

LIGHT, LIFE, AND LOVE

Selections from the  
German Mystics  
of the Middle Ages

by

W. R. Inge (1860-1954)

1904



## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Precursors of the German Mystics
2. Meister Eckhart
3. Eckhardt's Religious Philosophy
4. The German Mystics as Guides to Holiness
5. Writers of the School of Eckhardt-Tauler
6. Suso
7. Ruysbroek
8. Theologia Germanica
9. Modern Mysticism
10. Specimens of Modern Mysticism

### ECKHART

God

Rest only in God

God is always ready

Grace

The Will

Surrender of the Will

Suffering

Sin

Contentment

Detachment

Prayer

Love of our Neighbour

Love

The Union with God

The Last Judgment

Precept and Practice

Relics

Sayings of Eckhart

TAULER

Our Aim

Consequences of the Fall

The Fall

Life a Battle

Sin

Fishing for Souls

The Efficacy of Divine Grace

Prayer

MEDITATIONS ON THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

The First Word

The Second Word

The Third Word

The Fourth Word

The Fifth Word

The Sixth Word

The Seventh Word

Suso

Suso and his Spiritual Daughter

A Meditation on the Passion of Christ

Aphorisms and Maxims

THEOLOGIA GERMANICA

Sin and Selfishness

The Two Eyes

A Foretaste of Eternal Life

Descent into Hell

The Three Stages

The Life of Christ

Union with God

The False Light

Light and Love

Paradise

Will and Self-Will

Union Through Christ

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. THE PRECURSORS OF THE GERMAN MYSTICS

TO most English readers the "Imitation of Christ" is the representative of mediaeval German mysticism. In reality, however, this beautiful little treatise belongs to a period when that movement had nearly spent itself. Thomas a Kempis, as Dr. Bigg has said, was only a semi-mystic. He tones down the most characteristic doctrines of Eckhart, who is the great original thinker of the German mystical school, and seems in some ways to revert to an earlier type of devotional literature. The "Imitation" may perhaps be described as an idealised picture of monastic piety, drawn at a time when the life of the cloister no longer filled a place of unchallenged usefulness in the social order of Europe. To find German mysticism at its strongest we must go back a full hundred years, and to understand its growth we must retrace our steps as far as the great awakening of the thirteenth century - the age of chivalry in religion - the age of St. Louis, of Francis and Dominic, of Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas. It was a vast revival, bearing fruit in a new ardour of pity and charity, as well as in a healthy freedom of thought. The Church, in recognising the new charitable orders of Francis and Dominic, and the Christianised Aristotelianism of the schoolmen, retained the loyalty and profited by the zeal of the more sober reformers, but was unable to prevent the diffusion of an independent critical spirit, in part provoked and justified by real abuses. Discontent was aroused, not only by the worldiness of the hierarchy, whose greed and luxurious living were felt to be scandalous, but by the widespread economic distress which prevailed over Western Europe at this period. The crusades periodically swept off a large proportion of the able-bodied men, of whom the majority never returned to their homes, and this helped to swell the number of indigent women, who, having no male protectors, were obliged to beg their bread. The better class of these female mendicants soon formed themselves into uncloistered charitable Orders, who were not forbidden to marry, and who devoted themselves chiefly to the care of the sick. These Beguines and the

corresponding male associations of Beghards became very numerous in Germany. Their religious views were of a definite type. Theirs was an intensely inward religion, based on the longing of the soul for immediate access to God. The more educated among them tended to embrace a vague idealistic Pantheism. Mechthild of Magdeburg (1212-1277), prophetess, poetess, Church reformer, quietist, was the ablest of the Beguines. Her writings prove to us that the technical terminology of German mysticism was in use before Eckhart, and also that the followers of what the "Theologia Germanica" calls the False Light, who aspired to absorption in the Godhead, and despised the imitation of the incarnate Christ, were already throwing discredit on the movement. Mechthild's independence, and her unsparing denunciations of corruption in high places, brought her into conflict with the secular clergy. They tried to burn her books - those religious love songs which had already endeared her to German popular sentiment. It was then that she seemed to hear a voice saying to her:

Lieb' meine, betruebe dich nicht zu sehr,  
Die Wahrheit mag niemand verbrennen!

The rulers of the Church, unhappily, were not content with burning books. Their hostility towards the unrecognised Orders became more and more pronounced: the Beghards and Beguines were harried and persecuted till most of them were driven to join the Franciscans or Dominicans, carrying with them into those Orders the ferment of their speculative mysticism. The more stubborn "Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit" were burned in batches at Cologne and elsewhere. Their fate in those times did not excite much pity, for many of the victims were idle vagabonds of dissolute character, and the general public probably thought that the licensed begging friars were enough of a nuisance without the addition of these free lances.

The heretical mystical sects of the thirteenth century are very interesting as illustrating the chief dangers of mysticism. Some of these sectaries were Socialists or Communists of an extreme kind; others were Rationalists, who taught that Jesus Christ was the son of

Joseph and a sinner like other men; others were Puritans, who said that Church music was "nothing but a hellish noise" (*nihil nisi clamor inferni*), and that the Pope was the *magna meretrix* of the Apocalypse. The majority were Anti-Sacramentalists and Determinists; and some were openly Antinomian, teaching that those who are led by the Spirit can do no wrong. The followers of Amalric of Bena believed that the Holy Ghost had chosen their sect in which to become incarnate; His presence among them was a continual guarantee of sanctity and happiness. The "spiritual Franciscans" had dreams of a more apocalyptic kind. They adopted the idea of an "eternal Gospel," as expounded by Joachim of Floris, and believed that the "third kingdom," that of the Spirit, was about to begin among themselves. It was to abolish the secular Church and to inaugurate the reign of true Christianity - i.e. "poverty" and asceticism.

Such are some of the results of what our eighteenth-century ancestors knew and dreaded as "Enthusiasm" - that ferment of the spirit which in certain epochs spreads from soul to soul like an epidemic, breaking all the fetters of authority, despising tradition and rejecting discipline in its eagerness to get rid of formalism and unreality; a lawless, turbulent, unmanageable spirit, in which, notwithstanding, is a potentiality for good far higher than any to which the lukewarm "religion of all sensible men" can ever attain. For mysticism is the raw material of all religion; and it is easier to discipline the enthusiast than to breathe enthusiasm into the disciplinarian.

Meanwhile, the Church looked with favour upon the orthodox mystical school, of which Richard and Hugo of St. Victor, Bonaventura, and Albertus Magnus were among the greatest names. These men were working out in their own fashion the psychology of the contemplative life, showing how we may ascend through "cogitation, meditation, and speculation" to "contemplation," and how we may pass successively through *jubilus*, *ebrietas spiritus*, *spiritualis jucunditas*, and *liquefactio*, till we attain *raptus* or ecstasy. The writings of the scholastic mystics are so overweighted with this

pseudo-science, with its wire-drawn distinctions and meaningless classifications, that very few readers have now the patience to dig out their numerous beauties. They are, however, still the classics of mystical theology in the Roman Church, so far as that science has not degenerated into mere miracle-mongering.

## 2. MEISTER ECKHART

It was in 1260, when Mechthild of Magdeburg was at the height of her activity, that Meister Eckhart, next to Plotinus the greatest philosopher-mystic, was born at Hocheim in Thuringia. It seems that his family was in a good position, but nothing is known of his early years. He entered the Dominican Order as a youth, perhaps at sixteen, the earliest age at which novices were admitted into that Order. The course of instruction among the Dominicans was as follows: - After two years, during which the novice laid the foundations of a good general education, he devoted the next two years to grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, and then the same amount of time to what was called the Quadrivium, which consisted of "arithmetic, mathematics, astronomy, and music." Theology, the queen of the sciences, occupied three years; and at the end of the course, at the age of twenty-five, the brothers were ordained priests. We find Eckhart, towards the end of the century, Prior of Erfurt and Vicar of Thuringia, then Lector Biblicus at Paris, then Provincial Prior of Saxony. In 1307 the master of the Order appointed him Vicar-General for Bohemia, and in 1311 he returned to Paris. We find him next preaching busily at Strassburg, and after a few more years, at Cologne, where the persecution of the Brethren of the Free Spirit was just then at its height. At Strassburg there were no less than seven convents of Dominican nuns, for since 1267 the Order had resumed the supervision of female convents, which it had renounced a short time after its foundation. Many of Eckhart's discourses were addressed to these congregations of devout women, who indeed were to a large extent the backbone of the mystical movement, and it is impossible not to see that the devotional treatises of the school are strongly coloured by feminine sentiment. A curious poem, written by a Dominican nun of this period, celebrates

the merits of three preachers, the third of whom is a Master Eckhart, "who speaks to us about Nothingness. He who understands him not, in him has never shone the light divine." These nuns seem to have been fed with the strong meat of Eckhart's mystical philosophy; in the more popular sermons he tried to be intelligible to all. It was not very long after he took up his residence at Cologne that he was himself attacked for heresy. In 1327 he read before his own Order a retractation of "any errors which might be found" (*si quid errorum repertum fuerit*) in his writings, but withdrew nothing that he had actually said, and protested that he believed himself to be orthodox. He died a few months later, and it was not till 1329 that a Papal bull was issued, enumerating seventeen heretical and eleven objectionable doctrines in his writings.

This bull is interesting as showing what were the points in Eckhart's teaching which in the fourteenth century were considered dangerous. They also indicate very accurately what are the real errors into which speculative mysticism is liable to fall, and how thinkers of this school may most plausibly be misrepresented by those who differ from them. After expressing his sorrow that "a certain Teuton named Ekardus, doctor, *ut fertur, sacrae paginae*, has wished to know more than he should," and has sown tares and thistles and other weeds in the field of the Church, the Pope specifies the following erroneous statements as appearing in Eckhart's writings: - 1. "God created the world as soon as God was. 2. In every work, bad as well as good, the glory of God is equally manifested. 3. A man who prays for any particular thing prays for an evil and prays ill, for he prays for the negation of good and the negation of God, and that God may be denied to him. 4. God is honoured in those who have renounced everything, even holiness and the kingdom of heaven. 5. We are transformed totally into God, even as in the Sacrament the bread is converted into the Body of Christ. *Unum, non simile*. 6. Whatever God the Father gave to His only-begotten Son in His human nature, He has given it all to me. 7. Whatever the Holy Scripture says about Christ is verified in every good and godlike man. 8. External action is not, properly speaking, good nor divine; God, properly speaking, only works in us internal actions. 9. God is one, in

every way and according to every reason, so that it is not possible to find any plurality in Him, either in the intellect or outside it; for he who sees two, or sees any distinction, does not see God; for God is one, outside number and above number, for one cannot be put with anything else, but follows it; therefore in God Himself no distinction can be or be understood. 10. All the creatures are absolutely nothing: I say not that they are small or something, but that they are absolutely nothing." All these statements are declared to have been found in his writings. It is also "objected against the said Ekardus" that he taught the following two articles in these words: - 1. "There is something in the soul, which is uncreated and uncreatable: if the whole soul were such, it would be uncreated and uncreatable: and this is the intelligence." 2. God is not good or better or best: I speak ill when I call God good; it is as if I called white black." The bull declares all the propositions above quoted to be heretical, with the exception of the three which I have numbered 8-10, and these "have an ill sound" and are "very rash," even if they might be so supplemented and explained as to bear an orthodox sense.

This condemnation led to a long neglect of Eckhart's writings. He was almost forgotten till Franz Pfeiffer in 1857 collected and edited his scattered treatises and endeavoured to distinguish those which were genuine from those which were spurious. Since Pfeiffer's edition fresh discoveries have been made, notably in 1880, when Denifle found at Erfurt several important fragments in Latin, which in his opinion show a closer dependence on the scholastic theology, and particularly on St Thomas Aquinas, than Protestant scholars, such as Preger, had been willing to allow. But the attempt to prove Eckhart a mere scholastic is a failure; the audacities of his German discourses cannot be explained as an accommodation to the tastes of a peculiar audience. For good or evil Eckhart is an original and independent thinker, whose theology is confined by no trammels of authority.

### 3. ECKHART'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

The Godhead, according to Eckhart, is the universal and eternal Unity comprehending and transcending all diversity. "The Divine nature is Rest," he says in one of the German discourses; and in the Latin fragments we find: "God rests in Himself, and makes all things rest in Him." The three Persons of the Trinity, however, are not mere modes or accidents, but represent a real distinction within the Godhead. God is unchangeable, and at the same time an "everlasting process." The creatures are "absolutely nothing"; but at the same time "God without them would not be God," for God is love, and must objectify Himself; He is goodness, and must impart Himself. As the picture in the mind of the painter, as the poem in the mind of the poet, so was all creation in the mind of God from all eternity, in uncreated simplicity. The ideal world was not created in time; "the Father spake Himself and all the creatures in His Son"; "they exist in the eternal Now" - "a becoming without a becoming, change without change." "The Word of God the Father is the substance of all that exists, the life of all that lives, the principle and cause of life." Of creation he says: "We must not falsely imagine that God stood waiting for something to happen, that He might create the world. For so soon as He was God, so soon as He begat His co-eternal and co-equal Son, He created the world." So Spinoza says: "God has always been before the creatures, without even existing before them. He precedes them not by an interval of time, but by a fixed eternity." This is not the same as saying that the world of sense had no beginning; it is possible that Eckhart did not mean to go further than the orthodox scholastic mystic, Albertus Magnus, who says: "God created things from eternity, but the things were not created from eternity." St Augustine (Conf. xi. 30) bids objectors to "understand that there can be no time without creatures, and cease to talk nonsense." Eckhart also tries to distinguish between the "interior" and the "exterior" action of God. God, he says, is in all things, not as Nature, not as Person, but as Being. He is everywhere, undivided; yet the creatures participate in Him according to their measure. The three Persons of the Trinity have impressed their image upon the creatures, yet it is only their "nothingness" that keeps them

separate creatures. Most of this comes from the Neoplatonists, and much of it through the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a Platonising Christian of the fifth century, whose writings were believed in the Middle Ages to proceed from St Paul's Athenian convert. It would, however, be easy to find parallels in St Augustine's writings to most of the phrases quoted in this paragraph. The practical consequences will be considered presently.

The creatures are a way from God; they are also a way to Him. "In Christ," he says, "all the creatures are one man, and that man is God." Grace, which is a real self-unfolding of God in the soul, can make us "what God is by Nature" - one of Eckhart's audacious phrases, which are not really so unorthodox as they sound. The following prayer, which appears in one of his discourses, may perhaps be defended as asking no more than our Lord prayed for (John 17) for His disciples, but it lays him open to the charge, which the Pope's bull did not fail to urge against him, that he made the servant equal to his Lord. "Grant that I, by Your grace, may be united to Your Nature, as Your Son is eternally one in Your Nature, and that grace may become my nature."

The ethical aim is to be rid of "creatureliness," and so to be united to God. In Eckhart's system, as in that of Plotinus, speculation is never divorced from ethics. On our side the process is a negative one. All our knowledge must be reduced to not-knowledge; our reason and will, as well as our lower faculties, must transcend themselves, must die to live. We must detach ourselves absolutely "even from God," he says. This state of spiritual nudity he calls "poverty." Then, when our house is empty of all else, God can dwell there: "He begets His Son in us." This last phrase has always been a favourite with the mystics. St Paul uses very similar language, and the Epistle to Diognetus, written in the second century, speaks of Christ as, "being ever born anew in the hearts of the saints." Very characteristic, too, is the doctrine that complete detachment from the creatures is the way to union with God. Jacob Boehme has arrived independently at the same conclusion as Eckhart. "The scholar said to his master: How may I come to the supersensual life, that I may see God and hear Him speak? The master

said: When you can throw yourself but for a moment into that place where no creature dwells, then you hear what God speaks. The scholar asked: Is that near or far off? The master replied: It is in you, and if you can for a while cease from all your thinking and willing, you shalt hear unspeakable words of God. The scholar said: How can I hear, when I stand still from thinking and willing? The master answered: When you stand still from the thinking and willing of self, the eternal hearing, seeing, and speaking will be revealed to you, and so God hears and sees through you."

In St Thomas Aquinas it is "the will enlightened by reason" which unites us to God. But there are two sorts of reason. The passive reason is the faculty which rises through discursive thinking to knowledge. The active reason is a much higher faculty, which exists by participation in the divine mind, "as the air is light by participation in the sunshine." When this active reason is regarded as the standard of moral action, it is called by Aquinas synteresis. Eckhart was at first content with this teaching of St Thomas, whom he always cites with great reverence; but the whole tendency of his thinking was to leave the unprofitable classification of faculties in which the Victorine School almost revelled, and to concentrate his attention on the union of the soul with God. And therefore in his more developed teaching, the "spark" which is the point of contact between the soul and its Maker is something higher than the faculties, being "uncreated." He seems to waver about identifying the "spark" with the "active reason," but inclines on the whole to regard it as something even higher still. "There is something in the soul," he says, "which is so akin to God that it is one with Him and not merely united with Him." And again: "There is a force in the soul; and not only a force, but something more, a being; and not only a being, but something more; it is so pure and high and noble in itself that no creature can come there, and God alone can dwell there. Yea, verily, and even God cannot come there with a form; He can only come with His simple divine nature." And in the startling passage often quoted against him, a passage which illustrates admirably his affinity to one side of Hegelianism, we read: "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which He sees me. My eye

and God's eye are one eye and one sight and one knowledge and one love."

I do not defend these passages as orthodox; but before exclaiming "rank Pantheism!" we ought to recollect that for Eckhart the being of God is quite different from His personality. Eckhart never taught that the Persons of the Holy Trinity become, after the mystical Union, the "Form" of the human soul. It is the impersonal light of the divine nature which transforms our nature; human personality is neither lost nor converted into divine personality. Moreover, the divine spark at the centre of the soul is not the soul nor the personality. "The soul," he says in one place, using a figure which recurs in the "Theologia Germanica," "has two faces. One is turned towards this world and towards the body, the other towards God." The complete dominion of the "spark" over the soul is an unrealised ideal.

The truth which he values is that, as Mr Upton has well expressed it, "there is a certain self-revelation of the eternal and infinite One to the finite soul, and therefore an indestructible basis for religious ideas and beliefs as distinguished from what is called scientific knowledge. . . . This immanent universal principle does not pertain to, and is not the property of any individual mind, but belongs to that uncreated and eternal nature of God which lies deeper than all those differences which separate individual minds from each other, and is indeed that incarnation of the Eternal, who though He is present in every finite thing, is still not broken up into individualities, but remains one and the same eternal substance, one and the same unifying principle, immanently and indivisibly present in every one of the countless plurality of finite individuals." It might further be urged that neither God nor man can be understood in independence of each other. A recent writer on ethics, not too well disposed towards Christianity, is, I think, right in saying: "To the popular mind, which assumes God and man to be two different realities, each given in independence of the other, . . . the identification of man's love of God with God's love of Himself has always been a paradox and a stumbling-block. But it is not too much to say that until it has been

seen to be no paradox, but a simple and fundamental truth, the masterpieces of the world's religious literature must remain a sealed book to us."

Eckhart certainly believed himself to have escaped the pitfall of Pantheism; but he often expressed himself in such an unguarded way that the charge may be brought against him with some show of reason.

Love, Eckhart teaches, is the principle of all virtues; it is God Himself. Next to it in dignity comes humility. The beauty of the soul, he says in the true Platonic vein, is to be well ordered, with the higher faculties above the lower, each in its proper place. The will should be supreme over the understanding, the understanding over the senses. Whatever we will earnestly, that we have, and no one can hinder us from attaining that detachment from the creatures in which our blessedness consists.

Evil, from the highest standpoint, is only a means for realising the eternal aim of God in creation; all will ultimately be overruled for good. Nevertheless, we can frustrate the good will of God towards us, and it is this, and not the thought of any insult against Himself, that makes God grieve for our sins. It would not be worth while to give any more quotations on this subject, for Eckhart is not more successful than other philosophers in propounding a consistent and intelligible theory of the place of evil in the universe.

Eckhart is well aware of the two chief pitfalls into which the mystic is liable to fall - dreamy inactivity and Antinomianism. The sects of the Free Spirit seem to have afforded a good object-lesson in both these errors, as some of the Gnostic sects did in the second century. Eckhart's teaching here is sound and good. Freedom from law, he says, belongs only to the "spark," not to the faculties of the soul, and no man can live always on the highest plane. Contemplation is, in a sense, a means to activity; works of charity are its proper fruit. "If a man were in an ecstasy like that of St Paul, when he was caught up into the third

heaven, and knew of a poor man who needed his help, he ought to leave his ecstasy and help the needy." Suso tells us how God punished him for disregarding this duty. True contemplation considers Reality (or Being) in its manifestations as well as in its origin. If this is remembered, there need be no conflict between social morality and the inner life. Eckhart recognises that it is a harder and a nobler task to preserve detachment in a crowd than in a cell; the little daily sacrifices of family life are often a greater trial than self-imposed mortifications. "We need not destroy any little good in ourselves for the sake of a better, but we should strive to grasp every truth in its highest meaning, for no one good contradicts another." "Love God, and do as you like, say the Free Spirits. Yes; but as long as you like anything contrary to God's will, you do not love Him."

There is much more of the same kind in Eckhart's sermons - as good and sensible doctrine as one could find anywhere. But what was the practical effect of his teaching as a whole? It is generally the case that the really weak points of any religious movement are exposed with a cruel logicality most exasperating to the leaders by the second generation of its adherents. The dangerous side of the Eckhartian mysticism is painfully exhibited in the life of his spiritual daughter, "Schwester Katrei," the saint of the later Beguines. Katrei is a rather shadowy person; but for our present purpose it does not much matter whether the story of her life has been embroidered or not. Her memory was revered for such sayings and doings as these which follow. On one occasion she exclaimed: "Congratulate me; I have become God!" and on another she declared that "not even the desire of heaven should tempt a good man towards activity." It was her ambition to forget who were her parents, to be indifferent whether she received absolution and partook of the Holy Communion or not; and she finally realised her ambition by falling into a cataleptic state in which she was supposed to be dead, and was carried out for burial. Her confessor, perceiving that she was not really dead, awoke her: "Are you satisfied?" "I am satisfied at last," said Katrei: she was now "dead all through," as she wished to be.

