



Meister Eckhart (1260 - c1328): Nondual Christian Mystic Sage

Timothy Conway, Ph.D.

[original source: Enlightened-Spirituality.org]

The deeply influential German Catholic mystic theologian and spiritual psychologist Meister Eckhart was the most illustrious spiritual instructor of his day. He was also unjustly condemned as a heretic by the papacy after an impressive career of writing, teaching, preaching, directing souls and serving as a high-level administrator of the Dominican Order. Eckhart, virtually forgotten by the Church for centuries, is seen by growing numbers of people in the modern era to be one of the world's pinnacle "nondual" mystics. His influence is greater now than at any time since the 14th century.

Eckhart's theology is that of radical pantheism ("all in God, God in all"), which goes far beyond mere theism (which can only posit a transcendent "God up there" who sometimes personally intervenes "down here"), and certainly goes far beyond lowly pantheism ("all is God"—God is not more than the sum of creation). For Eckhart, God's supremely glorious nature can only mean that God is fully transcendent and fully immanent, entirely beyond all and yet completely within all as the One Who alone IS, pure Spirit, the groundless Ground or Essence of all. For Eckhart, therefore, God is both the transpersonal Godhead (*Gotheit*) or "God beyond god," and the personal Lord, i.e., the triune God—the Persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one nondual, indistinct Divine Nature.

Furthermore, Eckhart courageously braved the charges of heresy by affirming that in every soul is the Divine Spirit ItSelf as its true Identity. Eckhart specifically declared that there is a non-creaturely "uncreated aspect of the soul," *which is always already perfectly one with God*. A startling, shocking truth that elated the many mystics of his time who flocked to hear his electric sermons, and, predictably, angered the non-mystics whose stunted intuition could not resonate with what the Meister so beautifully spoke.

Eckhart was born around 1260 in the mountain village of Tambach (not Hochheim, as previously thought) in Germany's east-central Thuringia region. About age 15 he left home to join the Dominican Order's friary at nearby Erfurt. The Dominicans were founded in southern France in 1215 by St. Dominic (1170-1221) as the Order of Preachers, their friars and priests specially trained to be the Church's prime teachers and orators. Eckhart was sent to Cologne in western Germany in 1280 for initial studies, including five years of philosophy and then three years of theology. Between study periods, he would have chanted the Divine Office for three hours each day and the regular mental prayer, *Orationes Secretae*, and had long periods of silence. At Cologne he likely met the old mystic-scholastic Albertus Magnus (Albert the Great, 1205-1280), "Doctor Universalis" and polymath mentor to Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), the Church's most renowned theologian. By 1293, Eckhart had been fully ordained as a priest.

He was sent to the University of Paris in 1294 to lecture on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the main text in the Middle Ages on intermediate theological studies, as part of his own curriculum leading to the coveted title, *Meister*/Master. The University of Paris was the center of medieval

academia, a place where Eckhart had access to all noteworthy works—and he evidently read most of them. Later that same year he became Prior of the Dominican friary at Erfurt and Vicar of Thuringia. Here he wrote his *Talks of Instruction* and likely some sermons still extant. Eckhart was back in Paris in 1298 to finish his studies; in 1302 he was granted the title Magister in Theologia, the highest academic honor of that age. He also held the Dominican chair in theology. During this time he likely wrote many of his extensive scriptural commentaries in Latin (e.g., on Genesis, Exodus, Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, and the Gospel of John). In 1303 Meister Eckhart was named first Provincial of the new Dominican province of Saxony, reaching from the Netherlands to Livonia on the Baltic (including Thuringia). In 1307, he was given the added office, Vicar of Bohemia, to reform Dominican houses in that southeast region of Germany. In 1309-10 he founded three new communities.

No reclusive “quietist,” this very busy man’s duties must have interfered with his writing, for his intended major academic work, the *Opus Tripartitum*, was never finished; only fragments survive. His duties also required extensive travel—along slow-going, bad roads. In 1311 he was recalled from becoming Teutonia’s provincial to resume duties in the more professorial life at Paris; only Thomas Aquinas had also held this respected chair of theology twice. In 1313 Eckhart came to lively Strasburg near the French border, where again he served as theology professor, spiritual director and preacher. In 1314 he was made Dominican Vicar-General.

His duties featured a special work performed earlier in Thuringia, Saxony and Bohemia: spiritually guiding the region’s Dominican nuns and the Beguine movement of co-habiting contemplative laywomen. Loosely affiliated with Dominican and Franciscan orders, the Beguines “took no permanent vows, followed no prescribed rule, supported themselves by manual labor, interacted with the ‘world,’ and remained celibate, . . . with freedom of movement, economic independence and spiritual creativity.” (Abby Stoner) They had arisen in the early 13th century, inspired by great mystics like Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-90), Hadewijch of Antwerp (early 13th c.) and Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1301). Certain Beguines (and male Beghards) incurred the wrath of the church for their “dangerous” mysticism, too similar to that of the heretical Free Spirit sect which (allegedly) taught that a soul in Divine union was free of conventional morality. Beguines had been accused of heresy since at least 1310, when Marguerite Porete was burnt at the stake in Paris for her book *Mirror of Simple Souls*.

Part of Eckhart’s work in Germany in this turbulent time was to teach Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy (proper views and practice) to save any wayward souls. Judging from his sermons, his own chief interest seems to have been to invite any already advanced, pious souls into a profound state of God-realization in this very lifetime, and he found many such persons among the women (and men) of the region. Fr. Richard Woods writes, “for some time, large numbers of Beguines had been flocking to Dominican convents. What attracted them and large numbers of other devout, well-educated women to the Dominicans in the late 13th and early 14th centuries was, it appears, the emphasis placed on study in the order together with the mystical character of its spirituality. The encounter between dynamic preachers [like Eckhart] and these God-centered women produced one of the most spectacular upsurges of mystical spirituality in the history of Europe.”

Eckhart was a prime impetus in this northern European movement of Rheno [Rhineland]-Flemish mysticism, a profound renewal of contemplative, ecstatic/*instatic* Christianity, which accepts outward worship of God but specializes in the inner *via negativa*, way of negation, or radical dis-identification from self by letting go all attachments, images, forms, and concepts—until nothing is left but God. The soul “dies” to all to live only in God—the one true Being or Substance.

This mysticism is suggested in the works of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, but expressed most vividly in a line of *via negativa* or apophatic mystics featuring John Scotus Eriugena (c.800-c.877), the greatest Christian mind of the early middle ages, and pseudo-Dionysius (Denys) Areopagite, an unknown monk (likely Syrian) who, circa 500 CE, wrote seminal works of apophatic mystical theology and transcendental metaphysics synthesizing Christianity and Neoplatonism (Plotinus, Proclus, et al.) (see Dionysius’ *Divine Names*, *Mystical Theology*, *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and epistles). Gregory of Nyssa (c.330-c.395) had been the first Christian father to seriously explore this apophatic “negation” approach to God.

After the Crusades re-exposed Christianity to the ancient Greeks —Muslims preserved many of their works—Aquinas made use of the newly-translated Aristotle to infuse Christianity with novel ideas. But Eckhart's theology, "one of the great medieval attempts to achieve a synthesis between Greek thought and Christian faith" (Oliver Davies), made more use of the Neoplatonists (especially Proclus [410-85]), whose tradition was much more amenable to a rich inner mysticism and a very different sense of the God-soul relationship. Says Huston Smith: "From the human standpoint the two are separated by a categorical gulf; God appears of necessity as radically Other. But the Neoplatonic tradition in which Eckhart stands teaches that it is quite otherwise from God's vantage point. For God knows that he alone is completely real; real in every sense—all else is only partially so. And that which is fully real in what is other-than-God is God's presence in it. Thus from the divine perspective a sublime continuity reigns. Everything that is, to the degree that it is, is God him/her/itself—our pronouns do not fit." Oliver Davies sees Eckhart's use of Neoplatonism anticipating 19th-century German idealism and influencing modern thinkers like Hegel, Schopenhauer, Bloch, Heidegger and Derrida.

