

THE GERMAN MYSTICS
WITH REFERENCE TO THE INFLUENCES
WHICH PRECEDED THEIR RISE

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BY

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THE GERMAN MYSTICS.

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I. Introduction: Mysticism.

The term "mysticism" is very loosely used in the present day. As applied to religion, it signifies the "type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage." (Rufus Jones: Studies in Mystical Religion, p. xv.). The mystic element in religion is the experiential element, as opposed to the intellectual element. Direct contact with the Divine through individual intuitions and emotions characterizes mystic religion. The mystic experiences rather than reasons. He comes directly to the Fount of Being, without mediating influence, and through pure emotional ecstasy and without the aid of any intellectual process, he bridges the gap between the material and the spiritual worlds. How this is accomplished the mystic cannot tell; nor does the experience of one man suffice for another.

Such is the original significance of the term. But it has come to have a much wider application. The mysticism just described has been characterized as "Mysticism of feeling." To this category belongs the mysticism of the Eleusinian Cults, that of St. Francis of Assisi, ^{that of} Catherine of Sienna, and that of George Fox. There are in addition, the "mysticism of the will," and "speculative mysticism." William James, in his "Varieties of Religious Experience," has well set forth the "mysticism of the will." Plato has been aptly termed "the father of speculative mysticism." With the latter, mysticism is carried into the realm of the rational and intellectual. Plato and Plotinus are the exponents of a speculative philosophy in which a more or less severe logic is brought to bear upon

the relation of the individual soul to the Divine.

Whatever the type of mysticism, whether the primitive mysticism of feeling, the mysticism of the will, or speculative mysticism, it has constantly proved a creative and ⁱrevivifying force in religion. There have always been two currents running parallel in religion: on the one hand systematized theology embodying dogma and doctrine and rules for holy living, on the other hand the mystic current ever fed afresh from the living springs of the Godhead and ever pouring new life into the church, which, without this constantly replenished spirit, would decay and finally lose all contact with human life*. There have been times when mysticism has assumed a pathological aspect, when hysteria, stigmata, glossolalia, and kindred abnormal psychological phenomena were characteristic of the mystic. There have been times when gross abuses have resulted from the anti-nomianism which is likely to mark any individual expression of religion. But when weighed in the balance with the good mysticism has wrought, these aberrations are comparatively of little moment.

Nearly every great, revolutionizing movement within the Christian Church has had its beginning in the soul of some man whose intense feeling of oneness with the Father was stronger than his love for dogma, creed, or outward observance. The mystic has ever been the opponent of the Pharisee.

But it must not be thought that the mystics are mere visionaries. The Apostle Paul, for example, was a true mystic, being gifted with great insight into the things of the Spirit. His vision on the road to Damascus; his highly-organized nervous system which responded to psychic influences; his possession of the "gift of tongues,"--these evidence that he was a true mystic. But he combined with these many practical qualities. He had executive ability in a marked degree. He was an organizer, as the churches which he

See: History of the Christian Church, p. 649: "It will often happen that in times of spiritual

founded give witness. ~~He had systematically persecuted the Christians before he found the light.~~ He was constantly looking after the practical matters of the churches; writing them frequently long letters, dealing with practical matters, and exhorting them to perform all the good works of the Christian life. St. Francis, another true mystic, spent his life going about among the poor and alleviating their sufferings. It is true, many of the mystics have set the life of contemplation above the life of industry, but these are scarcely in the majority. For the most part, the mystic union with God has found expression in the transformed outward life filled with good works.

The great danger is always that the expressions of mysticism shall crystallize into dogma. Thus, in the Methodist Church, the experience of John Wesley has been made the basis for all Christian experience; among the Quakers, George Fox is the type of the true Christian, and all who would come to God must follow in his footsteps. The very fundamental fact of mysticism is here denied: namely, that each shall experience God for himself, in his own individual way. "Contemplate any group you like, from Methodism to Christian Science, and you will discover that the whole force of organization tends to shape the individual upon a pre-existing mold." (G. A. Coe: Relation of Mysticism to Education).

Looking upon mysticism in a broad and comprehensive way, we may say, however, that it is the very well-spring and life of all true religion.

The Mysticism of Plato.

Modern Christianity has been well said to be a fusion of primitive Christian thought, Platonism, Neo-platonism and Stoicism. Of all pre-Christian influences, ^{Judaism, of course, excepted,} that of Plato has perhaps had most ~~had most~~ to do with shaping Christian thought. Coming down to us

now xx mystics will rise to show that religion is something more than a dry dogma, a creed of the understanding.

through the Greek Church Fathers, it is the basis of the generally-accepted ideas of the soul, of the heavenly world, and of the Deity.

For Plato, there are two worlds: the finite world, the world of error, mutability, and variety here; the infinite world, the world of permanence, truth, changelessness, yonder. The world we see is not the true world, but its shadow. The physical eye sees the phenomenal world; but the eye of the soul sees (after it has been trained to see) the real, the transcendent world.

Plato compares this world of unenlightened men to a dark cave (Republic: Book VII, p. 209 f. World's Great Classics Ed.):-

"Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open toward the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like a screen which marionette-players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets."

This cave is the sense-world, the world of phenomena. In this unenlightened men live, seeing but the shadows from the real world, the world of "ideas." The events of the real world take place upon the raised way, but only their images are seen cast upon the wall of the cave by the brightly blazing fire. But a few of the men in the cave are released and see the real world, later, returning ^{to tell} the incredulous inhabitants of the cave what they have seen. Thus the enlightened soul sees with the eye of reason the transcendent world and its realities, but men are incredulous and do not believe.

The soul is a divine entity, deathless and invulnerable. It lives in both worlds, the world of shadow and the world of reality. But the "power of knowing reality is already in the soul when the eye of the soul is turned."

The soul, in itself, is naturally pure, but "while we are in the body, and the soul is mingled with this mass of evil, our desire for truth will not be satisfied." (Phaedo, p. 86, World's Great Classics Ed.). We must therefore strip ourselves of all the qualities that inhere in the body. "All experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body." (Ib. p. 87). After death we shall attain to true knowledge, "for then, and not till then, the soul will be in herself alone and without the body." (Ib. p. 87). The final aim of the pure soul is the Supreme Good, the Ultimate Reality, of which it catches glimpses all along its upward way. That the soul shall finally attain this perfect knowledge is not a chimera; "we are not walking in a vain imagination; but I am confident in the belief that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living spring from the dead, and that the souls of the dead are in existence, and that the good souls have a better portion than the evil." (Ib. p. 93). The soul acquired knowledge of eternal things before its birth into this world. (Ib. p. 98). How does the soul attain perfect knowledge?

"When returning into herself she reflects; then she passes into the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging." (Ib. p. 102).

"That soul, I say, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world--to the divine and immortal and rational; thither arriving, she lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods." (Ib. p. 103).

But not all souls are filled with this desire for the pure and perfect. The soul which departs from this life the slave of lust and all evil desires, is condemned to wander about the visible world, "prowling about tombs and sepulchures, in the neighborhood of which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions

tion and to express its final convictions concerning God, the world and the human soul." (Weber, History of Philosophy, p. 166.).

The philosophic system of Plotinus has been called "^{at}emanistic pantheism." Form and matter are the constituents of all beings. God is the One, the Form; He is the dunamis which produces everything and matter is the dunamis which suffers everything, becomes everything and is infinitely modified. God is above all, He transcends all. We cannot attribute anything to Him, for to give Him any attribute is to limit Him. We cannot say that He is good, or just, or loving, for He is more than goodness, justice, or love. He is the source of all.

Below the One is nous, and below that the soul. "The image and product of the motionless nous is the soul, which, according to Plotinus, is like the nous, immaterial. Its relation to the nous is the same as that of the nous to the One. It stands between the nous and the phenomenal world, is permeated and illuminated by the former, but is also in contact with the latter. The nous is indivisible; the soul may preserve its unity and remain in the nous, but at the same time it has the power of uniting with the corporeal world and thus being disintegrated. It therefore occupies an intermediate position. As a single soul (world-soul) it belongs in essence and destination to the intelligible world; but it also embraces innumerable individual souls, and these can either submit to be ruled by the nous, or turn aside to the sensual, and lose themselves in the finite." (Harnack).

The aim of the soul for Plotinus, as for Plato, is ~~ka~~ union with the One. How shall this union be obtained? Plotinus himself, according to Porphyry, attained this union four times during his life. The One and the Good, which is the first principle of things,

is, as already suggested, beyond thought. It cannot then be seen with the eyes which look upon phenomenal things. The One is to be seen with the "eyes of the soul," but only after they are closed to other sights. That which apprehends the One is intellect, or the soul when it has become pure intellect; so that the principle above intelligence has sometimes to be spoken of as an "intelligible", and as that which mind, when it "turns back," thinks before it thinks itself. The One itself does not think; its possession of itself is too complete for the need to exist even of intuitive thought. Accordingly, since it can only be apprehended by the identification with it of that which apprehends, mind, to apprehend it, must dismiss even the activity of thought and become passive. Then, at last, unexpectedly, the vision of the One dawns on the purified intellectualized (if the term be allowed) soul. "Since soul is derived from intellect, ^{nous} it is intellectual, and the perfection of soul is from intellect, as from a father that nourishes it, who generated soul, as with reference to himself, not perfect. . . . Intellect, causes the soul to be ~~divine~~ more divine, both because it is the father of it, and because it is present with it. For there is nothing between them, except the difference of one with reference to the other, soul being successive to, and the recipient of intellect; but intellect subsisting as form. . . . Though the soul is such as we have described it, yet it is surpassed by intellect." (En. V.1), Select Works of Plotinus: Taylor, p. 167).

