'

27. As Christ.

28. =Christ, as often in Middle High German.

29. The text of this sermon is, according to the old Dominican missal, from the epistle for the last Sunday after Trinity. This would explain the Trinitarian speculations of this last part (Q).

30. It may be helpful to give here in translation Quint's summary of this last part, from his analysis of the whole sermon (*DW* III, 127–28.): 'The highest perfection [cf. note 18 above] however can only be attained in the next life, where not only the soul but also the human body is united, in the personal unity which God-man Christ possesses by the union of humanity and divinity, with this very Christ, eternally indwelling in that personal unity in the "ground" of the Father, so that the being of soul *and* body is perfected in the one Christ, as one God and one Son.'

SERMON SEVENTY-ONE

(Q 59, Jundt 10)

ET NUNC SEQUIMUR TE IN TOTO CORDE, ET TIMEMUS TE,
ET QUAERIMUS FACIEM TUAM
(Daniel 3:41)

The prophet Daniel says, "We follow thee with all our hearts and fear thee and seek thy face."[1] This text fits in well with the one I quoted yesterday,[2] "I have called upon Him and invoked Him and cajoled Him,[3] and into me has come the spirit of wisdom, and I have preferred this to all kingdoms and to power and glory and to gold, silver and precious stones, and compared to the spirit of wisdom I have regarded all things as a grain of sand, as a puddle, and as nothing."

It is a clear sign that a man has "the spirit of wisdom" if he regards all things as a mere nothing. If a man has regard for any thing, then the spirit of wisdom is not in him. When he said, "as a grain of sand," that was inadequate; when he said, "as a puddle," that too was inadequate: when he said, "as nothing," that was well said, for all things are mere nothing compared to the spirit of wisdom. "I have called upon Him and invoked Him and cajoled Him, and into me has come the spirit of wisdom." If a man calls upon Him with all his heart, the spirit of wisdom will come into him.

There is a power in the soul which is wider than the whole world. It must be very wide, for God dwells in it. Some people do not call for[4] the spirit of wisdom, they call for health, wealth, and pleasure: but the spirit of wisdom does not come into them. What they ask for is dearer to them than God — just as if a man gives a penny for bread he wants the bread more than the penny — and they make God their slave. Suppose a rich man were to say, 'Do this for me and make me well, and I will give you whatever you ask!' If a man were then to

ask for a halfpenny that would be foolish, because if he asked for a hundred marks, the rich man would gladly give it. Therefore it is absolute folly to ask God for anything less than Himself: that is not to His liking, for he gives nothing so gladly as Himself. A master[5] says, 'All things have a Why, but God has no Why, and if a man prays to God for anything but Himself, he ascribes a Why to God.'[6]

Now he says, "Together with the spirit of wisdom all things equally came to me" (Wisd. 7:11). The gift of wisdom is the noblest of the seven gifts.[7] God gives none of these gifts without first giving Himself equally and in fecundity. Whatever is good, and can bring joy and comfort, all that I have in "the spirit of wisdom," together with all sweetness, omitting not as much as a needle's point: and yet all that would be trifling if one did not possess it fully and equally and exactly as God enjoys it; so I too enjoy it equally in His nature.[8] For in the spirit of wisdom He operates equally, so that the least becomes as the greatest, not the greatest as the least: just as if a noble stem were grafted on to a common stock, the fruit would develop according to the nobility of the graft and not according to the commonness of the stock. Thus it happens in this spirit: all works become equal, for there the least becomes as the greatest and not the greatest as the least. God gives Himself in fecundity, for the noblest work of God is giving birth (as far as one can say that one work of God is nobler than another): for God takes the greatest delight in giving birth. Whatever I have by birthright, no man can deprive me of unless he deprives me of myself. Whatever I acquire by chance I can lose: therefore God gives birth to Himself fully in me that I may never lose Him, for whatever I have by birthright[9] I cannot lose. God has all His joy in giving birth,[10] and therefore He gives birth to His Son in us, that we may have all *our* joy therein, and that we may give birth to the same natural Son with Him: for God has all His joy in giving birth, and therefore He gives birth to Himself in us, so that he may have all His joy in the soul and *we* may have all our joy in Him.[11] Therefore Christ said, as St. John reports in his Gospel, "They follow me" (John 10:27). To follow God truly is good, that is, that we should follow according to His will, just as I said yesterday: "Thy will be done."[12] St. Luke says in the Gospel that our Lord said, "Whoever would follow after me, let him abandon self and take up his cross and follow after me" (Luke 9:23). If a man were to abandon himself truly, he would be

truly God's, and God would be truly his: I am as sure of that as that I am a man. For such a man, all things are as easy to abandon as a lentil:[13] the more is abandoned, the greater the joy.

St. Paul wished for God's sake to be separated from God for his brothers' sake.[14] The masters are very worried and doubtful about this. Some think he meant for a while. That is quite wrong: as loth for a moment as for eternity, and as lief for eternity as for a moment. If he placed God's will first, then the longer it lasted the more glad he would be, and the greater the pain, the more glad he would be. It is just like a merchant: if he knew for certain that he would get ten marks for something that cost him one, he would invest all the marks he had, and whatever toil it cost him, if only he were sure that he would come home safely and make so much profit, all that would be a pleasure to him. So it was with St. Paul: whatever he knew to be God's will — the longer, the better, and the greater the pain, the greater the joy. For to do God's will is heaven, so the longer the will lasts, the longer the heaven, and the greater the pain from God's will, the greater the blessedness.

'Deny yourself and offer up your cross!'[15] The masters say this is suffering: fasting and other pains. I say it is putting away suffering, for nothing but joy follows this practice. After that he says, "I give them life" (John 10:28). Now many other things that rational beings have are accidents, but life belongs to every rational creature as its being. Therefore he says, "I give them life," for his being *is* his life: for God gives Himself altogether when He says, "I give." No creature can give that:[16] even if it were possible for any creature to give it, yet God loves the soul so tenderly that He would not permit this, for He wants to give it Himself. If any creature were to give it, the soul would scorn it, and would heed it as little as a midge. It is just as if an emperor were to give a man an apple; he would regard it more highly than if somebody else gave him a coat: so too the soul cannot endure to receive life from any other than God. That is why he says, "I give," so that the soul may have perfect joy of the giving.

Now he says, "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30):[17] the soul in God and God in her. If anyone put water in a barrel, the barrel would surround the water, but the water would not be *in* the barrel,[18] nor would the barrel be in the water: but the soul is so wholly one with God that the one cannot be understood without the other. We

can understand heat without fire, and the shine without the sun: but God cannot understand Himself without the soul nor the soul without God — so completely are they one.

The soul differs in no way from our Lord Jesus Christ except in that the soul has a coarser essence: for his essence is in the eternal Person.[19] But as far as she can lay aside her coarseness — if she could lay this aside altogether — she would be completely the same, and whatever can be said of our Lord Jesus Christ, could be said of the soul. A master[20] says, 'God's least is full of creatures, and His greatest is nowhere.' I will tell you a story. Someone asked a holy man why it was that he sometimes wanted to worship and pray, and sometimes not. He replied as follows, 'A dog who sees a hare, smells him, and gets on his track, chases the hare: but the others that see this one running run too, but soon they are tired and give up. It is the same with a man who has seen God and scented Him: he does not give up, but continues the chase.' Therefore David says, "Taste[21] and see how sweet God is" (Ps. 33:9). This man does not tire, but the others soon tire. Some people run in front of God, some beside God, some follow behind God. Those who run in front of God are they who follow their own will and do not care about God's will: that is altogether bad. The others, who run beside God, say, 'Lord, I want only what you want.' But if they are sick, they wish for God to want them well: that may pass. The third are those who follow behind God: wherever He wants to go they willingly follow Him, and they are perfect.[22] Concerning these, St. John says in the Book of Secrets, "They follow the lamb wherever it goes" (Rev. 14:4). These people follow God wherever He leads them, in sickness or in health, in good fortune or in bad. St. Peter went before God, and then our Lord said, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23). Now our Lord said, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (John 14:11). Thus God is in the soul, and the soul is in God.

Now he says, "We seek thy face." Truth and goodness are a garment of God's: God is above anything that we can put into words. Understanding[23] "seeks" God and grasps Him at the root, whence the Son proceeds, and the entire Godhead, but will remain outside and clings to goodness, for goodness is a garment of God's.[24] The highest angels grasp God in His vestry, *before* He is clothed with goodness

or with anything one can put into words.[25] Therefore he says, "We seek thy face," for God's face is His essence.

That we may grasp this and possess it willingly, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. From the apocryphal part of Daniel not in the Hebrew (=The Song of the Three Children), v. 18.
2. Reference untraced.
3. All three verbs represent the Latin *invocavi*. The whole text (Wisd. 7:7–9) is rather freely rendered.
4. A play on the meanings of *laden:* 1. 'invoke, invite,' and 2. 'load (take in)': such people 'take on board' not wisdom but health, etc.
5. Unidentified.
6. Cf. Sermon 43, note 6 and Latin sermon IV (*LW* IV, 22): *quia Deus, et per consequens homo divinus, non agit propter cur et quare,* and further references there (Q).
7. The gifts of the Holy Ghost.
8. I.e., the spirit of wisdom.
9. *Daz mir angeborn ist* 'what is born to me.'
10. Cf. Sermon 48.
11. Quint remarks that the second half of this sentence is a slightly varied repetition of the first half. But it includes a typically Eckhartian intensification: the implications of what has been said are extracted and given more extreme expression.
12. Perhaps Sermon 40. Sermon 18 has a similar reference back to 'yesterday.'
13. Cf. Sermon 80.
14. Rom. 9:3; cf. Sermon 57.
15. Paraphrasing Luke 9:23, quoted above.
16. Life.
17. *Ego et pater unum sumus.* As Ueda has shown, Eckhart insists on the oneness of God at the expense of the concept of the Trinity: this is expressed by *unum* not *unus* (Ueda 32ff., 100ff.).
18. I.e., contained in the planks of the barrel: cf. Sermon 5 and Sermon 78.
19. The second Person of the Trinity.
20. Similarly Sermons 33, 39. Perhaps a reminiscence of the *Liber XXIV Philosophorum,* prop. 18 (Q), though the Latin parallels are not very close.
21. *Smecken* means both 'taste' and 'smell.'
22. Cf. Eckhart's commentary on John 1:43 (*LW* III, 190ff.).
23. The intellect, the highest power of the soul.
24. Eckhart is again asserting the primacy of intellect over will in opposition to the Franciscan view.
25. Cf. Sermon 31.

SERMON SEVENTY-TWO

(Pf 72, Q 7, QT 8)

POPULI EIUS QUI IN TE EST, MISEREBERIS
(Hosea 14:4)[1]

The prophet says, "Lord, have mercy on the people that are in thee." Our Lord replied, "All that are sick I shall heal, and willingly love them."[2]

I will take for my text the words "The Pharisee desired our Lord to eat with him" (Luke 7:36), and Our Lord said to the woman, '*Vade in pace* — go in peace.' " It is good if one comes from peace into peace: that is praiseworthy, but imperfect. One should run into peace, but not begin in peace. God means that one should be established in peace and thrust into peace, and one should end in peace.[3] Our Lord said, "In me alone you have peace."[4] So far into God, so far into peace. If anything of a man is in God, that has peace; whatever of him is outside of God has no peace. St. John says, "Whatever is born of God shall overcome the world" (1 John 5:4). What is born of God seeks peace and runs into it. Therefore he said, "*Vade in pace* — run into peace."[5] The man who is running, in a continual run, into peace, is a heavenly man. Heaven runs round constantly, and in its course seeks peace.[6]

Now observe: "The Pharisee desired our Lord to eat with him." The food that I eat is united with my body just as my body is with my soul. My body and my soul are united in one being, not in one act, in the way in which my soul is united with my eye in one act, which is seeing. Thus the food I eat is of one being with my nature and is not united in one act, and this typifies that great union we are destined to have with God, in one being, not (just) in one act. That is why the Pharisee desired our Lord to eat with him. "Pharisee" means one who is detached, and who knows no end.[7] Whatever belongs to the

soul must be stripped away. The nobler the powers, the more they strip away. Some powers are so far above the body and so aloof that they peel off and strip off altogether. A master[8] has a fine saying: 'What once touches corporeal things never enters there.'[9] The second meaning[10] is that one should be detached, withdrawn, and indrawn. From this we see that an unlettered man, through love and desire, may obtain skill and be able to impart it. The third meaning is that one should have no end, should nowhere be shut in and cling to nothing, being so established in peace that one knows nothing of disquiet, so that a man is established in God through these powers being wholly unattached. Therefore the prophet said, "Lord, have mercy on the people that are in thee."

A master says the highest work that God ever performed in all creatures is mercy.[11] The most secret and hidden work that He performed even in regard to the angels is borne up in mercy: it is the work of mercy as it is in itself and as it is in God. Whatever God performs, its first breaking forth is mercy, not in the sense of His forgiving man's sins or of one man showing mercy to another, but he means that the highest work that God performs is mercy. A master says the work of mercy is so akin to God that, though truth, riches, and goodness are names for God, one of them names Him better than the other. God's highest work is mercy, and this means that God places the soul in the highest and purest place that she can attain to, into space, into the sea, into a bottomless ocean, and there God works mercy. Therefore the prophet said, "Lord, have mercy on the people that are in thee."

What people are in God? St. John says, "God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). Although St. John says love unites, yet love never places us in God, though perhaps it acts as a binding force. Love does not unite, not in any way: but what is united it fastens together and binds close.[12] Love unites in works, not in essence. The best masters declare that intellect strips everything off and grasps God bare, as He is in Himself, pure being. Knowledge breaks through truth and goodness and, striking on pure being, takes God bare, as He is, without name. I say that neither knowledge nor love unites. Love takes God Himself, insofar as He is good, and if God were to lose the name of goodness, love could go no further. Love takes God under a veil, under a garment. Understanding does not do this: understanding takes God as

He is known to it: it can never grasp Him in the ocean of His unfathomableness. I say that above these two, understanding and love, there is mercy: there God works mercy in the highest and purest acts that God is capable of.

A master says a fine thing, that there is something very secret and hidden in the soul, yet far above it, from which there burst forth the powers of intellect and will.[13] St. Augustine says that just as that is ineffable how the Son springs from the Father in the first coming forth, so there is something very secret above that first coming forth, whence proceed intellect and will. A master, who has spoken best of all about the soul, says that no human wit can ever come to know what the soul is in her ground.[14] To know what the soul is requires supernatural understanding. When the powers go out from the soul into works, we know nothing of that, or at least we know a tiny bit about it, but our knowledge is small. What the soul is in her ground, nobody knows. What we can know of it must be supernatural: it must be by grace. Therein God works His mercy. Amen.

Notes

1. The Vulgate has *pupilli* 'orphans' instead of *populi,* a Septuagint reading. Quint refers to Albertus Magnus, *In XII Prophetas Minores.*
2. Hosea 14:5. The Vulgate reads *Sanabo contritiones eorum, diligam eos spontanee. Contritiones* seems to render a word meaning 'apostasy': the manuscript reading here *anvellic* means 'infected, sick,' and may be a mistake for *abevellic,* 'apostate.'
3. 'Eckhart values that peace most highly that is the outcome of a struggle, an active striving for peace which is not there at the beginning' (Q).
4. Cf. John 16:33.
5. Here, as above, Eckhart says not 'in peace' but 'into peace,' and this time he uses the stronger verb *louf* 'run' for *vade* 'go.' This strains the text but provides a bridge to the next sentence.
6. Cf. Sermon 79.
7. Lit. 'one who *is* set apart.' Eckhart got this perfectly correct etymology from St. Jerome or from Albertus Magnus.
8. St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.8 (cf. Latin sermon XLVII, n. 482 (*LW* IV, 397)) (Q).
9. Into the higher powers.
10. Of 'Pharisee.'
11. Cf. Sermon 97, note 8.
12. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 21, a. 4. Cf. also *LW* IV, 122 (Clark).
13. The 'spark' in the soul.
14. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 6.29.40 (Q).

SERMON SEVENTY-THREE

(Pf 73, Q 73, QT 33)

DILECTUS DEO ET HOMINIBUS, CUJUS MEMORIA IN BENEDICTIONE EST.
SIMILEM ILLUM FECIT IN GLORIA SANCTORUM
(Sirach 45:1)

These words are spoken in the Book of Wisdom,[1] and the wise man says, "He who is beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction. God has made him like the saints in glory." These words may be particularly applied to the saint whose festival we celebrate today, for his name is Benedict,[2] 'blessed,' and the words used here are highly appropriate to him: *cujus memoria in benedictione est,* that is, "whose memory is worthy of praise in benediction," and also because we read that a glory was revealed to him, in which he saw the whole world gathered up before him as in a ball,[3] and this text says, "God made him like the saints in glory."

Now note concerning this glory: St. Gregory says that to a soul that is in this glory all things seem small and narrow. The natural light of the intellect that God has poured into the soul is so splendid and so strong that all that God has created of bodily things seems mean and petty to it. This light, too, is nobler than any corporeal thing God ever made: for the smallest and meanest of corporeal things that exist, would, if it were shone on or illumined by this light, which is intellect, become of more worth than any bodily thing. It would become clearer and brighter than the sun, because this light strips from things both matter and time. This light is so wide that it transcends width — it is wider than wide. It transcends wisdom and goodness as God transcends wisdom and goodness: for God is neither wisdom nor goodness, but from God come wisdom and goodness. Intellect does not take rise from wisdom, nor does intellect proceed from truth, nor is it born, like will, from goodness. For will wills on account of

goodness, is begotten of goodness and born of intellect, but intellect does not come from truth. And the light that flows from intellect is understanding, and is just like an outflow, an outburst or a stream compared to that which intellect is in its own being. And this outburst is as far removed from it as heaven is from earth. I often say, and think oftener still, it is marvelous what intellect God has poured into the soul.

Now there is another light, and that is the light of grace: compared to this the natural light[4] is as small as what a needle point can pick up of earth compared with the whole earth, or what a needle point can pick up of heaven, which is incredibly greater than the whole earth. God's presence in the soul by grace brings in more light than any intellect can give: and all the light that intellect can give is but a drop in the ocean beside this light, indeed a thousandfold less. Thus it is with the soul that is in God's grace: to her all things, and whatever the intellect can grasp, appear small and mean.[5]

I was once asked why good folk feel so happy with God and are so zealous to serve Him. I replied by saying it was because they had tasted God, and it would be strange indeed if the soul that had once tasted and tried God could stomach anything else. One saint says that the soul that has tasted God finds all things that are not God repugnant and stinking.[6]

Now let us take the text in another sense: when the wise man[7] says, "Beloved of God and men," he omits the word *is* and does not say, "He *is* beloved of God and men," for he is not thinking of his changing and unstable temporal nature, which essence, which this text means, so far transcends. Essence embraces all things within itself and yet is so high above them that it was never yet touched by anything created. All those who imagine they know something about this know nothing at all. St. Dionysius[8] says anything that we know, that we can dissect and distinguish into parts, that is not God, for in God there is neither this nor that which we can abstract or to which we can attribute distinction. In Him there is only one thing,[9] and that is Himself. And concerning this there is much discussion among the masters as to how it may be that this motionless, this intangible and abstract essence can communicate itself to the soul, coming to be within the purview of the soul,[10] and they are greatly exercised as to how the soul can become receptive to it. I say that His divinity

depends on His being able to communicate Himself to whatever is receptive to Him: and if He did not communicate Himself, He would not be God.[11]

The soul that God loves and to whom He communicates Himself must be so wholly stripped of time and from all creaturely flavor that God in her tastes only of His own flavor. It says in scripture, "In the middle of the night, when all things were silent, then, Lord, thy word came down from the royal thrones" (Wisd. 18:14–15).[12] That means: in the night, when no creature shines or looks into the soul, and in the stillness, when nothing speaks to the soul, then the word is spoken to the intellect. This word belongs to the intellect and means *Verbum* as it is and stands in the intellect.[13]

Often I feel afraid, when I come to speak of God, at how utterly detached the soul must be to attain to union with Him. But no one should think this impossible: nothing is impossible for the soul that possesses God's grace. Nothing was ever easier for a man than it is for the soul that has God's grace to leave all things: no creature can harm her. St. Paul says, "I am persuaded that no creature can separate me from God: not good fortune or bad fortune or life or death."[14]

Now observe: nowhere is God so really God as in the soul. In all creatures there is something of God, but in the soul God is very God,[15] for she is His resting place. That is why one master says God loves nothing but Himself: all His love is lavished on Himself. He would be a fool who could seize a hundred marks at one go, if he were only to take a penny.[16] His love in us is the blossoming-forth of the Holy Ghost. One more word on this: God loves nothing in us but the good He does in us Himself. A saint says nothing is crowned by God except His own work that He does in us.[17] Let no one be afraid at my saying that God loves nothing but Himself: it is to our supreme advantage, for therein He has in view our highest bliss. He intends thereby to lure us into Himself and to get us purged so that He can take us into Himself, so that with Himself He may love us in Him and Himself in us. And He wants our bliss so badly that He entices us into Himself with every means at His disposal, whether pleasant or disagreeable. God forbid that God should ever do anything to us that was *not* meant to entice us into Him! I will never give thanks to God for loving me, because He cannot help it, whether He would or not: His nature compels Him to it. I will give Him thanks because by His

goodness He cannot cease to love me. To be taken out of ourselves and installed in God is not hard, since God himself is bound to be working this in us: for it is God's work when man just follows and offers no resistance. He should be passive and let God work.

That we may thus follow God so that He can take us into Himself, that we may be united with Him so that He can love us with Himself, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Not the Wisdom of Solomon but Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus Sirach).
2. March 21. St. Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480–543) was the 'father of Western monasticism.' But the words were originally applied to Moses.
3. Gregory the Great, *Dialogi* 2.35.
4. Gregory writes 'a single sunbeam' (*sub uno solis radio*).
5. To the intellect.
6. The point is similar to that of the anecdote in Sermon 71.
7. Jesus Sirach (note 1). Cf. Sermon 97, note 1.
8. *De caelesti hierarchia,* 2.5 (Q).
9. *Einez* (neuter), corresponding to Latin *unum* (cf. Sermon 71, note 17).
10. A difficult passage: *in einem ûzluogenne der sêle,* 'in a looking-out by (or 'for') the soul.' Is it God or the soul that 'looks out'? Quint thinks the former.
11. Cf. Sermons 11, 67.
12. That was the text of Sermon 1.
13. The *Logos.*
14. Cf. Rom. 8:38.
15. Eckhart says *götlîch,* 'divine,' but the play on *got, götlîch* is important: unfortunately 'godly' does not have the required meaning inEnglish.
16. Cf. Sermon 71.
17. St. Augustine, *Epistolae* 194, ch. 5, n. 19, or *De gratia et libero arbitrio,* 6.15 (Q).

SERMON SEVENTY-FOUR

(Pf 86, Q 74)

DILECTUS DEO ET HOMINIBUS, ETC.
(Sirach 45:1)[1]

"He was beloved of God and men" (whom we now commemorate), "and is blessed and sanctified in God in the glory of the saints." Such words we read today concerning my dear Lord St. Francis, and he is praised on account of two things: and whoever has them is a great man.[2] The one is true poverty. We read of him that he was once walking with one of his companions when they met a poor man. Then he said to his companion, 'This man has disgraced us and put us to shame, for he is poorer than we are.'[3] Take note of these words, that he considered himself disgraced when he found anyone who was poorer than himself. I used sometimes to say (and it is quite true) that whoever truly loves poverty is so desirous of it that he grudges anyone having less than he has.[4] And so it is with all things, whether it is purity, or justice, or whatever virtue he loves, he wants to have it in the highest degree. He always wants to reach the highest degree attainable in time,[5] and cannot endure that there should be anything above him: he always wants to take the highest place.[6] Love is not satisfied as long as something (more) exists, with which one can love. This saint loved poverty so much that he could not endure anyone being poorer than himself. The poorer the man is in spirit, the more he is detached and makes naught of all things: the poorer he is in spirit, the more truly he possesses all things, and the more they are his own.

The second virtue that makes a man great is humility: this saint possessed this to perfection with the naughting and rejecting of self. This virtue makes a man greatest of all: whoever has this most deeply and perfectly has the possibility of gaining all perfection.

"He was beloved" (scripture says) "of God and men." Now I will tell you some good news: for him who understands it, it is a great comfort. The man who loves God is beloved of all the saints and all the angels so immeasurably much, that all the love we can imagine is unequal to this love, and is as nothing to it. All who are in heaven love me so much (if I love God) that all the love you can imagine is not equal to it, whatever and however you would have it: I am loved by the entire host of angels, of whom there are so many that they are uncountable.

I was recently asked how it could be that there were more angels than the number of all corporeal things, of which there is such a multitude, such as of corn, grass, and all sorts of things. To this I say those things must be many in which God makes Himself at home and which make God their own, and are near God. Those masters who want to put the matter rightly say that every angel has a particular nature and receives the whole of this nature in himself. In the same way, if I were a man and had the nature of all men in me: the strength, wisdom, beauty, and everything that all men have, then I would be a very splendid man; and if there were no other men but me, then I would receive all that other men receive. Every single angel has his own particular nature:[7] the closer he is to God, the nobler he is and he has taken into himself just as much of God as he is capable of receiving. And all this multitude loves me, and all those love me who love God, and no one hates me but those who are God's foes. Whoever he may be, by that very fact[8] he becomes God's enemy, and for the same reason God is opposed to him. But if it comes about that God is his enemy, and if God forgives his enemy, why should I not also forgive him? And if God avenges me, why should I take vengeance upon myself?[9]

Now you might say, 'Bad people have a good time, they get their way more than other people.' Solomon says, "The evil man should not say, 'What harm will it do me if I do evil and it does not hurt me?' or, 'Who would do anything to me on that account?' "[10] The very fact that you do evil is to your great harm and causes you enough pain. Be assured of this by the eternal Truth, that this is a great sign of God's anger: He could do nothing worse to the sinner, neither with hell nor with anything else, than He does by permitting or allowing him to be sinful, and does not show him mercy by imposing such

great distress on him that he *cannot* sin. And if God were to give him all the sorrow in the world, He could not afflict him more harshly than he is afflicted by being a sinner.

"He is beloved of God and men whose memory is in praise and benediction." These words were first said of Moses,[11] and he is so called as one who was taken out of the water.[12] By the water we understand transient things. That man alone is pleasing to God who is detached and removed from all transient things. That man who is most detached and has most fully forgotten all transient things is the most pleasing to God, and thereby the nearest to God.

Now you might say, 'How could I do so much as to reject the entire world for God's sake?' I say he would have done far more, who could abandon and give up all things. King David says, "Daughter, forget thy people and thy father's house, and the king will desire thy beauty" (Ps. 44:11), as if he were to say, 'The king will be quite crazy and infatuated for love of you.' What God's love performs in us and what nobility we receive thereby I have stated in another sermon and discourse.[13] Now pay close attention to these words: "Forget thy people and thy father's house." Why do I love my father more than another man? Because he is my father and my *omne*,[14] for he is my *omne*, that is, my all, my very own. And what is mine I have to forget in all things: that is the meaning of that text. The prophet says, "thy father's house." As I recently said,[15] if a man could get so far, above himself and out of himself, then he would have fought well. If you can forget what is yours, then you will have gained virtue.[16]

This virtue has four degrees.[17] The first breaks through and makes a way for a man away from all transient things. The second takes them away from a man altogether. The third not only takes them away, but causes them to be altogether forgotten as if they had never been — and this is part of the process. The fourth degree is right in God and is God Himself. When we get to this stage, then "the king will desire our beauty." It says further, "For He is the Lord thy God, and they will honor and adore Him" (Ps. 44:12). In that case, our Lord is your God: he is as truly and powerfully yours as He is His own — think how you like, He is yours! How, then, does He become yours? By your becoming entirely His. If God is to be as much mine as His own, I must be as much His as my own.

One writer says, 'When is God your God? When you desire nothing but Him, for you find him so tasty.[18] But if you desire anything that entices you anywhere out of Him, then He is not *your* God.' Elsewhere he says, 'If you are fonder of one man more than another, unless it is his virtues that you love, then you belong to yourself, and God is not your God.' Again, the prophet says, "Then they will adore him and bring him gifts, all races and the kings of the earth."[19] So too this saying must be interpreted: 'He was beloved of God and pleasing to men, and the blessing of *all* men was given to him.'[20] When we say 'all,' nothing is excepted. Everything that they have who are in heaven or on earth, that is as much my own as theirs, and I am as blessed on account of what our Lady has, as on account of what I myself have[21] — even her honor and virtue make me as blessed as if I had gained them myself.

Now someone might say, 'Well, if all things are mine and I can enjoy them as they do, why should I have to strive so hard and be so detached? I will have the right to be a good man, and take my ease, and I will have as good a share of heaven as those who struggle for it.' To this I say, 'Just as far as you are detached from things, you possess them, and no more. But if you think of what you may get, and have your eye on it, then you will get nothing. In like measure as I renounce things, in such measure I shall receive.' To which I would add, 'if I love my neighbor as myself.'

Thus, whoever loves God with all his heart, he loves his neighbor as himself. Therefore it says *tanquam,*[22] that is 'just as, equally.' Why am I more glad that something good happens to my brother or to myself rather than to another? Because I love my own more than another's. But if I love him as myself, as God's commandment ordains that I should love God, then it will seem all the same to me whatever the commandment says — that I should love God with all my heart and all my soul, and my neighbor as myself. Love will begin with God and straightway be with my neighbor. If I detach myself fully from my own and have one equal love, then I shall love all things equally and enter into their possession. But this does not apply to material things, which differ in this from things spiritual: they are in no way alike.[23]

Take an example. The water that is in a barrel is not in the wood, but the wood surrounds the water. Nor is the wood in the water:

neither is in the other. And the water that is in the barrel is separated from all [other] water. But in spiritual things there is no separating of one from another. All that the highest angel has in himself, the one below him has, fully contained in himself, so that the highest one has nothing, even the size of a dot, that is not in the lowest one, neither being nor blessedness. So it is with spiritual things, for what is in one is possessed in common in the other, and according as one abandons the more, so one receives the more. But if people were to consider themselves or their own, then they would have abandoned nothing, as I say of St. Peter when he said, "*Ecce, nos reliquimus omnia* — see, Lord, we have abandoned all things, what will there be for us?" (Matt. 19:27). How can he who considers what he will get have abandoned everything?

Just listen to one word more, and then no more. The more a thing is in common, the nobler and more valuable it is. I have life in common with those things that live, in which life is added to being. There are more of them that have being than have life. I have senses in common with the animals. I would rather lose my senses than my life. My being is dearest of all to me, it is the thing I have most in common, and is my most intimate thing. I would rather give up all things that are under God. Being flows without mediation from God, and life flows from being, and therefore I like it best and it is the dearest thing to all creatures. The more universal our life is, the better and nobler it is.[24]

That we may attain to this, that we may become pleasing to God and give up all the world in true poverty, and forget 'our father's house' and love our neighbor as ourselves, so that we may receive the same in the glory of the saints, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. The same text as for Sermon 73, but this time on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi (October 4). Miss Evans (Sermon 86) translates only a tiny fragment (see note 17) and says in a footnote: 'Authorship doubtful. Excerpt only.' Quint however (*DW* III, 271) is in no doubt of the sermon's authenticity.
2. Eckhart's tribute to the founder of the Franciscan order. In his time the Dominicans and Franciscans were at loggerheads.
3. St. Bonaventura, *Legenda Sancti Francisci,* 7.6 (Q).
4. Quint is unable to trace an exact parallel to this remark in Eckhart's writings.
5. In this life.

6. In Eckhart's sense, this does not of course conflict with the next virtue mentioned, true humility.
7. Cf. Sermon 63, note 2.
8. Of hating me.
9. This could be a reference to Eckhart's persecutors, who were mainly Franciscans.
10. Actually the words of Elihu (Job 35:6). Quint has conjecturally supplied 'evil' for 'anything' in the second question, but the Latin is *quid facies contra eum?*
11. Cf. Sermon 73, note 2.
12. The meaning of 'Moses' according to Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.46 (Q).
13. Cf. Sermon 73, note 17.
14. *Omne* 'all': Eckhart occasionally uses such Latin tags in his German. Quint rightly rejects Lasson's conjecture *ôme* 'uncle.'
15. Quint thinks this might refer to Sermon 85.
16. I.e., detachment.
17. This paragraph is the only one translated by Miss Evans (note 1). Cf. Sermon 84, note 12.
18. Cf. Sermon 71, note 21. The writer has not been traced.
19. Cf. Psalm 71:10–11.
20. The 'all' has of course been introduced by Eckhart.
21. Cf. Sermon 13a.
22. Mark 12:31: *Diliges proximum tuum tanquam te ipsum* (=Lev. 19:18).
23. Cf. Sermon 5.
24. Cf. Sermon 40.

SERMON SEVENTY-FIVE

(Pf 75)[1]

EXPEDIT VOBIS, ETC. VADO PARARE VOBIS LOCUM, ETC.
(John 16:7, 14:2)

"It is expedient for you and for your good that I should go from you, for as long as I am with you the Holy Ghost cannot come to you." With these words our Lord consoled his disciples knowing full well that they were troubled because he had told them of his ascension into heaven. Our Lord cannot tolerate that any who love him are troubled, for fear is painful. And St. John says, "Love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). And so, because fear is painful, love can endure no fear and pain, for as a man waxes in love so he wanes in fear, and when he is perfect in love, all fear leaves him completely. But in the beginning of the good life fear is useful to a man and gives him access to love. As the bodkin makes a passage for the thread, and the shoe is stitched with thread and not with the iron, so to begin with fear leads us to love, and love binds us to God, while fear passes out.

In another passage our Lord says, "I will leave you, that I may prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Concerning these words, we should note two benefits which our Lord displayed by his ascension. The first benefit is, that the soul is by nature created for heaven, for God is her rightful heritage, since no one can create the soul but God. God has created her without any intervention. Some masters will perhaps wish to say that the divine light pouring into the angels, and the image of all creatures that God formed in the angels before it was realized in creatures, that this divine light and this image in the angels is what creates the soul. This cannot be. The soul cannot tolerate any mixing or distortion of the divine light coming to her, but only as it comes fresh and pure, without any distinction from

God. God has made the soul so cunningly and secretly that no one knows truly what she is.

One master calls her a light, and that is well said, for just as the light streams forth from the sun and pours into all creatures, so the soul is created without distinction by God.[2] St. Augustine says the soul is created by God and returns to God, and therefore she can never rest but in God. Another master says the soul is a spirit, and that is true in a certain sense, for God is a spirit and the soul is made in God's image, so she may well be called spirit, being to God as spirit to spirit. A third master says she is a fire, and he speaks the truth symbolically, for fire is most lofty in its nature and most powerful in its effect, for it never rests till it licks the heavens. It envelops all the elements and is much higher and wider than the air, or than water or earth, since it embraces all the others in itself.[3] Therefore it is the closest of all to the heavens and revolves with them. The air goes with it partially, because of being dense, while water, which is altogether grosser, is unable to keep pace and runs behind. Thus the soul is called a fire because with her desire she keeps pace with God like the fire in the heavens, for the soul can never rest except in God. Some souls are rather dense: they follow haltingly, as air lags after fire. But some souls are altogether gross like water and are earthbound: they cannot keep up with God but run behind; for seeing or hearing something good will stir them with desire to be good, so they do follow after. Like water that drifts to and fro and yet does not rise, so these people are moved, and yet they stay in the same mind as before. A fourth master calls the soul a spark of divine and celestial nature, and that fits in well with this sermon, for the soul belongs to heaven by nature: for where one clod of earth falls, there all earth falls too, thus one clod reveals the ground to be its resting place, and whither one spark flies from a fire, that place is revealed as the resting place of fire.[4]

Now we have sent one spark to heaven, that is the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, which proves to us that the common resting place of all souls is nowhere but in heaven: and herein we have proof that the soul belongs entirely to heaven. But the body is composed of the four elements,[5] so its natural resting place is on earth. But the soul is so intimately united with the body that they must eternally stay together, although the body belongs to earth and the soul to heaven. But God

found a wise solution to this problem, himself becoming man and going of his proper power to heaven, so that in him we have already sent one clod of earth to heaven. For this reason, the entire earth must belong to heaven, for our Lord Jesus Christ's resting place is nowhere else than in union with his Father: for as God is threefold in the Persons, so He is one in nature, they having one being and one life. Thus our Lord Christ has prepared the place[6] where our being and our life shall be eternally in divine union.

The second benefit[7] our Lord has shown us by his ascension is, how we must prepare ourselves to follow after him, in accordance with his words: "I go to prepare a place for you." For just as the soul has four properties whereby she is called a light, a spirit, a fire, or a spark of divine and celestial nature, so too the soul should be lifted up or made ready by four things. This is finely shown in the Old Testament with my lord Moses, who drove his flock together in a hidden desert, and there upon the mount of God he saw a bush burning and not consumed. And Moses wanted to approach and see this miracle, the burning bush that was not consumed. Then our Lord said to him out of the bush, "Moses, do not approach: take off your shoes."[8] These words teach us four precious lessons.

The first is in the name of Moses, for Moses means to say 'one taken from the water.'[9] So shall a man be rescued from instability, out of the tempests of this world.

Secondly, that man's animal passions and desires must all be herded up into the highest power of the soul. For unless the soul is raised and lifted above created things, the Holy Ghost cannot enter in or operate in her. For all the divine work done by God He must do in the spirit, above time and place, for corporeal things corrupt the divine influx. Divine light shed on spiritual creatures engenders life, but if it falls on material things, it is extinguished and perishes altogether. That is why our Lord said, "It is expedient for you, it is for your good that I am taken from you," for his disciples loved him as a man who was still mortal. Now there can be no doubt that our Lord was nobler than anything God ever created. If he, then, was a hindrance to his followers, it is certainly true that other things we love, which are inferior to God, will hinder us much more. Therefore the soul must be raised above time[10] if she wants God to do His divine works in her. Now St. Augustine teaches explicitly that by knowledge and

love we transcend the world, and by knowledge and love we are not in the world.

The third thing is, that man can see and know God's works, but while in this life he cannot attain to them perfectly, just as Moses saw the burning bush but could not go right up to it; he wanted to, however: that is a case of love which does not consume the body and is unmixed with spirit.

The fourth thing, taking off our shoes, signifies that the soul's desire should be freed and withdrawn from all mortal and perishable things. To this, and things still higher, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. Not in Quint's edition. Text as in Pfeiffer, as emended by Quint 1932. An Ascension Day sermon. Its ascription to Eckhart is doubtful, but it does seem to show Eckhartian touches.
2. Just as the sun shines without distinction on all.
3. Cf. e.g., *Asclepius* in *Corpus Hermeticum,* vol. 2, ed. A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugère (Paris, 1960), p. 298: *Ignis solum, quod sursum versus fertur, vivificum; quod deorsum, ei deserviens. At vero quicquid de alto descendit generans est; quod sursum versus emanat, nutriens;* 'Fire alone is a vital force because it is borne back on high; what is below is subservient to it. But whatever descends from on high generates life; whatever emanates back to the heavens nourishes it.' Quoted by Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Sylvester* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 153–54.
4. I.e., heaven, as above.
5. Fire, air, water, and earth.
6. Cf. the text, John 14:2, quoted above, opening of second paragraph. This concludes the first of the two 'benefits' there mentioned.
7. Cf. note 6.
8. Cf. Exodus 3:1–5.
9. Cf. Sermon 74. note 12.
10. Temporal things: cf. Sermon 93, note 4.

SERMON SEVENTY-SIX

(Q 61, Sievers 25, Evans II, 50)[1]

MISERICORDIA DOMINI PLENA EST TERRA ETC.
(Psalm 32:5)

King David says, "The earth is full of the mercy of our Lord." On this St. Augustine comments thus: 'The earth is full of pity since it is full of lamentation and pain, but in heaven there is no pity because there is no pain.'[2] Therefore King David also says, "The heavens are established by the power of the word of our Lord, and from the breath of his mouth comes all their power" (Psalm 32:6). St. Augustine says: 'The word of the heavenly Father is the only-begotten Son, and the breath of His mouth is the Holy Ghost.'[3] These words, therefore, are well suited to this present feast of the Holy Trinity, for by these words the Holy Trinity is to be understood: the power of the Father, when He speaks of the heavens being established; the wisdom of the Son, when he says, "in the word of the Father"; the goodness of the Holy Ghost, when he says, "from the breath of his mouth comes all their power." St. Paul realized this when, being caught up into the third heaven, he saw such things as are ineffable, and cried out with a loud voice, "O thou depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out!"[4] St. Augustine interprets these words thus: St. Paul's being caught up into the third heaven simply refers to three kinds of knowledge belonging to the soul. The first is knowledge of creatures, which we can perceive with the five senses, and all things which are objective to man. In these we do not know God properly, for they are coarse. The second knowledge is more spiritual, and we can have it with the absent, as when I know a friend a thousand miles away whom I have previously seen. But I must see him by likeness — his dress, his form, and in time and place. That too is crude and material.

With this knowledge one cannot know God: one cannot know Him by place or time or appearance. The third heaven is purely spiritual knowledge, therein the soul is rapt away from all objective, bodily things. There we hear without any sound and see without matter: there is neither white nor black nor red. In this pure perception the soul knows God altogether as being onefold in nature and threefold in the Persons.[5] Speaking of this knowledge, St. John[6] says, "That light enlightens all who come into this world." By this he means the state of gnosis he was in at the time. We should understand this purely in the sense that he was aware of nothing but God and all things divine: and all those who come to this awareness are truly illumined, and nobody else. Accordingly he says, "All who come into *this*[7] world." If he meant this dense material world, his words would not be true, for here there are many blind and wicked sinners: he means this pure perception in which he came to know the Holy Trinity, where God is "the Word in the beginning, and the Word is with God, and the Word is God."[8] St. Augustine says of this, 'If he had said more, no one would have understood it.'[9] This was the third heaven, into which St. Paul was caught up. Therefore he[10] says, "The heavens are established by the word of the Lord." And Job too says that "the heavens are established as if they were cast in bronze" (Job 37:18).

There are four things to be noted about heaven: that it is fixed and pure, it contains all things in it, and it is fruitful. It ought to be the same with man, who is meant to be a heaven for God to dwell in. He should be fixed as the heavens are fixed. According to scripture,[11] whatever happens to a good man does not change him. The will of a friend with his friend's will is one will. So it is with the man who has one will with God: evil and good, joy and sorrow are all one to him. Therefore our Lord said, "The house that is built on a rock will not fall."[12] According to scripture,[13] two or three miles above the earth there is neither rain nor hail nor wind. It is so still that letters traced in dust or sand would stay entire and undisturbed. Man, who is so easily troubled and disturbed, may judge by this how far he is removed from God by sin.

Secondly,[14] we find purity and clarity in heaven, just as we can see in the case of water: when it is muddy, whatever is held over it will not be reflected in the water because this is mixed with earth. But when it is clear and unmixed, whatever we hold over it will be

reflected in it. It is the same with man: while he is defiled with earthly things he cannot see his purity or God's clarity. But our purity is like impurity compared to God's perfection, says the prophet.[15] About this St. Bernard says, 'Why does the hand not apprehend the sun as the eye does, since the soul is whole in every member?'[16] That is because the hand is not so pure as the eye. If the hand or the foot could receive the sun as the eye can, then the hand or foot could know the sun as the eye does. Why are sweet things not tasted by the ears as well as by the mouth, and sweet song and sweet voices enjoyed by the mouth as much as by the ears? The reason is that they are not adapted to the task. Why does a carnal man not know spiritual things as well as a spiritual man? The reason above all is that if anyone seeks to know and relish spiritual things, that is wrong, and he is often misled. I will not enlarge on this, but a heathen master[17] says that a good man is just like a bad man for half the time, that is, when he is asleep: in that state the bad man does neither ill nor good. The same applies to the good man, but he has just one advantage over the other, that he dreams good things in his sleep: that is a sure sign of a pure man. But if he is visited by something evil, he fights with it in his sleep: that is a sign that he has overcome it in the waking state. If he takes pleasure in it when asleep, that shows that he has not overcome it when awake.

Thirdly, heaven comprehends all things and retains them. A man can attain this in love, whereby he contains all things in himself: that is, friends and enemies. Friends he loves *in* God, foes for love of God, and all that God has created he loves in relation to God, our Lord, inasmuch as it leads to God.

Fourthly, heaven is fruitful, in that it helps all kinds of work. Heaven does more than the carpenter who constructs or builds a house.[18] Heaven is the throne of our Lord.[19] According to scripture, "Heaven is His throne, and earth His footstool."[20] A heathen master says, if there were no time,[21] place, or matter, all would be one being. Matter imports distinction into the one being which is all alike in the soul. Concerning this, the soul says in the Book of Love, "Press me into thee like wax into a seal."[22] That this may happen to us, may the good God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. A sermon for Trinity Sunday. Miss Evans has translated this in her second volume from the text published by E. Sievers, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 15 (1872), pp. 430–33: a very corrupt text.
2. Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum,* 32.4 (Q).
3. Loc. cit., n. 5 (Q). The scribe of Sievers's ms. has jumped from 'breath of his mouth' in the psalm to the same words in the Augustine quotation, and is followed by Miss Evans despite its being nonsense.
4. Cf. Rom. 11:33.
5. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.34 (Q).
6. Not, of course, 'in the Apocalypse' (Sievers's text and Evans), but John 1:9.
7. I.e., the world of divine ideas, as the following makes clear (Q).
8. Cf. John 1:1.
9. Augustine, *In Johannem,* tr. 2, ch. 1, n. 2 (Q).
10. David (Psalm 32:6 as above).
11. What follows is not a biblical quotation, and Quint thinks these words are an interpolation. For the sense, cf. Sermons 43, 65.
12. Cf. Matt. 7:24–25.
13. Not biblical. A similar image occurs in Sermon 45.
14. This is the second of the 'four things' mentioned above.
15. Untraced.
16. Quint compares St. Bernard, *In Cant. Sermo* 31.2 for the general sense. Cf. also Sermon 69.
17. Cf. Aristotle, *Nich. Ethics* 1.18 (Q). Quint also notes that St. Thomas quotes this Aristotle passage (*Summa theol.* IIa–IIae, q. 154, a. 5). The rest of this paragraph, which is corrupt in Sievers's text, is regarded by Miss Evans as 'almost certainly an interpolation': in Quint's version the passage makes good sense and there is no reason to doubt its authenticity.
18. The carpenter determines the form, not the essence of the house (Q). Cf. Sermon 23.
19. Most mss. have 'fifthly' here, but as only four points have been mentioned above, this is probably wrong.
20. Cf. Isaiah 66:1.
21. The mss. have 'house,' which must be a mistake in this (Aristotelian) context (Q).
22. Cf. Song 8:6. Quint notes that the wax is not mentioned in Canticles, but adduces the same image in Aristotle, *De anima,* 2.12. Sievers could not understand the conclusion of his (faulty) text, but Quint convincingly interprets it as an image of the *unio mystica.*

SERMON SEVENTY-SEVEN

(Q 63, Jundt 7)

DEUS CARITAS EST, ETC.
(1 John 4:16)

In this country we read in the epistle for today[1] that St. John says, "God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." Now *I* say, 'God is love, and he who dwells in love is in God, and He in him.' And when I say, 'God is love,' I do so in order that we may remain with the One.[2] Now observe: when we say, 'God is love,' the question might arise as to which love it was, for there are more kinds of love than one — and in that way we should be departing from the One. Therefore, so that we may remain with the One, I say 'God is Love,' and this for four reasons.[3]

The first reason is: God pursues all creatures with His love, that they may desire to love God. If I were asked what God is, I would now answer, 'God is a good that pursues all creatures with love so that they may pursue Him in turn' — so great is the joy God feels in being pursued by creatures.

Secondly, all creatures pursue God with their love, for no man is so evil as to commit sin for the sake of evil: he does so rather out of loving desire. If a man slays another, he does so not in order to do evil: he thinks that as long as the other lives, he will not be at peace with himself: accordingly he will seek his desire in peace, for peace is something we love. So all creatures pursue God with love, for 'God is love,' and all creatures desire love. If a stone had reason, it would have to pursue God with love. If you were to ask a tree why it bore fruit, if it had reason, it would say, 'I renew myself in the fruit in order to approach my origin in the renewal, for it is lovely to be near the origin.' God is the origin and is Love. Therefore the soul can never be satisfied but with love. 'Love is God.' St. Augustine says, 'Lord, if

thou wert to give me all thou canst, I would not be satisfied unless thou gavest me thyself.'[4] St. Augustine also says, 'O man, love what you can obtain with love, and hold to what satisfies your soul.'[5]

Thirdly I say, 'God is Love,' for God has scattered His love among all creatures and yet is One in Himself. Since there is something lovable in all creatures, in every one, therefore every creature, as far as endowed with reason, loves something in another that is like itself. Accordingly, women sometimes desire something red because they seek satisfaction of their desire, and if that does not satisfy them, then another time they demand something green, and still their desire cannot be satisfied, and the reason is this: they do not[6] take the simple desire, but they take the cloth as well, which bears the color that appears desirable. Now since something desirable appears in every creature, therefore people love now *this* and now *that*. Now put aside 'this' and 'that,' and what remains is nothing but God. If a man paints a picture on the wall, the wall is the support of the picture; so, if anybody loves the picture on the wall, he loves the wall as well. If you took the wall away, the picture would be removed as well. But if you can remove the wall in such a way that the picture remains, then the picture is its own support. If anyone should then love the picture, he would love pure picture. So, you should love all that is lovable and not that *on which* it appears lovable, and then you will love nothing but God: that is an undoubted truth.[7] St. Dionysius says God has become as nothing to the soul; that means He is *unknown* to her.[8] Because we do not know God, so we love in *creatures* what is good, and since we confuse *things* with goodness, that is a cause of sin.[9] The angels are innumerable:[10] no one can imagine their number, and for each one there is a heaven(?),[11] one above the other. If the lowest angel dropped a splinter — as if one were to cut a splinter off a piece of wood — and if that were to fall down in time[12] on to this earth complete with the nobility it has of its true nature, all things on earth would blossom and become fruitful. You can imagine, then, how noble the *highest* angel is.[13] Now if we were to combine the nobility of all the angels which they possess by nature, and the nobility of all creatures that they have by nature, together with the nobility of the whole world, and if we wanted to bring all this into comparison with God, we would not find God that way, for before God it is worthless: it is all worthless, utterly worthless and less than

worthless, for it is pure nothing. God is not to be found that way, but only in the One.

