

First Sunday in Advent

‘Put on the Lord Jesus Christ’ – *Romans 13:14*¹

St Paul says: ‘Put Christ into yourself, interiorize him to yourself [cf. Rm 13:14]. By putting self aside, a person puts inside himself Christ, God, happiness, and holiness. [...] The prophet was amazed at two things. The first: what God does with the stars, the moon and the sun. The second marvel is about the soul, that God has done and does such great things with it and for its sake. [...] The soul he made not just according to an image in himself, nor according to something coming forth from him, as one describes him. Rather, he made it according to himself, in short, according to all that he is in his nature, his being, his activity which flows forth yet remains within, and according to the ground where he remains within himself, where he constantly gives birth to his only-begotten Son, from where the Holy Spirit blossoms forth. God created the soul in accordance with this out-flowing, inward-remaining work. [...]

There is something in the soul in which God is bare, and the masters say it is nameless, that it has no name of its own. It exists, but has no being of its own because it is neither this or that, neither here nor there. It has what it is in another and that [other] is in it; for it is what it is in that other and that other is in it. This other flows into it and it into this other, and here, he [Paul] urges: ‘Join yourselves to God, to happiness.’ Here the soul takes all its life and being, and from here it draws its life and being, because this is completely in God and everything else is outside. Hence the soul is always in God according to this [something], unless the soul carries it outside or extinguishes it within.

A master says that this [something] is so present to God that it can never turn from God and that God is always present to it and within it. I say that God has been in continually from eternity. For man to be one with God in it grace is not necessary because grace is a creature, and no creature belongs here; for in the ground of divine being where the three Persons are one being, the soul is one according to the ground. And so, if you wish it, all things are yours and God as well. Therefore, abandon yourself, all things, and everything you are in yourself, and take yourself according to how you are in God.

¹ Sermon 24, translated by F. Tobin in Meister Eckhart, *Teacher and Preacher* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986), 284-286.

The masters say that human nature has nothing to do with time and that it is completely untouched, being much more within and closer to a person than he is to himself. Therefore God assumed human nature and united it with his Person. At this point human nature became God because he took on human nature and not a human being. Therefore, if you want to be this same Christ and God, abandon all of that which the eternal Word did not assume. The eternal Word did not assume *a* man. Therefore, leave whatever is *a* man in you and whatever you are, and take yourself purely according to human nature. Then you are the same in the eternal Word as human nature is in him; for your human nature and his are without difference. It is one, and whatever it is in Christ, that it also is in you. Thus I said in Paris that in the just man is fulfilled whatever the holy scriptures and the prophets have ever said. If you are as you should be, everything that was said in the Old and New Testament will be fulfilled in you.

When are you as you should be? There are two ways of understanding this according to the words of the prophet who said: 'In the fullness of time the Son was sent' (Gal. 4:4). 'Fullness of time' is of two kinds. A thing is full when it has reached its end, as the day is full at evening. Thus, when all time drops away from you, time is full. The second: When time comes to its end, that is eternity because then all time has an end since 'before' or 'after' is no longer. There, whatever is, is all present and new, and you have present to your view whatever ever happened or ever shall happen. There, there is neither before nor after; it is all present there. And in this ever present view I hold all things in my possession. This is the 'fullness of time,' and thus I am as I should be. And thus I am truly the only Son and Christ.

That we come to this 'fullness of time', may God help us. Amen.

Nativity (in the Octave)

'When the middle silence [or: the silence of all means/*media*] held all things' – *Wisdom* 18:14²

Here, in time, we are celebrating the eternal birth which God the Father bore and bears unceasingly in eternity, because this same birth is now born in time, in human nature. St. Augustine says, 'What does it avail me that this birth is always happening, if it does not happen in me? That it should happen in me is what matters.' We shall therefore speak of this birth, of how it may take place in us and be consummated in the virtuous soul, whenever God the Father speaks His eternal Word in the perfect soul. [...]

² Sermon 101, translated by M. O'C. Walshe, revised by B. McGinn, in *The Complete Works of Meister Eckhart* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2009), 29-38.

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

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

No! But how do you know what nobility God has bestowed on human nature, not yet fully described, and still unrevealed? For those who have written of the soul's nobility have gone no further than their natural intelligence could carry them; they had never entered her ground, so that much remained obscure and unknown to them. So the prophet said, 'I will sit in silence and hearken to what God speaks within me' (Ps. 84:9). Because it is so secret, this Word came in the night and in darkness. St. John says, 'The light shone in the darkness, it came into its own, and as many as received it became in authority sons of God; to them was given power to become God's sons' (*John* 1:5, 11-12). Now observe the use and the fruit of this secret Word and this darkness. The Son of the heavenly Father is not born alone in this darkness, which is his own: you too can be born a child of the same heavenly Father and of none other, and to you too He will give power. Now observe how great the use is! For all the truth learned by all the masters by their own intellect and understanding, or ever to be learned till Doomsday, they never had the slightest inkling of this knowledge and this ground. Though it may be called a nescience, an unknowing, yet there is in it more than in all knowing and understanding without it, for this unknowing lures and attracts you from all understood things, and from yourself as well.

Epiphany

‘Where is he who is born King of the Jews?’ – *Matthew 2:2*³

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

Another question arises. You might say, ‘Sir, you place all our salvation in ignorance. That sounds like a lack. God made man to know, as the prophet says, ‘Lord, make them know!’ (*Tob. 13:4*). Where there is ignorance there is a lack, something is missing, a man is brutish, an ape, a fool, and remains so long as he is ignorant.’ Ah, but here we must come to a transformed knowledge, and this unknowing must not come from ignorance, but rather from knowing we must get to this unknowing. Then we shall become knowing with divine knowing, and our unknowing will be ennobled and adorned with supernatural knowing. [...]

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

³ Sermon 102, translated by M. O’C. Walshe, revised by B. McGinn, in *The Complete Works of Meister Eckhart* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2009), 39-45.