To attain union with the One, the soul must become unformed (*aneideos*). "You first separate body from the man, viz. from yourself. And if after this, you separate the soul which fashions the body, and as much as possible take away sense, desire and anger, and other trifles of this kind, as very much verging to the mortal nature. For

then, that which remains of the soul, is what we have dominated the image of intellect, and which preserves something of its light; so as to resemble the light proximate to the sphere of the sun which emanating from, diffuses its light about the sun." (En. V.iii, ib. p. 272). But this is not the final goal. The soul has reached the image of pure intellect, which is self-sufficing, because it has all that it needs for self-knowledge; but it needs to think itself. "The principle, which gives mind its being and makes it self-sufficing, is beyond even this need; and the true end for the soul is, by the light it sees by, to touch and gaze upon that light. How is this to be done? Take away all!" (Whittaker: The Neo-Platonists, p. 105.) Strip the soul of absolutely everything; then it will become one with the Absolute, the Good, the One.

The God of Plato is the Supreme Idea, the sovereign of all Ideas, if you will; but the God of Neo-Platonism is superior even to the Idea. Plato is a rational mystic (if terms so contradictory may be combined); Plotinus goes beyond, he posits a world and a Supreme Being beyond reason, a world where even nous fails, a world beyond all thinking, willing, feeling. It is pantheistic quietism. Herein, as we shall see later, his system contains the fundamental ideas of the German mystics.

Plotinus was followed by Porphyry, Jamblichus, and Proclus. Probably he exerted a great influence upon Synesius (circa 410); About the middle of the ninth century, the figure of John Scotus Erigena emerges into view. He has been considered both a belated Neo-Platonist and as the first of the Scholastics. Later appears Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), whose teachings are a mixture of Aristotelian ethics and Neo-Platonic conceptions. Through him and the Church Fathers, Neo-Platonism became a moving and vital force among

the Dominicans and so among the German mystics Eckhardt, Suso, and Tauler.

Monasticism
 II. ~~Conditions~~ in Europe Prior to
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The monastic life has always had great attraction for a certain type of mind. Buddhism, Islamism, and Christianity furnish us examples of monastic life almost as far back as the beginnings of these religions themselves. At the very dawn of Christianity, in Alexandria and in the desert regions of Palestine we find monastic orders. To retire from the world with its noises and strife is the summum bonum for some men. To men living thus retired and so forced into more or less introspective contemplation, mysticism has always had great charm.

It is not until the Middle Ages, however, that we find the monastic orders flourishing, acquiring vast property, leading the vanguard of culture, and exerting a wide influence over the political situations of the times.

Monasticism in the Christian Church is more in evidence in the West than in the East. In the Eastern Church there never was but one of these orders, that of St. Basil, which to this day is

the basis of the whole Oriental monastic system. In the West, the really great impulse given to the monastic spirit was through St. Benedict . In 529, he founded a monastery at Monte Casino. The Benedictine Rule which he established was the model for all future attempts of the sort. This rule was three-fold; it included the vows of perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience. The aim of the order was practical Christian work. Within a hundred years from the establishment of the order, it had spread throughout Christian Europe. The monasteries of the order became the ~~new~~ birth-place and the home of a new culture. Classic culture had died out, and a sterile period had set in. But the monks preserved the classic learning and through their schools disseminated a new education, whose importance cannot be overestimated.

By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, many more monastic orders had sprung up. In 1209, St. Francis of Assisi established his order near Assisi. St. Francis, as has been said, is a type of the mystic of feeling. From his boyhood, he was subject to frequent illnesses, accompanied with strange dreams and visions. After a serious illness, he found that he could not return to the gay life in which his youth had been spent. His mind was turned toward higher things. While praying in the church of St. Damian, near Assisi, he found that he could not remove his eyes from those of his Lord upon the crucifix. The figure seemed to be becoming alive. Suddenly it spoke to him and asked that he give his life to his Master. This was the beginning. The story of the stigmata, of his life among the lowly, of his preaching to his "little brothers," the birds,- this story is familiar to all. But the vision in the church of St. Damian seems to have been the starting-point of his career as the head of a brotherhood. It was the group spirit that actu-

ated him throughout the rest of his life. It is rare that the spirit of the mystic is so closely combined with the spirit of practical helpfulness as it is in St. Francis.

The members of the brotherhood which St. Francis founded he called the Friars Minor, because they were to be least in the kingdom of God. They were not cloistered, but were ordered to live in the world, that they might perform good works, and convert it to the love of God.

The Franciscan order was approved by Pope Honorius III (1223). Later, a minor order for women was established, the order of St. Clara, whose members were sworn to perpetual silence and seclusion. A lay order was finally instituted; its members lived in the world, owned property and married, the only requirement being to observe the great precepts of faith and Christian charity.

But the order with which we have most to do is the Dominican order. It was founded by St. Dominic, a Castilian, born in 1170. He was probably of noble birth, and, in contrast to St. Francis, was a learned theologian. At fourteen he began his studies in philosophy and theology at Palencia, although the university there had not yet been founded. He distinguished himself by his scholarship and later held high office in the church. He travelled widely, preaching against heresy in Italy, Spain, and France. The first brotherhood of his disciples was organized in Toulouse, the seat of Albigensian heresy, in 1217 the order ^{was} accepted by Pope Honorius III. In 1220, Dominic convoked the first general chapter of the order. Its members were to be dependent upon charity for subsistence, and were to go about preaching, hence they were called the "Preaching Friars."

There is great likeness between the results attained by St. Francis *and those attained by St. Dominic.* Both commanded their followers to renounce temporal possessions.

Both founded three sorts of orders: the brotherhood, the order of

women, the the order for pious laymen. Both orders were divided into provinces, the head of a province being a minister among the Franciscans, a prior among the Dominicans; the whole body in each case being subject to a general who was answerable only to the Pope himself.

Dominic died August 6th, 1221. After his death the order spread rapidly. Greece, Poland, Denmark, and Palestine were soon included among its provinces. After 1248 there was a studium generale for each province. In these universities, theology naturally was of the greatest moment, but the liberal arts were not neglected. Theology was first taught from the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard, but by the latter part of the thirteenth century, the Summa Theologia of Thomas Aquinas took its place, and the general chapter of 1315, passed an edict requiring his works to be in the library of every monastery of the order.

The order was fostered by powerful friends among the nobility, and the popes conferred lavish privileges upon both Franciscans and Dominicans. There was, to be sure hostility in certain quarters. By the end of the thirteenth century, many of the cities in which monasteries were built began to be unfriendly; the Cistercians and Carthusians resented the intrusion of the "preaching friars." This enmity went so far that Innocent IV was obliged in 1254 to limit their activities, allowing them to preach and hear confession only with the assent of the parish priest. The contest in Paris was terminated in 1259 in favor of the Dominicans, and soon they held theological chairs in Bologna, Padua, Vienna, Cologne, Prague, Oxford and Salamanca.

One of the greatest figures ~~of~~ among the Dominicans of the Middle Ages is Thomas Aquinas, but before entering upon a discussion of him and his works, it is well to speak a little of the spiritual

fellowships which had their beginning as early as the eleventh century.

III. Brotherhood Groups in the Middle Ages.

After the Crusades, the common people of Europe were in pitiable plight. The widows and orphans of the Crusaders filled town and country. Their pathetic cry, "Brod durch Gott!" rang in the ears from daybreak until dark. What was to be done to relieve the situation?

About 1180, Lambert "le Bègue," a priest of Liège in Flanders, conceived the idea of establishing common houses for the women and girls thus left homeless and without means of support. This was the beginning of the order of Beguines. At first the common house was but an ordinary dwelling. But as time passed, these became model villages, in which all sorts of pious works were carried on. The occupants of these "Beguinages" were comparatively free. They had no binding vows except those of decent, moral life; they were not shut fast within the four walls of their convents; but were occupied with all sorts of practical Christian work in and about the cities and towns. They might marry and leave the order if they chose to do so.

A ~~the~~ brotherhood with the same aims, the members of which were called Beghards, was founded in Louvain in 1220. These pious laymen nursed the sick, bore the dead to their graves, and administered spiritual comfort to those condemned to die.

According to Delacroix, (Essai sur le mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne) there were ^{three} classes of Beguines: Rich women who went into a Beguinage to live the simple life, poor women who lived upon the charity of rich patrons without begging, and poor women who lived solely by their handiwork and begging, especially the latter.