In the fourth place I say, 'God is Love,' because He must love all creatures with His love, whether they know it or not. Accordingly I will say something I last said on Friday:[14] I will never pray to God for His gifts, nor will I ever thank Him for His gifts, for if I were worthy to receive His gifts He would *have* to give them to me whether He would or not. Therefore I will not pray to Him for His gifts, since He *must* give: but I will surely pray to Him to make me worthy to receive His gifts, and I will thank Him for being such that He has to give. Therefore I say, "God is Love," for He loves me with the love with which He loves Himself: and if anyone deprived Him of that, they would deprive Him of His entire Godhead. Though it is true that He loves me with His love, yet I cannot become blessed through that: but I would be blessed by loving Him and be blessed in His love.

Now I say, 'He who dwells in Love is in God, and He is in him.' If I were asked where God is, I should reply, 'He is everywhere.' If I were asked where the soul is that dwells in Love, I should reply, 'She is everywhere.' For God loves, and the soul that dwells in Love is in God and God is in her: and since God is everywhere and she is in God, she is not half in and half out of God; and since God is in her, the soul must be everywhere, for He who is everywhere is in her. God is everywhere in the soul, and she is everywhere in Him. Thus God is one All without everything,[15] and she is with Him one All without everything. This is a sermon for All Saints. Now it is over. Now all sit still, I want to keep you longer. I am going to preach you another sermon.[16] God preserve us from peril!

Notes

1. First Sunday after Trinity. Cf. Sermon 5, with which this is closely related.
2. Eckhart is here giving his own, highly individual interpretation of the text.
3. The normal rendering of *Deus caritas est* is 'Got ist *diu* minne,' i.e., with the definite article. Eckhart omits the article to denote the *one* love he wishes to speak about — the unitary love of God without any distinction (Q). Since English does not use the article in this case, I have made the distinction by capitalizing 'Love' in this sense.
4. Eckhart seems to be quoting Augustine freely. Quint refers to *Conf.* 13.8 (cf. Sermon 20a).

5. Again, a free rendering of Augustine. Quint refers to *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.26 (cf. Sermon 5, and *LW* IV, 151).

6. Quint supplies 'not' for the sense.

7. Cf. also Sermon 5.

8. Cf. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 7.3 (Q).

9. The text says, 'since we love (*minnen*) things with goodness.' I take *minnen* as an error for *meinen* 'mean, intend.' When we say 'goodness' we mean *things,* not God. Quint's interpretation is slightly different, but comes to the same thing.

10. Cf. Sermon 63, note 2.

11. The Mss have *ain coli* or *an coly,* which makes no obvious sense. Quint refers to Q 10 (our Sermon 66, note 8) and the fact that each angel is a distinct species. He also quotes a reference to the various heavens of angels. Possibly *coli* is somehow corrupted from *caelum* (cf. Sermon 41, note 8).

12. Temporality.

13. Cf. Sermon 5.

14. Cf. Sermon 11, at end. But Eckhart probably means that he has said this on various occasions.

15. God is 'everything' but not 'all *things.*'

16. This is certainly Sermon 78, which follows in the Mss and is close in theme.

SERMON SEVENTY-EIGHT

(Q 64, Jundt 8)[1]

The soul is one with God and not united.[2] Here is a simile:[3] if we fill a tub with water, the water in the tub is united but not one with it, for where there is water there is no wood, and where there is wood there is no water. Now take the wood and throw it in the middle of the water, still the wood is only united and not one (with the water). It is different with the soul: she becomes one with God and not united, for where God is, there the soul is, and where the soul is, there God is.

Scripture says, "Moses saw God face to face" (Exod. 33:11). The masters deny this,[4] saying where two faces appear God is not seen, for God is one and not two: for whoever sees God sees nothing but one.

Now I will take the text I used in my first sermon:[5] "God is Love, and he who dwells in love is in God, and He in him" (1 John 4:16). To him who is thus in Love I address the words of St. Matthew:[6] "Enter, true and faithful servant, into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:21), and I will add the words of our Lord: "Enter, faithful servant, I will place you over all my goods." This is to be understood in three ways. First: "I will set you over all my goods," as my goods are scattered among creatures: over this dividedness I will set you up in one.[7] Secondly, inasmuch as they are all summed up in one, I will set you over this summation, in unity, as all good is a unity. Thirdly I will set you into the source of unity, where the very term 'united' disappears.[8] *There* God is to the soul as if the reason for His being God were that He might be the soul's. For if it could be that God were to withhold from the soul so much as a hair's breadth of His being or His self-identity, whereby He belongs to Himself, then He would not be God — so absolutely one does the soul become with God. I take a saying of our Lord from the Gospel, "I pray thee Father, as I and thou are one, that they may thus become one with us" (John

17:21). And I take another text from the Gospel, where our Lord said, "Where I am, there too my servant shall be" (John 12:26). So truly will the soul become one being, which is God, and no less: and that is as true as that God is God.

Dear children, I beg you to note one thing: I pray you for God's sake, I beg you to do this for my sake and carefully mark my words. All those who are thus in unity, as I have described it, must not suppose that because they are free from 'forms,'[9] such forms would be better for them than not departing from unity. To do so would be wrong and might even be called heresy: for you should know that there, in the unity, there is neither Conrad nor Henry.[10] I will tell you how I think of people: I try to forget myself and everyone and merge myself, for them, in unity.[11] May we abide in unity, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. This is the 'other sermon mentioned at the end of Sermon 77, of which it looks very like a continuation. But Quint does not agree with Pahncke's view that Sermons 77 and 78 (his Sermons 63 and 64) are 'one piece.' Miss Evans has this, from 'Schmidt's MS (=Quint's Str_3) as Sermon I of her vol. 2.

2. I omit the words 'Scripture says' bracketed by Quint as being a scribal addition. The words are not scriptural but typically Eckhartian, and closely linked with the end of Sermon 77.

3. Cf. Sermon 71, note 18.

4. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia–IIae, q. 98, a. 3, ad 2, quoting Augustine (Q).

5. Sermon 77. For the use of 'Love' (capitalized) see Sermon 77, n. 3.

6. The MS has 'St. Paul,' corrected by Quint. This is the text of Sermon 8, with which there are parallels.

7. I.e., in God (Evans).

8. Following Quint's 'interpretative translation' of this difficult passage.

9. I.e., sense objects which present themselves to the mind. Quint refers to Sermon 5 which follows in his edition as Sermon 65. The attainment of this unity implies the withdrawal from the diversity of 'forms,' and this should not be regretted.

10. Cf. Sermon 5, note 6.

11. By forgetting people as individuals, Eckhart enters into this unity on behalf of all people.

SERMON SEVENTY-NINE

(Pf 79, Q 43, QT 52)

ADOLESCENS TIBI DICO: SURGE
(Luke 7:14)[1]

Today we read in the Gospel about a widow who had an only son, who was dead. Then our Lord came to Him and said, "I tell you, young man, arise!" And the young man sat up.

By this widow we mean the soul. Because her husband was dead, so her son was dead also. By the son we mean the intellect, which is the man in the soul.[2] Because she did not live in the intellect, the man was dead, and therefore she was a widow. "Our Lord said to the woman at the well, 'Go home, and bring me your husband!' " (John 4:16). He meant that, because she did not live in the intellect, which is the man, she was not vouchsafed the 'living water' which is the Holy Ghost: this is granted only to those that dwell in the intellect.[3] Intellect is the highest part of the soul, where she dwells in community and close companionship with the angels in angelic nature. Angelic nature is not in contact with time, nor is the intellect which is the man in the soul: it is free from time. If the man is not living there, the son dies. Therefore she was a widow. Why a widow? No creature lives but has some good and some shortcomings that lead to abandoning God. The widow's lack was that her fruitfulness was dead, and accordingly the fruit perished.

'Widow' in another sense denotes one who has been abandoned—and *has* abandoned. Thus we must leave and forsake all creatures. The prophet says, "The woman who is barren has more children than she who is fruitful."[4] So it is with the soul that gives birth spiritually: her birth is much greater; she gives birth every moment. The soul that has God is fruitful all the time. God has to perform all His works of necessity. God is ever at work in the eternal now, and His work is

the begetting of His Son: He is bringing him forth all the time.[5] In his birth all things have proceeded forth, and so great is God's pleasure in this birth that He spends His whole energy upon it. The more one knows all things, the more perfect that knowledge becomes, and yet it seems like nothing.[6] God bears Himself out of Himself into Himself, and bears Himself again back into Himself.[7] The more perfect the birth, the more does it bear. I say that God is wholly one: He knows nothing but Himself alone. God gives Himself birth all at once in His Son: God speaks all things in His Son. Therefore he says, "Young man, arise!"

God exerts all His power in this birth, and this is necessary that the soul may return to God. In one way this is frightening, since the soul so often falls away from where God is exerting all His power:[8] and this (exertion) is necessary to bring the soul to life again. God creates all creatures by His utterance: but in order to vivify the soul God speaks with all His power in this birth. In another way it is consoling, in that the soul is brought back therein.[9] In that birth she comes to life, and God bears His Son into the soul so as to quicken her. God speaks Himself in His Son. In the very utterance wherein He speaks Himself in His Son, He speaks into the soul. All creatures have the capacity for birth. A creature without birth would not exist. According to one master, it is a sign of the divine birth that all creatures are wrought in it.

Why did he say, "Young man"? The soul has nothing that God can speak into except the intellect. Some powers are too lowly for God to speak into them. He speaks indeed, but they do not hear Him. Will as will is not receptive, not in any way. The 'man' means no other power than the intellect. The will is only concerned with execution.

"Young man": All the powers that belong to the soul do not age. The powers that belong to the body are used up and perish. The more a man knows, the better he knows. Therefore, "Young man." The masters call 'young' that which is close to its beginning. In the intellect man is ever young: the more active he is with *that* power, the closer he is to his birth, and a thing near its birth is young. The firstborn of the soul is intellect, and then will, and after that the other powers.

Now he says, "Young man, arise!" What does it mean, "arise"? "Arise" from the work, and let the soul "arise" in herself! One single

work that God does in the impartible light of the soul is fairer than all the world, and more delightful to God than all that He ever wrought in creatures. Foolish folk take bad for good and good for bad. But to him who understands aright the unique work of God in the soul is better and nobler and higher than the whole world.

Above this light comes grace. Grace enters neither into intellect nor into will. For grace to enter into intellect, intellect and will must transcend themselves. That cannot be, for the will is so noble in itself that it can be filled with nothing but God's love. God's love performs mighty works. And there is one thing yet higher (than will), which is intellect: this is so noble that it can only be perfected with divine truth. Accordingly, a master said there is something very secret above these, which is the head of the soul.[10] It is here that the true union takes place between God and the soul. Grace never did any virtuous work: it has never done any work at all, though it flows forth in the doing of good works. Grace does not unify by works. Grace is the indwelling and cohabiting of the soul in God. Work of whatever kind, external or internal, is beneath it. All creatures are searching for the God-like. The more base and external, like air and water, are dispersed. But heaven, which is nobler, seeks the Godlike more closely. Heaven revolves steadfastly, and in its revolution brings forth all creatures. In that it resembles God: but His intention is not this, but something above that. Secondly, in its revolution, heaven is seeking rest. Heaven never condescends to any task in order to serve any creature that is below it. In this way it is even closer to God. The place where God gives birth to His only-begotten Son cannot conceive other creatures. Nevertheless heaven strives to perform the work that God performs in Himself. If heaven does this, and other creatures of less worth — the soul is nobler than heaven.

One master says the soul bears herself in herself, and bears herself out of herself and back into herself.[11] She can perform wonders by her natural light: she is so strong that she separates what is one. Fire and heat are one: this one is divided by intellect. Wisdom and goodness are one in God: if wisdom is presented to intellect, it never thinks of the other. The soul brings forth in herself God out of God into God: she bears Him truly outside of herself: she does this by bearing God there, where she is Godlike: *there* she is an image of God. I have said before that an image, as image, can never be separated from

that which it images.[12] As long as the soul lives there where she is God's image, she is fruitful: in that place there is true union which all creatures cannot sever. Not God Himself, not the angels, not souls or any creatures can sever where the soul is God's image. That is true union, and there lies true blessedness. Some masters look for blessedness in the intellect. I say blessedness lies neither in intellect nor in will: blessedness lies above them, where blessedness lies *as* blessedness not as intellect, and God is there as God and the soul as God's image. Blessedness is there, where the soul takes God as God. *There* soul is soul and grace is grace, blessedness is blessedness and God is God. We pray to our Lord that he may grant that we be thus united with him. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. On the same text as Sermons 36, 37, and 80.
2. Cf. Sermon 36. *Man*=both 'man' and 'husband.' The higher intellect is meant.
3. This is, of course, the story of the woman of Samaria (cf. Sermon 58, note 5).
4. A telescoping of Isaiah 54:1: "Rejoice, O *barren* woman... for she who is *deserted* has more children than she who has a husband." Cf. also Sermon 8.
5. Cf. Sermon 48.
6. This sentence, missing in Pfeiffer, is not in all MSS. Quint regards it as genuine despite its somewhat loose connection with the context. A similar passage occurs in Sermon 83.
7. A similar statement is made later about the soul (cf. note 11).
8. Thus frustrating the birth of the Son in the soul, if the soul does not 'dwell in the intellect,' so that the 'man' in the soul dies (Q).
9. After 'falling away.'
10. Cf. Sermon 72, note 12.
11. Cf. note 7.
12. Cf. Sermon 14b.

SERMON EIGHTY

(Pf 80, Q 42, QT 39)

ADOLESCENS, TIBI DICO: SURGE
(Luke 7:14)

We read in the Gospel how my lord St. Luke writes of a youth who was dead. Then our Lord came upon him and stepped up to him and touched him, saying, "Young man, I say to you and command you, arise!"

Now you must know that in all good people God is present all at once, and there is something in the soul wherein God lives, and something in the soul where the soul lives in God. And if the soul turns outward toward external things she dies, and God too is dead for the soul: but He does not therefore by any means die in Himself—He is alive in Himself. Just as, when the soul leaves the body, the body dies and the soul lives on in herself, so God is dead for the soul, but lives on in Himself.

And you should know, there is one power in the soul[1] that is wider than heaven which itself is incredibly wide, so wide that we cannot truly define it—but this other power[2] is much wider still.

Now mark carefully. In this exalted power God is saying to His only-begotten Son, "Young man, arise!" God has such a close union with the soul that it is past belief: and God is so lofty in Himself that neither understanding[3] nor desire can attain to Him. But desire reaches further than anything that can be grasped by the understanding. It is wider than heaven, wider than all the angels, and yet all that is on earth lives from one little angelic spark.[4] Desire is far-reaching, measureless. All that understanding can grasp, all that desire can desire, that is not God. Where understanding and desire end, there is darkness, and there God shines.

Now our Lord says, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" See now, if I am to hear God speaking in me I must be wholly estranged from

all that is mine, as strange as I am to things over the ocean, and especially from time. The soul is as young in herself as when she was created, and she is affected by age solely on account of the body, when she makes use of the senses. A master[5] says, 'If an old man had the eyes of a youth, he would see as well as a youth.' Where I sat yesterday I said something that sounds quite incredible: I said Jerusalem is as near my soul as the ground I stand on now. Yes, in holy truth! Whatever is a thousand miles further off than Jerusalem is as close to my soul as my own body is. I am as sure of this as that I am a man, and learned priests can easily understand this! Know then that my soul is as young as when she was created, in fact much younger! And I tell you, I should be ashamed if she were not younger tomorrow than today!

The soul has two powers which have nothing whatever to do with the body, namely, intellect and will, which function above time. Oh, if only the soul's eyes were opened so that her understanding might clearly behold the truth! Do you know, for such a man it would be as easy to give up everything as a pea or a lentil or as nothing — indeed, upon my soul, to that man all things would be as nothing! There are some who give up things for love although they greatly prize what they have abandoned. But this man who knows in truth that even if he leaves himself and all things it is still absolutely nothing — the man indeed who lives thus, in truth, he possesses all things.

There is one power in the soul to which all things are alike sweet: the very worst and the very best are all the same to this power, which takes things above 'here' and 'now': *now* meaning time and *here* the place where I am now standing. If I should have gone out of myself and were entirely empty, then indeed the Father would bear His only-begotten Son in my spirit so purely that the spirit would bear him back again. In very truth, if my soul were as ready as the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, then the Father would work in me as purely as in His only-begotten Son, no less, for He loves me within the self-same love with which He loves Himself. St. John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word" (John 1:1). Now then, to hear this Word in the Father (where all is stillness), a man must be quite quiet and wholly free from image, indeed from all forms. Indeed, a man would have to be so true to

God that nothing whatever might gladden or sadden him. He must take all things in God, just as they are *there.*

Now he says, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" His intention is to perform the work Himself. If anyone were to tell me to carry a single stone, he might as well tell me to carry a thousand stones as one, if he meant to carry them himself. Or if anyone were to say, 'carry a hundred weight,' he might as well make it a thousand if he meant to do it himself.[6] Well now, God *will* do this work Himself: man needs only to obey and not resist. If only the soul would stay within, she would have all things present to her there. There is one power in the soul that is not only power but being, and it is not only being but it frees from being: it is so pure, so high and so noble in itself that no creature can enter it — only God dwells in there. In very truth, God Himself cannot enter there as long as He has any mode: neither as being wise[7] nor as being good nor as being rich. God cannot enter there in any mode: He can only enter there in the nakedness of the divine nature.[8]

Now note the words "Young man, I *tell* you." What is it that God 'tells' us? That is God's work, and that work is so noble, so sublime, that God alone performs it. Understand: all our perfection and all our bliss depends on our traversing and transcending all creatureliness, all being and getting into the ground that is groundless.[9]

We pray to our dear Lord God that we may be one and indwelling, and may God help us to find this ground. Amen.

Notes

1. This 'power' is desire, as explained below.
2. This is the 'something in the soul' mentioned above, the 'spark in the soul': cf. note 8.
3. Not the 'higher intellect' but the lower power of discursive thought.
4. Cf. Sermon 77, note 12.
5. Aristotle, *De anima* 1.65 (Q).
6. Cf. Sermon 8.
7. Curiously, the ambiguity of Middle High German *weise* (noun and adjective: modern *Weise* and *weise)* is exactly paralleled in English *wise:* either meaning would make sense here.
8. This is the 'castle in the soul' of Sermon 8. For God's 'nakedness' see also Sermon 68, note 13.
9. The 'ground' of God. Cf. Sermon 66 note 11.

SERMON EIGHTY-ONE

(Q 33, *Par. an.* 49, Evans II, 38)

SANCTI PER FIDEM VICERUNT REGNA
(Hebrews 11:33)

St. Paul says, 'The saints overcame the kingdom by faith." There are four kingdoms the saints have overcome, and we too must overcome them. The first kingdom is the world: we must conquer the kingdom of the world by poverty of spirit. The second kingdom is that of our flesh: this we must conquer with hunger and thirst. The third kingdom is the devil's: this we must conquer with sorrow and pain. The fourth kingdom is that of our Lord Jesus Christ: this we must conquer by the power of love.

If a man possessed the whole world, he should still consider himself poor and should always stretch out his hand at our Lord God's door and beg for the alms of our Lord's grace, for grace makes us[1] God's children. Therefore David says, "Lord, all my desire is for thee and after thee" (Ps. 37:10). St. Paul says, "I count all things as a cesspool, that I may magnify our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). It is impossible for any soul to be without sin, unless God's grace enters into her. The work of grace is to make the soul quick and amenable to all divine works, for grace flows from the divine spring and is a likeness of God and tastes of God and makes the soul like God. When this same grace and its savor are projected into the will, that is called love, and when grace and its savor are projected into the rational power, that is called the light of faith, and when this same grace and its savor are projected into the angry power,[2] which is always rising up, that is called hope. Therefore these are called divine virtues, because they perform God's work in the soul, just as we can see by the power of the sun which performs living works on earth, because it makes all things live and sustains their being. If this light should fail, all things

would vanish as if they had never been. So it is with the soul: where there is grace and love, that man finds it easy to do all divine works. It is a sure sign, if a man has difficulty in doing godly works, that there is no grace in him. Concerning this a master[3] says, 'I do not condemn people for wearing fine clothes or eating well, if they have love. Nor do I rate myself higher for leading an austere life, unless I find that I have more love.' It is great foolishness when many a man fasts much, prays and performs great works and spends his time alone, if he does not mend his ways, and is impatient and angry. He should find out his greatest weakness, and devote all his energy to overcoming *that*. If he is well disciplined in his behavior, then whatever he does will be pleasing to God.

That is how to conquer the kingdoms. Let us pray.[4]

Notes

1. Eckhart switches from singular 'a man' to plural 'them' here. It is an easier switch in English to 'us.'
2. *Irascibilis:* see Sermon 50, note 3.
3. Perhaps from a pseudo-Bernardine treatise on the virtues (Q).
4. The normal conclusion is lacking.

SERMON EIGHTY-TWO

(Pf 82, Q 8, QT 9)

IN OCCISIONE GLADII MORTUI SUNT
(Hebrews 11:37)[1]

We read of the martyrs that they "died by the sword." Our Lord said to his disciples, You are blessed when you suffer anything in my name (Matt. 5:11).

Now he says, "They died." The first meaning of their being dead is that whatever one suffers in this world and in this body, will have an end. St. Augustine says that all pain and toilsome labor will come to an end, but the reward that God gives for this is eternal. The second thing we should consider is that all this life is mortal, so we should not fear all the pain and travail that befall us, for it will end. The third thing is that we should act as if we were dead, being touched by neither joy nor sorrow. A master says nothing can move the heavens,[2] meaning that that man is a heavenly man[3] in whom all things are so little present that they do not move him. A master says, since all things are so vile, how does it come that they can so easily distract a man from God? For the soul is after all at her meanest better than heaven and all creatures. He says it comes of minding God too little. If man minded God as he should, it would be almost impossible for him ever to fall. So it is a good precept for a man to act in this world as if he were dead. St. Gregory says no man can have much of God but he who is thoroughly dead to this world.[4]

The fourth lesson is the best of all. He says, "They are dead." Death gives them being. A master says nature never breaks anything without giving something better. When air becomes fire, that is better, but when air becomes water that is destruction and aberration.[5] If this is nature's way, how much more is it God's: He never destroys without giving something better. The martyrs are dead and have lost

life, but they have found being. A master says the noblest thing is being, life, and knowledge.[6] Knowledge is higher than life or being, for in that which it knows it has life and being. Yet again, life is nobler than being or knowledge[7] in the sense that a tree lives but a stone has being. Now again, if we take being naked and pure, as it is in itself, then being is loftier than knowledge or life, for in that it has being it has knowledge and life. They[8] have lost life and found being.

A master says there is nothing so like God as being: insofar as it has being it is like God. A master says that being is so pure and so lofty that all that God is, is being. God knows nothing but being, He is conscious of nothing but being: being is His circumference. God loves nothing but His being, He thinks of nothing but His being. I say all creatures are one being.[9] One master says that some creatures are so close to God and have pressed into themselves so much of the divine light that they give being to other creatures. That is not true, for being is so high, so pure and so akin to God that no one can give being save God alone in Himself. God's characteristic is being. A master says one creature can quite well give *life* to another.[10] Therefore in being alone lies all that is at all. Being is the first name.[11] Whatever is deficient is a falling away from being. Our whole life ought to be being.

So far as our life is one being, so far it is in God. So far as our life is enclosed in being, so far it is akin to God. There is no life so feeble but, taken as it is being, it is nobler than anything that ever lived. I am certain that if the soul had knowledge of the least thing that has being, she would never depart for an instant from that thing. The meanest thing, known in God — if one were but to know a flower as it has being in God — that would be nobler than the whole world. To know the meanest thing in God as it is one being is better than to know an angel.

If an angel turned to the knowledge of creatures, it would become night. St. Augustine says when the angels know creatures without God, that is evening light, but when they know creatures in God, it is morning light. When they know God in Himself as He is in His being, that is bright noonday.[12] I declare that man should grasp and recognize how noble being is. There is no creature so mean that it does not desire being. When caterpillars drop off a tree, they crawl up a wall to preserve their being, so noble is being. We advocate dying in God so that He may place us in a being which is better than life:

a being in which our life lives, in which our life *becomes* being. A man should willingly embrace death and die that he may obtain a better being.

I sometimes say that a bit of wood is more precious than gold — a surprising statement. A stone is nobler, having being, than God and His Godhead without being, if were possible to deprive Him of being. That must indeed be a powerful life, in which dead things revive, in which even death is changed to life. To God nothing dies: All things are living in Him. "They are dead," scripture says of the martyrs, and they are established in eternal life, in the life where 'life' is 'being.' We must be thoroughly dead, so that neither joy nor sorrow can touch us.

Whatever we would know, we must know in its cause. One can never truly know a thing in itself unless one knows it in its cause. Knowledge can never be knowledge unless it knows it in its productive cause.[13] Thus life can never be perfected till it returns to its productive source where life is one being that the soul receives when she dies right down to the 'ground,' that we may live in that life wherein life is one being. What holds us back from being constant in this is, as one master explains, our contact with time. Whatever touches time is mortal. A master says the course of heaven is eternal: true, time is derived from this, but only by a falling-away.[14] But heaven's course is eternal, knowing nothing of time, which means that the soul should be established in pure being.[15] The second hindrance is that life contains oppositions within itself. What are the opposites? Joy and sorrow, white and black are opposites, and they cannot subsist in being.

A master says the soul is given to the body that she may be purified.[16] When the soul is separated from the body she has neither reason nor will. She is one, and would be unable to exercise the power of turning to God: she has these powers in her ground, as in their roots, but not as functioning.[17] The soul is purified in the body so that she may collect what is scattered and dispersed. When that which the five senses have dispersed comes back into the soul, she has a power in which it all becomes one.[18] Secondly, the soul is purified in the exercise of virtues, whereby she ascends into the life of unity. The soul's purification consists in her being purified of a life that is divided, and entering into a life that is unified. All that is scattered among lower things is united when the soul climbs up into a life where there are no opposites. When the soul enters the life of

intellect, she knows no opposites.[19] Whatever falls away from this light falls into mortality and dies. The third point about the soul's purity is that she should not turn to any object. Whatever is directed toward anything else must die and cannot subsist.

We pray to our dear Lord to help us from a life that is divided into a life that is united. May God help us to this. Amen.

Notes

1. According to the Basle Tauler print, a sermon for the feast of SS John and Paul (June 26).
2. Aristotle, *De generatione* A.6 (Q).
3. Cf. Sermon 72.
4. Gloss on Exodus 33:20 (Q).
5. Freely after Albertus Magnus, *De generatione et corruptione* I, tr. 1, ch. 25 (Q). Cf. Sermon 36, and *LW* V, 78.
6. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3 (Q).
7. Clark omits 'or knowledge' following the Basle print, but Quint refers to *LW* III, 52 for an explanation.
8. The martyrs.
9. In his reply to the second list of impugned passages (Blakney, p. 300), Eckhart quotes these words and adds, 'This sounds bad and is wrong in this sense *(sic falsum est).*' His meaning is to be inferred from his commentary on the Book of Wisdom, 107 (*LW* II, 443): 'Note that in natural things being is always one and in the one.' Quint also notes St. Thomas on the *Liber de causis,* lect. 18, 'Therefore being, which is first, is common to all things.'
10. Clark says, 'Eckhart has just asserted that this is untrue.' He has missed the contrast of 'being' and 'life.'
11. Cf. *LW* II, 142 (to Exodus 20:7): 'Therefore this name "Being" is the first and most proper among all the names of God' (Q).
12. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.23.40, and St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 58, a. 6, ad 3 (Q).
13. *Berlîche sache,* lit.='pregnant cause.' Quint refers to Eckhart's commentary on St. John (*LW* III, 10, etc.), where the Latin expression used in a similar context is *in suis principiis.*
14. As a by-product: *abevallen.*
15. I.e., beyond time.
16. Avicenna, *De Anima* 1 (Q).
17. St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 77, a. 8 (Q).
18. The *sensus communis* mentioned in Eckhart's second (parabolic) Genesis commentary, n. 203 (*LW* I, 674–75) (Q).
19. Quint refers to the second Genesis commentary, n. 99 (*LW* I, 564): 'For in the intellect there is properly neither evil nor anything contrary' (to Gen. 2:17). Quoting St. Thomas's statement that (in the intellect) the ideas of contraries are not contrary, Eckhart continues, 'rather the *idea* of evil is good, and the idea of good and evil is one and the same.' We are here close to the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Cusanus.

SERMON EIGHTY-THREE

(Pf 102, Q 51, QT 24)

HAEC DICIT DOMINUS: HONORA PATREM TUUM, ETC.
(Matthew 15:4, cf. Exodus 20:12)[1]

This text which I have quoted in Latin is spoken by our Lord in the Gospel and means in German, "You must honor your father and mother," and another commandment is given by God our Lord, "You must not covet your neighbor's goods, nor his house nor his farm nor anything that is his" (Exod. 20:17). A third text says that the people went to Moses and said, "Speak to us yourself, for we cannot hear God" (Exod. 20:19). The fourth is when our Lord God said: "Moses, you shall make me an altar of earth, and in the earth, and all that is offered on it you shall burn up" (Exod. 20:24). The fifth is, "Moses went into the cloud" (Exod. 20:21), and ascending the mountain he there found God, and in the darkness he found the true light.

My lord St. Gregory[2] says, 'Where the lamb touches bottom, the ox or the cow swims and where the cow swims the elephant forges ahead, and the water goes over his head.'[3] This is a pretty parable from which one may derive a great deal. My lord St. Augustine says scripture is like the deep sea. The little lamb denotes a simple, humble person who is able to fathom scripture. The ox that swims denotes coarse-grained people: each of these takes out what suits *him.* But by the elephant that forges ahead we are given to understand clever people who search the scriptures and plunge into them. I am astonished that Holy Scripture is so full,[4] and the masters say they are not to be interpreted barely as they stand: they say that if there is anything crudely material in them it must be expounded, but for this parables are necessary.[5] The first went in up to the ankles, the second to the knees, the third to the waist, and it went over the head of the fourth and he sank altogether.[6]

Now what is the meaning of this? St. Augustine says in the beginning scripture looks laughingly at young children, and attracts a child to it, but at the end, when one wants to fathom scripture, it makes fools of the wise: and none is so simple-minded but he can find what suits him there, and there is none so wise that when he tries to fathom it, he will not find it deeper yet and discover more in it. Whatever we may hear, and whatever anyone can tell us, contains another, hidden sense. For whatever we understand *here*[7] is as different from the way it really is, and the way it is in God, as if it did not exist at all.

Now let us return to this text: "Honor your father and mother," and in the general sense it does mean father and mother, that we should honor them; all those, too, who have spiritual power should be honored and treated with greater respect, as well as those from whom you have all temporal goods. In this we can 'wade' and even 'touch bottom,' but the profit from this is trifling. And a woman said, 'If we are to honor those from whom we have external goods, how much more should we honor those from whom we have all these!'[8] All things that we have outwardly in multiplicity *here,* is *there* all inward and one. Now you can well understand that this likeness applies to the Father. I was thinking last night how all likenesses are only there for the purpose of likening to the Father.

Secondly, "you must honor your father," that is, your heavenly Father, from whom you have your being. Who honors the Father? No one but the Son: he alone does Him honor. And none honors the Son save only the Father. All the Father's joy, His displays of affection and pleasure are reserved for the Son alone. The Father knows nothing at all but the Son. He takes such great delight in the Son that He has no need of anything but to beget His Son, for he is a perfect likeness and a perfect image of his Father. Our masters declare that whatever is known or born is an image. Accordingly they say, If the Father is to beget His only-begotten Son, He must beget His own image, abiding in Himself in the ground. The image, as it has eternally been in Him *(formae illius),* that is His immanent form.[9] Nature teaches us, and it seems entirely right to me,[10] that we must point to God by way of likeness, with this and that. Nevertheless He is neither this nor that, and the Father is not satisfied till He has withdrawn into the first source, to the innermost, to the ground and core of Fatherhood where He has been forever in Himself in His Fatherhood, where He

rejoices in Himself there, as Father of Himself in unique oneness. Here all blades of grass, wood, stones, and all things are one. This is the best of all, and I am infatuated with it. Therefore, all that nature can produce concentrates on this, plunging into the Father-nature so as to be one and one Son, so as to outgrow all things else and to be all one in the Father-nature, and, if they cannot be one,[11] to be at least a likeness of the one. Nature, which is from God, seeks nothing outside of itself: indeed nature, as it is in itself, has nothing to do with outward appearances,[12] for nature, which is of God, seeks nothing else but God's likeness.

I was thinking last night that all likeness is a preamble.[13] I cannot see anything unless it has likeness with me; I cannot know anything unless it has likeness with me. God has all things hidden in Himself: not this and that in separation, but as one in unity. The eye has no color in itself,[14] but the eye *receives* color and not the ear: the ear perceives sound and the tongue, flavor. Each has that with which it is one. Here the image of the soul and God's image are one — when we are *sons*. Even if I had neither eyes nor ears I would still have being. If anyone were to deprive me of my eyes that would not thereby deprive me of my being or my life, for life dwells in the heart. If anyone were to strike at my eye, I would put my hand before it to ward off the blow. But if anyone wanted to strike at my heart, I would exert my whole body to preserve this life. If anyone wanted to strike off my head, I would put my arm in the way so as to save my being and my life.

I have said before, the shell must be broken and what is inside must come out, for, if you want to get at the kernel you must break the shell.[15] Accordingly, if you want to find nature unveiled, all likenesses must be shattered, and the further you penetrate, the nearer you will get to the essence. When the soul finds the One, where all is one, there she will remain in that One. Who honors God? He who seeks God's honor in all things.

Many years ago I did not exist. Not long after that, my father and mother ate meat and bread and vegetables that grew in the garden, and from that I became a man. In this my father and mother were unable to help, but God made my body unaided, and created my soul after the highest. Thus I became possessed of life *(possedi me)*. This grain has it in its nature to become rye, that one's nature is to become

wheat, and it never rests until it has attained that nature. This grain of wheat has it in its nature to become all things, therefore it pays the price and goes to its death that it may become all things. And this ore is copper, but it has it in its nature to become silver, and silver has it in its nature to become gold, therefore it never rests until it has attained that nature.[16] Indeed, this wood has it in its nature to become a stone. I say further: it can become all things; it can be put in a fire and be burnt up so as to be transformed into the fire's nature, and then it becomes one with the one and has eternally one being. In fact wood and stone and bone and all the grasses have all been one in their first beginning. And if *this* nature is such, how is it with *that* nature which is so pure in itself that it seeks neither this nor that, but, outstripping all else, hastens on toward its pristine purity?

I was thinking last night that there are so many heavens. Now there are some unbelieving people who do not believe that this bread on the altar can be transformed, that it can become the gracious body of our Lord and that God can bring this about. (How unworthy these people are, that they cannot believe God capable of doing this!) But if God has granted to nature the power to become all things, how much more is it possible for God to turn this bread on the altar into his body! If frail nature can manage to take a man out of a leaf, then it is far more easily possible for God to make his body out of a piece of bread. Who honors God? He who seeks God's honor in all things. This reason is the more obvious, although the first is better.[17]

The fourth meaning:[18] "They stood far off and said to Moses, 'Moses, speak to us yourself, for we cannot hear God'" "They stood far off," and that was the 'shell'[19] that prevented them from hearing God.

"Moses went into the cloud and ascended the mountain," and there he saw the divine light. Truly, it is in the darkness that one finds this light, so when we are in sorrow and distress, then this light is nearest of all to us. Now whether God does His best or His worst, He *has* to give Himself to us,[20] even though in travail and distress. There was once a saintly woman with many sons whom they sought to kill.[21] Then she laughed and said, "You should not be sad but rejoice and think of your heavenly Father, for you have got nothing from me" — as if she were to say, 'You have your being directly from God.' This applies well to ourselves. Our Lord said,

"Your darkness — that is, your suffering — shall be changed into clear light" (cf. Isaiah 58:10). Yet I should not seek it or strive for it. I said in another place,[22] the hidden darkness of the eternal light of the eternal Godhead is unknown and never shall be known. "And the light of the eternal Father has eternally shone in this darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend the light" (John 1:5).

Now may God help us to come to this eternal light. Amen.

Notes

1. The texts show that this was preached on the Wednesday after the third Sunday in Lent. Quint believes the sermon must have been preached in Cologne between 1322 and 1326 (see note 21).
2. Gregory the Great, *Moralia, Letter to Leander* 4 (Q).
3. I follow Quint's final translation (*DW* II, 723), not that in QT (p. 262), which makes no sense in relation to the interpretation that follows.
4. Cf. Sermon 53, note 7.
5. This was the whole purpose of Eckhart's second Genesis commentary, the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* (*LW* I, 447–702).
6. These are the lamb, the cow, the ox, and the elephant. The visual image can be variously interpreted, but the 'parabolic' meaning is clear.
7. On earth.
8. A slightly obscure passage. The woman (a nun?) presumably asked Eckhart about these words after a previous sermon. But who are 'these'? Evans and Blakney both ignore the plural 'these' and make the reference to God, which does violence to the text. Quint in his note takes the same view but does not explain how it fits the construction. He does explain that 'here' and 'there' refer to our earthly 'fathers' and to the heavenly Father respectively.
9. Cf. *LW* I, 518.
10. Quint has altered Pfeiffer's *unbillîch* 'unsuitable' to *billîch*. This accords with the following 'nevertheless.'
11. 'One' supplied by Quint.
12. *Varwe* (modern *Farbe)* meant not only 'color' but 'appearance.'
13. Miss Evans's word: *vürwerk* or *vorwerk* may mean an outer bastion or a forecourt.
14. Quint's reading: cf. Sermon 57 and *LW* III, 86.
15. Cf. Sermon 24a.
16. Cf. Sermon 29: 'The nature of all corn tends toward wheat, and of all treasure toward gold, and of all birth toward man.' The first Genesis commentary to Gen. 1:31 (*LW* I, 285), has, 'as every grain is an infirmity or sickness of wheat, a falling-away from its form and perfection... and every metal an infirmity or sickness of gold — wherefore the alchemists claim by purging this sickness, to change any metal into real gold — so man, as the most perfect animal of all, stands to the other animals in such a way that every animal is something imperfect and a sickness of man.'
17. Eckhart's second point above.

18. The disposition of the sermon has been obscured by the corrupt transmission, but this refers to the text Exod. 20:19.

19. Cf. note 15. The better of the two Basle prints has *schale,* 'shell,' the other (followed by Pfeiffer) has *sache,* 'reason.'

20. On God's having to give Himself, cf. especially Sermon 11.

21. 2 Maccabees 7:20ff. If, as Quint thinks on the basis of references back, this sermon was preached at St. Maccabees in Cologne, the reference is especially appropriate. But cf. Sermon 50, note 9. Also quoted in *The Book of Divine Comfort.*

22. Pfeiffer has 'A master said in another place,' but as this is a self-quotation from Sermon 53, Quint has emended to 'I said.'

SERMON EIGHTY-FOUR

(Q 84, *Par. an.* 57, Evans II, 42)

PUELLA, SURGE
(Luke 8:54).

Our Lord said to the girl, "Arise!"

With that single word our Lord Jesus Christ teaches how the soul should arise from all mortal things, and as the Son is the Word of the Father so he teaches in one word how the soul is to rise, to hoist herself up above herself and to dwell above her own self.[1] The Father spoke one Word, that was His Son. In that single Word He uttered all things. Why did He say no more than one word? Because to Him all things are present together.[2] If I could grasp in one idea all the thoughts I ever had or ever shall have, then I should have one word and no more, for "the mouth brings forth what is in the heart" (Matt. 12:34). But I will say no more of this now.

There are four reasons why the soul should arise and dwell above herself. The first is for the manifold delights she finds in God, for God's perfection cannot contain itself: He must let creatures overflow from Him to whom He can impart Himself, who can receive His likeness — so many it seems He must empty Himself — in such measureless profusion that there are more angels than sand grains or grass or leaves. Through them all there flows down to us light and grace and gifts. And all that which flows through all these creatures or natures, God offers the soul to receive: and yet all that God can give the soul would be too little for her if God did not give Himself in the gifts.[3]

The second thing is that the soul should ascend for the purity that she finds in God, for in God all things are pure and noble. As soon as they flow out of God into the nearest creature, unlikeness arises as between something and nothing: for in God there is light and being,

and in creatures there is darkness and nothingness, since what in God is light and being, in creatures is darkness and nothingness.[4]

The third thing is that the soul should ascend for the *same* she finds in God, for there is no *different*.[5] Wisdom and goodness are one in God. What wisdom is, that very same is goodness, and what is mercy is the same as justice. If goodness in God were one thing and wisdom another, there would be no satisfaction for the soul in God: for the soul is by nature inclined to goodness, and creatures all have a natural longing for wisdom. For a soul overflowing with goodness, if goodness were one thing and wisdom another, she would have to abandon wisdom with pain; and if she wanted to pour forth wisdom she would have to abandon goodness with pain. St. Augustine says the souls in heaven are not completely blest while they still have a leaning toward the body.[6] Therefore the soul cannot find peace with any but God, for in Him she finds all goodness collected together.[7] The soul must also transcend herself if she is to get God, for all things beget themselves: each begets its own nature. Why does not the apple tree's nature produce wine, and why does not the vine produce apples? Because that is not its nature, and so forth with all other creatures. Fire begets fire. If it could turn to fire everything near it, it would do so. Water would do the same: if it could turn to water and liquefy everything near it, it would do so. Just as dearly does a creature love its own being, which it has received from God. If all the pains of hell were poured onto a soul she still would not wish not to be. That shows how much a creature loves its own being which it has received directly from God. The soul *must* dwell above herself if she is to lay hold of God: for however much she might achieve with that power whereby she grasps created things — and if God had made a thousand heavens and a thousand earths she could well grasp them by that power[8] — yet she cannot grasp God. The infinite God who is in the soul, He grasps the God who is infinite. Then God grasps God, God makes God in the soul and shapes her after Himself.[9]

The fourth thing is that the soul should arise for the limitlessness she finds in God, for all things are in God new and timeless. Therefore St. John says in the Apocalypse, "He that sat on the throne said, 'I will make all things new' " (Rev. 21:5). All things are 'new' in the Son, for he is being born today of the Father, just as if he had never been born: and just as God flows into the soul, so she flows back into

God. And just as one can die of fright before the blow is struck, so too one can die of joy.[10] Thus the soul dies to herself *before* she steps into God.[11]

The soul takes four steps into God.[12] The first is that fear, hope, and desire grow in her.[13] Again she steps on, and then fear and hope and desire are quite cut off. At the third stage she comes to a forgetfulness of all temporal things. At the fourth stage she enters into God where she will eternally dwell, reigning with God in eternity, and *then* she will never again think of temporal things or of herself, being fused with God and God with her. And what she then does, she does in God.[14]

May God help us to take these steps here[15] and (thus) die, that we may rejoice in Him in eternity. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 36.
2. Cf. Sermons 30 and 89.
3. Cf. Sermon 67.
4. Cf. Sermon 30.
5. I have adopted Miss Evans's rendering for its clarity: but literally *samentheit* (which she renders 'the *same)*' means 'totality.' Thus I have avoided the cumbrousness of Quint's 'interpretative' translation.
6. *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.35 (Q). Cf. Sermon 26.
7. Eckhart here uses the same word *samentheit* as above (see note 5).
8. Cf. Sermon 45, note 9, where, however, Eckhart untypically equates this 'highest power' of the soul not with wisdom but with love: but in the present sermon, which bears the marks of Eckhart's greatest maturity, the two are seen as one in God.
9. We seem here to have as clear a statement as any concerning the much-disputed 'uncreated something' in the soul referred to in art. 27 of the bull of 1329 (Cf. Sermon 57, note 7): it is not part of the soul but part of God, a 'divine power' in the soul, as Ueda (p. 135) points out without reference to this sermon.
10. I.e., from joyful anticipation ('Vorfreude') (Q).
11. A more succinct explanation of the joy of ascetic self-abandonment would be hard to find!
12. See Sermon 74, n. 17, for an almost identical progression.
13. Not 'weaken' as Miss Evans translates, but 'grow' (*wahsent!*) Quint explains the meaning as fear of God, hope and desire for God. The fear may be, however, rather that of earthly things. At the second stage all these emotions are transcended.
14. The conclusion is taken by Quint from a better MS than that used by Strauch and translated by Miss Evans.
15. Here on earth.

SERMON EIGHTY-FIVE

(Q 85, *Par. an.* 58, Evans II, 43)

PUELLA, SURGE
(Luke 8:54)[1]

"Arise!" Our Lord laid his hand on the girl and said, "Arise!" The hand of God, that is the Holy Ghost. All things are wrought in heat. If the fiery love to God grows cold in the soul she dies, and if God is to work in the soul God must be united with the soul. Thus for the soul to be united with God or to become so, she must be divorced from all things, she must be all alone as God is all alone, for a work wrought by God in an empty soul is better than heaven and earth. God created the soul that she might be united with Him. One saint says the soul was made from nothing and He alone made her, no one with Him.[2] If anyone had shared in the making, God would have had cause to worry lest the soul turn that way. Therefore the soul must be all alone as God is all alone.

Spiritual and material things cannot be united.[3] If divine perfection is to operate in the soul, the soul must be a spirit as God is a spirit, and if God were to give to the soul *in* the soul, He could only give in a limited way. So He takes her into Himself *in* Himself, and in this way she is united with Him. Here is an example: When fire and stone unite, since both are material things, the stone often remains cold inside owing to the stone's dense nature, and so it is with air and light: whatever you see in the air, you can see in the sun. And yet, since they are both material, there is more light in a mile than in half a mile, and more in half a mile than in a house.[4] But the best comparison to be found is that of body and soul. These are so closely knit that the body can do nothing without the soul or the soul without the body; and just as the soul sticks to the body, so God sticks to the

soul, and when the soul leaves the body that is the death of the body. So too the soul dies if God leaves her.

Three things prevent the soul from uniting with God. The first is that she is too scattered, that she is not unitary: for when the soul is inclined toward creatures, she is not unitary. The second is when she is involved with temporal things. The third is when she is turned toward the body, for then she cannot unite with God.

So too there are three things that favor the union of God with the soul. The first is that the soul should be simple and undivided: for if she is to be united with God, she must be simple as God is simple. Secondly, that she should dwell above herself and above all transient things and adhere to God.[5] The third is that she should be detached from all material things and work according to her primal purity.[6] Concerning the free soul, Augustine says, 'When thou dost not want me[7] I want thee; when I want thee thou dost not want me. When I pursue thee, thou fleest from me.'[8] On the return journey the pure spirits all take one course into the bare essence of God.[9]

Notes

1. On the same text as Sermon 84, but a different treatment. Quint remarks that this sermon must have been abridged by a skillful editor or scribe, though it lacks a clear disposition. Probably preached on the same Sunday (twenty-fourth after Trinity) as Sermon 84, but in a different year.
2. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 7.21 (Q).
3. Cf. Sermon 44.
4. Cf. Sermon 23.
5. Cf. Sermon 84.
6. Her divine ground (Q).
7. 'Me' supplied by Quint after Sievers.
8. Quint, following Lüers, refers to Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 69.6. This quotation serves to underline the soul's tendency to evade God's efforts at uniting with her.
9. As this is only an abstract, the normal ending of a sermon is lacking.

SERMON EIGHTY-SIX

(Q 56, *Par. an.* 26, Evans II, 32)[1]

"Mary[2] stood at the sepulcher weeping" (John 20:11). It was a wonder that in such sore distress she could weep at all. 'Love was the reason of her standing, sorrow of her weeping.'[3] She stepped forward and looked into the tomb. She sought a dead man, and found two living angels. Origen says, 'she stood.' Why did she stay when the apostles had fled? She had nothing to lose: all she had she had lost with him. When he died she died with him. When they buried him they buried her soul with him. Therefore she had nothing to lose.

She went on. Then he met her. "She thought he was the gardener, and said, 'Where have you laid him?'" (John 20:15). She was so anxious about him that she only took in one word that he said.[4] "Where have you laid him?" that was what she said to him. Then he revealed himself gradually[5] to her. If he had revealed himself all at once, while she was in the throes of longing, she would have died of joy.[6] If the soul knew when God was coming into her, she would die of joy; and if she knew when He was leaving her, she would die of grief. She does not know when He comes or when He goes, though she can sense when He is with her. A master says His coming and His going are hidden. His presence is not concealed, for He is a light, and light is by nature revelation.