In 1322, Eckhart, now the most famous preacher of his era, was moved by the Dominicans to Cologne, where he uttered some of his most memorable sermons. His teachings were laced with fresh imagery from the vernacular style of chivalrous courtly love-talk, and even more rich with an extremely sublime, lofty mysticism often featuring riveting aphorisms that jolted one into (some degree of) spiritual awakening—e.g., "God is at home, man abroad"; "Be thoroughly dead and buried in God"; "I pray God to make me free of God, for [His] unconditioned Being is above God and all distinctions." "The authorities say that God is a being, an intelligent being who knows everything. But I say that God is neither a being nor intelligent and He doesn't 'know' either this or that. God is free of everything and therefore He *is* everything." "If I had a God I could understand, I would no longer consider him God."

Eckhart's mystic teachings were already suspect to non-mystics who heard or read his works out of context. "He seems to have delighted in shocking his listeners into attention to the divine presence within and in the world outside by outrageous comparisons, puns, and comic examples.... By adopting the role of trickster, Eckhart irritated the official guardians of pious sobriety and cautious expression.... Eckhart's playful but profound assaults on conventional God-talk [were thought by some to be] mad and dangerous." (Woods)

Meister Eckhart was clearly a man of great piety himself, and urged this in others. Yet he was also ahead of his time, psychologically quite free, it seems, of that morbid penitential religiosity that weighed so heavily upon the West during the Middle Ages. In this, he was actually like Jesus 2,000 years ago, who taught the simple "Our Father" prayer, not a complex regimen of penance-practices. Listen, for instance, to Eckhart's words on "sin" from one of his earliest writings: "Love knows nothing of sin—not that man has not sinned—but sins are blotted out at once by love and they vanish as if they had not been. This is because whatever God does he does completely, like the cup running over. Whom he forgives, he forgives utterly and at once." (*Talks of Instruction* 15) Astute spiritual counselor that he was, like his beloved Lord Jesus, Eckhart did not want people maintaining an ego-sense through guilt any more than he wanted them to inflate the ego through pride. The essential aim that Meister Eckhart always points his listeners toward is selflessness and emptiness so that God can be one's only One.

In 1325 papal official Nicholas of Strasburg examined Eckhart's works at Pope John XXII's request and declared them "orthodox." But in 1326 Eckhart was summoned before the inquisition and accused of heresy by Henry II of Virneburg, Cologne's archbishop, perhaps jealous of Eckhart's talent and fame. Eckhart was the first theologian of major rank ever to face this charge. He then trudged 500 miles to face the papal court at Avignon, France (where the papacy dwelt in exile from Rome). For over a year he defended his views; he wrote his Defense to show that his more controversial teachings were rooted in Scripture and the writings of eminent Church Fathers like Paul and Augustine. (Davies: "If his accusers charged Eckhart with heresy, then he charged them with stupidity," i.e., lacking information and competence to judge such things.) Other factors were at play in this debacle. Since he was a reformer, disgruntled friars sought revenge. "The two key witnesses against him in Cologne and Avignon, Herman de Summo and William of Nidecken, were malcontents ... later seized and imprisoned for disobedience and treachery." (Woods) Moreover, the interrogators at Cologne were Franciscans, perhaps rankled by the teaching prowess of famous Dominicans like Eckhart.

Finally, his association with the Beguines, increasingly coming in for censure by the Church (their non-institutional status made them hard to control), made him suspect as well. It seems, too, that some people were irresponsible in applying his teachings. As John Tauler poignantly said, “He spoke from the point of view of eternity, and you understood him from the point of view of time.”

A verdict came in against him, so Eckhart appealed to Pope John. While the proceedings dragged on, Eckhart died at Avignon, probably in winter 1327/8. In 1329, Pope John, at the behest of petty Henry II, his close political ally in the attempt to return the papacy to Rome, condemned Eckhart, identifying 17 points of his teaching as heretically unorthodox, 11 as “evil-sounding, rash and suspect of heresy.” This postmortem condemnation—spiteful, since Eckhart was no longer alive to preach—shows how widely influential his mystical views had in fact become. The papal bull of condemnation intended to taint his good name and stamp out his writings. In fact, not until the mid-19th century did most of his teachings again come to light, thanks to Franz Pfeiffer and Franz Jostes, who uncovered a large body of Eckhart’s work beyond the few sermons preserved in the writings of his disciple Johann Tauler (1300-61). Yet Eckhart’s views were propagated through the 14th century, albeit more cautiously, by his followers, the Friends of God, and, more generally, by the Rheno-Flemish mystical movement. Thus, his German Dominican disciples Tauler and Blessed Henry Suso (1295-1366) (both of whom were at times censored by the Church), Flemish mystic Blessed Jan van Ruusbroec (or Ruysbroek, 1293-1381, also greatly influenced by Eckhart), the Beguine and Beghard communities, the important unknown German authors of *The Book of Spiritual Poverty* (c.1350) and *Theologia Germanica* (14th cent.), the unknown British author of *Cloud of Unknowing* (et al.) (late 14th c.), and the German mystic, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1400-64)—all gratefully look to Eckhart for inspiration.

In the 20th century, Dominican scholars have labored to clear Meister Eckhart’s name and, in a new light, show the brilliance and relevance of his thinking. The Walberberg Chapter, a panel of experts, from 1982-1992 studied his works and concluded that Eckhart needed no “rehabilitation” in the juridical sense, for neither he nor his doctrine had in fact been condemned, contrary to what had been thought; heresy implies deliberately, willfully teaching against Church doctrine, and Eckhart had been unyielding in claiming, rightly so, that his views were rooted in Scripture and Church Fathers, “a judgment sustained today by scores of theologians and historians.” (Woods)

In 1992, the Master of the Dominican Order formally requested Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) to abrogate the bull of condemnation; though this has not yet occurred, Pope John Paul II himself in September 1985 observed, “Did not Eckhart teach his disciples: ‘All that God asks you most pressingly is to go out of yourself ... and let God be God in you?’ One could think that in separating himself from creatures, the mystic leaves his brothers, humanity, behind. The same Eckhart affirms that, on the contrary, the mystic is marvelously present to them on the only level where he can truly reach them, that is, in God.” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 28 Oct. 1985)

Dominican scholar Richard Woods concludes: “For all practical purposes, the exoneration of Meister Eckhart has been achieved.” So the Meister can openly be considered as he was in his own day: “one of the greatest masters of Western spirituality” (Colledge & McGinn).

His Writings and Sermons

Meister Eckhart generated numerous Latin and German works. The Latin treatises—most quite orthodox and didactic—include 56 sermons, featuring a long sermon on the Lord’s Prayer; scriptural commentaries (many unfinished); fragments from his *Opus Tripartitum*; an Introduction to his commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences*; and the *Parisian Questions*, a record of his brilliant Paris debates.