It was not long, however, before these societies began to degenerate. They were loosely organized, and not all contingencies had been foreseen by the original organizers. It was difficult to safeguard the women as closely as was to be desired. From the nature of their work they were constantly exposed to all sorts of temptation. In 1244 the Archbishop of Mayence forbade any Beguine association to admit a woman under forty years of age. ~~But~~ Admission into the order was easy, and the vows not binding. There were no strict rules nor any long novitiate. The lack of discipline and sequestration attracted to the societies teachers and propagandists of various unwholesome doctrines. All sorts of ill-balanced and abnormal persons had united with them. The ecclesiastical authorities decided that the solution was to place these associations under the care of the Franciscans and Dominicans.

The orders became permeated with pantheistic mysticism. From the Beghards and Beguines, filled with this new gedanke, evolved the association known as the "Brethren of the Free Spirit." The abstract doctrines of Dionysius the Areopagite and Erigena had now become the property of the common mind, and great was the confusion. Jundt, in his Pantheisme populaire, states their views thus:

"This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, a dispensation of liberty for one to do whatever he pleases . . . Man can arrive here in the present life to the fulness of divine blessedness . . . Every intellectual being possesses within himself by his very nature perfect blessedness . . . The soul has no need of Divine Light (i.e. beyond what it has within itself) to rise to a contemplation of God . . . Man can attain in this life such a degree of perfection that he will become incapable of sinning, and that he can make no further progress in divine grace, for if he were able to progress further he might attain a greater perfection than that of Jesus Christ . . . When a person has attained the highest degree of perfection there is no need of fasting or praying, for the senses are now so completely subject to reason that the body may be given absolute liberty. . . Those who live in this state of perfection, and are moved by the Spirit of God, are no longer under any law or ecclesiastical regulation, for where the Spirit of God is there is

liberty. . . He who must still practise virtues is an imperfect person. The perfect soul has got beyond virtues. . . When the body of Christ is presented in divine service it is not necessary to rise or to show any respect for the host, for it would be a sign of imperfection to come down from the heights of pure contemplation to dwell on thoughts of the sacrament or the passion of the Saviour." (Jundt, pp. 50-51).

In these doctrines is a perversion of one of the most divine utterances of Jesus. Jesus urges "be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect," expressing thus the possibility of perfection in the human soul. But these pantheistic mystics claimed that they were already perfect. Whereas they had been men of social impulse, they were now individualists of the worst type. They were not striving to reach up to God's perfection, but they were striving to drag God down to the level of their imperfection. We are all gods, self-created. We are one with God. We are God. Not that we are lost in God, but the sum total of Deity is embodied in us. The divine nature excludes all differences. It is neither good nor bad, black nor white. It is above all law. They rejoiced in this antinomianism, for if the divine is embodied in the human and is above all law, then the human is above all law.

It is but natural that such antinomianism should result in license. Gross immorality spread through the societies. Ullmann paints a very dark picture, doubtless somewhat exaggerated, of their secret societies and clandestine meetings. It became necessary at length to suppress the orders entirely. Hence, in 1311, decrees were passed, though not published until 1317, abolishing the orders of Bedhards and Beguines. ~~This was~~. This was an unnecessarily harsh measure in some cases, as there were societies free from the charge of heresy and immorality. But their doctrines were dangerous, inasmuch as they set at nought the authority of the Church. It was a grave issue, and had to be met with stern measures.

IV. Scholasticism and Thomas Aquinas.

While the current of mysticism was flowing so freely among the lay orders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, another current had its rise in the church and was flowing parallel with it, namely scholasticism. This movement began about 1000 A.D. and lasted until 1500 A.D. Erigena, Lanfranc, and Anselm were among its earlier exponents. Later came Abelard and Peter Lombard. It reached its high water mark in the person of Thomas Aquinas.

In the break between the old world and the new, the church was one of the few surviving institutions, and the only science preserved from the debris was philosophy. It was the aim of the church to embrace in one system and under one science, the whole of human thought. Whatever this ~~system~~ ^{was to be,} system, since it was wrought out in the church, it must have a theological basis. When scholasticism arose, therefore, the science which it found ready to hand was theology, and its task was to bring all human knowledge under this one head. All other sciences were therefore subsidiary to this one sovereign science. In this work, Thomas Aquinas was pre-eminent.

Thomas was born in 1225 at Rocca Sicca in the kingdom of Naples. At seventeen he assumed the Dominican habit. After several years study under Albertus Magnus, he became second lecturer and magister studentium at Cologne. In 1257 he was created doctor of theology and began giving lectures in Paris and in Rome. He was a profound student of Aristotle and direct all his efforts toward acquainting Europe with the Aristotelian philosophy as set forth in the Greek text, (hitherto it had only been known through Latin translations made from Arabian translations), giving the philosophy a decidedly theological color. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he strives to present a condensed summary of all known science.

According to Aquinas, there are two sources of knowledge: reason and revelation. These are distinct, as he makes plain in his Contra Gentiles, but revelation is the more important of the two. Revelation is considered a source of knowledge rather than a manifestation of the divine life, and its chief characteristic is that it presents men with mysteries which are to be believed in even where they cannot be understood. Revelation is not from Scripture alone, nor from church tradition alone, but is found in both. It is a divine source of knowledge, of which Scripture and church tradition are the channels. Reason is not individual reason, but the fountain of natural truth whose chief channels are the various systems of heathen philosophy, and more especially the thoughts of Plato and the methods of Aristotle. Through the church and philosophy a man can come into touch with both kinds of knowledge. But, in the last analysis, both the truths of reason and those of revelation ^{come from} ~~caem~~ God, the Absolute, the Source of all knowledge.

God alone is the perfect knowledge of things. "He possesses absolute truth, because He is absolute truth. . . God's ideas not only exactly reproduce all things, they are the things themselves. Things first exist, and then man thinks them: in God, thought precedes the things, which exist only because and as he thinks them. Hence there is no difference in him between thought and being; and, since this identity of knowledge and its object constitutes truth, God is truth itself." (Weber: History of Philosophy, p. 244).

"The universe, which consists of the two realms of nature and of grace, is the best possible world. . . . To say that God conceived perfection and realized an imperfect world would presuppose an opposition between knowledge and will, between the ideal principle and the real principle of things, which contradicts thought as

well as faith. Hence the divine will is not a will of indifference, and the freedom of God, far from being synonymous with caprice and chance, is identical with necessity." (Ib. p. 245.)

The twelve volumes of the Summa Theologiae in which the system of Thomas is set forth are divided into three parts. Part one deals with the nature, attributes and relations of God. Part two is ethical and discusses man, treated as in Aristotle, according to his telos. It deals with the Christian virtues: faith, hope, and charity; and with the so-called natural or heathen virtues: justice, courage, temperance, and the like. Part three deals with the person and offices of Christ.

If Thomas Aquinas marks the climax of scholasticism, he also marks the beginning of its decline. From his time downwards, reason and faith, official theology and philosophy are more sharply differentiated, and are carried on more independently. It was a more or less artificial fusion which he attempted. Moreover, men began to see more and more that life is a matter of practical work and simple faith, rather than a matter of theoretical beliefs. Theology in the West busied itself more with practical matters of living than with metaphysics from this time onward, and the decline of the scholastics was in proportion to the ~~marked~~ growth of practical ethics within the church.

But ^{Aquinas} he paved the way for the great mystics: Eckhart, Tauler and Suso, and helped to purge mysticism of some of its worst features namely, its extreme antinomianism and consequent immorality, and also introduced an intellectual element into the mystic current, that helped to clarify it and put it on a more soundly philosophical basis. There was much in the "heathen philosophy" which he introduced to the Occident which acted as a corrective of the evils within the church and without.

We have seen something of the rise of mysticism, of its philosophical treatment at the hands of Plato and Plotinus and of its course during the earlier centuries of the Middle Ages, we have also seen something of the beginnings of monasticism and scholasticism, which reached its climax in the person of Thomas Aquinas. We now come to Heinrich Eckhart (variously Ekehart, Eckhardt, or Eckhart) in whose person the forces of Neo-platonic mysticism and scholasticism are combined.

V. Heinrich Eckhart.

Eckhart has been taken by Ullmann as a type of the members of the spiritual fellowships of the thirteenth century. In his "Reformers Before the Reformation," he has used the material of the twenty-six theses which are supposed to epitomize Eckhart's doctrines as an expression of the doctrines held by the Brethren of the Free Spirit. This is only half a truth, however, as applied to Eckhart, since we have to reckon with the intellectual side of Eckhart's character, influenced as it was by the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas. Nor must we consider that morally Eckhart showed very close kinship with these "free spirits." In fact he expressly condemns their antinomianism, as the following passage from one of his sermons clearly shows:

"There are persons who say, 'I have God and His love, I can do what I wish' This view shows an ignorance of true liberty. When thou wishest to do a thing contrary to the will of God and His law, thou hast not the love of God, even though thou endeavorest to make the world believe that thou hast. That man who has established himself in the will of God and in the love of God does what God loves and leaves undone what He forbids. It is as impossible for him to do what God does not will as it is not to do what He wills. The man whose feet are bound cannot walk, and the man who lives in the will of God cannot sin." (Pfeiffer, p. 232).

