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The Philosophical Thought of a Fourteenth Century Mystic, John Tauler, O. P.

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT OF A
FOURTEENTH CENTURY MYSTIC,
JOHN TAULER, O.P.

by

Hannah L. Klein

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of
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LIFE

Hannah L. Klein was born in Kaiserslautern, Germany, August 19, 1924.

She received her secondary education partly in Germany, and after entering the United States in 1936 at Sullivan High School, Chicago, Illinois, where she was graduated in June, 1942.

During the war years, 1942-1945, she was employed in the Production Control Division of Bell and Howell Company, leaving to begin studies at Mundelein College. After two years her studies there were interrupted when she accepted the position of vice-president in her father's manufacturing concern, but were continued during evenings at Loyola University College.

She returned as a full time student to Mundelein College in September, 1949, and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in June, 1950. She began her graduate work at Loyola University in February, 1951.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It may be argued that as far as philosophical enquiry is concerned, the thought of a mystic is of minor significance, if not altogether unimportant. This may be true of some centuries, but it is certainly not so of the fourteenth, for this century above all others is a reaction toward the philosophy of the previous one, and its thought echoes that reaction. This can also be felt in the antagonism existing between the princes both secular and religious and the authority of the Holy See which had been in the previous centuries the binding force which united all men.

It is in the framework of this century that we find John Tauler. His importance, for this study at least, lies not in his mysticism but in the philosophical thought, for he clearly demonstrates the general tendencies of his time. It would be definitely overstating the case if it were assumed that he taught a systematic philosophy; his intentions were far from it; on the contrary, his sermons were preached to bring his flock back to the simple religion from which it had been enticed by the emphasis of reason. Although his audience

were mostly religious, it was his aim to lead them as well as the common man back to a simple faith without the necessity of rational demonstration.

Yet it is evident in a study of his sermons that Tauler was well acquainted with the philosophy of his predecessors and that he did not scorn reason, though holding it to be a poor substitute and a second best to faith. He uses philosophy as an aid to faith but emphasizes that it is impossible for man to find true happiness through anything but a simple faith. Although his philosophy is not found embodied as an integrated system but only as disjointed thoughts in the framework of his preaching, it is true philosophy nevertheless.

A complete understanding of Tauler will involve several points. First of all we must have some comprehension of the age which molded him and made him this particular man and Dominican. Although this would normally fall in the province of the historian we feel that it is equally necessary here in order to give a comprehensive picture of Tauler's thought. This will be treated in Chapter II. Secondly, a thorough analysis of his thought both in regard to God and man will be undertaken in Chapter III.

CHAPTER II

MAN AND CENTURY

There are innumerable ways in which the fourteenth century can be classified and understood. Briefly, it can be said to be one of change, not only in the sense that each succeeding century evidences some new notions and discoveries of the previous one, but here the tendency was a more or less complete breakdown of all that the thirteenth had tried to cultivate. The fourteenth century can best be described as one of transition from the past in which the human mind was still rooted and the future through and in which it sought something new.

This search was not confined to any one part of human life, but was brought about in all facets of endeavor. Nothing was left untouched, nothing was held sacred enough to be left out from the complete stripping to which life in all its aspects was subjected.

The concept of a universal Holy Empire yielded to the notion of a sovereign independent states, the acceptance of a natural law ceased to find favour . . . Philosophy became "emancipated" and no longer, as with the Schoolmen, sought to defend belief upon rational principles; economics ceased to have any ethical significance, comfort and material power took the place of the Beatific Vision as man's final good. Though

nominal allegiance was given to principles peculiarly Christian, in fact the World was increasingly conducted upon secular considerations.¹

That this general let-down brought reverberations of great import cannot be denied. Perhaps the greatest, and best marked, can be seen in the decay of Scholasticism, which only a few years before had been at its height. It is certainly true that particular scholastics had not always been in complete agreement with each other, but the dissatisfaction of everything which characterized the fourteenth century was certainly not present in the previous one.

The causes which brought about this disintegration of Scholasticism have been enumerated by Maurice De Wulf and consist of four: the lack of originality; the breaking up of the scholastic patrimony; the gradual spread of an exaggerated dialectics; and the decadence of language.² Just exactly how much each of these contributed to the final result cannot be ascertained with accuracy, nor need

1 Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Slessor, The Middle Ages in the West, London, n.d., 11.

2 Maurice DeWulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, translated by Ernest C. Messenger, London, 1926, 11, 167-169.

this detain us here, but that each had some contribution to make cannot be denied. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to say that the first three were of major importance, and we shall confine our discussion mainly to these, since they have distinct philosophical connotation.