Mary sought God and God alone: that is why she found Him, and she desired nothing but God. To the soul that seeks God, all creatures must be a pain. It was a pain for her to see the angels. Thus for the soul in quest of God, all things must be as nothing.[7] For the soul to find God she needs six things: First, what was sweet to her before must become bitter to her. Second, that the soul becomes too cramped for herself, so that she cannot remain within herself.[8] Third, she must desire nothing but God. Fourth, that none can comfort her but God.

Fifth, that she never returns to transient things. Sixth, that she has no inner peace till He is restored to her.

Let us pray, etc.

Notes

1. Even more fragmentary than Sermon 85.
2. Mary Magdalene. From the Gospel for Maundy Thursday (cf. Sermon 34).
3. Traced by Quint to a homily falsely ascribed to Origen: *Opera* II (Basle, 1571), 450: *Amor faciebat eam stare, et dolor cogebat eam plorare.* Cf. Sermon 34, note 1.
4. I.e., Jesus's words, "Whom do you seek?"
5. Quint conjectures *al einzelen,* 'gradually, by stages' for various corrupt readings in the MSS. This is contrasted with the following *zemâle,* 'all at once.'
6. Cf. Sermon 84, note 10, where, however, the idea of the soul's 'dying of joy' is given a positive connotation.
7. Cf. Pseudo-Origen (note 3), 452, and Latin sermon VIII, n. 84 (*LW* IV, 81) (Q).
8. She must dwell 'above herself' as stated in Sermons 84 and 85.

SERMON EIGHTY-SEVEN

(Pf 87, Q 52, QT 32)

BEATI PAUPERES SPIRITU QUIA IPSORUM EST REGNUM CAELORUM
(Matthew 5:3)

Beatitude itself opened its mouth of wisdom and said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." All angels, all saints,[1] and everything that was ever born must keep silent when the wisdom of the Father[2] speaks: for all the wisdom of angels and all creatures is pure folly before the unfathomable wisdom of God. This wisdom has declared that the poor are blessed.

Now there are two kinds of poverty. The one is external poverty, and this is good and much to be commended in the man who practices it voluntarily for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he himself possessed this on earth. About this poverty I shall say no more now. But there is another poverty, an interior poverty, to which this word of our Lord applies when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Now I beg you to be like this in order that you may understand this sermon: for by the eternal truth I tell you that unless you are like this truth we are about to speak of, it is not possible for you to follow me.

Some people have asked me what poverty is in itself, and what a poor man is. This is how we shall answer.

Bishop Albert says a poor man is one who finds no satisfaction in all things God ever created,[3] and this is well said. But we shall speak better, taking poverty in a higher sense: a poor man is one who wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing. We shall now speak of these three points, and I beg you for the love of God to understand this wisdom if you can; but if you can't understand it, don't worry, because I am going to speak of such truth that few good people can understand.

Firstly, we say that a poor man is one who *wants* nothing. There are some who do not properly understand the meaning of this: these are the people who cling with attachment[4] to penances and outward practices, making much of these.[5] May God have mercy on such folk for understanding so little of divine truth! These people are called holy from their outward appearances, but inwardly they are asses, for they are ignorant of the actual nature of divine truth. These people say that a poor man is one who wants nothing and they explain it this way: A man should so live that he never does his own will in anything, but should strive to do the dearest will of God. It is well with these people because their intention is right, and we commend them for it. May God in His mercy grant them the kingdom of heaven! But by God's wisdom I declare that these folk are not poor men or similar to poor men. They are much admired by those who know no better, but I say that they are asses with no understanding of God's truth. Perhaps they will gain heaven for their good intentions, but of the poverty we shall now speak of they have no idea.

If, then, I were asked what *is* a poor man who wants nothing, I should reply as follows. As long as a man is so disposed that it is his *will* with which he would do the most beloved will of God, that man has not the poverty we are speaking about: for that man has a *will* to serve God's will — and that is not true poverty! For a man to possess true poverty he must be as free of his created will as he was when he was not.[6] For I declare by the eternal truth, as long as you have the *will* to do the will of God, and longing for eternity and God, you are not poor: for a poor man is one who wills nothing and desires nothing.

While I yet stood in my first cause, I *had* no God and was my own cause: then I wanted nothing and desired nothing, for I was bare being and the knower of myself in the enjoyment of truth. Then I wanted myself and wanted no other thing: what I wanted I was and what I was I wanted, and thus I was free of God and all things. But when I left my free will behind and received my created being, *then* I had a God. For before there were creatures, God was not 'God': He was That which He was. But when creatures came into existence and received their *created* being, then God was not 'God' in Himself — He was 'God' in creatures.[7]

Now we say that God, inasmuch as He is 'God,' is not the supreme goal of creatures, for the same lofty status[8] is possessed by the least of creatures in God. And if it were the case that a fly[9] had reason and could intellectually plumb the eternal abysm of God's being out of which it came, we would have to say that God with all that makes Him 'God' would be unable to fulfil and satisfy that fly! Therefore let us pray to God that we may be free of God that we may gain the truth and enjoy it eternally, there where the highest angel, the fly, and the soul are equal, there where I stood[10] and wanted what I was, and was what I wanted. We conclude, then: if a man is to be poor of will, he must will and desire as little as he willed and desired when he was not. And this is the way for a man to be poor by not wanting.

Secondly, he is a poor man who *knows* nothing. We have sometimes said that a man should live as if he did not live either for himself, or for truth, or for God.[11] But now we will speak differently and go further, and say, For a man to possess *this* poverty he must live so that he is *unaware* that he does not live for himself, or for truth, or for God. He must be so lacking in all knowledge that he neither knows nor recognizes nor feels that God lives in him: more still, he must be free of all the understanding that lives in him. For when that man stood in the eternal being of God, nothing *else* lived in him: what lived there was himself. Therefore we declare that a man should be as free from his own knowledge as he was when he was not. That man should let God work as He will, and himself stand idle.

For all that ever came out of God, a pure activity is appointed. The proper work of man is to love and to know. Now the question is, Wherein does blessedness lie most of all? Some masters have said it lies in knowing,[12] some say that it lies in loving:[13] others say it lies in knowing and loving, and they say better. But we say it lies neither in knowing nor in loving: for there is something in the soul from which both knowledge and love flow:[14] but it does not itself know or love in the way the powers of the soul do. Whoever knows this, knows the seat of blessedness. This has neither before nor after, nor is it expecting anything to come, for it can neither gain nor lose. And so it is deprived of the knowledge that God is at work in it: rather, it just is itself, enjoying itself God-fashion. It is in this manner, I declare, that a man should be so acquitted and free that he neither knows nor

realizes that God is at work in him: in that way can a man possess poverty.

The masters say God is a being, an intellectual being that knows all things. But we say God is not a being and not intellectual and does not know this or that. Thus God is free of all things, and so He *is* all things. To be poor in spirit, a man must be poor of all his own knowledge: not knowing any *thing,* not God, nor creature nor himself. For this it is needful that a man should desire to know and understand nothing of the works of God. In this way a man can be poor of his own knowledge.

Thirdly, he is a poor man who *has* nothing. Many people have said that perfection is attained when one has none of the material things of the earth, and this is true in one sense — when it is voluntary. But this is not the sense in which I mean it. I have said before, the poor man is not he who wants to fulfil the will of God but he who lives in such a way as to be free of his own will and of God's will, as he was when he was not.[15] Of this poverty we declare that it is the *highest* poverty. Secondly, we have said he is a poor man who does not know of the working of God within him. He who stands as free of knowledge and understanding as God stands of all things, has the *purest* poverty. But the third is the *straitest* poverty, of which we shall now speak: that is when a man *has* nothing.

Now pay earnest attention to this! I have often said, and eminent authorities say it too, that a man should be so free of all things and all works, both inward and outward, that he may be a proper abode for God where God can work. Now we shall say something else. If it is the case that a man is free of all creatures, of God and of self, and if it is still the case that God finds a place *in him* to work, then we declare that as long as this is *in* that man, he is not poor with the strictest poverty. For it is not God's intention in His works that a man should have a place within himself for God to work in: for poverty of spirit means being so free of God and all His works, that God, if He wishes to work in the soul, is Himself the place where He works — and this He gladly does. For, if he finds a man *so* poor, then God performs His own work, and the man is passive to God within him, and God is His own place of work, being a worker in Himself. It is just here, in *this* poverty, that man enters into that eternal essence that once he was, that he is now and evermore shall remain.

This is the word of St. Paul. He says, "All that I am, I am by the grace of God" (1 Cor. 15:10). Now this sermon seems to rise above grace and being and understanding and will and all desire — so how can St. Paul's words be true? The answer is that St. Paul's words *are* true: it was needful for the grace of God to be in him, for the grace of God effected in him that the accidental in him was perfected as essence. When grace had ended and finished its work, Paul remained that which he *was*.

So we say that a man should be so poor that he neither is nor has any place for God to work in. To preserve a place is to preserve distinction. Therefore I pray to God to make me free of God, for my essential being is above God, taking God as the origin of creatures. For in that essence of God in which God is above being and distinction, there I was myself and knew myself so as to make this man.[16] Therefore I am my own cause according to my essence, which is eternal, and not according to my becoming, which is temporal. Therefore I am unborn, and according to my unborn mode I can never die. According to my unborn mode I have eternally been, am now, and shall eternally remain. That which I am by virtue of birth must die and perish, for it is mortal, and so must perish with time. In my birth all things were born, and I was the cause of myself and all things: and if I had so willed it, I would not have been, and all things would not have been. If I were not, God would not be either.[17] I am the cause of God's being God: if I were not, then God would not be God. But you do not need to know this.

A great master says that his breaking-through is nobler than his emanation, and this is true.[18] When I flowed forth from God, all creatures declared, 'There is a God'; but *this* cannot make me blessed, for with this I acknowledge myself as a creature. But in my breaking-through, where I stand free of my own will, of God's will, of all His works, and of God himself, *then* I am above all creatures and am neither God nor creature, but I am that which I was and shall remain for evermore.[19] There I shall receive an imprint[20] that will raise me above all the angels. By this imprint I shall gain such wealth that I shall not be content with God inasmuch as He is God, or with all His divine works: for this breaking-through guarantees to me that I and God are one. *Then* I am what I was, then I neither wax nor wane, for then I am an unmoved cause that moves all things.[21] Here, God

finds no place *in* man, for man by his poverty wins for himself what he has eternally been and shall eternally remain. Here, God is one with the spirit, and that is the strictest poverty one can find.

If anyone cannot understand this sermon, he need not worry. For so long as a man is not equal to this truth, he *cannot* understand my words, for this is a naked truth which has come direct from the heart of God.

That we may so live as to experience it eternally, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. From the Gospel for All Saints Day (November 1).
2. I.e., the Son. Cf. Sermon 48, note 8.
3. Albertus Magnus, *Enarrationes in Matt.,* 5:3 (Q after B. Geyer).
4. *Eigenschaft,* which has many meanings in Middle High German: perhaps 'possessiveness.' Cf. Sermon 6, n. 3.
5. I follow Quint in assuming that it is these people themselves, not others, who make much of these practices.
6. Cf. Sermon 8.
7. On this whole passage Quint says, 'What Eckhart says here concerns the existence of man before his creation, an idea in the *actus purus* of the divine ground of being, where the idea of individual man is in essential unity with the Godhead, in which, therefore, 'I' had and knew no 'God' (*DW* II, 509). Cf. Sermon 56, note 8. The distinction between God and Godhead, as Eckhart sometimes puts it (Kelley 90, 239), is brought out in a parallel adduced by Quint from Preger's *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* 1 (1874): 485, 'I have sometimes said I am a cause for God's being God. God has Himself from the soul, His Godhead from Himself: for before creatures were, God was not God, but He was Godhead, and that He does not have from the soul.' And with different terminology Eckhart writes in the second Genesis commentary (*LW* I, 575), 'It should be known that God is and is from eternity called 'God,' but 'Lord' is more properly said in regard to *time.* For when creatures began to be, God came to be called 'Creator' and 'Lord' '(Q).
8. Eckhart's word is *rîcheit,* which is multivalent: 'wealth, power, sovereignty,' etc.
9. Not 'flea' as rendered by Evans and Blakney!
10. I.e., 'in my first cause' as above.
11. No statement exactly to this effect has been traced in Eckhart's writings.
12. The Dominicans.
13. The Franciscans.
14. Cf. Sermon 79, note 10.
15. Cf. note 7.
16. My earthly self.
17. Cf. note 7.

18. Cf. Sermon 56, note 9. Quint does not know who this 'great master is; Blakney thinks of Plato. This breaking-through is the soul's return to the divine ground, beyond all Trinitarian concepts (Ueda 125).

19. Ueda 24: 'This 'I'-form makes it unmistakably clear that Eckhart is speaking directly from his own experience of at-onement with God, not by way of making his own experience the object of description and thus distancing himself from the experience (as when someone relates something about himself), but in such a way that Eckhart's 'I,' which is in immediate oneness with God, speaks directly.'

20. This is the literal meaning of *îndruk,* which Quint hesitantly renders 'Aufschwung' ('upward impulse'). But the notion of an imprint or 'seal' also makes good sense.

21. Cf. Sermon 24a, where Eckhart cites Boethius (*De cons. phil.* III, m. 9); see also Sermon 51, note 16.

SERMON EIGHTY-EIGHT

(Pf 85, Q 75)

MANDATUM NOVUM DO VOBIS
UT DILIGATIS INVICEM SICUT DILEXI VOS
(John 13:34)

In the Gospel written for us by St. John we read that our Lord said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give you, that you shall love one another as I have loved you; and by this people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Now we find there are three kinds of love that our Lord has, and in these we must be like him. The first is natural, the second is that of grace, and the third is God's love, though actually there is nothing *in* God that is not God too. But we must consider it as it is in ourselves in an ascending scale: from good to better and from better to more perfect. But in God there is neither less nor more: He is nothing but one simple, pure, essential truth.

From the first kind of love that God has, we can learn how His divine goodness constrained Him to create all creatures, with which He was eternally pregnant in His ideal prevision,[1] intending them to enjoy His goodness with Him. And among all creatures He does not love one more than another: for as each is wide enough to receive, in the same measure He pours Himself into it. If my soul were as capacious and as roomy as the angel of the Seraphim,[2] who has nothing in him,[3] God would pour Himself out into me as perfectly as into the angel of the Seraphim. It is just as if you were to make a circle in the round, covered all round about with dots, and with a point in the center: from this point all the dots would be equally near or far.[4] Then for one dot to get nearer to it, it would have to be displaced, for the middle point remains constantly at the center. So it is with divine being: it is not questing around but abiding altogether in itself.

In order to receive from it, a creature must of necessity be moved out of itself. When we speak of man we speak of all creatures, for Christ himself said to his disciples, "Go forth and preach the gospel to all creatures" (Mark 16:15), since all creatures are subsumed in man. Yet God as being pours Himself out into all creatures, to each as much as it can take. This is a good lesson to us to love all creatures equally with all that we have received from God, and if some are by nature nearer to us by kinship or friendship, that we should still favor them equally out of divine love in regard to the same good. I sometimes *seem* to like one person better than another; but yet I have the same goodwill toward another whom I have never seen, but this one is more present to me, and on that account I am better able to give myself to him. Thus God loves all creatures equally and fills them with His being. And thus too, we should pour forth ourselves in love over all creatures. We often find the heathen arriving at this loving peace by their natural understanding, for a pagan teacher says, 'Man is an animal kindly by nature.'[5]

The second love of God, which is gracious or spiritual, He is flowing with into the soul and into the angels, just as I explained before how the intellectual creature must be rapt away from itself with a light that surpasses all natural light.[6] Since all creatures take such delight in their natural light, that which draws them away from it, the light of grace, must be stronger. For in the natural light man enjoys *himself,* but the light of grace, which is unspeakably more powerful, deprives man of self-enjoyment and draws him into itself. Therefore the soul says in the Book of Love, "Draw me after thee in thy sweet savor" (Song 1:3).

Now we cannot love God without first knowing Him: but the essential point which is God stands there in the center, equally far from and near to all creatures, and the only way of getting closer to it is for my natural intellect to be displaced by a light that surpasses it. Supposing my eye were a light and strong enough to absorb the full force of the sun's light and unite with it, then it would see not only by its own power, but it would see with the light of the sun in all its strength. So it is with my intellect. The intellect is a light, and if I turn it right away from all things and in the direction of God, then, since God is continually overflowing with grace, my intellect becomes illumined and united with love, and therein knows and loves God as

He is in Himself. By this we are shown how God continually flows out into rational creatures with the light of grace and how we must approach this light of grace with our intellect to be drawn out of ourselves and ascend into that one light that is God Himself.[7]

The third love is divine, from which we should learn how God has ever been begetting His only-begotten Son and is giving birth to him now and eternally:[8] and thus He lies in childbed like a woman who has given birth, in every good, outdrawn, and indwelling soul.[9] This birth is His understanding, eternally welling forth from His paternal heart, in which lies all His joy. All that He has power to give He expends on this understanding, which is His birth, and He seeks nothing outside Himself. His entire happiness is centered in His Son; He loves nothing but His Son and all He finds in him: for the Son is a light that has shone from all eternity in the Father's heart. If we are to enter there we must climb from the natural light into the light of grace, and grow therein into the light that is the Son Himself.[10] There we shall be loved by the Father with the love that is the Holy Ghost, which has its eternal source in Him and having blossomed forth to his eternal birth — that is the third Person — continually blossoms forth from the Son to the Father as their mutual love.[11]

The master says, 'I sometimes think of what the angel said to Mary: "Hail, full of grace!" What good would it do me for Mary to be full of grace if I were not also full of grace?'[12] And what would it profit me that the Father gives birth to His Son unless I bear Him too? God begets His Son in a perfect soul and is brought to bed there so that she may bear Him forth again in all her works. Concerning this, a heathen virgin said of my lord Joseph, the patriarch's son, 'I did not regard him as a man but as a god, for God shines out of his works.'[13] Thus we, by the love of the Holy Ghost, being unified into His Son, shall know the Father with the Son and love ourselves in Him and Him in ourselves with their mutual love.

Whoever would achieve perfection in this triple love must have four things. The first is true detachment from all creatures. The second, the true life of Leah, that is to say the active life which is set in motion in the ground of the soul by the touch of the Holy Ghost. The third is the true life of Rachel, the contemplative life.[14] The fourth is an aspiring spirit. A master was once questioned by his pupil about the angelic order. He instructed him and said, 'Go away and turn

into yourself until you understand, plunge into that with your essential being and see that you are in nothing else but in what you find there. It will seem to you at first that you are one with the angels, and if you surrender to their collective being, it will seem to you that you are all angels *with* all angels.' The pupil went away and withdrew into himself until he found out the truth of all this. Then, returning to the master, he thanked him and said, 'It happened to me as you foretold. When I surrendered myself to the being of the angels and ascended into their being, it seemed to me finally that I was all angels *with* all angels.' Then the master said, 'Well now, if you but proceed a little nearer to the source, wonder upon wonder will be wrought with your soul.' For as long as a man is still on the ascent and receiving through the medium of creatures, he has not come to rest. But once he is climbing up into God, there in the Son he will receive with the Son the whole of what God has to give.

May God help us thus to ascend from one love to another and to be united in God, to abide there in bliss eternally. Amen.

Notes

1. *In dem bilde sîner vürsihticheit,* lit. 'in the image (or idea) of His providence.' All creatures preexisted as Platonic ideas in God: cf. also Sermon 87. note 7.

2. The highest order of angels according to the tradition adopted by the church from Pseudo-Dionysius. Cf. Sermon 45, note 8, and Sermon 47, note 7.

3. I.e., he is completely 'empty' and therefore totally receptive to God.

4. This image has caused confusion. Quint thinks of a circle of dots which are, of course, equidistant from the central point; this makes sense and Quint is rightly critical of Mahnke's notion of an *infinite* circle. But the text refers to a circle (*zirkel*) made round (*sinwel*), which is full of dots 'round and round' (*umbe und umbe*). The commonest meaning of *sinwel* is 'spherical,' and I think what Eckhart has in mind is a spherical construction of dots rather than a mere circle: something impossible to draw and difficult for him to describe or, perhaps, for his hearers to imagine.

5. Aristotle, *Topics* 5.21 (Q): cf. *LW* IV, 19.

6. The syntax of the original, even after Quint's emendations, remains pretty contorted. The 'intellectual creature' is, of course, man, or man's intellectual part.

7. According to Quint this is the 'third love' to which Eckhart now turns.

8. I have omitted 'as a master says,' which is bracketed in Pfeiffer's source and absent from the other extant MS.

9. The participles *ûzgebrâhten* and *îngewonten* (found, apparently, only here) appear to mean that the soul has been 'drawn out' of herself and 'accommodated into' (or 'dwelling in') God (Q).

10. This is the 'ascending scale' mentioned in the second paragraph.

11. Cf. Sermon 68, following note 11.

12. Who the 'master' was is not quite clear, but cf. the words ascribed to St. Augustine at the beginning of Sermon 1.

13. Quint compares Gen. 39:23. But who was the 'heathen virgin'? Quint is silent: she can scarcely have been Potiphar's wife!

14. Cf. Gen. 29:10ff. Quint refers to a passage in Pfeiffer's Sermon 101, which is most probably by a pupil of Eckhart's: 'St. Gregory says that Rachel, meaning the interior life, signifies a vision of the source, but Leah, the other sister, means the life of the exterior man, for she had weak eyes' (Evans I, p. 255). Later, reference is made to Mary and Martha (cf. Sermon 9).

SERMON EIGHTY-NINE

(Pf 89, Q 49)

BEATUS VENTER, QUI TE PORTAVIT, ET UBERA, QUAE SUXISTI
(Luke 11:27)[1]

We read in the Gospel for today how a woman, a married woman, said to our Lord: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and blessed are the breasts that you sucked." Then our Lord said, "You are right. Blessed is the womb that bore me, and blessed are the breasts that I sucked. But more blessed is the man who hears my word and keeps it."

Now pay close attention to this saying of Christ's: "The man who hears my word and keeps it is more blessed than the womb that bore me and the breasts that I sucked." If I had said this and if it were my word, that that man is more blessed who hears God's word and keeps it than Mary is by giving birth and being Christ's bodily mother — I repeat, if *I* had said this, people would be surprised. But Christ himself has said it, and therefore we must believe him that it is the truth, for Christ is the Truth.

Now note *what* he hears who hears the word of God. He hears Christ, born of the Father in perfect equality with the Father, who has taken on our humanity, united in his person, true God and true man, one Christ: that is the Word that he hears in sum, who hears the word of God and keeps it to perfection.

St. Gregory writes of four things needful for a man who hears the word of God and keeps it. The first is that he should have mortified himself to all stirrings of the flesh, and having slain all transient things in himself, should himself too be dead to all transient things. The second is that he should be wholly and entirely raised up in God with knowledge, with love and with true inwardness. The third is that he should never do to anyone what he would not like to have done to

him. The fourth is that he should be bounteous both with material things and with spiritual goods, giving both generously.[2] Many a man appears to give, but in reality gives nothing at all. These are people who give their goods to those whose possessions are greater than their own, where their gift is perhaps not wanted, or they give it where they obtain some service for their gift, or where they are given something in return, or where they expect to be honored. Such people's gifts can more properly be called begging than giving, for in truth they give nothing. Our Lord Jesus Christ was free and poor in all the gifts that he bounteously gave us: in all his gifts he never sought his own: rather did he desire only the praise and glory of the Father and our salvation, and he continued suffering and giving himself for true love until his death. If now a man wants to give for the love of God, let him thus give away material goods purely for God's sake, with no eye to profit or exchange or any transitory honor, and let him seek nothing for himself, but only God's honor and glory, and to help his neighbor in God's name, if through need he lacks something. And so too he should give spiritual goods, wherever he knows that his fellow Christian is willing to receive them in order to better his life for God's sake — and for this he shall not seek any thanks or reward from that man or any advantage, nor should he want any reward from God for this service, but only that God may be glorified. In this way he should be free in his giving as Christ was free and poor in all the gifts he gave us. If a man gives thus, that is true giving. Whoever has these four things may truly have confidence that he has heard God's word and kept it.

The whole of Christendom pays our Lady great honor and respect because she is the bodily mother of Christ, and that is right and proper. Holy Christendom prays to her for grace which she is able to obtain, and that is right. And if holy Christendom pays her such honor, as indeed is fitting, nevertheless holy Christendom should pay even greater honor and glory to that man who hears God's word and keeps it, for he is even more blessed than our Lady is through being the bodily mother of Christ, as Christ himself has told us. All that honor, and immeasurably more, is accorded to that man who hears God's word and keeps it. I have given you this introduction that you might collect yourselves.[3] Forgive me for having held you up with it. Now I intend to preach.

We will take three passages from the Gospel and I will preach on them. The first is "He who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed." The second is "Unless the grain of wheat falls to earth and perishes there, it will remain alone. But if it falls to earth and perishes there, it brings forth fruit a hundredfold." (John 12:24). The third is "No man among the sons who have risen from the womb of women is greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Now, leaving aside the last two, I will speak on the first text.[4]

And Christ said, "He who hears the word of God and keeps it is blessed." Now pay close attention to the meaning of this. The Father Himself hears nothing but this same Word, knows nothing but this same Word, speaks nothing but this same Word, begets nothing but this same Word. In this same Word the Father hears, the Father knows, the Father gives birth to Himself, and this very Word and all things, and His Godhead in its very depth, He bears Himself according to His nature and this Word with the same nature in another Person. Now see the manner of His speaking. The Father utters His own nature rationally in fruitfulness all at once in His eternal Word. He does not speak this word by His will as an act of will, in the sense that when a thing is said or done by the power of the will, by that same power He could refrain if He wished. It is not so with the Father and His eternal Word; whether He would or not He must speak this Word and beget it unceasingly: for with the Father it is as it were rooted in His nature naturally, as the Father is Himself. So you see the Father speaks the Word willingly but not by will, naturally but not by nature.[5] In this Word the Father speaks my spirit and your spirit and every individual human being's spirit equally in the same Word. In that speaking you and I are the natural son of God just like the Word itself. For, as I said before, the Father knows nothing but that same Word and Himself and all the divine nature and all things in this Word, and all that He knows therein is like the Word and is the same Word naturally and in truth.[6] When the Father gives and reveals to you this understanding, He is giving you His life and His being and His Godhead all at once and really and in truth. The father in this life, the human father, imparts his nature to his child but not his own life or his own being, for the child has a different life and a different being from that of the father. The proof is this: the father may die and the child live, or the child may die and the father live.

If they both had one life and one being, then of necessity they would both have to die or live together, since the life and being of them both would then be one. But it is not so, and thus they are strangers to each other, separated as they are in life and being. If I take fire from one place and bring it to another it is divided, though it is still fire: this one may burn and that one go out, or this one may go out and that one go on burning — thus it is neither one nor eternal.

But as I said before, the Father of heaven gives you His eternal Word, and in that same Word He gives you at once His own life, His own being and His Godhead: for the Father and the Word are two Persons but one life and one being undivided. When the Father takes you into this light, that you may intellectually behold this light *in* this light in exactly the same way[7] as He knows Himself and all things according to His paternal power in this Word[8] — the same Word according to reason and truth, as I have said — then He gives *you* the power of begetting, with Himself, yourself and all things, and His *own* power which is the same as this Word. Then you too are, with the Father, and in the Father's power, unceasingly bearing yourself and all things in the present now.[9] In this light, as I have said, the Father knows no difference between you and Him and no precedence, any more or any less than between Him and His Word. For the Father and yourself and all things and the Word itself are one in this light.[10]

Now I shall turn to my second theme, when our Lord said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls to earth and perishes there, it will remain alone and bear no fruit. But if it falls to earth and perishes there, it brings forth fruit a hundredfold." "A hundredfold" means in spiritual terms fruits without number. But what is the grain of wheat that falls to earth, and what is the earth into which it falls? As I shall this time explain, it is the spirit — this grain of wheat — which we call or designate a human soul, and the earth into which it falls is the most glorious humanity of Jesus Christ: for that is the noblest field that was ever created out of earth or made ready for fruitfulness. This field was made ready by the Father Himself and this same Word and the Holy Ghost. Now what was the fruit of this noble field of Jesus Christ's humanity? That was his noble soul, from the very moment that it happened, by the will of God and the power of the Holy Ghost, that that glorious human nature and that noble body was created

for mankind's good[11] in our Lady's womb, and the noble soul was created, so that body and soul were united with the eternal Word in one moment of time. So quickly and truly did this union take place: the very moment body and soul were aware of his presence, he knew himself as uniting human and divine nature, as true God and true man, one Christ who is God.

Now observe the manner of his fruitfulness. I shall call his noble soul for this time a grain of wheat which perished in the earth of his noble humanity in suffering and action, in grief and in death, as he said himself before he was to suffer, in these words: "My soul is grieved unto death" (Matt. 26:38). He did not then mean his noble soul according as this is intellectually contemplating the highest good, with which he is united in person and which he *is* according to union and person: that, even in his greatest suffering, he was continually regarding in his highest power, just as closely and entirely the same as he does now: no sorrow or pain or death could penetrate *there*. So it is in truth, for when his body died in agony on the cross, his noble spirit lived in this presence. But according to the part whereby his noble spirit was rationally united to the senses and life of his blessed body, to that extent our Lord called his *created* spirit a 'soul,' since this gave life to the body and was united to the senses and the reason. In *this* way, to this extent, his soul was "grieved unto death" with the body, for the body had to perish.

Now I shall speak of this perishing. The grain of wheat, his noble soul, perished in the body in two ways. The first way was, as I said, that this noble soul had an intellectual vision, with the eternal Word, of all the divine nature. From the moment of being created and united, the soul perished in the earth, that is in the body, having nothing more to do with this beyond the fact of being and living in union with it. But the soul's life was with the body but above the body, immediately in God without any obstructions. Thus she (the soul) perished in the earth — the body — by having nothing more to do with it than being united with it.

The second way of the soul's perishing in the earth, the body, was as I said, by giving life to the body and being united with the senses: in *that* way she was with the body and full of travail and pain and discomfort and 'grief unto death,' so that — speaking in this mode — she never knew rest or ease with the body, or satisfaction without

impermanence — or the body with her — as long as the body was mortal. And this is the second way in which the grain of wheat, the noble soul, perished without knowing rest or ease.

Now observe the hundredfold fruit, the fruits without number, of this grain of wheat! The first fruit is, that he gave honor and glory to the Father and to all divine nature by never turning away for an instant or a moment with his highest powers for anything that reason had to report or for anything that the body had to suffer: thus he remained despite all continually regarding the Godhead, giving continually renewed inborn praise to the glory of the Father. That is one manner of his fruitfulness, of the grain of corn, out of the earth of his noble humanity. The other manner is this: all the fruitful suffering of his sacred humanity, whatever he suffered in this life by hunger, thirst, cold, heat, wind, rain, hail, snow, and all pain, and his bitter death as well, all that he offered up together to the glory of the heavenly Father. That is to his glory and a fruitful bounty to all creatures who wish to follow him in their life by his grace and with all their might. You see, that is the second fruitfulness of his sacred humanity and of the wheat grain of his noble soul, which became fruitful therein to his glory and to the sanctification of human nature.

Now you have heard how our Lord Jesus Christ's noble soul was made fruitful in his sacred humanity. Now you must note further how a man can also come to this. For that man who wishes to cast his soul, the grain of wheat, into the field of Jesus Christ's humanity that it may perish therein and so become fruitful, the manner of his perishing must also be of two kinds. The first way must be physical, and the second spiritual. The physical side is to be understood like this: whatever he suffers from hunger, thirst, from cold or heat, or from being scorned and suffering unjustly, in whatever way God sends it, he must accept it willingly and gladly, just as if God had never created him except to endure suffering, discomfort, and travail, not seeking anything for himself therein nor desiring anything in heaven or earth, and he should consider all his suffering as trifling, as a mere drop of water compared to the raging sea. That is how you should regard all your suffering compared to the great suffering of Jesus Christ. *Then* the grain of corn, your soul, will become fruitful in the noble field of Jesus Christ's humanity and will perish there so as to abandon self completely. That is one manner of the fruitfulness

of the grain of wheat that has fallen into the field and the earth of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Now observe the second manner of the fruitfulness of the *spirit*, of the grain of wheat. It is this: all the *spiritual* hunger and bitterness that God permits to invade him, he shall patiently endure: and even then, having done all he can both inwardly and outwardly, he shall desire nothing. Even if God wanted to annihilate him or cast him into hell, he should neither wish nor desire that God should preserve him in existence or save him from hell. You should let God do what He will with you, what He will — just as if you did not exist:[12] God's power should be as absolute in all that you are as it is within His own uncreated nature. There is another thing you should have. It is this: if God were to take you away from inner poverty and invest you inwardly with riches and with grace and were to unite you with Himself as far as ever your soul could endure this, you should hold yourself free of these riches and give the glory to God alone, just as your soul remained empty when God created it from nothing into something. That is the second manner of the fruitfulness that the grain of wheat, your soul, received from the soil of Jesus Christ's humanity, which remained free in the height of his enjoyment,[13] as he himself said to the Pharisees: "If I were to seek *my* glory, that would be no glory to me. I seek the glory of my Father who has sent me" (John 8:54)

The third section of this sermon concerns our Lord's words "John the Baptist is great; he is the greatest of all who have risen among the sons of women. But if anyone were less than John, he would be greater than he in heaven" (Matt. 11:11). Just notice how wondrously strange are these words of Jesus Christ in which he praises John's greatness, declaring him the greatest man born of woman, and yet says: "If anyone were *less* than John, he would be greater than he in heaven"! How are we to explain this? I will show you.

Our Lord does not contradict his own words. In praising John as being greater, he meant that he was little by true humility: that *was* his greatness. We can see this from Christ's own words: "Learn from me to be gentle and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29). All those things that in us are virtues are in God pure being and His own nature. That is why Christ said, "Learn from *me* to be gentle and humble of heart." However humble John was, yet this virtue had some measure, and

beyond that measure he was neither humbler nor greater nor better than he was. Now our Lord said, "If anyone were *less* than John he would be greater than he in heaven," as if he were to say that if there were anyone who could go beyond that humility by even a hair's breadth or anything at all, being that much humbler than John, he would be eternally greater in heaven.

Now attend closely: Neither John nor anyone else among all the saints has been put before us as a limit, or as a compulsory goal beyond which we may not go. Christ our Lord alone is the end to which we must strive and our goal under which we must stay, with whom we shall be united, equal to him in all his glory, as this union pertains to us. There is no saint in heaven so holy or so perfect but his virtues in life were measured, and according to that measure is the magnitude of his eternal life, and all his perfection depends entirely on the same measure. In very truth, if there were a single man who could go beyond the measure of the highest saint whose virtuous life has brought him to blessedness — if there were a single man who could in any way at all transcend that measure of virtue — in that way he would be in virtue holier and more blessed than that saint ever was. By God I say — and it is as true as that God lives — there is no saint in heaven who is so perfect but that you could transcend his holiness by the holiness of your life, and come to stand above him in heaven and eternally remain so. That is why I say if anyone were humbler and less than John, he would be eternally greater than he in heaven. *That* is true humility, that a man should concern himself with nothing of that which he is — being by nature something created out of nothing — whether by doing or leaving undone, but wait upon the light of grace. The knowing what to do and to leave undone is true humility of nature. Humility of *spirit* consists in this, that a man no more accepts nor lays claim to all the good that God ever does to him than he did when he was not.

May God help us to such humility. Amen.

Notes

1. Miss Evans translated only a part of this sermon, declaring in a footnote: 'Fragment. Pfeiffer's text seems to be a compound of several sermons.' She gives a variant translation of the same part of Sermon 89 at II, 14 (doubtless by an oversight).

The sermon *is* exceptionally long and complex, but Quint is in no doubt as to its unitary character, and closer inspection confirms his judgment.

2. Cf. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia* I.18 (Q).

3. Perhaps deliberately and humorously ambiguous: Eckhart is possibly waiting for latecomers to settle down, but his main intention is to get his hearers to concentrate their minds.

4. Miss Evans's translation (in both versions) starts here.

5. This subtle distinction is made by St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 41, 2.2 (Q).

6. Cf. Sermon 1.

7. *Nach der selben properheit,* 'according to the same properness': Eckhart uses this word only here (Q).

8. =the light (Q).

9. Cf. Sermon 66, following note 16.

10. Miss Evans's two versions end here.

11. There is a corruption in the MSS here, but a word with this general sense is required: Quint conjectures *gedîhe,* 'well-being' (cf. modern German *gedeiben,* 'thrive').

12. Eckhart changes from 'he' to 'you' in mid-sentence. I have broken up the sentence and made the transition slightly smoother.

13. Of the highest good (Q).

SERMON NINETY

(Pf 103)[1]

EGO EX ORE ALTISSIMI PRODIVI
(Sirach 24:5)

These words which I have quoted in Latin, we may speak in the person of the eternal Word. He says, "I proceeded forth out of the mouth of the Most High." These are the exalted words which the eternal Word uttered from the Father's heart on taking on human nature in our Lady's womb. I will say no more of this carnal birth, for you have been told plenty about that here: I will speak about the eternal birth. But before we come to our subject, we have to find the answers to two questions.

The first is: Whether the eternal Word can be called a perfect Word, seeing that it is still in the throes of birth? — Yes, for the eternal Word is conceived in the essential light and abides therein, giving itself to nothing outside itself, having been perfectly uttered by the Father. Hence it may well be called a perfect Word.

The second question is: Whether our intelligence can at all beget a perfect Word? For it is proper to all intelligences that they should understand. Is not this,[2] which is understanding itself, the same thing? I say no, because *our* word is conceived in a fitful light. Since our understanding is a changing thing, it cannot give birth to a perfect Word. The word you hear from me is not a perfect word: it betokens the Word that is in me.

Now note the way of the eternal birth. Inasmuch as Personal understanding pertains to the unity of nature,[3] it is one with the same understanding whereby the Father understands Himself in His characteristic nature. Were this not so, there would have to be two intelligible essences, but there are not: there is but one intelligible essence wherein the Father sees Himself in His characteristic nature.

The object of the Father's thought is the eternal Word. Where this eternal Word cleaves to the natural understanding of the Father it is none other than the Father-nature. Where this same Word is directed on to itself, it is separated as regards Person and is yet one simple essence in the divine nature. In this connection I will put four questions so that you may the better understand the mode of the eternal birth, although this is incomprehensible to all (human) intelligences. However, I will teach you as much as your minds are capable of grasping.

The first question is: Why is the Person of the Son called born and the Person of the Father not? The answer is: Where the personal understanding of the Father cleaves to the unity of nature, there it is one with the natural understanding of the Father, with which He understands Himself in His characteristic nature, for the object of the Father's understanding is the eternal Word. Therefore the Person of the eternal Word is called born and the Person of the Father not.

The second question is: Is the work of the eternal birth wrought by His personal power or by His natural power? To this, some masters say it is brought about by the personal power of the Father, since it is the property of all things born to receive community of nature from that of which they are born. Where did you ever see a father who did not communicate his nature to his son? In this way they seek to prove that the work of the eternal birth is wrought by (the Father's) personal power. That is not my view. Where the personal understanding cleaves to the unity of nature, that nature is a Person. Now the eternal Word originates in the essential mind wherein the Father understands Himself in His characteristic nature. Therefore the work of the eternal birth must be performed by his natural power, for if the eternal Word sprang from the personal understanding of the Father, the eternal Word would be its own cause, for this understanding *is* the Word.

The third question is: Where does the Father-nature have a maternal name? Where it does maternal work. Where the personal nature keeps to the unity of its nature and combines with it, there Fatherhood has a maternal name and is doing mother's work, for it is properly a mother's work to conceive. But there, where the eternal Word arises, in the essential mind, *there* Motherhood has a paternal name and performs paternal work.[4]

The fourth question is: Whether this work is essential whether the Father can take it or leave it. I say No: if He were to stop for a single instant, He would deny Himself. For the eternal Word is an image of the Father as He conceives Himself in his capacity as Person, and is also an image of all creatures: therefore the work must be essential. The other dignity which the eternal Word has received from its eternal birth is this: the eternal Word has received in the quality of its own Person all the perfection which the Father has and all the omnipotence proper His nature. The heretical teacher Arius[5] contradicts this, saying, 'It appears to me to be untrue that the eternal Word has received all the perfection of the Father, for he cannot do what the Father can: he cannot beget another Son.' To this St. Augustine replies that his not begetting another Son is not due to incapacity, but that it is not his task. Some teachers misunderstand this saying and declare that if the Son wanted to, he could beget another Son. This is erroneous, for then the Person of the Son would be the Person of the Father. Therefore it is not his office. Each Person receives the unity of nature, and yet with a difference: the Father by His Fatherhood, the Son by his Sonship, and the Holy Ghost by his common origin in them both. Here the Persons are a hypostasis of the nature, each Person receiving the one nature in its entirety, just as three candles shine with one light and the light has one essence.

The third dignity the eternal Word has by its eternal birth is that of being equal with the Father, for it springs from the essential mind of the Father. Inasmuch as it cleaves to this mind, it is none other than divine nature: in turning toward the Word it is distinct in Person, and is yet one simple essence in the divine nature.

The question now arises: How can it be that the eternal Word is distinct according to Person and yet one simple essence in the divine nature? The aptest answer the masters can give to this is: on account of the unity and simplicity of that nature. The entire content of divine nature is of one simple essence with it and becomes one with the divine nature.

That we may come to this oneness as far as it is possible for us, may God help us. Amen.

Notes

1. This sermon is not in Q or QT. The text amended from Pfeiffer's after Quint 1932. It may be by a pupil, however.
2. The word.
3. The unified divine nature.
4. Such a formulation is not expressly found anywhere else in Eckhart's certainly genuine works. The antithetical expression is in keeping with his style.
5. Arius (ca. 256–336) denied the consubstantiality of Father and Son: for him, Christ was 'half God and half man.' He had many followers at one time, including Wulfila, bishop of the Goths and translator of the Bible into Gothic. His views were finally condemned at the councils of Nicaea (325) and of Constantinople (381).

SERMON NINETY-ONE

(Pf 91, Q 79, QT 41)

LAUDATE CAELI ET EXULTET TERRA
(Isaiah 49:13)

EGO SUM LUX MUNDI
(John 8:12)

I have quoted two texts in Latin. One is in the lesson, the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Rejoice, o heaven and earth, God has comforted His people and will have mercy on His poor ones." The other is in the Gospel, where our Lord says, "I am a light of the world, and he that follows me will not walk in darkness: he shall find and have the light of life."

Now observe the first text, where the prophet says, "Rejoice, O heaven and earth." Truly, truly, by God, by God, be as sure of this as that God lives: at the least good deed or the least good will or the least good desire, all the saints in heaven and earth and all the angels rejoice with such great joy as all the joys of this world cannot equal. And the higher each saint is the greater his joy, and the higher each angel is the greater his joy, and yet all their joy combined is as small as a lentil compared with the joy that God has at that act. For God makes merry and laughs at good deeds, whereas all other works which are not done to God's glory are like ashes in God's sight. Therefore he cries, "Rejoice, o heaven and earth, God has comforted His people." Note that he says, "God has comforted His people and will have mercy on *His* poor ones" — he says, "*His* poor ones." The poor are left to God alone, for no one else takes care of them. If a man has a friend who is poor, he does not acknowledge him, but if he has possessions and is wise, that man says, 'You are my kinsman,' and is quick to acknowledge him, but to the poor man he says, 'God

protect you!'[1] The poor are left to God, for wherever they go they find God and have God in all places, and God takes them in charge, for they have been abandoned to Him. That is why he says in the Gospel, "Blessed are the poor" (Matt. 5:3).

Now note his words, "I am a light of the world." With "I am" he touches the essence. The masters say that all creatures can say 'I,' for the word is common property, but the word *sum* 'am' can only properly be spoken by God alone.[2] *Sum* denotes one thing that contains all goodness in itself: but it is denied to all creatures that any one of them should have everything so as to give man complete satisfaction. If I had all that I could desire but my finger hurt me, then I should not have everything, for I would have that sore finger, and as long as my finger hurt I should not be entirely comforted. Bread is a great comfort to a man when he is hungry: but if he is thirsty, bread gives him no more comfort than a stone. It is the same with clothes when he is cold: but when he is too hot he has no comfort from clothes. It is the same with all creatures, and so it is true that all creatures have bitterness within them. It is true that all creatures bear in themselves some consolation, as the comb produces honey. But the honeycomb, meaning whatever goodness there may be collectively in all creatures, that is altogether in God. Therefore it says in the Book of Wisdom, "With thee all goodness comes to my soul" (Wisd. 7:11), and that comfort comes from God. But the consolation of creatures is not complete, because it is not unmixed. But God's comfort is pure and unmixed: it is perfect and complete, and He is so eager to give it to you that He cannot wait to give you *Himself* first of all. God is so besotted in His love for us, it is just as if He had forgotten heaven and earth and all His blessedness and all His Godhead and had no business except with me alone, to give me everything for my comforting. And He gives it to me complete, He gives it to me perfectly, He gives it to me most purely, He gives it all the time, and He gives it to all creatures.

Now he says, "He that follows me will not walk in darkness." Observe that he says, "He that follows me." According to the masters, the soul has three powers.[3] The first power always seeks the sweetest. The second always seeks the highest. The third one always seeks the best: for the soul is too noble ever to rest anywhere but in her source, whence drops what goodness is made of.[4] See, so sweet is

God's consolation that all creatures go in quest of Him, hunting after Him. And I say further: all creatures' life and being depends on their seeking and hunting for God.

Now you might say, 'Where is this God all creatures are in quest of, from whom they get their being and their life?' — I speak gladly of the Godhead, for all our blessedness flows thence. The Father says, "My son, I beget you today in the reflection of the saints" (cf. Ps. 109:3). Where is this God? — "In the plenitude of the saints I am contained" (cf. Sir. 24:16). Where is this God? — In the Father. Where is this God? — In eternity. No man could ever have found God, for as the prophet says, "Lord, thou art the hidden God" (Isa. 45:15). Where is this God? — It is just as if a man were to hide himself and then to give himself away by clearing his throat: God has done the same. No man could ever have found God, but He has revealed His presence. One of the saints has said, 'I sometimes experience such sweetness in me that I forget myself and all creatures and wish to dissolve right into thee.'[5] But when I want to seize it, Lord, you snatch it from me. Lord, what do you mean by this? If you would entice me, why do you take it from me? If you love me, why then do you flee me? Ah, Lord, you do this so that I may receive much from you. — The prophet says, "My God." 'Who told you that I am your God?' — Lord, I cannot rest except in you, and I have no well-being save in you.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost help us thus to seek God, and also to find Him. Amen.

Notes

1. Or 'May God provide for you!' Miss Evans has slipped up badly, and uncharacteristically, in translating this whole passage, obviously reading *vergizzet,* 'forgets,' for *vergihet,* 'acknowledges,' and rendering *mâc,* 'kinsman,' as 'servant.' Blakney (Sermon 10, p. 143) is not very happy with the passage, but goes less wildly astray.

2. Cf. Sermon 17 at end. In his Exodus commentary (*LW* II, 21) Eckhart explains that *sum* denotes the identity of essence and being which is only in God (Q).

3. The three powers are *concupiscibilis* (desire), *irascibilis* (anger), and *rationalis* (reason) (Q): see Sermon 50, note 3, Sermon 52, note 9 and Sermon 97, note 8.

4. According to Quint this source is the 'general perfection' of divine goodness, which is in the *actus purus* one with the divine ground of being. See Sermon 58, note 6, and Sermon 87, note 7.

5. A free rendering of Augustine, *Conf.* 10.40 (Q). The rest according to Quint is Eckhart's own, but based on *Conf.* 1.1.

SERMON NINETY-TWO

(Pf 94, Q 24)

INDUIMINI DOMINUM JESUM CHRISTUM
(Romans 13:14)

St. Paul says, "Put on" — take in — "Christ."[1] By putting off self we take in Christ, God, blessedness, and holiness.[2] Even if a boy were to tell strange things he would be believed, and yet when Paul promises you great things, you scarcely believe him. He promises you, if you put off self, God, blessedness, and holiness. It is amazing, but if a man puts off self, in the putting off he takes in Christ and holiness and blessedness and becomes very great. The prophet marveled at two things: First, what God did with the stars, the moon, and the sun. The second marvel is concerning the soul, that God has done and does such great things with her and for her sake:[3] for He does whatever He can for her sake; He does many great things with her and is wholly busied with her, and that is on account of the great estate to which she is created. Observe how great that is. I write a letter of the alphabet according to the likeness of that letter which is *in* my soul, but not according to my soul itself. So it is with God. God has made all things in general after the *image* that He has in Himself of all things, not after Himself. Some things He has specially made after something that emanates from Himself, such as goodness, wisdom, and (other) things we to God. But the soul he has made not merely like the image in Himself, or like anything proceeding from that is predicated of Him, but He has made her like *Himself,* in fact like everything that He is — like His nature, His essence, and His emanating-immanent activity, and like the ground wherein He subsists in Himself, where He ever bears His only-begotten Son and where the Holy Ghost blossoms forth: it is like this outflowing, indwelling work that God has formed the soul.[4]

It is in the nature of all things that what is above always flows downward into things below, insofar as the lower things are adapted to the higher: for the higher things never receive from the lower, but the lower receive from the higher. Now since God is above the soul, God continually pours into the soul and cannot fall away from her. The soul can indeed fall away from Him, but as long as a man keeps right under God, he is immediately receptive to this divine influence unmixed from God, and is not subject to anything else, neither fear nor joy nor sorrow, nor anything else that is not God. So, cast yourself then completely under God, and you will receive His divine influence wholly and solely. How does the soul receive from God? The soul does not receive from God as something alien, as the air receives light from the sun, which to it is a foreign intrusion. But the soul receives God not as alien nor as being inferior to God, for what is inferior implies difference and distance. The masters declare that the soul receives as a light from the light, for in that there is neither difference nor distance.