Eckhart absorbed the mystical teachings of his predecessors, Augustine, Dionysius, Erigena, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas, and became the interpreter of this mystical message to the

people. "He was at the storm centre of heretical mysticism-- the mysticism of the 'Free Spirit'; he pushed his speculations up to the perilous edge, 'beyond the flaming bounds of time and space,' and for an entire generation, with the boldest of freedom, he preached to the multitudes in the German tongue on topics bristling with difficulties for the orthodox faith." (Jones: Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 217).

An authentic account of Eckhart's life is hard to obtain. It is very probable that he was born about 1260 in Hochheim, a Thuringian village. (Denifle and Delacroix say Hochheim, while Jundt argues for Strassburg. Denifle, however, discovered a sermon in Latin, which ends with the note: "This sermon was reported from the lips of Eckhart of Hochheim."). When about fifteen years of age, he entered a Dominican convent, ^{probably} likely in Erfurt. The course of studies for a Dominican priest occupied nine years. The latter part of this period was spent at Cologne, where Albertus Magnus had taught, and where his pupil Thomas Aquinas was beginning to make his influence felt. Records show that he was a student in the school of theology at Paris in 1302. He had already been made Prior of the Dominican convent at Erfurt and Vicar of the order for the district of Thuringia. "This," says Mehlhorn (Die Blütezeit der deutschen Mystik), "must have been prior to 1298, as after that time the above offices were no longer united in one man." In 1303 Eckhart returned to Erfurt where he was chosen Provincial-^{prior} ~~vicar~~ of the Dominican Order for Saxony. Four years later he became Vicar-general for Bohemia, and was also re-elected Provincial-prior for Saxony. In 1310 he became Provincial-prior of the Order in Teutonia, i.e. High Germany and the Rhine country down to Cologne, but he was never installed in office, as in 1311 he again went to Paris as a teacher. Later, at least by

1314, we find him in Strassburg, teaching and preaching. Some time later, we find him holding a chair in the Dominican University in Cologne. Here, notwithstanding the deep impression which his preaching made upon the people, an impression heightened by his devout life, he was accused of heresy in 1326. The privilege of appealing to the Pope was refused by the Archbishopial Council. Upon this, he composed a manifesto which was read from the pulpit of the Dominican Church, in which he states that "he has always hated every error in faith, and especially every error which might be found in his own teachings." He died in 1327, before the matter was finally settled. In 1328, the General Council of the Dominicans in Toulouse decided to interfere when preachers "led the people astray by their subtleties." A Bull of Pope John XXII, in 1329, condemned twenty-eight ^{theses} by which Eckhart "had obscured the true faith in his preaching to the people"; fifteen of these these being clearly heretical, and ~~1~~ eleven suspicious.

a. Eckhart's Conception of God and the World.

In his conception of the Godhead, Eckhart shows the influence of Neo-platonism. God is the Absolute, the Undifferentiated. He distinguishes between Gott and Gottheit. The one is the Divine Nature revealed in personal character; the other is the central mystery, the Ground of all that is, Itself unrevealed. It is that which does the knowing and is Itself unknown. "All that is in the Godhead is one. Therefore we can say nothing. He is above all names, above all nature. God works; so doth not the Godhead. Therein they are distinguished--in working and not working. The end of all things is the hidden Darkness of the eternal Godhead, unknown and never to be known." (Pfeiffer, p. 173) The Godhead is formless;

for "he who seeks God through definite outward forms, attains the forms, but God, hidden beneath them, is lost for him. Only he who seeks God under no form finds God as He is in Himself," i.e. the Formless does not exist under any form. Men cannot see God as if He "stood yonder and I here." "Whatsoever has being (finite being), time, and space is not God. He transcends all this. Though He is in all creatures, He is still above them, that which makes all things one, must be above all things. . . God works in being, but He is above being. Before being was, God worked. God is not being nor goodness, but is above all being and goodness." God is not good, nor just, nor loving, since he transcends all these. "It is just as wrong to call God a Being as to call white black. God is not this nor that, ^{not being nor goodness,} but with these I have not denied being to Him; but I have exalted and ennobled it in Him." "God is neither good, nor better nor best of all."

God manifests Himself in the three persons of the Trinity. In the beginning was God the Father, who was made through Himself. (Denifle: Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters, p. 534, vol. ii). From the Father goes out a word (logos), which comprises everything. The Father procreates the Son, who is like the Father in everything, except that he does not procreate. (Ib. p. 337). From the mutual love of Father and Son springs the Holy Spirit (Ib. p. 497). Yet it must not be forgotten that in the twenty-third thesis, there is the statement that "God is absolutely one, transcending and encompassing number; in Him, therefore, there can ~~be~~ not be, nor can there be thought to be, any distinctions; either in His nature or in His persons."

"As soon as God was (i.e. as soon as He had created Himself) He created (also) the world; the world was from God from the beginning; the world and the Son, equal and co-eternal, were created simultaneously." These quotations from the first three theses which

were among the twenty-six brought as charges against Eckhart by his enemies and which were admittedly an expression of his doctrines, show a close relation to the emanatistic pantheism of Plotinus. Especially as Eckhart says in another place that creation is going on eternally.

Creatures have existence only so far as they are in God. None of them has independent being (Sein). Only in so far as His being permeates them are they in any sense real. In the twenty-sixth thesis is the statement that "all creatures are a pure nothing." In a sermon quoted by Pfeiffer on the text I John 4: 9, Eckhart says: "All creatures are a pure nothing. I do not say that they are little or something, I say they are nothing. Whatsoever has no being is nothing, and all creatures lack independent existence (Wesen)." "Where the creature stops, God begins."

In Eckhart's mind, no temporary activity can be attributed to God, hence the creation of the world must be considered to have been going on from eternity. "The perishable being is the creature confined within the limits of space and time. On the other hand, every creature, considered according to its true entity, is eternal." (S.M.Deutsch; Schaff-Herzog, vol. IV, p. 69). There is a difficulty involved in this conception. If, however, we allow that Eckhart, somewhat in the manner of Plato, conceived of a real world and an ideal world, his meaning becomes somewhat more clear.

b. God and the Soul,

Eckhart holds that beneath all things, even God, there is a Ground or Essence. So it is with the soul. "There is in the soul something which is above the soul, divine, simple, rather unnamed than named." This is the "Spark," "Tiny Spark," the "Soul's

Eye," the "Man of the Soul," the "Ground of the Soul," the "Synteresis," (moral conscience), or the "Active Reason." The aim of the soul is union with God.

There is a contradiction involved in the dual view which Eckhart holds of the soul. In certain passages, he contends that the "Spark" is really God, or a part of Him, a bit of the Uncreated which remains in the Godhead, which has never "come out" from God. "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which he sees me". But elsewhere, he speaks as if the soul's "Spark" were a created faculty. It has come from God, but is not the identical essence of God--it will remain apart from Him eternally. "God with His own nature, His essence, His Godhead is in the soul, and yet He is not the soul (he transcends it)." (Pfeiffer, p. 180).

At any rate, the soul and God belong together. The end of the soul is to become one with God. This is obtained by complete renunciation, for this union with God is above all earthly possessions. "If a man were to have all earthly possessions, and glory, and honor, yet were separated from God, he would have nothing;" if a man possess God, he possesses everything, it matters not at all then whether he has other possessions, God is everything. Not only every outward possession, but the self also should be given up. In the tractates, Eckhart says:

"There are certain restless people who are full of perversity, and seek their salvation in outward renunciation and pious works. The farther these go at, the less they find what they seek. They fare as one who has lost his way; the farther he goes, the more confused he becomes. What shall such a man do? He shall first of all get rid of self; then he has got rid of all. Really, if a man should give up a kingdom, or the entire world, but cling to self, he should have given up nothing. But if a man has given up self, whatsoever he shall keep, be it riches, or honor, or what not, - he has given up all!" (Pfeiffer, p. 546).

Not so much the outward action as the right intent is the thing that counts and makes for progress in the soul's upward climb.

"To will to do a thing as soon as I am able is the same thing before God"(as if I did it). What makes man and his works good is the complete turning of the soul toward God." The "true possession of God rests upon the inner disposition and upon an intimate, intelligent turning toward God and love for Him." "He who has God according to His being grasps God in a divine way and to him God's light shines in everything. Everything has a God-like flavor and God manifests Himself to him through everything."

The mystic union with God is for Eckhart not so much a matter of feeling as it is a matter of the will. For "God can disappear for a moment from the feeling, but not from the good-will," i.e. the will that has given itself up to God. The man who has done this is "completely in God and God surrounds him as my hat surrounds my head." In the eucharist we are made one with Christ, and so with God. But what if we have no feeling^{of this union?} That is so much the better, we have the will and the faith to believe without feeling, and so we are on a higher level. Men must strive to have the good-will or, better, the "God-will." "There where God is one with man in the inmost well-spring (of the soul), there comes forth from God a will which also belongs to the soul. As long as this will remains untouched by all creatures and all created things, so long is it free."