In regard to the first, this does not appear to need proof, for the entire century seemed to concern itself mainly with the attack of the existing systems, not caring too much for the establishing of new ones. Running alongside of this can be seen the breakdown of the scholastic patrimony, for in the constant attack of one system or another nothing was left whole and intact. The confusion of this in the minds of the thinkers of the century can well be understood, and is poignantly described by Etienne Gilson as "Duns Scotus had disagreed with Thomas Aquinas and Ockham had disagreed with Duns Scotus. Whom should one believe?"³

It is in this turmoil of one faction against another and of no apparent agreement among thinkers that

... there grew up on German soil a peculiar branch of Mysticism . . . developed chiefly in sermons from the German pulpit . . . The object of the preachers was to present the system of the schools, as exhibited in the writings

³ Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, New York, 1938, 90;

of Albert the Great and Thomas, in a manner which should take hold of the heart of every individual among the people. With the transference of science into the German language, and with the attempt of preachers to assume a popular style, the prevalent tendency toward the logical and toward the ingenious combination of fundamental ideas in the form of syllogistic proofs, fell away; in its place came speculation, which, giving to the theorems of faith spiritual vitality, stripped them of the unyielding form of dogmas, and, viewing them from the standpoint of one vitalizing, central idea, spread them as a synthetic whole before the hearts and wills of the hearers.⁴

It is in this tradition that we find John Tauler.

There are many instances in the life of John Tauler on which there are points of dispute among authors, the date of his birth among them. Some say that he was born in 1300, others favor the date of 1290.⁵ There is no dispute, however, that he was a native of Strasbourg and that his family were evidently prominent citizens and property owners. That they were religious is shown by the fact that John entered the Dominicans and his sister became a nun in the Dominican convent of St. Nikolaus in undis.

4 Friedrich Ueberweg, History of Philosophy, translated by George S. Morris, New York, 1871, I, 467-468.

5 James M. Clark, The Great German Mystics, Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso, Oxford, 1949, 36, gives the date as 1300, while William Turner, History of Philosophy, Boston, 1929, 414, uses that of 1290.

There is no available information as to the childhood of Tauler, but ". . . if he entered the Strasbourg convent at the usual age he would be a novice about 1314."⁶ During that year Eckhart was prior of the convent but it is not known whether Tauler studied under him but it is certainly evident that he knew him through his writings and was influenced by them. According to the rule of his order Tauler followed the two year novitiate with an eight year course of instruction which included Logic, Physics, the Bible, and Dogma.⁷ He was sent to Cologne where he studied the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, especially the works of St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and St. Bernard; the mystical writers, such as St. Dionysius, and Hugo and Richard of St. Victor; and above all St. Thomas Aquinas, whom Tauler often quotes under the title of "Master Thomas", and Albertus Magnus, whose scientific temper he seems to have favored and assimilated with his own. There can also be found in his sermons frequent references to pagan classical authors, especially

6 Clark, The Great German Mystics, 36.

7 Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, compiled by Historische Commission, Leipzig, 1894, 454.

those which evidence philosophical tendencies.⁸ Whether Tauler ever studied at Paris is not known with certainty, some authors believe that he did,⁹ for he mentions the masters of Paris in his sermons as if he had personal contact with them.

It was with his native city that Tauler was most closely associated, for there he found an active life preaching in the vast cathedral.

To one in the least degree acquainted with St. Thomas and the earlier schoolmen, Tauler is immediately revealed as the perfection of a preacher trained in Catholicity's best atmosphere. Therefore he gives a finished product of mental culture. It is, indeed, simply the Gospel of Christ as embodied in His Church's dogmas and precepts; but it is advanced with those irresistible appeals to reason that distinguish the disciples of Aquinas . . .¹⁰

That Tauler was an excellent preacher cannot be denied; this phase of his life will be taken up presently. The implication of the above quotation of his training in "Catholicity's

⁸ "Tauler's Sermons in English," Catholic World, LXXXVIII, February, 1909, 645.

⁹ Paul De Jaeger, S.J., An Anthology of Mysticism, translated by Donald Attwater and others, London, 1935. Susanna Winkworth, History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler, London, 1857.

¹⁰ Walter Elliott, C.S.P., "Tauler's Place Among Preachers," Catholic World, XCII, October, 1910, 52

best atmosphere" as well as his being one of "the disciples of Aquinas," however, certainly can and must be questioned. It seems that Father Elliott is in agreement with H. C. Graef that "fourteenth century mysticism is Thomist in its essence,"¹¹ a fact to which we cannot assent.

