

Meister Eckhart

12th century German Dominican

“one of the greatest masters of Western spirituality”

QUOTES:

From *The Defense*:

“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.”

“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.

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 every 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)

I said before that a poor person is someone who does not even will to perform God's will, but who lives in such a way that he or she is as free both of their own will and of God's will as they were before they were created. Of this we say that it is the highest poverty.... And so we say that we should be so poor that we neither are nor possess a place in which God can act. If we still have such a place within us, then we still have multiplicity. Therefore I ask God to make me free of "God" for my most essential being is above "God" in so far as we conceive of God as the origin of creatures.

See: [Eckhart, Meister; http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Meister_Eckhart.html](http://www.enlightened-spirituality.org/Meister_Eckhart.html)