The quality in the soul that keeps it away from God is "das Nicht." This is the antithesis, the negation of God, who alone is true being, and so created things are "das Nicht." Eckhart says of this:

"What burns in Hell? . . . 'Das Nicht' burns in Hell. A parable! Suppose one should take a burning coal and lay it on my hand; if I should say the coal burns my hand, I should be very much mistaken. I should rather describe what burns me by saying 'das Nicht' does it, because the coal has something in it which my hand has not. If my hand contained all that the ~~xxx~~ coal is and does, then it would possess the nature of

fire. If one should take then all fire that has ever burned and shake it out on my hand, it would not hurt me.

In the same way I maintain that God and all those who see God in all blessedness have something which those who are separated from God have not. This 'Nicht' tortures souls that are in Hell more than self-will, or any fire whatsoever. Therefore, if you desire to become perfect, you must be free from all desire."

Sin is in the will, wrongly directed to the finite world. The soul fixes its gaze upon "creatures" and the image of the creatures so fills it, that it cannot see God. It is only when the soul has cast out all "das Nicht" that it can come to God. To the soul emptied of the finite God comes, and gives birth in it to his Son. This process ~~xxx~~ goes on continuously in the soul, and causes to spring up therein the qualities which are in God, the process is a "Vergött[~]nung." The supreme good is attained when, through casting out of desire and ^{thru} the exercise of all Christian virtues, God enters into the ^{"Quellpunkte"} "Wellpunkt" of the soul and takes up His abode there. Then peace and tranquillity enter in also, and the soul reaches a beatific state in which no rude shock from the outward world can in anywise disturb it. It is even glad then for its former sins, since these were the means of bringing it to God.

VI. Johann Tauler.

In the fourteenth century, there was a remarkable expression of mystical religion in Germany, the exponents of which are known as the "Friends of God." "The title does not cover a sect, nor even a 'Society' in the strict sense of the word." (Jones: p. 242). It may be taken rather as a type of mystical religion. This movement was influenced by Meister Eckhart, also by the German "Prophetesses" of the two preceding centuries--St. Hildegarde, St. Elizabeth, and St. Matilda. These "Friends of God" formed themselves into loose organizations under spiritual leaders; the whole movement being unified by the work of itinerant "prophets" and by a voluminous literature. "The failing of these people," says Rufus Jones,

"lies not so much in extreme mysticism, as in the direction of extreme asceticism and self-renunciation. All the leading Friends of God, both in sermons and in writings, speak vigorously against the negative freedom and licence of the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" (Ib. 245). The great lights of this movement are Rulman Merswin, John Tauler, Henry Suso, and Jan Ruysbroek. Henry of Nördlingen and the author of the "Theologia Germanica" figure as well.

The best-known of these is perhaps John Tauler, who is supposed to be the "learned doctor," whose life is set forth in the "Book of the Master." This book is translated into English and set before the sermons by Susanna Winkworth in her English version of the "Life and Sermons of Tauler." The "Friend of God from Oberland" is supposed to be Nicholas of Basle, who was a Beghard and was burned at the stake in Vienna, as a heretic. Preger and Denifle question the historicity of the events narrated in this book, and think at any rate that Tauler is not the "learned doctor" mentioned in its pages. It is the basis of the life of Tauler given by Susanna Winkworth, and the following short biography is from that source.

Tauler was born in Strassburg in 1290 (Jones says "about 1300."). His father was probably Nicholas Tauler, whose name occurs among those of the Senators of Strassburg in 1313. At an early age he entered the Dominican order, and after a period of training, was ordained a priest in the order. It is likely that, with John von Dambach, he went to the great school of theology at Paris soon after the year 1308. Here he came under the influence of Abelard, Amaury de Bene, the philosophy of Aristotle, and Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. It is said that Tauler did not look back with any great degree of satisfaction upon this scholastic period of his life. Upon his return to Strassburg, he must have come into contact with Meister Eckhart, who was discoursing to the people in the vernacular

upon lofty philosophical themes. Numerous mystics were in Strassburg at this period, and it would be very strange indeed if Tauler had not absorbed the mysticism of his age and city.

Tauler was in Basle from 1338 to 1339. Here he met Henry of Nördlingen, from whose letters many of the events of Tauler's life at this period have been gleaned. Basle was under an interdict but the people prevailed upon the Pope to relax his severity for the space of a year, and it does not seem to have affected conditions of life at this particular time.

The "Book of the Master of Holy Scripture" takes up his life at the year 1340. It tells how at this time, a certain layman heard of the great doctor's preaching and came to hear him discourse. He heard Tauler preach on the "twenty-four articles whereby a man may perceive who are the proper, true, reasonable, enlightened, contemplative men." These articles are love, self-renunciation, resignation, poverty of spirit, true content, waiting on God, resigning the will to God's will, seeing God in all things, receiving all from him, freedom from the creature, steadfastness in the truth, wisdom to discern between good and evil, etc. I have given a partial list of these articles, because it seems to me that they thoroughly represent Tauler. The ones underscored are mystical in content, and I fail to see that this sermon differs materially from those universally recognized as Tauler's own. This is to me convincing proof that the "Book of the Master" has reference to Tauler as the "learned doctor" and to no one else. This is, of course, purely internal evidence and it may be that one of Tauler's sermons was incorporated in the book, while the narrative itself referred to some one else, but this seems somewhat doubtful. At any rate, a comparison with other sermons will show the close resemblance.

The narrative is resumed after this sermon. It goes on to say how the pious friend reproved the Master for preaching more of the letter than the spirit, and told him that his mode of life and preaching must be reformed. The Master spent two years in contemplation and rigorous self-discipline. From this experience, he emerged a mystic and a preacher of great power. This two-years' experience had been peculiarly trying. He lay for a long period sick and deserted in his cell, meditating on the sufferings of Christ, when suddenly he received a great illumination and he heard a voice announce that he was "healed in body and in mind." In great humility the Master asked for enlightenment from the pious layman, and was given the "A, B, C" of the Christian life: "After a manly and not a childish sort, ye shall, with thorough earnestness, begin a good life," "Carefully endeavour to keep the middle path in all things, with seemliness and moderation," "Give heed to exercise yourself in all godly works of mercy toward the body of the spirit," and the like. These very simple rules of conduct the Master learned, when his friend told him that he had now received the grace of God and was ready to preach. The Master essayed to preach once more, but was so moved that he could not utter a word. A second attempt, a sermon on the text "Behold the bridegroom cometh," met with better success. There were striking psychic phenomena during the sermon. One of the hearers cried, "It is true!" and fell to the ground as one dead. Others fell into the same state of trance. Cries were heard throughout the assemblage. Intense excitement reigned. From this time the Master, having learned true humility and discovered the secrets of the truly Christ-like life, was a preacher of greater power and effectiveness than ever before.

Tauler was a moral mystic of the scholastic type, not so

speculative as Eckhart, so poetic and contemplative as Suse, nor so severe as Ruysbroeck. There is a certain homeliness about Tauler which is very attractive. His illustrations are drawn largely from simple, everyday life, and often are very striking. There is a childlike naïveté and a youthful freshness about the sermons which is refreshing after the learned speculations of Eckhart, although he is not second to Eckhart in point of learning. It is rather that the homeliness and concreteness of his style make him less remote from the sympathies of the simple man. He lays emphasis upon the experiences of the devout man as being of more worth than much ^{learning} and the reading of weighty books. "Great doctors of Paris read ponderous books and turn over many pages. The Friends of God read the living Book where everything is life." (Sermon LIX).

Susanna Winkworth thus characterizes his preaching:

"His preaching is distinguished from that of most of his brethren among the 'Friends of God,' by its more searching application of religious principles to the moral questions arising in the various emergencies of inward experience and outward life. How much more widely still must it have differed from that of the ordinary preachers, who fought to captivate the educated by the refinements of scholastic logic, employed on questions of no use but to display their own ingenuity, or to entertain the vulgar by marvelous stories of wonder-working saints or demons--when in simple earnest language he appealed to the consciences of his hearers, and then showed them the way of escape from the wretchedness of their sinful lives to the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. And when he taught them that they must forsake the creature and cleave to God alone, it was no selfish shutting up of the heart within the narrow sphere of its own emotions and experiences which he preached, for he is continually admonishing to works of love, and ever places human duties on their true level, measuring their value not by the nature of the act, but by the obedience and love involved in its performance." (Life & Sermons, p. 126).

There is a moderation in Tauler's sermons which is in pleasing contrast to the antinomianism and pantheistic mysticism of the Beghards. These he expressly condemns. Of the Beghards he says:

"They think that they are free from sin, and are united to God without any means whatsoever, and that they have got above all subjection to the Holy Church, and above the command-

ments of God, and above all works of virtue; for they think this emptiness to be so noble a thing that it may not be hindered by aught else, whatsoever it be. Hence they stand empty of all subjection, and do no works either towards them who are above or below them, even as an instrument is empty, and waiteth on the master when he shall choose to work therewith; for they deem that if they work, it hindereth the work of God, and therefore they empty themselves of all virtue. Nay, they would be so empty, that they would not give praise or thanks to God, nor have, nor confess, nor love, nor desire, nor pray for anything; for they have already, as they suppose, all that they could pray for; and think that they are poor in spirit, for that they are, as they dream, without all self-will, and have renounced all ownership wholly and without reserve. For they believe that they have risen above it, and that they possess all those things for the sake of which the ordinances and precepts of the Church were appointed and established, and that none can give or take from them, not even God Himself, since they think that they have suffered all exercises and all virtues, and have attained to pure emptiness of spirit; and they say it requireth more pains to become empty of virtue than to attain unto virtue." (Ib. 147-8).