Our objection is grounded in the facts that ". . . by the end of the thirteenth century . . . the inclination to abandon all attempts to reconcile faith and reason, the essential justification for Scholasticism, was growing,"¹² coupled with the criticism of both Aquinas and Scotus, of Averrhoist pantheistic heresies, and the Nominalism of Ockham. The additional evidence of the revival of Neo-platonism by the mystics certainly cannot classify the century nor Tauler as Thomistic.

We know how prolonged were the reverberations of Neo-platonism in the Middle Ages; philosophers and mystics were tributary to it in various ways and respects, from John Scotus Eriugena to Tauler and Ruysbroeck, by way of Bernard of Clairvaux, the Victorines, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, David of Augsburg,

11 H. C. Graef, "John Tauler," Blackfriars XXIII, August, 1942, 321.

12 Slessor, The Middle Ages in the West, 216.

Eckhart.¹³

It is true that Thomism and Thomistic notions are embodied in Tauler's thought, but his use of the ideas of Proclus, St. Augustine, and pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite outweigh these.

As a preacher Tauler is usually easy to understand, although there are times when obscurity veils his thought, but this is often in the more mystical passages. His language is very picturesque, the imagery is derived from "hunting, war, sea-faring, viniculture, farming, trade and natural history,"¹⁴ and it is quite evident that his analogies and examples are drawn from vast observations and knowledge of ordinary life and ordinary people. The usual procedure of his sermons is the expounding of the gospel of the day phrase by phrase, with the three-fold division of introduction, development, and conclusion, although at times he seems to have no fixed plan, and digresses freely as the subject matter may warrant.

Although Tauler was a pupil of Eckhart directly

13 Joseph Marechal, S.J., Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics, translated with an Introduction and Foreword by Algar Thorold, London, 1927, 181.

14. Clark, The Great German Mystics, 45.

or indirectly, he confined his mysticism to safer channels. He avoids the semblance of heresy by defining his terms accurately. Although Eckhart taught very much the same thing as Tauler and said the same thing on occasion, Tauler uses the terminology which will enable him to remain on the safe road of orthodoxy, qualifying every remark that could be misunderstood, so that he avoids the condemnation which Eckhart suffered.¹⁵ Tauler adapts himself much more to his congregation than his master did. The two mystics not only differ in the form of their work but in the matter also. "Eckhart sees only the goal of the mystic way: the union of the soul with God . . . Tauler stresses the way itself, the method by which the soul can be made ready for this great consummation."¹⁶

It was during his life of preaching that Tauler became indirectly involved in the struggle between the Emperor Ludwig and Pope John XXII. In 1325 the emperor was excommunicated by the Pope and his lands were laid under

¹⁵ A. L. McMahon, "Eckhart," Catholic Encyclopedia, New York, 1909, V. 274.

On March 27, 1329, 17 propositions of Eckhart's were condemned by Pope John XXII, 11 as ill-sounding, rash, and suspected of heresy.

¹⁶ Clark, The Great German Mystics, 45.

an interdict.¹⁷ The Strasbourg Dominicans were allowed, for a time, to preach and say Mass unmolested. But in 1339 the interdict ban was renewed and more strongly enforced and they were forced into exile at Basel where they remained until 1343. Tauler, however, preceded his brethren; the most acceptable reason given being that the Provincial school removed first and that he, as one of the teachers, accompanied the students. Why he remained at Basel until 1347-1348, after the other friars had left, is not known.

It was while at Basel that Tauler formed, with Heinrich von Noerdlingen, the focal point for the numerous 'Friends of God,' who had come together there during the turbulent time of the interdict. It was here that he also established contact with Venturini, as well as with Margarethe and Christine Ebner.

He formed here (Basel) with the world--priest Heinrich von Noerdlingen the focal point for the numerous "Friends of God," who, in the stormy times of the interdict, came from far and near to this city which, although siding with the Emperor Ludwig, nevertheless gave refuge to the friendly foes of the Emperor.

17 Alexander Clarence Flick, The Decline of the Medieval Church, London, 1930, I, Chapter VII, 216-224, gives a more detailed account of this struggle between the Emperor and the Pope, and the reasons for it.

From here he established contact with the Italian Venturine, whose fiery sermons in Italy had brought the people in masses to confession. . . . also with the ecstatic women Margarethe Ebner in the cloister of Medingen near Donauwoerth and with Christine Ebner in the cloister of Engelthal near Nuerberg . . . and other friends of the mystical life who called themselves, after John 15, 15, "Friends of God."¹⁸

Here also began his acquaintance with Merswin, whose confessor he became after his return to Strasbourg, which relationship is said to have been of rather short duration.

The oft-quoted story of Tauler's conversion in later life by a layman has been shown by many to be false. The general opinion is that he led the type of life necessary for his vocation, and that he helped and brought many to salvation. Tauler died on June 16, 1361.