His works in Middle High German begin with four treatises: *Talks of Instruction* (longest and evidently earliest, written in the 1290s), *The Nobleman/Aristocrat, On Detachment/Disinterest* (this work has been questioned by some as authentically Eckhart’s), and, in 1308, *The Book of Divine Consolation*, especially written for the widowed Queen Anne of Hungary after the death

of her mother and murder of her father, Emperor-elect Albert I of Austria.

We also now finally have transcripts of over 100 German sermons judged as authentically Eckhart's, "the first substantial body of sophisticated philosophical and theological discussion in a European vernacular language" (Davies). In these very original works occur most of the statements charged (falsely) as being "heretical." And it is in these sermons (many recorded by the Dominican nuns under his guidance) that Eckhart eagerly speaks to the listeners' heart with his most intensely nondual, mystical parlance on the glory of God and the soul.

Meister Eckhart wanted everyone, high or low, learned or unlettered, to intimately know and love God the way he himself was blessed to enjoy. God is not distant, a matter for rarified theology. God is HERE and NOW. Thus, a central theme for Eckhart is the "birth of God in the soul" in this timeless Now, an Incarnation abolishing any dualism between self and God or God and world. Eckhart describes a threefold movement of detachment, release and *dehiscence* (splitting open), elsewhere called *breakthrough*, yielding a joyfully enlightened "living without a why" in the realization that all things are in God, who is One and thus renders all beings *one within Him*. "For Eckhart, as for the ancient mystical theology of the Church, God is uniquely present in the depths of the soul, waiting to break forth into consciousness." (Woods)

Some have tried to find a consistent Eckhart schema for stages of mystical growth, as, for instance, found in many medieval Christian mystics' triple sequence of "purgation, illumination, and union with God." But Robert Forman observes, "I have counted at least seventeen separate passages in which Eckhart enumerates the divisions of phases that a mystic might undergo. No two are identical." Moreover, in contrast to, for example, the Jesuits, with their structured "Spiritual Exercises" of St. Ignatius, Eckhart's spiritual path is a "wayless way," with no particular methodology other than pure, immediate contemplation of the infinitely simple Divine Truth already alive and dynamically present at the core of one's being. Out of such spiritual contemplation flows loving action. And for Eckhart, contemplation and action aren't separate, but truly one process.

A key element in many passages of Eckhart's writings and sermons is complete accordance with the will of God. He points out with great irony that Christians daily pray, in the Our Father prayer, that "Thy will be done." But then they complain when things happen that they don't like—yet, for Eckhart, it is obvious that whatever happens is meant to be happening, by Divine Will, otherwise something else would be happening, by Divine Will.

Reading Meister Eckhart's many works, one beholds his uncanny ability to draw out rich, multiple meanings from a single line in scripture. In an era and society that saw nearly everything in religious terms, Eckhart delighted in taking God-talk to ever-higher levels. His genius, surely flowing out of direct and deep experiencing of Divine Spirit, came up with a wealth of interpretations and illustrations, playfully-surprising turns of language, and "instatic" expressions of worshipful love of God. Bernard McGinn: "Eckhart was not only a highly trained philosopher and theologian, but also a preacher, a poet, and a punster who deliberately cultivated rhetorical effects, bold paradoxes, and unusual metaphors, neologisms, and wordplay to stir his readers and hearers from their intellectual and moral slumber." Davies: "[We find] in his work a geniality of style, profound speculation and spiritual vision that still move us today as they once did those who gathered in the churches and convents of medieval Germany to hear a Master who spoke in so strange a way of the 'God beyond words.'"

An Eckhart Glossary of Terms

(L= Latin; MHG= Middle High German) (most of these terms are adapted from McGinn & Tobin, Meister Eckhart: Teacher & Preacher; with others from Blakney, Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation)

A. Latin Terms

Aeternitas (L) (MHG: Nû)—eternity, the timeless NOW beyond time

Bonum (L)—good; God is "Goodness Itself" (*ipsa bonitas*)

Caritas / Amor (L)—charity, love

Creatio (L)—the mode of God’s activity

Emanatio (L)—emanation, the “flowing out” of all things from the Source, God; Latin equivalents: origo, fons, egressus, effluxus; Middle High German: ûzbruch, ûzvluז, ûzganc; related to this is generatio (L), generating or “begetting” of the Son by the Father, and of the Son in the holy soul, and of any phenomena by God

Distinctio-Indistinctio (L)—distinction (characterizing creatures) and indistinction (proper to God, the Indistinctum)

Esse (L; MHG: Wesen)—existence or being; esse tale or esse determinatum (particular, determined existence/being) contrasts with God’s esse simpliciter or esse absolutum, “simple, absolute Being.” God is plenitudo essendi, the “Fullness of Existence/Being”

Esse Omnium (L)—God as “the existence of all,” “the Being of beings”

Ipsium Esse (L)—God as “Existence/Being Itself” (from Aquinas)

Essentia (L)—Essence

Gratia (L)—Divine Grace

Imago – Similitudo (L)—the “image and likeness” of the soul unto God, as declared in the Hebrew Bible’s book of Genesis

Intellectus (L)—“Intellect”; today a better sense of this important scholastic term is “consciousness,” the highest part of the soul.

Negatio-Affirmatio (L)—negation and affirmation, the fundamental acts of intellect/ consciousness

Negatio negationis (L)—“negation of negation,” Eckhart’s dialectical description of God, “the purest form of affirmation”

Nihil (L) (MHG: niht)—nothing (MHG: nitheit, “nothingness”); referring either to the mere nothingness of creatures or to God as the “No-thing,” i.e., the pure, infinite Divine Spirit, Source of all things (when existence is ascribed to creatures)

Reditus (L) (see MHG: Durchbruch)—the “return” of all creatures to their Divine Ground or Source; equivalent terms Eckhart also uses are refluxus, regressus, and conversio; reditus completa is the “complete return” of the Divine consciousness unto Itself

Simplicitas/ simplex (L)—“Simplicity / simple,” the partless, uncompounded and unfragmented wholeness of the Divine

Substantia (L)—the Divine Reality, That which “stands under” things

Unum (L) (MHG: ein)—“the One,” “Absolute Unity”; the metaphysical ground for unio (“union” of soul and God) and unitas (“unity”)

Verbum (L) (MHG: wort)—Word, Divine Logos; God’s expression as the Son, Second Person of the Trinity, incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth and as our own true Sonship in the Father

Verum (L)—“the Truth,” especially the Divine Truth or Reality

B. German Terms

Abgescheidenheit (MHG)—“Disinterest” or “detachment,” the spiritual indifference toward all that happens in creation, the equanimity toward the play of opposites (gain-loss, praise-blame, etc.), since the soul is immersed in the oneness of the One. This is not uninterested apathy or withdrawal from the world, but seeing the world only in the oneness of God.

Âne mittel (MHG)—without a medium or mediation, direct, immediate

Âne war umbe / sunder war umbe (MHG)—“living without a why,” without a limited creaturely purpose, i.e., in Divine realization

Diz noch daz (MHG)—“this or that,” the particularity and limits of all created being; God is neither this nor that, but Absolute Being

Durchbruch / durchbrechen (MHG)—breakthrough, breaking through, the soul’s return to its primal source in/as God

Geburt (MHG)—birth, especially birth of the Divine Son in the soul

Gotheit (MHG)—Godhead, the Divine Reality “prior” to the Trinity

Grunt (MHG)—Ground or core, the inmost depth of God and of the soul (where it is identical with God)

Isticheit (MHG)—“Is-ness,” being, God’s pure existence

Lüterkeit, lüter, ledic, blôz (MHG)—Purity, pure, empty, bare, naked; signifying the primal purity of the Divine Nature and also the purity and emptiness or transparency the soul must have to be one with God

Vernünfticheit (MHG)—intellect, understanding, consciousness

Vüncelîn (MHG)—“spark of the soul”; related terms: bürgelîn, daz edele, oberste, wipfel, daz innigeste; the “uncreated,” therefore the soul’s highest, truest, noblest, inmost aspect, where it is one with God

Unwizzen (MHG)—“Unknowledge,” Divine unknowing, unself-consciousness, intuitive knowing by Being.