He inveighed strongly against this passive mysticism, and his own life bears out his teachings in this direction. "Works of love are more acceptable to God than lofty contemplation; art thou engaged in devoutest prayer, and God wills that thou go out and preach, or carry broth to a sick brother, thou shouldest do it with joy." When the Black Death visited Strassburg, he went about administering the sacraments and bringing consolation to the sick and dying.

After a lingering illness, the nature of which we do not know, Tauler died in Strassburg in 1361.

Tauler's Doctrines.

He is much more simple in his conceptions of God than is Eckhart, but occasionally he rises to the same Absolute as that upon which Eckhart discourses. He sometimes tells his listeners that "there is nothing so near the inmost heart of man as God." On the other hand, he speaks upon occasion of the "Divine Abyss," the "Hidden God," "the calm waste of the Godhead," "the Divine Dark," the "Desert of the Godhead."

"God is a pure Being (i.e. without attributes), a waste of calm seclusion--as Isaiah says, He is a hidden God--He is much nearer than anything is to itself in the depths of the heart, but He is hidden from all our senses. He is far above every outward thing and every thought, and is found only where thou hidest thyself in the secret place of the heart, in the quiet solitude where no word is spoken, where is neither creature nor image nor fancy. This is the quiet Desert of the Godhead, the Divine Darkness--dark from His own surpassing brightness, as the shining of the sun is darkness to weak eyes, for in the presence of its brightness our eyes are like the eyes of the swallow in the bright sunlight--this Abyss is our salvation." (Third Instruction).

He speaks of the "Highest Good, which is God Himself?" (Winkworth's Tauler: p. 208). "Nothing hinders the soul so much in knowledge of God as time and place." (Ib. 211). "Time and place are parts, and God is one." (Ib. p. 211). In God alone is real being. "If I am to know real Being, I must know it in that where it is self-existent, that is, in God. In God alone is the true Divine Substance." (Ib. 212). He is omnipotent, "for God has all power in heaven and on earth." (Ib. 245).

The soul longs to get back to God whence it came. This it does by self-renunciation. But the intervention of Christ is also necessary. Tauler emphasizes the Triune God. God reveals Himself to the soul in a three-fold manner. "In the first place He reveals the Father's sovereignty to the soul by declaring His changeless, infinite Power. And when through the Son the soul ~~xxx~~ hath experience of this power, it becomes strong and mighty in whatever happens, so that it grows powerful and steadfast in all virtues and in perfect singleness of mind," so that nothing can shake it. "In the second place, the Lord reveals Himself in the soul with an infinite Wisdom, which He Himself is. In this Wisdom the Father perceiveth Himself, with all His Fatherly sovereignty. . . In the third place, Christ reveals Himself also with an infinite Love, sweetness and richness flowing forth from the power of the Holy Ghost, overflowing and streaming in a very flood of richness and sweetness into

the heart that is waiting to receive it; and with this sweetness He reveals Himself to the soul, and unites Himself with her." (Ib. 331-332).

Before proceeding with the discussion of the means by which the soul gets back to God, let us ~~xxx~~ take a brief glance at Tauler's conception of Christ. Like Eckhart, he thinks of the Son as being eternally created and issuing from the Father, but he lays more emphasis than the former upon the human side of Christ. In his sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent (Ib. 223f.) he says: "How wonderful God is in His deity, that He has become man for the sake of His bride (the soul). This is the miracle that Moses saw, and said: 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.' The thorn-bush is Christ's human nature; the flame is His soul filled with burning love; the light is His deity shining through His mortal body. . . He is the Truth who hath taught us the way to heaven; let the soul look upon Him, that she may follow Him, to live after His spirit, and not after her own inclination, and her nature shall be greatly strengthened to fight the good fight when she considers the nature of her King, how He fulfilled His pilgrimage. For it shall greatly refresh the loving soul to remember from time to time His human infirmities, and from time to time to rejoice in His life in the spirit." Again in the Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday (Ib. 272f) on Matt. XX.1, he states that "this householder signifies our Lord Jesus Christ; His house is the heavens, and this earth and purgatory, and hell. He saw that all nature had gone astray, inso-much that His lovely vineyard lay a barren waste; and man, whom He had made to possess this fair and fruitful vineyard, had wandered far away from Him, and left this excellent vineyard to be untilled. But the Lord of the vineyard determined to invite men to return into this vineyard for which He created him, and went out early to that

end."

Man, as we have seen, longs to get back to the individual unity from which he came. The soul, thus striving to return, has mysterious converse with God. For "God is everywhere alike near to the soul." But the soul is hindered by external things ("time and place" and "creatures") from coming to God. "God is ever ready, but we are very unready; God is nigh to us, but we are far from Him; God is within, we are without." But we can get back to God. "God leadeth the righteous by a narrow path into a broad highway, till they come unto a wide and open place." (Ib. 213). This "narrow path" is the path of renunciation. Tauler, since he holds that God is above creatures, makes much of this negative way of reaching Him, by renunciation of all creatures and turning the eyes of the soul inward upon itself where God dwells. "Loose thy hold on outward things, cease from thy vain anxieties, thy selfish wishing and planning, and turn thy thoughts inward, that thou mayest learn to know thyself, and to see what thou art, how thou art. . . Forsake everything but God, so that your love towards Him is the strongest love you have." (Ib. 215 & 217). Then, when the soul has cast off outward things, it is "created anew in Christ Jesus. It is not until the thoughts can find rest in nothing but God, that the man is drawn close to God Himself and becomes His." (Ib. 229). "Then is God in the man, when there is nothing in him which is contrary to the will of God. For God makes a man's body the temple of the Holy Ghost when He finds nothing in the man which grieves His Spirit, but He reigns with Jesus Christ over the body." (Ib. 230). God works in the inner chambers of the soul, "through means in one class of men, and without means in the other and more blessed sort. But what He works in the souls of these last with whom He holds direct converse, none can say, nor can ~~any man~~ one man give account of it to another,

but he only who has felt it knows what it is; and even he can tell thee nothing of it, save only that God in very truth hath possessed the ground of his soul. And where this comes to pass, outward works become of no moment, but the inward perceiving of God greatly increases." (Ib. 251). (As I have already said, ^{in 2,} this is invariably true of the mystic experience: no one can relate his experience to another; each must feel it for himself.)

It would seem that this regeneration is a free gift of God, and that man has no participation in it, except in so far as he is passive to the inflowing current of the spirit. This is not strictly true. Man does work, and his work is of a three-fold nature: first, works of nature; second, works of grace; third, works of God. All of these, in their best aspect, are pure. The process of returning to the Godhead is long and arduous. Men are first drawn up by the lower powers being governed by the higher. Then men are changed into the likeness of Christ by contemplation of Him. Finally, the soul, having loosed itself from all earthly things (including possessions, desires, and its very self), becomes lost in the Source whence it came. Some men gain the higher ^{life} calmly and gradually, by a process of slow growth; others, through convulsions of mind,--each according to his nature. As we see, Tauler preaches a doctrine of ~~both~~ poverty, both as regards material possessions and as regards the things of the soul. Entire emptiness is the condition of God's coming in and taking up His abode in the waiting soul.

Vaughan, in his "Hours with the Mystics," quotes the following passage from Tauler's Sermon for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity (found complete in Winkworth, p. 430 f.), as containing the essence of Tauler's doctrine:

"When, through all manner of exercises, the outward man

has been converted into the inward, reasonable man, and thus the two, that is to say, the powers of the senses and the powers of the reason, are gathered up into the very centre of the man's being,--the unseen depths of his spirit, wherein lies the image of God,--and thus he flings himself into the Divine Abyss, in which he dwelt eternally before he was created; then when God finds the man thus simply and nakedly turned towards Him, the Godhead bends down and descends into the depths of the pure, waiting soul, and transforms the created soul, drawing it up into the uncreated essence, so that the spirit becomes one with Him. Could such a man behold himself, he would see himself so noble that he would fancy himself God, ~~and see himself a thousand times nobler than he is in himself, and would perceive all the thoughts and purposes, words, and works, and have all the knowledge of all men that ever were.~~ (Winkworth: p. 439.)

VII. Heinrich Suso.

In Suso we have the most poetic of the mystics with whom we have to deal. He does not differ essentially in doctrine from his master, Eckhart, nor his contemporary Tauler (there was but a few years difference in their ages), but he excels them both in beauty and poetry of expression as well as in ardency of temperament. It will not be necessary to dwell upon him at such length as we have ~~dealt with~~ ^{dwelt upon} Eckhart and Tauler, as to do so would be largely to duplicate the others.