A manuscript at Colmar, giving an account of Tauler by one who had known him personally,

¹⁸ Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, 455.

"Er bilded hier (Basel) mit dem Weltpriester Heinrich von Noerdlingen dem Mittelpunct fuer die zahlreichen "Gottesfreunde", welche in dem stuermischen Zeiten des Interdicts in dieser Stadt, welche zu Kaiser Ludwig heilt, aber auch den friedlichen Gegnern des Kaisers den Aufenthalt gestattete, von nah und ferne sich zusammen gefunden hatten. Von hier aus unterheilt er Verbindungen mit dem Italiener Venturini, dessen feurige Beredsamkeit in Italien das Volk in Scharen zur Busse gerufen hatte . . . ferner mit den ekstatischen Frauen Margarethe Ebner in Kloster Medingen bei Donauwoerth und mit Christine Ebner in Kloster Engelthal bei Neurnberg, . . . und anderen Freunden des mystischen Lebens, die sich mit Vorliebe nach John 15, 15 'Gottes Freunde' nannten."

describes him as 'a gifted and holy Friend of God;' but adds that he was detained six years in purgatory for sundry faults, one of these being that on his deathbed he allowed himself to receive too much attention from his sister, 'in whose guesthouse he died.' Other faults ascribed to him are that he was irritable, that he was wanting in submission to his superiors, and that he extolled too highly the 'Friends of God,' while toward others he was harsh.¹⁹

Whether the above citation depicts Tauler truly, we cannot ascertain. But what is evident from the facts known about him is that he certainly was a model preacher and that his doctrines were accepted, for his works were widely read in his lifetime, copied throughout the Middle Ages and printed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁰

It is surmised that we are indebted to the nuns to whom Tauler preached for the collection and preservation of his sermons. "They made notes of his preaching and afterwards compared and arranged them."²¹ These ser-

19 John Tauler, The Inner Way, translated and edited with an Introduction by Arthur Wollaston Hutton, London, 2nd, 1901, xxiii.

20 Clark, The Great German Mystics, 48.

21 John Tauler, The Sermons and Conferences of John Tauler, O.P., translated with Introduction and Index by Very Rev. Walter Elliott, C.S.P., Washington, D.C., 1910, Introduction, 5.

mons were, for the most part, copied and recopied in the form in which they were first printed.²² "The most important editions of Tauler's Sermons are those of Leipzig, 1498, Basel, 1521 and 1522, Cologne, 1543; translated into Latin by Surius, Cologne, 1548; translated into modern German, Frankfort-on-the-Main, 1826 and 1864, 3 parts."^{23a}

22 Wilhelm Preger, Geschichte der Deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter, Leipzig, 1893, III, 60-61.

23a Ueberweg, History of Philosophy, I, 470.

23b Preger, Geschichte der Deutschen Mystik, 58-60, gives the following information of the collection of the sermons of Tauler: The first printing of a collection of 84 sermons was in Leipzig in 1498. The title page showed a "translation" which was a mere change of the original into more easily understandable German. A copy of this into the dialect of Augsburg, printed and published in Augsburg in 1508, was made by J. Otmar. The title page again showed a "translation" but this time from the Latin into German, which was a mistaken interpretation of the above. The next publication was of the original 84 sermons, with an additional 42 new ones, which Preger claims were not Tauler's, in Basel in 1521; second printing in 1522. The publication of Cologne in 1543 contained a collection of the original 84, the new 42, and an additional 25 which were likewise from other authors. The differences of the editions in the 84 original texts are that the text of Basel holds to that of Leipzig with the exception that the editor cut many passages and in others sought to clarify them. The Cologne printing had for its basis that of Basel, and not of Leipzig.

CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

Tauler's thought takes its root from diverse and varied systems and thinkers, as we have pointed out in the previous chapter. He is at times a Thomist, adhering to strict Thomistic concepts and using the words of St. Thomas to substantiate his own ideas. But he is equally as much, indeed if not more, an Augustinian; his expressions and ideas have a definite Neo-platonic semblance, an inheritance in part, no doubt, from Meister Eckhart. Most of all, however, Tauler is a mystic; his every sermon, his every idea is colored with his particular type of mysticism.

In Johannes Tauler, German mysticism has its orthodox classic. He is at one with his master, Eckhart, in the doctrine of an ultimate essence of the soul in which the "purified spirit" can achieve an ineffable union with God. But he is closer to the market place than Eckhart. . . . In his cure of souls Tauler guides his flock wisely along the middle course between schismatic mysticism and a moralistic, non-mystical ecclesiasticism.²⁴

²⁴ Joseph Bernhart, Theologia Germanica, translated by Susanna Winkworth, New York, 1949, 90-91.

