

The celebrated 14th Century
mystic and scholastic

MEISTER ECKHART

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theology since Aquinas

with the text of his historic
Defense against charges of heresy

A modern translation
by Raymond B. Blakney

Louis



Meister Eckhart

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By Raymond Bernard Blakney

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MEISTER ECKHART: A MODERN TRANSLATION

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NOTES

Distinctions are lost in God¹

QUI AUDIT ME, NON CONFUNDETUR.

(Ecclesiasticus 24:30)

THE eternal wisdom of the Father says: "He that heareth me is not ashamed. (If he is ashamed, it is of his shame.) He who acts in me sins not. He that reveals me and fears me shall have eternal life." There is matter enough for one sermon in any of these three statements.

I shall discuss the first—that the eternal wisdom says: "He that heareth me is not ashamed." To hear the wisdom of the Father, one must be "in," at home, and alone.²

Three things there are that hinder one from hearing the eternal Word. The first is corporeality, the second, number, and the third, time. If a person has overcome these three, he dwells in eternity, is alive spiritually and remains in the unity, the desert of solitude, and there he hears the eternal Word. Our Lord says: "No man heareth my word or teaching until he hath forsaken selfhood."³ The hearing of God's Word requires complete self-surrender. He who hears and that which is heard are identical constituents of the eternal Word. What the eternal Father teaches is his own Being, Nature, and Godhead—which he is always revealing through his only begotten Son. He teaches that we are to be identical with him.

To deny one's self is to be the only begotten Son of God and one who does so has for himself all the properties of that Son. All God's acts are performed and his teachings conveyed through the Son, to the point that we should be his only begotten Son.⁴ And when this is accomplished in God's sight, he is so fond of us and so fervent that he acts as if his divine Being might be shattered and he himself annihilated if the whole foundations of his Godhead were not revealed to us, together with his nature and being. God makes haste

to do this, so that it may be ours as it is his.⁵ It is here that God finds joy and rapture in fulfillment and the person who is thus within God's knowing and love becomes just what God himself is.

If you love yourself, you love everybody else as you do yourself. As long as you love another person less than you love yourself, you will not really succeed in loving yourself but if you love all alike, including yourself, you will love them as one person and that person is both God and man. Thus he is a just and righteous person who, loving himself, loves all others equally.⁷

Some people say: "I prefer my friends who are good to me to other people"—but they are wrong and this is not the perfect way. Nevertheless, we have to make the best of it, just as people do who have to sail over the sea with a cross wind and yet manage to get over. Well, it is like this with one who has his preferences in people, as naturally one will. If I care for other people as I do for myself, then what happens to them, whether for better or for worse, let it mean life or death, I should be glad to take it on myself. That is true friendship.

Speaking to this point, St. Paul says: "I could wish to be cut off eternally from God for my friends' sake and for God's sake."⁶ To be cut off from God for an instant is to be cut off from him forever, and to be cut off from God at all is the pain of hell.⁷ What, then, does St. Paul mean by saying that he could wish to be cut off from God? The authorities question whether or not St. Paul, when he made this remark, was already perfect or only on the road to perfection. I say that he was already quite perfect, for otherwise he would not have said it and now I shall explain why St. Paul could say that he could wish to be cut off from God.

Man's last and highest parting occurs when, for God's sake, he takes leave of god.⁸ St. Paul took leave of god for God's sake and gave up all that he might get from god, as well as all he might give—together with every idea of god. In parting with these, he parted with god for God's sake and yet God remained to him as God is in his own nature—not as he is conceived by anyone to be—nor yet as something yet to be achieved—but more as an "is-ness,"⁹ as God really is.¹⁰ Then he neither gave to God nor received anything from him, for he and God were a unit, that is, pure unity. Thus one be-

"A mountain peak, or such a religious genius as Eckhart, can be approached from many valleys and appreciated by differing seekers for truths. There remains only the obligation to express wholehearted appreciation of this presentation to American readers of Meister Eckhart."

—*Christian Century*

"Deserves careful consideration by all who want to understand the views to which speculative mysticism leads."

—*Crozer Quarterly*

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