Meister Eckhart’s Teachings

(For the following four works by Eckhart, we excerpt from Raymond B. Blakney [Tr.], *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, Harper & Row, 1941. For greater readability and reverence, I capitalize all pronouns referring to God—e.g., “He,” “Him,” instead of “he,” “him.”)

From *Talks of Instruction*

(This is Meister Eckhart’s earliest written work we have, from the 1290s.)

True and perfect obedience is a virtue above all virtues.... Being obedient, if a man purifies himself, God will come into him in course; for when he has no will of his own, then God will command for him what God would command for Himself.... You will never hear an obedient person saying, ‘I want it so and so; I must have this or that.’ You will hear only of utter denial of self. (1) Let us learn self-forgetting until we call nothing more our own. (21)

Comes now the question: How is man to work together with God? ... An answer: ... to reduce self to nothingness. Still, this annihilation or diminution of self never gets so far that if God did not finish it in Himself, it would be imperfect.... The highest heights of [spiritual] exaltation lie precisely in the lowest depths of humiliation.... Therefore, the more humble a man may be, the more exalted he will be. Our Lord said: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” ... All our being depends therefore on not being.... Therefore, if God is to give us Himself and everything else, freely to be our own, He must first take all we have away.... If, therefore, I deny myself, God will be mine much more than any thing could be; He shall be mine as much as His own.... Nothing was ever owned to the degree that God may be my own, together with all that is His. (23)

The strongest prayer, one well-nigh almighty in what it can effect, and the most exalted work a man can do proceed from a pure heart.... A pure heart is capable of anything.... A pure heart is one that is unencumbered, unworried, uncommitted, and which does not want its own way

about anything but which, rather, is submerged in the loving will of God, having denied self. (2)
To the extent that you eliminate self from your activities, God comes into them... Begin with that, and let it cost you your utmost. In this way, and no other, is true peace to be found. (4)
When you are about to begin a new life or work, go to God and ask with all your might and devotion that He will make it turn out for the best.... Then whatever God brings about, take it as direct from Him—the best as he sees it—and be completely satisfied. (22)

I hold this to be best, that a man should give himself over to God and let God throw on him what He will, offenses, work, or suffering, and that then he takes them gladly and thankfully, allowing God to put such things upon him even if he does not choose them for himself. To learn from God gladly in all things, and to follow after Him only, is to be on the right track.... Spiritually a man must conform to our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.... In all you do, keep in yourself as perfect a likeness of Him as possible. (18)

The person who wants to go to our Lord ... must first make sure that his conscience is without reproach. In the second place, his will must point only to God and he must so concentrate on God that he can take pleasure in nothing but God... This is the test by which one may prove how far away from God one is—or how near—according as one is less or more this way.... For we are to be changed into Him and made One with Him, so that what is His shall be ours and what is ours, His: our heart and His are to be one heart; our body and his, one body. So, too, it shall be with our senses, wills, thoughts, faculties, and members: they are all to be transported into Him, so that we feel with Him and are made aware of Him in every part of body and soul.... His is the only treasure with which you will be contented or satisfied. (20)

God does not look at what you do but only at your love and at the devotion and will behind your deeds.... He is concerned only that we shall love Him in all things. (16)

People ought not to consider so much what they are to do as what they are; let them but be good and their ways and deeds will shine brightly. If you are just, your actions will be just too. Do not think that saintliness comes from occupation; it depends rather on what one is.... Thus take care that your emphasis is laid on being good and not on the number or kind of thing to be done. (4)

If [a man] really has God, and only God, then nothing disturbs him. Why? Because he has only God and thinks only God and everything is nothing but God to him. He discloses God in every act, in every place.... If we mean God and only God, then it is He who does what we do and nothing can disturb him [the man devoted to God].... He thinks of nothing, is looking for nothing and relishes nothing but God, who is one with him by perfect devotion. Furthermore, since God cannot be distracted by the number of things, neither can the person, for he is one in One, in which all divided things are gathered up to unity and there undifferentiated. (6)

People ... think they are apart from God—so far apart that they cannot follow Him. Let no one think that!... Consider that God is near you, for great harm comes of feeling that God is distant. For let a man go away or come back: God never leaves. (17)

We ought not to have or let ourselves be satisfied with the god we have thought of, for when the thought slips the mind, that god slips with it. What we want is rather the reality of God, exalted far above any human thought or creature.... When one takes God as He is divine, having the reality of God within him, God sheds light on everything. Everything will taste like God and reflect Him.... The more he regards everything as divine—more divine than it is of itself—the more God will be pleased with him. To be sure, this requires effort and love, a careful cultivation of the spiritual life, and a watchful, honest, active oversight of all one's mental attitudes towards things and people. It is not to be learned by world-flight, running away from things.... Rather, one must learn an inner solitude,... He must learn to penetrate things and find God there.... To acquire this art, one must practice much.... [Finally,] a man should shine with the divine Presence without having to work at it. He should get the essence out of things and let the things themselves alone. (6)

We ought to learn how to keep a free mind in all we do.... It requires great diligence. Expert attention is necessary. To be aware of God at all times and to be enlightened by Him equally under all circumstances, there are two special requirements: First: be spiritually quite private, guarding the mind carefully against irrelevant ideas... The second has to do with the mind's own inventions, whether spontaneous in the mind or representing some object... Do not be dissipated in such ideas lest you become lost in the crowd of them.... This viewpoint is only possible through discipline and the training of the intellect [attention] to the ways of God and, doing this, a man will become, in time, divine within.... However natural and native God is to the mind, once the mind has digressed, taken root in creatures, and been perverted by them and become accustomed to them, it is proportionately infected and enfeebled, handicapped for its nobler functions.... We must learn to look through every gift and every event to God... There is no stopping place in this life.... Therefore it is not enough to surrender self and all that goes with it once. We have to renew the surrender often, for thus we shall be free and unfettered in all we do. (21)

One may test the degree to which one has attained to virtue by observing how often one is inclined to act virtuously rather than otherwise. (21)

You may now be asking when the will is perfect. It is perfect and right when it has no special reference, when it has cut loose from self, and when it is transformed and adapted to the will of God... The only true and perfect will is the one that has been merged with the will of God, so that the man has no will of his own. And the more it is so, the more the man himself blends into God.... He is wholly within God and God is around him. (10-11)

Everything takes its flavor from God and becomes divine; ... things all have this one taste; and therefore God is the same to this man alike in life's bitterest moments and sweetest pleasures. (11)

The truth is that the more ourselves we are [in God], the less self is in us. (11)

Truly it is not sin to have sinned and repent of it. Only do not consent to [further] sin.... Those who are well grounded in God are always aware that the faithful, loving God has lifted them out of a life of sin into life that is divine... Once justly set in the will of God, a man will not wish that the sin he committed had never happened. To be sure, it was contrary to God, but by it he is committed to greater love, being abased and humbled because he did act contrary to God.... Who was ever dearer to our Lord, or more intimate with him than the apostles? There was not one of them that did not commit mortal sin.... (12)