It is difficult to give an adequate description of Tauler's mysticism, but in general it can be said to be one of a contemplative union of the soul with God, in which, contrary to the teaching of Eckhart, the soul retains its distinction from God.

The union of the soul with God is the principal theme of each of Tauler's sermons, though they are all developed along different lines. In each he exhorts his listeners to foster that union, to let nothing stand in the way of their souls becoming more and more closely united with God. In this can best be seen the mysticism of Tauler. In some manner it might be said that it is a rational mysticism, if such a term could be coined and applied at all, and although the two terms of rational and mysticism are not comparable but at opposite ends of a vast chasm, yet in Tauler's case that chasm might be bridged and the term thus formed might be employed. He is constantly using philosophical ideas to convey to his listeners the truths of God and yet these are equally as often colored by some ideas of a mystical union of the soul with God.

"The substantial distinction between the soul and God is the metaphysical postulate in the sermons of John

Tauler."²⁵ This must be pointed out again and again; although the union of the soul with God is foremost in the mind of Tauler, the distinction between them is of equal importance. If it were not for the fact of Eckhart's condemnation on just this point, it is doubtful whether Tauler's insistence on the distinction as much as on the union would have been forthcoming. But as Eckhart's doctrines were declared heretical, it is no small wonder that Tauler tried by all means at his disposal to avoid any such heretical semblance. He constantly insists that the distinction be kept in the mind of his audience. The problem of the union of the soul with God will become clear in the following presentation.

In order to give a systematic exposition of Tauler's philosophical ideas, we shall, in the interest of clarity, observe a certain order, which is one of our own choosing. It must be remembered that there is no systematic presentation of his sermons as regards specific topics, but that each has within itself some of the ideas which we shall group into: the knowledge of God, which will of

²⁵ Maurice De Wulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, II, 252.

itself give an explanation of his mysticism; the nature of God; the divine attributes; and lastly we shall endeavor to give Tauler's treatment of man.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

In regard to man's knowledge of God, it must be remembered that "love is for the mystic the way to God; God answers its highest rapture with His essence, His Word, His presence."²⁶ Time and again we find in Tauler's sermons this central idea of love, but we also find that he was well aware of the fact of a natural knowledge of God by man, for he shows that "the soul knows that God exists, and that even by the light of natural reason; but as to who He is it has no knowledge; this is hidden from

26 Gottlob Siedel, Die Mystik Taulers, Leipzig, 1911, 46.

"Die Liebe ist also fuer den Mystiker der Weg zu Gott; ihrer hoechsten Entfaltung antwortet Gott von selbst mit seiner essentia, seiner Wortgeburt, seiner Gegenwart."

it."²⁷ The distinction as here given is between our natural knowledge of God through the things of sense, and a knowledge of Him as He is in His essence, which is impossible for man in this present life.

The same idea can be seen in the Thomistic treatment of our knowledge of God and shows Tauler's adherence to it.

Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to

²⁷ John Tauler, The Sermons and Conferences of John Tauler, O.P., translated with Introduction and Index by the Very Rev. Walter Elliott, C.S.P., Washington, D.C., 1910, 101.

Johann Tauler, "Die Predigten Taulers aus der Engelberger und der Freiburger Handschrift sowie aus Schmidts Abschriften der ehemaligen Strassburger Handschrift," edited by Ferdinand Vetter, in Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, Berlin, 1910, 20.

"Die Sele weis wol dass Got ist, jo ouch von naturlichem lichte, mer wer er so oder wo er si, das ist zumole ir unbekant und verborgen und enweis davon zumole nihtes niht."

For a comparison for the sermons in the editions of Elliott and Vetter, see Appendix.

know of God whether He exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him.²⁸

Tauler was well aware of this distinction, and he brought it out time and time again. In one sermon in particular, he seemed to bring the point out clearly and concisely when he stated: "we cannot know what God is in Himself, but we learn more of Him by unceasingly abstracting from our thoughts of Him whatever He is not."²⁹

Here also the comparison to St. Thomas is evident and can be seen in the following.

. . . we cannot know God in our present life except through material effects.³⁰

We cannot know the essence of God in this life, as He really is in Himself, but we know him accordingly as He is represented in the perfection of creatures . . .³¹

. . . our intellect cannot know the essence of God itself in this life, as it is in itself, but whatever mode it applies in deter-

28 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 12, 12.

29 Tauler, Sermons, 92.

30 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 86, 2, ad 1.