There is something in the soul in which God is bare, and the masters[5] say this is nameless, and has no name of its own. It is, and yet has no being of its own, for it neither this nor that nor here nor there:[6] for it is what it is in another, and that in this, for what it is, it is in that and that in this:[7] for that flows into this and this into that. And in *that* he[8] means you should enter into God, into blessedness: for in here the soul gets her whole life and being, and from this she sucks her life and being, for *this* is wholly in God and the rest is outside, and therefore the soul is always in God through this, unless she turns it outward[9] or lets it be extinguished within her.

One master says that this thing is so present to God that it can never turn away from God and God is always present and within it.[10] *I* say that God has always been in it, eternally and uninterruptedly, and for man to be one with God in this requires no grace, for grace is a created thing, and no creature has any business *there:* for in the ground of divine being, where the three Persons are one being, she[11] is one according to the ground. Therefore, if you wish it, all things are yours — and are God! That is to say: go out of yourself and all things, and all that you are in yourself, and take yourself according as you are in God.

The masters declare that human nature has nothing to do with time, being wholly unshakable and much more inward and close to a man than he is to himself.[12] That is why God took on human nature and united it with his own Person. Then human nature became God, for he put on bare human nature and not any man. Therefore, if *you* want to be the same Christ and God, go out of all that which the eternal Word did *not* assume. The eternal Word did not put on a human being, and so, go out of whatever is a human being in you and whatever *you* are, and take yourself just as bare human nature, and *then* you will be the same to the eternal Word as human nature is to him. For between your human nature and his there is no difference: it is one, for it is in Christ what it is in you. That is why I said in Paris that in the righteous man all things are fulfilled that holy scripture and the prophets ever said *of Christ:*[13] for, if you are in a right state, then all that was said in the Old and New Testaments will be fulfilled in *you*. How then can you be in a 'right state'? This is to be understood in two ways according to the words of the apostle:[14] "In the fullness of time the Son was sent" (Gal. 4:4). "Fullness of time" is of two kinds. A thing is full when it is at an end, as the day is full in the evening. Thus, when all time drops away from you, time is fulfilled. The other sense is, when time comes to an end, that is eternity: for then all time has an end — there is no before or after there.[15] There, everything that is is present and new, and you see there in a single present vision all that has ever happened or will happen. There there is neither before nor after; everything is there present, and in this present vision I am possessed of all things. *That* is the "fullness of time," and *then* I am in a right state, and then I am truly the only Son and Christ.

That we may attain to this "fullness of time," so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Eckhart has here rendered *induimini* as 'take in' (*întuot*) rather than 'take on' (the Latin *in* has, of course, both meanings): he then explains it by *inniget,* 'internalize' (Q). The play on words cannot be rendered in English.
2. Lit. 'By *un*doing self we *in*do Christ,' etc.
3. Cf. Ps. 8:4–5.
4. Quint compares the distinction here made to that made concerning "the Lord's goods": Sermon 58, note 7.
5. Particularly Avicenna (Q). Cf. also Sermons 17 and 21.
6. Cf. Sermon 47, note 6.
7. The 'other' is that part of the soul which is *not* this 'something' (Q).
8. Paul.
9. Toward 'creatures.'
10. Quint compares Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.9. Cf. also *LW* II, 255.
11. The soul.
12. St. Thomas, *De ente et essentia,* ch. 3 (Q). For the question of 'having nothing to do with time,' see next paragraph. Ueda (p. 39) refers to Eckhart's commentary on John 2:1 (*LW* III, 241): 'God the Word assumed the nature, not the person, of man.... We all have a nature in common with God, equally and in the same sense. This gives us confidence that as in him, so there dwells in each one of us truly the Word made flesh.... Human nature is closer to every man than he is to himself.' Cf. Sermon 47, note 2.
13. 'Of Christ' supplied by Quint after art. 12 of the bull of 1329: 'Whatever holy scripture says of Christ is entirely true of every good and godly man.' Quint assumes with great probability that 'of Christ' was omitted from the manuscripts here because the passage had been condemned by the pope.
14. The text has 'the prophet,' but the reference is clearly to Paul.
15. Similarly in the commentary on John 2:1 (*LW* III, 245).

SERMON NINETY-THREE

(Pf 95, Q 50)

ERATIS ENIM ALIQUANDO TENEBRAE, NUNC AUTEM LUX IN DOMINO
(Ephesians 5:8)

St. Paul says, "For sometimes you were darkness, but now a light in God." The prophets who walked in the light knew and discovered the secret truth by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes they were moved to turn without and speak of things they knew to be conducive to our blessedness, so as to teach us to know God. And then it happened that they fell silent and were tongue-tied, and this was for three reasons.

First, the good they had known and seen in God was so vast and arcane that they could form no conceptual image of it, for whatever they could conceptualize was so unlike what they had seen in God, and was such a travesty of the truth, that they kept silent for fear of lying. The second reason was that everything they had seen in God was alike so vast and so sublime that they could find no image or form in which to express it. The third reason for their silence was because they saw the hidden truth and discovered the mystery in God, but could find no words for it. However, it sometimes happened that they did turn outward and speak, but owing to the incommensurability of the truth they lapsed into gross matter and tried to teach us to know God with the aid of lower, creaturely things.[1]

St. Paul says, "Sometimes you were darkness,[2] but now a light in God." *Aliquando,* for those who can fully interpret it,[3] means 'sometimes' and implies *time,* which is what keeps us from the light. For nothing is so firmly opposed to God than time.[4] He[5] means not just time, but *clinging* to time; he means not just clinging to time but contact with time: not only contact with time but even a smell or savor of time—for just as where an apple has lain the smell lingers,

so you must understand it with time. Our finest masters declare that the physical heavens, the sun, and the stars have nothing to do with time beyond bare contact with it.[6] Now I assert that the soul, which was created far *above* the heavens, has in her highest and purest part no truck with time.[7] I have often said that through this act in God, the birth wherein the Father bears His only-begotten Son, through this outflowing there proceeds the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit proceeds from both, and in this procession the soul is outpoured, and that the image of the Godhead is imprinted on the soul; and in the outflowing and return of the three Persons the soul is poured back, being reformed into her primal and imageless image.[8] This is what Paul means by "now a light in God." He does not say, "You *are* the light," but "*now* a light."[9] He means, as I too have often said, that to know things we must know them in their cause.[10] The masters say that things are suspended in their birth in such a way as to have the clearest view of being.[11] For when the Father gives birth to the Son, that is an ever-present Now. In this eternal birth wherein the Father generates the Son, the soul has flowed forth into her essence and the image of the Godhead has been imprinted in her.

There was a debate in the schools, and some masters maintained that God had imprinted His image in the soul as a picture is painted on a wall, which fades. This was refuted. Other masters said, with more truth, that God impressed His image as something permanent in the soul, like a lasting thought, such as, 'I have an intention today, and have the same thought tomorrow, and I shall keep this image alive by ever-present attention.' Therefore, they said, God's works are perfect. For if the carpenter were perfect at his work, he would not need any materials: for as soon as he thought it, the house would be ready. Thus it is with the works of God: as soon as He has thought them, the works are perfected in the ever-present Now.

Then came the fifth master[12] who spoke best of all. *There,* he said, is no becoming: it is one Now, a becoming without becoming, newness without renewal, and this becoming is God's being. In God is something so subtle that it admits of no renewal, and in the soul too there is a subtleness[13] that is so pure and fine that it too admits of no renewal, because everything that is in God is a present Now without renewal. There were four things I wanted to speak of: God's subtlety

and the soul's subtlety, the work in God and the work of the soul, but I must leave that now.[14]

Notes

1. Eckhart speaks of the ineffability of God in many places, e.g., Sermons 32a, 39, 67.
2. First part of the text supplied by Quint.
3. Meaning not an elementary knowledge of Latin but skill in discovering the hidden meaning of scripture. Cf. Sermon 83, note 5.
4. Eckhart declares in his Latin works, 'God is not in time.' Cf. his commentary to John 1:38 (*LW* III, 174), and Latin sermon XXIV, 2 (*LW* IV, 300). Cf. Sermon 75. note 10.
5. Paul.
6. Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 12.9 (Q). See Sermon 33.
7. Cf. Sermon 23, note 4, and Sermon 82, note 3.
8. See Sermon 68, after note 11.
9. Cf. Sermon 73, note 7, and Sermon 97, note 1.
10. Cf., e.g., *LW* III, 10; Kelley, p. 26.
11. Cf. Sermon 66, note 17.
12. Quint is puzzled by this 'fifth,' but though only three *opinions* have been stated, the first two views were propounded by 'masters' in the plural, thus making a total of at least five. None can be identified.
13. This 'subtle thing' (*kleinlichkeit*) is used here for both God's ground and the 'spark' in the soul.
14. As in some other sermons, Eckhart breaks off before dealing with all points. But the customary concluding prayer is also missing and the sermon is very short. Perhaps an arbitrary conclusion by a scribe who had not the complete text.

SERMON NINETY-FOUR

(Pf 97, Q 80, QT 55)

HOMO QUIDEM ERAT DIVES, ETC
(Luke 16:19)

"There was a rich man who was clad in silk and samite and ate sumptuous food every day, and he had no name."[1]

This can be understood in two ways: of the unplumbed depths of the Godhead, and of every delicate soul.

"There was a rich man." 'Man' denotes a rational entity: so says a heathen master.[2] By 'man' in scripture we mean God.[3] St. Gregory says if there were one thing in God we could say was nobler than another, it would be His understanding: for by understanding God is manifested to Himself, in understanding God flows into Himself, in understanding God flows forth into all things, in understanding God created all things. If there were no understanding in God there could be no Trinity, and then no creature could have flowed forth.[4]

"He had no name." Thus the unplumbed depth of God has no name: for all names the soul gives to Him are obtained from her understanding. As the heathen master says in his book called *The Light of Lights,*[5] God is superessential and superrational and beyond comprehension as far as the natural understanding is concerned. I do not speak of understanding through grace, because by grace a man might be so transported as to understand as St. Paul did: for he was caught up into the third heaven and saw such things as a man neither should nor could declare.[6] In fact the way he saw them he could not put them into words: for to understand something we must understand it by its cause, its mode, or its activity. Therefore God remains unknown because none has caused Him, He being always the first. He is also without mode[7] (that is, in his unknowable nature). And He is also without activity (that is, in His hidden stillness).[8]

Therefore He has no name. What about all the names that have been given to him? Moses asked His name. Then God said, "He who is has sent you."[9] That was the only way he could understand it: for God cannot give to any creature to understand Him as He is in Himself — not that He could not do it, but because creatures are not capable of understanding it. Therefore the master says in the book called *The Light of Lights,* that God is superessential and beyond extolling, superrational and beyond comprehension.[10]

The man was also "rich." So too, God is rich in Himself and in all things. Now observe: the riches of God are fivefold. First, He is the first cause, and so pours Himself forth into all things. Second, He is one in essence, and therefore is the inwardness of all things. Third, He is the fountainhead, and therefore shares Himself with all things. Fourth, He is unchangeable, and therefore the most dependable. Fifth, He is perfect, and therefore the most desirable.

He is the first cause, therefore He pours Himself forth into all things. About this point a heathen master says that the first cause pours itself more into all (other) causes than the other causes pour into their effects.[11] He is also simple in His essence. What is simple? Bishop Albrecht[12] says that thing is simple which is intrinsically one without a second: that is God, and all simple things are maintained by the fact that He is.[13] There, creatures are one in the one, and are God in God: in themselves they are nothing. Thirdly, being the fountainhead He is overflowing into all things. Bishop Albrecht says he flows forth in three ways into things in general: with being, with life, and with light, and especially into the rational soul as a comprehension of all beings and a return of creatures to their original source:[14] this is the Light of Lights, for "All gifts and perfections flow from the Father of lights," as St. James says (James 1:17). Fourthly, being unchangeable, He is most dependable. Now mark how God unites with things. He unites with things while yet remaining one in Himself, all things being one in Him. Therefore Christ says, "You will be transformed into me, but I shall not be transformed into you."[15] This is due to God's unchangeableness and His immensity, and the littleness of things. As to this, the prophet says that all things are to God as a drop in the ocean.[16] If you were to cast a drop into the ocean, the drop would become the ocean and not the ocean the drop.[17] Thus it is with the soul: when she imbibes God she is turned into God, so that the soul

becomes divine but God does not become the soul. Then the soul loses her name and her power, but not her will and her existence. On this, Bishop Albrecht says that the will a man dies in he abides in eternally.[18] Fifthly, being perfect, He is most desirable. God is the perfection of Himself and all things. What is perfection in God? That He is His own good and the good of all things.[19] Therefore all things desire Him, for He is their good.

May that goodness be ours that is God Himself, that we may enjoy it eternally, so help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. The Authorized Version 'purple and fine linen' is more literal. The words 'and he had no name' loosely represent *quidem.*
2. Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1.
3. Quint finds this statement puzzling. Presumably Eckhart means 'in *this* scripture.'
4. Quotation not traced, but cf. Sermon 67, note 7.
5. An alternative name for the *Liber de causis* ascribed to Proclus. The reference is to prop. 5.
6. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–4.
7. Cf. Sermon 8, note 7.
8. Cf. Sermon 67, note 7.
9. A favorite text of Eckhart's: cf. Sermon 51, note 20.
10. Cf. note 5.
11. *Liber de causis,* prop. 1 (Q).
12. Albertus Magnus. Quotation untraced (Q).
13. Or 'in that which He is.' The German is ambiguous.
14. Quotation untraced (Q). Cf. Sermon 56, note 5. The reference back is to the 'first cause' of the *Liber de causis* (also called *Lux luminum,* cf. note 5) (Q).
15. Not a scriptural quotation (cf. John 6:57), but a paraphrase of Augustine, *Conf.* 7.10 (Q).
16. Cf. Wisd. 11:23 (Q).
17. Cf. the final line of Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia:* 'The dewdrop slips into the shining sea.'
18. *Commentary on Matt.* 2:7 (Q).
19. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 8.3. Cf. *LW* III, 432 (Q).

SERMON NINETY-FIVE

(Pf 98, Q 72, QT 56)

VIDENS JESUS TURBAS, ASCENDIT IN MONTEM, ETC.
(Matthew 5:1)[1]

We read in the Gospel that our Lord avoided the crowd and "ascended the mountain. Then he opened his mouth and taught them about the kingdom of God."

"He taught." St. Augustine says, 'Whoever teaches has set his chair in heaven.'[2] He who would take in God's instruction must rise above and transcend all things scattered: these he must eschew. To take in God's instruction he must gather himself together and be enclosed within himself, turning away from all cares and involvements and trafficking with lower things. The powers of the soul, which are so many and far-reaching, he must transcend—even those that operate in thought, although thought can work wonders in itself. But this thought too must be transcended if God is to speak to the powers that are undivided.[3]

Secondly, "He went up into the mountain." This means that God thereby shows the sublimity and sweetness of His nature, from which must fall away everything that is creature. There he is aware of nothing but God and himself, insofar as he is an image of God.

Thirdly, "He went up into the mountain." This betokens his exaltation (what is high is near to God), and denotes those powers that are near to God. On one occasion our Lord took three of his disciples and led them up a mountain where he appeared to them in the same illumination of the body as we shall have in eternal light.[4] Our Lord said, "Remember what I have told you: you saw there neither image nor likeness."[5] When a man avoids the crowd,[6] God gives Himself to the soul without image or likeness. But all *things* are known by image and likeness.[7]

St. Augustine teaches about three kinds of knowing.[8] The first is bodily, perceiving images as the eye sees and perceives images. The second is mental but still admits of images of bodily things. The third is in the interior mind, which knows without image or likeness, and this knowledge resembles the angels. The highest ranks of the angels are threefold.[9] One master says the soul does not know itself except by likeness, but angels know themselves and God without likeness.

"He ascended the mountain and was transfigured before them."[10] The soul must be transfigured and impressed and molded again in that image which is God's Son. The soul is created in God's image,[11] but the masters say that the Son is God's image, and the soul is created after the image of the image.[12] But I say further: the Son is an image of God above all images; he is an image of His concealed Godhead. And from there, where the Son is an image of God, from the imprint of the Son's image, the soul receives her image. The soul draws from where the Son draws. But the soul is not suspended even there, where the Son issues forth from the Father: she is above all images.[13] Fire and heat are one, and yet are far from being one; the taste and color of an apple are one and yet far from being one. The mouth perceives the taste, and the eye can do nothing about that; the eye perceives the color, about which the mouth knows nothing. The eye craves light, but taste works perfectly in the dark. The soul knows one only: she is above form.

The prophet says, "God will lead His sheep into a green pasture."[14] The sheep is simple, and so are they who are simplified to one. One master says that heaven's course can nowhere be so readily observed as in simple animals: they guilelessly accept the influence of heaven, as do children with no minds of their own.[15] But those folk who are clever and full of ideas, they are carried away in a proliferation of things. So our Lord promised to feed his sheep on the mountain on green grass. All creatures are green in God. All creatures proceed first from God, and then through the angels. That which has the nature of no creature has in itself the impress of all creatures. The angel has in himself the impress of all creatures. All that the angel's nature *can* receive it already has within it. Whatever God is capable of creating, the angels bear within them, and so are not deprived of the perfection other creatures have. Why has an angel this? Because he is so close to God.

St. Augustine says, 'What God creates has a channel through the angels.'[16] In the height all things are green: on the 'mountaintop' all things are green and new: when they descend into time they grow pale and fade. In the new 'greenness' of all creatures our Lord will "feed his sheep." All creatures that are in that green and on that height, as they exist in the angels, are more pleasing to the soul than anything in this world. As the sun is different from night, so different is the least of creatures, as it is there from the whole world.

Therefore, whoever would receive God's teaching must ascend this mountain: there God will make the teaching perfect in the day of eternity where all is light. What I know of God, that is light: what touches creatures is night. That is the true light that has no contact with creatures. What one knows must be light. St. John says, "God is a true light that shines in darkness."[17] What is this darkness?[18] Firstly, that a man should cling to nothing and hang on to nothing, be blind and know nothing of creatures. I have said before, 'He who would see God must be blind.'[19] Secondly, "God is a light that shines in the darkness." He is a light that blinds us. That means a light of such nature that it is uncomprehended: it is unending; in other words, it has no end and knows no end. The blinding of the soul means that she knows nothing and is aware of nothing. The third 'darkness' is best of all and means that there is no light. A master says heaven has no light, it is too lofty for that: it does not shine and is neither hot nor cold in itself. So in this darkness the soul has lost all light, having outgrown all we call heat and color.

A master says light is the highest thing when God gives us what He has promised. One master says the taste of all that is desirable must be conveyed to the soul in this light. One master says there was never anything subtle enough to enter the ground of the soul but God alone. He means that God shines in a darkness where the soul outgrows all light: true, in her powers she receives light and sweetness and grace, but in her ground she receives nothing but God barely. When the Son and the Holy Ghost break out from God, these indeed the soul receives in God: but what else flows from Him of light and sweetness, she receives in her powers.

According to the best authorities, the powers of the soul and the soul herself are one.[20] The fire and its brightness are one, but when the fire descends into reason, it enters as into another nature. When

intellect breaks out from the soul, it is as if it enters another nature. Thirdly, that is a light above all lights: there the soul outgrows all light 'on the mountain's peak,' where there is no light. Where God breaks forth into His Son, the soul is not caught up there. If we catch something of God when He is outflowing, the soul is not detained there: all is higher up, where she outgrows all light and all knowledge. Therefore he says, "I will deliver them and gather them together and lead them into their land, where I will lead them into a green pasture." "Upon the mountain he opened his mouth." One master says our Lord does indeed open his mouth here below, teaching us through scripture and through creatures. But St. Paul says, "Now God has spoken to us in His only-begotten Son" (Heb. 1:2). "In him I shall know all from the least to the greatest all at once in God." (Heb. 8:11).

May God help us to outgrow all that is not God. Amen.

Notes

1. Gospel for All Saints' Day (November 1).
2. *De disciplina Christiana,* 14.15 (Q): 'chair'=*cathedra.*
3. The first group of 'powers' are the lower powers of the soul, including discursive thought, which are 'scattered' among outward things: the 'undivided powers' are intellect and will (Q). Cf. Sermon 21.
4. Cf. Matt. 17:1–2.
5. The quotation seems to combine John 16:4 with a reminiscence of Isa. 53:2. Cf. Sermon 41.
6. See opening sentence (where the Bible says, "*seeing* the crowd").
7. In contrast to God.
8. *De Genesi ad litteram* 12.34 (Q).
9. Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. Cf. Sermon 31, note 3.
10. This is a different text: Matt. 17:1–2.
11. Gen. 1:26.
12. Cf. *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 88, a. 3 ad 3 (Q).
13. The soul must transcend even *this* point where the Son is the image of the Father, to be an 'image' of the impersonal Godhead (Q after Seppänen).
14. Cf. Ezek. 34:11ff.
15. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sent.* II, d. 20, q. 2, a. 2 ad 5 (Q).
16. Cf. *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.24 (Q).
17. Cf. John 1:9+5.
18. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *De mystica theologia.*
19. Cf. Sermon 19.
20. Cf. *Summa theol.* IIIa, q. 90, a. 3 (Q).

SERMON NINETY-SIX

(Pf 99, Q 83, QT 42)

RENOVAMINI SPIRITU MENTIS VESTRAE
(Ephesians 4:23)

"You shall be renewed in your spirit which is called *mens*" (that is, mind). Thus says St. Paul. Now St. Augustine[1] says that in the highest part of the soul which is called *mens* or mind, God created together with the soul's essence a power which the masters call a vessel or shrine of mental forms or formed images. This power[2] makes God like the soul in His outflowing Godhead, from which He has poured forth the whole treasure of His divine essence into the Son and the Holy Ghost (in distinction of persons), just as the soul's memory[3] pours out its treasury of images into the powers of the soul. Now if, with this power, the soul sees anything imaged, whether she sees the image of an angel or her own image, it is an imperfection in her. If she sees God as He is God, or as He is an image, or as He is three, it is an imperfection in her. But when all images are detached from the soul and she sees nothing but the one alone, then the naked essence of the soul finds the naked, formless essence of divine unity, which is superessential being, passive, reposing in itself. Oh wonder of wonders, what noble suffering that is, that the essence of the soul can suffer nothing but the bare unity of God!

Now St. Paul says, "You shall be renewed in the spirit." Renewal befalls all creatures under God, but God undergoes no renewal, having only eternity. What is eternity? Observe. The property of eternity is that being and youth are in it the same, for eternity would not be eternal if it could *become* new and were not always so. Now I say, renewal befalls an angel, namely, in respect of foreknowledge, for an angel does not know future things except insofar as God reveals them to him. Renewal also befalls the soul insofar as she is called soul, for

she is called soul because she gives life to the body and is a form of the body.[4] Renewal also befalls her insofar as she is called a spirit. She is called 'spirit' because she is detached from here and now and from all natural things. But where she is an image of God and as nameless as God, no renewal befalls her, but only eternity, as with God.

Now observe: God is nameless because none can say or understand anything about Him. Concerning this a pagan master says that what we understand or declare about the first cause is more what we ourselves are than what the first cause is, because it is above all speech or understanding.[5] If I now say God is good, it is not true; rather, I am good, God is not good. I will go further and say I am better than God: for what is good can become better, and what can become better can become best of all. Now God is not good, therefore He cannot become better. And since He cannot become better, therefore He cannot become best; for these three, good, better, and best, are remote from God, since He is above them all. Thus, too, if I say God is wise, it is not true: I am wiser than He. So too if I say God is a being, that is not true: He is a transcendent being, and a superessential nothingness. St. *Dionysius*[6] says the finest thing one can say about God is to be silent from the wisdom of inner riches. So be silent and do not chatter about God, because by chattering about Him you are lying and so committing a sin. So, if you want to be without sin and perfect, don't chatter about God. Nor should you (seek to) understand anything about God, for God is above all understanding. One master says, 'If I had a God I could understand, I would no longer consider him God.'[7] So, if you understand anything of Him, that is not He, and by understanding anything of Him you fall into misunderstanding, and from this misunderstanding you fall into brutishness, for whatever in creatures is uncomprehending is brutish. So, if you don't want to become brutish, understand nothing of God the unutterable.

— 'Oh, but what should I do then?'

You should wholly sink away from your youness and dissolve into His Hisness, and your 'yours' and His 'His' should become so completely one 'Mine' that with Him you understand His uncreated self-identity and His nameless Nothingness.

Now St. Paul says, 'You shall be renewed in the spirit.' If we wish to be renewed in the spirit, then the six powers of the soul, both

higher and lower,[8] must each have a golden ring, all gilded over with the gold of divine love. Now note the lower powers, they are three. The first is called discrimination, *rationalis.* On this you should have a golden ring, that is the light, so that your discrimination should be always timelessly illumined by the divine light. The second is the angry power, *irascibilis.* On this you should have a ring, your peace. Why? Because as far as you are at peace, so far you are in God, and as far as you are out of peace you are out of God. The third power is called desire, *concupiscibilis.* On this you should have a ring which is contentment, so that you are content in regard to all creatures that are under God; but with God you should not be content, for you can never have enough of God! The more you have of God, the more you want of Him, for if you could have enough of God, so as to become sated with God, then God would not be God.

On each of the higher powers, too, you must have a golden ring. Of these higher powers there are likewise three. The first is called the retentive power, *memoria.* This power is likened to the Father in the Trinity. On this you should wear a golden ring which is retention, that you may keep all things within you. The second is called understanding, *intellectus.* This power is compared to the Son. On this you should likewise wear a golden ring, which is knowledge, that you may at all times know God. But how? You should know Him without image, without means, and without semblance. But if I am to know God without means, then I must really become He and He I. I say further: God must really become I and I must really become God, so fully one that this 'he' and 'I' become and are one 'is,'[9] and in that 'self-identity' work one work eternally, for this 'he' and this 'I' — that is, God and the soul — are very fruitful.[10] But a single 'here' or a single 'now,' and this 'I' and this 'He' could never work together or become one.[11]

The third power is called will, *voluntas.* This power is compared to the Holy Ghost. On this you should wear a golden ring which is love, that you should love God. You should love God apart from loveworthiness: that is, not because He is worthy of love, for God is not loveworthy, He is above all love and loveworthiness.

— 'Then how should I love God?'

— You should love God nonspiritually: that is to say the soul should be de-spirited, stripped of spiritual dress. For as long as the

soul is in spirit form, she has images; as long as she has images, she has means; as long as she has means, she has not unity or simplicity, and as long as she has not simplicity she has never rightly loved God, for true love lies in simplicity. Therefore your soul should be de-spirited of all spirit, she should be spiritless, for if you love God as He is God, as He is spirit, as He is person and as He is image — all that must go!

— 'Well, how should I love Him *then?*'

— You should love Him as He is: a non-God, a non-spirit, a non-person, a non-image; rather, as He is a sheer pure limpid One, detached from all duality.

And in that One may we eternally sink from nothingness[12] to nothingness. So help us God. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Augustine on Ps. 3:3 (Q).
2. The 'spark' in the soul (Q).
3. The created power in which the soul is like God the Father ('memory' in the Augustinian formula).
4. Cf. Eckhart's commentary on St. John's Gospel (*LW* III, *459*, to John 12:25), in which he explains that *anima* is so called because it *animates* the body (Q). 'Form' here means an active, formative agent.
5. Cf. *Liber de causis,* prop. 6 (Q).
6. The text wrongly has 'Augustine.' Cf. *De myst. theol.* 1.1.
7. Augustine, Sermon 117 (Q).
8. Cf. Sermon 52, note 9.
9. Quint takes 'is' as a substantive.
10. This differs from Quint's earlier translation in QT, p. 354.
11. If time and space intervene, the union with God cannot be achieved.
12. Rejecting Quint's conjecture *ihte* ('something'): cf. Ueda p. 127.

SERMON NINETY-SEVEN

(Pf 100, Q 21, QT 22)

UNUS DEUS ET PATER OMNIUM
(Ephesians 4:6)

I have quoted a text in Latin where St. Paul says in the epistle, "One God and Father of all, who is blessed above all and through all and in us all." I will take another text from the Gospel, where our Lord says, "Friend, climb up higher, draw up higher" (Luke 14:10).

In the first place, when Paul says, "One God and Father of all," he omits one little word, which implies change.[1] By saying "one God" he means that God is one in Himself and apart from all. God belongs to no one, and no one belongs to Him: God is one. Boethius says God is one and does not change.[2] All that God ever created, He created changeable. All things, as they are created, bear the mark of change on their backs. This means that we should be one in ourselves and apart from all; firm and unmoved, we should be one with God. Outside of God there is nothing but — nothing![3] Therefore it is impossible that anything of change or mutability can get into God. Whatever seeks another place outside of Him, is changeable. God has all things within Him in plenitude, therefore He seeks nothing outside Himself, but only in the plenitude as it is in God. As it is the way God bears it in Himself cannot be grasped by any creature.

There is a second lesson when he says, "Father of all, who is blessed." Now this word[4] implies a change. When he says, 'Father,' we are involved with this. If He is our Father, we are His children, and then the honor or the disrespect He is shown goes to our hearts. When a child sees how its father loves it, then it knows what it owes him, such as living in purity and innocence. And therefore we too should live in purity, for God Himself says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). What is purity of heart?

Purity of heart is what is apart from and detached from all material things, collected and enclosed within itself, and then plunging from this purity into God and being united with Him. David[5] says those works are pure and guileless which are pursued and perfected in the light of the soul, and those are still more innocent which abide within, in the spirit, and do not come out. "One God, and Father of all."

The second text is, "Friend, come up higher, draw up higher." I will combine the two.[6] When he says, "Friend, come up higher, draw up higher," that is a conversation of the soul with God, and the reply is, "One God, and Father of all." A master says, 'Friendship depends on the will."[7] I have also said before, love does not unify:[8] true, it unites in act but not in essence. Accordingly it merely says, "One God"; "Climb up higher, draw up higher." The ground of the soul can be penetrated by nothing but the pure Godhead. Even the highest angel, though he is so near to God and so akin and has so much of God in him (his works are established in God, he is united in God in being, not in work, he has an indwelling in God and a constant habitation) — noble as that angel is (which is wondrous), he still cannot enter the soul. One master says that all creatures which have differentiation are unworthy that God Himself should work in them.[9] The soul in herself, as she is above the body, is so pure and delicate that she receives nothing but pure naked Godhead. And yet God cannot enter there unless He has been stripped of all additions.[10] Therefore she was answered, "One God."

St. Paul says, "One God." *One* is something purer than goodness or truth. Goodness and truth do not add anything, but they add in *thought*, and when it is thought, something is added. The One adds nothing, where He is in Himself before flowing forth into the Son and the Holy Ghost. Therefore he says, "Friend, draw up higher." A master says, 'One is the negation of the negation."[11] If I say God is good, that adds something. One is the negation of the negation and a denial of the denial. What does *one* mean? One means that to which nothing is added. The soul receives the Godhead as it is purified in itself, with nothing added, with nothing thought. *One* is a negation of the negation. All creatures have a negation in themselves: one negates by not being the other. An angel negates by not being another. But God negates the negation: He is one and negates all else, for outside of God nothing is. All creatures are in God and are

His very Godhead, which means plenitude, as I said before. He is one Father of all Godhead. I speak of one Godhead, because there nothing is yet flowing forth, and nothing is touched or thought. If I deny God goodness (but I cannot really deny God anything) — but in denying God anything I grasp at something in Him that He is not, and that must go! God is one — He is a negation of the negation. Therefore he says, "One God, Father of all"; "Friend, draw up higher."[12]

A master says the angelic nature has no power and no works, knowing of nothing but God alone. Everything else it ignores.[13] Some powers of the soul take in from without, such as the eye. However subtle that which it takes in, rejecting the coarser part, yet it takes something from without that is concerned with here and now. But intelligence and intellect, stripping all things away, seize where there is no here and now. In this breadth intellect touches the angelic nature.[14] Yet it still receives from the senses: what the senses bring in from without, the intellect takes from that. The will does not, and in *this* respect will ranks above intellect. Will takes from nowhere but pure understanding, where there is no here and now. God means to say that,[15] however exalted, however pure the will is, it still must rise higher. That is God's reply, when he says, "Friend, rise higher; honor awaits you" (Luke 14:10).

Will wills blessedness. I was asked what was the difference between grace and blessedness. Grace, while we are in this life, and blessedness, which we are to have hereafter in eternal life, are to each other as the flower to the fruit. When the soul is replete with grace and there remains nothing in her for grace to perform and perfect, still not everything (as it is in the soul) that the soul has to do comes to performance, so that grace can perfect it. I have also said before, grace performs no work, but just pours all adornments fully into the soul: that is plenitude in the kingdom of the soul. I say grace does not unite the soul with God, but is a fulfillment: that is its work, that it brings the soul back to God. Then from the flower it bears the fruit. Will, as long as it wills blessedness and wills to be with God and is thus drawn upward — in that pure state God indeed slips into the will, and as far as intellect seizes on God purely, as He is truth, God also slips into intellect. But when He sinks into will, this must rise higher. Therefore he says, "One God"; "Friend, climb up higher."

"One God." By God's being one, God's Godhead is perfected. I declare God could never beget His only-begotten Son if He were not one. From God's oneness everything derives that He performs in creatures and in the Godhead. I say further: God alone has oneness. God's property is oneness; it is on this basis that God is God; otherwise God would not be. Whatever is number depends on one, and one depends on nothing. God's riches and wisdom and truth are all absolutely one in God: it is not one, it is oneness. God has everything He has in one, it is one in Him. The masters say heaven revolves in order to bring all things to one, that is why it revolves so rapidly.[16] God has all plenitude as one, God's nature depends on it, and it is the soul's blessedness that God is one: it is her adornment and her glory. He said, "Friend, climb up higher, glory awaits you." It is the glory and honor of the soul that God is one. God behaves as if He were one merely to please the soul, and as if He adorned Himself to make the soul fall in love with Him alone. This is the reason why man wants now one thing, now another, cultivating now wisdom, now some art. Because she has not got the one, the soul never finds rest until all becomes one in God. God is one: that is the soul's blessedness, her adornment and her rest. A master says in all His works God means all things. The soul is all things. Whatever is the noblest, the purest, the highest of all things beneath the soul, God pours completely into her. God is all, and is one.

That we may be thus made one with God, may He who is "one God, Father of all" help us. Amen.

Notes

1. This is the word 'is' (Q): cf. Sermon 73. note 7.
2. Cf. *De cons. phil.* III, m. 9: *stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri,* also quoted by Eckhart in Sermons 24 and 51.
3. Cf. Sermon 49, note 10.
4. The word 'father.'
5. This is not in the Psalms or Proverbs. Clark thinks of the Franciscan David von Augsburg (d. 1272).
6. I.e., Eph. 4:6 and Luke 14:10, making them into a 'conversation.'
7. Quint, for once, is at a loss. Clark supplies the reference: *Summa theol.* IIa–IIae, q. 24, a.1.
8. Cf. Sermon 72, note 11.

9. Untraced, but cf. Eckhart's commentary on St. John 1:11 (*LW* III, p. 85): 'It is a property of God to be without differentiation and He is distinguished solely by His lack of differentiation, whereas it is a property of creatures to be differentiated. But the differentiated cannot properly take in the undifferentiated' (Q).

10. Cf. Sermon 8, note 7.

11. Cf. St. Thomas, *Quodlibet* 10, q. 1, a. 1 ad 3 (Q). The expression *negatio negationis* occurs in several places in the Latin works, e.g., *LW* I, p. 43; III, p. 175 (Q).

12. Sentence transferred from after 'it ignores' (next paragraph), as considered but not done by Quint.

13. Cf. *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 112, a. 1 (Q).

14. Cf. *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 54, a. 5 (Q).

15. I.e., in the 'conversation' above (see note 6).

16. Clark suggests a reminiscence of Aristotle, *Metaphys.* 11.7.

Appendix to Part One

ECKHART THE SCHOLASTIC

From the Commentary on the Book of Wisdom 38–45
(*LW* II, 359–69, edited by Josef Koch)

The following short extract from Eckhart's Latin works is not only a fair sample of his scholastic writings which any translation should at least illustrate, but also, as Josef Koch has shown ('Zur Analogielehre Meister Eckharts,' *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson,* Paris, 1959, 327–50), serves to clarify his important doctrine of analogy, which in turn helps to explain and justify some of his apparently unorthodox statements, including several condemned in the bull of 1329. The side numbers 38–45 are those used by the editor for easy reference. (K) in the notes refers to Koch.

Creavit enim, ut essent omnia (Wisd. 1:14). "He created all things that they might have being" (concluding portion).

38. Further it is to be noted that multitude and inequality are properties which always attach to creatures or created things, but unity and equality are proper to God and the divine as such. To denote this it is said that *God created, that all things might be.*[1] "God" he (Solomon) says, and "created": that is unity; "He created all things": that is multitude and inequality. By the very fact of being created, a thing is differentiated, and because it is differentiated, it is unequal and multiple. For the created, by the fact that it is descended from the one and undifferentiated, falls away from the one and falls into differentiation and, consequently, into inequality. Conversely, the uncreated, since it has not fallen or descended from anything, remains in the fountainhead of unity, equality and nondistinction. Hence it is that the three Persons in the Godhead, although they are several (*plures*), yet are not many (*multi*) but one (*unum*) — even if there were a thousand Persons! "The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

39. Here again it is to be noted that from the very fact that creatures are many, differentiated, and unequal, it follows that God is undifferentiated, not many, and not unequal. It also follows that every created thing is in some way one, equal, and undifferentiated. The reason for all that has been said is that the higher by its nature always affects what is subject to it, but is in no way affected in turn by it, as is made clear in the treatise *On the Nature of the Higher.* Therefore God the creator affects all creation with His unity, equality, and undifferentiation, according to the words of Proclus: 'all multiplicity shares somehow in the One' — and that which is divided from others is undivided in itself.

40. In agreement with the above is what Seneca says in his sixty-seventh letter: 'Things divine have one nature,' and again: 'there is no distinction in the divine.'

    Boethius in Book III of his *De consolatione,* addressing God, says,

> All things Thou bringest forth from Thy high archetype:
> Thou, height of beauty, in Thy mind the beauteous world
> Dost bear, and in that ideal likeness shaping it,
> Dost order perfect parts a perfect whole to frame.[2]

    Thus, from Seneca you can gather that the one and the equal pertain to the nature of the divine and, consequently, the many and the unequal to the nature of the created; but from Boethius that this world, i.e., the whole universe, was first intended and was 'derived from its exemplar,' from the image of the Creator; but the parts, which are many, are secondary, to the extent that the perfection of the one universe requires them. Or, to speak more properly, the perfect unity of the universe is the cause of such parts. For in general the parts of any whole do not confer being on the whole, but on the contrary receive being from the whole, by the whole and in the whole. For outside of the whole they have no being at all, except by a designation which is wrong because equivocal.

Justitia enim perpetua est et immortalis (Wisd. 1:15). "For justice is perpetual and immortal."

41. It should be noted that this proposition is simply true of all justice everywhere, in the literal sense. For one must know that there is a total difference, indeed opposition, between bodily characteristics (*accidentia*) such as whiteness, taste, and so on, and the spiritual perfections. For bodily characteristics perish and lose their being when their subjects perish. And the reason is that they receive their being, and their unity, and consequently also their dividedness and their number (as we said above about the parts of the universe),[3] from their subjects, through and in their subjects, and consequently are posterior to their subjects. But the spiritual perfections, for the same reason already stated, are quite different. For these in no way receive being from their subjects, and consequently do not receive division or number from them or perish with them. For each thing is dissolved by the same causes which brought it about, as Chrysostom says, and a jurist adds that 'nothing is so natural.' On the contrary, these perfections, such as justice, wisdom, and the like, receive nothing whatsoever of their own from the subject, but rather give the subject the whole of its being as such, as is clearly seen in the relation of justice and the just man. Accordingly they are prior to their subjects and anterior to their subjects, and are not properly *in* their subjects, nor do they properly receive being *from* their subjects; on the contrary, the subjects are "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17) in *them,* and receive their being, as such, in them as that which is prior to themselves.

42. For example, the just man, as such, receives his whole being from justice itself, so that justice is in truth the parent and father of the just man, and the just man, as such, is the offspring and son of justice, as I have noted to the text "From whom is all fatherhood in heaven and on earth" (Eph. 3:15).[4] Another manifest example is seen in the body and the soul. For we usually say that the soul is in the body, whereas in truth the body is rather in the soul, which gives being to the body. Accordingly, when a man's body perishes, his soul does not perish, inasmuch as it is not immersed in matter. For always the later and caused things perish when the first things or causes perish, and not conversely. This is the meaning of the words "For justice is perpetual and immortal."

43. But that the inexperienced say and believe that justice, wisdom, and the like die with the just and wise man, comes from the ignorance of those who judge spiritual things by physical ones, whereas in nature it is always the reverse, that the spiritual is the measure of the physical. That is why it is said significantly below in the third chapter, "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the pain of death shall not touch them" (Wisd. 3:1–2); then follows, "in the eyes of fools they seemed to die." This is clearly in agreement with what Augustine teaches in *De Trinitate,* Book VIII, chapter 2, where he says, 'If a soul becomes good, it can only achieve this by turning to something not itself. But where shall it turn to become a good soul if not to the Good, by loving, desiring, and striving for this? And if it turns away from this and thus, by this very turning from the Good, ceased to be good, then — if that Good from which the soul turns had no continuity in itself — there would be nothing to which the soul could again turn if it wished for amendment.' This is the meaning of Isaiah 30:18, "The Lord waits on you to take pity on you," as I have noted more clearly and fully on that text.[5] Also in chapter 7 below, "The light (of wisdom) is inextinguishable": see at that place.[6]

44. Again, in evidence of the above it must be noted that we should not imagine, as some slow-witted persons think, that there is a different justice in each of several just men, being divided and counted, and fixed and rooted in those just men as is the case (noted above) with bodily characteristics. But rather, all just men are just from justice which is one in number, but a number that is numberless, one without oneness or, more properly speaking, one which is above oneness. Therefore all just men, insofar as they are just, are one,[7] as our Savior clearly teaches in John 17:11, 21–23. And this is what Augustine says in Book III of His *Confessions:* justice is 'everywhere and always,' not 'different here from there,' according to which all the just are just. And further on: 'Can justice be varied and mutable? Only the times over which it rules are different: for they are *times.*' And further on he gives a fitting example from prosody. For if various just men were just by different kinds of justice, then they

would be equivocally just,[8] or justice would relate to just men univocally.[9] But the relation is that of *analogy,* by way of exemplar and antecedent, and thus is subject neither to number nor to time.[10] And that is something common to all spiritual and divine perfections, according to the Psalm: "His wisdom is without number" (Ps. 146:5), as I have noted there.[11] "For all wisdom is from the Lord God" (Sir. 1:1). Hence Avicenna says in his *Metaphysics* that justice and virtue come from the Giver of Forms, but that bodily characteristics come from the action of the active qualities of the body, which is changeable.

45. But by saying all the above, we do not deny that the virtuous possess habits of virtue: we say rather this, that these (habits) are, as it were, configurations in conformity with justice, and with God Himself from whom they come, and *to* whom they shape and conform us, according to 2 Cor. 3:18: "We are transformed into that same image, as by the spirit of the Lord"; and in Heb. 1:3 it is said of the first just man, the Son of God, that he is "the brightness of His glory and the image of His being." He says, "the brightness of His glory," and that is what we wish to say. For the virtues, such as justice and the like are more like gradual acts of conformation than anything imprinted and immanent which has its fixed root in the virtuous man: they are in a continuous state of becoming, like the glow of light in midair, or the image in a mirror. That is why they are called flowers: "my flowers are the fruit" (Sir. 24:23). According to Ambrose the virtues are the fruits,[12] and these fruits are the flowers. In agreement with this is the fact that (as has been stated to the text "My flowers are the fruit") the Son is ever born in the Godhead,[13] and also that in Christ himself, as a man, there is no other being than that divine being whereby he is the Son of God.

Notes

1. Another way of turning the Latin *Deus creavit ut essent omnia.*
2. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy,* trans. V. E. Watts (Harmondsworth, 1969), 97. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.
3. See above, 40.
4. Latin sermon XXXV (*LW* IV, 311).

5. No commentary on Isaiah by Eckhart is preserved; but cf. Latin sermon V, 3 (*LW* IV, 61) (K).

6. Wisd. 7:10 (*LW* II, 425–29).

7. (In God): cf. Latin sermon XXX, 1 (*LW* IV, 276, trans. Clark-Skinner, p. 216) (K).

8. Having merely the same name.

9. As one cause which produces *exactly the same* effects in individual members of the species.

10. As one thing which produces *a similar* effect, like the image in a mirror.

11. *Comm. on St. John* 3:34 (*LW* III, 313–14).

12. (Pseudo-) Ambrose, *Comm. on Gal.* 5:22 (K).

13. *Comm. on Ecclesiasticus* 24:23 (*LW* II, 249–50, 257) (K).

Part Two

TREATISES AND OTHER WORKS

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

As mentioned in Note B above (p. 23), the 110 sermons printed in Pfeiffer's 1857 edition are followed by 18 so-called 'treatises' (*Traktate*), of which only three are now considered genuine. These are V *The Book of Divine Comfort,* XVII *The Talks of Instruction,* and IX *On Detachment.*

The earliest of these works is *The Talks of Instruction* (*Rede der underscheidunge*), which can be dated between about 1295 and 1298 on the basis of the manuscript heading in which Eckhart is referred to as 'Brother [not yet 'Master'] Eckhart,' and as 'vicar of Thuringia and prior of Erfurt,' two offices which by a decision of 1298 were not allowed to be held by the same person. We have here the substance of a series of talks, or perhaps rather 'question-and-answer sessions' given by Eckhart to, presumably, the novices in his charge.[1] The text, in twenty-three loosely connected sections, was probably put together by Eckhart himself or under his direction. Since these talks, despite one or two more difficult or 'dangerous' passages, do not go into the higher flights of mysticism, it has been thought by some that this was a youthful work, but as Clark points out, Eckhart was nearing the age of forty at the time, and the elementary character of the talks is doubtless due to consideration for his audience. For this very reason the talks may also serve as a useful introduction for the modern reader. The 'collations' of the Latin heading were originally readings from the church fathers and the like which were held after supper, being later extended to general instruction sessions. Sermon 55 also appears to be an evening discourse of this nature. The intrusion of real or feigned questions from listeners is found in various sermons (e.g., Sermons 2, 3, 4, and 96). In both cases they may be assumed to be stylized versions of typical questions Eckhart had been asked.

Thus a prime purpose of these talks must be seen as a clearing up of difficulties. The basic ground rules had to be laid out, discussed and understood before Eckhart's pupils were ready for higher things. It should not need stressing that, for Eckhart, the mystic way could only be undertaken on the basis of strict personal discipline.

The contrast with the next work, *The Book of Divine Comfort,* is considerable. This, together with the third work given here, *The Nobleman,* constitutes what Miss Evans (Evans II, p. vi) refers to as 'the "lost" *Book of Benedictus.*' The book was only 'lost' in the sense that it does not appear under this title in Pfeiffer's edition (though the opening text from 2 Cor. 1:3 is sufficient identification), and also because Pfeiffer does not include *The Nobleman.* The title *Benedictus* occurs in the trial documents (cf. Introduction, pp. 9ff). Thirteen articles were taken from *The Book of Divine Comfort* and two from *The Nobleman* in the first list (A) of forty-nine articles objected to by the Cologne inquisitors, introduced by the words 'These are the articles extracted from the book which Meister Eckhart sent to the Queen of Hungary, written in German, which book begins *Benedictus Deus et pater domini nostri Jhesu Christi,*' although only one of them was condemned in the bull of 1329 (see p. 554, note 19). A later source[2] adds the information that the Queen was 'sister of the Dukes of Austria,' thus identifying her unequivocally with Agnes (ca. 1280–1364), whose father Albrecht of Habsburg was murdered in 1308. This is almost certainly the event which led to Eckhart's writing to console her, although other dates have been suggested.[3]

If we are right in dating *The Book of Divine Comfort* about 1308, there is considerable irony in its being attacked as heretical by the Cologne inquisitors some eighteen years later, since at the time of writing it Eckhart was engaged in reforming the Dominican house in Bohemia where heretical views, as well as general laxness, were rife.[4] It is true, however, that in this work Eckhart touched on some of the deepest mysteries. The difficulty of understanding it is increased by the fact that earlier translators, including Miss Evans and Blakney (though not Clark), had to rely on the poor text of Pfeiffer's edition or that of Strauch (1919), which, being based on the same faulty Basle MS, is little better, and in addition they themselves made mistakes in translation. It is remarkable that Eckhart introduced such difficult

matters into a work intended for the consolation of a bereaved high-born lady. It is however clear that she was an intelligent and deeply religious woman, so we may assume that Eckhart's teachings were not entirely lost on her and may, indeed, have contributed to her decision to adopt the religious life.