Are we to conclude that the logical outcome of mysticism is this strange reproduction, in Teutonic Europe, of Indian Yogism? Many who have studied the subject have satisfied themselves that Schwester Katrei is the truly consistent mystic. They have come to the conclusion that the real attraction of mysticism is a pining for deliverance from this fretful, anxious, exacting, individual life, and a yearning for absorption into the great Abyss where all distinctions are merged in the Infinite. According to this view, mysticism in its purest form should be studied in the ancient religious literature of India, which teaches us how all this world of colour and diversity, of sharp outlines and conflicting forces, may be lost and swallowed up in the "white radiance," or black darkness (it does not really matter which we call it) of an empty Infinite.

The present writer is convinced that this is not the truth about mysticism. Eckhart may have encouraged Schwester Katrei in her attempt to substitute the living death of the blank trance for the dying life of Christian charity; but none the less she caricatured and stultified his teaching. And I think it is possible to lay our finger on the place where she and so many others went wrong. The aspiration of mysticism is to find the unity which underlies all diversity, or, in religious language, to see God face to face. From the Many to the One is always the path of the mystic. Plotinus, the father of all mystical philosophy in Europe (unless, as he himself would have wished, we give that honour to Plato), mapped out the upward road as follows: - At the bottom of the hill is the sphere of the "merely many" - of material objects viewed in disconnection, dull, and spiritless. This is a world which has no real existence; it may best be called "not-being" ("ein lauterer Nichts," as Eckhart says), and as the indeterminate, it can only be apprehended by a corresponding indeterminateness in the soul. The soul, however, always adds some form and determination to the abstract formlessness of the "merely many." Next, we rise to, or project for ourselves, the world of "the one and the many." This is the sphere in which our consciousness normally moves. We are conscious of an overruling Mind, but the creatures still seem external to and partially independent of it. Such is the temporal order

as we know it. Above this is the intelligible world, the eternal order, "the one-many," das ewige Nu, the world in which God's will is done perfectly and all reflects the divine mind. Highest of all is "the One," the, Absolute, the Godhead, of whom nothing can be predicated, because He is above all distinctions. This Neoplatonic Absolute is the Godhead of whom Eckhart says: "God never looked upon deed," and of whom Angelus Silesius sings:

"Und sieh, er ist nicht Wille,  
Er ist ein' ewige Stille."

Plotinus taught that the One, being superessential, can only be apprehended in ecstasy, when thought, which still distinguishes itself from its object, is transcended, and knower and known become one. As Tennyson's Ancient Sage says:

"If you would hear the Nameless, and descend  
Into the Temple-cave of your own self,  
There, brooding by the central altar, you  
May haply learn the Nameless has a voice,  
By which you will abide, if you be wise;  
For knowledge is the swallow on the lake,  
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there  
But never yet has dipt into the Abysm."

In the same way Eckhart taught that no creature can apprehend the Godhead, and, therefore, that the spark in the centre of the soul (this doctrine, too, is found in Plotinus) must be verily divine. The logic of the theory is inexorable. If only like can know like, we cannot know God except by a faculty which is itself divine. The real question is whether God, as an object of knowledge and worship for finite beings, is the absolute Godhead, who transcends all distinctions. The mediaeval mystics held that this "flight of the alone to the alone," as Plotinus calls it, is possible to men, and that in it consists our highest blessedness. They were attracted towards this view by several influences. First, there was the tradition of Dionysius, to whom (e.g.)

the author of the "Theologia Germanica" appeals as an authority for the possibility of "beholding the hidden things of God by utter abandonment of yourself, and of entering into union with Him who is above all existence, and all knowledge." Secondly, there was what a modern writer has called "the attraction of the Abyss," the longing which some persons feel very strongly to merge their individuality in a larger and better whole, to get rid not only of selfishness but of self for ever. "Leave nothing of myself in me," is Crashaw's prayer in his wonderful poem on St Teresa. Thirdly, we may mention the awe and respect long paid to ecstatic trances, the pathological nature of which was not understood. The blank trance was a real experience; and as it could be induced by a long course of ascetical exercises and fervid devotions, it was naturally regarded as the crowning reward of sanctity on earth. Nor would it be at all safe to reject the evidence, which is very copious, that the "dreamy state" may issue in permanent spiritual gain. The methodical cultivation of it, which is at the bottom of most of the strange austerities of the ascetics, was not only (though it was partly) practised in the hope of enjoying those spiritual raptures which are described as being far more intense than any pleasures of sense : it was the hope of stirring to its depths the subconscious mind and permeating the whole with the hidden energy of the divine Spirit that led to the desire for visions and trances. Lastly, I think we must give a place to the intellectual attraction of an uncompromising monistic theory of the universe. Spiritualistic monism, when it is consistent with itself, will always lean to semi-pantheistic mysticism rather than to such a compromise with pluralism as Lotze and his numerous followers in this country imagine to be possible.

But it is possible to go a long way with the mystics and yet to maintain that under no conditions whatever can a finite being escape from the limitations of his finitude and see God or the world or himself "with the same eye with which God sees" all things. The old Hebrew belief, that to see the face of God is death, expresses the truth under a mythical form. That the human mind, while still "in the body pent," may obtain glimpses of the eternal order, and enjoy foretastes

of the bliss of heaven, is a belief which I, at least, see no reason to reject. It involves no rash presumption, and is not contrary to what may be readily believed about the state of immortal spirits passing through a mortal life. But the explanation of the blank trance as a temporary transit into the Absolute must be set down as a pure delusion. It involves a conception of the divine "Rest" which in his best moments Eckhart himself repudiates. "The Rest of the Godhead," he says, "is not in that He is the source of being, but in that He is the consummation of all being." This profound saying expresses the truth, which he seems often to forget, that the world-process must have a real value in God's sight - that it is not a mere polarisation of the white radiance of eternity broken up by the imperfection of our vision. Whatever theories we may hold about Absolute Being, or an Absolute that is above Being, we must make room for the Will, and for Time, which is the "form" of the will, and for the creatures who inhabit time and space, as having for us the value of reality. Nor shall we, if we are to escape scepticism, be willing to admit that these appearances have no sure relation to ultimate reality. We must not try to uncreate the world in order to find God. We were created out of nothing, but we cannot return to nothing, to find our Creator there. The still, small voice is best listened for amid the discordant harmony of life and death.

The search for God is no exception to the mysterious law of human nature, that we cannot get anything worth having - neither holiness nor happiness nor wisdom - by trying for it directly. It must be given us through something else. The recluse who lives like Parnell's "Hermit":

"Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise,"

is not only a poor sort of saint, but he will offer a poor sort of prayers and praises. He will miss real holiness for the same reason that makes the pleasure-seeker miss real happiness. We must lose ourselves in some worthy interest in order to find again both a better self and an object higher than that which we sought. This the German

mystics in a sense knew well. There is a noble sentence of Suso to the effect that "he who realises the inward in the outward, to him the inward becomes more inward than to him who only recognises the inward in the inward." Moreover, the recognition that "God manifests Himself and works more in one creature than another" ("Theologia Germanica"), involves a denial of the nihilistic view that all the creatures are "ein lauterer Nichts." It would be easy to find such passages in all the fourteenth-century mystics, but it cannot be denied that on the whole their religion is too self-centred. There are not many maxims so fundamentally wrong-headed and un-Christian as Suso's advice to "live as if you were the only person in the world." The life of the cloistered saint may be abundantly justified - for the spiritual activity of some of them has been of far greater service to mankind than the fussy benevolence of many "practical" busybodies - but the idea of social service, whether in the school of Martha or of Mary, ought surely never to be absent. The image of Christ as the Lover of the individual soul rather than as the Bridegroom of the Church was too dear to these lonely men and women. Unconsciously, they looked to their personal devotions to compensate them for the human loves which they had forsworn. The raptures of Divine Love, which they regarded as signal favours bestowed upon them, were not very wholesome in themselves, and diverted their thoughts from the needs of their fellow-men. They also led to most painful reactions, in which the poor contemplative believed himself abandoned by God and became a prey to terrible depression and melancholy. These fits of wretchedness came indeed to be recognised as God's punishment for selfishness in devotion and for too great desire for the sweetness of communing with God, and so arose the doctrine of "disinterested love," which was more and more emphasised in the later mysticism, especially by the French Quietists.

I have spoken quite candidly of the defects of Eckhart's mystical Christianity. As a religious philosophy it does not keep clear of the fallacy that an ascent though the unreal can lead to reality. "To suppose, as the mystic does, that the finite search has of itself no Being at all, is illusory, is Maya, is itself nothing, this is also to deprive

the Absolute of even its poor value as a contrasting goal. For a goal that is a goal of no real process has as little value as it has content." But, as Prof. Royce says, mysticism furnishes us with the means of correcting itself. It supplies an obvious *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory with which it set out, that "Immediacy is the one test of reality," and is itself forced to give the world of diversity a real value as manifesting in different degrees the nature of God. Those who are acquainted with the sacred books of the East will recognise that here is the decisive departure from real Pantheism. And it may be fairly claimed for the German mystics that though their speculative teaching sometimes seems to echo too ominously the apathetic detachment of the Indian sage, their lives and example, and their practical exhortations, preached a truer and a larger philosophy. Eckhart, as we have seen, was a busy preacher as well as a keen student, and some of the younger members of his school were even more occupied in pastoral work. If the tree is to be judged by its fruits, mysticism can give a very good account of itself to the Marthas as well as the Marys of this world.

#### 4. THE GERMAN MYSTICS AS GUIDES TO HOLINESS

THIS little volume is a contribution to a "Library of Devotion," and in the body of the work the reader will be seldom troubled by any abstruse philosophising. I have thought it necessary to give, in this Introduction, a short account of Eckhart's system, but the extracts which follow are taken mainly from his successors, in whom the speculative tendency is weaker and less original, while the religious element is stronger and more attractive. It is, after all, as guides to holiness that these mystics are chiefly important to us. This side of their life's work can never be out of date, for the deeper currents of human nature change but little; the language of the heart is readily understood everywhere and at all times. The differences between Catholic and Protestant are hardly felt in the keen air of these high summits. It was Luther himself who discovered the "Theologia Germanica" and said of it that, "next to the Bible and St Augustine, no book has ever come into my hands whence I have learnt or would

wish to learn more of what God and Christ and man and all things are. I thank God that I have heard and found my God in the German tongue, as I have not yet found Him in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew." The theology of these mystics takes us straight back to the Johannine doctrine of Christ as the all-pervading Word of God, by whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together. He is not far from any one of us if we will but seek Him where He is to be found - in the innermost sanctuary of our personal life. In personal religion this means that no part of revelation is to be regarded as past, isolated, or external. "We should mark and know of a very truth," says the author of the "Theologia Germanica," "that all manner of virtue and goodness, and even the eternal Good which is God Himself, can never make a man virtuous, good, or happy, so long as it is outside the soul." In the same spirit Jacob Boehme, 250 years later, says: "If the sacrifice of Christ is to avail for me, it must be wrought in me." Or, as his English admirer, William Law, puts it: "Christ given for us is neither more nor less than Christ given into us. He is in no other sense our full, perfect, and sufficient Atonement than as His nature and spirit are born and formed in us." The whole process of redemption must in a sense be re-enacted in the inner life of every Christian. And as Christ emptied Himself for our sakes, so must we empty ourselves of all self-seeking. "When the creature claims for its own anything good, such as life, knowledge, or power, and in short whatever we commonly call good, as if it were that, or possessed that - it goes astray." Sin is nothing else but self-assertion, self-will. "Be assured," says the "Theologia Germanica," "that he who helps a man to his own will, helps him to the worst that he can." He, therefore, who is "simply and wholly bereft of self" is delivered from sin, and God alone reigns in his inmost soul. Concerning the highest part or faculty of the soul, the author of this little treatise follows Eckhart, but cautiously. "The True Light," he says, is that eternal Light which is God; or else it is a created light, but yet Divine, which is called grace." In either case, "where God dwells in a godly man, in such a man somewhat appertains to God which is His own, and belongs to Him only and not to the creature." This doctrine of divine immanence, for which there is ample warrant in the New Testament, is the real kernel of German mysticism. It is a doctrine

which, when rightly used, may make this world a foretaste of heaven, but alas! the "False Light" is always trying to counterfeit the true. In the imitation of the suffering life of Christ lies the only means of escaping the deceptions of the Evil One. "The False Light dreams itself to be God, and sinless"; but "none is without sin; if any is without consciousness of sin, he must be either Christ or the Evil Spirit."

Very characteristic is the teaching of all these writers about rewards and punishments. Without in any way impugning the Church doctrine of future retribution, they yet agree with Benjamin Whichcote, the Cambridge Platonist, that "heaven is first a temper, then a place"; while of hell there is much to recall the noble sentence of Juliana of Norwich, the fourteenth-century visionary, "to me was showed no harder hell than sin." "Nothing burns in hell but self-will," is a saying in the "Theologia Germanica." They insist that the difference between heaven and hell is not that one is a place of enjoyment, the other of torment; it is that in the one we are with Christ, in the other without Him. "The Christlike life is not chosen," to quote the "Theologia Germanica" once more, "in order to serve any end, or to get anything by it, but for love of its nobleness, and because God loves and esteems it so highly. He who does not take it up for love, has none of it at all; he may dream indeed that he has put it on, but he is deceived. Christ did not lead such a life as this for the sake of reward, but out of love, and love makes such a life light, and takes away all its hardships, so that it becomes sweet and is gladly endured." The truly religious man is always more concerned about what God will do in him than what He will do to him; in his intense desire for the purification of his motives he almost wishes that heaven and hell were blotted out, that he might serve God for Himself alone.

## 5. WRITERS OF THE SCHOOL OF ECKHART - TAULER

Such are the main characteristics of the religious teachings which we find in the German mystics. Among the successors of Eckhart, from whose writings the following extracts are taken, the most notable names are those of Tauler, Suso, and Ruysbroek. From Tauler I have

taken very little, because a volume of selections from his sermons has already appeared in this series. Accordingly, it will only be necessary to mention a very few facts about his life.

John Tauler was born at Strassburg about 1300, and studied at the Dominican convents of Strassburg and Cologne. At both places he doubtless heard the sermons of Eckhart. In 1329 the great interdict began at Strassburg, and was stoutly resisted by many of the clergy. It is a disputed point whether Tauler himself obeyed the Papal decree or not. His uneventful life, which was devoted to study, preaching, and pastoral work, came to an end in 1361. Like Eckhart, he had a favourite "spiritual daughter," Margaret Ebner, who won a great reputation as a visionary.

## 6. SUSO

Henry Suso was born in 1295 and died in 1365. His autobiography was published not long before his death. He is the poet of the band. The romance of saintship is depicted by him with a strange vividness which alternately attracts and repels, or even disgusts, the modern reader. The whole-hearted devotion of the "Servitor" to the "Divine Wisdom," the tender beauty of the visions and conversations, and the occasional naivete of the narrative, which shows that the saint remained very human throughout, make Suso's books delightful reading; but the accounts of the horrible macerations to which he subjected himself for many years shock our moral sense almost as much as our sensibilities; we do not now believe that God takes pleasure in sufferings inflicted in His honour. Moreover, the erotic symbolism of the visions is occasionally unpleasant: we are no longer in the company of such sane and healthy people as Eckhart and Tauler. The half-sensuous pleasure of ecstasy was evidently a temptation to Suso, and the violent alternations of rapture and misery which he experienced suggest a neurotic and ill-balanced temperament.

On this subject - the pathological side of mysticism - a few remarks will not be out of place, for there has been much discussion of it lately. A great deal of nonsense has been written on the connexion between

religion and neuroticism. To quote Professor James' vigorous protest, "medical materialism finishes up St Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out St Teresa as an hysteric, St Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate. George Fox's discontent with the shams of his age, and his pining for spiritual veracity, it treats as a symptom of a disordered colon. Carlyle's organ-tones of misery it accounts for by a gastro-duodenal catarrh. All such mental over-tensions, it says, are, when you come to the bottom of the matter, mere affairs of diathesis (auto-intoxications most probably), due to the perverted action of various glands which physiology will yet discover." Now, even if it were true that most religious geniuses, like most other geniuses, have been "psychopaths" of one kind or another, this fact in no way disposes of the value of their intuitions and experiences. Nearly all the great benefactors of humanity have been persons of one-sided, and therefore ill-balanced, characters. Even Maudsley admits that "Nature may find an incomplete mind a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose. It is the work that is done, and the quality in the worker by which it is done, that is alone of moment; and it may be no great matter from a cosmical standpoint, if in other qualities of character he (the genius) was singularly defective." Except in the character of our Lord Himself, there are visible imperfections in the record of every great saint; but that is no reason for allowing such traces of human infirmity to discredit what is pure and good in their work. More particularly, it would be a great pity to let our minds dwell on the favourite materialistic theory that saintliness, especially as cultivated and venerated by Catholicism, has its basis in "perverted sexuality." There is enough plausibility in the theory to make it mischievous. The allegorical interpretation of the Book of Canticles was in truth the source of, or at least the model for, a vast amount of unwholesome and repulsive pietism. Not a word need be said for such a paltry narrative of endearments and sickly compliments as the "Revelations of the Nun Gertrude," in the thirteenth century. Nor are we concerned to deny that the artificially induced ecstasy, which is desired on account of the intense pleasure which is said to accompany it, nearly always contains elements the recognition of which would

shock and distress the contemplatives themselves. There are, however, other elements, of a less insidious kind, which make the ecstatic trance seem desirable. These are, according to Professor Leuba, the calming of the restless intellect by the concentration of the mind on one object; the longing for a support and comfort more perfect than man can give; and, thirdly, the consecration and strengthening of the will, which is often a permanent effect of the trance. These are legitimate objects of desire, and in many of the mystics they are much more prominent than any tendencies which might be considered morbid. As regards the larger question, about the alleged pathological character of all distinctively religious exaltation, I believe that no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that the religious life flourishes best in unnatural circumstances. Religion, from a biological standpoint, I take to be the expression of the radical will to live; its function (from this point of view) is the preservation and development of humanity on the highest possible level. If this is true, a simple, healthy, natural life must be the most favourable for religious excellence - and this I believe to be the case. Poor Suso certainly did not lead a healthy or natural life. But in his case, though the suppressed natural instincts obviously overflow into the religious consciousness and in part determine the forms which his devotion assumes, we can never forget that we are in the company of a poet and a saint who will lift us, if we can follow him, into a very high region of the spiritual life, an altitude which he has himself climbed with bleeding feet.

The simple confidence which at the end of the dialogue he expresses in the value of his work is, I think, amply justified. "Whoever will read these writings of mine in a right spirit, can hardly fail to be stirred to the depths of his soul, either to fervent love, or to new light, or to hunger and thirst for God, or to hatred and loathing for his sins, or to that spiritual aspiration by which the soul is renewed in grace."

## 7. RUYSBROEK

[Note: the Ruysbroek selection has not been reproduced in this edition. ]

## 8. THEOLOGIA GERMANICA

The "Theologia Germanica," an isolated treatise of no great length by an unknown author, was written towards the end of the fourteenth century by one of the Gottesfreunde, a widespread association of pious souls in Germany. He is said to have been "a priest and warden of the house of the Teutonic Order at Frankfort." His book is both the latest and one of the most important productions of the German mystical school founded by Eckhart. The author is a deeply religious philosopher, as much interested in speculative mysticism as Eckhart himself, but as thoroughly penetrated with devout feeling as Thomas ? Kempis. The treatise should be read by all, as one of the very best devotional works in any language. My only reason for not translating it in full here is that a good English translation already exists, so that it seemed unnecessary to offer a new one to the public. I have therefore only translated a few characteristic passages, which are very far from exhausting its beauties, and a few of the more striking aphorisms, which indicate the main points in the religious philosophy of the writer.

## 9. MODERN MYSTICISM

The revival of interest in the old mystical writers is not surprising when we consider the whole trend of modern thought. Among recent philosophers - though Lotze, perhaps the greatest name among them, is unsympathetic, in consequence of his over-rigid theory of personality - the great psychologist Fechner, whose religious philosophy is not so well known in this country as it deserves to be, has with some justice been called a mystic. And our own greatest living metaphysician, Mr F.H. Bradley, has expounded the dialectic of speculative mysticism with unequalled power, though with a bias

against Christianity. Another significant fact is the great popularity, all over Europe, of Maeterlinck's mystical works, "Le Tresor des Humbles," "La Sagesse et la Destinee," and "Le Temple Enseveli."

The growing science of psychology has begun to turn its attention seriously to the study of the religious faculty. Several able men have set themselves to collect material which may form the basis of an inductive science. Personal experiences, communicated by many persons of both sexes and of various ages, occupations, and levels of culture, have been brought together and tabulated. It is claimed that important facts have already been established, particularly in connexion with the phenomena of conversion, by this method. The results have certainly been more than enough to justify confidence in the soundness of the method, and hope that the new science may have a great future before it. Towards mysticism, recent writers on the psychology of religion have been less favourable than the pure metaphysicians. While the latter have shown a tendency towards Pantheism and Determinism, which makes them sympathise with the general trend of speculative mysticism, psychology seems just at present to lean towards a pluralistic metaphysic and a belief in free-will or even in chance. This attitude is especially noticeable in the now famous Gifford Lectures of Professor William James and in the recent volume of essays written at Oxford. But even if the rising tide of neo-Kantianism should cause the speculative mystics to be regarded with disfavour, nothing can prevent the religion of the twentieth century from being mystical in type. The strongest wish of a vast number of earnest men and women to-day is for a basis of religious belief which shall rest, not upon tradition or external authority or historical evidence, but upon the ascertainable facts of human experience. The craving for immediacy, which we have seen to be characteristic of all mysticism, now takes the form of a desire to establish the validity of the God-consciousness as a normal part of the healthy inner life. We may perhaps venture to predict that the Christian biologist of the future will turn the Pauline Christology into his own dialect somewhat after the following fashion: - "The function of religion in the human race is closely analogous to, if not identical with, that of instinct in the

lower animals. Religion is the racial will to live; not, however, to live anyhow and at all costs, but to live as human beings, conforming as far as possible to the highest type of humanity. Religion, therefore, acts as a higher instinct, inhibiting all self-destroying and race-destroying impulses in the interest of a larger self than the individual life." To turn this statement into theological form it is only necessary to claim that the "perfect man" which the religious instinct is trying to form is "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," that that perfect humanity was once realised in the historical Christ, and that the higher instinct within us - ourselves, yet not ourselves - which makes for life and righteousness, and is the source of all the good that we can think, say, or do, may (in virtue of that historical incarnation) be justly called the indwelling Christ. This is all that the Christian mystic needs.