31 Ibid., I, 13, 2, ad 3.

mining what it understands about God, it falls short of the mode of what God is in Himself.³²

Although Tauler does not re-iterate his ideas in the exact terminology of St. Thomas, their similarity can nevertheless be seen. From this also we find that even for a mystic there is a knowledge of God possible by the use of the natural powers with which man is endowed. That such an idea is a part of the teaching of Tauler clearly points to the fact that although he is mystical in his general tenets, he does have some solid philosophical knowledge and uses that knowledge whenever feasible. It is certainly an indisputable fact that even though we can come to know God in this life, we cannot know His essence in itself. This is above and beyond the comprehension of man's natural powers, and it is thus explained by Tauler.

It is typical of Tauler that he gives a statement of fact and then just flatly leaves it at that. He does not here, and indeed in few places, give a real explanation of anything. In regard to the manner in which the natural reason can come to a knowledge of God, the clo-

32 Ibid., I, 13, 11.

sest to any real exposition of this point can be gathered from the following excerpt.

God draws men to Himself by created things, through which He reveals His existence in the created light of their souls. St. Thomas teaches that some of the heathen saw God's presence as He dwelt about them in the created world, which showed Him as its Creator and Master, so that men should pay Him honor in every part of the world. Thus God draws men through His creatures, thereby giving them proofs of His existence.³³

We will certainly agree that this is not a complete explanation, but as it seemed to be the method of Tauler to give them in this light, this is a typical part of his teaching and of his philosophy.

When Tauler states that "it is true that our natural reason has a part to play and must use all its powers, if the soul's longing for God shall be satisfied; but natural reason does not know God's generation in us, and cannot, therefore, reveal it,"³⁴ he is posing for us two prob-

33 Tauler, Sermons, 349.

34 Ibid., 101.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 20.

". . . wanne das die nature geleisten mag, das mus dis kosten, sol diser begerunge gnug geschehen und sol dise geburt in der worheit funden werden; alle naturliche licht enwiset su dich nit."

lems. The first, the longing of the soul for God and how it can be satisfied; the second, if natural reason is incapable of showing us God, how will a complete knowledge of Him be made possible for man.

Before showing Tauler's treatment of these points it might be well to insert here the Thomistic presentation for comparison.

It is impossible for any created intellect to see the essence of God by its own natural power. For knowledge is regulated according as the thing known is in the knower. But the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Hence the knowledge of every knower is ruled according to its own nature. If therefore the mode of anything's being exceeds the mode of the knower, it must result that the knowledge of that object is above the nature of the knower. . . . It follows therefore that to know self-subsistent being is natural to the divine intellect alone; and this is beyond the natural power of any created intellect; for no creature is its own existence, forasmuch as its existence is participated. Therefore the created intellect cannot see the essence of God, unless God by His grace unites Himself to the created intellect, as an object made intelligible to it.³⁵

. . . the essence of God cannot be known through any created species whatever, whether sensible or intelligible. Accordingly, if God is to be known as He is, in His essence, God Himself must become the form of the intellect knowing Him and must be joined to that intellect, not indeed as

35 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 12, 4.

to constitute a single nature with it, but in the way an intelligible species is joined to the intelligence. For God, who is His own being, is also His own truth, and truth is the form of the intellect.³⁶

Returning now to Tauler, both of these points are explained by him in more or less mystical terms. He takes the matter up in several sermons, each showing God acting on the soul, but in none of them does he give a full and strictly rational explanation. There can be no question that "the soul is . . . ever without rest, struggling to know more, searching for what is concealed and yet is to be revealed of Him,"³⁷ for it cannot have this knowledge in this life. But the longing of the soul must be satisfied at least somewhat and Tauler attempts an exposition of how this can be accomplished.

In one sermon he shows that this knowledge of God and search for Him cannot be accomplished by the means of images, in which the soul must deal in its present life. His statement and its conclusion demonstrate this for us.

But you may object that by nature the soul is ever full of images. I answer no; for if that

36 St. Thomas, Compendium Theologiae, 105.

37 Tauler, Sermons, 92.

were true the soul could never be happy, nor could God ever make a being capable of perfect bliss; nor would God be our greatest joy and last end -- God, who is the beginning and the end of all. No creature can ever be the bliss of another creature, nor its perfection. The perfection of all virtue in this mortal life is followed by the perfection of immortal life hereafter, which consists in immediate union with God. If thou wouldst, therefore, enjoy here below a foretaste of thy future bliss, thou must needs retire inward and dwell in thy soul's depths and essence. There must it be that God will touch thee with His most simple being, without medium or similitude.³⁸

The main idea here seems to be for Tauler that there are actually two separate lives of the soul, the one its life in the use of reason and in the formation of ideas on a natural level, the other, a higher life, the life of God acting within it. It seems probable that he was referring to the life of grace within the soul, although not actually naming it as such. The general idea he brings out again and again. In another sermon it is, perhaps, brought out even clearer, for he shows the futility of the use of natural reason in this complete union of the soul with God.