The Nobleman, which is clearly linked to *The Book of Divine Comfort* as an appendage, is in form a sermon similar to, but longer than many of the sermons in the present collection. Quint plausibly conjectured that its greater length is due to the fact that, unlike other sermons, we have it in the form as written out in full by Eckhart himself. This makes it an especially valuable document even apart from its intrinsic worth.

The last of the four 'treatises' translated here, *On Detachment,* was considered spurious by Adolf Spamer in his study of 1909 (cf. p. 23), and Quint did not include it in his translation volume of 1955 though, after appearing in a separate edition by Quint's pupil Eduard Schaefer (Bonn, 1956), it found an honored place in vol. V of *DW.* Its theme is so fundamental and its treatment so typical of Eckhart that one can only wonder, as Clark remarks, that it was neglected for so long. The poor translation by Blakney is not improved by its having been given the misleading and, indeed, rather silly title *On Disinterest.*

Scarcely had the above words been penned, and literally on the very day on which I was preparing to send the completed typescript of this volume to the publisher, when a small but important additional text came to my notice, which I have been able to include here as a fifth item. This is a fragment of an unknown sermon by Eckhart, preserved in a Nürenberg MS of the early fourteenth century (i.e., written in Eckhart's lifetime), which was discovered by Professor Kurt Ruh as long ago as 1967, and accepted by Josef Quint in 1972 as Eckhartian, but which for some reason has only just been published.[5] For convenience of reference (more particularly in the biblical index) I have numbered it as Sermon 98. Despite its early date the text is not only fragmentary but corrupt, and interpretation is in part somewhat tentative. Quint in fact considered it to be part of a compilation from Eckhart's sermons, while Ruh believes, as I do, that it is part of a single sermon. It thus vividly illustrates some of the difficulties that Eckhart scholars are faced with.

It must be remembered that the sermons in *DW,* though based on the most painstaking investigation, are in the last analysis only Quint's best guess as to the exact wording. As Clark (*Meister Eckhart,* 1957, pp. 116–117) puts it,

> Few, if any, of the German sermons were written down by the author himself or under his supervision [with the possible exception of *The Nobleman,* M.O'C.W.]. They were recorded by members of the congregation during the sermon, or written down from memory afterward. There are reasons for thinking that some form of shorthand or Tironian notes, or an extremely abbreviated script was used for the purpose. It is known that in those days some persons were able to write down a whole sermon from memory.

Though Eckhart's listeners (at least those in orders) were obviously literate, the habit of memorizing, as a survival from preliterate days, was doubtless much stronger then than it is now. But of course not all listeners were equally capable of such a feat. The present sermon is a poor copy of a bad transcript. It is, however, exceptional, as Kurt Ruh has recently shown.[6] If it were not, as he remarks, a critical edition would not have been possible.

In fact, if we can regard *The Nobleman* as the best possible case of the transmission of an Eckhart sermon, we can place this fragment (ironically the oldest such fragment known) very near the bottom end of the scale, as the worst case, since anything much worse preserved than this would be highly liable not to be recognized as by Eckhart at all. It was painfully written down, perhaps in a Swiss convent as the dialect suggests, by a scribe with little understanding of the theme from a fairly faulty copy made during or after the sermon. The original copy may have been scrawled on wax tablets, which cannot have helped the unfortunate scribe. Yet this fragment contains one magnificent and unmistakably Eckhartian touch, so nearly lost to the world: the idea that God would have burst if He had not been able to pour out all His nature, and that, since no creature could contain it all, He had to beget the Son as a receptacle. One can only wonder how many sermons, and how many gems of this sort, have been irretrievably lost.

Sermon 98, then, though fortunately not typical in its bad transmission, is an instructive case. Josef Quint attempted to establish, as far as possible, a valid canon of Eckhart's German works, using first of all the evidence of the trial documents and other objective criteria to provide a solid core of authenticated material. As he proceeded, he necessarily passed increasingly from the most assured to the more dubious, though with his incomparable knowledge and skill he was able to establish a corpus that will not lightly be overthrown, whatever minor corrections of detail may be made here and there, and whatever additions. Certainly he cannot be accused of lack of caution, and many would say that if anything he went too far in rejecting texts that ought to have been included. He himself intended to publish a fourth volume of sermons that he considered probably genuine, but this was not to be.

The pieces included in Appendix I are in a different category: they are obviously not *by* Eckhart. They are included here, following Quint's example in QT, for their very real intrinsic interest, and above all as living examples of the Master's influence which the authorities might weaken but could not destroy. Their popularity is attested by the fact that all four are found in numerous manuscripts, and they go to show, I think, that there were indeed many who understood at least a great deal of the Master's message. (There are other texts associated with his name, not included here, where such understanding is less apparent.) Who their authors were is of course entirely unknown, though in the case of number 4 at least we can almost certainly detect the hand of his direct pupils.

The final piece, in Appendix II, belongs again in a slightly different, as we might say mixed, category. Though scarcely an authentic work of Eckhart as it stands, it may well reflect the Master's final words on parting. If so, it illustrates from yet another angle the sort of problems facing Eckhart scholarship. The mass of material contained in parts II, III and IV of Pfeiffer's edition, together with some of the additional pieces included by Miss Evans in volume II of her translation, is only a sample of what has passed for Eckhart's writings. Some of it is, or may be, genuine Eckhart; some is 'mosaic' material extracted from his sermons and rearranged, often in a more or less garbled form. Quint indeed believed our Sermon 98 belonged in this category, but Ruh points out that such 'conglomerates' belong

to a later age than the date of this manuscript. Quint may have been wrong in this instance, but his achievement is vast. And it is only fair to state that my predecessor in this task, Miss Evans, showed herself aware of something of the problem and presented material in English guise which was not to be found in Pfeiffer, toward whom she always maintained a critical attitude. She was not equipped with sufficient scholarship, and proceeded on an intuitive basis, and some of her findings were certainly wrong, but her effort must be recognized. In the case of Sermons 76, 78, and 84–86 at least, her judgment was confirmed by Quint.

The task facing other scholars, then, following in Quint's footsteps (as Miss Evans could not) is a daunting one. New finds are always possible, as we have just seen. The papal ban made the spreading of the Master's teachings under his own name hazardous, and much of what he undoubtedly wrote was preserved anonymously or under other names. And the very preservation of Sermon 98 (which long antedates the bull of 1329) shows how chancy such preservation was: perhaps some of his boldest sermons have been lost because listeners found them incomprehensible or shocking. Anything like a complete 'Eckhart canon' is thus an obvious impossibility, and we must be grateful indeed for what we have, and to present and future scholars who may succeed in adding to the store. We may be grateful, too, that his church has now adopted a more positive attitude toward him. In a perceptive article, a leading American Dominican, Father Thomas O'Meara, has reviewed modern attitudes to the Master. He writes,

> Eckhart's fate in the earlier part of this century coincided with a prevailing narrow interpretation of theological expression joined to a rigid view of the role of the church in doctrinal discussion. Theological developments of recent decades, and especially since Vatican Council II, have freed Eckhart from that destiny of rejection.[7]

And the same writer quotes with approval Thomas Merton and others to show that the interest shown in Eckhart by Japanese Zen Buddhists is reciprocated by modern Catholic admirers of Eckhart. It is a far cry from the days when such apologists were forced, like Otto Karrer,[8] to try to prove the Master to have been a rigid Thomist. And there we must leave the matter. As translator, I have no ambition to

add my own interpretation of 'what Eckhart *really* meant' to all the others that have been seen.

Notes

1. It is scarcely necessary now to repeat Clark's statement (Clark-Skinner, 31) that the talks were not, in the words of Norah Leeson's pioneer English translation (1917), 'delivered to a Women's Settlement of the Friends of God' (concerning whom see note 2 on p. 25 above). Miss Evans's suggestion that the audience consisted of 'probably the inmates of a Beguine House' is also pure conjecture. In fact there is no particular reason to suppose that the talks were addressed to women at all: novice friars seem the obvious audience. If the hearers *were* women they would presumably have been nuns.

2. Johannes Wenck, the intemperate Heidelberg theologian, in a pamphlet attacking both Eckhart and his own contemporary Cardinal Cusanus (see p. 13 above), for alleged pantheism, written about 1440 in reply to Cusanus's important work *De docta ignorantia.*

3. The assassination caused a great stir. Albrecht's widow (Agnes's mother) founded a convent at Königsfelden in the Aargau, the scene of the crime, to which Agnes herself retired in 1313 to spend the rest of her long life in prayer. Albrecht was German king and Holy Roman Emperor elect, though not having been crowned by the pope he never held the imperial title. He was nor, of course, king of Hungary. His harsh rule had allegedly provoked the successful revolt of the Forest Cantons of 1291, and his assassin, reviled as 'Parricida' (though he was his victim's nephew, not his son), makes a brief appearance in Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell,* where his base crime is contrasted with Tell's high-minded slaying of Gessler.

The other dates suggested for Eckhart's work are 1305, when Agnes lost a sister-in-law and a beloved niece, and 1313 when her mother died. But 1308, when Eckhart was in Bohemia as vicar general and in touch with royal circles, is by far the most probable date. The death of Agnes's husband in 1301 would certainly be too early.

4. This would not be the only irony of Eckhart's career. Pope John XXII, who condemned him, was himself twice accused of heresy (see p. 11 above), and William of Ockham later, from the safety of imperial protection, launched similar attacks on John's successor, Benedict XII, who, as Cardinal Jacques Fournier, had been Eckhart's chief judge.

5. For further details see notes to the text.

6. Kurt Ruh, 'Deutsche Predigtbücher des Mittelalters,' *Vestigia Bibliae, Jahrbuch des deutschen Bibel-Archivs Hamburg* 3 (1981): 11–20.

7. 'Meister Eckhart's Destiny,' *Spirituality Today* (September–December 1978): 357. Edmund Colledge (1981, see Bibliography) by contrast strikes a more old-fashioned note.

8. Otto Karrer, *Meister Eckhart: Das System seiner religiösen Lehre* (Munich, 1926).

I

THE TALKS OF INSTRUCTION

These are the talks of instruction which the vicar of Thuringia, the prior of Erfurt, Brother Eckhart, O.P, delivered to certain of his novices, who asked many questions concerning these talks as they sat together 'in collationibus.'

1. Of True Obedience

True and perfect obedience is a virtue to crown all virtues, and no work, however great, can be performed and done without this virtue: and however trifling or paltry a work is, it is more usefully done in true obedience, whether it be reading, or hearing Mass, praying, contemplation, or whatever you can think of. But take however trifling a task you like, whatever it may be, and it will be made the nobler and better for you by true obedience. Obedience always produces the very best in all things. Yet obedience never hinders or misses anything a man does in any way that proceeds from true obedience, for it misses nothing good. Obedience need never be concerned, for it lacks no good.

Wherever a man in obedience goes out of his own and gives up what is his, in the same moment God must go in there,[1] for when a man wants nothing for himself, God must want it equally as if for Himself. So in all things that I do not want for myself, God wants for me. Now see — what does he want for me that I do not want for myself? If I abandon self, He must want everything for me that He wants for Himself, neither more nor less, and in the same way as He wants for Himself. And if God did not want this, then by the truth

that God is, God would not be just and would not be God, which is His natural being.

In true obedience there should be no trace of 'I want so-and-so,' or 'this and that,' but a pure going out of your own. And therefore, in the best prayer a man can pray it should not be 'give me this virtue or that habit,' or even 'Lord, give me Yourself,' or 'eternal life,' but 'Lord, give only what You will, and do, O Lord, whatever and however You will in every way.' This surpasses the former as heaven does the earth. And when such a prayer is uttered one has prayed well, having gone right out of self into God in true obedience. And as true obedience should have no 'I want this,' so too one should never hear from it 'I don't want,' for 'I don't want' is an absolute bane of all obedience. As St. Augustine says,[2] 'The true servant of God does not desire to be told or given what he would like to hear or see, for his first and highest care is to hear what pleases God best.'

2. Of the Most Powerful Prayer and the Highest Activity

The most powerful prayer, one well-nigh omnipotent to gain all things, and the noblest work of all is that which proceeds from a bare mind. The more bare it is, the more powerful, worthy, useful, praiseworthy and perfect the prayer and the work. A bare mind can do all things. What is a bare mind?

A bare mind is one which is worried by nothing and is tied to nothing, which has not bound its best part to any mode, does not seek its own in anything, that is fully immersed in God's dearest will and gone out of its own. A man can do no work however paltry that does not derive power and strength from this source. We should pray so intently, as if we would have all members and all powers turned to it — eyes, ears, mouth, heart, and all the senses; and we should never stop until we find ourselves about to be united with Him whom we have in mind and are praying to: that is — God.

3. Of Unresigned People, Who Are Full of Self-Will

People say, 'Alas, sir, I wish I stood as well with God or had as much devotion and were as much at peace with God as others are, I wish

I were like them, or that I were so poor,' or, 'I can never manage it unless I am there or there, or do this or that; I must get away from it all, or go and live in a cell or a cloister.'

In fact, the reason lies entirely with yourself and with nothing else. It is self-will, though you may not know it or believe it: restlessness never arises in you except from self-will, whether you realize it or not. Though we may think a man should flee these things or seek those things — places or people or methods, or company,[3] or deeds — this is not the reason why methods or things hold you back: it is you yourself *in* the things that prevents you, for you have a wrong attitude to things.

Therefore start first with yourself, and resign yourself. In truth, unless you flee first from yourself, then wherever you flee to, you will find obstacles and restlessness no matter where it is. If people seek peace in outward things, whether in places or in methods or in people or in deeds or in banishment or in poverty or in humiliation, however great or of whatever kind all this may be, this is all in vain and brings them no peace. Those who seek thus seek wrongly; the further they go the less they find what they are seeking. They are like a man who has taken a wrong turning: the further he goes, the more he goes astray. But what should he do? He should resign *himself* to begin with, and then he has abandoned all things. In truth, if a man gave up a kingdom or the whole world and did not give up self, he would have given up nothing. But if a man gives up himself, then whatever he keeps, wealth, honor, or whatever it may be, still he has given up everything.[4]

One saint[5] comments on St. Peter's words, "See, Lord, we have left everything" (Matt. 19:27) — and all that he had left was just a net and his boat. This saint says whoever leaves a little of his own free will, he leaves not that alone, but he leaves all that worldly people can get hold of, in fact all that they are able to desire. For he who resigns himself and his own will has left all things as truly as if they were his free possession and at his absolute disposal. For that which you don't *want* to desire, you have handed over and resigned for God's sake. That is why our Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), that is, in *will*. And none should doubt this, for if there were any better way our Lord would have declared it, just as he said, "If any one would follow me, he must first deny himself" (Matt.

16:24). It all depends on that. Observe yourself, and wherever you find yourself, leave yourself: that is the very best way.

4. Of the Value of Resignation: What to Do Inwardly and Outwardly

You must know that no man ever left himself so much in this life, but he could find more to leave. There are few who are truly aware of this and who are steadfast in it. It is really an equal exchange and barter: just as much as you go out of all things, just so much, neither more nor less, does God enter in with all that is His — if indeed you go right out of all that is yours. Start with that, and let it cost you all you can afford. And in that you will find true peace, and nowhere else.

People should not worry so much about what they have to *do;* they should consider rather what they *are.* If people and their ways were good, their deeds would shine brightly. If you are righteous, then your deeds will be righteous. Do not think to place holiness in doing; we should place holiness in being, for it is not the works that sanctify us, but we who should sanctify the works.[6] However holy the deeds may be, they do not sanctify us in the least insofar as they are deeds, but rather, insofar as we are and have being, just so far do we hallow all that we do, whether it be eating, sleeping, waking, or anything else. Those in whom being is but slight, whatever deeds they do amount to nothing. Therefore note that all our endeavors should be devoted to *being* good, not caring so much about what we do or what kind of works, but how the ground of our works is.

5. Observe What Makes the Essence and the Ground Good

The basis for a man's essence and ground being wholly good, and from which a man's works derive their goodness, is that a man's whole mind shall be entirely turned toward God. Turn all your study to letting God grow great for you, so that all your sincerity and striving is directed toward Him in all that you do or leave undone. In truth, the more you have of this, the better all your works, of whatever kind, will be. Hold fast to God, and He will fasten all goodness to you. If you seek God, you will find God and all goodness. In fact,

in such a frame of mind if you stepped on a stone it would be a more godly act than to receive the body of the Lord while more concerned with your own affairs or in a less detached frame of mind. If a man holds fast to God, God and all virtues cleave to him. And what before you sought, now seeks you; what before you pursued, now pursues you; and what before you fled, now flees you. And so, if a man cleaves fast to God, all that is divine cleaves to him and all that is alien and remote from God flees him.

6. On Detachment and on Possessing God

I was asked, 'Some people shun all company and always want to be alone; their peace depends on it, and on being in church. Was that the best thing?' And I said, 'No!' Now see why. He who is in a right state, is always in a right state wherever he is, and with everybody. But if a man is in a wrong state, he is so everywhere and with anybody. But if a man is in a right state, in truth he has God with him. Now if a man truly has God with him, God is with him everywhere, in the street or among people just as much as in church or in the desert or in a cell. If he possesses God truly and solely, such a man cannot be disturbed by anybody. Why?

He has only God, thinks only of God, and all things are for him nothing but God. Such a man bears God in all his works and everywhere, and all that man's works are wrought purely by God — for he who causes the work is more genuinely and truly the owner of the work than he who performs it. If we then have none but God alone in mind, then He must really do our work, and God's work can be hindered by none, nor by any company or place. Therefore no one can stop such a man, for he regards, seeks, and tastes nothing but God, for God is united with that man in all his aims. And just as no multiplicity can scatter God, so nothing can scatter or diversify that man, for he is one in the One, where all multiplicity is one and is nonmultiplicity.

A man should receive God in all things and train his mind to keep God ever present in his mind, in his aims, and in his love. Note how you regard God: keep the same attitude that you have in church or in your cell, and carry it with you in the crowd and in unrest and inequality.[7] And — as I have often said — when we speak of 'equality,'

this does not mean that one should regard all works as equal, or all places or people. That would be quite wrong, for praying is a better task than spinning, and the church is a nobler place than the street. But in your acts you should have an equal mind and equal faith and equal love for your God, and equal seriousness. Assuredly, if you were equal-minded in this way, then no man could keep you from having God ever present.

But if God is not thus truly in a man, but has to be got from without, from this and that, if he seeks God in unequal fashion, whether in deeds or in people or in places, that man has not got God. And that man may easily be distracted, since he has not got God, and does not seek God alone, or love and strive for God alone. Accordingly he is put off not only by *bad* company — even goodness is a hindrance to him: not only the street but even the church, and not only evil words and deeds but even good words and deeds, for the blockage is within himself because in him God has not become all things. If this were so, then he would be happy and at ease everywhere and with everybody, for he would have God, whom none can take from him, nor could anyone hinder his work.

Wherein lies this true possession of God — this *really* having Him? This true possession of God depends on the mind, an inner mental turning and striving toward God — but not in a continuous and equal thinking of Him, for that would be impossible for nature to strive for, very difficult and not even the best thing. A man should not have, or be satisfied with, an imagined God, for then, when the idea vanishes, God vanishes! Rather, one should have an essential God, who far transcends the thought of man and all creatures. Such a God never vanishes unless a man wilfully turns away from Him.

He who has God thus essentially, takes Him divinely, and for him God shines forth in all things, for all things taste divinely to him, and God's image appears to him from out of all things. God flashes forth in him always, in him there is detachment and turning away, and he bears the imprint of his beloved, present God. It is just like a man who is terribly thirsty: he can do other things beside drinking and can even turn his mind to other thoughts, but yet, whatever he does and in whatever company he is, whatever he intends, whatever he thinks or does, he never loses the thought of drinking as long as his thirst lasts; and the greater the thirst, the greater and deeper

and more present and persistent will be the thought of a drink. Or if there is a man who is so passionately devoted to a thing that nothing else interests him or touches his heart, he is intent on that thing and nothing else; quite certainly, wherever or with whomever that man is, and whatever he takes up or does, the image of what he loves never fades in him, and he finds its image in everything, and it is ever the more strongly present to him, the more his love for it increases. And that man will not seek rest, for no unrest disturbs him.

That man finds greater praise before God, for he takes all things as divine, and as greater than they are in themselves. Indeed, this requires zeal and love and a clear perception of the interior life, and a watchful, true, wise, and real knowledge of what the mind is occupied with among things and people. *This* cannot be learned by running away, by fleeing into the desert away from outward things; a man must learn to acquire an inward desert, wherever and with whomever he is. He must learn to break through things and seize his God in them, and to make His image grow in himself in essential wise. It is just like learning to write: truly, if a man is to acquire this art, he must apply himself and practice hard, however heavy and bitter a task it seems to him, and however impossible. If he is prepared to practice diligently and often, he will learn and master the art. Of course, at first he has to remember every letter and fix it firmly in his mind. Later on, when he has acquired the art, he will be completely free of the image and will not have to stop and think, but will write fluently and freely — and the same with playing the fiddle or any other task that requires skill. All he needs to know is that he intends to exercise his skill, and even if he is not paying full attention, wherever his thoughts may stray, he will do the job because he has the skill. Thus a man should be pervaded with God's presence, transformed with the form of his beloved God, and made essential by Him, so that God's presence shines for him without any effort; rather he will find emptiness in all things and be totally free of things. But first there must be thought and attentive study, just as with a pupil in any art.

7. How to Perform One's Work in the Most Rational Way

We find many people at the stage — which a man can easily reach if he will — where the things a man moves among do not hinder him or

leave any lasting image with him: for when the heart is full of God, creatures cannot have or find a place in it. But this is not enough: we should gain more profit from all things, whatever they may be, wherever we are, whatever we see or hear, and however strange or alien it may be. Only then are we in a right state and not before, and a man can never come to an end of this, but can continue to grow and gain more and more in genuine increase. And in all his acts and in all things a man should consciously use his reason, having in all things a perceptive awareness of himself and his inward being, and in all things seize God in the highest possible way. For a man should be as our Lord said, "Like people on the watch, always expecting their Lord" (Luke 12:36). For indeed, people who are expectant like that are watchful; they look around them to see where he whom they expect is coming from, and they look out for him in whatever comes along, however strange it may be, just in case he should be in it. In this way we should consciously discover our Lord in all things. This requires much diligence, demanding a total effort of our senses and powers of mind; then those who manage this are in a right state: taking God equally in all things, they find God in equal measure in all.

It is true that one piece of work differs from another, but if a man were to do all things with an equal mind, then indeed his works would all be equal, and for a man in a right state, who should thus possess God, God would shine forth as nakedly in the most worldly things as in the most godly. Not of course that a man should do anything worldly or unfitting, but rather: whatever of outward things he should chance to see or hear, he should turn to God. He to whom God is thus present in all things, who is in full control of his reason and uses it, he alone knows true peace, and he has heaven indeed. For him who would be in a right state, one of two things must happen: either he must seize God in activities, and learn to have Him, or he must abandon all works. But since man cannot in this life refrain from activities, which are human and manifold, so a man should learn to have his God in all things and remain unhindered in all acts and places. And so, when a beginner has to deal with people, he should first arm himself strongly with God and fix Him firmly in his heart, uniting all his intentions, thoughts, will, and strength with Him, so that nothing else can arise in that man's mind.

8. On Unremitting Effort in the Highest Progress

A man should never regard a task so easily and as so well done, that he becomes too free in his actions or so confident as to let his reason become idle and go to sleep. He should always lift himself up with the twin powers of reason and will, seizing his highest good therein at their peak, and wisely guarding himself against all harm, both outwardly and inwardly. In this way he will never fail in anything, but will continue to make great progress.

9. How the Inclination to Sin Is Always Salutary to Man

You should know that the impulse to wrongdoing is not without great benefit and use to the righteous. Now see: here are two men; one of them is such that he is subject to no weaknesses, or hardly any; while the other is one who is subject to temptations. By the outward presence of things his outer man is moved, maybe to anger or to vanity or perhaps to sensuality, according to whatever object he encounters. But with his highest powers he stands firm, unmoved, and will not yield to temptation, whether it be anger or any sin, and thus he fights strongly against temptation, for the weakness may well be a part of his nature, just as many a man is by nature angry or proud or whatever it may be, but still he will not sin. This one deserves far more praise, his reward is much greater and his virtue nobler than that of the first man, for perfection of virtue comes by struggle. As St. Paul says, "Virtue is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Inclination to sin is not sin, but willingness to sin is sin, willingness to be angry is sin. Truly, if a man who was in a right state had the power to wish, he would not wish to lose his inclination to sin, for without this a man would be uncertain in all things and in all his acts, without a care for things, and would also miss the honor of struggle, victory, and reward; for the temptation and the stimulus of vice bring forth virtue and the reward of effort. For this inclination makes a man ever more zealous to practice virtue strongly; it drives him by force to virtue and is a sharp lash which compels a man to mindfulness and virtue, for the weaker a man finds himself to be, the more he should arm himself with strength and victory. For virtue and vice both depend on the will.

10. How the Will Can Do All Things, and How All Virtues Rest in the Will, Provided Only that It Is Just

A man should not be too greatly frightened of anything as long as he knows himself to be of good will, and he should not be too sad if he cannot carry out his intentions. But he should not think himself far from all virtues if he is aware of a good will in himself, for virtue and all goodness lies in a good will. If you have a true and proper will, you can lack nothing, neither love nor humility nor any other virtue. But what you will strongly and with all your will, that you *have,* and neither God nor all creatures can take it from you if your will is perfect and a true godly will, and *in the present.* Not 'I want later on,' but 'I will that it shall be so *now!*' If a thing were a thousand miles away and I want to have it, it is more truly mine than something in my lap that I don't want.

Good is no less powerful for good than evil is for evil. Note this: though I might never have done an evil deed, yet if I had the will to do evil, the sin is mine, just as if I had done the deed; if I were utterly determined I could commit as great a sin as if I had murdered the whole world without actually doing a thing toward it. Why should not the same be true of a good will? Indeed it is, in fact incomparably more so.

In fact, with the will I can do all things. I can endure the sorrows of all men, feed all the poor, and do all men's work, or whatever you can think of. If you have lacked only in the power and not in the will, then in the eyes of God you have done it all, and no one can take this from you or hinder you for a moment, for the will to do as soon as I can is the same in the sight of God as having done the deed. Further, if I wanted to have all the will in the world, and if my desire for this were strong and perfect, then I truly *have* it, for what I will to have, I have. Again, if I truly wanted to have as much love as all men have ever possessed, to praise God as much, or what you will, you truly possess it if your will is entire.

Now you may ask when the will is a right will. The will is perfect and right when it is without all attachment, when it has gone out of self and is shaped and formed after the will of God. The more this is

so, the more perfect and true the will. And with *that* will you can do anything, love or anything else.

You ask, 'How can I have this love if I don't feel it or notice it, such as I see in many people who perform great deeds, and in whom I see great devotion or wondrous things which I have not got?'

In this connection you should note two things about love: the one is the *essence* of love, the other is the *work* or expression of love. The place of the essence of love is in the will alone: whoever has more will has more love. But as to who has more of this, no man knows concerning another — it lies hidden in the soul as long as God lies hidden in the ground of the soul. This love lies wholly in the will, and whoever has more will has more love. Then there is another thing, the expression and work of love. *That* shines forth as inwardness and devotion and jubilation, and this is not always the best thing; for sometimes it is not from love, but sometimes it comes from nature that one has such savor and sweetness, or it can come from the influence of heaven or borne in by the senses. And those who have more of this are not always the best people, for though it may well come from God, yet our Lord gives it to such folk as an enticement and a stimulus, or as a way of keeping them apart from other people. But when such people later on gain more love, they may not have so much feeling or sensation, and then it clearly appears that they have love, if without such support they remain wholly and steadfastly faithful to God.

But even supposing this is entirely love, it is still not the best thing; that appears in this, that one must sometimes leave such a state of joy for a better one of love, and sometimes to perform a work of love where it is needed, whether it be spiritual or bodily. As I have said before, if a man were in an ecstasy as St. Paul was (2 Cor. 12:2–4), and if he knew of a sick person who needed a bowl of soup from him, I would consider it far better if you were to leave that rapture out of love and help the needy person out of greater love.

A man should not suppose that in this way he is bereft of grace, for whatever a man willingly gives up for love, he shall receive in nobler fashion; as Christ says, "He who leaves anything for my sake will receive again a hundredfold" (Matt. 19:29). Truly, whatever a man gives up or renounces for God's sake, even if that man greatly yearns for the consolation of such feelings and such inwardness, and

does all he can to get it, and God denies it to him — if he renounces and does without for God's sake, then in truth he will find it just as if he had been possessed of all goods in fee simple and had willingly left it, renounced it and given it up for God: he will be rewarded a hundredfold. For whatever a man would have, if he renounces and does without for God's sake, whether it is physical or spiritual, he will find it all in God just as if he had had it and had willingly abandoned it; for a man must consent to be deprived of all things for God's sake, and in love he must abandon and do without all comfort for very love.

That one should at times leave such feelings for love we learn from the loving St. Paul, who said, "I have wished to be separated from the love of Christ for love of my brothers" (Rom. 9:3). The way he meant it was this — not in the first sense of love, for he would not be separated from that one instant for all that is in heaven and earth, but in the consolation.

However, you should know that God's friends[8] are never without consolation, for whatever God wills is their greatest consolation, whether it is comfort or discomfort.

11. What a Man Should Do When He Misses God, Who Is in Hiding

You should also know that the good will cannot miss God. But the mind's perceptive faculty sometimes misses Him, and often thinks God has gone away. What should you do then? Do exactly the same as if you were in the greatest comfort; learn to do the same when you are in the greatest distress, and behave just as you behaved then. No counsel is so good for finding God as to seek where you left Him; and if you now do, while you miss Him, just as you did when you last had Him, then you will find Him. But a good will never loses or misses God at any time. Many people say, 'We have a good will,' but they have not God's will: they want to have *their* will, or they want to teach our Lord to do such and such. That is not good will. We must seek to find God's own dearest will.

God's intent in all things is that we should give up our will. When St. Paul spoke a great deal to our Lord, and our Lord to him, this

availed him nothing till he abandoned his will and said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Then our Lord knew well what he should do. So too, when the angel appeared to our Lady: nothing that she or he said to one another could have made her the mother of God, but as soon as she gave up her will, at once she became a true mother of the eternal Word and conceived God straight away: he became her natural son. Moreover, nothing can make a true man but the giving up of the will. Indeed, except by giving up our will in all things we cannot achieve anything with God. But if it should come to the point that we gave up all of our will, daring to abandon all things for God's sake, *then* we should have done all things, and not before.

There are not many people who — whether they know it or not — do not wish to be in such a state and to feel lofty emotions about it, that is, they want to have this condition and the profit together — but this is nothing but self-will. You must give yourself up wholly to God in every respect, not caring what He does with His own. Thousands have died and gone to heaven who never departed perfectly from their own will, but that alone would be a perfect and true will if one had completely entered into God's will and were without a will of one's own. Whoever has more of that is more, and more truly, established in God. Even one *Ave Maria* said in this spirit, when a man has gone out of himself, is of more value than reading a thousand psalters without it. In fact a single step with it would be better than crossing the sea without it.

A man who had thus thoroughly abandoned self and everything pertaining to self would in truth be so firmly established in God that, wherever you touched him you would first touch God, for he is completely in God and God is all round him just as my cowl is round my head, and if anyone wants to take hold of me, he must first touch my clothing. In the same way, if I want to drink, the drink must first pass over my tongue, where it gains its taste. If my tongue is coated with bitterness, then indeed, however sweet the wine may be in itself, it must become bitter by the means through which it reaches me. Truly, a man who had quite renounced his own would be so surrounded by God that all creatures could not touch him, and whatever got to him would have to pass through God, and in doing so take on His flavor and become godlike.

However great the suffering may be, if it comes through God, then God suffers first from it.[9] Indeed, by the truth that *is* God, there never was so tiny a pang of sorrow that befell a man, not the least little discomfort or inconvenience, but if he placed it in God, then it would pain God incomparably more than that man, and incommode God more than the man himself. But if God endures this for the sake of such benefit as He intends for you thereby, and *if you* will endure that which God endures and which comes to you *through* Him, then it inevitably becomes godlike, so that shame is like honor, bitterness like sweetness, and the blackest darkness like the brightest light. It takes all its savor from God and becomes godlike: for whatever comes to such a man conforms to God, because he seeks nothing else and has no taste for anything else. Accordingly, he gets hold of God in all bitterness just as in the greatest sweetness.

The light shines in the darkness, and then we are aware of it. What good is the teaching or the light to people unless they make use of it? When they are in darkness or in sorrow, *then* they will see the light.

The more we are owned, the less we own.[10] A man who should have gone out of himself could never fail of God in any works. But should it happen that such a man slipped or erred in speech, or that something wrong crept in, since God began the work He must bear the damage: therefore you should on no account abandon your work. We find this exemplified in St. Bernard and other saints. In this life we can never be quite free from such incidents. Just because tares sometimes grow among the corn, you should not on that account reject the good corn. Truly, for a man in a right state who knows God's ways, such accidents would be of great profit. For to the good, all things work for the good, as St. Paul says (Rom. 8:28), and as St. Augustine says, 'Yes, even sins,'[11]

12. Concerning Sin, and the Attitude to Take If We Find We Are in Sin

In fact, to have sinned is no sin if one regrets it. A man should not wish to commit a sin for all that can happen in time or eternity — neither mortal nor venial nor any kind of sin. He who is wise in the ways of God should ever consider that our faithful and loving God

has brought us from a sinful life to a godly life: out of an enemy He has made a friend, which is more than to have created a new earth. This should be one of the main reasons why a man should establish himself firmly in God, and it would amaze you how greatly this would inspire a man in strong deep love, so that he would renounce himself completely.

Indeed, a man truly established in God's will should not wish that the sin into which he had fallen had never been: not in the sense that it was against God, but because thereby you are bound to greater love and thus made lowly and humble—even though it was against God. But you should safely trust God not to have permitted this unless He wanted to turn it to your profit. But when a man stands right above sin and turns completely away, then our faithful God acts as if that man had never fallen into sin, and will not let him suffer for a moment for all his sins. Even if they were as many as all men have ever committed, God will never punish him, but would be as familiar to that man as to any other creature. Provided He finds him now ready, He pays no regard to what he was before. God is a God of the present. As He finds you, so He takes and receives you, not as what you were but as what you are now. All the harm and shame that God can bear on account of all sins, He will gladly bear and have borne for many a year, so that a man may come to a greater recognition of His love, and so that that man's love and gratitude may be the greater, and his zeal the hotter, as indeed is the right and frequent outcome after one has sinned.

That is why God gladly accepts the harm of sins and has often tolerated it and allowed it to come to those whom He has chosen to prepare for great things. See: who was dearer to our Lord or more intimate with him than the Apostles were? Yet not one of them but fell into mortal sin: they had all been mortal sinners. He has frequently shown this in both the Old and the New Testament in regard to those who afterward were by far the dearest to Him; and even now one seldom finds that people come to greatness without erring somewhat at first. Our Lord's intention in this is that we should recognize his great mercy: he wants to urge us by this to great and true humility and devotion. For when repentance is renewed, love too is greatly increased and renewed.

13. Of Two Kinds of Repentance

There are two kinds of repentance. The one is temporal or sensible, the other is divine and supernatural. Temporal repentance drags down into ever greater sorrow and plunges a man into such distress that he is ready to despair, and then the repentance remains painful and gets no further: nothing comes of this.

But divine repentance is quite different. As soon as a man feels dissatisfied, he at once rises toward God and establishes an unshakeable will to turn from all sin forever; then he lifts himself in full confidence to God and gains great assurance; and from that there arises a spiritual joy which elevates the soul above all woe and distress and makes it fast to God. For the more a man feels himself at fault and the more he has sinned, the greater reason he has to bind himself with undivided love to God, with whom there is no sin and no lack. And so, the best step a man can take if he would come to God in full devotion, is to be without sin in divine repentance.

And the greater we ourselves feel our sin to be, the more ready God is to forgive that sin and to enter the soul to drive it out; for everyone is most eager to get rid of what hurts him most. So, the more and the greater the sins, the more immeasurably glad and the quicker God is to forgive them, the more so since they are more hateful to Him.[12] And then, when this divine repentance lifts itself up to God, all sins have vanished in God's abyss more quickly than I can blink an eye, and they are completely destroyed as if they had never been, provided the repentance is complete.

14. Of True Confidence and Hope

The sign of perfect love is if one has great hope and trust in God; for there is no better sign of perfect love than trust. For if a man deeply and perfectly loves another, that creates trust, and whatever one dares to expect of God one will really find, and a thousandfold more. And so, just as God could never love a man too much, nor could a man trust God too much. Of all things a man can do, none is so seemly as putting full trust in God. There was none who ever had full confidence in Him but He wrought great things with them. And He has proved to all men that this confidence comes from love, for

love has not only confidence, it has true knowledge and indubitable security.

15. Of Two Kinds of Certainty of Eternal Life

There are in this life two kinds of certainty of eternal life. One is when God tells a man Himself or through an angel or shows him by a special illumination. This happens seldom and to few.[13] The other kind of knowledge is incomparably better, and this often comes to people who have perfect love. It is when a man's love and intimacy with God are such that he has such perfect trust and security in Him, that he cannot doubt and is thus quite assured, loving Him without distinction in all creatures. And even if all creatures rejected him and forswore him, though God Himself rejected him, he would not lose his faith, for love *cannot* lose faith but always trusts in the good. Nor is there any need to say a word to the lover or the beloved, for by knowing him to be His friend God at once knows all that is good for him and pertains to his felicity. For however much you love Him, rest assured that He loves you immeasurably more and has vastly more faith in you. For He is good faith in Himself; of this you and all who love Him may be assured.

This assurance is far greater, more perfect, and truer than the first, and cannot deceive us. But the telling [i.e., the first kind mentioned above] might be deceptive and could be a false illumination. But *this* one is felt in all the powers of the soul and cannot deceive those who truly love God; they doubt as little as that man doubts God, for love drives out fear.[14]

"Love knows not fear," as St. John says (1 John 4:18);[15] and it is also written, "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). For when sins occur there can be no perfect trust or love because this covers up sin, it knows nothing of sin. Not that one has not sinned, but that it totally destroys and banishes sin as if it had never been. For all God's works are absolutely perfect and superabundant, so that if He forgives He forgives altogether and completely, and more willingly big sins than little, and that creates perfect faith. I consider this far better, incomparably better than the former knowing, and it brings a greater reward and is truer, for nothing hinders it, neither sin nor anything else. For when God finds men in equal love, He

judges them equally, even though one may have sinned much or not at all. But he to whom more is forgiven should love the more, as our Lord Christ said, "He to whom more is forgiven must love more" (Luke 7:47).

16. Of True Penance and Holy Living

Many people think they are performing great works by outward things such as fasting, going barefoot, or other such things which are called penance. But the true and best penance is that whereby one improves greatly and in the highest degree; and that is that a man should experience a complete and perfect turning away from whatever is not entirely God and divine in himself and in all creatures, and have a full, perfect, and complete turning toward his beloved God in unshakeable love, so that his devotion and yearning for Him are great. In whatever you do, the more of this is present, the more righteous you are; and the more this is the case, in the same measure will there be more penance, and it will wash away more sin and all pain. Indeed, you might well turn away quickly and in a short time from all sins, so strongly and with such true revulsion, and turn so strongly to God that, though you had committed all the sins that ever were or shall be since Adam's time, they would all be forgiven you, together with the punishment for them, so that if you were to die now you would come before the face of God. This is true penance, and it comes especially and most perfectly through true suffering in the perfect penance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The more a man enters into that, the more all sin, and all penalties of sin, drop away from him. And a man should so train himself in all his actions as always to grow into the life and works of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all his doing and leaving undone, enduring and living, being ever mindful of him here as he was mindful of us.

This penance is truly a state of mind lifted into God away from all things, and in whatever works you find you can have it most, and have it from those works, do them the more freely; and then, if any outward work should hinder you, whether it be fasting, watching, reading, or whatever else, you can safely leave that alone without worrying about failing in any penance. For God regards not what the works are, but only what love and devotion and what kind of a

spirit is in the works. For He is little concerned with our works, but only with our state of mind in all our works, that we love Him alone in all things. For a man is too greedy if he is not satisfied with God. All your works shall be rewarded in that God knows of them and that you intend Him in them; let that ever suffice you. And the more purely and simply you seek God in them, the more truly will your works atone for your sins.

You should consider, too, that God was the common savior of the entire world, and for that I owe Him more gratitude than if He had saved me alone. Thus you should be a common savior of all that you have spoilt in yourself by sin; and you must commit yourself to Him with all that, for with sin you have spoilt all that is in you — heart, mind, body, soul, powers, and whatever else there is in and about you: it is all sick and spoilt. Therefore flee to Him, in whom is no fault, but all is good, that He may be to you a common savior of all your rottenness within and without.

17. How a Man Should Rest in Peace When Not Oppressed by Outward Distress Such as Christ and the Saints Often Endured; and How He Should Follow God

People may well be daunted and afraid because the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and the saints was so severe and painful, and a man cannot endure much of this or does not feel compelled to it. And so, when people feel themselves unequal to this, they often think they are far from God, as One whom they are unable to follow. No one should think this. A man should in no wise ever deem himself far from God, whether on account of failings or of weakness or for anything. Even suppose, though, that your great shortcomings have carried you so far away that you cannot conceive yourself near to God, you should still regard God as near to you. For great harm results if a man puts God at a distance: for whether a man goes near or far, God never goes far away but always stands nearby; and even if He cannot remain within, He never goes further than outside the door.

It is the same with the strictness of your imitation.[16] Now see how your imitation should be. You should note and have paid attention

to what God has chiefly enjoined you to do, for not all people are called to God by the same route, as St. Paul says (cf. 1 Cor. 7:24). If you then find that your nearest way is not in the doing of outward works or in great endurance or deprivation — which are actually of small account unless a man is specially driven to them by God or has the power to perform them without damage to his inner life — if you find that this is not in you, then be at peace and do not take much of this upon yourself.

But you may say, 'If this does not matter, then why did our forbears, many of them saints, do it?' Consider this: our Lord gave them this way and also the strength to do it, so that they *could* follow this way, and he was pleased with them for this, in which they should profit best. For God has not bound man's salvation to any special mode. Whatever has one mode has not another, but God has endowed all good ways with effectiveness and denied this to no good way.[17] For one good does not conflict with another good. And so people should observe that they do wrong if they see or hear of a good man, and because he does not follow their way they consider it is all wasted. If they don't like people's ways they disregard their *good* way and good intent, which is not right. We should have more regard to other people's way, when they have true devotion, and not scorn anybody's way.

Let every man keep to his own good way and include all ways in it, and take up in his way *all* goodness and all ways. To change one's way makes for instability of mind as well as of way. Whatever you can get from one way you can also obtain from another if it is good and praiseworthy and mindful only of God: but not all men can follow one path. And so it is with imitating the austerities of such saints. You should love this way, and it may well appeal to you, even though you need not follow it.

Now you might say, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ always had the highest way, we ought to follow *him*.' That is true. We certainly should follow our Lord, but not in all respects. Our Lord fasted for forty days, but no one should take it upon himself to follow that. Christ performed many works in which he intended that we should follow him spiritually but not physically. And so one should endeavor to follow him sensibly, for he sought our love more than our deeds. We must follow him in our own way. 'Such as?' — Pay attention in all things

how, and in what way.[18] As I have often said, I consider a spiritual work more valuable than a physical one.

'How is that?' — Christ fasted for forty days. Follow him this way, by observing whatever you are most inclined to or ready for: concentrate on that and observe yourself closely. Often it is more necessary for you freely to renounce *that,* than if you were to give up all food. And sometimes it is harder for you to keep silence about a single word than to cease speaking altogether. And sometimes, too, it is harder for a man to endure a single word of reproach, which means nothing, than a fierce blow that he was prepared for; or it is much harder for him to be alone in a crowd than in the desert; or he finds it harder to abandon a small thing than a great, or to do a small task than one which is considered much greater. In this way a man can well follow our Lord (even) in his weakness, without feeling or needing to feel himself far removed.

18. In What Way a Man May Take as Is Fitting, Delicate Food and Fine Clothing and Merry Companions If They Attach Themselves to Him in the Natural Course

You need not worry about food and drink, as to whether they seem too good for you, but train your ground and your mind to be far above such things. Let nothing touch your mind with power and love but God alone — it should be exalted above all else. Why? Because that would be a feeble kind of inwardness that the outward dress could correct. Rather should the inward correct the outer, if it rests entirely with you. But if it just comes to you, you can from your ground accept it as good, just as you would put up with it if it were different, and would be glad and willing to endure it. The same applies to food, friends, and relations and with whatever else God gives you or takes from you.

And that I consider better than anything, that a man should fully abandon himself to God when He would cast anything upon him, be it disgrace, trouble, or whatever kind of suffering it might be, accepting it with joy and gratitude, allowing oneself rather to be led by God than plunging into it oneself. So just learn all things gladly from God and follow Him, and all will go well with you. In that

way you can well take honor or comfort, but in such a way that, if discomfort and dishonor were to be a man's lot, he would likewise be able and willing to bear them. *Then* they may rightly and legitimately feast, who would have been as ready and willing to fast.[19] And that is doubtless why God spares His friends much great suffering; for otherwise His measureless good faith would not permit this, seeing that so much great profit resides in suffering, and He would not and ought not to deprive them of any good thing. He is satisfied with the good will, otherwise He would not omit any suffering, on account of the innumerable benefits suffering brings.

And so, so long as God is satisfied, rest content: and when something different pleases Him in regard to you, be also content. For a man should inwardly be so wholly for God with all his will, that he should worry little about the way or about works. In particular you should eschew all, whether in clothing, food, or speech — such as using high-flown words — or any peculiarity of gestures, which is of no value. Still, you must know that not *all* peculiarity is forbidden. There are forms of singularity that must be maintained at times and with many people, for he who is singular must also behave unusually many times and in many ways.

A man should have conformed himself to our Lord Jesus Christ inwardly in all things, so that in him is found a reflection of all his works and of his divine image; so a man should bear within himself a perfect likeness, as far as he can, of all his works. You must work and he must take. Do your work with perfect devotion and with full intent; train your mind to this at all times so as to conform in all things to him.

19. Why God Often Allows Good People, Who Are Truly Good, to Be Prevented from Doing Good Works

God in His faithfulness often permits His friends to succumb to weakness to the end that whatever support they might lean on or cling to may give way. For to a loving soul it would be great joy if he could perform many and great feats, whether in keeping vigil, in fasting or in other practices, or in some especial great and difficult undertakings.

This is a great joy, support and hope for them, so that their works become their mainstay, support, and security. Our Lord does not want this, for *he* wishes to be their sole support and security. And he does this solely out of his goodness and compassion. For nothing moves God to any act but His own goodness, and our deeds contribute nothing to making God give us anything or do anything for us. Our Lord wants his friends to abandon this attitude, so he deprives them of this support in order that he alone may be their support. For he wants to endow them richly for no other reason than from his free goodness, and he would be their support and consolation. But they should consider and regard themselves as mere nothing in all God's great gifts; for the more barely and freely the mind falls on to God and is supported by Him, the more deeply a man is established in God and the more receptive to God in all His most precious gifts. For a man should build on God alone.

20. Of the Body of Our Lord, That One Should Receive It Often, and in What Way and Frame of Mind

Whoever would fain receive the body of our Lord has no need to attend to what he experiences or tastes in it, or how great his piety and reverence is, but he should observe how his will and intention is. You should not overestimate your feelings, but rather have due respect for that which you love and strive for.

A man who is freely able and willing to go to our Lord should first of all be in such a state that his conscience is free from all reproach of sin. The second thing is that a man's will should be turned to God, so that he seeks nothing and desires nothing but God and all that is divine, and that he is displeased with what is unlike God. For that is the test of how far or how near a man is to God: according as he has more or less of this. The third thing he should have is that his love for the sacrament and our Lord should grow more and more, and that his reverent awe should not diminish by frequent going. For often, what is one man's life is another man's death. And so you should note in yourself whether your love for God grows and your reverence is not extinguished. *Then,* the more often you go to the sacrament the better

you will be, and it will also be of greater benefit and profit to you. Therefore, do not let anyone put you off God by talk or preaching, for the more the better and the more pleasing to God. For our Lord revels in dwelling in and with man.

But you might say, 'Alas, sir, I feel so bare and cold and lazy that I dare not face our Lord!' I reply, All the more need for you to go to your God, for by Him you will be enflamed and set afire, and in Him you will be sanctified and joined and made one with Him, for you will find such grace in the sacrament, and nowhere else so truly, that your bodily powers are there united and collected by the precious power of the physical presence of our Lord's body, so that all a man's scattered senses and his mind are here concentrated and unified, and those which especially were too much inclined downward will be lifted up and duly offered to God. And by the indwelling God they will be so inwardly trained and weaned of the bodily hindrances of temporal things and limbered up toward divine things, and so, strengthened by God's body, *your* body will be renewed. For we should be turned into Him and become fully united with Him, so that His own becomes ours, and ours all becomes His: our heart and His one heart and our body and His one body. Thus our senses and our will, intention, our powers and our limbs are borne into Him so that we sense and become aware of Him in all the powers of body and soul.