[Therefore,] there is nothing else a man can do that is so beneficial as to put complete trust in God. (14) The best penitence ... is to turn away, root and branch, from all that is not God and not divine, whether it be in one's self or in other creatures. (16) With all our strength, freely plunge the spirit into God. (20)

All people are not called to God by the same road, as St. Paul says.... God never tied man's salvation to any pattern. (17) Let a person choose one good way [of meditation, prayer, etc.] for himself and stick to it... We must see that all good ways belong together in the One Way. (22)

One ought to become a God-seeker in all things and a God-finder at all times. (22)

I am to be so content with God's will in every event, so pleased that his will is being done, that this fact means more to me than all he might ever use me for or give to me.... Truly, I am so content with all God does, ... that there is not a cent's worth of difference between my condition and the best I could imagine for myself.... You will have peace to the extent that you have God, and the further you are away from God the less you will be at peace.... Perfectly to will what God wills, to want what He wants, is to have joy; but if one's will is not quite in unison with God's, there is no joy. May God help us to be in tune with Him! Amen. (23)

From *Book of Divine Consolation*

(Written in 1308 for Queen Anne of Hungary, who had lost her husband, mother and father.)

St. Augustine says: “God is not far off nor is He long in coming.” If you want not to be far from God nor to wait long for Him, then go straight to Him.... In God there is neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any pain. If you will be rid of pain and suffering, stop where you are and turn to God—but only to Him. Surely suffering is due to our failure to aim at Him and Him alone.... A man should study to discount self and all other creatures and to know no Father except God only. Then nothing may sadden or worry him, neither God nor creature... and his whole being, life, knowing, and loving will be of God, in God and will be God Himself. (1)

I turn toward the creature from which discomfort comes in course and turn away from Him from whom joy and comfort naturally come. What wonder, then, that I am sad and grow sadder? ... Those who love only God in the creature and the creature only in God shall discover real and true comfort on all sides. (1)

How can one whose attention is fixed on his loss and misfortune ever be comforted, especially if he keeps visualizing it, brooding over it, his eyes heavy with sorrow...? ... When one longs for outward things, ... it is a sure sign that God is not in his human heart. (2)

There can be no good man who does not want what God wants, because it is not possible that God should want anything but goodness, and just because of this, when God does want something, it must be not only for the good but for the best. That is why our Lord has taught us, through the apostles, to pray every day [in the Our Father] that God’s will be done. And yet, when the will of God is done, we complain and are sad and troubled.... It is impossible that God should let adversity befall anyone, except he intended to spare that person much greater, or to prepare him for a nobler earthly comfort, or he intended something better to come of it.... (2)

A really perfect person will be so dead to self, so lost in God, so given over to the will of God, that his whole happiness consists in being unconscious of his self and its concerns, and being conscious, instead, of God, in knowing nothing and wishing to know nothing except the will and truth of God.... This kind of person is so unified with God and in unison with His will that he wants what God wants and wants it God’s way. (2)

Now if I knew it for the truth that all my stones were to be changed into pure gold, the more stones I had and the larger they were the gladder I should be. Here, I say, is great comfort for anyone in his trouble or misery. (2)

The soul that is empty of creatures is lifted up to God.... I have spoken before of emptiness, that is, of innocence, to the effect that the more innocent and poor [empty] the soul is, the less it has to do with creatures, the emptier of things that are not God, the more surely it takes to God, gets into Him and is made One with Him, itself becoming God.... Our Lord Jesus Christ besought his Father that we should be made one—not merely united—but joined together in Him and with Him in the one single One. (2)

See clearly why we are comforted in our pain, anguish, and hurt. It is due simply to our human way of living on the outside of things, far away from God, and not being empty or innocent of creatures, not being like God, and to our being cold to divine love. (2)

[Just like the rock’s “constant downward tendency ingrained in it and which neither God nor man nor creature can take away,”] I may say the same of virtue. It, too, has an inner function: to will and tend toward all good and to resist and struggle against all evil and bad, against all that is unconformed to God and goodness.... Fully to know [the] inner work of virtue [the truly virtuous attitude prior to any virtuous deeds]... one must be estranged even from good, truth, or anything else which, in thought or by name, implies the light or shadow of distinction. He must

trust himself to that pure One, which has been purified of multiplicity and division and which is One even as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. It is this One that makes us blessed and the further we are from it, the less we are Sons, and the less the Holy Spirit flows through us. . . . To be the born Son of God, therefore, is to love God for Himself, that is, to love Him for the sake of loving God, to act only for the sake of acting for God. . . . The good man. . . will suffer because he likes to suffer for God, and to bear God's will and he thus ends in being God's Son, transformed by God into God. . . . And thus God will always love him and act in his nature; his being, his life, and his blessedness will be God's work. (2)

Our Lord said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross." . . . Surely there can be no more crucifixion in suffering and pain for the man who has denied and forgotten self. To him it is all joy, delight, and heart's content. He really is following God and nothing can make this man suffer or be sorry any more than it can God. . . . When he said: "Let him deny himself [...]" it was as if He said: "so that he might become a Son even as I was born one." For God is that same One that I am, the One I create in my nature by remaining in the bosom and heart of the Father. The Son also says, "Father, I will that they who come and follow me shall be where I am," but no one comes to the Son except by becoming the Son himself and no one can be where the Son is except he is in the Father's heart and bosom, one in the One as the Son is. . . . God loves One to one. . . . He gathers all up into unity, the unity which all creatures really seek, even the meanest of His creatures. (2)

Since God is with us when we suffer, He suffers with us. . . . God, suffering with man, suffers incomparably more in His own way than man suffers for Him. . . . Since God goes through my pain before I do, then if I suffer for Him, then my agony, however great and manifold it may be, is a comfort and a joy and very easy. . . . All a man suffers and does through God will be sweetened with His sweetness before it can reach his emotions, if he acts and suffers for God alone. (2)

It is of the greatest comfort: God's property it is, to be pure One, in whom there is no contingent distinction. . . . such that everything in Him is God Himself. If that be true, I say that whatever the good man suffers he suffers for God and in God and God suffers with him. . . . Where I find pure suffering for God and in God I find that suffering to be my God. . . . Suffer, then, gladly and with friendship for God; for suffering is a useful blessing. . . . Observe . . . the dullness of those people who, when they see a good man bearing pain and misery, are astonished and full of surmises that his pains are due to obscure sins. . . . If a person is good, his suffering does not mean pain, unhappiness, or misery to him but rather a great delight and blessing. (2)

It is a sign of inward infirmity that any person should be glad or sad about the passing things of this world. (3)

May the loving and compassionate God, who is the Truth itself, grant to me and to all who read this book an inward awareness of Truth. (3)

From The Nobleman/Aristocrat

Our Lord teaches how noble man is by nature created and how divine, by grace, he may aspire to be. . . . The seed of God is in us. . . . Pear seeds grow into pear trees; nut seeds into nut trees, and God-seed into God!