Suso was born about 1300, of a noble Swabian family, probably in Ueberlingen on Lake Constance. His mother was a devout woman, his father a careless man of the world. At thirteen he entered the Dominican ~~monastery~~ monastery at Constance, where he spent five years of study. His mother had died while he was still a school boy at Cologne, but at the hour of death she had appeared to him and kissed him tenderly, telling that she was not really dead. This is the first recorded vision of Suso, and indicates his disposition. At eighteen he had a great conversion experience. At this time he began to "turn wholly from things." A long period of his life was given up to the most rigorous asceticism. He thought thus to find

the "Eternal Wisdom," of which something had been revealed to him in his conversion experience. This became the quest of his life. "As often as he heard of earthly love either in conversation or song, his heart and mind were directed to that dearest object of affection from whom all love flows." This ~~wisdom~~ wisdom involved two things: pure intelligence and thorough sanctification. The mind of Suso, being poetical rather than logical or scholastic, does not seem to have set itself to analyze very closely this divine "Wisdom." At the University of Cologne, Suso came into contact with Meister Eckhart, who confirmed him in his pursuit of mysticism. Although Suso embraced Eckhart's principles of union with God by self-annihilation, he never entirely occupied the ground of Pantheism upon which his teacher's religion was based. Suso's mysticism is essentially a mysticism of feeling, rather ~~of~~ than a speculative mysticism, or a mysticism of the will.

Suso's Doctrines.

God is pure undivided, universal being. He is the cause of all things, the beginning and the end. From the fulness of His nature, he is constantly giving forth Himself. The Son is a personal emanation from the Father. "Into him the Father pours himself, and he into the Father." The reciprocal love that results is the Holy Spirit. In creation, which is temporal and finite, man occupies the chief place. Although he is finite, he possesses within himself the potentiality of infinitude, by means of the Spirit which sheds into him the "beams of the eternal Godhead." This is the image of God in the rational mind. The pattern of Godliness is Christ, the Son of God manifest in the flesh. Men should strive to become like him. As with Tauler, there is the three-fold process of entering into the Godhead. First, men must turn away from world-

ly pleasure and toward God. Second, they must acquire a willingness to endure affliction. Third, they must "have Christ's bitter passion, sweet doctrine, gentle walk and spotless life/ ^{formed within!} After a man takes this third step, and gives up all external things, he enters into a state of spiritual coma. The spirit, losing itself, penetrates into the eternal Godhead. "Above time and space, man vanishes into God." But this is not pantheistic quietism. Suso distinguishes between the divine Thou and the human I.

"For the spirit's annihilation and transition into the Deity, and its whole nobleness and perfection, are not to be taken as a transmutation of man's nature in such a way as that he is God, although by reason of his grossness he may not be conscious of it; or that he becomes God, and his own being is destroyed. But it consists in escaping from and contemning one's self. The spirit passes away. God has become all things to it, and all things have, in a manner become God. For all things answer to it according to the manner in which they are in God, and yet everything continues to be what it was in its natural being, and that is what an intellect unpracticed in this true distinction cannot or will not admit into its confused apprehension." "In this decline the spirit dies, and yet not altogether. It acquires certain qualities of the Godhead; but does not become naturally God."

Suso had great power of visualizing his conceptions. He continually speaks of the "Eternal Wisdom" as his "divine mistress" and again and again he sees her embodied in the flesh. He says in his "Leben,"- "I looked, and behold the body about my heart was clear as crystal, and I saw the Eternal Wisdom calmly sitting in my heart in lovely wise; and, close by that form of beauty, my soul leaning on God, embraced by His arm, pressed to His heart, full of heavenly longing, transported, intoxicated with love!" Wisdom addresses him in these words: "I am the throne of joy, I am the crown of bliss. Mine eyes are so bright, my mouth so tender, my cheeks so rosy-red, and all my form so winning fair, that were a man to abide in a glowing furnace till the Last Day, it would be a little price for a moment's vision of my beauty." Once he was allowed to hold the Christ-child in his arms. He gazed upon it lov-

ingly, strained it to his heart, and kissed its tender little mouth. His ecstatic experiences did~~not~~, however, always take such definite shape. Once, when he was alone in his cell, "of a sudden he saw and heard what no tongue can express. What he saw was without definite form or shape, and yet had in itself the beauty of all forms and all shapes. It was at once the climax of his desires and the realisation of his hopes. . . He felt the sweetness of eternal life in calm and silence."

His language is always vivid and forceful. He pictures the tortures of the damned in Hell in this fashion: "O woe, end without end, O dying without dying, to die every hour and yet to die again forever!. .O woe, we would that if there were a mill-stone as broad as the earth and so great that its edges touched the heavens on all sides, and there came a little bird every hundred thousand years and picked off from this stone only as much as the tenth-part of a grain of mustard-seed,- we would that our sufferings might be ended when this stone is gone,-but it cannot be!" Quite as vividly he pictures the bliss of Heaven, where are "satisfaction of desire, love without grief, in ever-continued security." Here a "countless multitude drink of living water to their hearts' content.. .They look unabashed upon the pure, clear i^mage of the Godhead, in which all things are made known and manifest to them." Here are the Virgin and the heavenly host, the martyrs in blood-red garments, maidens of angelic purity, here is the Christ bright as the morning. Here the blessed soul finds eternal happiness.

Though we cannot help condemning the severe self-mortification which so nearly destroyed Suso's life, we must feel entire sympathy with his loving spirit, his tender human sympathy, and his passion for Christlike purity and union with God.

VIII. Jan Ruysbroeck.

We now come to the fourth and last of these Dominican mystics, Jan Ruysbroeck. Lacking the learning of Eckhart and Tauler, and the poetry of Suso, he yet has a simple strength and a keen insight into life that places him upon as high a level as they. The impulse which gave life to the "Brethren of the Common Lot" came from him. Although he was not the actual founder, Gerard Groote, who was, owes much to Ruysbroeck, his "spiritual father." Without education, childlike and at times childish, when "he undertakes to teach us what transpires in the nature of God, he writes pages which Plato could not have written!" (Maeterlinck, in Ruysbroeck and the Mystics.)

It is somewhat difficult to ascertain the details of Ruysbroeck's life, all of its events as given in extant biographies are so interwoven with legend. "They (the biographers) show us a holy hermit, silent, ignorant, amazingly humble, amazingly good, who was in the habit of working miracles unawares. The trees beneath which he prayed were illumined by an aureole; the bells of a Dutch convent tolled without hands on the day of his death. His body, when exhumed five years after his soul had quitted it, was found in a state of perfect preservation, and from it rose wonderful perfumes, which cured the sick who were brought from neighboring villages." (Ib. 29-30).

Cleared of the accretion of legend, the events of Ruysbroeck's life are somewhat as follows. He was born about the year 1293 (Maeterlinck says 1274), in the village of Ruysbroeck, on the Senne, between Brussels and Hal. The name of his native town, Ruysbroeck, is now the only name by which we know him. He became a ~~prie~~ priest in the church of Sainte-Gudule; afterward, upon the advice

of the hermit Lambert, he left the Brabant town and retired to Grönendal in the forest of Soignes, near Brussels. A company joining him there, he founded the Abbey of Grönendal. His renown attracted many pilgrims from Germany and Holland, among them John Tauler and Gerard (Gerhard) Groote. He died December 2nd, 1381. Maeterlinck (Ruysbroeck and the Mystics, p. 12) says of him:

"This monk possessed one of the wisest, most exact, and most subtle philosophic brains which have ever existed. He lived in his hut at Grönendal, in the midst of the forest of Soignes. He knew no Greek, and perhaps no Latin. He was alone and poor; and yet in the depths of this obscure forest of Brabant his mind, ignorant and simple as it was, receives all unconsciously dazzling sunbeams from all the lonely, mysterious peaks of human thought. He knows, though he is unaware of it, the Platonism of Greece, the Sufism of Persia, the Brahmanism of India, and the Buddhism of Tibet; and his marvellous ignorance rediscovers the wisdom of buried centuries, and foresees the knowledge of centuries yet unborn."

Maeterlinck is not attempting in the above to give us a historical estimate of Ruysbroeck, so much as he is trying to win our sympathy for a man whose course of life and mode of thought are foreign to our own, hence he is not to be taken too literally. It is not strange that Ruysbroeck, surrounded by an atmosphere of mysticism, living in the time of Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart, and Tauler, should be influenced by Platonic philosophy, Neo-platonic mysticism, and the mystic teachings of the Orient. There is nothing miraculous in this. He probably gained his knowledge of these things from direct contact with their exponents. And so the atmosphere of mystery is somewhat cleared away, and he appears in a more human light.

Ruysbroeck's Writings and Doctrines.

Ruysbroeck's conceptions of God, the soul, and creation do not differ materially from those of Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso. He is more severe, perhaps, in his views of life, and often less happy in expression. He has great simplicity, sometimes obscurity, of

language. He does not, although unlettered, disparage the intellect. On the other hand, he apotheosizes intellect, although his "intellect" is not precisely what we mean by that term. It is rather an intuitional principle within the soul. "In the intuition of the intellect, intelligible objects are perceived by the intellect by means of the light which the First One spreads over them, and in seeing these objects, it sees readily the intelligible light. But, as it gives its attention to the objects on which the light falls, it does not perceive with any exactness the principle which enlightens them, while if, on the contrary, it forgets the objects which it sees so as to contemplate only the brightness which makes them visible, it sees the light itself and the principle of the light. But it is never outside of itself that the intellect can contemplate the intelligible light." (Maeterlinck: p. 20.)