But you might say, 'Alas, sir, I know of no great matters in me, only poverty. How dare I go to Him like this?' Truly, if you want to transform all your poverty, then go to the abundant treasury of immeasurable riches, and you will be rich. For you must know that He alone is the treasure which can sate you and fill you full. Therefore say, 'I will go to You, that Your riches may end my penury and all Your boundless superfluity fill up my emptiness, and Your immeasurable, inconceivable Godhead replenish my all too base and corrupt humanity.'

'Alas, sir, I have sinned greatly, I cannot atone.' Therefore go to him, for he has nobly atoned for all sins. In him you may offer the precious sacrifice to the heavenly Father for all your guilt.

'Alas, sir, I would gladly praise him, but I cannot.' Go to him, for he alone is the thank offering acceptable to the Father and a measureless, truthful, and perfect praise of all God's goodness.

In short, if you would be at once rid of all defects and be clothed in virtue and grace, or be joyously led and conducted to the source, then conduct yourself in such a way that you can take the sacrament worthily and often, and then you will be united with him and ennobled with his body. Indeed, in the body of our Lord the soul is so joined to God that all angels, whether of the choir of Cherubim or of Seraphim, cannot discover or find out the difference between them. For wherever they touch God they touch the soul, and where they touch the soul they touch God. There never was so close a union, for the soul is far more closely united with God than are body and soul, which make up a man. This union is far closer than when a man pours a drop of water into a vat of wine, for that would make water and wine — but *this* is so turned into one that all creatures could never find out the difference.[20]

But you might say, 'How can that be? I can't feel anything.' What matter? The less you feel and the more you firmly believe, the more laudable is your faith, and the more it will be respected and praised, for perfect faith is far more in a man than mere belief. In it we have true knowing. In fact we lack nothing but true faith. If we think we get more from one thing than from another, that is due to outward conventions, for one thing is not greater than another. Thus he who has equal faith takes equally and has things equally.[21]

But you might say, 'How can I believe in higher things as long as I do not feel in such a condition, but feel myself imperfect and prone to many things?' Just see. You should observe two things in yourself which our Lord also had in himself. He possessed the higher and the lower powers, which had two different functions. His higher powers had possession and enjoyment of eternal bliss. But His lower powers were at the same time involved in the greatest suffering and struggle in the world, yet none of these works hindered the others in their sphere.[22] That is how it should be in you, that the highest powers should be lifted entirely into God, and entirely surrendered and added to Him. Moreover, we should assign all suffering to the body, to the lower powers and the senses, but the spirit should raise itself up with all its strength and plunge unfettered into God. Rather, the suffering of the senses and the lower powers are not your concern, nor this assault of the world: for the greater and fiercer the struggle, the greater and more glorious the victory and the honor of victory.

For the greater the temptation and stronger the assault of vice, if a man yet prevails, the more truly is the virtue yours and the dearer to your God. Therefore, if you would be worthy to receive God, look to it that your highest powers are directed to God and that your will ever seeks His, and consider what you want from Him and how your loyalty is toward Him.[23]

No man ever receives the precious body of our Lord in this spirit without receiving great and especial grace, and the oftener, the greater the profit. Indeed, it is possible for a man to receive the body of our Lord with such devotion and intentness that if he were ordained to enter the lowest choir of angels, by once receiving him thus he would be raised to the next choir; in fact you could receive him with such devotion that you would be deemed worthy to enter the eighth or ninth choir. [24] And so, if there were two men, alike in their lives, and if one of them had worthily received the body of our Lord once more than the other, that man would thereby be as a bright sun above the other and have a special union with God.

This receiving and this blessed enjoyment of the body of our Lord depends not just on outward enjoyment; it depends too on spiritual enjoyment with desirous mind, in atonement and devotion. It is possible for a man to receive this so faithfully that he is richer in blessings than anyone on earth. A man can do this a thousand times a day or more, wherever he is, whether he is ill or well. However, it is necessary to fit oneself for this in sacramental fashion, according to wise and proper order and in accordance with the magnitude of one's desire for it. But if one has not the desire one should urge oneself on, make ready and conduct oneself accordingly, and then one can become holy in time and blessed in eternity: for to follow and obey God *is* eternity. May the Teacher of truth grant us this, and the love of chastity and the life of eternal bliss. Amen.

21. Of Diligence

Whenever a man wishes to receive the body of our Lord, he may well approach without undue worry. But it is seemly and very profitable to confess first, even if one has no pangs of conscience, for the sake of the fruits of the sacrament of confession. But should a man have some compunction, and if on account of preoccupation he cannot go

to confession, let him go to his God, confess himself guilty with true repentance, and be at peace until he has a chance to go to confession. And if during this the thought or pangs of conscience for his sins disappear, he may consider that God has also forgotten them. One should rather confess to God than to man, and it is a duty to take one's confession to God seriously and accuse oneself strictly. Nor should a man who intends to go to the sacrament lightly abandon this and leave it aside for the sake of some outward penance, for it is a man's intention in his works that is righteous, godly, and good.

You should learn to be unattached in your works. But for an unpracticed man it is an uncommon thing to reach the point where no crowd and no task hinders him — it calls for diligent application — so that God is ever present to him and shines before him completely unveiled, at all times and in all company.[25] Skillful diligence is required for this, and in particular two things. One is that a man has shut himself off well inwardly, so that his mind is on its guard against the images without, that they remain without and do not unfittingly keep company and walk with him, and that they find no resting place in him. The second is that he should not let himself be caught up by his *internal* imagery, whether it be in the form of pictures or lofty thoughts, or outward impressions or whatever is present to his mind, nor be distracted nor dissipate himself in their multiplicity. A man should train and bend all his powers to this and keep his inner self present to him.

Now you might say a man must turn outward if he is to do external works, for no task can be done but according to its own form.[26] That is true. But the externality of form is nothing external for the practiced man, for to the inward-turned man all things have an inward divinity. This above all is necessary: that a man should train and practice his mind well and bring it to God, and then he will always have divinity within. Nothing is so proper to the intellect, nor so present and near as God. It never turns in any other direction. It does not turn to creatures unless subjected to violence and injustice, whereby it is quite broken and perverted. If it is thus spoilt in a young person, or whoever it may be, it must be very diligently trained, and it is necessary to do all in one's power to bring the intellect back and train it. For, however proper and natural God is to it, once it gets turned away and is settled among creatures and caught up in them

and accustomed to this state, it becomes so weakened in this part and lacking in self-control, so hindered in its noble striving, that all a man's efforts are insufficient to draw it back fully. Even though he makes every effort; he requires constant watchfulness.

Above all things a man must see to it that he trains himself strictly and well. If an untrained, unpracticed man wanted to conduct himself and behave like a trained man, he would destroy himself and nothing would ever come of him. Once a man has first quite weaned himself of all things and become a stranger to them, *then* he can faithfully perform all his tasks, and delight in them or leave them alone without hindrance. But whatever a man loves or takes pleasure in and wilfully follows, whether it be food or drink or anything else, this cannot be maintained without harm in an untrained man. A man must train himself not to seek his own in anything, but to find and take God in all things. For God does not give, and has never given any gift which a man might take and rest content with it. All the gifts He has ever given in heaven and on earth, He gave that He might give one gift — Himself. With all these gifts He wishes to prepare us for that gift which is Himself, and all the works God ever wrought in heaven or on earth He wrought for the sake of working one work — to hallow Himself that He might hallow us. Therefore I say, in all gifts and in all works we must learn to regard God; we should be satisfied with nothing and stop nowhere. There is no manner of standing still for us in this life, and never has been for any man, however advanced he might be. Above all things, a man must ever be directed toward God's gifts, and ever anew.

I will speak briefly of one who greatly wished to receive something from our Lord. I said she was not yet ready, and if God gave her the gift while she was unready, it would perish. A question: 'Why was she not ready? She had a good will, and you say that that can do all things, and it contains all things and all perfection.' That is true; but there are two different meanings of 'will': the one is an accidental and non-essential will, and the other is a decisive will, a creative and a trained will. Of course it is not sufficient for a man's mind to be detached for one split second, just when he wants to link up with God, but one must have a well-trained detachment before and after. *Then* one can receive great things from God, and God in those things. But if one is not ready, the gift is spoilt, and God with the gift. That

is why God cannot always give us things as we ask for them. It is not due to a lack on His part, for He is a thousand times more eager to give to us than we are to receive. But we do Him violence and wrong in hindering His natural work by our unreadiness.

A man must learn to give up self in all gifts, and keep or seek nothing for himself, not profit or enjoyment or inwardness or sweetness or reward or heaven or own-will. God never gave Himself and never will give Himself in another's will: He only gives Himself in His own will. Where God finds His own will, there He gives Himself and bestows Himself in it with all that He is. And the more we die to our own, the more truly we come to be in *that*.[27] Therefore it is not enough for Him that we give up self and all we have and can do just once, but we must constantly renew ourselves and so make ourselves simple and free in all things.

It is also very useful for a man not to be satisfied to possess virtues in his mind such as obedience, poverty, and the rest; but he should practice the works and fruits of virtue, often putting himself to the test, and be willing and anxious to be trained and tested by people. For it is not enough to perform works of virtue, or practice obedience or endure poverty and disgrace, or humble and abandon ourselves in some other way — we must strive and never cease until we have gained the virtue in its essence and ground. And the test of the matter is this: if we feel inclined to virtue above all else, and perform virtuous deeds without preparation of the will, and carry them through without the special spur of a just or important cause, when in fact virtue performs itself more by itself and for love of virtue without any why or wherefore — *then* one has the perfection of virtue, and not before.

We must school ourselves in abandoning till we keep nothing back. All turbulence and unrest comes from self-will, whether we know it or not. We should place ourselves with all we have in a pure renunciation[28] of will and desire, into the good and precious will of God, together with everything that we may will or desire in any form.

A question: 'Should one willingly forgo all God's sweetness? May this not easily stem from laziness or insufficient love of God?' Certainly, if one does not understand the difference. For we can tell whether it comes from laziness or from true detachment and self-abandonment by observing whether, when we feel in this state, when

we feel inwardly completely detached, we are just as much devoted to God as if we felt Him most strongly; if we do in this state just what we should do — no more and no less — keeping free and detached from all comfort and help, as we should do when we were aware of God's presence.

For a man in a right state in perfect good will, no time can be too short. For if the will is such that it wills totally all that it can — not only now but, even if a man endured a thousand years he would will to do all in his power — that will performs as much as could be achieved in works in a thousand years: he has done it all in the sight of God.

22. How We Ought to Follow God, and about Good Ways

A man who would start on a new life or work should betake himself to his God, and beg Him with all his might and with total devotion to dispose things for the best, as shall best please and honor God, seeking in it nothing of his own but merely God's dearest will and nothing else. Whatever God then sends him, let him take it direct from God, regard it as best for himself, and be fully content.

Though later on some other way may please him better, he should think, 'This is the way God has sent you,' and accept it as the best. He should trust God in this and bring all good ways into line with this, taking all things in and according to this, whatever their nature. For whatever good God has done and given in one way, can be found in all good ways. For in one way one should take all good ways and not cling to the peculiarities of the way. For a man must always do one thing, he cannot do everything. It must always be one thing, and in that *one* one should take everything. For if a man wanted to do everything, this and that, dropping his way for another's way, which he liked better, truly that would make for great instability. For that man would reach perfection sooner who left the world to join one order only, than he ever would who should leave one order for another, however holy. That comes of changing ways. Let a man choose a good way and keep to it, introducing all good ways into it and bearing in mind that it comes from God, instead of starting one

thing today and something else tomorrow; he need not worry that he is missing anything. For with God one can miss nothing. With God one can no more miss anything than God can miss anything. So, take one way from God, and embody in it all good things.

But if it turns out that they are incompatible, one at variance with the other, then you have a sure sign that it is not from God. One good is not foe to another, for, as our Lord said, "A kingdom divided against itself will not stand" (Luke 11:17). He also said, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather up with me, scatters" (Luke 11:23). So let this be a sure sign: whatever good does not tolerate, or destroys, another good, even a lesser good, is not from God. It should bring increase, not destroy.

In a few brief and true words, then, there is no doubt that God in His faithfulness takes every man at his best. That is assuredly so, and He never takes a man lying down whom He might have found standing up, for God intends the best for all things. I was asked why, in that case, God does not take those who — He knows — will fall away from the grace of baptism, so that they might die in childhood, before reaching discretion, since He is aware that they will fall and not rise again — for would not that be best for them? I reply that God is not a destroyer of any good, but a fulfiller: God is not nature's destroyer, but her fulfiller. Even grace does not destroy nature but fulfils it.[29] Now if God destroyed Nature in the beginning, he would do her harm and outrage, and that He does not do. Man has free will to choose good or evil, and God lays before him death for evil and life for doing good. Man should be free, lord of all his deeds, undestroyed and uncompelled. Grace does not destroy nature, but fulfils it, for glory is fulfilled grace.[30] Thus there is nothing in God that destroys anything that has being, but he is a fulfiller of all things. Therefore we should not destroy any small good in ourselves, nor a small way by a greater, but we should fulfil it in the highest.

I have been speaking about one who wanted to begin a new life right from the beginning, and I said this: that a man should become a God-seeker in all things and a God-finder at all times, in all places, in all company, in all ways. In this manner one can always incessantly wax and grow, and never reach an end of growth.

23. Of Inward and Outward Works

Suppose a man should withdraw into himself with all his powers, outward and inward, then when he is in that condition there is in him no image or motive, and he is without any activity within or without. Then he should well observe whether there is any inclination toward anything. But if a man is not drawn to any work and does not want to undertake anything, then he should force himself into some activity, whether inward or outward (for a man should not be satisfied with anything, however good it may seem or be) so that, when he finds himself oppressed or constrained, it may appear rather that that man *is worked* than that he *works;* thus he may learn to co-operate with his God. Not that one should give up or neglect or reject one's inner life, but in it and with it and from it one should learn to act in such a way as to let the inward break into activity and draw the activity into inwardness, and thereby train oneself to act in freedom. For one should turn one's eyes to this inner work and act therefrom, whether it be in reading, praying, or — on occasion — outward work. But if the outward work tends to destroy the inward, one should follow the inward. But if both can be as one, that is best, then one is co-operating with God. You ask, 'How can there be co-operation, if a man has become lost to self and all activities and, as St. Dionysius[31] says, he speaks most fairly of God who in the fullness of interior riches can best hold his peace — then image and work, praise and thanks or whatever he may do disappear?' One answer: one work yet truly and genuinely belongs to him, and that is the destruction of self. But this naughting and shrinking of self is never so great but it lacks something unless God Himself completes it in us. Only then is humility sufficient, when God humbles a man with that man, and only then is that man, and the virtue, perfected, and not before.

A question: 'How does God destroy a man with himself? It would seem that the destruction of man would be his exaltation by God, for the Gospel says, "He that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12, Luke 14:11).' Answer: Yes and no. He must humble himself, and this cannot be done sufficiently unless God does it: and he shall be exalted, not that the humbling is one thing and the exalting another, but the highest height of exaltation lies in the deep ground of humility. For the deeper and lower the ground, the higher and more

immeasurable the exaltation and the height. The deeper the well, the higher it is; height and depth are one. And so, whoever can humble himself more is raised higher, and therefore our Lord said, "He who desires to be the greatest, let him be the least among you" (Mark 9:34). He who would become this must become that. *This* being is found only in *that* becoming. He who becomes least *is* truly the greatest; but he who has *become* least is truly now the very greatest. Thus the word of the evangelist is made true and fulfilled: "He that humbles himself shall be exalted." For our whole being depends on nothing but a becoming-nothing.

It is written, "They have become rich in all virtues" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:5). Truly, this can never happen unless we first become poor in all things. He who would receive all things must abandon all things. This is fair dealing and an equal bargain, as I said long ago. Therefore, when God wishes to give us Himself and all things in free possession, He wishes to take from us, once and for all, all possessiveness. Truly, God would not in any way that we should possess as much as might fill my eyes. For of all the gifts He ever gave us, gifts of nature or of grace, He never gave any but so that we might possess nothing of our own, for such possession he has not granted in any way, to His Mother, to any man or any creature. And in order to teach us this or to make us ready for this, He frequently takes from us both physical and spiritual goods, for the possession of honor should not be ours, but only His. Rather we should hold all things as if they were lent to us and not given, without possessiveness, whether it be body or soul, senses, powers, outward goods or honors, friends, relations, hearth and home, or anything at all.

What is God's purpose that He insists so much on this? He wishes Himself to be our sole and perfect possession. This He wills and intends, and this alone he strives for, that He can and may be this. In this lies His greatest joy and delight. And the more, and the more fully this is so, the greater His joy and happiness; for the more we possess of things the less we possess of Him, and the less love we have of things, the more we have of Him with all that He can do. Therefore, when our Lord wanted to speak of all blessings, he put poverty of spirit as the crown of them all, and this was their chief (Matt. 5:3) as a sign that all bliss and perfection always start with

poverty of spirit, and that was in truth a foundation on which to build all that is good, which could not exist without it.

In return for our keeping ourselves free of all things external to ourselves, God will give us free possession of all that is in heaven, and heaven itself with all its power; indeed, whatever flowed from Him that all the angels and saints have, to be ours as it is theirs, far more than any *thing* is mine. In return for my going out of myself for His sake, God will be mine entirely with all that He is and can do, as much mine as His, no more and no less. He will be a thousand times more my own than whatever any man ever had and kept in a chest, or than he ever belonged to himself. Nothing was ever so much my own as God will be mine with all that He is and can do.

We must earn this possession here by not possessing ourselves or anything that is not God, and the more perfect and free this poverty, the greater the possession. But we should never aim at, or think of this return; our eyes should never once look to see if we are ever to gain or receive anything, but solely for the love of virtue. For the more detached, the more truly possessed, as the noble St. Paul says we ought to have "as having nothing, yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). He is without possession, who does not desire or wish to have anything of himself or of all that is outside of him, or even of God or anything.

Do you want to know who is a truly poor man? That man is truly poor in spirit who can do without anything unnecessary. That is why he who sat naked in his tub[32] said to Alexander the Great, to whom the whole world was subject, 'I am a greater ruler than you, for I have rejected more things than you have ever possessed. What you think it a great thing to possess, is too petty for me to scorn.' He is far more blessed who can do without all things and have no need of them, than he who has possession of all things and has wants. That man is the best who can do without what he does not need. Therefore he who can do without and despise the most has abandoned most. It seems a great thing if a man gives up a thousand marks of gold for God's sake and builds many hermitages and monasteries and feeds all the poor: that would be a great deed. But he would be far more blessed who should despise as much for God's sake. That man would possess very heaven who could for God's sake renounce all things, whatever God gave or did not give.

You may say, 'Yes, sir, but would I not be a cause of hindrance through my failings?' If you have failings, then pray frequently to God, if it is to His Glory and if it suits Him, to free you from them, for without Him you can do nothing. If He takes them away, thank Him: if He does not, then you suffer for His sake, not as the weakness of sin, but rather as a great training whereby you can earn a reward, and practice patience. You should be satisfied, whether He gives you His gift or not.

God gives every man according to what is best and most fitting for him. If you want to make a coat for a man you have to make it to his measure; what fits one would not fit another at all. So we measure each one to see what fits him. Thus God gives to every man the best according as He perceives what is most necessary for him. Indeed, anyone who has full trust in God in this regard receives and gets as much from the smallest gift as from the greatest. If God wanted to give me what He gave St. Paul,[33] I would accept it gladly, if He wished it. But since He will not give it to me — for He wants very few people to know in this world what St. Paul knew — then the fact that God does not give it to me is just as dear to me, and I thank Him as much and am as satisfied that He withholds it as I would be if He had granted it; and I am as content and happy as if He had done so, if in other respects I am in a right state. In truth, I should be satisfied with God's will: whatever God wished to do or give, I should be so pleased and should prize that will no less than if He gave me the gift and performed the deed in me. Then all gifts would be mine, and all God's works, and whether all creatures were to do their best or their worst, they could not deprive me of that. Why should I complain, when the gifts of all men are mine? Truly I would be so satisfied with whatever God did to me, or whatever He gave me or did not give me, that I would not give a brass farthing to gain the kind of life I might imagine to be the best.

You may say, 'I fear I am not earnest enough and don't try as hard as I could.' You should regret this and endure it with patience; regard it as discipline and be at peace. God gladly endures shame and misfortune and willingly forgoes His praise and service that those who love Him and belong to Him may be at peace. Why should we then not be at peace, whatever He gives us or whatever we lack? Thus it

is written, and our Lord says, "Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10). Indeed, if a thief about to be hanged, who had well deserved it by his thefts, or one who had committed murder and was justly to be executed, could find it in themselves to say, 'Look, you are going to suffer this for righteousness' sake, it serves you right,' they would be saved immediately. In fact, however wrong we may be, if we duly accept from God whatever He does or does not do to us, and suffer for righteousness' sake, we are blessed. Therefore do not lament for anything, but bewail only the fact that you still do lament and are not satisfied. You should only lament that you have too much. For he who was in a right state would take it all the same way, lacking and having.

Now you will say, 'Well, God performs such great things in many people, and thus they are overshadowed by the divine being, and God works in them, not they themselves.' Thank God for their sake, and if He grants it to you, in God's name take it; if He does not, then willingly do without, and seek nothing but Him, and be unconcerned as to whether God does your deeds or you do; for God *must* do them if you seek only Him — whether He wants to or not.

Do not bother yourself about what condition or way of life God gives anyone. If I were so good and holy that I were to be elevated among the saints, people would talk about it, and speculate whether it was a matter of nature or of grace, and get confused. They were wrong to do that. Let God work in you, give Him the work and do not worry about whether He works with nature or above nature: both nature and grace are His. What does it matter to you how it suits Him to work, or what work He performs in you or in someone else? He must work how, where, and in whatever way it suits Him.

A man very much wanted to conduct a stream into his garden and said, 'As long as I get the water, I don't care what kind of pipe it comes through, whether it is of iron or wood, of bone or rusty metal, provided the water comes through.' And so they are all wrong who worry about *how* God works in you, whether by nature or by grace. Just leave the work to Him, and you be at peace.

For as far as you are in God, you are at peace, and as far as you are out of God, you are not at peace. If anything is in God, it has peace: as much in God, so much at peace. That is how you can tell how far you are in God or otherwise, by whether you have peace or

unrest. For where you have unrest, you *must* be restless, for unrest comes from creatures and not from God. Nor is there anything to be feared in God: whatever is in God is to be loved. Likewise, there is nothing in Him to cause sadness.

Whoever has all his will and what he wants is joyful. No one has that but he whose will and God's will are one. God grant us this oneness. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Sermon 13b.
2. *Conf.* 10.26 (Q).
3. Reading *menige,* 'crowd,' with Q (rejecting Pfeiffer's conjecture *meinunge,* 'opinion').
4. Cf. Sermon 57.
5. St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies* (PL 76, 1093) (Q).
6. Cf. Sermon 15.
7. On the difficulty of translating Eckhart's *glîch,* see Sermon 65 and note 10.
8. Not in the sense of the 'Friends of God' (*Gottesfreunde*) as used by Tauler (cf. Note B, note 2, p. 25 above), but in the sense of John 15:15: "I do nor call you servants,... I call you friends" (Q). See also Sermon 9 and note 2.
9. Cf. Sermon 8.
10. Elliptical in the original: either 'The more we are owned (by God), the less we own (our own selves),' or 'The more we own (ourselves), the less we are owned (by God).' The meaning is much the same either way.
11. *De correptione et gratia* 24 (PL 44, 930) (Q).
12. The text is corrupt here. Q has 'And the more quickly they are hateful to him'; Clark: 'and all the more quickly if they are hateful to Him.'
13. Through revelation (Q).
14. Cf. Sermons 53 and 75.
15. The MSS erroneously have 'Paul' for 'John.'
16. *Nâchvolgenne,* 'following' or 'imitation,' as in the *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas à Kempis.
17. Cf. Appendix B.
18. Q puts a full stop after 'all things.' I follow Clark's punctuation.
19. Cf. Sermon 37.
20. Cf. Sermons 42 and 62.
21. Cf. note 7 above.
22. Cf. Sermon 89. On the 'powers' see Sermon 1, note 9.
23. Colledge, *Meister Eckhart, The Essential Sermons, etc.,* 273, mistranslates 'and that your trust is based on him' (*triuwe,* modern *Treue,* 'loyalty').
24. On angels, see Sermon 31, note 2, and Sermon 95, note 9.
25. Cf. Sermon 9.
26. Cf. Sermon 3.

27. 'und ie mêr wir des unsern *entwerden*, ie mêr wir in disem gewaerlîcher *werden*.' The play on words with *entwerden/werden* is hard to reproduce in English (but cf. Sermon 56).

28. Clark's word for *entwerden* 'unbecoming.'

29. Cf. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 1, a. 2 (Q).

30. Cf. Sermon 97.

31. Pseudo-Dionysius (who was, of course, not a saint!): cf. *De myst. theol.* ch. 1 (Q).

32. Diogenes.

33. Cf. 2 Cor. 12:2.

II

THE BOOK OF DIVINE COMFORT

Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi etc.
(2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

The noble apostle St. Paul says this: "Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our tribulations." Three kinds of tribulation may beset a man and assail him in this land of exile. The first is misfortune occurring to outward goods; the second, to our relatives and dearest friends; the third, to ourselves: dishonor, hardship, pain of body, and heart's distress.

Therefore I propose in this book to impart some teachings whereby a man may find consolation in all adversity, unhappiness, and suffering. This book has three parts. In the first are to be found certain truths, from which may be deduced that which is well able, fully and fittingly, to comfort him in any trouble. After that he will find some thirty rules or maxims, in any one of which he will find full and sufficient solace. After that in the third part of this book he will find examples from the deeds and words done and spoken by wise people in times of tribulation.

I

In the first place, we should know that the wise man and wisdom, the true man and truth, the just man and justice, the good man and goodness are in correspondence and are related to each other as follows: goodness is not created nor made nor begotten, it is procreative and begets the good; and the good man, in as far as he is good, is

unmade and uncreated, and yet the begotten child and son of goodness.[1] Goodness begets itself and all that it is in the good man, and the good man receives all his being, knowledge, love, and energy from the heart and inmost depth of goodness, and from that alone. The good man and goodness are nothing but one goodness, all in one, apart from the bearing and being born, and yet the bearing of goodness and the being born in the good man is but one being and one life. All that belongs to the good man he gets from goodness and in goodness. Therein he is and lives and dwells. There he knows himself and all that he knows, and loves all that he loves, and works with goodness in goodness, and goodness does all her works with him and in him, just as it is written where the Son says, "The Father remaining in me and dwelling in me performs the works" (John 14:10), "The Father works until now and I work" (John 5:17), "All that belongs to the Father is mine, and all that is mine and pertains to mine is the Father's: His in the giving and mine in the receiving" (John 17:10).

Further, we should know that when one says, 'good,' the name or word denotes and includes nothing else, neither more nor less than goodness pure and simple, which yet gives itself out. When we speak of a good man, we mean that his goodness has been given to him, infused, engendered by the unborn goodness. Hence the Gospel says, "As the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son to have the same life in himself' (John 5:26). He says, '*in* himself' not '*of* himself,' for the Father has given it to him.

All that I have said of the good man and goodness applies equally to the true man and truth, to the just man and justice, to the wise man and wisdom, to God's Son and God the Father, to every God-begotten thing that has no father on earth, in which, too, nothing is born that is created which is not God, in which there is no image but God alone, naked and pure. For this is what St. John says in his Gospel: "To all of them is given power and strength to become sons of God, who were not born of blood nor of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God and from God alone" (John 1:12–13). By the blood he means everything in man not subordinate to the human will. By the will of the flesh he means whatever in a man is subject to his will, but with resistance and reluctance, which inclines to the carnal appetites and is common to the body and the soul, not peculiar to the soul alone, in consequence of which the soul's powers become

tired, feeble and old. By the will of man St. John means the highest powers of the soul,[2] whose nature and work is unmixed with flesh, which reside in the pure nature of the soul, detached from time and space and from all that has any hankering or taste for the things of time and space, having nothing in common with anything, in which man is formed in the image of God, in which man is of God's lineage and God's kindred. And yet, since they are not God Himself but are in the soul and created with the soul, therefore they must lose their form and be transformed into God and be born in God and from God, with only God for Father, for thus they too become God's sons and God's only-begotten Son. For I am the son of all that which forms me after its own image and in itself, and bears me thus. Such a man, God's son, good the son of goodness, just the son of justice, insofar as he is her son, she (justice) is unborn-bearing, and her born son has the same single being as justice has and is, and is possessed of all that pertains to justice and truth.

From all this teaching, which is found in the holy Gospel and is clearly grasped in the natural light of the rational soul,[3] there is true solace for every human sorrow. St. Augustine says, 'For God nothing is far or long.'[4] If you wish for nothing to be far away or long for you, then conform to God, for then a thousand years are as one day — today. Thus I say that in God there is no sorrow or suffering or distress. If you would be free from all adversity and pain, turn and cleave entirely to God. Assuredly, all your ills are because you do not turn to God and God alone. If you were formed and begotten into righteousness alone, in truth nothing could pain you, any more than righteousness can pain God. Solomon says, "The just will not grieve, whatever may befall" (Prov. 12:21). He does not say the just man or the just angel or this or that: he says, 'the just.'[5] Whatever appertains to the just, especially the fact that justice is his and he is just, all *that* is a 'son,' and has a father on earth and is a creature, made and created, for its father is a creature, made and created. But 'the just' pure and simple, since this has no made or created father, and God and justice are one, and justice alone is its father, therefore pain and sorrow cannot enter into him any more than into God. Justice cannot sadden him, for all joy, delight, and bliss are justice; thus if justice grieved the just it would be grieving itself. No iniquity or injustice, nothing made or created can grieve the just, for everything created is

as far beneath him as it is beneath God, it makes no impression or influence on the just, and is not begotten in him whose father is God alone. Therefore a man should strive earnestly to de-form himself of himself and of all creatures, and know no father but God alone. Then nothing will be able to afflict or sadden him, neither God nor creature, created or uncreated, and all his being, life, knowledge, wisdom, and love will be from God and in God, and *be* God.

Another thing one should know that will console a man in any tribulation. It is that the just and good man assuredly delights immeasurably, unspeakably more in doing right than he or even the highest angel delights and rejoices in his natural being and life. That is why the saints gladly gave their lives for justice.

I say then: when outward ills befall the good and just man, if he remains in equanimity with the peace of his heart unmoved, then it is true, as I have said, that nothing that happens to him can disturb the just.[6] But if he is perturbed by outward mishaps, then truly it is right and proper that God has permitted him to suffer this harm, for he wanted and thought to be just and yet was upset by so small a thing.[7] If it is right for God, then indeed he should not be grieved thereby but should rejoice for it far more than for his own life, which a man rejoices in and values more than all this world; for what would this world profit a man if he were not?

The third thing we can and should know is that, according to natural truth, God alone is the sole fount and vein of all goodness, essential truth, and comfort, and whatever is not God has of itself a natural bitterness, discomfort, and unhappiness, and adds nothing to the goodness which is from God and is God, but rather lessens, dims, and hides the sweetness, joy, and comfort that God gives.

And further I declare that all sorrow comes from love of that which loss has deprived me of. If I mind the loss of outward things, it is a sure sign that I am fond of outward things, and *really* love sorrow and discomfort! Is it to be wondered at, then, that I am grieved, if I love and seek sorrow and discomfort? My heart and inclination ascribe to creatures what belongs to God. I turn to creatures, whence by nature discomfort comes, and turn away from God, from whom all comfort flows. Is it to be wondered at that I am sad and grieved? For indeed, in very truth it is impossible for God or the whole world to give solace to one who looks for it in creatures. But he who should

love God alone in creatures and creatures in God alone, *he* would find true, real, and equal comfort everywhere. Let this suffice for the first part of this book.

II

Now, in the second part, there follow some thirty grounds, any one of which alone should suffice to comfort the rational man in his trouble.

The first is that no hardship or loss is without some comfort, and no loss is total loss. That is why St. Paul says that God's good faith and goodness does not permit any trial or tribulation to be insupportable.[8] He always makes and gives some consolation with which a man can find help. For the saints and the pagan masters also say that God and nature cannot brook the existence of undiluted evil or suffering.[9]

Let us suppose a man has a hundred marks, of which he loses forty and keeps sixty. If he goes on brooding over the forty he has lost, he must remain disconsolate and woeful. How can he take comfort and be free from care, if he turns toward the loss and tribulation, impressing it upon himself and himself upon it, so that he looks at it and it looks back at him, and he talks and converses with the loss and the loss converses with him, and they gaze at each other face to face? But if he would but turn to the sixty marks he still has and turn his back on the forty that are lost, and reflect on the sixty and gaze at *them* face to face, then he would assuredly be consoled. What exists is good and can comfort us, but what is naught and is no good, what is not mine and is lost to me, can only bring disappointment, woe, and distress. Accordingly Solomon says, "In the days of adversity do not forget the days of prosperity" (cf. Sir. 11:27). That is to say, if you are in woe and distress, think of the profit and ease that you still have and hold. There is comfort too in the thought of how many thousands there are who, if they had the sixty marks you still possess, would think themselves lords and ladies and wealthy, and would rejoice in their hearts.

There is something else that should comfort you. If a man is sick and in great bodily pain, but he has his home and all his needs in the way of food and drink and medical aid, and servants to nurse him, the sympathy and companionship of his friends, what should he do?

What do poor folk do who have just as much or greater sickness and hardship and none to give them a cup of cold water? They must beg for a bare crust in the rain, cold, and snow from house to house. So, if you would be comforted, forget those who are better off and just remember those who are worse off than you.

Further, I declare, all suffering comes from love and attachment. So if I suffer on account of transitory things, then I and my heart have love and attachment for temporal things, I do not love God with all my heart and do not yet love that which God wishes me to love with Him. Is it any wonder then that God permits me to be rightly afflicted with loss and sorrow?

St. Augustine says, 'Lord, I did not want to lose thee, but in my greed I wanted to have creatures besides thee; therefore I have lost thee, for thou wouldst not have man possess the falsehood and deceit of creatures alongside thee, who art truth.' [10] And elsewhere he says that he is altogether too greedy who is not content with God alone. And again he says, 'How should God's gifts to creatures satisfy a man who is not satisfied with God Himself?'[11] To a good man that should be no comfort but pain which is alien to God, unlike Him and not God Himself alone. He should always say, 'Lord God my comfort, if thou sendest me away from thee to anything else, then give me another thee, that I may go from thee to thee, for I want nothing but thee.'[12] When the Lord promised Moses all blessings and sent him into the Holy Land, which denotes heaven, Moses said, "Lord, send me nowhere but where thou wilt accompany me" (cf. Exod. 33:15).

All inclination, desire and affection comes from likeness, for all things tend toward and love their likes.[13] The pure man loves purity, the just man loves and inclines to justice; a man's lips speak of what is within, just as our Lord says, "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45), and Solomon says, "All the labor of a man is in his mouth" (Eccles. 6:7). Thus it is a sure sign that not God but creature is in a man's heart if he finds attachment and consolation without. And therefore a virtuous man should be very ashamed before God, and in his own eyes, if he becomes aware that God is not in him, and God the Father is not active in him, but that the wretched creature is still living and yearning in him and acting in him. Accordingly King David says and laments in the Psalms, "Tears have been my comfort day and night, as long as they could say to me,

Where is your God?" (Ps. 41:4). To turn to outward things and to find comfort in what is comfortless, and to speak eagerly and overmuch about it — that is a true sign that God is not apparent in me, is not watching and working in me. Still more should he be ashamed for good people to be aware of this in him. The good man should never rail at loss or sorrow: he should only lament that he *does* lament them, and that he is aware of his own wailing and lamentation.

The masters say that under heaven there is fire, widespread and fierce and with nothing in between, and yet heaven is not in the least affected by it.[14] One writer says that the lowest part of the soul is nobler than the summit of heaven.[15] How then can a man claim to be a celestial being whose heart is in heaven, if he is distressed and troubled by such trivial things?

Now I will turn to another matter. A man cannot be good who does not wish for exactly what God wills, for it is impossible that God should will anything but good, and precisely in and because God wills it, it must be good and best. That is why our Lord taught the apostles, and us through them, to pray every day that God's will be done. And yet when God's will appears and is done, we complain.

Seneca, a pagan master, asks, 'What is the best comfort in suffering and distress?' and says it is that a man should take all things as if he had wished and prayed for them: for you *would* have wished it had you realized that all things come about from, with, and in God's will.[16] A pagan master declared, 'Ruler, supreme Father and Lord of the highest heaven, all that you will I am prepared for. Vouchsafe me the will to live according to your will.'[17]

A good man should trust in God, believe and be assured that God is so good that it is impossible for God, His goodness, and love to endure that any pain or suffering befall a man unless either to save that man from further suffering, or else to give him greater consolation on earth, or to make thereby and therefrom something better which should redound more largely and fully to God's glory. Yet be that as it may: by the mere fact of its being God's will that it should occur, the good man's will should be so much at one and united with God's will, that that man would will the same as God, even though it were to his own harm or indeed his damnation. Thus St. Paul wished to be sundered from God for God's sake and to the glory of God (cf. Rom. 9:3).[18] For the truly perfected man should be wont to be so dead to

self, so lost in God to his own form and so transformed in God's will, that his entire blessedness consists in unknowing of himself and all things, and knowing only God, willing nothing and knowing no will but God's will, willing to know God, as St. Paul says, "as God knows me" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). God knows all that he knows, loves and wills all that he wills, in Himself and in His own will. Our Lord says, "That is eternal life, to know God alone" (John 17:3).

Therefore the masters declare that the blessed in heaven know creatures independently of any image of those creatures, knowing them in the one image that is God, in which God knows Himself and all things, and loves and wills them. And God Himself teaches us to pray for and desire this, when we say, "Our Father," "hallowed be thy name" — that is, to know You alone — "thy kingdom come," that I may possess nothing I prize and regard as wealth but You, who are all riches. Therefore the Gospel says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), that is, in *will,* and so we pray to God that His will may be done "in earth" (that is, in ourselves) and "in heaven" (that is, in God Himself). Such a man is so one-willed with God that he wills all that God wills and in the way God wills it. And so, since God in a way wills that I should have sinned, I would not wish that I had not done so,[19] for thus God's will is done "in earth" (that is, in ill-doing) as well as "in heaven" (that is, in well-doing). In this way one wills to do without God for God's sake, to be sundered from God for God's sake, and that alone is true repentance for my sins: then I grieve for sin without grief, as God grieves for all evil without grief. I have grief, the greatest grief, for my sins, for I would not sin for everything that is created or creaturely, even though there were a thousand worlds existing to all eternity — and yet without grief, and I accept and take the suffering in God's will and from God's will. *Such* suffering alone is perfect suffering, for it arises and springs from pure love of God's sheer goodness and joy. Thus it is made true, and one comes to know it, as I have said in this little book, that the good man, insofar as he is good, enters into full possession of that goodness which God is in Himself.

Now observe what an amazing and blissful life this man must lead "in earth as in heaven" — in God Himself! Discomfort serves him as comfort, grief as well as joy — and note too the special comfort it brings: for, if I have the grace and goodness of which I have spoken,

then I am at all times and in all ways equally comforted and happy; and if I lack it, then I shall do without it for God's sake and by God's will. If God wills to give me what I want, then I have it and have the pleasure of it; if God does not will to give it to me, then I get it by doing without, in God's same will, and thus I take by doing without and not taking. So what do I lose? Really and truly, one receives God in a truer sense by doing without than by getting, for when a man gets something, it is the gift itself which is the cause of his being happy and comforted. But if he receives nothing, he has, finds, and knows nothing to rejoice at but God, and God's will alone.

There is yet another comfort. If a man has lost his outward goods, a friend or a kinsman, an eye, a hand, or whatever it may be, then, if he endures it patiently for God's sake, he can be sure at least of having before God all that for which he would not have wished to bear it.[20] If a man loses an eye, and if he would not have sacrificed his eye for a thousand marks, or for six thousand marks or more — then assuredly he has before God, and in God, all the amount that he would have given in order not to endure such loss or pain. This is perhaps what was meant when our Lord said, "It is better for you to enter into eternal life with one eye than to be lost with two" (Matt. 18:9). It may also be the meaning of God's words, "He who leaves father and mother and sister and brother, farm and fields or anything else, shall receive a hundredfold *and* eternal life" (Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:29–30). For a certainty, I can say this in God's truth and by my salvation, that whoever for God's sake and for goodness leaves father and mother, brother and sister, or whatever it may be, receives a hundredfold in double fashion: firstly, that his father and mother, brother and sister, become a hundred times dearer to him than they are now; and in another way, that not just a hundred, but all people, inasmuch as they are people and human, become far dearer to him than his father, mother, or brother are to him now by nature. If a man cannot understand this, it is purely and solely because he has not yet, for God's sake and for goodness, totally renounced father and mother, sister and brother, and all things. *How* has a man abandoned father and mother, sister and brother for God's sake, if he has them still on earth in his heart, if he is still sad, and considers and regards what is not God? How has he abandoned all things for God's sake, who still considers and regards this or that good? St. Augustine says,

'Remove this and that good, then pure goodness remains hovering in its simple extent: that is God.'[21] For, as I have said above, this and that good adds nothing to goodness, rather it hides and covers up the goodness in us. He knows and sees this who sees and perceives in truth, for it is true in truth, and therefore one must perceive it there[22] and nowhere else.

But we should know that there is a difference of degree in the possession of virtue and the will to suffer, just as we see in nature that one man is bigger and fairer in form, in complexion, in knowledge and skills than another. And so I say that a good man can be truly good and yet be moved and shaken, to a greater or lesser extent, by natural love of father, mother, sister, and brother without falling away from God or from goodness. Yet he is good, or better, according as he is less or more comforted and moved by the natural love and inclination for father, mother, sister, and brother, and for himself, and is aware of this.

And yet, as I have written above, if a man could accept this in God's will, inasmuch as it is God's will that man's nature has such shortcomings precisely because of God's justice in regard to the sin of the first man, and if he were equally willing to do without if, in God's will, things were otherwise, then all would be well with him and he would find assured consolation in his suffering. This is the sense of St. John's words that the true "light shines in the darkness" (John 1:5), and of what St. Paul says, that virtue is perfected in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). If a thief could truly, fully, purely, gladly, willingly, and happily suffer death for love of divine justice, in which and according to which God wills in His justice that the evildoer be slain, he would assuredly be saved and blessed.

Yet another comfort is this: probably no one can be found who is not fond enough of some living being to gladly do without an eye or be blind for a year, if at the end of it he could have his sight again and if he could thus save his friend from death. Now if a man is ready to sacrifice his eye to save another from death, who in any case is bound to die in a few years' time, surely he should be the more ready to give the ten, twenty, or thirty years he may still have to live to gain his eternal happiness, and to see God eternally in His divine light, and himself and all creatures in God.

A further consolation: a good man, insofar as he is good, born of goodness alone and an image of goodness, considers all that is created as *this* or *that* to be unpleasing, bitter and harmful. The reason? Because the loss of *that* is release, the loss of pain, discomfort, and harm. In truth, to lose one's sorrow is true comfort. So a man should not lament his loss. He should rather lament that comfort is unknown to him, that comfort cannot comfort him, as a sick man cannot savor the sweetness of wine. He should lament, as I have written before, that he is not fully de-formed of creatures and is not totally in-formed in goodness.

A man should also remember in his trouble that God speaks truth and promises by Himself, the Truth. If God were to break His word He would lapse from His Godhead and would not be God, for He is His word, His truth. His word is that our sorrow shall be turned to joy (Jer. 31:13; John 16:20). Truly, if I knew that all my stones were to be transformed into gold, then the more and the bigger the stones I had, the happier I should be; I should ask for stones and collect them, big ones in plenty; the more they were and the bigger, the better I should like them. In this way a man would be powerfully comforted in tribulation.

Another of the same kind: no vessel can hold two separate kinds of drink. If it is to contain wine, we must pour out the water; the vessel must be bare and empty. And so, if you would receive divine joy and God, you must pour away creatures.[23] St. Augustine says, 'Pour out, that you may be filled. Learn not to love that you may learn to love. Turn away that you may be turned toward.'[24] In short, to take in, to be receptive, a thing must be empty. The masters say that if the eye had any color in it in perceiving, it would perceive neither the color it had nor those it had not. But since it is free of all color, it perceives all colors.[25] The wall has color in it, and so perceives neither its own color nor any other; it cares naught for color, no more for gold and azure than for coal black. The eye has no color and yet truly has it, for it rejoices in color with pleasure and delight. And the more perfect and pure the powers of the soul are, the more perfectly and extensively they take in what they perceive, and receive the more widely and have the greater delight in, and become the more one with what they receive, so much so that the highest power of the soul, which is bare of all things and has nothing in common

with things, receives nothing less than God Himself in the extent and fullness of His being.[26] And the masters show that nothing can equal this union, this fusion and bliss for joy and delight.[27] Therefore our Lord says in striking words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). He is poor who has nothing. "Poor in spirit" means, as the eye is 'poor' and bare of color yet receptive of all colors, so is he poor in spirit who is receptive of all spirit, and the spirit of all spirits is God. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, and peace.[28] Bareness, and poverty, having nothing and being empty transforms nature; emptiness makes water run upward and performs many other miracles of which it is not the place to speak now.

So, if you would seek and find perfect joy and comfort in God, see to it that you are free of all creatures and of all comfort from creatures; for assuredly, as long as you are or can be comforted by creatures, you will never find true comfort. But when nothing can comfort you but God, then God *will* comfort you, and with Him and in Him all that is bliss. While what is not God comforts you, you will have no comfort here or hereafter, but when creatures give you no comfort and you have no taste for them, *then* you will find comfort both here and hereafter.

If a man might and knew how to make a cup completely empty and keep it empty of whatever might fill it, even air, assuredly that cup would lose and forget its own nature, and emptiness would bear it aloft.[29] So too, being bare, poor, and void of all creatures carries the soul to God. Likeness, too, and heat are causes of ascent. Likeness we ascribe to the Son in the Godhead, heat and love to the Holy Ghost. Likeness in all things, more especially and firstly in the divine nature, is the birth of the one, and likeness of one, in one and with one is the origin and source of the flowering, ardent love. One is beginning without any beginning.[30] Likeness is beginning begotten of the One alone, getting its being, and its being-a-beginning, from and in the One. It is the nature of love to arise and flow out of two as a one. One as one is not love; two as two is not love; but two as one must produce natural, willing, ardent love.

Now Solomon says that all waters (that is all creatures) flow back and return to their source (Eccles. 1:7). Therefore it must be true, as I have said: likeness and ardent love raise, lead, and convey the soul into the prime source of the one, that is, the Father of all things in

heaven and earth (cf. Eph. 4:6). I therefore say that likeness, born of one, draws the soul to God, just as He is in His hidden unity, for that is the meaning of 'one.' We have a visible symbol of this: when material fire burns wood, a spark receives the nature of the fire and becomes like that pure fire which exists immediately below heaven.[31] All at once it forgets and renounces father and mother, brother and sister on earth and shoots up to its heavenly father.[32] The father of the spark, here below, is the fire, its mother is the wood, its brother and sister are the other sparks, and for these the first spark will not wait. It shoots up quickly to its true father, who is heaven; for whoever knows the truth knows well that the fire, as fire, is not a real, true father of the spark. The real, true father of the spark and all that is fiery is heaven. Further, it is important to note that this little spark not only leaves and forgets father and mother, brother and sister on earth; it also leaves and forgets and abandons itself in its urgent desire to get to its true father, heaven, for it is bound to be quenched by the cold air; and yet it wants to give proof of the natural love it bears for its real, heavenly father.

And just as I have said above concerning emptiness or purity that, in proportion as the soul is more perfect, bare, and poor and has less of creatures, and is more free of all things that are not God, so she receives God more purely and more in God, becomes more one with God and looks into God and God into her, as in an image transfigured, as St. Paul says (2 Cor. 3:18), even so I declare in regard to likeness and the ardor of love: for the more anything is *like* another, the more it rushes to that other, the quicker it moves and the sweeter and more joyous its progression; and the further it leaves behind itself, and whatever is not the other, the more it becomes like that toward which it is hurrying. And since likeness flows from the One, drawing and attracting by dint of and in virtue of the One, so there is no stilling or satisfying either that which draws, or that which is drawn, till they are united in the One. Therefore our Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah to the effect that no high likeness and no peace of love satisfies me, until I myself appear in my Son, and I myself am kindled and set ablaze in the love of the Holy Ghost (cf. Isa. 62:1).[33] And our Lord besought his Father that we should become one with Him and in Him, not merely united (cf. John 17:11). We have a clear image and demonstration of this saying and this truth in nature, even

outwardly: when fire is at work kindling and burning wood, the fire makes the wood quite small and unlike its former self, robbing it of solidity, cold, mass, and moisture, and making the wood more and more like itself, the fire; and yet neither fire nor wood is stilled or quieted or sated by any warmth or heat or likeness, till the fire gives birth to itself in the wood and gives it its own nature and also its own being, so that all is one fire, of like property, undifferentiated, neither more nor less. And so, until this comes about there is always a reeking, fighting, crackling, toil, and strife between the fire and the wood. But when all unlikeness has been abolished and cast out, the fire dies down and the wood is silent. Further I declare in truth that the hidden power of nature abhors hidden likeness insofar as it bears within itself some difference and duality, seeking in it the *one*, loving this in it and for its sake alone,[34] just as the mouth seeks in and from the wine only the taste or the sweetness, loving only this. If water had the same taste as wine, the mouth would relish wine no more than water.