For the inner man, the new man—says St. Augustine—the first grade is living according to the ideas of good and saintly people but he is still childish, dependent and like an infant at the breast. In the second grade, he no longer attends only to the examples of good people but he runs in hot pursuit of instruction, the counsel of God and divine wisdom, turning his back on the human and his face toward God. . . . In the third grade. . . putting fear away. . . he is taken up with the love of God, trusting Him with such zeal that at last he is established in joy and delight, so that whatever is unlike God. . . or unseemly in His presence has become disagreeable. In

the fourth grade he keeps growing and becomes sufficiently rooted in God's love to be ready always to encounter temptation in any shape, to be put to the test, and is willing to suffer and to suffer gladly, with desire and joy. In the fifth grade, he is at peace with himself and the world, at rest in the riches and delight of the highest, unspeakable wisdom. In the sixth grade, he is "disformed" and transformed in the divine eternal nature, having achieved full perfection. He has forgotten the things of this passing temporal life and has been caught up into the likeness of God, having become a child of God. There is no higher grade, nothing beyond this. It is eternal rest and blessing—the final end of the inner and new man, eternal life.

There are no distinctions in God and no differences between the divine Persons, since they are to be regarded as one in nature. The divine nature is Oneness, and each Person is One, the same One in [God's] nature.... Since we find God in oneness, that oneness must be in him who is to find God.... Be therefore that One so that you may find God. And of course, if you are wholly that One, you shall remain so, even where [apparent] distinctions are. Different things will all be parts of that One to you, and you will no longer stand in your way.... To look for unity short of God is to be self-deceived.... This One is a friend only to persons of chaste and virgin hearts.... This is how man is to be united to that One that only God is.... [He] is a person who submits completely to God, giving up all he is and has, a person who looks up to God, disregarding the self.... That is genuine and perfect humility.... He has nothing more to do with vanity.... He is now pure being, goodness and truth. To be like this is to be a noble man (aristocrat) and nothing else.

When creatures are known in God, that is "daybreak knowledge," in which creatures are perceived without distinctions, all ideas being rejected, all comparisons done away in that One that God Himself is. This is the knowledge that characterizes the aristocrat.... He is One and knows God and creatures as they are One.... The aristocrat is one who derives his being, his life and his happiness from God alone, with God and in God, and not at all from his knowledge, perception or love of God, or any such thing.

A person can hardly know that he knows God when he does not know himself!... For a man must himself be One, seeking unity both in himself and in the One, experiencing it as the One, which means that he must see God and God only. And then he must "return," which is to say, he must have knowledge of God and be conscious of his knowledge.

The foundation of spiritual blessing is this: that the soul look at God without anything between.

Our Lord speaks in the prophet Hosea: "I will allure her—the soul of the aristocrat—into the wilderness and there speak to her heart"—that is, One to one, one from One, one in One and One in one, eternally.

From *About Disinterest*

(Some have questioned whether this work was actually written by Meister Eckhart, but the very same idea of disinterest, dispassion, unattachment, emptiness, equanimity, etc. occurs throughout Eckhart's works, especially in his sermons.)

My blessing in eternity depends on my being identified with God.... Disinterest brings God to me and I can demonstrate it this way: Everything likes its own habitat best; God's habitat is purity and unity, which are due to disinterest. Therefore God necessarily gives Himself to the disinterested heart.... Being disinterested, a man is sensitive only to God.... Disinterest comes so close to zero that nothing but God is rarified enough to get into it, to enter the disinterested heart.... You may ask: "What is this disinterest, that it is so noble...?" Know, then, that a mind unmoved by any contingent affection or sorrow, or honor or slander, or vice, is really disinterested—like a broad mountain that is not shaken by a gentle wind. Unmovable disinterest brings man into his closest resemblance to God. It gives God his status as God. His purity is derived from it, and then his simplicity and unchangeable character. If man is to be like God, to

the extent that any creature may resemble him, the likeness will come through disinterest, and man proceeds from purity to simplicity and from simplicity to unchangeableness, and thus the likeness of God and man comes about.

Keep this in mind: to be full of things is to be empty of God, while to be empty of things is to be full of God.

God does not work in all hearts alike but according to the preparation and sensitivity He finds in each. In a given heart, containing this or that [identification or attachment], there may be an item which prevents God's highest activity.

Therefore, if a heart is to be ready for Him, it must be emptied out to nothingness.... So, too, a disinterested heart, reduced to nothingness, is the optimum, the condition of maximum sensitivity.

What is the prayer of the disinterested heart? ... A disinterested man, pure in heart, has no prayer, for to pray is to want something from God, something added that one desires, or something that God is to take away. The disinterested person, however, wants nothing, and neither has he anything of which he would be rid. Therefore he has no prayer, or he prays only to be uniform with God.... When the soul achieves this, it loses its identity, it absorbs God and is reduced to nothing.... Nothing helps toward this end like disinterest.

There is no peace except in disinterest.

The more subject to creatures a man is, the less he conforms to God, but the disinterested heart, being void of creatures, is constantly worshipping God and conforming to Him, and is therefore sensitive to His influence.... The desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the spirit.... Therefore, discard the form and be joined to the formless essence [of God].... The less one pays attention to the creature things, the more the Creator pursues one.... Disinterest is best of all, for by it the soul is unified, knowledge is made pure, the heart is kindled, the spirit awakened, ... the virtues enhanced. Disinterest brings knowledge of God; cut off from the creature, the soul unites with God....

From the Sermons

(DW = German sermons; LW = Latin sermons)

When I preach, I am accustomed to talk about detachment, saying that we should become free of ourselves and all things. Secondly, I say that we should be in-formed back into the simple goodness, which is God. Thirdly, I say that we should be mindful of the great nobility which God has given the soul in order that we should become wonderfully united with Him. Fourthly, I speak of the purity of the divine nature, and of the radiance within it which is ineffable. (DW 53, Sermon 5 as translated by Oliver Davies)

All creatures are the utterance of God. If my mouth speaks and declares God, so too does the being of a stone.... All creatures wish to echo God in all their works, but they can reveal Him only a little.... The higher we ascend with our knowledge [spiritual consciousness], the more we are one with Him.... The closer I am to God, the more He speaks Himself in me. (DW 53, Sermon 5, Davies)

Why do we pray, why do we fast, why do we all perform our devotions and good works, why are we baptized, why did God, the All-Highest, take on our flesh [in the Incarnation]?...: in order that God may be born in the soul and the soul in God.... If the soul could be touched by time, she would not be the soul, and if God could be touched by time, He would not be God.... All time must fall away from that place where God is to be born in the soul.... This is the Now of eternity in which the soul knows all things new and fresh and present in God.... (DW 38,

Sermon 2, Davies)

If there were a hundred Persons in the Godhead, they would see only one God. Unbelievers and some uneducated Christians are astounded at this; even some priests know as little about it as a stone does, and take three [Divine Persons] in the sense of three cows or three stones. But whoever can conceive of distinction in God without number or quantity, knows that three Persons are a single God.... Do you know how God is God? God is God because there is nothing of the creature in Him. (DW 38, Sermon 2, Davies)

If we are to dwell in Him ... we should take leave of ourselves and of all things and be attached to nothing external which acts upon the senses within. (DW 40, Sermon 11, Davies)

Between that person and God there is no distinction, and they are one.... Their knowing is one with God's knowing, their activity with God's activity and their understanding with God's understanding. (DW 40, Sermon 11, Davies)

God should be the rule and foundation of your love. The first intention of your love should be directed solely towards God first and then towards your neighbor and yourself, but your neighbor no less than yourself.... For someone who loves God, it would be just as easy to give up the whole world as it would be to give up an egg. (DW 30, Sermon 4, Davies)

When the soul is united with God, then it perfectly possesses in him all that is something. The soul forgets itself there, as it is in itself, and all things, knowing itself in God as divine, in so far as God is in it. (DW 58).