## 10. SPECIMENS OF MODERN MYSTICISM

I conclude this introductory essay with a few extracts from recent American books on the psychology of religion. It is interesting to find some of the strangest experiences of the cloister reproduced under the very different conditions of modern American life. The quotations will serve to show how far Tauler and the "Theologia Germanica" are from being out of date.

"The thing which impressed me most" (says a correspondent of Professor William James) "was learning the fact that we must be in absolutely constant relation or mental touch with that essence of life which permeates all and which we call God. This is almost unrecognisable unless we live into it ourselves actually - that is, by a constant turning to the very innermost, deepest consciousness of our real selves or of God in us, for illumination from within, just as we turn to the sun for light, warmth, and invigoration without. When you do this consciously, realising that to turn inward to the light within you is to live in the presence of God or of your Divine self, you soon discover the unreality of the objects to which you have hitherto been turning and which have engrossed you without."

The next quotation comes from a small book by one of the "New Thought" or "Mind Cure" school in America. The enormous sale of the volume testifies to the popularity of the teaching which it contains.

"Intuition is an inner spiritual sense through which man is opened to the direct revelation and knowledge of God, the secret of nature and life, and through which he is brought into conscious unity and fellowship with God, and made to realise his own deific nature and supremacy of being as the son of God. Spiritual supremacy and illumination thus realised through the development and perfection of intuition under divine inspiration gives the perfect inner vision and direct insight into the character, properties, and purpose of all things to which the attention and interest are directed. It is, we repeat, a spiritual sense opening inwardly, as the physical senses open outwardly; and because it has the capacity to perceive, grasp, and know the truth at first hand, independent of all external sources of information, we call it intuition. All inspired teaching and spiritual revelations are based upon the recognition of this spiritual faculty of the soul and its power to receive and appropriate them. Conscious unity of man in spirit and purpose with the Father, born out of his supreme desire and trust, opens his soul through this inner sense to immediate aspiration and enlightenment from the divine omniscience, and the co-operative energy of the divine omnipotence, under which he becomes a seer and a master. On this higher plane of realised spiritual life in the flesh the mind acts with unfettered freedom and unbiassed vision, grasping truth at first hand, independent of all external sources of information. Approaching all beings and things from the divine side, they are seen in the light of the divine omniscience. God's purpose in them, and so the truth concerning them, as it rests in the mind of God, are thus revealed by direct illumination from the divine mind, to which the soul is opened inwardly through this spiritual sense we call intuition."

The practice of meditation "without images," as the mediaeval mystics called it, is specially recommended. "Many will receive great help, and many will be entirely healed by a practice somewhat after the following nature: - With a mind at peace, and with a heart going

out in love to all, go into the quiet of your own interior self, holding the thought, I am one with the Infinite Spirit of Life, the life of my life. I now open my body, in which disease has gotten a foothold, I open it fully to the inflowing tide of this infinite life, and it now, even now, is pouring in and coursing through my body, and the healing process is going on." "If you would find the highest, the fullest, and the richest life that not only this world but that any world can know, then do away with the sense of the separateness of your life from the life of God. Hold to the thought of your oneness. In the degree that you do this, you will find yourself realising it more and more, and as this life of realisation is lived, you will find that no good thing will be withheld, for all things are included in this."

This modern mysticism is very much entangled with theories about the cure of bodily disease by suggestion; and it is fair to warn those who are unacquainted with the books of this sect that they will find much fantastic superstition mixed with a stimulating faith in the inner light as the voice of God.

But whatever may be the course of this particular movement there can be no doubt that the Americans, like ourselves, are only at the beginning of a great revival of mystical religion. The movement will probably follow the same course as the mediaeval movement in Germany, with which this little book is concerned. It will have its philosophical supportees, who will press their speculation to the verge of Pantheism, perhaps reviving the Logos-cosmology of the Christian Alexandrians under the form of the pan-psychism of Lotze and Fechner. It will have its evangelists like Tauler, who will carry to our crowded town populations the glad tidings that the kingdom of God is not here or there, but within the hearts of all who will seek for it within them. It will assuredly attract some to a life of solitary contemplation; while others, intellectually weaker or less serious, will follow the various theosophical and theurgical delusions which, from the days of Iamblichus downward, have dogged the heels of mysticism. For the "False Light" against which the "Theologia Germanica" warns us is as dangerous as ever; we may even live to see

some new "Brethren of the Free Spirit" turning their liberty into a cloak of licentiousness. If so, the world will soon whistle back the disciplinarian with his traditions of the elders; prophesying will once more be suppressed and discredited, and a new crystallising process will begin. But before that time comes some changes may possibly take place in the external proportions of Christian orthodoxy. The appearance of a vigorous body of faith, standing firmly on its own feet, may even have the effect of relegating to the sphere of pious opinion some tenets which have hitherto "seemed to be pillars."

For these periodical returns to the "fresh springs" of religion never leave the tradition exactly where it was before. The German movement of the fourteenth century made the Reformation inevitable, and our own age may be inaugurating a change no less momentous, which will restore in the twentieth century some of the features of Apostolic Christianity.

## LIGHT, LIFE AND LOVE

### ECKHART; GOD

GOD is nameless, for no man can either say or understand aught about Him. If I say, God is good, it is not true; nay more; I am good, God is not good. I may even say, I am better than God; for whatever is good, may become better, and whatever may become better, may become best. Now God is not good, for He cannot become better. And if He cannot become better, He cannot become best, for these three things, good, better, and best, are far from God, since He is above all. If I also say, God is wise, it is not true; I am wiser than He. If I also say, God is a Being, it is not true; He is transcendent Being and superessential Nothingness. Concerning this St Augustine says: the best thing that man can say about God is to be able to be silent about Him, from the wisdom of his inner judgement. Therefore be silent and prate not about God, for whenever you prate about God, you lie, and commit sin. If you will be without sin, prate not about God. You can understand nought about God, for He is above all understanding. A master says: If

I had a God whom I could understand, I would never hold Him to be God.

God is not only a Father of all good things, as being their First Cause and Creator, but He is also their Mother, since He remains with the creatures which have from Him their being and existence, and maintains them continually in their being. If God did not abide with and in the creatures, they must necessarily have fallen back, so soon as they were created, into the nothingness out of which they were created.

### REST ONLY IN GOD

IF I had everything that I could desire, and my finger ached, I should not have everything, for I should have a pain in my finger, and so long as that remained, I should not enjoy full comfort. Bread is comfortable for men, when they are hungry; but when they are thirsty, they find no more comfort in bread than in a stone. So it is with clothes, they are welcome to men, when they are cold; but when they are too hot, clothes give them no comfort. And so it is with all the creatures. The comfort which they promise is only on the surface, like froth, and it always carries with it a want. But God's comfort is clear and has nothing wanting: it is full and complete, and God is constrained to give it you, for He cannot cease till He have given you Himself.

It is only in God that are collected and united all the perfections, which in the creatures are sundered and divided.

Yet all the fulness of the creatures can as little express God, as a drop of water can express the sea.

### GOD IS ALWAYS READY

NO one ought to think that it is difficult to come to Him, though it sounds difficult and is really difficult at the beginning, and in separating oneself from and dying to all things. But when a man has

once entered upon it, no life is lighter or happier or more desirable; for God is very zealous to be at all times with man, and teaches him that He will bring him to Himself if man will but follow. Man never desires anything so earnestly as God desires to bring a man to Himself, that he may know Him. God is always ready, but we are very unready; God is near to us, but we are far from Him; God is within, but we are without; God is at home, but we are strangers. The prophet says: God guides the redeemed through a narrow way into the broad road, so that they come into the wide and broad place; that is to say, into true freedom of the spirit, when one has become a spirit with God. May God help us to follow this course, that He may bring us to Himself. Amen.

## GRACE

THE masters say: That is young, which is near its beginning. Intelligence is the youngest faculty in man: the first thing to break out from the soul is intelligence, the next is will, the other faculties follow. Now he says: Young man, I say to you, arise. The soul in itself is a simple work; what God works in the simple light of the soul is more beautiful and more delightful than all the other works which He works in all creatures. But foolish people take evil for good and good for evil. But to him who rightly understands, the one work which God works in the soul is better and nobler and higher than all the world. Through that light comes grace. Grace never comes in the intelligence or in the will. If it could come in the intelligence or in the will, the intelligence and the will would have to transcend themselves. On this a master says: There is something secret about it; and thereby he means the spark of the soul, which alone can apprehend God. The true union between God and the soul takes place in the little spark, which is called the spirit of the soul. Grace unites not to any work. It is an indwelling and a living together of the soul in God.

Every gift of God makes the soul ready to receive a new gift, greater than itself.

Yea, since God has never given any gift, in order that man might rest in the possession of the gift, but gives every gift that He has given in heaven and on earth, in order that He might be able to give one gift, which is Himself, so with this gift of grace, and with all His gifts He will make us ready for the one gift, which is Himself.

No man is so boorish or stupid or awkward, that he cannot, by God's grace, unite his will wholly and entirely with God's will. And nothing more is necessary than that he should say with earnest longing: O Lord, show me Your dearest will, and strengthen me to do it. And God does it, as sure as He lives, and gives him grace in ever richer fulness, till he comes to perfection, as He gave to the woman at Jacob's well. Look you, the most ignorant and the lowest of you all can obtain this from God, before he leaves this church, yea, before I finish this sermon, as sure as God lives and I am a man.

O almighty and merciful Creator and good Lord, be merciful to me for my poor sins, and help me that I may overcome all temptations and shameful lusts, and may be able to avoid utterly, in thought and deed, what You forbid, and give me grace to do and to hold all that You have commanded. Help me to believe, to hope, and to love, and in every way to live as You will, as much as You will, and what You will.

## THE WILL

THEN is the will perfect, when it has gone out of itself, and is formed in the will of God. The more this is so, the more perfect and true is the will, and in such a will you can do all things.

## SURRENDER OF THE WILL

YOU should know, that that which God gives to those men who seek to do His will with all their might, is the best. Of this you may be as sure, as you are sure that God lives, that the very best must necessarily be, and that in no other way could anything better happen. Even if something else seems better, it would not be so good for you, for God

wills this and not another way, and this way must be the best for you. Whether it be sickness or poverty or hunger or thirst, or whatever it be, that God hangs over you or does not hang over you - whatever God gives or gives not, that is all what is best for you; whether it be devotion or inwardness, or the lack of these which grieves you - only set yourself right in this, that you desire the glory of God in all things, and then whatever He does to you, that is the best.

Now you may perchance say: How can I tell whether it is the will of God or not? If it were not the will of God, it would not happen. You could have neither sickness nor anything else unless God willed it. But know that it is God's will that you should have so much pleasure and satisfaction therein, that you should feel no pain as pain; you should take it from God as the very best thing, for it must of necessity be the very best thing for you. Therefore I may even wish for it and desire it, and nothing would become me better than so to do.

If there were a man whom I were particularly anxious to please, and if I knew for certain that he liked me better in a grey cloak than in any other, there is no doubt that however good another cloak might be, I should be fonder of the grey than of all the rest. And if there were anyone whom I would gladly please, I should do nothing else in word or deed than what I knew that he liked.

Ah, now consider how your love shows itself! If you loved God, of a surety nothing would give you greater pleasure than what pleases Him best, and that whereby His will may be most fully done. And, however great your pain or hardship may be, if you have not as great pleasure in it as in comfort or fulness, it is wrong.

We say every day in prayer to our Father, Your will be done. And yet when His will is done, we grumble at it, and find no pleasure in His will. If our prayers were sincere, we should certainly think His will, and what He does, to be the best, and that the very best had happened to us.

Those who accept all that the Lord send, as the very best, remain always in perfect peace, for in them God's will has become their will. This is incomparably better than for our will to become God's will. For when your will becomes God's will - if you are sick, you wish not to be well contrary to God's will, but you wish that it were God's will that you should be well. And so in other things. But when God's will becomes your will - then you are sick: in God's name; your friend dies: in God's name!

## SUFFERING

MEN who love God are so far from complaining of their sufferings, that their complaint and their suffering is rather because the suffering which God's will has assigned them is so small. All their blessedness is to suffer by God's will, and not to have suffered something, for this is the loss of suffering. This is why I said, Blessed are they who are willing to suffer for righteousness, not, Blessed are they who have suffered.

All that a man bears for God's sake, God makes light and sweet for him.

If all was right with you, your sufferings would no longer be suffering, but love and comfort.

If God could have given to men anything more noble than suffering, He would have redeemed mankind with it: otherwise, you must say that my Father was my enemy, if he knew of anything nobler than suffering.

True suffering is a mother of all the virtues.

## SIN

DEADLY sin is a death of the soul. To die is to lose life. But God is the life of the soul; since then deadly sin separates us from God, it is a

death of the soul.

Deadly sin is also an unrest of the heart. Everything can rest only in its proper place. But the natural place of the soul is God; as St Augustine says, Lord, you have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in You. But deadly sin separates us from God; therefore it is an unrest of the heart. Deadly sin is also a sickness of the faculties, when a man can never stand up alone for the weight of his sins, nor ever resist falling into sin. Therefore deadly sin is a sickness of the faculties. Deadly sin is also a blindness of the sense, in that it suffers not a man to know the shortness of the pleasures of lust, nor the length of the punishment in hell, nor the eternity of joys in heaven. Deadly sin is also a death of all graces; for as soon as a deadly sin takes place, a man becomes bare of all graces.

Every creature must of necessity abide in God; if we fall out of the hands of his mercy, we fall into the hands of His justice. We must ever abide in Him. What madness then is it to wish not to be with Him, without whom you can not be!

## CONTENTMENT

A GREAT teacher once told a story in his preaching about a man who for eight years besought God to show him a man who would make known to him the way of truth. While he was in this state of anxiety there came a voice from God and spake to him: Go in front of the church, and there shalt you find a man who will make known to you the way of truth. He went, and found a poor man whose feet were chapped and full of dirt, and all his clothes were hardly worth twopence-halfpenny. He greeted this poor man and said to him, God give you a good morning. The poor man answered, I never had a bad morning. The other said, God give you happiness. How do you answer that? The poor man answered, I was never unhappy. The first then said, God send you blessedness. How do you answer that? I was never unblessed, was the answer. Lastly the questioner said, God give you health! Now enlighten me, for I cannot understand it. And the poor

man replied, When you said to me, may God give you a good morning, I said I never had a bad morning. If I am hungry, I praise God for it; if I am cold, I praise God for it; if I am distressful and despised, I praise God for it; and that is why I never had a bad morning. When you asked God to give me happiness, I answered that I had never been unhappy; for what God gives or ordains for me, whether it be His love or suffering, sour or sweet, I take it all from God as being the best, and that is why I was never unhappy. You said further, May God make you blessed, and I said, I was never unblessed, for I have given up my will so entirely to God's will, that what God wills, that I also will, and that is why I was never unblessed, because I willed alone God's will. Ah! dear fellow, replied the man; but if God should will to throw you into hell, what would you say then? He replied, Throw me into hell! Then I would resist Him. But even if He threw me into hell, I should still have two arms wherewith to embrace Him. One arm is true humility, which I should place under Him, and with the arm of love I should embrace Him. And he concluded, I would rather be in hell and possess God, than in the kingdom of heaven without Him.

## DETACHMENT

THE man who has submitted his will and purposes entirely to God, carries God with him in all his works and in all circumstances. Therein can no man hinder him, for he neither aims at nor enjoys anything else, save God. God is united with Him in all his purposes and designs. Even as no manifoldness can dissipate God, so nothing can dissipate such a man, or destroy his unity. Man, therefore, should take God with him in all things; God should be always present to his mind and will and affections. The same disposition that you have in church or in your cell, you should keep and maintain in a crowd, and amid the unrest and manifoldness of the world.

Some people pride themselves on their detachment from mankind, and are glad to be alone or in church; and therein lies their peace. But he who is truly in the right state, is so in all circumstances, and among all persons; he who is not in a good state, it is not right with him in all

places and among all persons. He who is as he should be has God with him in truth, in all places and among all persons, in the street as well as in the church; and then no man can hinder him.

It is often much harder for a man to be alone in a crowd than in the desert; and it is often harder to leave a small thing than a great, and to practise a small work than one which people consider very great.

## PRAYER

GOOD and earnest prayer is a golden ladder which reaches up to heaven, and by which man ascends to God.

The man who will pray aright should ask for nothing except what may promote God's honour and glory, his own profit and the advantage of his neighbours. When we ask for temporal things we should always add, if it be God's will and if it be for my soul's health. But when we pray for virtues, we need add no qualification, for these are God's own working.

## LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

IT is a hard thing to practise this universal love, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, as our Lord commanded us. But if you will understand it rightly, there is a greater reward attached to this command, than to any other. The commandment seems hard, but the reward is precious indeed.

## LOVE

HE who has found this way of love, seeks no other. He who turns on this pivot is in such wise a prisoner that his foot and hand and mouth and eyes and heart, and all his human faculties, belong to God. And, therefore, you can overcome your flesh in no better way, so that it may not shame you, than by love. This is why it is written, Love is as strong as death, as hard as hell. Death separates the soul from the body, but

love separates all things from the soul. She suffers nought to come near her, that is not God nor God-like. Happy is he who is thus imprisoned; the more you are a prisoner, the more will you be freed. That we may be so imprisoned, and so freed, may He help us, Who Himself is Love.

## THE UNION WITH GOD

THE union of the soul with God is far more inward than that of the soul and body.

Now I might ask, how stands it with the soul that is lost in God? Does the soul find herself or not? To this will I answer as it appears to me, that the soul finds herself in the point, where every rational being understands itself with itself. Although it sinks and sinks in the eternity of the Divine Essence, yet it can never reach the ground. Therefore God has left a little point wherein the soul turns back upon itself and finds itself, and knows itself to be a creature.

God alone must work in you without hindrance, that He may bring to perfection His likeness in you. So you mayt understand with Him, and love with Him. This is the essence of perfection.

## THE LAST JUDGMENT

PEOPLE say of the last day, that God shall give judgement. This is true. But it is not true as people imagine. Every man pronounces his own sentence; as he shows himself here in his essence, so will he remain everlastingly.

## PRECEPT AND PRACTICE

BETTER one life-master than a thousand reading-masters (noetiger waere ein Lebemeister denne tausend Lesemeister). If I sought a master in the scriptures, I should seek him in Paris and in the high schools of high learning. But if I wished to ask questions about the

perfect life, that he could not tell me. Where then must I go? Nowhere at all save to an utterly simple nature; he could answer my question.

## RELICS

MY people, why seek you after dead bones? Why seek you not after living holiness, which might give you everlasting life? The dead can neither give nor take away.

## SAYINGS OF ECKHART

MASTER ECKHART says: He who is always alone, he is worthy of God; and he who is always at home, to him is God present; and he who abides always in a present now, in him does God beget His Son without ceasing.

Master Eckhart says: I will never pray to God to give Himself to me: I will pray Him to make me purer. If I were purer, God must give Himself to me, of His own nature, and sink into me.

Master Eckhart was asked, what were the greatest goods, that God had done to him. He said, there are three. The first is, that the lusts and desires of the flesh have been taken away from me. The second is, that the Divine Light shines and gives me light in all my doings. The third is, that I am daily renewed in virtue, grace and holiness.

## TAULER; OUR AIM

THINK, and think earnestly, how great, how unutterable will be the joy and blessedness, the glory and honour of those who shall see clearly and without veil the gladsome and beauteous face of God, how they will enjoy the best and highest good, which is God Himself. For in Him is included all pleasure, might, joy, and all beauty, so that the blessed in God will possess everything that is good and desirable, with everlasting joy and security, without fear lest they should ever be parted from Him.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

FROM the time when the first man gave a ready ear to the words of the enemy, mankind have been deaf, so that none of us can hear or understand the loving utterances of the eternal Word. Something has happened to the ears of man, which has stopped up his ears, so that he cannot hear the loving Word; and he has also been so blinded, that he has become stupid, and does not know himself. If he wished to speak of his own inner life, he could not do it; he knows not where he is, nor what is his state.

How can it be that the noble reason, the inner eye, is so blinded that it cannot see the true light? This great shame has come about, because a thick coarse skin and a thick fur has been drawn over him, even the love and the opinion of the creatures, whether it be the man himself or something that belongs to him; hence man has become blind and deaf, in whatever position he may be, worldly or spiritual. Yes, that is his guilt, that many a thick skin is drawn over him, as thick as an ox's forehead, and it has so covered up his inner man, that neither God nor himself can get inside; it has grown into him.

## THE FALL

THROUGH two things man fell in Paradise - through pride, and through inordinate affection. Therefore we too must return by two things, that nature may recover her power: we must first sink our nature and bring it down under God and under all men in deep humility, against whom it had exalted itself in pride. We must also manfully die to all inordinate lusts.

## LIFE A BATTLE

NOTHING in the world is so necessary for man as to be constantly assailed; for in fighting he learns to know himself. As grace is necessary to a man, so also is fighting. Virtue begins in fighting, and is

developed in fighting. In every state to which a man is called, inward and outward, he must of necessity be assailed. A high Master said: As little as meat can remain without salt and yet not become corrupt, so little can a man remain without fighting.

A man should in the first place act as when a town is besieged, and it is certain that the besieging army is stronger than the town. When the town is weakest, men take the very greatest care to guard and defend the town; if they neglected to do so, they would lose the town, and with it their lives and properties. So should every man do: he should be most careful to find out in what things the evil spirit most often besets him - that is, on what side the man is weakest, and to what kind of errors and failings he is most prone, and should manfully defend himself at those points.

Next, turn yourself earnestly away from sin; for I tell you of a truth, by whatever temptation a man is assailed, if he turns not from it heartily, but stands in it vacillating, he has no wholehearted desire to leave his sins by God's will, and without doubt the evil spirit is close upon him, who may make him fall into endless perdition.