This movement toward God is managed in two different ways. One class of men work with their natural activity of mind, using the images of high thoughts of reason, with the result that they confuse the soul's inner life and stifle its

38 Ibid., 78.

yearnings, substituting their own efforts at understanding things for the longing after God. . . . But the others, they who in very truth arise and are enlightened, yield to God the task of preparing their soul's depths.³⁹

We might question Tauler on how man must act in order that God may prepare the soul for Himself. Or, putting it another way, is it possible for man to do anything to help in this preparation? Tauler answers:

. . . when God Himself undertakes to act within it, then the soul must hold itself passive . . . so that while God acts and the soul receives His action, the best possible effect may be produced. . . . it must be passive and tranquil when God alone works within it; and ere this is begun and perfected the soul looks to God and to itself that it may possess a perfected work. . . . insofar as the soul acts up to its possibilities in all fidelity, insofar does God's Spirit rule the soul and its activity; then does it see the power of God and receive His Spirit.⁴⁰

39 Ibid., 113-114.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 22-23.

"Aber diseme berueren wurt begegnet oder gevolget zweier kunne wise von zweier kunne luten. Die ersten kumment mit irre naturlichen behendikeit und mit vernuenftigen bilden und mit hohen dingen, domitte verirrent su disen grunt; und dise begerunge stillent su domitte daz su dise ding wellent hoeren und verston . . . Mer die andern daz sint edele menschen, die stont uf in der worheit, und davon werdent su erluhtet, die lossent Got iren grunt bereiten."

40 Ibid., 88.

One final point we wish to discuss on this matter. That is the importance which Tauler places in the search for constant unity. This will be brought out in more detail later, but its mentioning at this time is worthwhile, for Tauler uses it also in his explanation of the preparation of the soul for God.

All the powers of the soul, intelligence and understanding, memory and will, lead thee into multiplicity. Therefore, thou must give them all up in so far as they lead thee into the life of the senses and of images in which thou seekest and findest thyself; then and not otherwise shalt thou find the Divine generation.⁴¹

It is necessary, therefore, according to Tauler, to remove all things from the soul in order to be able to ready the soul for its union with God. In all passages in this subject Tauler's mysticism takes the foreground and rational explanations must remain partially hidden.

The light of Divine grace was for Tauler the all-important reality necessary for man's salvation. He never tired of referring to it, and exhorting his audience to free their souls of the things of sense in order that God may enter into them. It is this simple emptying of

41 Ibid., 117.

the soul for God that gives us the explanation of the mysticism of Tauler.⁴² This, and nothing else, is its most potent and powerful characteristic. The union of the soul and God which follows is, of course, of major importance, but the readying of the soul seems to be Tauler's prime concern.

Stating the idea of Tauler's mysticism in regard to the topic of the union of the soul and God, we may say that it is a union fostered by man in that he removes all things but God from his soul and gives God a chance to enter into it. This same principle is applied by Tauler when he speaks of the soul's knowledge of God, for he states:

We shall experience the divine Trinity within us in proportion as we are conformed to it in all truth and reality. The resemblance to God is in our souls certainly by nature, though of course in no such noble manner as the resemblance of the divine persons one to another. Hence we need to cherish the determination to consider the divine image within us most attentively, the glory of which no man can rightly describe. For God is here formed in us in a formless way; truly it is formless, though spiritual writers often strive to picture this divine image to us by means of many forms and comparisons. All teachers say

⁴² For additional demonstrative passages, see Sermons, 92; 107; 246.

that He is in the highest faculties of our soul, memory, understanding and will, by means of which we are made rightly conscious of the Trinity. Yet all this is but in the lowest grade of perception of God's presence, for it is merely in the natural exercise of the soul's powers.⁴³

In regard to the manner in which we can come to a true knowledge of God, i.e., without the aid of reason, Tauler tells us that "He will draw thee yet further, and will lift thee up to that image without form, without mode, which nothing can picture or describe as it is revealed to devout souls interiorly."⁴⁴ Thus is the knowledge of God and the union of God and the soul explained and expounded.

43 Ibid., 363.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 300.

". . . diser drivalteit der sullen wir war nemen in uns, wie wir nach der gebildet sin in der worheit; wan man vindet dis gotliche bilde eigenlichen und werlichen und bloklich in der selen naturlich, mer doch nut also adellich als es an im selber ist. Nu ist unser furgand das wir des minneklichen bildes in uns war nemen vor allen dingen, das so minnenklichen und eigenlichen in uns ist. Von dem adel dis bildes kan nieman eigenlich gesprechen, wan Got ist in disem bilde und ist dis bilde selber unbiltlichen. Von disem sprechent die meister gar vil und suchent dis bilde in maniger naturlichen wisen und wesentlichen; so jehent alle meister das es eigenlichen ist in den obersten kreften, gehugnisse und verstentnisse und wille; mit den kreften sin wir engenlichen empfunglichen und gebruchlichen der heiligen drivalteit; dis ist wor in dem aller nidersten grote, wan dis ist in der nature ein nochrede."