Nothing is as opposed to God as time.... There is no process of becoming in God, but only a present moment, that is a becoming without a becoming, a becoming-new without renewal.... All that is in God is an eternal present—time without renewal. (DW 50, Sermon 8, Davies)

In created things, as I have often said, there is no truth. But there is something [No-thing!] which is above the created being of the soul and which is untouched by any createdness, by any [mere] nothingness. Even the angels do not have this, whose clear being is pure and deep.... It is like the divine nature; in itself it is one and has nothing to do with anything. And it is with regard to this that many teachers go wrong. It is a strange land, a wilderness, being more nameless than with name, more unknown than known. If you could do away with yourself for a moment, even for less than a moment, then you would possess all that this possesses in itself. But as long as you have any regard for yourself in any way or for anything, then you will not know what God is. (DW 28, Sermon 3, Davies)

“Ego,” the Latin word for “I,” can be used properly by God alone in His unity.... That we may become this unity and may remain within it, so help us God. Amen. (DW 28, Sermon 3, Davies)

When the soul enters the light that is pure, she falls so far from her own created somethingness into her nothingness that in this nothingness she can no longer return to that created somethingness by her own power. (DW 1, Sermon 12, Davies)

I have occasionally spoken of a light in the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable.... This light has more unity with God than it does with any of the soul's faculties.... This light is not satisfied with the simple, still and divine being which neither gives nor takes, but rather it desires to know from where this being comes. It wants to penetrate to the simple ground, to the still desert, into which distinction never peeped, neither Father, Son nor Holy Spirit. There, in that most inward place, where everyone is a stranger, the light is satisfied, and there it is more inward than it is in itself, for this ground is a simple stillness which is immovable in itself. But all things are moved by this immovability and all the forms of life are conceived by it which, possessing the light of reason, live of themselves. (DW 48, Sermon 7, Davies)

When we turn away from ourselves and from all created things, to that extent we are united and sanctified in the soul's spark, which is untouched by either space or time. This spark is opposed

to all creatures and desires nothing but God. (DW 48, Sermon 7, Davies)

The soul must go out from her createdness. Christ says, “Whoever wishes to follow me must take up their cross, deny themselves, and follow me.” (Matt. 16:24) ... As long as we fail to be as empty of ourselves as we were before we existed, we shall never go out and deny ourselves.... Now there are many people who rather than denying themselves actually maintain themselves in their own self-esteem.... These people do not follow God... rather, they follow the self-esteem in which they hold themselves. God is no more likely to be found in external observances than he is in sin. But these people, who practice many external devotions, have great status in the eyes of the world, which comes from their likeness to it. For those who understand only physical things, have a high regard for the kind of life which they can perceive with the senses. Thus one ass is adored by another! ... The soul must abandon her own being. This is where the death that is spiritual begins. If the soul is to undergo this death, then she must take leave of herself and all things, holding herself and all things to be as insignificant as they were before they existed.... For to die, properly understood, is nothing other than the cessation of all that is. I do not mean that the being of the soul falls into [mere] nothingness... rather we should understand this cessation to be the eradication of possessing and having. Here the soul forsakes all things, God and all creatures. Of course, it sounds astonishing to say that the soul should forsake God, but ... the soul must exist in a free nothingness. That we should forsake God is altogether what God intends, for as long as the soul has God [in a possessive way], knows God [as a concept] and is aware of God [as an object], she is far from God. This then is God’s desire—that God should reduce Himself to nothing in the soul so that the soul may lose herself. For the fact that God is called God comes from creatures. When the soul was a creature, she had a God, and then as she lost her createdness, God remained for Himself as He is. And this is the greatest honor that the soul can pay to God, to leave God to Himself and to be free of Him. This is how we should understand the smallest [final] death which the soul undergoes in order to become divine. Such people go virtually unknown.... These people are turned outwards to all in divine life and in complete openness in a way that is beyond their control.... Thus she [the soul] dies her highest death.... This spirit [soul] is dead and is buried in the Godhead, for the Godhead lives as no one other than Itself.... She and God are a single blessedness and a single kingdom.... Here the soul and the Godhead are one, and here the soul has discovered that she herself is the kingdom of God. Now someone may ask what is the best exercise we can do to help the soul attain this. The answer to this is that the soul must remain in death and not flinch from death.... Augustine says that God became man in order that man might become God. In God the soul receives new life. Here the soul rises from the dead into the life of the Godhead, and here God pours into her all his divine wealth.... That this may be revealed to us, so help us God. Amen. (Excerpts from a long German sermon recently determined to be Eckhart’s, translated by Davies as Sermon 30)

[Re: Jesus’ teaching, “God is Spirit and must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth,” John 4:24:] The soul must strip herself of all things ... so that, made bare, she can seek God as He is bare in Himself and not anything which is in Him.... According to John Damascene, prayer is “the ascent of the intellect [consciousness, mind] to God.” Therefore, the intellect does not touch God until it first rises up. Rising up means advancing to a higher state. Accordingly, the intellect must transcend not only the dimension of the imagination but also that of the intellect [itself]. Further, since the intellect refers everything to being, it must also transcend being [as a concept]. For being is not the cause of being, just as fire is not the cause of fire, but that is rather something far higher, to which it must ascend.... The soul must also transcend God Himself, in so far as He is concealed by this name, or by any name. ... Its ascent is its entrance into the primal root of the purity of all beings, which is in the [Divine] Word. (LW 24.2, in Davies)

God is one (*Deus unus est*).... God is infinite in His simplicity and simple in His infinity. Therefore He is everywhere and is everywhere complete. He is everywhere on account of His infinity, and is everywhere complete on account of His simplicity. Only God flows into all things, their very essences. Nothing else flows into something else. God is in the innermost part of each and every thing, only in its innermost part, and He alone is One.... All things are contained in the One, by virtue of the fact that it is one, for all multiplicity is one, and is one thing, and is in and through the One.... God unites things with Himself only because He is

one and only in so far as He is one. Indeed, He must unite all things, uniting them with and in Himself on the grounds that He is Himself One.... The One is not distinct from all things. Therefore all things and the fullness of being are in the One by virtue of its indistinction and unity.... The One descends into everything and into each single things, yet remaining the One that unites what is distinct. That is why six is not twice three but six times one.... God, the One, is.... He is the Being of all beings. (LW 29)

God alone truly is, and ... He is intellect [consciousness], and ... He is [consciousness] alone to which no other being is added. (LW 29).

Observe that all that is a consequence of the One, or of oneness, such as identity, likeness, image, relation and the like, are properly to be found only in God or Divinity.... All these signify unity in multiplicity.... Only in God are being and [consciousness] identical. (LW 29)

Therefore only God calls things into being through the [consciousness] for only in Him are [consciousness] and being identical. (LW 29)

From The Defense

They regard as an error [e.g., Meister Eckhart's teachings on the sublime nature of God and the soul, etc.] all that they do not understand; and again, they regard every error as heresy, even though only stubborn adherence to error makes heresy and a heretic, as the law and teachers say.... They take objections to things as heretical which St. Thomas [Aquinas] clearly states in the solutions of certain arguments which they have not seen or do not remember.... They object to certain things as false and heretical [implying] that man cannot be united to God—contrary to the teaching of Christ and the gospel, John 17:21, “Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.” They say that a creature, or the world, is not nothing in itself except for God, which is contrary to the gospel, John 1:3, “All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made.” Besides, to say that the world is not nothing in itself but that it is some slight thing is obvious blasphemy.... They make it an accusation that deiform man [i.e., “made in the image and likeness of God,” as Genesis states] may do the works of God, contrary to the teaching of Christ and the gospel, John 14:12, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works shall he do.” (Conclusion)