A man must have some conception of the God he worships. "The soul which studies God must form an idea of Him whom it seeks to know; being aware, moreover, to what greatness it desires to unite itself, and persuaded that it will find blessedness in that union, it must plunge into the depths of divinity, until, instead of contemplating itself, or the intelligible world, it becomes itself an object of contemplation, and shines with the brightness of conceptions which have their source above."

He does not always dwell upon the contemplative life, but descends at times into the every-day, as thus, at the end of chapter XXXI of The Book of the Twelve Beguines, he says: "And after this I leave the contemplative life, which is God Himself, and which He grants to those who have renounced self and have followed His Spirit to where, in eternal glory, He rejoices in Himself and in His chosen!" (Ib. p. 35).

The "spiritual ladder" by which the soul climbs up to the Divine has three stages. First, there is the active life, wherein the soul does all manner of good deeds, and abstains from evil deeds. The second stage is the inward life. Deeds are not left behind, but the soul performs them out of sheer love, instead, as in the first stage, out of hope of reward. "The pure soul feels ~~the presence of~~ a constant fire of love, which desires above all things to be one with God, and the more the soul obeys the attraction of God the more it feels it, and the more it feels it the more it desires to be one with God." (The Book of the Sparkling Stone). The third stage of the Ladder is the contemplative life, which few attain. "Those who have raised themselves into the absolute purity of their spirit by love stand in God's presence with open and unveiled faces; by the light and splendour which radiate from God they behold the very substance of God above reason and beyond distinction."

Ruysbroeck, however, emphasized the practical life and the performance of all good deeds. In the brotherhood at Grönendal a humble, helpful spirit prevailed, and the master exemplified in himself the humility which he inculcated. He inveighs against "priests and doctors who live such a life that they are incapable of receiving divine wisdom." "The act of life must drive man outwardly to practise virtue; the act of death must drive him into God, in the depths of his own being. These are the two movements of the perfect life, united as matter and form, as soul and body." (R. Jones, op. cit. p. 314).

Rufus Jones says that "the thing which most impressed Gerard Groote at the time of his visit to Ruysbroeck was the practical side of his life. It seemed to him that the religious life of the little society at Grönendal, of which Ruysbroeck was the central figure, realized the idea of a true brotherhood upon the highest

Christian principles. A genuine family spirit reigned among the brethren which put them all on the same social level!"

IX. Theologia Germanica.

No discussion of the Dominican mystics would be complete without some reference, however brief, to the "Theologia Germanica," a little book by one of the "Friends of God," first brought into notice by Luther, who published an edition of it in 1516. A second edition came out two years later. The book has probably had as many admirers and as wide a circulation as the "Imitation" itself.

The influence of Eckhart is evident, and quotations from Tauler appear frequently. In fact, as Rufus Jones says, the writer shows the "family characteristics" of the "Friends of God."

Although the doctrines of the "Theologia Germanica" are similar to those of the "Friends of God" whom we have discussed, the author shows a slightly different point of view. Thus in the beginning of the fifth chapter we read:

"Certain men say that we ought to be without will, wisdom, love, desire, knowledge, and the like. Hereby is not to be understood that there is to be no knowledge in man, and that God is not to be loved by him, nor desired and longed for, nor praised and honoured; but it meaneth that man's knowledge should be so clear and perfect that he should acknowledge of a truth that all these are of the Eternal God, from whom they all proceed."

It is not that man should not have will, love, desire and the like, (i.e. he is not to empty himself entirely in the sense that the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" and the Beghards use the expression), but he must refrain from calling these things his own. He is to substitute divine love, divine will, divine knowledge for human love, human will, human knowledge. It is in this sense that he strips himself of these things. It is the will that would gain things for

self that is the bad will. "So long as a man taketh account of any-thing which is this or that, whether it be himself or any other creat-ure; or doeth anything or frameth a purpose for the sake of his own likings or desires, or opinions, or ends, he cometh not unto the life of Christ." (Theologia Germanica, Winkworth's Translation, p.60).

"So long as a man seeketh his own will and his own highest good, because it is his and for his own sake, he will never find it. For so long as he doeth this, he is seeking himself and dreameth that he is himself the highest good. But whoever seeketh, loveth, and pur-sueth goodness (i.e. the good for its own sake), and maketh that his end, for nothing but the love of goodness; not for the love of I, me, mine, self, and the like, he will find the highest good, for he seeketh it aright." ^{(Ch. 7. 161).} This is the keynote of the whole book, in some respects upon a higher ethical plane and full of a more unself-ish spirit than any other utterance of these mystics.

This book really bridges the gap between the "Friends of God" and Luther and his contemporaries. It combines the mystical with the ethical, and so puts it ^(i.e. the mystical) on a practical plane where it ap-peals to such a mind as that of Luther. How much it had to do with the formulation of Luther's doctrines is perhaps not to be ascer-tained, but it certainly exerted a strong influence upon him. In his preface to the second edition he says of it:-

"We read that St. Paul, though he was of a weak and contemp-tible presence, yet wrote weighty and powerful letters, and he boasts of himself that his 'speech is not with enticing words of man's device,' but 'full of the riches of all knowledge and wisdom.' And if we consider the wondrous ways of God, it is clear that He never hath chosen mighty and eloquent preachers to speak His word, but as it is written: 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise,' Ps. viii, 2. And again, 'For wisdom opened the mouth of the dumb, and made the tongues of them that cannot speak eloquent,' Wisdom X. 21. Again, He blameth such as are high-minded and are offended at these simple ones. 'Ye have made a mock at the counsel of the poor, because he putteth his trust in the Lord,' Ps. xiv. 6.

"This I say because I will have every one warned who read-eth this little book, that he should not take offence, to his own hurt, at its bad German, or its crabbed and uncouth words.

For this noble book, though it be poor and rude in words, is so much the richer and more precious in knowledge and divine wisdom. And I will say, though it be boasting of myself and 'I speak as a fool,' that next to the Bible and St. Augustine, no book hath ever come into my hands whence I have learnt, or would wish to learn more of what God, and Christ, and man and all things are; and now I first find the truth of what certain of the learned have said in scorn of us theologians of Wittenberg, that we would be thought to put forward new things, as though there had never been men elsewhere and before our time. Yea, verily, there have been men, but God's wrath, provoked by our sins, hath not judged us worthy to see and hear them; for it is well known that for a long time past such things have not been treated of in our universities; nay, it has gone so far, that the Holy Word of God is not only laid on the shelf, but is almost mouldered away with dust and moths. Let as many as will, read this little book, and then say whether Theology is a new or an old thing among us; for this book is not new. But if they say, as before, that we are but German theologians, we will not deny it. I thank God that I have heard and found my God in the German tongue, as neither I nor they have yet found him in the Latin, Greek, nor Hebrew tongue. God grant that this book may be spread abroad, then we shall find that the German theologians are without doubt the best theologians." "Ib. p. XIX-XX).

I have quoted this preface at length, because it shows in what esteem this little book was held by Luther. How much did it have to do with inciting the spirit which dominated the German Revolution? *Reformation?*

X. Conclusion.

What was the contribution of the German mystics to the life and thought of their time, and what influence did they exert upon that life?

First. They combated the antinomianism of the mystics who preceded them, opposing to the extreme individualism of such dissolute orders as the Beghards a purer and more normal ethic.

Second. On the other hand, they poured a fresh and living stream of religious life into the church, which was filled with dry and formal scholasticism. By combining the stream of mysticism with the scholasticism of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas they brought to bear a sobering and practical influence upon mysticism and infused new life into scholasticism. This is especially true of Eckhart and

Tauler.

Third. They brought the common people into touch with religious ^{knowledge,} which hitherto had been the possession of the clergy. They translated philosophy and religion into the common tongue and set them forth in simple language, so that "he who runs may read."

Fourth. They had a decided influence in formulating the German language. Denifle, although not in entire sympathy with Eckhart, admits that the German language is highly indebted to him.

Fifth. In these ways, and by the wide circulation of their literature, they prepared the way for the German Reformation. For their teachings, widely circulated, became a bond uniting the German people,—separated by divergent interests and differences of dialect,—into an integral whole.

Sixth. They made of religion a personal matter, a matter of experience and of the soul's direct communion with God, whereas it had been a matter of believing certain doctrines, repeating certain formulae, and the performance of certain rites. The soul that can come direct to God, "without a creature," needs the mediation of no priest to prepare the way for its coming. They taught the individual to look into his own psychological processes and determine the validity of doctrine for himself, with reference to his own needs and aptitudes. At the same time, they did not, on the whole, disparage the life of good works. They placed the emphasis upon something higher, that is all. Thus, the religion of the Middle Ages retained all the good there was in the old systems and gained much that was of value through the new teachings.

Thus these men paved the way for Luther and the German Reformation.

April 28th, 1910.

W. S. Swisher.