That is why I have said that the soul hates and has no love for likeness, for likeness in and for itself, but she loves it for the One that is concealed in it and is the true Father, a beginningless beginning of all that is in heaven and earth. And so I say that as long as likeness is found and appears between fire and wood, there is no true joy or peace there, no rest, no satisfaction. Therefore the masters say that the generation of fire comes through conflict, pain, and unrest, and in time. But the birth of the fire and the joy are beyond time and space. Joy and pleasure never seem too long or too far. All that I have said is intended by our Lord's words, "A woman giving birth to a child endures sorrow, pain, and suffering, but when the child is born, she forgets the pain and woe" (John 16:21). Therefore God speaks to us in the Gospel and reminds us to pray the heavenly Father that our joy may be perfect (John 15:11), and St. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will suffice us" (John 14:8); for 'father' means birth and not likeness, it means the One, in which likeness is silent and everything is stilled that desires being.

Now a man can see quite clearly why and how he lacks consolation in all his pain, adversity, and loss. This comes wholly and solely from the fact that he is remote from God and not free of creatures, unlike to God and cold in divine love.

But there is another reason, observing and knowing which a man would rightly be comforted in outward loss and sorrow. Suppose a man goes a certain way or starts on one task, leaving another, and then he suffers harm: he breaks a leg or an arm, or loses an eye or falls ill. If he keeps on thinking, 'if only I[35] had taken a different road or done something different, this would never have happened,' he will remain disconsolate and is bound to suffer. And so he should think, 'if I had gone a different way, or done or not done something else, I might well have suffered some far greater loss or harm,' and then he will be comforted.

Here is another point. If you have lost a thousand marks, do not bewail the thousand marks you have lost. You should thank God who gave you the thousand marks to lose, and who grants you the chance, by practicing the virtue of patience, to gain eternal life, which many thousands have not.

And here is another comforting reflection. Suppose a man has had honor and comfort for many years, and now loses all this by God's decree. That man should reflect wisely and thank God. When he realizes the loss and tribulation he now has, then for the first time he will understand what profit and security he had before, and should thank God for the security he enjoyed without appreciating it, and not be angry. He ought to realize that a man gets by nature nothing by himself but ill and imperfection. Whatever is good or goodness, God has lent, not given him. For whoever knows the truth knows that God, the heavenly Father, gives the Son and the Holy Ghost all that is good; but to creatures He *gives* nothing good, but only lends it. The sun gives heat to the air, but the light is loaned, and so, as soon as the sun sets, the air loses the light, but retains the heat, for this is given to it for its own.[36] Therefore the masters say that God, the heavenly Father, is the father, not the lord of the Son, nor the lord of the Holy Ghost. But God-Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is one lord and lord of creatures, and we say that God is eternally Father, but from when He created creatures He has been Lord.[37]

Now I say, since whatever is good or comforting or temporal is only lent to a man, what right has he to complain when the lender wishes to take it back? He should thank God, who lent it to him for so long. He should even thank Him for not taking back all that He has lent; for it would be only just if God took back all that He had

lent when a man was angry at a part being taken away, which was never his, and of which he never was the master. Accordingly, the prophet Jeremiah spoke well, in the throes of pain and lamentation, when he said, "Oh how great and manifold are God's mercies, that we are not destroyed!" (Lam. 3:22). If a man had lent me his jacket, fur coat, and cloak, and if he were to take back the cloak, leaving me the jacket and fur coat in the frost, I should thank him heartily and be glad. You should specially note how badly I am in the wrong if I rage and lament whenever I lose something; for if I want the good thing that I have to be given to me and not merely lent, that means I want to be a lord and God's natural son, and perfect, although I am not yet even God's son by grace — for it is a quality of the Son of God, and of the Holy Ghost, to be equable under all conditions.

Further, we should know that the natural human virtues are without doubt of such nobility and power that no outward work is too hard for them, nor indeed big enough for them to find full scope in it or at it, or to find (adequate) expression. And therefore there is an inner work which neither time nor space can enclose or contain. In it is that which is divine and in it is that which is divine and like God, whom neither time nor space encloses — for He is everywhere and equally present at all times — and it is also like God in this respect, that no creature can fully embrace Him or mirror God's goodness in itself. Therefore there must be something more inward, more exalted and uncreated, something without measure or mode in which the heavenly Father may properly imprint, pour forth, and manifest Himself, that is to say the Son and the Holy Ghost.

And none can hinder this work of virtue, any more than one can hinder God. Day and night this work glistens and shines. It glorifies God and sings His praise in a new song, just as David says, "Sing unto the Lord a new song" (Ps 97:1). *His* praise is earthly, and God does not love that work which is outward, confined to time and space, which is narrow and subject to hindrance and constraint, which tires and grows old with time and use. The (inner) work is loving God, intending good and goodness, in which whatever a man wills and *would* have done with a pure and total will in all good works, he has *already done,* being in this respect like God, of whom David says, "All that He has intended, He has already done and performed" (Ps. 134:6).

We have a clear illustration of this teaching in a stone. Its outward work consists in falling down and lying on the ground. This work may be hindered, for it is not falling all the time without interruption. But there is another work more inward in the stone, and that is a downward tendency, which is inherent in it;[38] neither God nor creature nor anyone can stop this. The stone performs this work day and night without a break. It might lie up above for a thousand years, and yet its tendency to fall would be no greater and no less than on the first day. In the same way I say of virtue that she has an inner work: a will and tendency toward all good, and a flight from and a repugnance to all that is bad, evil, and incompatible with God and goodness. And the worse an act is, and the less godly, the stronger the repugnance; and the greater the work and the more godlike, the easier, more welcome, and pleasanter it is to her. And her sole complaint and sorrow — if she could feel sorrow — is that this suffering for God is too little, and all outward, temporal works are too little for her to be able to find full expression, realization, and shape in them.[39] By practice she becomes strong, and by giving she becomes rich. She does not wish to have suffered and to have got over pain and suffering: she is willing and eager to suffer always without ceasing for God and well-doing. All her happiness lies in suffering, and not in *having suffered,* for God's sake. And therefore our Lord says quite deliberately: "Blessed are those who suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10): he does not say 'who have suffered.' Such a man hates 'having suffered,' for 'having suffered' is not the suffering that he loves. And so I say too that such a man hates 'going to suffer,' for that too is not suffering. Yet he hates 'going to suffer' less than 'having suffered,' for 'having suffered' is further from suffering and more unlike it, being over and done with. But suffering to come does not take away all suffering which he loves.

St. Paul says that he would choose to be separated from God that God's glory might be enhanced (Rom. 9:3).[40] They say these words were spoken by St. Paul when he was not yet perfected. But I think this was the utterance of a perfect heart. It is also said that he meant that he only wanted to be separated from God for a time. But I say that a perfect man would be as loath to be apart from God for a single hour as for a thousand years. Yet, if it were God's will and to God's

glory that he should be deprived of God, then a thousand years, or even eternity, would be as easy to him as a day or a single hour.

The inner world, too, is godly, divine, and endowed with the character of God so that, just as all creatures — though there were a thousand worlds — are not one hair's breadth better than God alone, so I declare and have said before, that this outer work cannot add either by quantity or size, nor by length or breadth nor in any other way to the value of the inner work, whose value lies in itself. And so the outer work can never be small if the inner work is great, neither can the outer be great or good if the inner is little or nothing. The inner work contains in itself all time, all magnitude, all breadth and length. The inner work draws and derives its entire being only from God and in God's heart; it receives the Son and is born as the Son in the heavenly Father's womb. With the outward work it is not so: this gets its divine goodness through the channel of the inner work, produced and poured out in a downflowing from the Godhead that is clothed with distinction, quantity, part, all of which and the like of which, even likeness itself, is far from God and alien to Him.[41] These all cling and cleave to, and rest in that which is good, which is illumined, which is creaturely, blind altogether to goodness and light in themselves, and to the One wherein God bears His only begotten Son, and in him all who are God's children, born sons.[42] There is the fount and origin of the Holy Ghost from whom alone, as he is the spirit of God and God Himself is a spirit, the spirit is begotten in us. It flows forth from all who are God's sons, according as they are in greater or lesser degree born purely of God alone, in God's image, transformed in God and estranged from all multiplicity (such as is still to be found according to their nature in even the highest angels), estranged indeed even (for him who can grasp this!) from goodness, from truth, and from anything at all which even in thought or name permits the merest hint or shadow of difference; and is entrusted to the One, bare of all number and variety,[43] wherein one God-Father-Son-and-Holy-Ghost loses and is stripped of all distinctions and properties, and is One alone. And that One makes us blessed, and the further we are from this One, the less we are sons and Son, and the less perfectly the Holy Ghost wells up in us and flows from us. That is what our Lord, God's Son in the Godhead, meant by saying, "Whoever drinks from the water that I give, in him a fountain of water shall arise, springing

up to everlasting life" (John 4:14). And St. John says he was speaking of the Holy Ghost (John 7:39). The Son in the Godhead gives by his own nature nothing but sonship, God-begottenness, the fountain, origin, and outflowing of the Holy Ghost, of the love of God, the full, true, and perfect savor of the One, the Heavenly Father. Therefore the Father's voice speaks from heaven to the Son, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am beloved and well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), for without a doubt, no one loves God in fullness and purity who is not God's son. For love, the Holy Ghost, arises in and issues from the Son, and the Son loves the Father for His own sake, the Father in himself and himself in the Father. Therefore our Lord says so truly, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), that is, those who have nothing of their own, human spirit, and come naked to God. And St. Paul says, "God has revealed it to us in His spirit" (1 Cor. 2:10).

St. Augustine says that man will understand the scriptures best of all who is bare of spirit and seeks the sense and truth of scripture itself, in the same spirit in which it is written or spoken: in God's spirit.[44] St. Peter says that all holy men have spoken in the spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21). St. Paul says, "No man can tell and know what is in man but the spirit that is in man, and none can tell what is the spirit of God and in God but the spirit that is of God and is God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Thus a certain writing, a gloss,[45] says truly that none can understand or teach the Pauline writings unless he has the same spirit in which St. Paul spoke and wrote. And that is always my sole complaint, that vulgar people, who lack God's spirit and have it not, seek to judge according to their crude human sense what they hear or read about in scripture, which is spoken and written in and by the Holy Spirit, not considering that it is written, "What is impossible for men is possible for God" (Matt. 19:26). And indeed it is common in the natural sphere, that what is impossible to the lower nature is usual and natural to the higher.

From this you should also deduce what I have just said, that a good man, God's son born in God, loves God for His own sake, in Himself, and many other things I have previously declared. To understand it better one should know, as I have also said before, that a good man, born of goodness and in God, enters into all the qualities of the divine nature. Now God has one property according to Solomon, that everything is wrought by God for His own sake

(Prov. 16:4), that is to say that He does not pay regard to any 'why' or 'wherefore' outside of Himself, other than for His own sake; He loves and does all things for Himself. So, if a man loves God for Himself and all things, and does all his deeds not for reward, for honor, or for pleasure, but for God and God's glory alone, that is a sign that he is God's son.

Still further, God loves for His own sake and performs all things for His own sake alone, that is, He loves for love's sake and works for the sake of working, for indeed, God would never have begotten His only-begotten Son in eternity if 'being begotten' were not the same as 'begetting.' Therefore the saints declare that the Son has been begotten eternally in that he is still being begotten unceasingly.[46] Nor would God have ever created the world if being created were not creation. And so — God *has* created the world by still continually creating it. Whatever is past or future is alien to and remote from God. And therefore, whoever is born of God as God's son, loves God for God's sake, that is, he loves for the sake of loving God and acts for the sake of acting. God never tires of loving and working, and whatever He loves is *one* love. Therefore it is true that God is love. And that is why I said above that the good man always wants and desires to suffer for God's sake, not to *have* suffered: in suffering he has that which he loves. He loves to suffer for God's sake, and he suffers for God's sake. Therefore and therein a man is God's son, formed after God and in God, who loves for his own sake, that is, he loves for the sake of loving, works for the sake of working; and for that reason God loves and works without ceasing. And God's work is His nature, His being, His life, and His felicity. Thus in very truth, for the son of God, for a good man insofar as he is God's son, suffering for God's sake, working for God is his being, his life, his work, his felicity, for our Lord declares, "Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10).

Again, in the third place, I declare that a good man, so far as he is good, has God's nature not only in loving all he loves and doing all he does for the sake of God whom he loves therein and for whom he works, but he loves and works also for himself, for Him who loves; for what he loves is God-Father-Unborn, and He who loves is God-Son-Born. Now the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father. Father and Son are One.[47] Concerning how the most inward

or highest part of the soul draws and receives God's Son and becomes God's Son in the heavenly Father's womb and heart, look at the end of this book, where I have written "Of the Nobleman who went into a distant country to gain a kingdom for himself, and returned" (Luke 19:12).

One should also know that in nature the impress and inflow of the highest and supreme nature is more delightful and pleasing to anything than its own nature and essence. Water flows downward of its own nature, and its being resides in that.[48] Yet through the impress and influence of the moon up in the sky, it abandons and forgets its own nature, flowing upstream and upward, and this effluxion is easier for it than the downflow. From this a man may know whether it would be right for him, if it would be pleasant and delightful for him to abandon his natural will, to give it up and to deny himself totally in everything that God wants him to suffer. And that is the true meaning of our Lord's words, "Whoever will come to me, let him go out of himself and deny himself and take up his cross"[49] (Matt. 16:24), that is, he shall lay aside whatever is cross and suffering. For assuredly, whoever had abandoned self and completely gone forth from self, for him nothing could be a cross or pain or suffering: it would all be a joy, a pleasure, and heart's delight, and that man would come and truly follow God. For just as nothing can make God sad or sorrowful, so nothing could make him sad or sorry. And so, when our Lord says, "Whoever will come to me, let him go out of himself and deny himself and take up his cross and follow me," this is not merely a commandment, as is commonly said and thought: it is a promise and a divine prescription for a man to make all his suffering, all his deeds and all his life happy and joyful. It is more a reward than a commandment.[50] For a man who is in that state has whatever he wants, and wants nothing evil, and that is blessedness. Therefore again our Lord says, "Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness' sake."

Again, our Lord's words, "Let him deny himself and take up his cross and come to me" mean, become a son as I am Son, born-God and the same One that I am, that I draw in, indwelling, abiding within the Father's bosom and heart. "Father," says the Son, "I will that my follower, he that comes to me, shall be where I am" (John 12:26). No one comes more truly to the Son, as he is Son, than he who becomes

a son, and no one is where the Son is (who is the Father's bosom and heart, One in One), than he who is a son. "I," says the Father, "will lead her into the wilderness and speak to her heart" (Hos. 2:14). Heart to heart, one in one is how God loves. Whatever is other and different from that, God hates. God entices and lures to the One. All creatures, even the lowest, seek the One, and the highest perceive the One. Caught up above nature and transformed, they seek One in One, One in Itself. That may well be what the Son means to say: 'In the Son of the Godhead, in the Father, where I am shall he be who serves me, who follows me, who comes to me.'[51]

There is a further consolation. You should know that it is impossible for all nature to break, destroy, or even touch anything without intending betterment for that which is touched.[52] Not content with doing equal good, she always wants to do something better. How is that? A wise physician never touches a man's bad finger so as to hurt him unless he can make the finger better, or make the man generally better, or give him relief. If he can make the man or the finger better, he does so. If he cannot, he cuts off the finger to benefit the man. And it is much better to lose the finger and save the man than to let both perish. One loss is preferable to two, especially when one is so much greater than the other. One should also realize that the finger, the hand, or any limb loves the person it belongs to far more dearly than itself, and will willingly, happily, and without question endure pain for that person. I declare with assurance and in truth that such a member cares absolutely nothing for itself except for the sake of that, and in that, of which it is a member. Accordingly it would only be right and proper, and in conformity with our nature, if we loved ourselves solely for God's sake and in God. And if that were so, then everything would be easy and pleasant for us that God wanted from us and in us, especially if we realized that God could much less tolerate any lack or loss, if He did not know and intend a much greater advantage from it. Indeed, if a man has no trust in God on that score, it is quite right that he should have pain and sorrow.

Here is another consolation. St. Paul says that God chastens all whom He accepts and receives as sons (cf. Heb. 12:6). Sonship involves suffering. Because God's Son could not suffer in the Godhead and in eternity, the heavenly Father sent him into time, to become man and suffer. So, if you want to be God's son and yet do not want

to suffer, you are wrong. In the Book of Wisdom it says that God proves and tests to find out who is righteous, as we prove and test gold by fire in a furnace (Wisd. 3:5–6). It is a sign that a king or a prince trusts a knight when he sends him into battle. I have seen one lord who sometimes, when he had taken a man into his retinue, would send him out by night and then attack him and fight with him. And once it happened that he was nearly killed by a man he wanted to test in this way; and he was much fonder of that retainer afterward than before.

We read that St. Antony was once especially sorely beset in the desert by evil spirits, and when he had transcended his suffering, our Lord appeared in visible form to him, rejoicing. Then the holy man said, 'Alas, dear Lord, where were you just now when I was in such great distress?' And our Lord said, 'I was here, just as I am now. I wanted to see, and was delighted to see how brave you were,'[53] A piece of silver or gold may well be pure, but if they want to make a cup for the king to drink out of it, they fire it much more thoroughly than another. Thus it says that the apostles rejoiced that they were worthy to endure contumely for God's sake (Acts 5:41). But God's Son by nature wished by his grace to become man so that he might suffer for you, and you want to become God's son and not man, so that you cannot and need not suffer for God's sake or your own! Also, if a man would only remember and consider what great joy God truly has in His own way, and all the angels and all who know and love God have, at the patience of a man when he suffers sorrow and loss for God's sake, then indeed a man should be truly comforted by that fact alone. For a man will give his goods and suffer great distress to give joy to a friend or to do him a kindness.

Again, one should reflect, if a man had a friend who was in sorrow, pain and distress on his account, surely it would be proper to be with him and comfort him with his presence and with such consolation as he could give. Therefore our Lord says in the Psalms that He is with him in his sorrow (Ps. 33:19). From this text we can derive seven lessons and seven kinds of comfort.

In the first place, what St. Augustine says, that patience in suffering for God's sake is better, more precious, higher, and nobler than anything that a man can be deprived of against his will — which is nothing but outward goods.[54] God knows, you will find no man who

loves this world, who is so rich that he would not gladly endure great pain, and put up with it for a long time, if thereafter he might be the paramount ruler of this world.

Secondly, I take it not only in the words that God utters, that He is with a man in his troubles, but I take it from, and in the text, and declare, if God is with me in my suffering, what more do I want, what else do I want? Surely I want nothing else, nothing more than God if I am in a right state? St. Augustine says, 'Most greedy and unwise is he who is not satisfied with God,'[55] and elsewhere he says, 'How should God's gifts to creatures satisfy a man who is not satisfied with God Himself?'[56] Therefore he says again elsewhere, 'Lord, if thou rejectest us, give us another thee, for we desire none but thee.'[57] Thus it says in the Book of Wisdom, "With God, the eternal Wisdom, all good things have come to me at once (Wisd. 7:11). This means, in one sense, that nothing is or can be good that comes without God, and whatever comes with God is good, and is good only *because* it comes from God. Of God I will not speak. If we took from all creatures in the world the Being that God gives, they would remain as a mere nothing, unpleasing, valueless, hateful. This saying, that all goodness comes from God, has many other admirable meanings, too long to enter into here. Our Lord says, "I am with a man in his trouble" (Ps. 90:15). Concerning this, St. Bernard says, 'Lord, if thou art with us in suffering, let me suffer always, that thou mayest always be with me, so that I may always have thee.'[58]

Thirdly, I say that God's being with us in suffering means that He suffers with me Himself. Truly, he who knows the truth knows that I speak truth. God suffers with man, indeed, He suffers in His fashion before, and far more than that man who suffers for His sake. So I declare, if God Himself wills to suffer, then it is only right that I should suffer, for if it is well with me, then I want what God wants. I pray every day, and God bids me pray, "Lord, thy will be done,"[59] and yet, when God wants suffering, I complain at the suffering, which is quite wrong. I also declare of a surety that God is so fond of suffering with us and for us if *we* suffer purely for God's sake, that He suffers without suffering. To suffer is such joy to Him that suffering for Him is no suffering.[60] And so, if we were in a right state, our suffering would be no suffering but a joy and a comfort.

Fourthly, I say that a friend's sympathy naturally eases my pain. So, if the suffering a human being shares with me brings comfort, how much more will God's sympathy[61] comfort me!

Fifthly, if I were ready and willing to suffer with a human being I was fond of and who was fond of me, then it is right that I should be willing to suffer with God, who suffers with me for the love He bears me.

Sixthly, I declare, if God suffers in advance, before I suffer, and if I suffer for God's sake, then indeed all my suffering, however great and manifold it may be, can easily turn to comfort and joy. It is a natural truth that if a man does something for another purpose, then that for which he does it is closer to his heart, and what he does is further from his heart and does not concern him except for the sake of that on account of which and for which it was done. If a builder hews wood and carves stone for the sole purpose of making a house against the heat of summer and the chill of winter, his heart is set first and solely on the house, and he would never hew the stone or endure the toil, but for the house. We observe that when a sick man drinks wine, he thinks and says it is bitter, and this is true,[62] for the wine loses all its sweetness through the external bitterness of the tongue, before it can get inside, where the soul can recognize and judge the flavor. So it is, and far more so, and more truly so, when a man does everything for God's sake, that God is the mediator and closest to the soul, and then nothing can touch a man's heart and soul without perforce losing its bitterness through God and God's sweetness, becoming pure sweetness before ever it can touch the man's heart.

Another testimony or comparison is this: the masters say that below heaven there is fire all round about, and therefore no wind or rain or storm or tempest can approach heaven from below near enough to touch it: it is all burnt up and destroyed by the heat of the fire before it gets near heaven.[63] Even so, I say that whatever one suffers or does for God's sake, that is all sweetened in God's sweetness before it reaches that man's heart who works and suffers for God's sake. For that is what is meant by the words 'for God's sake,' because it never gets to the heart except by passing through God's sweetness in which it loses its bitterness. And it is burnt by the fiery flames of God's love, which envelops the good man's heart on all sides.

Now we can clearly perceive how well, and in how various ways, a good man is consoled on all sides in suffering, in sorrow, and in action. One way, if he suffers and works for God's sake, and another way, if he is in divine love. And a man can also tell and know if he is doing all his works for God's sake, and if he is in God's love; for assuredly, if a man finds himself woeful and disconsolate, to that extent his work was not done for God alone, and — observe! — to that extent he is not quite in God's love. King David says, "A fire comes with God and before God, that burns up all round about whatever God finds opposed to Him and unlike Him" (Ps. 96:3), that is grief, disconsolateness, unrest, and bitterness.

The seventh point about the saying that God is with us in suffering and suffers with us is, we should be profoundly comforted by the fact of God's being purely One without any adventitious quantity of difference even in thought, so that everything that is in Him is God Himself.[64] And since this is true, I say, whatever a good man suffers for God's sake, he suffers in God, and God is with him in his suffering. If my suffering is in God and God suffers with me, how then can my suffering be painful when suffering loses its pain, and my pain is in God and my pain *is* God?[65] In truth, as God is truth and wherever I find truth I find my God, the truth — so likewise, neither more nor less, whenever I find pure suffering in God and for God, there I find God, my suffering. Whoever cannot understand this should blame his own blindness, not me or God's truth and loving-kindness.

Suffer therefore in this fashion for God's sake, since it brings such great profit and blessing. Our Lord says, "Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10). How can God, who loves goodness, endure that his friends, good people, are not all the time suffering without a break? If a man had a friend who was to suffer a few days in order to gain great profit, honor, and advantage, and possess that for a long time, then if he wanted to hinder this or if his wish were for someone to hinder it, people would not say he was that man's friend or fond of him. Therefore it may well be that God could in no way endure that His friends, good people, were ever without suffering, if they could not suffer without suffering. All the goodness of outward suffering comes forth and flows from the will, as I have written before. And therefore, whatever a good man would suffer, and is ready and eager to suffer for God's sake, that he *does*

suffer before God's face, for God's sake in God. King David says in the Psalms, "I am ready in all distress, and my sorrow is ever present in my heart and in my face" (Ps. 37:18). St. Jerome says that a piece of wax that is soft and suitable to make out of it whatever one might wish, contains within itself all that can be made from it, even though outwardly no one should make anything out of it.[66] I too have written above that a stone is no less heavy when it is not lying visibly on the ground: all its heaviness is perfectly present in its tending downward and being in itself ready to fall down. I have also written above that a good man has already done everything in heaven and earth that he wanted to do, in this respect just like God.

Now we can see the dullness of people who are commonly surprised when they see good people suffering pain and distress, and they often get the idea and the notion that this is due to their secret sins. And sometimes they say, 'Oh, I thought he was such a good man. How is it that he has to endure such great pain and sorrow? I thought he had no faults.' I agree that if it were really painful, and if they actually suffered in pain and distress, then they would not be good and sinless. But if they are good, then their suffering is no pain or misfortune, but a great happiness and blessing. "Blessed," said God, who is truth, "are they that suffer for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10). And so the Book of Wisdom says that "The souls of the righteous are in God's hand. Foolish folk think and believe that they die and perish, but they are at peace" (Wisd. 3:1–3). When St. Paul describes how many saints have endured many sorts of pain, he says that the world was unworthy of them (Heb. 11:36–38), and this saying contains, rightly understood, three meanings. One is that the world is unworthy of the presence of many good people. Another sense is better, namely, that the goodness of this world is despicable and worthless: God alone is of value, and therefore they are worthy in God's eyes and worthy of God. The third sense, that I mean now, and shall declare, is that this world, that is to say those that love this world, are unworthy to endure pain and distress for God's sake. Therefore it is written that the holy apostles rejoiced that they were worthy to endure pain in God's name (Acts 5:41).

Now enough of words, for in the third part of this book I want to describe many a comfort with which a good man should and may

console himself in his sorrow, as can be found in the deeds, and not just in the words, of good and wise people.

III

We read in the Book of Kings that a man cursed King David and grossly insulted him. Then one of David's friends said he would slay the dirty dog. But the king said, "No! for it may be that God intends my welfare by this insult" (2 Sam. 16:5ff.). In the *Book of the Fathers*[67] it says that a man lamented to a holy father that he was suffering. The father said, 'My son, do you want me to ask God to take this from you?' The other replied, 'No, father, for it is good for me — I know that well. But pray to God to give me His grace to bear it willingly.'

Once a sick man was asked why he did not pray to God to make him well. He said he was unwilling to do this for three reasons. One was that he felt sure a loving God would never tolerate his being sick unless it were for his good. The second was that if a man is good he wants whatever God wants, and not that God should want what man wants: that would not be right. And therefore, if He wants me to be ill — and if He did not, I should not be — then I ought not to wish to be well. For without doubt, if it were possible for God to make me well against His will, I would not want to care that He had made me well. Willing comes from loving, not-willing from not-loving. It is far preferable, better, and more profitable for me that God loves me and I am sick, than if I were well in body and God did not love me. What God loves is something, and what God does not love is nothing, says the Book of Wisdom (cf. Wisd. 11:25). And it is the truth that whatever God wills, precisely in and because of the fact that God wills it, is good. In truth, humanly speaking, I would rather that a rich and powerful man, a king, might love me and yet leave me for a while unrewarded, than that he should immediately bid them give me something without loving me — if he gave me nothing now out of love, postponing the gift because he intended to reward me better and more richly later on. Let us even suppose that the man who loves me and gives me nothing now has no intention of giving me anything; perhaps he will change his mind later and give me something. I must wait patiently, especially since his gift is by grace and is undeserved.

But certainly, if I care nothing for a man's love and am opposed to his will, except that I want his gift, then it is right that he should give me nothing and should hate me and should leave me in misery.

The third reason why I scorn and dislike to ask God to make me well is that I will not and ought not to pray to the mighty, loving, and generous God for such a small thing. Suppose I came to the pope a hundred or two hundred miles, and when I came into his presence I were to say, 'My Lord, Holy Father, I have traveled about two hundred miles with great difficulty and expense, and I beg you — and this is what I came for — to give me a bean,' truly, he and whoever heard it would say, and rightly, that I was a great fool. But it is a certain truth, I declare, that all goods, indeed all creatures, are less compared with God than a bean compared with the entire physical world. And so, if I were a good and wise man, I should rightly scorn to pray that I might be made well.

As regards this I say too that it is a sign of infirmity of mind if a man is joyful or sorrowful for the transient things of this world. We ought to be heartily ashamed before God and His angels and before men, if we notice such a thing in ourselves.[68] People are terribly ashamed of some defect in the face which shows *outwardly.* What more should I say? The books of the Old and New Testaments, the works of the saints and of the pagans are full of examples of how virtuous men have given up their lives and abandoned self for God's sake, or even from natural virtue.

A pagan master, Socrates, says that virtue makes impossible things possible, even easy and pleasant.[69] Nor would I forget that blessed lady of whom the Book of Maccabees tells,[70] who once saw before her eyes and heard the inhuman and grisly tortures inflicted on her seven sons; and she saw this joyfully and enjoined them all individually not to be afraid and to sacrifice body, and soul willingly for the sake of God's justice.

Here we should end this book. But first, two more things.

One is this: certainly a good and godly man should be terribly ashamed at ever being moved by sorrow when we see that a merchant, for the sake of a small profit or even on a mere chance frequently goes on long journeys and perilous ways through mountains and valleys, wildernesses and seas, braving robbers and killers of his life and property, enduring great privations of food and drink, sleep, and

other discomforts, and yet gladly and willingly forgets all this for such a small and doubtful gain. A knight in battle risks property, body and soul for fleeting and brief honor, and yet we think it so great a thing that we endure a little suffering for the sake of God and eternal blessedness.

The other thing I want to tell you is that many a dull-witted man will declare that a lot of the things I have said in this book and elsewhere are not true. To this I reply with what St. Augustine says in the first book of his *Confessions.*[71] He says God has now made all future things for thousands and thousands of years (if the world should last so long), and that He will make today all things which have passed away many thousand years ago. How can I help it if anyone does not understand this? And elsewhere he says that that man is obviously too fond of himself who wants to blind others to hide his own blindness.[72] I am satisfied if what I say and write is true in me and in God. He who sees a stick[73] thrust into the water thinks the stick is crooked, although it is quite straight; this is due to the water being denser than the air. But the stick *is* straight, not crooked, both in itself and in the eyes of him who sees it in clear air.

St. Augustine says, 'He who, free from all thoughts, all bodily forms and images, perceives within himself that which no outward seeing has conveyed to him, knows that this is true. But he who does not know this laughs and mocks at me, and I pity him. But such people want to behold and taste eternal things and divine activities, and stand in the light of eternity, while yet their heart is flitting about in yesterday and tomorrow.'[74]

A pagan master, Seneca, says, 'Great and lofty things should be discussed with great and lofty minds and with exalted souls.'[75] And some will say that such teachings should not be uttered or written to the unlearned. To this I reply, if one may not teach the unlearned, then no one can teach or write. For we teach the unlearned so that from being unlearned they may become learned. If there were nothing new there would be nothing old. "Those who are well," says our Lord, "have no need of medicine" (Luke 5:31). The physician is there to heal the sick. But if anyone misinterprets this saying, how can he help it who rightly teaches this saying, which is right? St. John proclaims the holy gospel to all believers and also to all unbelievers that they may believe, and yet he begins his Gospel with the highest that any

man can declare here on earth about God; and *his* words, and those of our Lord, have frequently been misunderstood.

May the loving compassionate God, the Truth, grant to me and to all who read this book, that we may find truth within ourselves and become aware of it. Amen.

Notes

1. Cf. Appendix: Eckhart the Scholastic; Sermons 43 and 59.
2. Cf. Sermon 80.
3. Cf. Sermon 21.
4. *Enarratio in Psalmum 36,* 1,3 (PL 36, 357) (Q).
5. Cf. Sermon 59.
6. Cf. Sermons 65 and 66.
7. Cf. Sermon 68.
8. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13.
9. Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 7.12, n. 18; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 4.12 (Q).
10. Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 10.41, n. 66 (Q).
11. Cf. Augustine, Sermon 105, n. 3,4 (PL 38, 620) (Q).
12. Not certainly traced.
13. Cf. Sermon 66.
14. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 4.1, 208a, 27ff. (Q). Cf. also Sermon 75.
15. Augustine, *De quantitate animae,* 6.9 (PL 32, 1040) (Q).
16. Seneca, *Nat. quaest.* III, praef. no. 12 (Q).
17. Also Seneca, *Epist. ad Lucilium* 107, 11, inaccurately quoted by Augustine in *De civ. Dei* 5.8 (Q).
18. Cf. Sermon 57.
19. Condemned in article 14 of the bull of 1329.
20. The value of what he has lost is 'credited' to him by God.
21. *De Trinitate* 8.3.4 (Q). The next passage, down to 'there and nowhere else,' is not in Pfeiffer and therefore not translated by Miss Evans.
22. I.e., 'in truth.'
23. Cf. *Talks of Instruction,* 7.
24. *Enarratio in Psalmum, 30,* sermo 3, n. 11 (Q).
25. Aristotle, *De anima* 2.71 (Q). Cf. Sermons 19, 57, 69, and 83.
26. Cf. Sermon 68.
27. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia–IIae q. 3, a. 2 ad 4 (Q).
28. The first three of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) (Clark). Cf. Sermon 87.
29. Cf. Sermon 4.
30. God the Father, the unbegotten begetter.
31. Cf. note 14 above.
32. Cf. Sermon 45.
33. Cf. Sermon 59, where Eckhart quotes Isa. 62:1.
34. Cf. Sermon 24a.
35. Eckhart says 'you.'

36. Cf. Sermon 43.
37. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 13, a. 7, ad 6 (Q).
38. Cf. Sermon 45 and *LW* III, 188, 13ff.
39. Cf. Sermon 32a.
40. Cf. *Talks of Instruction,* 10, and Sermon 57.
41. Cf. Sermon 72.
42. Cf. e.g., Sermon 53.
43. Cf. Sermon 21,.
44. Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina Christ.* 3.27.38 (Q).
45. This is the *Glossa ordinaria,* the famous Bible commentary widely used throughout the Middle Ages.
46. Cf. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* I, d. 9, c. 4 (Q).
47. Cf. Introduction above, pp. 18ff.
48. Cf. Sermons 62 and 24a.
49. Cf. Sermon 7. Eckhart is punning on the two senses of the verb *ûfheben,* 'take up' and 'take away, cancel.'
50. Cf. Sermon 40.
51. Eckhart's own expanded paraphrase of the scriptural text, summing up his interpretation just given.
52. Cf. Sermon 82.
53. *Lives of the Fathers* 1.9 (PL 73, 132) (Q).
54. Augustine, *Letter,* 138.3.12 (Q).
55. Cf. note 10.
56. Cf. note 11.
57. Cf. note 12.
58. St. Bernard, *On Psalms 90,* sermo 7, n. 4 (Q).
59. Cf. Sermons 12 and 18.
60. Cf. St. Augustine, *De patientia,* 1.1 (Clark).
61. Clark notes the play on the two meanings of *mitleiden:* 'suffering with another' and 'sympathy.' In fact the German word is a literal rendering of Latin *compassio* (Greek *sympatheia*). This play on words is continued under the fifth head.
62. Cf. *Talks of Instruction,* 11, and Sermons 53 and 68.
63. Cf. note 14.
64. Cf. Sermon 25 and note 5 there.
65. Conjectural restoration of a corrupt text by Quint. Clark says, 'a bold and original thought' (i.e., that God *is* the mystic's suffering), but it is a typically Eckhartian deduction from the premise above (note 64).
66. Cf. St. Jerome, *Letter,* 120.10 (PL 22, 999) (Q).
67. *Lives of the Fathers* 3 (PL 73, 742, n. 8) (Q).
68. Clark renders: 'That one ever took any notice of them.' I follow Quint's interpretation: we should be ashamed, not at noticing 'things' but at the realization that we are thus affected by them. This *outward* defect should be a greater cause of shame than any *inward* blemish. Miss Evans's rendering, 'We ought to be heartily ashamed to be found guilty of it . . .' is more of a paraphrase than a translation, but hits the meaning, assuming it is we who find *ourselves* 'guilty.'
69. Cf. *Platonis Timaeus interprete Chalcidio,* ed. J. Wrobel (Leipzig, 1876), 210, 26ff. (Q).
70. 2 Maccabees, ch. 7.

71. *Conf.* 1.6.10 (Q). Clark by an oversight has 'the second book.'
72. Cf. *Conf.* 10.23.34 (Q).
73. Augustine actually says, 'an oar': cf. *True Religion* 33.62 (Q).
74. *Conf.* 11.8.10 (Q).
75. Seneca, *Letter* 71, 24 (Q).

III

THE NOBLEMAN

Our Lord says in the Gospel, "A certain nobleman went away to a distant country to gain a kingdom for himself, and returned" (Luke 19:12). With these words our Lord teaches us how nobly man has been created by nature and how divine is that state to which he may attain by grace, and also how a man can come to this. And in these words a great part of holy scripture is touched upon.

One should first know, and it is in fact obvious, that man has two kinds of nature: body and spirit. Accordingly it says in one book, 'Whoever knows himself knows all creatures, for all creatures are either body or spirit.'[1] Thus too the scriptures say of man that there is in us an outer man and another, inner man.[2] To the outer man belongs all that is attached to the soul but embraced by and mixed with the flesh, and co-operating with and in each bodily member such as the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, and so on. And scripture calls all that the old man, the earthly man, the outward man, the hostile man, the servile man.[3] The other man who is within us is the inner man, whom scriptures call a new man, a heavenly man, a young man, a friend, and a nobleman. And it is he whom our Lord means when he says, "A nobleman went away to a distant country, and gained a kingdom for himself, and returned."

It should also be known that St. Jerome, and the masters in general, declare that every man, from the beginning of his human career, has a good spirit, an angel, and an evil spirit, a devil.[4] The good angel advises and continually inclines him to that which is good, that is godly, that is virtue and heavenly and eternal. The evil spirit advises and inclines the man continually to that which is temporal and transient, to what is sinful, evil, and devilish. This same evil spirit forever woos the outer man, and through him ever secretly plots against the inner man, just as the serpent wooed Lady Eve and, through her, the man

Adam (Gen. 3:1–6). The inner man is Adam. The man in the soul[5] is the good tree that continually brings forth good fruits, of which our Lord speaks (Matt. 7:17). He is also the field in which God has sown His own image and likeness and in which He now sows the good seed (Matt. 13:24), the root of all wisdom, all arts, all virtues, all goodness, the seed of the divine nature. The seed of divine nature is God's Son, God's Word (Mark 4:3, Luke 8:11).

The outer man is the hostile man and the enemy who has sown and cast tares on the field (Matt. 13:25). Of him St. Paul says, "I find within me that which hinders me and is opposed to what God commands and what God enjoins and what God has spoken and still speaks in the highest, in the ground of my soul" (cf. Rom. 7:23). And again he says and laments, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this mortal flesh and body?" (Rom. 7:24). And elsewhere he says yet again that the spirit of man and his flesh are constantly fighting with each other (Gal. 5:17). The flesh counsels to vice and evil; the spirit counsels to the love of God, joy, peace, and all virtues. Whoever follows and lives after the spirit, according to its counsel, belongs to eternal life.

The inner man is he of whom our Lord says: "A nobleman went away to a distant country to gain a kingdom for himself." That is the good tree of which our Lord says that it always brings forth good fruits and never evil (Matt. 7:18), for he wills the good and tends toward the good, and to goodness resting in itself and untouched by *this* and *that*. The outer man is the evil tree that can never bring forth good fruit.

Concerning the nobility of the inner man, of the spirit, and the worthlessness of the outer man, the flesh, the pagan masters Tully[6] and Seneca[7] also say that no rational soul is without God: God's seed is within us. If it had a good, skillful, and industrious gardener to tend it, it would thrive all the better and grow up to God, whose seed it is, and the fruit would be like God's nature. The seed of a pear-tree grows into a pear tree, that of a nut tree into a nut tree, God's seed into God. But if the good seed has a foolish or bad gardener, then weeds will grow and cover up and drive out the good seed so that it cannot reach the light and grow. But Origen, a great master, says, 'Since God Himself has sown this seed, impressed and impregnated it, it can indeed be covered over and hidden, but never destroyed

or extinguished in itself; it glows and gleams, shines and burns and inclines without ceasing toward God.'[8]

The *first* stage of the inner man and the new man, St. Augustine says, is that a man lives by the example of good and saintly people, though he still holds on to chairs and supports himself by walls, and subsists on milk.[9]

The *second* stage is when he not merely regards the outward examples and good people, but runs and hastens to the teaching and counsel of God and divine wisdom, turns his back on mankind and his face toward God, crawling forth from his mother's lap to smile up at his heavenly Father.

The *third* stage is when a man withdraws more and more from his mother and, being further and further from her lap, escapes from care and casts off fear so that, even if he might with impunity do evil and injustice to all, he would have no wish to do so, for he is so bound to God with love in eagerness, until God establishes and leads him in joy, sweetness, and bliss, wherein he cares nothing for whatever is repugnant and alien to God.

The *fourth* stage is when he grows more and more, and becomes rooted in love and in God, so that he is ready to welcome any trial, temptation, adversity, and suffering willingly, gladly, eagerly, and joyfully.

The *fifth* stage is when he lives altogether at peace with himself, resting calmly in the richness and abundance of the supreme ineffable wisdom.

The *sixth* stage is when a man is de-formed and transformed[10] by God's eternity, and has attained total forgetfulness of transitory, temporal life and is drawn and translated into a divine image, having become the child of God. Beyond this there is no higher stage,[11] and *there* there is eternal rest and bliss, for the final end of the inner man and the new man is eternal life.

Concerning this inner, noble man in whom God's seed and God's image are impressed and sown, and how the seed and the image of divine nature and divine being, God's Son, appears and is made manifest — but, too, is sometimes concealed — the great master Origen gives a simile:[12] that God's image, God's Son, is in the ground of the

soul like a living fountain. If earth is thrown on it (that is, earthly desire), that hinders and covers it up so that it is not recognized or perceived; yet it remains living within, and when the earth that was thrown on to it from without is removed, it appears visibly. He says this truth is indicated in the First Book of Moses, where it says that Abraham had dug wells of living water in his field, and evildoers filled them with earth, and later when the earth was removed the living streams reappeared (cf. Gen. 26:15ff.).

Here is another simile: the sun is always shining but, if there is a cloud or fog between us and the sun, we do not perceive its radiance. Likewise, if the eye is weak and sick in itself, or is covered over, it perceives no light. I have also sometimes used a clear example: if an artist wants to make an image from wood or stone, he does not put the image into the wood, but he cuts away the chips that had hidden and concealed the image: he *gives* nothing to the wood but *takes* from it, cutting away the overlay and removing the dross, and then that which was hidden under it shines forth. That is the treasure hidden in a field of which our Lord tells in the Gospel (Matt. 13:44).

St. Augustine says that when the soul is turned entirely upward into eternity, into God alone, then God's image shines forth and glows; but when the soul is turned outward, if only to the outward practice of virtue, then the image is totally veiled.[13] And that is why women's heads are covered and men's bare, according to St. Paul's teaching (1 Cor. 11:4–5)[14] Thus, whatever of the soul turns downward receives a covering, a kerchief, from what it turns to; but that in the soul which turns upward, *that* is God's bare image, God's birth, bare and naked in the naked soul.[15] In the noble man, just as in God's image, God's son, the seed of divine nature can never be destroyed in us though it may be covered up. King David says in the Psalms, "Although man is afflicted by many kinds of vanity, suffering and distress, he shall abide in God's image and the image in him."[16] The true light shines in the darkness though we may be unaware of it (cf. John 1:5).

"Do not consider," says the Book of Love, "that I am brown, for I am shapely and beautiful, only the sun has discolored me a little" (Song 1:5).[17] The sun is the light of this world, and this means that the highest and best of things created or made will hide and discolor the image of God within us. "Take away," says Solomon, "the dross from

the silver, and the purest of vessels will gleam and shine forth" (Prov. 25:4),[18] that is the image, God's son, in the soul. And that is what our Lord meant by these words, that "a nobleman went forth," for a man must go out from all forms and from himself, become wholly foreign and remote from them all, if he really means to receive the Son and become the Son in God's bosom and heart.

All that is a 'means' is alien to God. God says, "I am the first and the last" (Isa. 41:4; Rev. 22:13). There is no distinction either in God's nature, or in the Persons according to the unity of that nature. The divine nature is One, and each Person is also one and is the same One that the nature is.[19] The distinction of being and essence is taken as one and is one. Where it is not present, it assumes, has, and creates distinction. And so: in the One, God is found, and he who would find God must become one. "A man," our Lord says, "went out." In distinction one can find neither being, nor God, nor rest, nor bliss, nor satisfaction. Be one, that you may find God! And in truth, if you were truly one, then you would even remain one in difference, and difference would be one to you, and then nothing could hinder you. One remains equally one in a thousand times a thousand stones as in four stones, and a thousand times a thousand is just a simple number as four is a number.

A pagan master says that One is born of the supreme God.[20] Its property is being one with one. Whoever seeks it beneath God, deceives himself. And in the fourth place the same master says that this One has real friendship with none so much as with virgins or maidens, as St. Paul says, "I have espoused and promised you chaste virgins to the One" (2 Cor. 11:2). And that is how a man should be, for so says our Lord, "One man went out."

'Man' in the proper meaning of his name in Latin[21] means in one sense one who bows and submits himself wholly to God, all that he is and all that is his, looking upward to God, and not his possessions which he knows to be behind him, below him, and beside him. This is perfect and genuine humility: the name comes from the earth (*humus*). I shall say no more of this for now. Further, when we say 'man,' the word means something that is above nature, above time, and above whatever inclines to time or smacks of time, and I say the same too of place and corporeality. Furthermore, this man has in one sense nothing in common with anything, that is, he is not formed or

likened to *this* or *that,* and knows nothing of 'nothing,' so that one only finds in him pure life, being, truth, and goodness. A man of this sort is a 'noble man' indeed, neither more nor less.

There is still another way of explaining what our Lord terms a noble man. You should know that those who know God naked, also know creatures with Him: for knowledge is a light of the soul; all men desire knowledge,[22] for even the knowledge of evil things is good.[23] The masters say that when one knows creatures in themselves, that is evening knowledge,[24] for then one sees the creatures in images of varied distinction; but when one sees creatures in God, that is called morning knowledge, and then one sees creatures without all distinction, stripped of form and deprived of all 'likeness,'[25] in the One that is God Himself. This too is the noble man of whom our Lord said, "A nobleman went out" — noble because he is one and because he knows God and creatures in the One.

I would now refer to and discuss yet another sense of 'nobleman.' I say that when a man, the soul, the spirit, sees God, he realizes and knows himself as knowing. That is, he knows that he sees and knows God. Now some people have thought, and it seems credible, that the flower and kernel of bliss lies in that knowledge, when the spirit knows that it knows God;[26] for if I had all joy and did not know it, what good would that be to me, and what joy would that be? But I definitely deny that that is so. Though it is true that the soul cannot be happy *without* that, yet felicity does not depend on it; for the *first* condition of felicity is that the soul sees God naked. From that she derives all her being and her life, and draws all that she is, from the ground of God, knowing nothing of knowledge, nor of love, nor of anything at all. She is utterly calm in God's being, knowing nothing but being there and God. But when she is aware and *knows* that she sees, knows, and loves God, that is a turning away and a reversion to the former stage according to the natural order:[27] for none knows himself to be white but he who is white.[28] Therefore, he who knows himself to be white builds and supports himself on being-white: he does not receive his knowing without mediation or unknowingly, direct from the color: he gets his knowledge of it and about it from that which is now white, not drawing knowledge and awareness from the color alone and in itself; he gets knowledge and awareness from what is colored or white, thus knowing himself to be

white. White is much less, and much more external than whiteness. There is a big difference between the wall and the foundation on which the wall is built.

The masters say there is one power whereby the eye sees, and another by which it knows that it sees.[29] The first, *that* it sees, it gets from the color, not from that which is colored. Therefore it is all the same whether the colored object is a stone or a block of wood, a man or an angel: all its essence lies in the fact that it has color. So I say that the noble man receives and draws all his being, life, and bliss from God, by God, and in God alone and bare, and not from knowing, seeing, or loving God or anything like that. Therefore our Lord says in very truth that eternal life is knowing God alone as true God, and not in knowing that one knows God (John 17:3).[30] How could a man know that he knows God, if he does not know himself? For indeed a man knows himself and other things not at all, but only God, when he gains felicity, in the root and ground of blessedness. But when the soul knows that she knows God, then she has knowledge of both God and herself.

Now there is one power, as I have said, whereby man sees, and another whereby he is aware and knows that he sees. It is true that here and now that power in us by which we are aware and know that we see is nobler and higher than the power by which we see; for nature begins her work at the weakest point, but God begins His work with the most perfect. Nature makes a man out of a child, and a hen out of an egg, but God makes the man before the child and the hen before the egg. Nature first makes wood warm and hot, and thereafter creates the essence of fire; but God *first* gives all creatures their being, and after that, in time yet timelessly,[31] He gives individually all that belongs to it [to being]. And God gives the Holy Ghost before He gives the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore I say that there is no blessedness without a man's being aware and well knowing that he knows God — and yet, God forbid that my felicity should depend on that! If anyone is satisfied with that, let him have it, but I am sorry for him. The heat of the fire and the essence of fire are quite unlike and strangely remote from each other in nature, although very close in time and space.[32] God's seeing and our seeing are very distant and different from each other.