Being is God... because if being is something different from God, God does not exist and there is no God.... God and being are the same.... If being is something different from God, a thing has its being from something other than God.... From God and God alone do all things have their being, one being, true being, good being.... Every being and every single thing has all its being, and all its unity, truth and goodness immediately from God.... God is being. (vii)

All creatures are pure nothing. I do not say that they are at least a little something but that they are pure nothing, because no creature has being. (viii)

He who sees any [ultimate] distinction clearly does not see God. For God is One, without number and above number, and He is not numbered with anything.... Being and all form are from God... therefore no distinction can exist in Him or be thought of. (vii)

From the Fragments

Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow and to love him as they love their cow—they love their cow for the milk and cheese and profit it makes them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward comfort. They do not rightly love God when they love Him for their own advantage. Indeed, I tell you the truth, any object you have on your mind, however good, will be a barrier between you and the inmost truth. (Fragments, in Blakney, p. 241)

The just man loves God for nothing, neither for this nor for that, and if God gave him wisdom or anything else He had to give, except Himself, the just man would not look at it... for he wants nothing, seeks nothing, and has no reason for doing anything. As God, having no [selfish] motives, acts without them, so the just man acts without motives. As life lives on for its own sake, needing no reason for being, so the just man has no reason for doing what he does. (Ibid., p. 241)

If a man goes seeking God and, with God, something else, he will not find God; but if one seeks only God—and really so—he will never find only God but along with God Himself he will find all that God is capable of. If you seek your own advantage or blessing through God, you are not really seeking God at all. (Ibid., p. 241)

God is ready to give great things when we are ready, for righteousness' sake, to give up everything. (Ibid., p. 243)

God is love. (Ibid., p. 244)

Where I am there is God, and where God is there I am. (Ibid., p. 244)

When I pray for something, I do not pray; when I pray for nothing, I really pray.... To pray for anything except God might be called idolatry or injustice. Right prayer is prayer in spirit and in truth. When I pray for some person such as Henry or Conrad, I pray least, but when I pray for no one in particular, I pray most of all. Really to pray, one must want nothing... When one prays for what God is not, there is something wrong and faithless about the prayer and it is a sign of immaturity.... When one puts something before God, he makes God nothing, and nothing, God. (Ibid., p. 245)

To get at the core of God at his greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least, for no one can know God who has not first known himself. Go to the depths of the soul, the secret place of the Most High, to the roots, to the heights; for all that God can do is focused there. (Ibid., p. 246)

I have spoken at times of a light in the soul that is uncreated.... I am accustomed to hint at it frequently in my sermons, for it refers to the immediacy of God, as undisguised and naked as He is by Himself and to the [Divine] act of begetting [the Son]. Thus I may truthfully say that this light is rather to be identified with God than with any [perceptive] power of the soul, even though it is essentially the same.... To the extent a person can deny himself and turn away from created things, he will find his unity and blessing in that little spark in the soul, which neither space nor time touches. The spark is averse to creatures and favorable only to pure God as He is in Himself. It is not satisfied with the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit, nor with all three persons together, as long as their several properties are preserved. To tell the truth, this light is not satisfied with the unity of this fruitful conception of the Divine nature, but I shall go further and say what must sound strange—though I am really speaking the truth—that this light is not satisfied by the simple, still, motionless essence of the divine being that neither gives nor takes. It is more interested in knowing where this essence came from. It wants to penetrate the simple core, the still desert, into which no distinction ever crept—neither the Father, the Son, nor the Holy Spirit. It wants to get into the secret, to which no man is privy, where it is satisfied by a Light whose unity is greater than its own. This core is a simple stillness, which is unmoved by itself but by whose immobility all things are moved and all receive life.... (Ibid., pp. 246-7)

Some people despise the little things of life. It is their mistake, for they thus prevent themselves from getting God's greatness out of these little things. God is every way, evenly in all ways, to him who has the eyes to see. But sometimes it is hard to know whether one's inclinations come from God or not, but that can be decided this way: if you find your self always possessed of a knowledge or intimation of God's will, which you obey before everything else, because you feel urged to obey it and the urge is frequent, then you may know that it is from God.

Some people want to recognize God only in some pleasant enlightenment -- and then they get pleasure and enlightenment but not God.... therefore we ought to expect God in all manners and all things evenly.... whatever the way that leads you most frequently to awareness of God, follow that way; and if another way appears, different from the first, and you quit the first and take the second, and the second works, it is all right. It would be nobler and better, however, to achieve rest and security through evenness, by which one might take God and enjoy him in any manner, and anything, and not have to deal they can hunt around for your special way: that has been my joy! To this end all kinds of activities may contribute and any work may be a help; but if it does not, let it go! (Ibid., pp. 249-50)

The Divine One is a negation of negations and a desire of desires. What does "One" mean? Something to which nothing is to be added. ... The One is a negation of negations.... He is that One who denies of every other that it is anything except Himself. (Ibid., p. 247)

You are to love God ... devoid of ghostliness.... True love is union. Your soul ought to be deghosted, void of ghosts, and be kept so. For if you love God as a god, a ghost, a person, or as if He were something with a form—you must get rid of all that. How then shall I love Him? Love Him as He is, a not-god, a not-ghost, apersonal, formless. Love Him as He is the One, pure, sheer, and clear, in whom there is no duality. For we are to sink eternally from negation to negation in the One. May God help us.... Amen. (Ibid., p. 248)

Recommended Reading

Of the many works in English on Eckhart and his teachings (not to mention the many German works), see: M. O’C. Walshe, *Meister Eckhart: German Sermons & Treatises*, 3 vols., UK: Element Books, 1979, 1981, 1985; Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*, NY: Penguin, 1994, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, London: SPCK, 1991; Edmund Colledge & Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: the Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises & Defence*, NY: Paulist Press, 1981; McGinn, with Frank Tobin, et al., *Meister Eckhart: Teacher & Preacher*, Paulist, 1986; McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from whom God Hid Nothing*, NY: Crossroad-Herder, 2001; McGinn (Ed.), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics Hadewich of Brabant, Mechtild of Magdeburg, & Marguerite Porete*, NY: Continuum, 1994; Reiner Schurmann, *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart’s Mystical Philosophy*, Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2001 (a reissue of his classic, *Meister Eckhart, Mystic & Philosopher*, Indiana U. Press, 1978); Matthew Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart’s Creation Spirituality in New Translation*, NY: Image Books, 1980; Armand Maurer (Ed.), *Master Eckhart: Parisian Questions & Prologues*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974; James Clark, *Meister Eckhart: An Introduction to the Study of His Works with an Anthology of His Sermons*, Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1957; J. Clark & John Skinner (Eds. & Tr.), *Treatises & Sermons of Meister Eckhart*, NY: Octagon Bks, 1983 (first publ. in 1958); Raymond B. Blakney, *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, Harper & Row, 1941 (reissued by Kessinger, 2003); Ursula Fleming, *Meister Eckhart: The Man from whom God Hid Nothing*, Leominster, Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing, 1995; Robert K.C. Forman, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic as Theologian*, Element, 1991; Bruce Milem, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart’s German Sermons*, Catholic Univ. of America Press 2002; Dom Cyprian Smith, *The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart*, London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2004; Richard Woods, *Eckhart’s Way*, Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1986 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991); and “Meister Eckhart’s Wayless Way and the Nothingness of God,” in his *Mysticism & Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998, pp. 77-91.