Know of a truth, that if you would truly overcome the evil spirit, this can only be done by a complete manful turning away from sin. Say then with all your heart: Oh, everlasting God, help me and give me Your Divine grace to be my help, for it is my steadfast desire never again to commit any deadly sin against Your Divine will and Your honour. So with your good will and intention you entirely overcome the evil spirit, so that he must fly from you ashamed.

Understand, however, that it is a miserable and pitiable thing for a reasonable man to let himself be overcome by the evil spirit, and in consequence of his attacks to fall voluntarily into grievous and deadly sin, whereby man loses the grace of God. A reasonable man, who allows himself voluntarily to be overcome by the evil spirit, is like a well-armed man who voluntarily lets a fly bite him to death. For man has many great and strong weapons, wherewith he may well and

manfully withstand the evil spirit - the holy faith, the blessed sacrament, the holy word of God, the model and example of all good and holy men, the prayers of holy Church, and other great supports against the power of the evil spirit, whose power is much less than that of a fly against a great bear. If a man will manfully and boldly withstand the evil spirit, the evil one can gain no advantage against his free will.

Turn, therefore, manfully and earnestly from your sins, and watch diligently and earnestly; for I tell you of a truth, that when you have come to the next world, if you have not withstood the evil spirit, and if you are found there without repentance and sorrow, you will be a mockery to all the devils and to yourself, and you will be eternally punished and tormented. And it will then be a greater woe to you, that you have followed the evil spirit, than all the external pains that you must endure eternally for your sins.

Thirdly, a man should diligently attend to his inner Ground, that there shall be nothing in it save God alone, and His eternal glory. For alas! there are many men, both lay and clerical, who live falsely beneath a fair show, and imagine that they can deceive the everlasting God. No, in truth, you deceive yourself, and lose the day of grace, and the favour of God, and makest yourself guilty towards God, in that He gives the evil spirits power over you, so that you can do no good work. Therefore, watch while it is day, that the hour of darkness and God's disfavour may not overtake you, and take heed that in your inner ground God may dwell, and nought besides.

Even as each man in his baptism is placed under the charge of a special angel, who is with him always and never leaves him, and protects him waking and sleeping in all his ways and in all his works, so every man has a special devil, who continually opposes him and exercises him without ceasing. But if the man were wise and diligent, the opposition of the devil and his exercises would be much more profitable to him than the aid of the good angel; for if there were no struggle, there could be no victory.

## SIN

WHEN a man has had the fair net of his soul torn by sin, he must patch and mend it by a humble, repentant return to the grace and mercy of God. He must act like one who wishes to make a crooked stick straight: he bends the stick further back than it ought to go, and by being thus bent back it becomes straight again. So must a man do to his own nature. He must bend himself under all things which belong to God, and break himself right off, inwardly and outwardly, from all things which are not God.

Every deadly sin causes the precious blood of Christ to be shed afresh. Jesus Christ is spiritually crucified many times every day.

## FISHING FOR SOULS

THE fisherman throws his hook, that he may catch the fish; but the fish itself takes the hook. When the fish takes the hook, the fisherman is sure of the fish, and draws it to him. Even so, God has thrown His hook and His net into all the world, before our feet, before our eyes, before our minds, and He would gladly draw us securely to Himself by means of all His creatures. By pleasurable things He draws us on; by painful things He drives us on. He who will not be drawn, is in fault; for he has not taken God's hook, nor will he be caught in God's net. If he came therein, beyond doubt he would be caught by God and would be drawn by God. It is not God's fault if we will not be drawn; we should grasp the hand held out to us. If a man were in a deep pool, and one tried to help him and pull him out, would he not gladly grasp his hand and allow himself to be pulled out?

Where two things are so related to each other, that one may receive something for the other, there must be something in common between them. If they had nothing in common, there must be a middle term between them, which has something in common both with the higher, from which it may receive, and with the lower, to which it may impart.

Now God has created all things, and especially mankind, immediately for Himself. He created man for His pleasure. But by sin, human nature was so far estranged from God, that it was impossible for a man to attain to that, for which he was made. Now Aristotle says that God and Nature are not unprofitable workers - that is, what they work at, they carry to its end. Now God created man that He might have pleasure in him. If then God's work in creating mankind was not to be unprofitable, when they were so far estranged from God by sin, that they could not receive that by which they might return and attain the enjoyment of eternal happiness, a Mediator was necessary between us and God, one who has something in common with us and our natures, and also shares in the nature of God. In order that on the one side, He might in Himself destroy our sickness, which was a cause of all our sins, and also destroy all our sins, to which our weakness has brought us; and on the other side that He might include in Himself all the treasure of grace and of God's honour, that He might be able to give us grace richly, and forgiveness of our sins, and eternal glory hereafter, this could only be, if the Son of God became man. (90)

Yea, the highest God and Lord of all lords, the Son of God, in His deep love felt pity for us poor, sinful men, condemned to the flames of hell. Though He was in the form of God, He thought it not robbery (as St Paul says) to be equal with God, and He annihilated Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made like any other man, being found in fashion as a man. He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

## THE EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE

ALL works which men and all creatures can ever work even to the end of the world, without the grace of God - all of them together, however great they may be, are an absolute nothing, as compared with the smallest work which God has worked in men by His grace. As much as God is better than all His creatures, so much better are His works than all the works, or wisdom, or designs, which all men could devise. Even the smallest drop of grace is better than all earthly riches

that are beneath the sun. Yea, a drop of grace is more noble than all angels and all souls, and all the natural things that God has made. And yet grace is given more richly by God to the soul than any earthly gift. It is given more richly than brooks of water, than the breath of the air, than the brightness of the sun; for spiritual things are far finer and nobler than earthly things. The whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, give grace to the soul, and flow immediately into it; even the highest angel, in spite of his great nobility, cannot do this. Grace looses us from the snares of many temptations; it relieves us from the heavy burden of worldly cares, and carries the spirit up to heaven, the land of spirits. It kills the worm of conscience, which makes sins alive. Grace is a very powerful thing. The man, to whom comes but a little drop of the light of grace, to him all that is not God becomes as bitter as gall upon the tongue.

Grace makes, contrary to nature, all sorrows sweet, and brings it about that a man no longer feels any relish for things which formerly gave him great pleasure and delight. On the other hand, what formerly disgusted him, now delights him and is the desire of his heart - for instance, weakness, sorrow, inwardness, humility, self-abandonment, and detachment from all the creatures. All this is in the highest degree dear to him, when this visitation of the Holy Ghost, grace, has in truth come to him. Then the sick man, that is to say the external man, with all his faculties is plunged completely into the pool of water, even as the sick man who had been for thirty-eight years by the pool at Jerusalem, and there washes himself thoroughly in the exalted, noble, precious blood of Christ Jesus. For grace in manifold ways bathes the soul in the wounds and blood of the holy Lamb, Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER

THE essence of prayer is the ascent of the mind to God, as holy teachers tell us. Therefore every good man, when he wishes to pray, ought to collect his outer senses into himself, and look into his mind, to see whether it be really turned to God. He who wishes that his prayers may be truly heard, must keep himself turned away from all

temporal and external things, and all that is not Divine, whether it be friend or joy (Freund oder Freude), and all vanities, whether they be clothes or ornaments, and from everything of which God is not the true beginning and ending, and from everything that does not belong to Him. He must cut off his words and his conduct, his manners and his demeanour, from all irregularity, inward or outward. Dream not that that can be a true prayer, when a man only babbles outwardly with his mouth, and reads many psalms, gabbling them rapidly and hastily, while his mind wanders this way and that, backwards and forwards. Much rather must the true prayer be, as St Peter tells us, "one-minded" - that is, the mind must cleave to God alone, and a man must look with the face of his soul turned directly towards God, with a gentle, willing dependence on Him.

If your prayer has these conditions, you mayst with true humility fall at the feet of God, and pray for the gentle succour of God; you may knock at His fatherly heart, and ask for bread - that is, for love. If a man had all the food in the world, and had not bread, his food would be neither eatable, nor pleasant, nor useful. So it is with all things, without the Love of God. Knock also at the door through which we must go - namely, Christ Jesus. At this door, the praying man must knock for three ends, if he wishes to be really admitted. First he must knock devoutly, at the broken heart and the open side, and enter in with all devotion, and in recognition of his unfathomable poverty and nothingness, as poor Lazarus did at the rich man's gate, and ask for crumbs of His grace. Then again, he should knock at the door of the holy open wounds of His holy hands, and pray for true Divine knowledge, that it may enlighten him and exalt him. Finally, knock at the door of His holy feet, and pray for true Divine love, which may unite you with Him, and immerse and cover you in Him.

## MEDITATIONS ON THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

[From a devotional treatise on the Passion of Christ, published in a Latin translation, by Surius, in 1548, and wrongly ascribed by him to Tauler. The author was an unknown German of the fourteenth century.]

### THE FIRST WORD

NOW, O my soul, and all you who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, come, and let us go with inward compassion and fervent devotion to the blessed palm-tree of the Cross, which is laden with the fairest fruit. Let us pass like the bee from flower to flower, for all are full of honey. Let us consider and ponder with the greatest care the sacred words of Christ, which He spoke upon the Cross; for everything that comes From this blessed Tree is wholesome and good. In the Cross of our Lord and Saviour are centred all our salvation, all our health, all our life, all our glory; and, "if we suffer with Him," says the Apostle, "we shall also reign with Him." That we may not be found ungrateful for these inestimable benefits, let us call upon heaven and earth, and all that in them is, to join us in praising and blessing and giving thanks to God. Let us invite them to come and look upon this wondrous sight, and say: "Magnify the Lord with me, for He has done marvellous things. O praise and bless the Lord with me, for great is His mercy toward us." Come up with me, I pray you, you angelic spirits, to Mount Calvary, and see your King Solomon on His throne, wearing the diadem wherewith His mother has crowned Him. Let us weep in the presence of the Lord who made us, the Lord our God. O all mankind, and all you who are members of Christ, behold your Redeemer as He hangs on high; behold and weep. See if any sorrow is like to His sorrow. Acknowledge the heinousness of your sins, which needed such satisfaction. Go to every part of His body; you will find only wounds and blood. Cry to Him with lamentations and say, "O Jesus, our redemption, our love, our desire, what mercy has overcome You, that You shouldest bear our sins, and endure a cruel death, to rescue us from everlasting death?" And You, O

God, the almighty Father of heaven, look down from Your sanctuary upon Your innocent Son Joseph, sold and given over unjustly to the hands of bloody men, to suffer a shameful death. See whether this be Your Son's coat or not. Of a truth an evil beast has devoured Him. The blood of our sins is sprinkled over His garments, and all the coverings of His good name are defiled by it. See how Your holy Child has been condemned with the wicked, how Your royal Son has been crowned with thorns. Behold His innocent hands, which have known no sin, dripping with blood; behold His sacred feet, which have never turned aside from the path of justice, pierced through by a cruel nail; behold His defenceless side smitten with a sharp spear; behold His fair face, which the angels desire to look upon, marred and shorn of all its beauty; behold His blessed heart, which no impure thought ever stained, weighed down with inward sorrow. Behold, O loving Father, Your sweet Son, stretched out upon the harp of the Cross, and harping blessings on You with all His members. Wherefore, O my God, I pray You to forgive me, for the sake of Your Son's Passion, all the sins that I have committed in my members. O merciful Father, look on Your only-begotten Son, that You mayst have compassion on Your servant. Whenever that red blood of Your Son speaks in Your sight, do You wash me from every stain of sin. Whenever You behold the wounds of this Your Son, open to me the bosom of Your fatherly compassion. Behold, O tender Father, how Your obedient Son does not cry, "Bind my hands and my feet, that I may not rebel against You," but how of His own will He extends His hands and feet, and gladly allows them to be pierced with nails. Look down, I pray You, not on the brazen serpent hanging on a pole for the salvation of Israel, but on Your only Son hanging on the Cross for the salvation of all men. It is not Moses who now stretches out his hand to heaven, that the thunder and lightning and the other plagues may cease, but it is Your beloved Son, who lovingly stretches out His bleeding arms to You, that Your wrath may depart from the human race. Aaron and Hur are not now holding up the hands of Moses that he may pray more unweariedly for Israel; but hard and cruel nails have fastened the hands of Your only Son to the Cross, that He may wait with long-suffering for our repentance, and receive us back into His grace, and that He may not turn away in

wrath from our prayers. This is that faithful David, who now strings tight the harp-strings of His body, and makes sweet melody before You, singing to You the sweetest song that has been ever sung to You: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is that High Priest, who by His own blood has entered into the Holy of Holies, to offer Himself as a peace-offering for the sins of the whole world. This is that innocent Lamb, who has washed us in His own precious blood, who, Himself without spot of sin, has taken away the sins of the world. Therefore from the storehouse of His Passion I borrow the price of my debt, and I count out before You all its merits, to pay what I owe You. For He has done all in my nature, and for my sake. O merciful Father, if You weigh all my sins on one side of the balance, and in the other scale the Passion of Your Son, the last will outweigh the first. For what sin can be so great, that the innocent blood of Your Son has not washed it out? What pride, or disobedience, or lust, is so unchecked or so rebellious, that such lowliness, obedience, and poverty cannot abolish it? O merciful Father, accept the deeds of Your beloved Son, and forgive the errors of Your wicked servant. For the innocent blood of our brother Abel cries to You from the Cross, not for vengeance, but for grace and mercy, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

## THE SECOND WORD

NOW the thieves who were crucified with Jesus reviled Him. But after a while, the one who hung on the right side of Christ, when he saw His great patience and long-suffering, wherewith He so lovingly prayed to His Father for those who cast reproaches upon Him and cruelly tortured Him, became entirely changed, and began to be moved with very great sorrow and repentance for his sins. And he showed this outwardly, when he rebuked his fellow-thief, who continued to revile Christ, saying: "Dost not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?" "Although" (he would say) "you are so obstinate as not to fear men, and think nought of your bodily pain, yet surely you must fear God, in the last moments of your life - God, who has power to destroy both your body and soul in hell. And though we

suffer the same punishment with Him, our deserts are very different. We, indeed, suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing amiss." He, who but lately was a blasphemer, is now a confessor and preacher, he distinguishes good from evil, blaming the sinner, and excusing the innocent: the unbelieving thief has become the confessor of almighty God. O good Jesus, this sudden change is wrought by Your right hand, at which he hung. Your right hand touched him inwardly, and forthwith he is changed into another man. O Lord, in this You have declared Your patience, out of a stone You have raised up a child to Abraham. Verily, the penitent thief received the light of faith solely from that bright light on the candlestick of the Cross, which shone there in the darkness and scattered the shades of night. But what does this signify, save that our Lord Jesus, out of the greatness of His goodness, looked upon him with the eyes of His mercy, although He found no merit in him, except what it pleased Him out of His goodness to bestow? For as God gives to His elect, out of His goodness alone, what no one has a right to demand, so out of His justice He gives to the wicked what they deserve. For this cause David says: "He saved me because He desired me." And this is why the thief, before the Lord touched his heart with the beams of His grace and love, joined the other thief in reviling Christ, thus showing first what his own character was, and afterwards what was wrought in him by grace. At first he acted like the other, being, like him, a child of wrath; but when the precious blood of Christ was shed as the price of our redemption and paid to the Father for our debt, then the thief asked God to give him an alms for his good, and at once received it. For how can one alms diminish that inexhaustible treasure? How could our tender Lord, whose property is always to have mercy, have refused his request? Indeed He gave him more than he asked. Yet how could the thief escape the glow of the fire which was burning so near him? Truly this was the fire, which the Father had sent down from heaven to earth, which had long smouldered, but now, kindled anew, and fed by the wood of the Cross, and sprinkled with the oil of mercy, and fanned, as it were, by the reproaches and blasphemies of the Jews, sent up its flames to heaven, by which that thief was quite kindled and set on fire, and his love became as strong

as death, so that he said: "I indeed suffer no grievous penalty, for it is less than I deserve; but that this innocent One, who has done no wrong, should be so tortured, contrary to justice and righteousness, this, truly, adds grievous sorrow to my sorrow." O splendid faith of this thief! He contemned all the punishment that might be inflicted on him: he feared not the rage of the people, who were barking like mad dogs against Jesus: he cared not for the chief priests: he feared not the executioners with their weapons and instruments of torture; but in the presence of them all, with a fearless heart he confessed that Christ was the true Son of God, and Lord of the whole world: and at the same time he confounded the Jews by confessing that He had done nothing amiss, and therefore that they had crucified Him unjustly. O wondrous faith! O mighty constancy! O amazing love of this poor thief, love that cast out all fear! He was indeed well drunken with that new wine which in the wine-press of the Cross had been pressed out of that sweet cluster, Jesus Christ, and therefore he confessed Christ without shame before all the people. At the very beginning of the Passion, the apostles and disciples had forsaken Christ and fled; even St Peter, frightened by the voice of one maidservant, had denied Christ. But this poor thief did not forsake Him even in death, but confessed Him to be the Lord of heaven in the presence of all those armed men. Who can do justice to the merits of this man? Who taught him so quickly that faith of his, and his clear knowledge of all the virtues, save the very Wisdom of the Father, Jesus Christ, who hung near him on the Cross? Him whom the Jews could not or would not know, in spite of the promises made to the patriarchs, the fulfilment of prophecies, the teaching of the Scriptures, and the interpretation of allegories, this poor thief learned to know by repentance. He confessed Christ to be the Son of God, though he saw Him full of misery, want, and torment, and dying from natural weakness. He confessed Him at a time when the apostles, who had seen His mighty works, denied Him. The nails were holding his hands and feet fixed to the cross; he had nothing free about him, except his heart and his tongue; yet he gave to God all that he could give to Him, and, in the words of Scripture, "with his heart he believed to righteousness, and with his tongue he made confession of Christ to salvation." O infinite and unsearchable mercy of God! For

what manner of man was he when he was sent to the cross, and what when he left it? (Not that it was his own cross, that wrought this change, but the power of Christ crucified.) He came to the cross stained with the blood of his fellow-man; he was taken down from it cleansed by the blood of Christ. He came to the cross still savage and full of rage, and while he was upon it he became so meek and pitiful that he lamented for the sufferings of another more than for his own. One member only was left to him, and at the eleventh hour he came to work in God's vineyard, and yet so eagerly did he labour that he was the first to finish his work and receive his reward. Indeed he behaved like a just man; for he first accused himself and confessed his sins, saying, "and we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Secondly, he excused Christ, and confessed that He was the Just One when he said "but this Man has done nothing amiss." Thirdly, he showed brotherly love, for he said, "do not you fear God?" Fourthly, with all his members, or at least with all that he could offer, and with loving eyes and a devout heart and a humble spirit, he turned himself to Christ and prayed earnestly, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." How great was the justice and humility and resignation which he showed in this prayer, for he asked only for a little remembrance of himself, acknowledging that he was not worthy to ask for anything great. Nor did he pray for the safety of his body, for he gladly desired to die for his sins. It was more pleasant for him to die with Christ than to live any longer. Nor did he pray that our Lord would deliver him from the pains of hell, or of purgatory, nor did he ask for the kingdom of heaven; but he resigned himself entirely to the will of God, and offered himself altogether to Christ, to do what He would with him. In his humility he prayed for nothing except for grace and mercy, for which David also prayed when he said, "Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy." And therefore, because he had prayed humbly and wisely, the Eternal Wisdom, Who reads the hearts of all who pray, heard his prayer, and, opening wide the rich storehouse of His grace, gave him much more than he had dared to ask. O marvellous goodness of God! How plainly You declare in this, that You desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. Now You have manifested and fulfilled what You

promised aforetime by Your prophet: "When the wicked man shall mourn for his sins, I will remember his iniquity no more." You did not impose upon him many years of severe penance, nor many sufferings in purgatory for the expiation of his sins; but just as if You had quite forgotten his crimes, and could see nothing in him but virtue, You said: "This day you will be with Me in paradise." O immeasurable compassion of God! Our tender Lord forgot all the countless crimes which that poor thief had done, and forgave him when he repented, and gave so great and splendid a reward to the good which there was in him, small indeed though it was. Our loving God is very rich; He needs not our gifts; but He seeks for a heart which turns to Him with lowliness and resignation, such a heart as He found in this poor thief. For He says Himself: "turn to Me, and I will turn to you." And so when this thief so courageously and effectively turned to God, his prayer was at once not only accepted but answered. For our Lord did not reject his prayer, or say to him: "See how I hang here in torment, and I behold before My eyes My mother in sore affliction, and I have not yet spoken one word to her, so that to hear you now would not be just." No, our Lord said nothing of this kind to the thief. Rather, He heard his prayer at once, and made answer in that sweet word, "Amen, I say to you, this day shall you be with Me in paradise." O tender goodness, O marvellous mercy of God! O great wisdom of the thief! He saw that the treasures of Christ were wide open, and were being scattered abroad. Who then should forbid him to take as much as would pay what he owed to his Lord? And O the accursed hardness of the impenitent thief, whom neither the rebuke of his associate, nor the patience of Christ, nor the many signs of love and mercy that shone forth in Christ, could melt or convert! He saw that alms were plentiful at the rich man's gate, that more was given than was asked for, and yet he was too proud and obstinate to ask. He saw that life and the kingdom of heaven were being granted, and yet he would not bend his heart to wish for them: therefore he shall not have them. He loved better revilings and curses, and they shall come to him, and that for all eternity. These new first-fruits of the grape, which our Lord gathered on the wood of the Cross from our barren soil, by much sweat of His brow and much watering with His own precious blood, He sent with

great joy as a precious gift to His heavenly Father, by His celestial messengers the holy angels. But if there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repents, how must they rejoice and exult at the salvation of this thief, of whom they had almost despaired? We can picture to ourselves with what joy the Father of heaven received these first-fruits of the harvest of His Son's Passion. But Christ Himself, though He felt some joy at the thief's conversion, was still more afflicted thereby, for by His wisdom He foresaw that this thief would be the cause of perdition to many, who would resolve to pass their whole lives in sin, hoping to obtain pardon and grace at the moment of death. Truly a most foolish hope, for nowhere in the Scriptures do we read that it has so happened to any man. In truth, they who seek after God only when they must, will not, it is to be feared, find Him near them in their time of need. In the meantime, none can trust too much in God, and no one has ever been forsaken by Him, who has turned to Him with his whole heart, and leant upon Him with loving confidence.