Therefore it was very well said by our Lord that "a nobleman went away to a distant country to gain a kingdom for himself, and returned." For man must be one in himself and must seek it in himself and in one — that is, to see God alone; and 'returning' is being aware and knowing that one knows God and is aware of it. And all this has been said before by the prophet Ezekiel, when he said that a mighty eagle with great wings, with long pinions, full of varied plumage, came to the pure mountain and, taking away the pith and marrow of the highest tree, cropped off its crown of leaves and brought it down (Ezek. 17:3). What our Lord calls a nobleman, the prophet calls a mighty eagle. Who then is nobler than he who is born, on the one hand from the highest and best that creatures have, and on the other hand from the innermost ground of divine nature and of His wilderness? In the prophet Hosea, our Lord says, "I will lead the noble soul into a wilderness, and there I will speak into her heart" (Hos. 2:14), one with One, one from One, one in One, and a single One eternally. Amen.

Notes

1. Isaac Israeli (d. 933), *Liber de definitionibus* (Q).
2. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:16. Cf. Sermon 70.
3. For these cf. 1 Cor. 15:47; Matt. 13:28; Luke 19:13–15; Rom. 6:17.
4. Cf. St. Jerome, *Comm. in Ev. Matt.* III, ch. 18, 10–11; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* II, dist. 11, ch. 1, n. 74 (Q).
5. Cf. Sermon 36.
6. (M. Tullius) Cicero, *De Tusc. Quaest.* III, ch. 1, n. 2 (Q).
7. Seneca, *Letter* 73, 16 (Q).
8. Origen, *Homily on Genesis* 13.4 (Q after Koch). Cf. also the references to *Synteresis* (Note A above, p. 22) and Sermon 32a. The orthodox view is that this spark is never extinguished even in the eternally damned. Origen did not believe in eternal damnation: 'To safeguard the liberty of rational souls, Origen thinks it necessary to regard them as ever capable of renewal; the sensible world, created by God for the purification of fallen souls, will come to an end when all will have been restored to their original purity' [*De principiis* III, vi, 6]: thus Origen's view is quoted with disapproval by Lebreron and Zeiller, *History of the Primitive Church* IV, trans. E. C. Messenger (London, 1948), 784–85. This view was, alas, not accepted by the church which saddled itself with the awful doctrine of eternal damnation, nor least through the insistence of the otherwise reasonable Augustine. If Eckhart had any doubts about this doctrine, he perforce kept silent, but his reference to Origen here may be significant, and it is a fact that his references to hell are few and perfunctory (cf. Clark, *Meister Eckhart* [London, 1957], 53). See also Sermon 57 and note 5 there.

9. Augustine, *True Religion* 26.9 (Q).
10. *entbildet und überbildet:* cf. Sermon 47 and note 3 there.
11. Augustine has in fact a seventh stage.
12. Cf. note 8 above.
13. Augustine, *Trinity* 12.7.10 (Q).
14. Cf. Sermon 68.
15. Cf. Sermon 32a.
16. Q says, 'Cf. Ps. 4:2ff.,' and Blakney says, 'Possibly Psalm 17:9–15,' while Clark declares: 'There is no such passage in the Psalter.' Certainly the parallels adduced are not close. Eckhart is quoting scripture very freely again to suit his purpose—something which was never held against him!
17. Cf. Sermon 21.
18. Cf. Sermon 14b.
19. Condemned in the bull of 1329, art. 24. Cf. Sermon 66.
20. Macrobius, *In somnium Scipionis* 1.6.7–10 (Q).
21. Cf. Sermon 20.
22. Aristotle, *Metaphys.* I.1 (Q). Cf. Sermon 66.
23. Thomas, *Summa contra Gent.* I.71 (Q). Cf. Sermon 82 and note 19 there.
24. Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 4.23.40 (Q). Cf. Sermon 82.
25. Lit. 'unlikened of all likeness' (*aller glîcheit entglîchet*).
26. Eckhart is attacking the view of Durandus of St. Pourçain. See also *LW* 3.93.6ff.
27. All this paragraph is loosely quoted by Suso in his *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom,* trans. Clark (London, 1953), 195.
28. As Clark notes, some MSS have *wîse* 'wise' for *wîz* 'white.' But there is no doubt as to the correct reading: as Quint points out, Eckhart several times refers in his Latin writings to the relation between 'whiteness' and 'white.'
29. More accurately stated at the beginning of the next paragraph, since it is the *man,* not his *eye,* that 'knows.' Cf. Thomas, *Summa theol.* Ia, q. 78, a. 4, ad 2 (Q).
30. The qualification is, of course, Eckhart's addition.
31. 'God gives the creatures existence, first in His mind as prototypes or ideas, and then as created beings in the visible universe' (Clark).
32. Cf. Sermon 95.

IV

ON DETACHMENT

I have read many writings of pagan masters, and of the prophets, and of the Old and New Testaments, and have sought earnestly and with all diligence to discover which is the best and highest virtue whereby a man may chiefly and most firmly join himself to God, and whereby a man may become by grace what God is by nature, and whereby a man may come closest to his image when he was in God,[1] wherein there was no difference between him and God, before God made creatures. After a thorough study of these writings I find, as well as my reason can testify or perceive, that only pure detachment surpasses all things, for all virtues have some regard to creatures, but detachment is free of all creatures. Therefore our Lord said to Martha, *"unum est necessarium"* (Luke 10:42), which is as much as to say, 'Martha, he who would be serene and pure needs but one thing: detachment.'

The teachers greatly praise love, as does St. Paul who says, "Whatever things I may do, and have not love, I am nothing" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1). But I extol detachment above any love. First, because, at best, love constrains me to love God, but detachment compels God to love me. Now it is a far nobler thing my constraining God to me than for me to constrain myself to God. That is because God is more readily able to adapt Himself to me, and can more easily unite with me than I could unite with God. That detachment forces God to me, I can prove thus: everything wants to be in its natural place. Now God's natural place is unity and purity, and that comes from detachment. Therefore God is bound to give Himself to a detached heart.[2]

In the second place I extol detachment above love because love compels me to suffer all things for God's sake, whereas detachment makes me receptive of nothing but God. Now it is far nobler to be receptive of nothing but God than to suffer all things for God, for

in suffering a man has some regard to the creatures from which he gets the suffering, but detachment is quite free of all creatures. But that detachment is receptive of nothing but God, I can prove this way: whatever is to be received must be taken in somewhere. Now detachment is so nearly nothing that there is no thing subtle enough to maintain itself in detachment except God alone. He is so subtle and so simple that He can stay in a detached heart. Therefore detachment is receptive of nothing but God.

The masters also extol humility above many other virtues. But I extol detachment above humility for this reason: humility can exist without detachment, but perfect detachment cannot exist without perfect humility, for perfect humility ends in the destruction of self. Now detachment comes so close to nothing, that between perfect detachment and nothing no thing can exist. Therefore perfect detachment cannot be without humility. But two virtues are always better than one.

The second reason why I praise detachment above humility is because humility means abasing oneself beneath all creatures, and in that abasement man goes out of himself into creatures, but detachment rests within itself. Now no going out can ever be so noble, but remaining within is nobler still. As the prophet David says, "*Omnis gloria eius filiae regis ab intus*" (Ps. 44:14), which is to say, "All the glory of the daughter comes from her inwardness." Perfect detachment is not concerned about being above or below any creature; it does not wish to be below or above, it would stand on its own, loving none and hating none, and seeks neither equality nor inequality with any creature, nor this nor that: it wants merely to be.[3] But to be either this or that it does not wish at all. For whoever would be this or that wants to be *something,* but detachment wants to be nothing. It is therefore no burden on anything.

Now somebody might say, 'Well, our Lady possessed all virtues to perfection, and so she must have had perfect detachment. But if detachment is higher than humility, why then did our Lady glory in her humility and not in her detachment when she said, "*Quia respexit dominus humilitatem ancillae suae*" (Luke 1:48), that is to say, "He regarded the humility of his handmaiden"?'

I reply that in God there is detachment *and* humility, insofar as we can speak of God's having virtues. You should know that it was

loving humility that led God to stoop to enter human nature, while detachment stood immovable within itself when he became man, just as it did when He created heaven and earth, as I shall tell you later. And because our Lord, when he would become man, stood unmoved in his detachment, our Lady knew that he required the same of her too, and that in this case he looked to her humility and not her detachment. For if she had thought once about her detachment and said, 'he regarded my detachment,' that detachment would have been sullied and would not have been whole and perfect, since a going forth would have occurred. But nothing, however little, may proceed from detachment without staining it. There you have the reason why our Lady gloried in her humility and not her detachment. Concerning this, the prophet said, *"Audiam, quid loquatur in me dominus deus"* (Ps. 84:9), that is to say, "I will (be silent and) hear what my lord God says within me," as if he were to say, 'If God wishes to speak to me, let Him come into me, for I will not go out.'

I also praise detachment above all compassion, for compassion is nothing but a man's going out of himself by reason of his fellow creatures' lack, by which his heart is troubled. But detachment is free of this, stays in itself and is not troubled by any thing: for as long as any thing can trouble a man, he is not in a right state. In short, when I consider all the virtues, I find none so completely without lack and so conformed to God as detachment.

A master called Avicenna[4] declares that the mind of him who stands detached is of such nobility that whatever he sees is true, and whatever he desires he obtains, and whatever he commands must be obeyed. And this you must know for sure: when the free mind is quite detached, it constrains God to itself, and if it were able to stand formless and free of all accidentals, it would assume God's proper nature. But God can give *that* to none but Himself, therefore God can do no more for the detached mind than give Himself to it. But the man who stands thus in utter detachment is rapt into eternity in such a way that nothing transient can move him, and that he is aware of nothing corporeal and is said to be dead to the world, for he has no taste for anything earthly. That is what St. Paul meant when he said, "I live and yet do not live — Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Now you may ask what this detachment is that is so noble in itself. You should know that true detachment is nothing else but a

mind that stands unmoved by all accidents of joy or sorrow, honor, shame, or disgrace, as a mountain of lead stands unmoved by a breath of wind. This immovable detachment brings a man into the greatest likeness to God. For the reason why God is God is because of His immovable detachment, and from this detachment He has His purity, His simplicity, and His immutability. Therefore, if a man is to be like God, as far as a creature *can* have likeness with God, this must come from detachment. This draws a man into purity, and from purity into simplicity, and from simplicity into immutability, and these things make a likeness between God and that man; and this likeness must occur through grace, for grace draws a man away from all temporal things and purges him of all that is transient. You must know, too, that to be empty of all creatures is to be full of God, and to be full of all creatures is to be empty of God.

You should also know that God has stood in this unmoved detachment from all eternity, and still so stands; and you should know further that when God created heaven and earth and all creatures, this affected His unmoved detachment just as little as if no creature had ever been created. I say further: all the prayers and good works that a man can do in time affect God's detachment as little as if no prayers or good works had ever occurred in time, and God never became more ready to give or more inclined toward a man than if he had never uttered the prayer or performed the good works. I say still further: when the Son in the Godhead wanted to become man, and became man and endured martyrdom, *that* affected God's unmoved detachment as little as if he had never become man. You might say at this, 'Then I hear that all prayers and good works are wasted because God does not allow Himself to be moved by anyone with such things, and yet it is said that God wants us to pray to Him for everything.'

Now you should mark me well, and understand properly if you can, that God in His first eternal glance (if we can assume that there *was* a first glance) saw all things as they should occur, and saw in the same glance when and how He would create all creatures and when the Son would become man and suffer; He saw too the least prayer and good work that anyone should do, and saw which prayers and devotion He would and should accede to; He saw that you will call upon Him earnestly tomorrow and pray to Him, but God will not grant your petition and prayer tomorrow, for He *has* granted it in

His eternity, before ever you became a man. But if your prayer is not sincere and in earnest, God will not deny it to you now, for He *has* denied it to you in His eternity.

And thus God has regarded all things in His first eternal glance, and God performs nothing afresh, for all has been performed in advance. Thus God ever stands in His immovable detachment, and yet the prayers and good works of people are not wasted, for he who does well will be rewarded, and he who does evil will reap accordingly. This is explained by St. Augustine in the fifth book of *On the Trinity,* in the last chapter thus: *'Deus autem, etc.'* which means, 'God forbid that anyone should say that God loves anyone in time, for with Him there is no past and no future, and He loved all the saints before the world was ever created, as He foresaw them. And when it comes to be that He displays in time what He has seen in eternity, then people think He has gained a new love for them; so too, when God is angry or does some good thing, it is we who are changed while He remains unchanged, just as the sun's ray hurts a sick eye and delights a sound one, and yet the sunshine remains unchanged in itself.' Augustine also touches on the same idea in the twelfth book of *On the Trinity* in the fourth chapter, where he says, *'Nam Deus non ad tempus videt, nec aliquid fit novi in eius visione,'* 'God does not see in temporal fashion, and no new vision arises in Him.' In the same sense Isidore speaks in his book *On the Highest Good,*[5] saying, 'Many people ask, What did God do before He created heaven and earth, or whence came the new will in God that He made creatures?' and he answers, 'No new will ever arose in God, for although a creature did not exist in itself (as it is now), yet it was before all time in God and in His reason.'[6] God did not create heaven and earth as we (perishable beings) might say, 'let that be so!' for all creatures were spoken in the Eternal Word. To this we can add what our Lord said to Moses when Moses said, "Lord, if Pharaoh asks me who you are, how am I to answer him?" and the Lord said, "Say, 'He who IS has sent me" (Exod. 3:13–14). That is as much as to say, He who is immutable in Himself has sent me.

But someone might say, 'Was Christ in unmoved detachment when he said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34), and Mary when she stood before the cross? How is all this compatible with unmoved detachment?' Concerning this, you should know what the masters say, that in every man there are two kinds of

man.[7] The one is called the outer man, that is, the life of the senses: this man is served by the five senses, though the outer man functions by the power of the soul. The other is called the inner man, that is, man's inward nature. You should understand that a spiritual man, who loves God, makes use of the powers of the soul in the outer man only to the extent that the five outer senses need it: the inward nature is not concerned with the five senses except insofar as it is a guide or ruler of those senses, guarding them so that they do not yield to sense objects in a bestial fashion, as some folk do who live for carnal pleasures like beasts unendowed with reason; such people should be termed beasts rather than men. And whatever powers the soul has over and above what it gives to the five senses are all devoted to the inner man. And when such a man perceives a noble or elevated object, the soul draws into itself all the powers it has granted to the five senses, and then that man is said to be insensible or entranced,[8] for his object is an intelligible image or something intelligible without an image.[9] But you should know that God requires of every spiritual man to love Him with all the powers of the soul. He says, "Love your God with all your heart" (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Now some people use up all the powers of the soul in the outer man. These are people who turn all their senses and their reason toward perishable goods, knowing nothing of the inner man.

You should know that the outer man can be active while the inner man is completely free of this activity and unmoved. Now Christ too had an outer man and an inner man, and so did our Lady, and whatever Christ and our Lady ever said about external things, they did so according to the outer man, but the inner man remained in unmoved detachment. Thus it was when Christ said, "My soul is sorrowful unto death," and whatever lamentations our Lady made, or whatever else she said, inwardly she was in a state of unmoved detachment. Here is an analogy: a door swings open and shuts on its hinge. I would compare the outer woodwork of the door to the outer man, and the hinge to the inner man. When the door opens and shuts, the boards move back and forth, but the hinge stays in the same place and is never moved thereby. It is the same in this case, if you understand it rightly.

Now I ask, 'What is the object of pure detachment?' My answer is that the object of pure detachment is neither *this* nor *that*. It rests on

absolutely nothing, and I will tell you why: pure detachment rests on the highest, and he is at his highest, in whom God can work all His will. But God cannot work all His will in all hearts, for, although God is almighty, He can only work where He finds readiness or creates it. I say 'creates it' on account of St. Paul, because in him God found no readiness, but made him ready by infusion of grace. And so I say God works according as He finds us ready. His working is different in a man and in a stone. Here is an example from nature. If you heat a baker's oven and put in it dough of oats, barley, rye, and wheat, there is only one heat in the oven, but it does not have the same effect on the different kinds of dough, for one turns into fine bread, the second coarser, and the third coarser still. And that is not the fault of the heat, it is due to the materials which are unlike. In the same way God does not work alike in all our hearts: He works as He finds readiness and receptivity. Now in whatever heart there is *this* or *that,* there may be something in 'this' or 'that' which God cannot bring to the highest peak. And so, if the heart is to be ready to receive the highest, it must rest on absolutely nothing, and in that lies the greatest potentiality which can exist. For when the detached heart rests on the highest, that can only be on nothing, since that has the greatest receptivity. Let us take an example from nature: if I want to write on a wax tablet, then anything written on that tablet already, however wonderful it may be, will prevent me from writing there; and if I want to write I must erase or destroy whatever is on the tablet, and the tablet is never so suitable for me to write on as when there is nothing on it. Similarly, if God is to write the highest on my heart, then everything called 'this and that' must be expunged from my heart, and then my heart stands in detachment. *Then* God can work the highest according to His supreme will. Therefore the object of a detached heart is neither this nor that.

Again I ask, 'What is the prayer of a detached heart?' My answer is that detachment and purity cannot pray, for whoever prays wants God to grant him something, or else wants God to take something from him. But a detached heart desires nothing at all, nor has it anything it wants to get rid of. Therefore it is free of all prayers, or its prayer consists of nothing but being uniform with God. That is all its prayer. In this sense we can take St. Dionysius's comment on the saying of St. Paul, "There are many who run, but only one gains

the crown" (1 Cor. 9:25). All the powers of the soul compete for the crown but the essence alone can win it. Dionysius says the race is nothing but a turning away from all creatures and a union with the uncreated.[10] And when the soul has got so far, it loses its name and is drawn into God, so that in itself it becomes nothing, just as the sun draws the dawn into itself and annihilates it. To this state nothing brings a man but pure detachment. To this we may add a saying of St. Augustine, 'The soul has a secret entrance to the divine nature, when all things become nothing for it.'[11] On earth, this entrance is nothing but pure detachment, and when the detachment reaches its climax, it becomes ignorant with knowing, loveless with loving, and dark with enlightenment. Thus we may understand the words of a master, that the poor in spirit are they who have abandoned all things to God, just as He possessed them when we did not exist.[12] None can do this but a pure, detached heart.

That God would rather be in a detached heart than in all other hearts, appears if you ask me, 'What does God seek in all things?' to which I answer from the Book of Wisdom, where He says, "In all things I seek rest" (Sir. 24:11).[13] But nowhere is perfect rest to be found but in a detached heart. That is why God prefers to be there rather than in other virtues or in anything else. You should know, too, that the more a man strives to be receptive to divine influence, the more blessed he is; and whoever can gain the highest readiness in this is in the highest state of blessedness. But none can make himself receptive to divine influence but by uniformity with God, for insofar as a man is uniform with God, to that extent he is receptive to the divine influence. But uniformity comes from man's subjecting himself to God, and the more a man is subject to creatures, the less he is uniform with God. Now the pure detached heart stands free of all creatures. Therefore it is totally subject to God, and therefore it is in the highest degree of uniformity with God, and is also the most receptive to divine influence. This was what St. Paul meant when he said, "Put on Christ,"[14] meaning unformity with Christ, for this putting on can only take place through uniformity with Christ. You should know that when Christ became man, he took on, not a man, but human nature.[15] Therefore, go out of all things and *then* there will remain only what Christ took on, and thus you will have put on Christ.

Whoever would know the nobility and profit of perfect detachment, let him note Christ's saying concerning his humanity, when he said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I should go away from you, for if I do not go away, the Holy Spirit cannot come to you" (John 16:7).[16] This is just as if he had said, 'You rejoice too much in my present form, and therefore the perfect joy of the Holy Ghost cannot be yours.' So, leave all images and unite with the formless essence, for God's spiritual comfort is delicate; therefore He will not offer Himself to any but to him who scorns physical comforts.

Now take note, all who are sensible! No man is happier than he who has the greatest detachment. There can be no fleshly and physical comfort without some spiritual harm, for "the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (cf. Gal. 5:17). Therefore, whoever in the flesh sows disorderly love reaps death, and whoever in the spirit sows ordered love, reaps from the spirit eternal life. Therefore, the quicker a man flees from the created, the quicker the Creator runs toward him. So, take note, all sensible men! Since the joy we might have from the physical form of Christ hinders us in receiving the Holy Ghost, how much more of a hindrance to gaining God is our inordinate delight in evanescent comforts! That is why detachment is best, for it purifies the soul, purges the conscience, kindles the heart, awakens the spirit, quickens the desire, makes us know God and, cutting off creatures, unites us with God.

Now take note, all who have good sense! The swiftest steed to bear you to His perfection is suffering, for none will enjoy greater eternal bliss than those who stand with Christ in the greatest bitterness. Nothing is more gall-bitter than suffering, nothing more honey-sweet than having suffered. Nothing disfigures the body before men like suffering, and nothing beautifies the soul before God like having suffered. The finest foundation on which this perfection can rest is humility. For whatever man's nature creeps here below in the deepest lowliness, that man's spirit will soar aloft to the heights of the Godhead, for joy brings sorrow and sorrow joy. And so, whoever would attain perfect detachment should strive for perfect humility, and thus he will come to the neighborhood of God. That this may be all our lot, so help us the highest detachment, which is God Himself. Amen.

Notes

1. As an idea in the mind of God. Cf. Sermons 58 and Sermon 87 and note 7 there.
2. Cf. Sermon 73.
3. The variant reading *eine sîn* 'to be alone' is rejected by Quint, following Schaefer.
4. Avicenna, *Liber VI, Naturalium,* 4.4 (ed. of 1508) (Q). Skinner/Clark's ref. is wrong.
5. *Sent.* I, ch. 8, n. 4 (Q).
6. Cf. note 1 above.
7. Cf. Sermon 56.
8. Not 'senseless or crazy' (Clark).
9. Quint cites Thomas, *De veritate,* q. 13, a. 2 on the different degrees of absorption. These are reminiscent of the 'world of form' (*rüpaloka*) and the 'formless world' (*arüpaloka*) of Buddhism, which are attained by the practice of the *jhānas* ('absorptions').
10. *De divinis nom.* 4.9 and 13.3 (Quint after Fischer).
11. Not traced directly in Augustine's works.
12. Cf. Sermon 87.
13. Not the Wisdom of Solomon but Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus Sirach), as in Sermon 73, note 1; cf. Sermon 45.
14. Cf. Sermon 92 and note 1 there.
15. Cf. Sermon 47 and note 2 there.
16. Cf. Sermon 75.

V

FRAGMENT OF AN UNKNOWN SERMON (98, Q 99)[1]

...This word [i.e., 'widow'] means 'she who has been abandoned.'[2] It denotes a soul that is abandoned and *has* abandoned all creatures, as I have said before. There is a light in the soul where time and place have never entered. Whatever has ever touched time and place never came into this light. In this light a man should stand.[3] Our Lord said in a different place (Matt. 13:24–25) that a man sowed his seed in the field. While the people were sleeping, the enemy came and cast his evil seed therein. God has cast His seed in the soul.[4] His seed is His Word, His Son. He has given him into the midst of the soul. A man should rather give up and lose body and soul than lose God.[5] The heart lies in the middle of the body. The masters say that God and nature have set the heart in the middle of the body so that a man may abandon all his members to death and destruction rather than lose his heart.[6] God has put His seed, His Word, in the middle of the soul, so that a man may lose all that he can achieve rather than lose God.[7] When God creates the soul, He begets His only-begotten Son in her, and perhaps before. I say, when God creates the soul, He creates the soul and begets His only-begotten Son into the soul both at once in one moment, at the same time and above time:[8] thus He pours His image into the soul.[9] Our Lord says, "He cast his seed in the field. While the people were sleeping the enemy came and cast his evil seed among the wheat." When a man is not willing to guard himself against the world and against people from whom harm may come....[10] Secondly, when the soul[11]...stands in the light and in the intellect[12] and in the highest light, then it is day in the soul[13] where God wants to sow His seed. The masters say the birth that occurs during the day is nobler than in the night on account

of certain things that accompany it.[14] The people who are born by day are nobler than those born by night on account of certain things. Therefore he[15] says that the son of the barren woman is far nobler than the son of the fruitful woman,[16] because it takes place in the daytime, in the light which nothing temporal can enter. Everything that the sun ever shone on or that was touched by time never came to this light,[17] therefore the seed is receptive in this light.[18] In the light the seed is conceived, therefore the fruit is nobler, and there are far more sons, and not daughters,[19] for whatever might prevent the birth of sons . . .[20] therefore there are sons and there are many more sons, because it occurs above time, in the day.

The other reasons why there are more sons [is] because it occurs frequently in the day, indeed a hundred times and far more: as many more as the soul is able to conceive, so the birth takes place in the soul.[21] Therefore there are many more sons, because it occurs in the day, and frequently in the day, and at that time there are many sons. For it is in eternity that sons shall come to be. Over two thousand years ago she abandoned that in the school [?][22] which will happen in a thousand times a thousand years: over that eternity spreads itself. If a man were to have thirty children over a period of thirty-years, and if he had everything that can happen to a man in a thousand years or in twenty thousand years — eternity plants that, which has become fruit and ripened,[23] and it becomes ripe in one moment. Therefore there are many sons, because it occurs in eternity at the. . . . [When] God gives Himself, He gives Himself altogether.[24] He either gives or does not give to the extent that the soul can receive, because God must pour Himself out all at once here . . .[25] burst, He would have burst if He had not poured Himself out all at once, for no creature existed into whom He could pour Himself out altogether, and therefore He begot a Son into whom He could pour Himself out altogether. Therefore there are sons . . . [in] eternity. A man who had great joy would not be silent about it. A master says, if anyone were with the sun and with the moon and saw the wonders there, if he could not tell anyone he could not endure it. He[26] said then, . . . "Cast out the maid and her son, for he shall not inherit with the freeborn children" (Gen. 21:10; Gal. 4:30). All corporeal prayer and fasting and all outward ways do not belong to the inheritance.[27] And after that

all spiritual things that work in the spirit do not belong to the inheritance.[28] However great the desire, cast out the maid and her son, then one can gain a great and immeasurable reward from fasting and praying and spiritual works....[29]

Notes

1. MS 80 18537, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, fragment discovered by Kurt Ruh in 1967: a double sheet from an old MS which had been subsequently used as a cover for documents, slightly trimmed at the edges and with four holes made by the later binder. Some words are illegible through friction. Written probably about 1300, and certainly not later than 1325 (thus during Eckhart's lifetime), perhaps by a female scribe. It is thus the oldest MS of any of Eckhart's sermons. Published in diplomatic reprint, with facsimile, in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 111 (1982): 219–25. The following notes are based almost entirely on Professor Ruh's article, for which this general acknowledgement may suffice. My own contribution is negligible, apart from keying the textual references, instead of to *DW*, to the present translation. For reference purposes I have numbered this as Sermon 98.

2. The word intended must be 'widow,' which I have accordingly supplied in the text: cf. Sermon 79 and *Talks of Instruction,* 3.

3. Cf. Sermons 60 and 14b.

4. Cf. Luke 8:11 and Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum* 84.15: 'Semen Dei in cordibus vestris.' See also *The Nobleman,* p. 558.

5. Cf. Sermon 10.

6. Cf. Sermon 19.

7. Cf. Sermon 71.

8. Cf. especially Sermon 66; also Sermons 53 and 18.

9. Cf. Sermon 20.

10. There is an obvious break in the sense here. Perhaps the scribe missed out a line in his (her?) copy, or it may be a case of homoteleuton (jumping from one passage to another with a similar ending): a frequent cause of scribal errors. In any case a 'first point' must have been made before the 'secondly.'

11. There is probably another omission here: the literal rendering is 'when the soul *does not* stand..., which makes little sense in the context.

12. *Redelichkeit,* as in Sermon 7. Cf. also Sermon 1, note 9, where it is pointed out that this refers to the 'higher intellect,' not the ratiocinative faculty.

13. Cf. Sermon 66.

14. Quotation untraced.

15. This 'he' has no grammatical reference, but Isaiah or St. Paul must be meant: see next note.

16. Cf. Gal. 4:27 (quoting Isaiah 54:1). Also mentioned but not discussed, *LW* I, 663.

17. Cf. Sermon 29.

18. Cf. Sermon 79.

19. Cf. Sermon 66.

20. Slightly obscure: there is probably something omitted. Ruh compares a passage from Pfeiffer Sermon 26 (the authenticity of which has not, so far, been confirmed): 'and if this nature were nor prevented, a son would always be being born as with the heavenly Father' (trans. Evans I, p. 77). However, Quint 1932 emended the words 'as (with) the heavenly Father,' on the basis of other manuscript evidence, to 'and never any daughter,' which is slightly closer to the present text. Cf. Sermon 31 and Sermon 17.

21. Cf. Sermon 79; also Sermon 69.

22. This passage is hopelessly corrupt. 'She' probably refers to the soul, and the reference is obviously to the paradox of time and eternity.

23. Conjectural reading by Ruh.

24. Cf. Sermon 10.

25. Cf. Sermon 79. See also *On Detachment,* note 2, Sermon 73 and also Sermon 48.

26. This should be 'she': the speaker is Sara. But cf. note 15.

27. Cf. Rom. 8:17, Gal. 4:7; Sermons 40 and 66.

28. This sentence is hopelessly corrupt.

29. Josef Quint considered this text, as he wrote on February 29, 1972, to Kurt Ruh, to be 'pieced together from various borrowings or excerpts by a compiler with no understanding,' whereas Ruh argues, and rightly as I think, that it is indeed part of a single sermon, however badly transmitted. The type of patchwork compilation Quint had in mind only came into existence after the mid-fourteenth century, whereas the paleographical evidence proves beyond doubt that our manuscript is much earlier than this.

The gist of Ruh's analysis is as follows: Eckhart does not intend to expand here on the 'abandoning of creatures' (as indicated in the 'widow' simile), as he has frequently done this. He turns to the theme of 'a light in the soul,' but quickly goes on to the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:24–25), linking this with the theme of light. The excursus on the heart being in the middle of the body is related by its connection to the birth of the Word in the soul, and then the 'light' theme is varied by reference to an unknown 'master' who declared that those born in the day are nobler than those born at night. The theme is related to Gal. 4:27, which brings us back to the widow mentioned in the beginning of our fragment. Ruh compares the treatment in Sermon 79. The remaining part can all be related to Gal. 4:27, and Ruh explains the apparent digression about a man's excessive joy by reference to the statement that God must of necessity pour Himself out into creatures. Despite the corruption of text toward the end, the theme of 'sons and heirs' is maintained logically (Ruh refers to Gal. 4:7 *quod si filius, et heres per Deum,* which the *New English Bible* renders: "and if a son, then also by God's own act an heir").

As regards the state of the text, Professor Ruh, in a letter of December 7, 1982, writes:

> That is what — at best — texts looked like that were based on notes taken down without any help or correction from the author. The greatest part of the manuscript tradition of Eckhart is — fortunately for us! — nor like this.

Appendix A to Part Two

FOUR ECKHART LEGENDS

(Pf III, 67–70, QT pp. 443–48)

1. A GOOD MORNING [1]

Meister Eckhart said to a poor man, 'God give you good morning, brother.'

'Keep it for yourself, sir, I have never had a bad one.'

He said, 'How is that, brother?'

'Because whatever God has sent me to suffer, I have suffered gladly for His sake and have considered myself unworthy of Him, and so I have never been sad or troubled.'

He asked, 'Where did you first find God?'[2]

'When I left all creatures behind, then I found God.'

He said, 'Where did you leave God, brother?'

'In every pure, clean heart.'

He said, 'What kind of a man are you, brother?'

'I am a king.'

He asked, 'Of what?'

'Of my flesh: for whatever my spirit desired from God, my flesh was always more nimble and quick to perform and endure than my spirit was to receive.'

He said, 'A king must have a kingdom. What is your realm, brother?'

'In my soul.'

He said, 'In what way, brother?'

'When I have closed the doors of my five senses and desire God with all my heart, I find God in my soul, as radiant and joyous as He is eternal life.'

He said, 'You must be a saint. Who made you one, brother?'

'Sitting still and raising my thoughts aloft and uniting with God — that has drawn me up to heaven, for I could find no rest in anything that was less than God. Now I have found Him I have rest and joy in Him eternally, and that surpasses all temporal kingdoms. There is no outward work so perfect, but it hinders the inner life.'

2. THE NAKED BOY[3]

He said, 'I come from God.' 'Where did you leave Him?'

'In virtuous hearts.'

'Where are you going?'

'To God.'

'Where will you find Him?'

'Where I abandoned all creatures.'

'Who are you?'

'A king.'

'Where is your kingdom?'

'Mind that no one shares it with you.'

'I will.'

Then he took the boy into his cell and said, 'Take whichever coat you like.'

'Then I would not be a king!'[4] And he vanished.

It was God Himself having fun with him.

3. MEISTER ECKHART'S DAUGHTER[5]

A young girl[6] came to a Dominican convent and asked for Meister Eckhart. The porter said, 'Whom shall I announce?'

She replied, 'I don't know.'

He said, 'Why don't you know?'

She said, 'Because I am neither a girl nor a woman, nor husband nor wife, nor widow nor virgin, nor master nor maid nor manservant.'

The porter went to Meister Eckhart. 'Come out to the strangest creature I ever saw, and let me go with you, and put your head out and ask, "Who wants me?" ' He did so. She spoke to him the same as she had spoken to the porter.

He said, 'My dear child, you speak truthfully and with a ready tongue: explain to me more fully what you mean.'

She said, 'If I were a girl, I would still be in my primal innocence; if I were a woman, I would be bearing the eternal Word without cease in my soul; if I were a man, I should put up a stiff resistance to all sins; if I were a wife, I should be faithful to my sole and beloved husband; if I were a widow, I should ever yearn for my one and only love; if I were a virgin, I should be in reverent service; if I were a master, I would command all the divine virtues; if I were a maid, I should be meekly subject to God and all creatures; if I were a manservant, I should be hard at work, serving my Lord with my whole will and without contradiction. But I am none of all these things: I am just a thing like anything else and go my way.'

The master went and said to his brothers, 'It seems to me that I have just heard the purest person I have ever met.'[7]

4. MEISTER ECKHART'S FEAST[8]

Once[9] a poor man came to Cologne on the Rhine in quest of poverty and the life of truth. Then a maiden came to him and said, 'Dear child, will you eat with me in God's love?'

'Gladly,' he said.

When they sat down, she said, 'Eat heartily, don't be ashamed.'

'If I eat too much it is wrong, if I eat too little it is wrong. The middle way is best: I will eat like a poor man.'

She asked, 'What is a poor man?'

He said, 'That consists in three things. The first is that he is dead to all natural things. The second is that he cannot desire too much of God. The third is that he should desire whatever is termed, or is, suffering for no one more than for himself.'

She said, 'My dear child, tell me, what is the poverty of the inner man?'

He said, 'That too lies in three things. The first is utter detachment from all creatures, in time and in eternity. The second is determined humility of the inner and the outer man. The third is a diligent devotion and a continual raising of the mind to God.'

She said, 'Indeed, I am glad to hear that. Now, dear child, tell me, what is the poverty of the spirit?'

He said, 'You ask too much!'

She said, 'I never heard that there could be too much of what concerns God's glory and man's blessedness.'

The poor man said, 'You speak truly. This too consists in three things. The first is, that a man should know nothing in time or eternity but God alone. The second is, that he should not seek God outside of himself. The third is, that he should not carry any spiritual goods, as his personal property,[10] from place to place.'

'Well then, should not the Master, your father and mine, not carry his sermon from his cell to the pulpit?'

He replied, 'Not he.'

'Why?' she asked.

He said, 'The more temporal, the more physical; the more physical, the more temporal.'[11]

She said, 'This spirit did not come from Bohemia!'

He said, 'The sun that shines on Cologne also shines on the city of Prague.'[12]

She said, 'Explain that to me more clearly.'

He said, 'It is not my place with the Master here present.'

The Master said, 'If a man has not the truth within, let him love it outside, then he will also find it within.'[13]

She said, 'This meal is well paid for.'

Then the poor man said, 'Maiden, now you must pay for the wine!'

'Gladly,' she replied, 'just ask me.'

He asked, 'How can a man recognize the works of the Holy Ghost in his soul?'

She said, 'By three things. The first is that he daily grows less in the way of bodily things, desires, and natural love. The second is that he continually grows in divine love and grace. The third is that, with love and eagerness, he devotes his labors more to his fellow men than to himself.'

He said, 'Our Lord's chosen friends have given good evidence of this.' Then he said, 'How can a spiritual man tell if God is present at his prayers and exercises?'

She said, 'By three things. The first is by the object which God sets before His chosen ones: that is the scorn of the world and physical suffering. The second is by a growth in grace commensurate with the

love that is between him and God. The third is that God never leaves that man without indicating some new path of wisdom to him.'

He said, 'That must indeed be true. Now tell me, how can a man tell if all his works are performed according to the sovran will of God?'

She said, 'By three things. The first is, that he never lacks a clear conscience. The second is, that he never turns from union with God. And the third is, that the heavenly Father begets His Son in him continually by grace.'

The Master said, 'If all debts were as well paid off as this wine, there is many a soul in purgatory that would now be in eternal life.'

Then the poor man said, 'If there is any more to pay, that is up to the Master.'

Then the Master said, 'Let old age be privileged.' But the poor man said, 'Let love do its work, which knows no distinctions.'[14]

The maiden said, 'You are a Master whose skill has been proven three times in Paris.'

The poor man said, 'I would rather have someone who had been tried and proven once in the truth than three times in Paris in the chair.'

Meister Eckhart said, 'If there was anything that needed saying to me, it has been said.'[15]

The maiden said, 'Tell me, Father, how can anyone know he is a child of the heavenly Father?'

He said, 'By three things. The first is, that a man performs all his actions out of love. The second is, that he accepts all things equally from God. The third is, that he pins all his hopes on none but God alone.'

The poor man said, 'Tell me, Father, how can anyone know whether virtue is operative in him to the highest degree of nobility?'

He said, 'By three things: you must love God for God's sake, the good for good's sake, and the truth for truth's sake.'

The Master said, 'Dear children, how should he live who preaches the truth?'

The maiden said, 'He should so live that what he preaches in words, he practices with deeds.'

The poor man said, 'That is good. But he should be inwardly so established that he has more truth within him than he can put

into outward words.[16] As the eternal Word is begotten of the heavenly Father, so the will of God is the begetting and becoming of all creatures.'[17]

This is Meister Eckhart's Feast.[18]

Notes

1. Pf III, 67. The 'poor man' evidently represents the 'poor in spirit' so frequently mentioned by Eckhart.
2. Cf. *On Detachment,* third paragraph.
3. Pf III, 68. A variant on the same theme as Sermon 1.
4. Perhaps derived from such texts as Sermon 63.
5. Pf III, 69. My own heading. Quint heads this, with the Munich and Wolfenbüttel MSS discovered by him, 'About a good sister: a goodly conversation she had with Meister Eckhart.' This piece seems to be developed (negatively turned and expanded) from the theme of the 'virgin who was a wife' referred to in Sermon 8.
6. The word used is 'daughter' (*tohter*), which can also mean 'young girl,' 'pupil,' or 'penitent' (modern German *Beichtkind,* lit. 'confession-child').
7. Pfeiffer's text, from a Stuttgart MS, concludes: 'This parable (*bîspel*) is called *Meister Eckhart's Daughter*' (cf. note 5 above), which perhaps links it with the better-known 'Sister Cathy' (Pf II, 6, trans. Evans I, 312–34), the heading of which is 'This is Sister Cathy (*Swester Katrei*), Meister Eckhart's Daughter from Strassburg,' an elaborate piece containing possible reminiscences of the present text, in which the 'daughter' finally declares that she has 'become God,' and proceeds to instruct the Master. The text is later than Eckhart's time, but if such sentiments reached the ears of the archbishop of Cologne, this would go far to explain his anxiety to have the Master's teachings condemned!
8. Pf III, 70. Quint gives a full analysis of this text, which is found in a number of MSS (QT, 529–31). I give the gist of the commentary here. Each of the three partners in the discussion, the poor man, the maiden, and the Master, has to answer three questions, and each answer is itself in three parts. There are also two short 'intermissions' and a concluding section (see below).
9. Pfeiffer's text, followed by Evans, opens with the words 'Meister Eckhart said.' These words, which are not found in all MSS, are clearly wrong and are omitted by Quint.
10. Eckhart's word is *eigenschaft,* meaning something like 'ownness' or 'possessiveness': cf. Sermon 6 and note 3 there.
11. Quint suggests that the carrying of the spiritual property of the preacher from his cell to the pulpit, being an act in time and space, drags the spiritual down to the material world. See notes 13 and 18.
12. The 'poor man' is supposed to have come from Bohemia, of which province Eckhart had been made vicar-general in 1307. From about 1322 Eckhart was in Cologne (see Introduction, p.). The maiden suggests that the spirit of the poor man's reply is that of Cologne (i.e., of Eckhart), which he cannot have 'brought with him,' in the sense referred to, from Prague. The poor man indicates by the image of the sunshine, that the same spirit is after all not unknown in Prague (Q). He also

implies, I think, that in spiritual matters neither time (at least fifteen years earlier) nor place is relevant; also, being 'poor in spirit,' he has nor carried it as his personal property, emphasizing this by refusing to elaborate further in the presence of the Master himself.

13. Quint interprets this too as a response to the poor man's words about 'carrying his sermon from his cell to the pulpit,' namely, that anyone who does nor find the truth within must learn to love it when he hears it preached (and that the preacher *must,* therefore, 'carry it to the pulpit'). If he loves what he hears, *then* he will indeed be able to find it within.

14. Since love knows no distinctions, age has no special privileges (Q).

15. This paragraph is missing in all but two MSS, in one of which it is misplaced (Q). Eckhart was in fact three times in Paris (1293, ca. 1300–1302, and 1311–12) (cf. Introduction, pages 7–8), and certainly 'proved himself' in disputation there. But, says the poor man, to have been 'tried and proven' in the *truth* is more important than such academic distinctions. Despite its omission in several MSS, this passage is a necessary and important element in the dialogue. Its omission is ascribable merely to a scribal oversight (inefficiently 'corrected' in the Munich text) and nor to any doctrinal misgivings.

16. Finally, the Master questions the maiden and the poor man, and the poor man's reply supplements that of the maiden. This indicates that he is wiser than she is, while the Master is, of course, wiser than both. Their answers together indicate the relation that should exist between the teacher or preacher, and the truth that he declares (Q).

17. Quint omits these words, found in Pfeiffer's text. Their relevance is nor perhaps immediately obvious, but they do point to the distinction between 'outward words' and the eternal Word. Even if they are genuine (which I think probable), it is nor quite clear whether they form part of the poor man's speech or nor. Cf. Sermons 36 and Sermon 22.

18. Quint has instead of this a doggerel verse from the Munich MS:

> This is Meister Eckhart's sermon and question.
> Whoever hears them or repeats them,
> May God grant him a goodly end
> And after this life a happy resurrection. Amen.

This is a typical scribe's verse, certainly nor attributable to the author of the dialogue, and of no interest except for its expression of faith in the Master. It is certainly less relevant than the words mentioned above (note 17). It is also inaccurate since the piece in question is nor a 'sermon' of the Master's. On the other hand, the term 'feast' (*wirtschaft*) in Pfeiffer's text is in accordance with the contents; indeed, since wine is included we might even speak of a 'symposium'! Quint calls the whole an 'ovation' for Meister Eckhart and quotes with approval Friedrich von der Leyen's words (*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 38 [1906]: 356) that it 'emanates from the circle of our Master's disciples,' or that it was 'produced under his immediate influence.' We can, I think, go a little further. The dialogue clearly emanates from those who had known the Master in his last days in Cologne. It is rigidly disciplined in form and content, and shows accurate knowledge of the Master's life (e.g., his three visits to Paris, cf. note 15, and his activity in Bohemia) as well as of his teachings. It

is nor merely an 'ovation' but a *defense* of the Master, whether produced before or after his death (cf. note 7). In this connection, the poor man's avoidance of excess is significant: on being urged to ear heartily he says he will ear neither too much nor too little. This could be an implied criticism of some more intemperate followers of the Master, alluded to by Suso in chapter 6 of his *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* (trans. Clark [London, 1953]) in the shape of the 'nameless wild one' who, in the manner of some recent Western Zen enthusiasts, misinterpreted the Master's teachings as 'unrestrained liberty.'

There is another possible interpretation of the discussion (cf. notes 11, 12, 13) about the Master's 'carrying his sermon from his cell to the pulpit,' which the poor man deprecates and the Master justifies. As Eckhart himself had said in one sermon (Sermon 56): 'Whoever has understood this sermon, good luck to him. If no one had been here I should have had to preach it to this offertory box.' He *had* to preach of that which he knew, even in the full knowledge that he would be misunderstood, and despite the realization that he would probably be — as he was — persecuted for it.

Appendix B to Part Two

THE MASTER'S FINAL WORDS[1]

(Pf pp. 685–86)

Meister Eckhart was besought by his good friends, 'Give us something to remember, since you are going to leave us.'

He said, 'I will give you a rule, which is the keystone[2] of all that I have ever said, which comprises[3] all truth that can be spoken of or lived.

'It often happens that what seems trivial to us is greater in God's sight than what looms large in our eyes. Therefore we should accept all things equally from God, not ever looking and wondering which is greater, or higher, or better. We should just follow where God points out for us, that is, what we are inclined to and to which we are most often directed, and where our bent is. If a man were to follow that path, God would give him the most in the least, and would not fail him.

'It often happens that people spurn the least, and thus they prevent themselves from getting the most in the least, which is wrong. God is in all modes, and equal in all modes, for him who can take Him equally.[4] People often wonder whether their inclinations come from God or not, and this is how to find out: if a man finds it within himself to be willing above all things to obey God's will in all things, provided he knew or recognized it, then he may know that whatever he is inclined to, or is most frequently directed to, is indeed from God.

'Some people want to find God as He shines before them, or as He tastes to them. They find the light and the taste, but they do not find God. A scripture declares that God shines in the darkness, where we sometimes least recognize Him.[5] Where God shines least for us is often where He shines the most. Therefore we should accept God equally in all ways and in all things.

'Now someone might say, "I would take God equally in all ways and in all things, but my mind will not abide in this way or that, so much as in another." To that I say he is wrong. God is in all ways and equal in all ways, for anyone who can take Him so. If you get more of God in one way than in another, that is fine, but it is not the best. God is in all ways and equal in all ways, for anyone who can take Him so. If you take one way, such and such, that is not God. If you take *this* and *that,* you are not taking God, for God is in all ways and equal in all ways, for anyone who can take Him so.

'Now someone might say, "But if I do take God equally in all ways and in all things, do I not still need some special way?" Now see. In whatever way you find God most, and you are most often aware of Him, that is the way you should follow. But if another way presents itself, quite contrary to the first, and if, having abandoned the first way, you find God as much in the new way as in the one that you have left, then that is right. But the noblest and best thing would be this, if a man were come to such equality, with such calm and certainty that he could find God and enjoy Him in *any* way and in *all* things, without having to wait for anything or chase after anything: *that* would delight me![6] For this, and to this end all works are done, and every work helps toward this. If anything does not help toward this, you should let it go.

'We thank thee, heavenly Father, that thou hast given us thine only-begotten Son, in whom thou givest thyself and all things. We pray thee, heavenly Father, for the sake of thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom thou neither wilt nor canst deny anything to anyone — hear us in him, and make us free and bare of all our manifold faults, and unite us, in him, with thee. Amen.

Notes

1. My title. This piece is included, as if by an afterthought, on the final two pages of Pfeiffer. Quint 1932 treats it as 'sermon 111' and introduces some emendations, which I have adopted. Not included in Q or QT but translated by Miss Evans and, badly, by Blakney.

Whereas the four pieces translated in Part I of this Appendix can only be classed as entirely apocryphal, however spiritually profound or poetic we may find them, there is some possibility that this reflects, however indistinctly, a genuine tradition of what the Master may have said to his disciples before leaving for Avignon. It is

after all entirely probable that he would have been asked for a 'last word,' and that his parting message would have been lovingly preserved.

2. The word is *slôz* which, like modern German *Schloss,* can mean both 'castle' and 'lock,' but in Middle High German it can also mean 'keystone.'

3. The verb used is *beslozzen* 'enclosed,' which links it with *slôz.* The play on words (as in Sermon 66 and note 14 there) cannot be reproduced in English.

4. This is repeated again and again in what follows with the hammer-blow effect of a Buddhist *sutra.* In many a sermon Eckhart has described the birth of the Word in the human soul and other mysteries. Here, in his final exhortation (if such it really is), he is insisting on what his disciples ought to *do.* It is above all the essence of his *practical* teaching. This, I think, lends weight to the argument in favor of the authenticity of this text.

5. This seems to be a paraphrase of John 1:5.

6. Blakney mistranslates (and italicizes): *'this has been my joy!'* But Eckhart's *daz behagete mir* is subjunctive. Miss Evans's version is different but no better: 'a boon accorded to me.' Blakney is also wrong in declaring that the 'chief message' of this text was forbidden on the basis of two quotations (which seem to me of dubious relevance) from the defense documents. Since in any case the passages quoted were nor condemned in the bull of 1329, their sense cannot be said to have been 'forbidden.'