### THE THIRD WORD

THERE stood also by the Cross of Jesus His most holy and ever-virgin mother Mary; not in order that His sufferings might thereby be lessened, but that they might be greatly augmented. For if any creature could have given consolation to the Lord while He hung on the Cross, no one could have done it so fitly as His blessed mother. But since it was God's will that Christ should die the most bitter of deaths, and end His Passion without any comfort or relief, but with true resignation, His mother's presence brought Him no consolation, but rather added to His sufferings, for her sufferings were thereby added to His, and this added yet more to His affliction. Who then, O good Jesus can discover by meditation how great was Your inward grief, for You know the hearts of all, when You saw all the body of Your holy mother tortured by inward compassion, even as You wast tortured on the Cross, and her tender heart and maternal breast pierced with the sword of sharp sorrow, her face pale as death, telling the anguish of her soul, and almost dead, yet unable to die. When You beheldest her hot tears, flowing down abundantly like sweet rivers upon her

gracious cheeks, and over all her face, all witnesses to You that she shared in Your sorrow and love; when You hearest her sad laments, forced from her by the weight of her affliction; when You sawest that same tender mother, melted away with the heat of love, her strength quite failing her, worn out and exhausted by the pains of Your Passion, which wasted her away; all this, truly, was a new affliction to You on the Cross; it was itself a new Cross. For You alone, by the spear of Your pity, explored the weight and grievousness of her woes, which to men are beyond comprehension. All this, indeed, greatly increased the pain of Your Passion, because You wast crucified not only in Your own body, but in Your mother's heart; for her Cross was Your Cross, and Your was hers. O how bitter was Your Passion, sweet Jesus! Great indeed was Your outward suffering, but far more grievous was Your inward suffering, which Your heart experienced at Your mother's anguish. It was now, beyond doubt, that the sword of sorrow pierced her through, for the queen of martyrs was terribly and mortally wounded in that part which is impassible - that is, the soul; she bore the death of the Cross in that part which could not die, suffering all the more her grievous inward death, as outward death departed further from her. Who, O most loving mother, can recount or conceive in his mind the immeasurable sorrows of your soul, or your inward woes? Him whom you brought forth without pain, as a blessed mother free from the curse of our first mother Eve, who instead of the pains of labour wast filled with joy of spirit, and who for your refreshment listened to the sweet songs of the angels as they praised your Son, you have now seen slain before your eyes with the greatest cruelty and tyranny. How manifold was that sorrow of your, which you wast permitted to escape at His birth, when you saw your blessed and only Son hanging in such torment on the Cross, in the presence of a cruel and furious crowd, who showered upon Him all the insults and contumely and shame that they could think of; when you saw Him whom you bore in your pure womb without feeling the burden, so barbarously stretched on the Cross, and pierced with nails; when you saw His sacred arms, with which He had so many times lovingly embraced you, stretched out so that He could not move them, and covered with red blood, His adorable head pierced with sharp thorns, and His whole body one

streaming wound, while you wast not able to staunch or anoint any of those wounds. What must your grief have been when you saw Him whom you had so often laid on your virgin bosom that He might rest, without anything on which to lean His sacred head; and Him whom you had nourished with the milk of your holy breasts, now vexed with vinegar and gall. O how your maternal heart was oppressed when you beheld with your pure eyes that fair face so piteously marred, so that there was no beauty in it, and nothing by which He could be distinguished. How did the wave of affliction beat against and overflow and overwhelm your soul! Truly, if even a devout man cannot without unspeakable sorrow and pity revolve in his mind the Passion of your Son, what must have been your Cross, your affliction, who wast His mother and saw it all with your eyes? If to many friends of God and to many who love Him, your Son's Passion is as grievous as if they suffered it themselves, if by inward pity they are crucified with your Son, how terribly, even to death, must you have been crucified inwardly, when you did not only ponder and search into the outward and inward pains of your Son in your devout heart, but saw them with your bodily eyes? For never did any mother love her child as you loved your Son. And if St Paul, who loved so much, could say, out of his ardent love and deep pity for your Son, "I am crucified with Christ; and I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," how much more were you crucified with Him, and inwardly received all His wounds, being made, in a manner, an image and likeness of your crucified Son?

#### THE FOURTH WORD

ABOUT the ninth hour our Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cried with a loud voice, that He might be easily heard by all, and also that by this wondrous word He might shake off from our souls the sleep of sloth, and cause them to wonder and marvel at the immeasurable goodness of God to us. Therefore He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" For the sake of vile sinners, for evil and thankless servants, for sinful and disobedient deceivers, You have forsaken Your beloved Son and most obedient Child. That Your enemies, who are vessels of wrath,

might be changed into children of adoption, You have slain Your own Son, and given Him over to death like one guilty. "O my God, why, I pray You, have You forsaken me?" For the very cause why men ought to praise and give thanks to You, and love You with an everlasting love; because You have delivered Your dear Son to death for their redemption, and sacrificed Him willingly, for this reason they will find ground for blasphemy and reproach against You, saying, "He says He is the Son of God. Let God deliver Him now if He will have Him." Why, O my God, have You willed to spend so precious a treasure for such vile and counterfeit goods? Besides, this word may be understood to have been spoken by Christ against those who seek to diminish the glory of His Passion, by saying that it was not really so bitter and terrible, owing to the great support and comfort which He drew from His Godhead. Let those who speak and think thus know that they renew His Passion and crucify Him afresh. It was to prove the error of such men that our Lord cried with a loud voice, and said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It is as if He had said these words to His own Divine nature, with which He formed one Person - for the Godhead of the Father and of the Son is all one - wondering, Himself, at His own love, which had so cast Him down and worn Him out and humbled Him, and that He who brings help to all mankind should have forsaken Himself, and offered Himself to suffer every kind of pain, impelled thereto by conquering love alone. Again, we should not be wrong, if we were to interpret this word which Christ spoke out of the exceeding bitterness of His sorrow in the following way - namely, that His spirit and inward man, taking upon itself the severe judgment of God upon all sinners, and at the same time discerning clearly and feeling and measuring in Himself the intolerable weight of His Passion, on this account cried out in a sorrowful voice to His Father, and complained tenderly to Him because He had been cast into these dreadful torments; as if the goodness of His Father had become so embittered against the sins of men, that in the ardour of His justice He had quite forgotten the inseparable union between His passible humanity and His impassible Godhead, and therefore in the zealously of His justice had quite given up His passible nature to the cruelty and malice of fierce men, that they might waste it away and

destroy it. For this reason, therefore, He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This word has besides an inward meaning, according to which Christ, in His sensitive parts, complained to His Father that He had been forsaken by Him. For as many as contend for His honour, and endure patiently the troubles of this world, our merciful God so moderates and tempers their crosses and afflictions by the inpouring of His divine consolation, that by His sensible grace He makes their crosses hardly felt; but He left His own beloved Son quite without any comfort, and so deprived Him of all consolation and light, that He endured as much in His human nature as had been ordained by the Eternal Wisdom, according to the strictness of justice, as much as was needed to atone for so many sins. And indeed our salvation was the more nobly and perfectly achieved, in that it was done and finished without any light at all, in absolute resignation and abandonment. For a chief cause of the Passion was to show clearly how great was the injury and insult brought upon His most high Godhead by the sins of the human race. Now as the knowledge of Christ was greater and more acute than that of all other beings, in heaven or in earth, so much the greater and heavier was His sorrow and agony. Nay more - what is more wonderful than anything - whatever afflictions have been endured by all the saints, as members of Christ, existed much more abundantly in Christ their Head; and this I wish to be understood according to the spirit and reasonably. For all the saints have suffered no more than flowed in upon them through Christ, joined to them as His members, who communicated to them His own afflictions. For He took upon Himself the afflictions of all the saints, out of His great love for His members, and wondrous pity, and He suffered far greater internal anguish than any of the saints, nay, more even than the blessed Virgin, His mother, felt her own sharp sorrow and sickness of heart. For if an earthly father loves his child so much, that in fatherly pity he takes upon himself the sorrows of his child, and grieves for them as if he suffered them himself, what must have been Christ's Cross and compassion for the affliction of His members, and above all, of those who suffered for His name's sake? Truly He bore witness to His members, how much He suffered from their afflictions, and how great was His inward pity for their

sufferings, when He took all their debt upon Himself, and abolished all the penalties which they had merited, so that they might depart free. The same is most amply proved by the words which He spoke to St Paul, when He said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" For the persecution which Saul had stirred up against the disciples, the members of the Lord, was not less grievous to Him than if He had suffered it Himself. Therefore He says to His friends and members, "He who touches you, touches the apple of Mine eye." For is there anything suffered by the members, which the Head does not suffer with them, He whose nature is goodness, and whose property is always to have mercy and to forgive?

## THE FIFTH WORD

OUR most tender Lord was so worn out and parched by the extreme bitterness of His pain and suffering, and by the great loss of blood, that He cried, "I thirst." A little word, but full of mysteries.

In the first place it may be understood literally. For it is natural for those who are at the point of death to feel thirst, and to desire to drink. But how great was the drouth felt by Him who is the fountain of living water, but who was now worn out and parched by the heat of His ardent love, when he could truly say, "I am poured out like water," and "My strength is dried up like a potsherd." For not only did He shed all His own blood, and pour out moisture by tears, but the very marrow of His bones, and all His heart's blood, were consumed for our sakes by the heat and flame of love. Therefore He said rightly, "I thirst."

But, secondly, the word may be understood spiritually, as if Christ said to all men, "I thirst for your salvation." Hence St Bernard says: "Jesus cried, I thirst, not, I grieve. O Lord, what do You thirst for? For your faith, your joy. I thirst because of the torments of your souls, far more than for My own bodily sufferings. Have pity on yourselves, if not on Me." And again, "O good Jesus, You wear the crown of thorns; You are silent about Your Cross and wounds, yet You cry out, I thirst.

For what, then, do You thirst? Truly, for the redemption of mankind only, and for the felicity of the human race." This thirst of Christ was a hundred times more keen and intense than His natural thirst. And, besides, He had another sort of thirst - that is to say, a thirst to suffer more, and to prove to us still more clearly His immeasurable love, as if He said to man, "See how I am worn out and exhausted for your salvation. See how terrible are the pains and anguish which I endure. The fierce cruelty of man has almost brought Me to nothing; the sinners of earth have drunk out all My blood, and yet I thirst. Not yet is My heart satisfied, nor My desire accomplished, nor the fire of My love quenched. For if it were possible for Me, and according to My Father's will, that I should be crucified again a thousand times for your salvation and conversion, or that I should hang here, in all this pain and anguish, till the day of judgement, I would gladly do it, to prove to you the immeasurable love which I bear you in My heart, and to soften your stony hearts and rouse you to love Me in return. This is why I hang here so thirsty by the fountain of your hearts, that I may watch the pious souls who come hither to draw from the deep well of My Passion. Therefore, the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Give Me to drink a little water out of the pitcher of your conscience' - the water of devotion, pity, tears, and mutual love - and who shall let down to Me her pitcher, and shall say, 'Drink, my Lord; and for Your camels also - that is, Your servants, who carry You about daily on their bodies, and who by night and day are held bound fast by Your yoke, I will draw the water of brotherly love' - that is the maiden whom the Lord has prepared for the Son of My Lord, even the bride of the Word of God, united to My humanity. And she shall be counted worthy to enter, like a bride with her bridegroom, into the chamber of eternal rest, when the Bridegroom invites her, saying, 'Come, My blessed bride, inherit the Kingdom of My Father. For I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink.'"

Thirdly, we may apply this word to the Father, as if Christ said to His Father: "Father, I have declared Your name to mankind; I have finished the work which You gave Me to do; and in Your service I have spent My whole body as Your instrument. Behold, I am all worn out and exhausted; and yet I still thirst to do and suffer more for Your honour.

This is why I hang here, extended to the furthest breadth of love, for I long to be an everlasting sacrifice, a sweet savour to You, and at the same time an eternal atonement and salvation to mankind." Thus, too, might this strong Samson have said: "O Lord, You have put into the hand of Your servant this very great salvation and victory, and yet behold, I die of thirst." As if He would say: Father, I have accomplished Your gracious will; I have finished the work of man's salvation, as You demanded; and yet I still thirst; for the sins by which You are offended are infinite. And so I desire that the love and merits of My Passion, by which You will be appeased, may be infinite too. And as I now offer myself as a peace-offering and a living sacrifice for the salvation of all men, so through Me may all men appease You, by offering Me to You as a peace-offering to Your eternal glory, in memory of My Passion, and to make good all their shortcomings." O how acceptable to the Father must this desire of love have been! For what was this thirst but a sweet and pleasant refreshment to the Father, and at the same time the blessed renovation of mankind? Or what other language does this burning throat speak to us, save that of Christ's burning love, without measure and without limit, out of which He did all His works? This truly is the most noble sacrifice of our redemption, this is that peace-offering which will be offered even to the last day, by all good men, to the Holy Ghost, to the highest Father, in memory of the Son, to the eternal glory of the adorable Trinity, and to the fruit of salvation for mankind. Here, certainly, is the inexhaustible storehouse of our reconciliation, which never fails, for it is greater than all the debts of the world. This is that immeasurable love, which is higher than the heavens, for it has repaired the ruin of the angels; deeper than hell, for it has freed souls from hell; wider and broader than the earth, for it is without end and incomprehensible by any created understanding. O how keen and intense was this thirst of our Lord! For not only did He then say once, "I thirst," but even now He says in our hearts continually, "I thirst; woman, give me to drink." So great, so mighty, is that thirst, that He asks drink not only from the children of Israel, but from the Samaritans. To each one He complains of His thirst. But for what dost You thirst, O good Jesus? "My meat and drink," says He, "is that men should do My Father's will. Now this is the will of My Father,

even your sanctification and salvation, that you may sanctify your souls by walking in My precepts, by doing works of repentance, by adorning yourselves with all virtues, in order that, like a bride adorned for her husband, you may be worthy to be present at My supper in My Father's kingdom, and to sleep with Me as My elect bride, in the chamber of My Father's heart." O how Christ longs to bring all men thither! This is the meaning of His words: "Where I am there shall also My servant be"; and again: "Father, I will that they may be one even as We are one." O, how incomprehensible is this thirst of Christ! What toil and labour He endured for thirty and three years, for the sake of it! For this His very heart's blood was poured out. See what our tender Lord says to His Father: "The zeal of Your house has even eaten Me." Truly, He would have submitted to be crucified a thousand times, rather than allow one soul to perish through any fault of His. O how this inward thirst tormented Him, when He thought that He had done all that He could, and even a hundredfold more than He need have done, and yet that so few had turned to Him, and been won by Him. His whole body was now worn out; all His blood was shed; nothing remained for Him to do; and therefore He was constrained to confess, "It is finished"; and yet by all His labours, afflictions, and sufferings, He had brought no richer harvest to the Father than this. Truly, this was the most bitter of all His sorrows, that after so hard a battle His victory had not been more glorious, and that He returned a conqueror to His Father with so few spoils. Therefore, all those who do not refresh Him by performing His will, and doing all that is pleasing and honourable to Him, and withstanding all that reason tells them to be displeasing to Him, will one day hear Him say, "I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

Fourthly, there is yet another inward meaning of this word - namely, that Christ spoke it out of the love which inwardly draws Him towards all men, thus making known to us His ardent love, and opening His own heart, as a delightful couch, on which we may feed pleasantly, and inviting us to it, saying, "I thirst for you." For as the liquid which we drink is sent down pleasantly through the throat into the body, and so

passes into the substance and nature of our body, so Christ out of the ardent thirst of His love, takes spiritual pleasure in drinking in all men into Himself, swallowing them, as it were, and incorporating them into Himself, and bringing them into the secret chamber of His loving heart. Therefore He says: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me" - all men, that is, who allow themselves to be drawn by Me, and submit to Me as obedient instruments, suffering Me to do with them according to My gracious will. But those who resist Him quench not His thirst, but give Him a bitter draught instead, even the deeds of their own self-will. These, when our Lord tastes them, He straightway rejects.

## THE SIXTH WORD

WHEN Christ had tasted the draught of vinegar and gall, He spoke the sixth word: "It is finished." Thereby He signified that by His Passion had been fulfilled all the prophecies, types, mysteries, scriptures, sacrifices, and promises, which had been predicted and written about Him. This is that true Son of God, for whom the Father of heaven made ready a supper in the kingdom of His eternal blessedness; and He sent His servant - that is the human nature of Christ, coming in the form of a servant, to call those who were bidden to the wedding. For Christ, when He took human nature upon Him, was not only a servant but a servant of servants, and served all of us for thirty and three years with great toil and suffering. Indeed, He spent His whole life in bidding all men to His supper. It was for this that He preached, and wrought miracles, and travelled from place to place, and proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that all should be prepared for it. But they would not come. And when the Father of the household heard this, He said to His Servant: "Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." Then that Servant thought within Himself: "How shall I be able without violence to compel these men to come, that rebellion may be avoided and yet that their privilege and power of free will may remain unimpaired? For if I compel them to come by iron chains, and blows, and whips, I shall have asses and not men." Then He said to Himself: "I perceive

that man is so constituted as to be prone to love. Therefore I will show him such love as shall pass all his understanding, love than which no other love can be greater. If man will observe this, he will be so caught in its toils, that he will not be able to escape its heat and flame, and will be constrained to turn to God, and love Him in return. For, turn where he will, he will always be met by the immeasurable benefits, the infinite goodness, and the wonderful love of God; and at the same time he will feel more and more compelled to return love for love, till he will be no more able to resist it, and will be gently constrained to follow. When this was done, Jesus Christ, this faithful and wise Servant, said to His Lord and Father, "It is finished. I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. What more could I have done, and have not done it? I have no member left that is not weary and worn with toil and pain. My veins are dry, My blood is shed; My marrow is spent, My throat is hoarse with crying. Such love have I shown to man, that his heart cannot be human, cannot even be stony, or the heart of a brute beast, but must be quite devilish and desperate, if it be not moved by the thought of these things."

Moreover, this word of our Lord Jesus is a word of sorrow, not of joy. He spoke it not as if He had now escaped from all His suffering. No; when He said, "It is finished," He meant all that had been ordained and decreed by the eternal Truth for Him to suffer. Besides, all the sufferings which had been inflicted upon Him by degrees and singly, He now endures together with immeasurable anguish. Who can have such a heart of adamant as not to be moved by such torment as this? How short were the words which our Lord Jesus spoke on the Cross, yet how full of sacramental mysteries! Now were fulfilled the words of Exodus: "And all things were finished which belonged to the sacrifice of the Lord."

Moreover by this word our Lord declared the glorious victory of the Passion, and how the old enemy, the jealous serpent, was overcome and thrown down; for this was the cause for which He suffered. For this He had taken upon Himself the garment of human nature, that He might vanquish and confound the enemy, by the same weapons

wherewith the enemy boasted that he had conquered man. This was the chief purpose of His Passion, and now He confesses that it is finished. O how wonderful are the mysteries, and the victories, included in this little but deep word: "It is finished!" All that the eternal Wisdom had decreed, all that strict justice had demanded for each man, all that love had asked for, all the promises made to the fathers, all the mysteries, types, ceremonies in Scripture, all that was meet and necessary for our redemption, all that was needed to wipe out our debts, all that must repair our negligences, all that was glorious and loving for the exhibition of this splendid love, all that we could desire, for our spiritual instruction - in a word, all that was good and fitting for the celebration of the glorious triumph of our redemption, all is included in that one word, "It is finished." What, then, remains for Him, but to finish and perfect His life in this glorious conflict; and, because nothing remains for Him to do, to commend His precious soul into His Father's hands, seeing that He has fought the good fight, and finished His course in all holiness? It is meet, then, that He should obtain the crown of glory which His heavenly Father will give Him on the day of His exaltation.

Lastly, by this word Christ offered up all His toil, sorrow, and affliction for all the elect, as the Apostle says: "Who in the days of His flesh offered up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

## THE SEVENTH WORD

OUR Lord Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit." O all you who love our Lord Jesus Christ, come, I beseech you, and let us watch, with all devotion and pity, His passing away. Let us see what must have been His sorrow and

agony and torment, when His glorious soul was now at last forced to pass out of His worthy and most sacred body, in which for thirty and three years it had rested so sweetly, peacefully, joyfully, and holily, even as two lovers on one bed. How hard was it for them to be rent asunder, between whom no disagreement had ever arisen, no strife, or quarrel, or treachery. How unspeakably grievous was that Cross, when His sacred body was compelled to part with so faithful a friend, so gentle an occupant, so loving a teacher and master; and how great was the sorrow with which His glorious and pure soul was torn away from so faithful a servant, which had ever served obediently, never sparing any trouble, never shrinking from cold or heat or hunger or thirst; always enduring labour and sorrow in gentleness and patience. O how great was this affliction! For, as the philosopher says: "Of all terrible things death is the most terrible, on account of the natural and mutual affection, which is very great, between soul and body." How much greater must have been the anguish and sorrow, when the most holy soul and body of Christ were sundered, between which there had always been such wonderful harmony and love. Therefore, with inward pity and anxious sorrow, let us meditate on this sad parting; for the death of Christ is our life.

Let us meditate devoutly how His sacred body, the instrument of our salvation, was steeped in anguish, when all His members, as if to bid a last farewell, were bowing themselves down to die! Who can look without remorse and sorrow and pity upon the most gracious face of Christ, and behold how it is changed into the pallor and likeness of death; how tears still flow from His dimmed eyes; how His sacred head is bent; how all His members prove to us, by signs and motions, the love which they can no longer show by deeds. Let us pity Him, I pray you, for He is our own flesh and blood, and it is for our sins, not His own, that He is shamefully slain. O you who up till now have passed by the Cross of Jesus with tepid or cold hearts, and whom all these torments and tears, and His blood shed like water, have not been able to soften; now at last let this loud voice, this terrible cry, rend and pierce your hearts through and through. Let that voice which shook the heaven and the earth and hell with fear, which rent the rocks and

laid open ancient graves, now soften your stony hearts, and lay bare the old sepulchres of your conscience, full of dead men's bones - that is to say, of wicked deeds, and call again into life your departed spirits. For this is the voice which once cried: "Adam, where are you; and what have you done?" This is the voice which brought Lazarus from Hades, saying, "Lazarus, come forth: arise from the grave of sin, and let them free you from your grave-clothes." Truly it was not so much the grievousness of His sufferings, as the greatness of our sins, which made our Lord utter this cry. He cried also, to show that He had the dominion over life and death, over the living and the dead. For though he was quite worn out, and destitute of strength, and though He had borne the bitter pangs of death so long, beyond the power of man, yet He would not allow Death to put forth its power against Him, until it pleased Him.

With a loud voice He cried, that earthly men, who care only for the things of earth, might quake with fear and trembling, and to cause them to meditate and see how naked and helpless the Lord of lords departed from this life. With a terrible voice He cried, to stir up all those who live in wantonness, and who have grown old in their defilement, and send forth a foul savour, like dead dogs, so that at last these miserable men may rise from their lusts and pleasures and sensual delights, and see how the Son of God, who was never strained with any spot of defilement, went forth to His Father; and with what toil and pain and anguish He departed from the light of day, and what He had to suffer before He reached his Father's Kingdom. He also cried with a loud voice, that He might inflame the lukewarm and slothful to devotion and love.

Moreover He cried with a loud voice as a sign of the glorious victory which He had gained, when after a single combat with His strong and cruel enemy, and having descended into the arena - the battlefield of this world - He had routed him on Mount Calvary and stripped him bare of his spoils. This victory, this glorious triumph, Christ proclaimed with a loud voice, and thus departing from the battlefield triumphant and victorious, He departed to the place of all delights, to

the heart and breast of God, His Father, commending to it, as to a safe refuge, both Himself and all His own, with the words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit."

We may learn from these words that the eternal Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, had been let down like a fishing-hook or great net, by the Father of heaven, into the great sea of this world, that He might catch not fish but men. Hear how He says: "My word, that goes forth out of My mouth shall not return to Me void, but shall execute that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." And this net is drawn by the Father out of the salt sea, to the peaceful shore of His fatherly heart, full of the elect, of works of charity, of repentance, patience, humility, obedience, spiritual exercises, merits and virtues. For Christ drew to Himself all the afflictions and good deeds of the good; just as St Paul says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Even so, Christ lives in all the good, and all who have been willing and obedient instruments in the hands of Christ. In all such Christ lives and suffers and works. For whatever good there is in all men, is all God's work. Therefore Christ, feeling His Father drawing Him, gathered together in Himself in a wonderful manner all the elect with all their works, and commended them to His Father, saying, "My Father, these are Your; these are the spoils which I have won by My conquest, by the sword of the Cross; these are the vessels which I have purchased with My precious blood; these are the fruits of My labours. Keep in Your own name those whom You have given Me. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil." Thus did Christ commend Himself and all His own into His Father's hands. Come therefore, O faithful and devout soul, and contemplate with great earnestness the coming in and the going out of your Lord Jesus; follow Him with love and longing, even to the chamber and bed of joy, which He has prepared for you in your Father's heart. Happy would he be, who could now be dissolved with Christ, and die with the thief, and hear from the lips of the Lord that comfortable word, "This day shalt you be with Me in paradise." And though this is not granted to us, yet whatever we can here gain by labours and watchings and fastings and prayers, let us commend it all

with Christ to the Father; let us pour it back again into the fountain, whence it flowed forth for us; and let nothing be left in us of empty self-satisfaction, no seeking after human praise or honour or reward. But whatever our God has been willing to do in us, let us return it back into His own hands and say, "We are nothing of ourselves. It is He who made us, and not we ourselves. All good was made by Him, and without Him was not anything made. When therefore He takes with Him what He made Himself, we are absolutely nothing."

Lastly, Christ commended His soul into His Father's hands, to show us how the souls of good and holy men mount up after Him to the bosom of the eternal Father, who must otherwise have gone down to hell; for it is He who has opened to us the way of life, and His sacred soul, by making the journey safe and free from danger, has been our guide into the kingdom of heaven.

SUSO

## SUSO AND HIS SPIRITUAL DAUGHTER

AFTER this, certain very high thoughts arose in the mind of the servitor's spiritual daughter, concerning which she asked him whether she might put questions to him. He replied, Yea verily: since you have been led through the proper exercises, it is permitted to your spiritual intelligence to enquire about high things. Ask then whatever you will. She said: Tell me, father, what is God, and how He is both One and Three? The servitor replied, These be indeed high questions. As to the first, What is God, you must know that all the Doctors who ever lived cannot explain it, for He is above all sense and reason. Yet if a man is diligent, and does not relax his efforts, he gains some knowledge of God, though very far off. Yet in this knowledge of God consists our eternal life and man's supreme happiness. In this way, in former times, certain worthy philosophers searched for God, and especially that great thinker Aristotle, who tried to discover the Author of Nature from the order of nature and its course. He sought earnestly, and he was convinced from the well-ordered course of nature that there must

of necessity be one Prince and Lord of the whole universe - He whom we call God. About this God and Lord we know this much, that He is an immortal Substance, eternal, without before or after, simple, bare, unchangeable, an incorporeal and essential Spirit, whose substance is life and energy, whose most penetrating intelligence knows all things in and by itself, whose essence in itself is an abyss of pleasures and joys, and who is to Himself, and to all who shall enjoy Him in a future life, a supernatural, ineffable, and most sweet happiness. The maiden, when she heard this, looked up, and said: These things are sweet to tell and sweet to hear, for they rouse the heart, and lift the spirit up far beyond itself. Therefore, father, tell me more about these things. The servitor said: The Divine Essence, about which we speak, is an intelligible or intellectual Substance of such a kind, that it cannot be seen in itself by mortal eyes; but it can be discerned in its effects, even as we recognise a fine artist by his works. As the Apostle teaches us, "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." For the creatures are a kind of mirror, in which God shines. This knowledge is called speculation, by which we contemplate the great Architect of the world in His works. Come now, look upward and about you, through all the quarters of the universe, and see how wide and high the beautiful heaven is, how swift its motion, and how marvellously its Creator has adorned it with the seven planets, and with the countless multitude of the twinkling stars. Consider what fruitfulness, what riches, the sun bestows upon the earth, when in summer it sheds abroad its rays unclouded! See how the leaves and grass shoot up, and the flowers smile, and the woods and plains resound with the sweet song of nightingales and other birds; how all the little animals, after being imprisoned by grim winter, come forth rejoicing, and pair; and how men and women, both old and young, rejoice and are merry. O Almighty God, if You are so lovable and so pleasant in Your creatures, how happy and blessed, how full of all joy and beauty, must You be in Yourself? But further, my daughter, contemplate the elements themselves - Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, with all the wonderful things which they contain in infinite variety - men, beasts, birds, fishes, and sea-monsters. And all of these give praise and honour to the

unfathomable immensity that is in You. Who is it, Lord, who preserves all these things, who nourishes them? It is You who provide for all, each in his own way, for great and small, rich and poor. You, O God, doest this; You alone are God indeed! Behold, my daughter, you have now found the God whom you have sought so long. Look up, then, with shining eyes, with radiant face and exulting heart, behold Him and embrace Him with the outstretched arms of your soul and mind, and give thanks to Him as the one and supreme Lord of all creatures. By gazing on this mirror, there springs up speedily, in one of loving and pious disposition, an inward jubilation of the heart; for by this is meant a joy which no tongue can tell, though it pours with might through heart and soul. Alas, I now feel within me, that I must open for you the closed mouth of my soul; and I am compelled, for the glory of God, to tell you certain secrets, which I never yet told to any one. A certain Dominican, well known to me, at the beginning of his course used to receive from God twice every day, morning and evening, for ten years, an outpouring of grace like this, which lasted about as long as it would take to say the "Vigils of the Dead" twice over. At these times he was so entirely absorbed in God, the eternal Wisdom, that he would not speak of it. Sometimes he would converse with God as with a friend, not with the mouth, but mentally; at other times he would utter piteous sighs to Him; at other times he would weep copiously, or smile silently. He often seemed to himself to be flying in the air, and swimming between time and eternity in the depth of the Divine wonders, which no man can fathom. And his heart became so full from this, that he would sometimes lay his hand upon it as it beat heavily, saying, "Alas, my heart, what labours will befall you to-day?" One day it seemed to him that the heart of his heavenly Father was, in a spiritual and indescribable manner, pressed tenderly, and with nothing between, against his heart; and that the Father's heart - that is, the eternal Wisdom, spoke inwardly to his heart without forms. Then he began to exclaim joyously in spiritual jubilation: Behold, now, You whom I most fervently love, thus do I lay bare my heart to You, and in simplicity and nakedness of all created things I embrace Your formless Godhead! O God, most excellent of all friends! Earthly friends must needs endure to be distinct and separate from those whom they

love; but You, O fathomless sweetness of all true love, melt into the heart of Your beloved, and pour Yourself fully into the essence of his soul, that nothing of You remains outside, but You are joined and united most lovingly with Your beloved.

To this the maiden replied: Truly it is a great grace, when anyone is thus caught up into God. But I should like to be informed, whether this is the most perfect kind of union or not? The servitor answered: No, it is not the most perfect, but a preliminary, gently drawing a man on, that he may arrive at an essential way of being carried up into God. The maiden asked him what he meant by essential and non-essential. He answered: I call that man essential or habitual (so to speak), who by the good and persevering practice of all the virtues, has arrived at the point of finding the practice of them in their highest perfection pleasant to him, even as the brightness of the sun remains constant in the sun. But I call him non-essential, in whom the brightness of the virtues shines in an unstable and imperfect way like the brightness of the moon. That full delight of grace which I described is so sweet to the spirit of the non-essential man, that he would be glad always to have it. When he has it, he rejoices; when he is deprived of it, he grieves inordinately; and when it smiles upon him, he is reluctant to pass to doing other things, even things that are pleasing to God; as I will show you by an example. The servitor of the Divine Wisdom was once walking in the chapter-house, and his heart was full of heavenly jubilation, when the porter called him out to see a woman who wished to confess to him. He was unwilling to interrupt his inward delight, and received the porter harshly, bidding him tell the woman that she must find some one else to confess to, for he did not wish to hear her confession just then. She, however, being oppressed with the burden of her sins, said that she felt specially drawn to seek comfort from him, and that she would confess to no one else. And when he still refused to go out, she began to weep most sadly, and going into a corner, lamented greatly. Meanwhile, God quickly withdrew from the servitor the delights of grace, and his heart became as hard as flint. And when he desired to know the cause of this, God answered him inwardly: Even as you have driven away uncomforted that poor woman, so have

I withdrawn from you my Divine comfort. The servitor groaned deeply and beat his breast, and hurried to the door, and as he did not find the woman there, was much distressed. The porter, however, looked about for her everywhere, and when he found her, still weeping, bade her return to the door. When she came, the servitor received her gently, and comforted her sorrowing heart. Then he went back from her to the chapter-house, and immediately God was with him, with His Divine consolations, as before.

Then said the maiden: It must be easy for him to bear sufferings, to whom God gives such jubilation and internal joys. And yet, said the servitor, all had to be paid for afterward with great suffering. However, at last, when all this had passed away, and God's appointed time had come, the same grace of jubilation was restored to him, and remained with him almost continuously both at home and abroad, in company and alone. Often in the bath or at table the same grace was with him; but it was now internal, and did show itself outside.

Then the maiden said: My father, I have now learned what God is; but I am also eager to know where He is. You shalt hear, said the servitor. The opinion of the theologians is that God is in no particular place, but that He is everywhere, and all in all. The same doctors say that we come to know a thing through its name. Now one doctor says that Being is the first name of God. Turn your eyes, therefore, to Being in its pure and naked simplicity, and take no notice of this or that substance which can be torn asunder into parts and separated; but consider Being in itself, unmixed with any Not-Being. Whatever is nothing, is the negation of what is; and what is, is the negation of what is not. A thing which has yet to be, or which once was, is not now in actual being. Moreover, we cannot know mixed being or not-being unless we take into account that which is all-being. This Being is not the being of this or that creature; for all particular being is mixed with something extraneous, whereby it can receive something new into itself. Therefore the nameless Divine Being must be in itself a Being that is all-being, and that sustains all particular things by its presence.

It shows the strange blindness of man's reason, that it cannot examine into that which it contemplates before everything, and without which it cannot perceive anything. Just as, when the eye is bent on noticing various colours, it does not observe the light which enables it to see all these objects, and even if it looks at the light it does not observe it; so it is with the eye of the soul. When it looks at this or that particular substance, it takes no heed of the being, which is everywhere one, absolute and simple, and by the virtue and goodness of which it can apprehend all other things. Hence the wise Aristotle says, that the eye of our intelligence, owing to its weakness, is affected towards that being which is itself the most manifest of all things, as the eye of a bat or owl is towards the bright rays of the sun. For particular substances distract and dazzle the mind, so that it cannot behold the Divine darkness, which is the clearest light.

Come now, open the eyes of your mind, and gaze if you can, on Being in its naked and simple purity. You will perceive that it comes from no one, and has no before nor after, and that it cannot change, because it is simple Being. You will also observe that it is the most actual, the most present, and the most perfect of beings, with no defect or mutation, because it is absolutely one in its bare simplicity. This is so evident to an instructed intellect, that it cannot think otherwise. Since it is simple Being, it must be the first of beings, and without beginning or end, and because it is the first and everlasting and simple, it must be the most present. If you can understand this, you will have been guided far into the incomprehensible light of God's hidden truth. This pure and simple Being is altogether in all things, and altogether outside all things. Hence a certain doctor says: God is a circle, whose centre is everywhere, and His circumference nowhere.

When this had been said, the maiden answered: Blessed be God, I have been shown, as far as may be, both what God is, and where He is. But I should like also to be told how, if God is so absolutely simple, He can also be threefold.

The servitor answered: The more simple any being is in itself, the

more manifold is it in its energy and operation. That which has nothing gives nothing, and that which has much can give much. I have already spoken of the inflowing and overflowing fount of good which God is in Himself. This infinite and superessential goodness constrains Him not to keep it all within Himself, but to communicate it freely both within and without Himself. But the highest and most perfect outpouring of the good must be within itself, and this can be nought else but a present, interior, personal and natural outpouring, necessary, yet without compulsion, infinite and perfect. Other communications, in temporal matters, draw their origin from this eternal communication of the Divine Goodness. Some theologians say that in the outflow of the creatures from their first origin there is a return in a circle of the end to the beginning; for as the emanation of the Persons from the Godhead is an image of the origin of the creatures, so also it is a type of the flowing back of the creatures into God. There is, however, a difference between the outpouring of the creatures and that of God. The creature is only a particular and partial substance, and its giving and communication is also partial and limited. When a human father begets a son, he gives him part, but not the whole, of his own substance, for he himself is only a partial good. But the outpouring of God is of a more interior and higher kind than the creature's outpouring, inasmuch as He Himself is a higher good. If the outpouring of God is to be worthy of His pre-eminent being, it must be according to personal relations.

Now, then, if you can look upon the pure goodness of the highest Good (which goodness is, by its nature, the active principle of the spontaneous love with which the highest Good loves itself) you will behold the most excellent and superessential outpouring of the Word from the Father, by which generation all things exist and are produced; and you will see also in the highest good, and the highest outpouring, the most holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, existing in the Godhead. And if the highest outpouring proceeds from the highest essential good, it follows that there must be in this Trinity the highest and most intimate consubstantiality or community of being, and complete equality and identity of essence, which the Persons

enjoy in sweetest communion, and also that the Substance and power of the three almighty Persons is undivided and unpartitioned.

Here the maiden exclaimed: Marvellous! I swim in the Godhead like an eagle in the air. The servitor, resuming his exposition, continued: It is impossible to express in words how the Trinity can subsist in the unity of one essence. Nevertheless, to say what may be said on the subject, Augustine says that in the Godhead the Father is the Fountain-head of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Dionysius says, that in the Father there is an outflowing of the Godhead, which naturally communicates itself to the Word or Son. He also freely and lovingly pours Himself out into the Son; and the Son in turn pours Himself out freely and lovingly into the Father; and this love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father, is the Holy Ghost. This is truly said, but it is made clearer by that glorious Doctor of the Church, St Thomas, who says as follows: In the outpouring of the Word from the Father's heart, God the Father must contemplate Himself with His own mind, bending back, as it were, upon His Divine essence; for if the reason of the Father had not the Divine essence for its object, the Word so conceived would be a creature instead of God; which is false. But in the way described He is "God of God." Again, this looking back upon the Divine essence, which takes place in the mind of God, must, in a manner, produce a natural likeness; else the Word would not be the Son of God. So here we have the unity of essence in the diversity of Persons; and a clear proof of this distinction may be found in the word of that soaring eagle St John: "The Word was in the beginning with God."

Thus the Father is the Fountain-head of the Son, and the Son is the outflowing of the Father; and the Father and Son pour forth the Spirit; and the Unity, which is the essence of the Fountain-head, is also the substance of the three Persons. But as to how the Three are One, this cannot be expressed in words, on account of the simplicity of that Abyss. Into this intellectual Where, the spirits of men made perfect soar and plunge themselves, now flying over infinite heights, now swimming in unfathomed depths, marvelling at the high and wonderful mysteries of the Godhead. Nevertheless, the spirit remains

a spirit, and retains its nature, while it enjoys the vision of the Divine Persons, and abstracted from all occupation with things below contemplates with fixed gaze those stupendous mysteries. For what can be more marvellous than that simple Unity, into which the Trinity of the Persons merges itself, and in which all multiplicity ceases? For the outflowing of the Persons is always tending back into the Unity of the same essence, and all creatures, according to their ideal existence in God, are from eternity in this Unity, and have their life, knowledge, and essence in the eternal God; as it is said in the Gospel: "That which was made, was Life in Him." This bare Unity is a dark silence and tranquil inactivity, which none can understand unless he is illuminated by the Unity itself, unmixed with any evil. Out of this shines forth hidden truth, free from all falsehood; and this truth is born from the unveiling of the veiled Divine purity; for after the revelation of these things, the spirit is at last unclothed of the dusky light which up till now has followed it, and in which it has hitherto seen things in an earthly way. Indeed, the spirit finds itself now changed and something very different from what it supposed itself to be according to its earlier light: even as St Paul says, "I, yet not I." Thus it is unclothed and simplified in the simplicity of the Divine essence, which shines upon all things in simple stillness. In this modeless mode of contemplation, the permanent distinction of the Persons, viewed as separate, is lost. For, as some teach, it is not the Person of the Father, taken by Himself, which produces bliss, nor the Person of the Son, taken by Himself, nor the Person of the Holy Ghost, taken by Himself; but the three Persons, dwelling together in the unity of the essence, confer bliss. And this is the natural essence of the Persons, which by grace gives the substance or essence to all their creatures, and it contains in itself the ideas of all things in their simple essence. Now since this ideal light subsists as Being, so all things subsist in it according to their essential being, not according to their accidental forms; and since it shines upon all things, its property is to subsist as light. Hence all things shine forth in this essence in interior stillness, without altering its simplicity.

Then the maiden said: I could wish greatly, sir, that you could give

me this mysterious teaching, as you understand it, under a figure, that I might understand it better. I should also be glad if you could sum up what you have been saying at length, so that it may stick more firmly in my weak mind. The servitor replied: Who can express in forms what has no form? Who can explain that which has no mode of being, and is above sense and reason? Any similitude must be infinitely more unlike than like the reality. Nevertheless, that I may drive out forms from your mind by forms, I will try to give you a picture of these ideas which surpass all forms, and to sum up a long discourse in a few words. A certain wise theologian says that God, in regard to His Godhead, is like a vast circle, of which the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. Now consider the image which follows. If anyone throws a great stone into the middle of a pool, a ring is formed in the water, and this ring makes a second ring, and the second a third; and the number and size of the rings depend on the force of the throw. They may even require a larger space than the limit of the pool. Suppose now that the first ring represents the omnipotent virtue of the Divine nature, which is infinite in God the Father. This produces another ring like itself, which is the Son. And the two produce the third, which is the Holy Ghost. The spiritual superessential begetting of the Divine Word is the cause of the creation of all spirits and all things. This supreme Spirit has so ennobled man, as to shed upon him a ray from His own eternal Godhead. This is the image of God in the mind, which is itself eternal. But many men turn away from this dignity of their nature, befouling the bright image of God in themselves, and turning to the bodily pleasures of this world. They pursue them greedily and devote themselves to them, till death unexpectedly stops them. But he who is wise, turns himself and elevates himself, with the help of the Divine spark in his soul, to that which is stable and eternal, whence he had his own origin: he says farewell to all the fleeting creatures, and clings to the eternal truth alone.

Attend also to what I say about the order in which the spirit ought to return to God. First of all, we should disentangle ourselves absolutely from the pleasures of the world, manfully turning our backs upon all

vices; we should turn to God by continual prayers, by seclusion, and holy exercise, that the flesh may thus be subdued to the spirit. Next, we must offer ourselves willingly to endure all the troubles which may come upon us, from God, or from the creatures. Thirdly, we must impress upon ourselves the Passion of Christ crucified; we must fix upon our minds His sweet teaching, His most gentle conversation, His most pure life, which He gave us for our example, and so we must penetrate deeper and advance further in our imitation of Him. Fourthly, we must divest ourselves of external occupations, and establish ourselves in a tranquil stillness of soul by an energetic resignation, as if we were dead to self, and thought only of the honour of Christ and His heavenly Father. Lastly, we should be humble towards all men, whether friends or foes. . . . But all these images, with their interpretations, are as unlike the formless truth as a black Ethiopian is to the bright sun.

Soon after this holy maiden died, and passed away happy from earth, even as her whole life had been conspicuous only for her virtues. After her death she appeared to her spiritual father in a vision. She was clothed in raiment whiter than snow; she shone with dazzling brightness, and was full of heavenly joy. She came near to him, and showed him in what an excellent fashion she had passed away into the simple Godhead. He saw and heard her with exceeding delight, and the vision filled his soul with heavenly consolations. When he returned to himself, he sighed most deeply, and thus pondered: O Almighty God, how blessed is he, who strives after You alone! He may well be content to bear affliction, whose sufferings You will thus reward! May the Almighty God grant that we likewise may be brought to the same joys as this blessed maiden!

## A MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST

THEN said the Eternal Wisdom to the servitor, Attend and listen dutifully, while I tell you what sufferings I lovingly endured for your sake.

After I had finished My last Supper with My disciples, when I had offered Myself to My enemies on the mount, and had resigned Myself to bear a terrible death, and knew that it was approaching very near, so great was the oppression of My tender heart and all My body, that I sweated blood; then I was wickedly arrested, bound, and carried away. On the same night they treated Me with insult and contumely, beating Me, spitting upon Me, and covering My head. Before Caiaphas was I unjustly accused and condemned to death. What misery it was to see My mother seized with unspeakable sorrow of heart, from the time when she beheld Me threatened with such great dangers, till the time when I was hung upon the cross. They brought Me before Pilate with every kind of ignominy, they accused Me falsely, they adjudged Me worthy of death. Before Herod I, the Eternal Wisdom, was mocked in a bright robe. My fair body was miserably torn and rent by cruel scourgings. They surrounded My sacred head with a crown of thorns; My gracious face was covered with blood and spittings. When they had thus condemned Me to death, they led Me out with My cross to bear the last shameful punishment. Their terrible and savage cries could be heard afar off: "Crucify, crucify, the wicked man."

Servitor. Alas, Lord, if so bitter were the beginnings of Your passion, what will be the end thereof? In truth, if I saw a brute beast so treated in my presence I could hardly bear it. What grief then should I feel in heart and soul at Your Passion? And yet there is one thing at which I marvel greatly. For I long, O my most dear God, to know only Your Godhead; and You tell me of Your humanity. I long to taste Your sweetness, and You show me Your bitterness. What means this, O my Lord God?

Wisdom. No man can come to the height of My Godhead, nor attain to that unknown sweetness, unless he be first led through the bitterness of My humanity. My humanity is the road by which men must travel. My Passion is the gate, through which they must enter. Away then with your cowardice of heart, and come to Me prepared for a hard campaign. For it is not right for the servant to live softly and delicately, while his Lord is fighting bravely. Come, I will now put on

you My own armour. And so you must yourself also experience the whole of My Passion, so far as your strength permits. Take, therefore, the heart of a man; for be sure that you will have to endure many deaths, before you can put your nature under the yoke. I will sprinkle your garden of spices with red flowers. Many are the afflictions which will come upon you; till you have finished your sad journey of bearing the cross, and have renounced your own will and disengaged yourself so completely from all creatures, in all things, which might hinder your eternal salvation, as to be like one about to die, and no longer mixed up with the affairs of this life.

Servitor. Hard and grievous to bear are the things which You say, Lord. I tremble all over. How can I bear all these things? Suffer me, O Lord, to ask You something. Could You not devise any other way of saving my soul, and of testifying Your love towards me, so as to spare Yourself such hard sufferings, and so that I need not suffer so bitterly with You?

Wisdom. The unfathomable Abyss of My secret counsels no man ought to seek to penetrate, for no one can comprehend it. And yet that which you have suggested, and many other things, might have been possible, which nevertheless never happen. Be assured, however, that as created things now are, no more fitting method could be found. The Author of Nature does not think so much what He is able to do in the world, as what is most fitting for every creature; and this is the principle of His operations. And by what other means could the secrets of God have been made known to man, than by the assumption of humanity by Christ? By what other means could he who had deprived himself of joy by the inordinate pursuit of pleasure, be brought back more fittingly to the joys of eternity? And who would be willing to tread the path, avoided by all, of a hard and despised life, if God had not trodden it Himself? If you were condemned to death, how could any one show his love and fidelity to you more convincingly, or provoke you to love him in return more powerfully, than by taking your sentence upon himself? If, then, there is any one who is not roused and moved to love Me from his heart by My immense love, My

infinite pity, My exalted divinity, My pure humanity, My brotherly fidelity, My sweet friendship, is there anything that could soften that stony heart?

Servitor. The light begins to dawn upon me, and I seem to myself to see clearly that it is as You say, and that whoever is not altogether blind must admit that this is the best and most fitting of all ways. And yet the imitation of You is grievous to a slothful and corruptible body.

Wisdom. Shrink not because you must follow the footsteps of My Passion. For he who loves God, and is inwardly united to Him, finds the cross itself light and easy to bear, and has nought to complain of. No one receives from Me more marvellous sweetness, than he who shares My bitterest labours. He only complains of the bitterness of the rind, who has not tasted the sweetness of the kernel. He who relies on Me as his protector and helper may be considered to have accomplished a large part of his task.

Servitor. Lord, by these consoling words I am so much encouraged, that I seem to myself to be able to do and suffer all things through You. I pray You, then, that You will unfold the treasure of Your Passion to me more fully.

Wisdom. When I was hung aloft and fastened to the wood of the cross (which I bore for My great love to you and all mankind), all the wonted appearance of My body was piteously changed. My bright eyes lost their light; My sacred ears were filled with mocking and blasphemy; My sweet mouth was hurt by the bitter drink. Nowhere was there any rest or refreshment for Me. My sacred head hung down in pain; My fair neck was cruelly bruised; My shining face was disfigured by festering wounds; My fresh colour was turned to pallor. In a word, the beauty of My whole body was so marred, that I appeared like a leper - I, the Divine Wisdom, who am fairer than the sun.

Servitor. O brightest mirror of grace, which the Angels desire to look

into, in which they delight to fix their gaze, would that I might behold Your beloved countenance in the throes of death just long enough to water it with the tears of my heart, and to satisfy my mind with lamentations over it.

Wisdom. No one more truly testifies his grief over My Passion, than he who in very deed passes through it with Me. Far more pleasing to Me is a heart disentangled from the love of all transitory things, and earnestly intent on gaining the highest perfection according to the example which I have set before him in My life, than one which continually weeps over My Passion, shedding as many tears as all the raindrops that ever fell. For this was what I most desired and looked for in My endurance of that cruel death - namely, that mankind might imitate Me; and yet pious tears are very dear to Me.

Servitor. Since then, O most gracious God, the imitation of Your most gentle life and most loving Passion is so pleasing to You, I will henceforth labour more diligently to follow Your Passion than to weep over it. But since both are pleasing to You, teach me, I pray You, how I ought to conform myself to Your Passion.

Wisdom. Forbid yourself the pleasure of curious and lax seeing and hearing; let love make sweet to you those things which formerly you shrank from; eschew bodily pleasures; rest in Me alone; bear sweetly and moderately the ills that come from others; desire to despise yourself; break your appetites; crush out all your pleasures and desires. These are the first elements in the school of Wisdom, which are read in the volume of the book of My crucified body. But consider whether anyone, do what he may, can make himself for My sake such as I made Myself for his.

Servitor. Come then, my soul, collect yourself from all external things, into the tranquil silence of the inner man. Woe is me! My heavenly Father had adopted my soul to be His bride; but I fled far from Him. Alas, I have lost my Father, I have lost my Lover. Alas, alas, and woe is me! What have I done, what have I lost? Shame on me, I

have lost myself, and all the society of my heavenly country. All that could delight and cheer me has utterly forsaken me; I am left naked. My false lovers were only deceivers. They have stripped me of all the good things which my one true Lover gave me; they have despoiled me of all honour, joy, and consolation. O you red roses and white lilies, behold me a vile weed, and see also how soon those flowers wither and die, which this world plucks. And yet, O most gracious God, none of my sufferings are of any account, compared with this, that I have grieved the eyes of my heavenly Father. This is indeed hell, and a cross more intolerable than all other pain. O heart of mine, harder than flint or adamant, why dost you not break for grief? Once I was called the bride of the eternal King, now I deserve not to be called the meanest of his handmaids. Never again shall I dare to raise mine eyes, for shame. O that I could hide myself in some vast forest, with none to see or hear me, till I had wept to my heart's desire. O Sin, Sin, whither have you brought me? O deceitful World, woe to those who serve you! Now I have your reward, I receive your wages - namely, that I am a burden to myself and the whole world, and always shall be.

Wisdom. You must by no means despair; it was for your sins and those of others that I came into this world, that I might restore you to Your heavenly Father, and bring you back to greater glory and honour than you ever had before.

Servitor. Ah, what is this, which whispers such flattering things to a soul that is dead, abhorred, rejected?

Wisdom. Dost you not know Me? Why are you so despondent? Are you beside yourself with excessive grief, My dearest son? Know you not that I am Wisdom, most gentle and tender, in whom is the Abyss of infinite mercy, never yet explored perfectly even by all the saints, but none the less open to you and all other sorrowing hearts. I am he who for your sake willed to be poor and an exile, that I might recall you to your former honour. I am He who bore a bitter death, that I might restore you to life. I am your Brother; I am your Bridegroom. I have put away all the wrong that you ever did against Me, even as if it had

never been, only henceforth, you must turn wholly to Me, and never again forsake Me. Wash away your stains in My blood. Lift up your head, open your eyes, and take heart. In token of reconciliation, take this ring and put it on your finger as My bride, put on this robe, and these shoes on your feet, and receive this sweet and loving name, that you mayst both be and be called for ever My bride. You has cost Me much labour and pain; for that cause, the Abyss of My mercy toward you is unfathomable.

Servitor. O kindest Father, O sweetest Brother, O only joy of my heart, will You be so favourable to my unworthy soul? What is this grace? What is the Abyss of Your clemency and mercy? From the bottom of my heart I thank You, O heavenly Father, and beseech You by Your beloved Son, whom You have willed to suffer a cruel death for love, to forget my impieties. . . .

Now, O Lord, I remember that most loving word, wherewith in the book of Ecclesiasticus You draw us to Yourself. "Come to me, all you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits. I am the mother of beautiful affection. My breath is sweeter than honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb." "Wine and music rejoice the heart, and above both is the love of Wisdom." Of a surety, O Lord, You show Yourself so lovable and desirable, that it is no wonder that the hearts of all long for You, and are tormented by the desire of You. Your words breathe love, and flow so sweetly, that in many hearts the love of temporal things has wholly dried up. Therefore, I greatly long to hear You speak of Your lovableness. Come, O Lord, my only comfort, speak to the heart of Your servant. For I sleep sweetly beneath Your shadow, and my heart is awake.

Wisdom. Hear, My son, and see; incline your ear, forgetting yourself and all other things. Lo, I in Myself am that ineffable Good, which is and ever was; which has never been expressed nor ever will be. For although I give Myself to be felt by men in their inmost hearts, yet no tongue can ever declare or explain in words what I am. For verily all the beauty, grace, and adornment which can be conceived by you or by

others, exists in me far more excellently, more pleasantly, more copiously, than any one could say in words. I am the most loving Word of the Father, begotten from the pure substance of the Father, and wondrously pleasing am I to His loving eyes in the sweet and burning love of the Holy Spirit. I am the throne of happiness, the crown of souls: most bright are Mine eyes, most delicate My mouth, My cheeks are red and white, and all My appearance is full of grace and loveliness. All the heavenly host gaze upon Me with wonder and admiration; their eyes are ever fixed upon Me, their hearts rest in Me, their minds turn to Me and turn again. O thrice and four times happy is he, to whom it shall be given to celebrate this play of love amid heavenly joys at My side, holding My tender hands in happiest security, for ever and ever to all eternity. Only the word that proceeds out of My sweet mouth surpasses the melodies of all the angels, the sweet harmony of all harps, and musical instruments of every kind. . . .

Servitor. There are three things, O Lord, at which I marvel greatly. The first is, that although You are in Yourself so exceedingly loving, yet towards sin You are a most severe judge and avenger. Alas, Your face in wrath is too terrible; the words which You speak in anger pierce the heart and soul like fire. O holy and adorable God, save me from Your wrathful countenance, and defer not till the future life my punishment.

Wisdom. I am the unchangeable Good, remaining always the same. The reason why I do not appear always the same, is on account of those who do not behold Me in the same way. By nature I am friendly; yet none the less I punish vice severely, so that I deserve to be feared. From My friends I require a pure and filial fear, and a friendly love, that fear may ever restrain them from sin, and that love may join them to Me in unbroken loyalty.

Servitor. What You say pleases me, O Lord, and it is as I would have it. But there is another thing at which I greatly marvel - how it is that when the soul is faint from desire of the sweetness of Your presence, You are wholly mute, and do not utter a single word that can be heard.

And who, O Lord, would not be grieved, when You show Yourself so strange, so silent, to the soul that loves You above all things?

Wisdom. And yet all the creatures speak of Me.

Servitor. But that is by no means enough for the soul that loves.

Wisdom. Also every word that is uttered about Me is a message of My love; all the voices of holy Scripture that are written about Me are letters of love, sweet as honey. They are to be received as if I had written them Myself. Ought not this to satisfy you?

Servitor. Nay but, O most holy God, dearest Friend of all to me, You know well that a heart which is on fire with love is not satisfied with anything that is not the Beloved himself, in whom is its only comfort. Even though all the tongues of all the angelic spirits were to speak to me, none the less would my unquenchable love continue to yearn and strive for the one thing which it desires. The soul that loves You would choose You rather than the kingdom of heaven. Pardon me, O Lord: it would become You to show more kindness to those who love You so ardently, who sigh and look up to You and say: Return, return! Who anxiously debate with themselves: alas, think you that you have offended Him? That He has deserted you? Think you that He will ever restore you His most sweet presence, that you will ever again embrace Him with the arms of Your heart, and press Him to your breast, that all your grief and trouble may vanish? All this, O Lord, You hear and know, and yet You are silent.

Wisdom. Certainly I know all this, and I watch it with great pleasure. But I would have you also answer a few questions, since your wonder, though veiled, is so great. What is it which gives the greatest joy to the highest of all created spirits?

Servitor. Ah, Lord, this question is beyond my range. I pray You, answer it Yourself.

Wisdom. I will do as you desire. The highest angelic spirit finds nothing more desirable or more delightful than to satisfy My will in all things; so much so, that if he knew that it would redound to My praise for him to root out nettles and tares, he would diligently fulfil this task in preference to all others.

Servitor. Of a truth, Lord, this answer of Your touches me sharply. I perceive that it is Your will that I should be resigned in the matter of receiving and feeling tokens of Your love, and that I should seek Your glory alone, in dryness and hardness as well as in sweetness.

Wisdom. No resignation is more perfect or more excellent, than to be resigned in dereliction.

Servitor. And yet, O Lord, the pain is very grievous.

Wisdom. Wherein is virtue proved, if not in adversity? But be assured, that I often come, and try whether the door into My house is open, but find Myself repulsed. Many times I am received like a stranger, harshly treated, and then driven out of doors. Nay, I not only come to the soul that loves me, but tarry with her like a friend; but that is done so secretly, that none know it save those who live quite detached and separated from men, and observe My ways, and care only to please and satisfy My grace. For according to My Divinity I am purest Spirit, and I am received spiritually in pure spirits.

Servitor. So far as I understand, Lord God, You are a very secret Lover. How glad would I be if You would - give me some signs, by which I might know You to be truly present.

Wisdom. By no other way can you know the certainty of My presence better, than when I hide Myself from you, and withdraw what is Mine from your soul. Then at last you know - by experience what I am, and what you art. Of a surety I am everlasting Good, without whom no one can have anything good. When therefore I impart that immense Good, which is Myself, generously and lovingly,

and scatter it abroad, all things to which I communicate Myself are clothed with a certain goodness, by which My presence can be as easily inferred, as that of the Sun, the actual ball of which cannot be seen, by its rays. If therefore you ever feel - My presence, enter into yourself, and learn how to separate the roses from the thorns, the flowers from the weeds.

Servitor. Lord, I do search, and I find within myself a great diversity. When I am deserted by You, my soul is like a sick man, whose taste is spoiled. Nothing pleases me, but all things disgust me. My body is torpid, my mind oppressed; within is dryness, without is sadness. All that I see or hear, however good in reality, is distasteful and hateful to me. I am easily led into sins; I am weak to resist my enemies; I am cold or lukewarm towards all good. Whoever comes to me, finds my house empty. For the House-Father is away, who knows how to counsel for the best, and to inspire the whole household. On the other hand, when the day-star arises in my inmost heart, all the pain quickly vanishes, all the darkness is dispelled, and a great brightness arises and shines forth. My heart laughs, my mind is exalted, my soul becomes cheerful, all things around me are blithe and merry; whatever is around me and within me is turned to Your praise. That which before seemed hard, difficult, irksome, impossible, becomes suddenly easy and pleasant. To give myself to fasting, watching, and prayer, to suffer or abstain or avoid, in a word all the hardnesses of life seem when compared with Your presence to have no irksomeness at all. My soul is bathed in radiance, truth, and sweetness, so that all its labours are forgotten. My heart delights itself in abundant sweet meditations, my tongue learns to speak of high things, my body is brisk and ready for any undertaking; whoever comes to ask my advice, takes back with him high counsels such as he desired to hear. In short, I seem to myself to have transcended the limits of time and space, and to be standing on the threshold of eternal bliss. But who, O Lord, can secure for me, that I may be long in this state? Alas, in a moment it is withdrawn from me; and for a long space again I am left as naked and destitute as if I had never experienced anything of the kind; till at last, after many and deep sighings of heart, it is restored to me. Is this You, O Lord, or

rather I myself? Or what is it?

Wisdom. Of yourself you have nothing except faults and defects. Therefore that about which you ask is I Myself, and this is the play of love.

Servitor. What is the play of love?

Wisdom. So long as the loved one is present with the lover, the lover knows not how dear the loved one is to him; it is only separation which can teach him that.

Servitor. It is a very grievous game. But tell me, Lord, are there any who in this life no longer experience these vicissitudes of Your presence?

Wisdom. You will find very few indeed. For never to be deprived of My presence belongs not to temporal but to eternal life.

## APHORISMS AND MAXIMS

ACT according to the truth in simplicity; and, whatever happens, do not help yourself; for he who helps himself too much will not be helped by the Truth.

God wishes not to deprive us of pleasure; but He wishes to give us pleasure in its totality - that is, all pleasure.

Will you be of use to all creatures? Then turn yourself away from all creatures.

If a man cannot comprehend a thing, let him remain quiet, and it will comprehend him.

Say to the creatures, I will not be to you what you are to me.

The power of abstaining from things gives us more power than the possession of them would.

Some men one meets who have been inwardly drawn by God, but have not followed Him. The inner man and the outer man in these cases are widely at variance, and in this way many fail.

He who has attained to the purgation of his senses in God performs all the operations of the senses all the better.

He who finds the inward in the outward goes deeper than he who only finds the inward in the inward.

He is on the right road who contemplates under the forms of things their eternal essence.

It is well with a man who has died to self and begun to live in Christ.

## THEOLOGIA GERMANICA

### SIN AND SELFISHNESS

SIN is nothing else but the turning away of the creature from the unchangeable Good to the changeable; from the perfect to the imperfect, and most often to itself. And when the creature claims for its own anything good, such as substance, life, knowledge, or power, as if it were that, or possessed it, or as if that proceeded from itself, it goes astray. What else did the devil do, and what was his error and fall, except that he claimed for himself to be something, and that something was his and was due to him? This claim of his - this "I, me, and mine," were his error and his fall. And so it is to this day. For what else did Adam do? It is said that Adam was lost, or fell, because he ate the apple. I say, it was because he claimed something for his own, because of his "I, me, and mine." If he had eaten seven apples, and yet never claimed anything for his own, he would not have fallen: but as soon as he called something his own, he fell, and he would have fallen,

though he had never touched an apple. I have fallen a hundred times more often and more grievously than Adam; and for his fall all mankind could not make amends. How then shall my fall be amended? It must be healed even as Adam's fall was healed. And how, and by whom, was that healing wrought? Man could not do it without God, and God could not do it without man. Therefore God took upon Himself human nature; He was made man, and man was made God. Thus was the healing effected. So also must my fall be healed. I cannot do the work without God, and He may not or will not do it without me. If it is to be done, God must be made man in me also; God must take into Himself all that is in me, both within and without, so that there may be nothing in me which strives against God or hinders His work. Now if God took to Himself all men who are or ever lived in the world, and was made man in them, and they were deified in Him, and this work were not accomplished in me, my fall and my error would never be healed unless this were accomplished in me also. And in this bringing back and healing I can and shall do nothing of myself; I shall simply commit myself to God, so that He alone may do and work all things in me, and that I may suffer Him, and all His work, and His divine will. And because I will not do this, but consider myself to be mine own, and "I, me, and mine," and the like, God is impeded, and cannot do His work in me alone and without let or hindrance; this is why my fall and error remain unhealed. All comes of my claiming something for my own.

## THE TWO EYES

We should remember the saying that the soul of Christ had two eyes, a right eye and a left eye. In the beginning, when the soul of Christ was created, she fixed her right eye upon eternity and the Godhead, and remained in the full beholding and fruition of the Divine essence and eternal perfection; and thus remained unmoved by all the accidents and labours, the suffering, anguish, and pain, that befell the outer man. But with the left eye she looked upon the creation, and beheld all things that are therein, and observed how the creatures differ from each other, how they are better or worse, nobler or baser; and after

this manner was the outer man of Christ ordered. Thus the inner man of Christ, according to the right eye of His soul, stood in the full exercise of His Divine nature, in perfect blessedness, joy, and eternal peace. But the outer man and the left eye of the soul of Christ stood with Him in perfect suffering, in all His tribulations, afflictions and labours; in such a way that the inner or right eye remained unmoved, unimpeded and untouched by all the labour, suffering, woe, and misery that happened to the outer man. It has been said that when Jesus was bound to the pillar and scourged, and when He hung on the cross, according to the outer man, the inner man, a soul according to the right eye, stood in as full possession of Divine joy and blessedness as it did after the ascension, or as it does now. Even so His outer man, or soul according to the left eye, was never impeded, disturbed, or troubled by the inward eye in its contemplation of the outward things which pertained to it. The created soul of man has also two eyes. The one is the power of looking into eternity, the other the power of looking into time and the creatures, of perceiving how they differ from each other, of giving sustenance and other things necessary to the body, and ordering and ruling it for the best. But these two eyes of the soul cannot both perform their office at once; if the soul would look with the right eye into eternity, the left eye must be shut, and must cease to work: it must be as if it were dead. For if the left eye is discharging its office towards outward things - if it is holding conversation with time and the creatures - then the right eye must be impeded in its working, which is contemplation. Therefore, he who would have one must let the other go; for no man can serve two masters.

## A FORETASTE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Some have asked whether it is possible for the soul, while it is still in the body, to reach so great a height as to gaze into eternity, and receive a foretaste of eternal life and blessedness. This is commonly denied; and in a sense the denial is true. For indeed it cannot come about, so long as the soul is occupied with the body, and the things which minister to the body and belong to it, and to time and created things,

and is disturbed and troubled and distracted by them. For the soul that would mount to such a state, must be quite pure, entirely stripped and bare of all images; it must be wholly separate from all creatures, and above all from itself. Many think that this is impossible in this present life. But St Dionysius claims that it is possible, as we find from his words in his letter to Timothy, where he says: "In order to behold the hidden things of God, you shalt forsake sense and the things of the flesh, and all that can be perceived by the senses, and all that reason can bring forth by her own power, and all things created and uncreated which reason can know and comprehend, and you shalt stand upon an utter abandonment of yourself, as if you knew none of those things which I have mentioned, and you shalt enter into union with Him who is, and who is above all existence and knowledge." If he did not think this to be possible in this present time, why did he teach it and urge it upon us in this present time? But you ought to know that a master has said, about this passage of St Dionysius, that it is possible, and may come to a man so often that he may become accustomed to it, and be able to gaze into eternity whenever he will. And a single one of these glances is better, worthier, higher, and more pleasing to God than all that the creature can do as a creature. He who has attained to it asks for nothing more, for he has found the kingdom of heaven and eternal life here on earth.

## DESCENT INTO HELL

Even as the soul of Christ had to descend into hell, before it ascended into heaven, so must the soul of man. And mark how this comes to pass. When a man truly perceives and considers who and what he is, and finds himself wholly base and wicked, and unworthy of all the consolation and kindness that he ever received, either from God or from the creatures, he falls into such a profound abasement and contempt for himself, that he thinks himself unworthy to walk upon the earth; he feels that he deserves that all creatures should rise against him and avenge their Maker upon him with punishments and torments; nay, even that were too good for him. And therefore he will not and dare not desire any consolation or release, either from God or

any creature; he is willing to be unconsoled and unreleased, and he does not lament for his condemnation and punishment, for they are right and just, and in accordance with God's will. Nothing grieves him but his own guilt and wickedness; for that is not right, and is contrary to God's will: for this reason he is heavy and troubled. This is the meaning of true repentance for sin. And the man who in this life enters into this hell, enters afterwards into the kingdom of heaven, and has a foretaste of it which exceeds all the delights and happiness which he has ever had, or could have, from the things of time. But while a man is in this hell, no one can comfort him, neither God, nor the creatures. Of this condition it has been written, "Let me die, let me perish! I live without hope; from within and from without I am condemned, let no man pray for my deliverance." Now God has not forsaken a man, while he is in this hell, but He is laying His hand upon him, that he may desire nothing but the eternal Good only, and may discover that this is so noble and exceedingly good, that its blessedness cannot be searched out nor expressed, comfort and joy, peace, rest, and satisfaction. When, therefore, the man cares for and seeks and desires the eternal Good and nought beside, and seeks not himself, nor his own things, but the glory of God only, he is made to partake of every kind of joy, blessedness, peace, rest, and comfort, and from that time forward is in the kingdom of God.

This hell and this heaven are two good safe ways for a man in this present life, and he is happy who truly finds them. For this hell shall pass away, but this heaven shall abide for evermore. Let a man also observe, that when he is in this hell, nothing can console him; and he cannot believe that he shall ever be delivered or comforted. But when he is in heaven, nothing can disturb him: he believes that no one will ever be able to offend or trouble him again, though it is indeed possible that he may again be troubled and left unconsoled.

This heaven and hell come upon a man in such a way, that he knows not whence they come; and he can do nothing himself towards making them either come or depart. He can neither give them to himself, nor take them away from himself, neither bring them nor drive them

away; even as it is written, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but can not tell whence it comes or whither it goes." And when a man is in either of these two states, all is well with him, and he is as safe in hell as in heaven. And while a man is in the world, it is possible for him to pass many times from the one state into the other - even within a day and night, and without any motion of his own. But when a man is in neither of these two states, he holds intercourse with the creatures, and is carried this way and that, and knows not what manner of man he is. A man should therefore never forget either of these states, but carry the memory of them in his heart.

### THE THREE STAGES

Be well assured that none can be illuminated, unless he be first cleansed, purified, or stripped. Also none can be united to God unless he be first illuminated. There are therefore three stages - first, the purification; secondly, the illumination; and thirdly, the union. The purification belongs to those who are beginning or repenting. It is effected in three ways; by repentance and sorrow for sin, by full confession, and by hearty amendment. The illumination belongs to those who are growing, and it also is effected in three ways; by the renunciation of sin, by the practice of virtue and good works, and by willing endurance of all trials and temptations. The union belongs to those who are perfect, and this also is effected in three ways; by pureness and singleness of heart, by love, and by the contemplation of God, the Creator of all things.

### THE LIFE OF CHRIST

We ought truly to know and believe that no life is so noble, or good, or pleasing to God, as the life of Christ. And yet it is to nature and selfishness the most bitter of all lives. For to nature, and selfishness, and the Me, a life of careless freedom is the sweetest and pleasantest, but it is not the best; indeed, in some men it may be the worst. But the life of Christ, though it be the bitterest of all, should be preferred

above all. And hereby you shall know this. There is an inward sight which is able to perceive the one true good, how that it is neither this nor that, but that it is that of which St Paul says: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." By this he signifies that what is whole and perfect excels all the parts, and that all which is imperfect, and in part, is as nothing compared to what is perfect. In like manner, all knowledge of the parts is swallowed up when the whole is known. And where the good is known, it cannot fail to be desired and loved so greatly, that all other love, with which a man has loved himself, and other things, vanishes away. Moreover, that inward sight perceives what is best and noblest in all things, and loves it in the one true good, and for the sake of the true good alone. Where this inward sight exists, a man perceives truly that the life of Christ is the best and noblest life, and that it is therefore to be chosen above all others; and therefore he willingly accepts and endures it, without hesitation or complaining, whether it is pleasing or displeasing to nature and other men, and whether he himself likes or dislikes it, and finds it sweet or bitter. Therefore, whenever this perfect and true good is known, the life of Christ must be followed, until the decease of the body. If any man vainly deems otherwise, he is deceived, and if any man says otherwise, he tells a lie; and in whatever man the life of Christ is not, he will never know the true good or the eternal truth.

But let no one imagine that we can attain to this true light and perfect knowledge, and to the life of Christ, by much questioning, or by listening to others, or by reading and study, or by ability and deep learning. For so long as a man is occupied with anything which is this or that, whether it be himself or any other creature; or does anything, or forms plans, or opinions, or objects, he comes not to the life of Christ. Christ Himself declared as much, for He said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "And if any man hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He means this: "He who does not give up and abandon everything can never know My eternal truth, nor attain to My life."

And even if this had not been declared to us, the truth itself proclaims it, for so verily it is. But as long as a man holds fast to the rudiments and fragments of this world, and above all to himself, and is conversant with them, and sets great store by them, he is deceived and blinded, and perceives what is good only in so far as is convenient and agreeable to himself and profitable to his own objects.

Since then the life of Christ is in all ways most bitter to nature and the self and the Me - for in the true life of Christ nature and the self and the Me must be abandoned and lost and suffered to die completely - therefore in all of us nature has a horror of it, and deems it evil and unjust and foolish; and she strives after such a life as shall be most agreeable and pleasant to ourselves; and says, and believes too in her blindness, that such a life is the best of all. Now nothing is so agreeable and pleasant to nature as a free and careless manner of life. To this therefore she clings, and takes enjoyment in herself and her powers, and thinks only of her own peace and comfort. And this is especially likely to happen, when a man has high natural gifts of reason, for reason mounts up in its own light and by its own power, till at last it comes to think itself the true eternal light, and gives itself out to be such; and it is thus deceived in itself, and deceives others at the same time, people who know no better and are prone to be so deceived.

## UNION WITH GOD

In what does union with God consist? It means that we should be indeed purely, simply, and wholly at one with the one eternal Will of God, or altogether without will, so that the created will should flow out into the eternal Will and be swallowed up and lost in it, so that the eternal Will alone should do and leave undone in us. Now observe what may be of use to us in attaining this object. Religious exercises cannot do this, nor words, nor works, nor any creature or work done by a creature. We must therefore give up and renounce all things, suffering them to be what they are, and enter into union with God. Yet the outward things must be; and sleeping and waking, walking and

standing still, speaking and being silent, must go on as long as we live.

But when this union truly comes to pass and is established, the inner man henceforth stands immoveable in this union; as for the outer man, God allows him to be moved hither and thither, from this to that, among things which are necessary and right. So the outer man says sincerely, "I have no wish to be or not to be, to live or die, to know or be ignorant, to do or leave undone; I am ready for all that is to be or ought to be, and obedient to whatever I have to do or suffer." Thus the outer man has no purpose except to do what in him lies to further the eternal Will. As for the inner man, it is truly perceived that he shall stand immoveable, "though the outer man must needs be moved. And if the inner man has any explanation of the actions of the outer man, he says only that such things as are ordained by the eternal Will must be and ought to be. It is thus when God Himself dwells in a man; as we plainly see in the case of Christ. Moreover, where there is this union, which is the outflow of the Divine light and dwells in its beams, there is no spiritual pride nor boldness of spirit, but unbounded humility and a lowly broken heart; there is also an honest and blameless walk, justice, peace, contentment, and every virtue. Where these are not, there is no true union. For even as neither this thing nor that can bring about or further this union, so nothing can spoil or hinder it, except the man himself with his self-will, which does him this great injury. Be well assured of this.

## THE FALSE LIGHT

Now I must tell you what the False Light is, and what belongs to it. All that is contrary to the true light belongs to the false. It belongs of necessity to the true light that it never seeks to deceive, nor consents that anyone should be injured or deceived; and it cannot be deceived itself. But the false light both deceives others, and is deceived itself. Even as God deceives no man, and wills not that any should be deceived, so it is with His true light. The true light is God or Divine, but the false light is nature or natural. It belongs to God, that He is neither this nor that, and that He requires nothing in the man whom He has

made to be partaker in the Divine nature, except goodness as goodness and for the sake of goodness. This is the token of the true light. But it belongs to the creature, and to nature, to be something, this or that, and to intend and seek something, this or that, and not simply what is good without asking Why. And as God and the true light are without all self-will, selfishness, and self-Seeking, so the "I, Me, and Mine" belong to the false light, which in everything seeks itself and its own ends, and not goodness for the sake of goodness. This is the character of the natural or carnal man in each of us. Now observe how it first comes to be deceived. It does not desire or choose goodness for its own sake, but desires and chooses itself and its own ends rather than the highest good; and this is an error and the first deception. Secondly, it fancies itself to be God, when it is nothing but nature. And because it feigns itself to be God, it takes to itself what belongs to God; and not that which belongs to God when He is made man, or when He dwells in a Godlike man; but that which belongs to God as He is in eternity without the creature. God, they say, and say truly, needs nothing, is free, exempt from toil, apart by Himself, above all things: He is unchangeable, immoveable, and whatever He does is well done. "so will I be," says the false light. "The more like one is to God, the better one is; I therefore will be like God and will be God, and will sit and stand at His right hand." This is what Lucifer the Evil Spirit also said. Now God in eternity is without contradiction, suffering, and grief, and nothing can injure or grieve Him. But with God as He is made man it is otherwise. The false light thinks itself to be above all works, words, customs, laws, and order, and above the life which Christ led in the body which He possessed in His human nature. It also claims to be unmoved by any works of the creatures; it cares not whether they be good or bad, for God or against Him; it keeps itself aloof from all things, and deems it fitting that all creatures should serve it. Further, it says that it has risen beyond the life of Christ according to the flesh, and that outward things can no longer touch or pain it, even as it was with Christ after the Resurrection. Many other strange and false notions it cherishes. Moreover, this false light says that it has risen above conscience and the sense of sin, and that whatever it does is right. One of the so-called "Free Spirits" even said

that if he had killed ten men, he would have as little sense of guilt as if he had killed a dog. This false light, in so far as it fancies itself to be God, is Lucifer, the Evil Spirit; but in so far as it makes of no account the life of Christ, it is Antichrist. It says, indeed, that Christ was without sense of sin, and that therefore we should be so. We may reply that Satan also is without sense of sin, and is none the better for that. What is a sense of sin? It is when we perceive that man has turned away from God in his will, and that this is man's fault, not God's, for God is guiltless of sin. Now, who knows himself to be free from sin, save Christ only? Scarce will any other affirm this. So he who is without sense of sin is either Christ or the Evil Spirit. But where the true light is, there is a true and just life such as God loves. And if a man's life is not perfect, as was that of Christ, still it is modelled and built on His, and His life is loved, together with modesty, order, and the other virtues, and all self-will, the "I, Me, and Mine," is lost; nothing is devised or sought for except goodness for its own sake. But where the false light is, men no longer regard the life of Christ and the virtues, but they seek and purpose what is convenient and pleasant to nature. From this arises a false liberty, whereby men become regardless of everything. For the true light is the seed of God, and brings forth the fruits of God; but the false light is the seed of the Devil, and where it is sown, the fruits of the Devil, nay the very Devil himself, spring up.

## LIGHT AND LOVE

It may be asked, What is it like to be a partaker of the Divine nature, or a Godlike man? The answer is, that he who is steeped in, or illuminated by, the eternal and Divine Light, and kindled or consumed by the eternal and Divine Love, is a Godlike man and a partaker of the Divine nature. But this light or knowledge is of no avail without love. You may understand this if you remember that a man who knows very well the difference between virtue and wickedness, but does not love virtue, is not virtuous, in that he obeys vice. But he who loves virtue follows after it, and his love makes him an enemy to wickedness, so that he will not perform any wicked act and hates wickedness in others; and he loves virtue so that he would not leave any virtue

unperformed even if he had the choice, not for the sake of reward, but from love of virtue. To such a man virtue brings its own reward, and he is content with it, and would part with it for no riches. Such a man is already virtuous, or in the way to become so. And the truly virtuous man would not cease to be so to gain the whole world. He would rather die miserably. The case of justice is the same. Many men know well what is just and unjust, but yet neither are nor ever will be just men. For they love not justice, and therefore practise wickedness and injustice. If a man loved justice, he would do no unjust deed; he would feel so great abhorrence and anger against injustice whenever he saw it that he would be willing to do and suffer anything in order to put an end to injustice, and that men might be made just. He would rather die than commit an injustice, and all for love of justice. To him, justice brings her own reward, she rewards him with herself, and so the just man would rather die a thousand deaths than live as an unjust man. The same may be said of truth. A man may know very well what is truth or a lie, but if he loves not the truth, he is not a true man. If, however, he loves it, it is with truth as with justice. And of justice Isaiah speaks in the fifth chapter: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Thus we may understand that knowledge and light avail nothing without love. We see the truth of this in the case of the Evil One. He perceives and knows good and evil, right and wrong: but since he has no love for the good that he sees, he becomes not good. It is true indeed that Love must be led and instructed by knowledge, but if knowledge is not followed by Love, it will be of no avail. So also with God and Divine things. Although a man know much about God and Divine things, and even dream that he sees and understands what God Himself is, yet if he have not Love, he will never become like God or a partaker of the Divine nature. But if Love be added to his knowledge, he cannot help cleaving to God, and forsaking all that is not God or from God, and hating it and fighting with it, and finding it a cross and burden. And this Love so unites a man to God, that he can never again be separated from Him.

## PARADISE

What is Paradise? All things that are. For all things are good and pleasant, and may therefore fitly be called Paradise. It is also said, that Paradise is an outer court of heaven. In the same way, this world is truly an outer court of the eternal, or of eternity; and this is specially true of any temporal things or creatures which manifest the Eternal or remind us of eternity; for the creatures are a guide and path to God and eternity. Thus the world is an outer court of eternity, and therefore it may well be called a Paradise, for so indeed it is. And in this Paradise all things are lawful except one tree and its fruit. That is to say, of all things that exist, nothing is forbidden or contrary to God, except one thing only. That one thing is self-will, or to will otherwise than as the eternal Will would have it. Remember this. For God says to Adam (that is, to every man) "Whatever you art, or do, or leave undone, or whatever happens, is lawful if it be done for the sake of and according to My will, and not according to your will. But all that is done from your will is contrary to the eternal Will." Not that everything which is so done is in itself contrary to the eternal Will, but in so far as it is done from a different will, or otherwise than from the Eternal and Divine Will.

## WILL AND SELF-WILL

Some may ask: "If this tree, Self-Will, is so contrary to God and to the eternal will, why did God create it, and place it in Paradise? We may answer: a man who is truly humble and enlightened does not ask God to reveal His secrets to him, or enquire why God does this or that, or prevents or allows this or that; he only desires to know how he may please God, and become as nothing in himself, having no will of his own, and that the eternal will may live in him, and possess him wholly, unhampered by any other will, and how what is due may be paid to the Eternal Will, by him and through him. But there is another answer to this question. For we may say: the most noble and gracious gift that is bestowed on any creature is the Reason and the Will. These two are so intimately connected that the one cannot be anywhere without the other. If it were not for these two gifts, there would be no reasonable

creatures, but only brutes and brutality; and this would be a great loss, for God would then never receive His due, or behold Himself and His attributes exhibited in action; a thing which ought to be, and is, necessary to perfection. Now Perception and Reason are conferred together with will, in order that they may teach the will and also themselves, that neither perception nor will is of itself, or to itself, nor ought to seek or obey itself. Nor must they turn themselves to their own profit, nor use themselves for their own ends; for they belong to Him from whom they proceed, and they shall submit to Him, and flow back to Him, and become nothing in themselves - that is, in their selfhood.

But now you must consider more in detail something concerning the will. There is an Eternal Will, which is a first principle and substance in God, apart from all works and all externalisation; and the same will is in man, or the creature, willing and bringing to pass certain things. For it pertains to the will, to will something. For what else does it exist? It would be a vain thing if it had no work to do, and this it cannot have without the creature. And so there must needs be creatures, and God will have them, in order that by their means the will may be exercised, and may work, though in God it must be without work. Therefore the will in the creature, which we call the created will, is as truly God's as the eternal will, and is not from the creature.

And since God cannot exercise His will, in working and effecting changes, without the creature, He is pleased to do so in and with the creature. Therefore the will is not given to be exercised by the creature, but by God alone, who has the right to carry into effect His own will by the will which is in man, but yet is God's will. And in any man or creature, in whom it should be thus, purely and simply, the will of that man or creature would be exercised not by the man but by God, and thus it would not be self-will, and the man would only will as God wills; for God Himself, and not man, would be moving the will. Thus the will would be united with the Eternal Will, and would flow into it; although the man would retain his sense of liking and disliking,

pleasure and pain. But nothing is complained of, except what is contrary to God. And there is no rejoicing except in God alone, and in that which belongs to Him. And as with the will, so is it with all the other faculties of man; they are all of God and not of man. And when the will is wholly given up to God, the other faculties will certainly be given up too; and God will have what is due to Him.

No one may call that which is free his own, and he who makes it his own, does injustice. Now in all the sphere of freedom nothing is so free as the will; and he who makes it his own, and allows it not to remain in its excellent freedom, and free nobleness, and free exercise, does it a great injustice. This is what is done by the devil, and Adam, and all their followers. But he who leaves the will in its noble freedom does right; and this is what Christ, and all who follow Him, do. And he who deprives the will of its noble freedom, and makes it his own, must necessarily be oppressed with cares and discontent, and disquietude, and every kind of misery, and this will be his lot throughout time and eternity. But he who leaves the will in its freedom has contentment and peace and rest and blessedness, through time and eternity. Where there is a man whose will is not enslaved, he is free indeed, and in bondage to no man. He is one of those to whom Christ said: "The truth shall make you free"; and He adds immediately afterwards: "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Moreover, observe that whenever the will chooses unhindered whatever it will, it always and in all cases chooses what is noblest and best, and hates whatever is not noble and good, and regards it as an offence. And the more free and unhampered the will is, the more it is grieved by evil, by injustice, by iniquity, and all manner of sin. We see this in Christ, whose will was the purest and freest and the least brought into bondage of any man's who ever lived. So was the human nature of Christ the most free and pure of all creatures; and yet He felt the deepest distress, pain, and wrath at sin that any creature ever felt. But when men claim freedom for themselves, in such a way as to feel no sorrow or anger at sin, and all that is contrary to God, and say that we must take no notice of anything, and care for nothing, but be, in

this life, what Christ was after the resurrection, and so forth, this is not the true and Divine freedom that springs from the true and Divine light, but a natural, unrighteous, false, deceiving freedom, which springs from the natural, false, deceitful light.

If there were no self-will, there would be no proprietorship. There is no proprietorship in heaven; and this is why contentment, peace, and blessedness are there. If anyone in heaven were so bold as to call anything his own, he would immediately be cast out into hell, and become an evil spirit. But in hell everyone will have self-will, and therefore in hell is every kind of wretchedness and misery. And so it is also on earth. But if anyone in hell could rid himself of his self-will and call nothing his own, he would pass out of hell into heaven. And if a man, while here on earth, could be entirely rid of self-will and proprietorship, and stand up free and at liberty in the true light of God, and continue therein, he would be sure to inherit the kingdom of heaven. For he who has anything, or who desires to have anything of his own, is a slave; and he who has nothing of his own, nor desires to have anything, is free and at liberty, and is in bondage to no man. li.

## UNION THROUGH CHRIST

Observe now how the Father draws men to Christ. When something of the perfect good is revealed and made manifest within the human soul, as it were in a sudden flash, the soul conceives a desire to draw near to the perfect goodness, and to unite herself with the Father. And the more strongly she longs and desires, the more is revealed to her; and the more is revealed to her, the more she is drawn to the Father, and the more is her desire kindled. So the soul is drawn and kindled into an union with the eternal goodness. And this is the drawing of the Father; and so the soul is taught by Him who draws her to Himself, that she cannot become united with Him unless she can come to Him by means of the life of Christ.