44 Ibid., 65.

True, it is mystical in its essence, but the philosophic implications at least are present. And, too, it must be remembered that unless we concern ourselves strictly with Natural Theology, it is difficult if not impossible to describe this topic in strict philosophic terms.

We have thus far concerned ourselves merely with that part of Tauler's teaching which concerns the method and possibility of a knowledge of God by man. We shall now take up the problem of the nature of God and of His attributes, which will be based upon what has already been said concerning the union of the soul with God and the manner in which God makes Himself known to the soul.

THE NATURE OF GOD

The general tenets which Tauler here advances show his Thomistic training in some respect. He adheres to the general doctrine of St. Thomas on the nature of God,⁴⁵ but as always his words are those of a mystic more so than those of a philosopher. It must be remembered throughout that Tauler had no intention of teaching a philosophical system.

45 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 2 and 3.
St. Thomas, Compendium Theologiae, 9-23.

It is typical of Tauler that he states some of the most profound and deeply philosophical facts in simple and short terms. Why he never continued on from his initial statements into an exposition of the problem is not clear, but it seems that in his preaching the necessity was not present. In speaking of God he simply states that "God is all act . . ."46 and without further explanation continues his sermon. It is difficult to ascertain what this statement meant for him, for no further explanation is given. But it seems from the tone of the rest of his treatment on God that he meant exactly what he said. It is very likely that no further exposition on this point was forthcoming because for him, as perhaps for the nuns to whom he was preaching, no further explanation was required. The statement speaks for itself, and presents a world of meaning.

To us, however, two meanings are open. One is that Tauler had the Thomistic concepts of act and potency in mind and was pointing out that in God there can be no potency but He must of necessity be all act if He is God.⁴⁷ The other

46 Tauler, Sermons, 64.

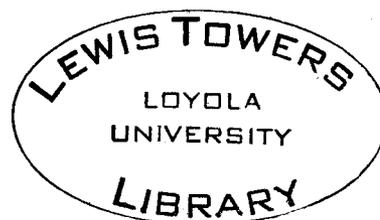
47 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 2, 3.
St. Thomas, Compendium Theologiae, 9.

interpretation can be gathered from one of his statements in another sermon, which reads: "Now, wherever God is, He must act; that means He must know Himself and thereby utter His eternal Word."⁴⁸ In essence, we may say that the two points are identical, but the connotation could be interpreted differently. The basic difference between the two uses of the word act are obvious. It is, unfortunately, difficult if not impossible to ascertain the exact meaning which Tauler intended. It would seem, however, that for him the two are one and the same, both referring to God as possessing no potency.

Nowhere does Tauler take up the problem of essence and existence in regard to God as a separate and distinct part of the treatment on God's nature. He does, however, mention the fact of existence.

The depth that is in God is an abyss that no created mind can fathom . . . The height that is in God is this: He can do all things, and yet He cannot make any creature so noble, as to enable it by its nature to reach His own divine height, even though such a creature were far above all seraphs and cherubim. The highest possible created nature is immeasurably below God, for it is created and God is uncreat-

48 Tauler, Sermons, 107.



ed and is wholly self-existent.⁴⁹

From this it can be seen that he did have the general notion of God as the self-existent reality. If we might venture into probabilities, we could deduce what Tauler held although never voiced. And here it seems that he had the correct Thomistic notion of God's essence and His existence as being one,⁵⁰ though not taking up the problem as such. If the need had arisen for him to speak on this, we are confident that such would have been his teaching.

In regard to the transcendental attributes we here also find the notion expressed by Tauler, but not completely. He gives an exposition, short though it be, on good, mentioning the others, and it again can be surmised that he held that God is Good, Truth, and Being.

49 Ibid., 530.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 367-368.

"Denne die tieffi die in Gotte ist, das ist ein alsolich abgrunde das alle geschaffen verstentnisse die enmugent das nut ervolgen noch erlangen . . . Die hoehi in Gotte die ist also das Got, der alle ding vermag, der envermochte des nut das er eine creature moechte so edel machen oder so hoch ueber alle cherubin und seraphin, das die von irre nature die hoehi Gottes mochten erlangen oder erkennen, und si enwere noch denne ein abgruendeg nicht vor siner hoehi, was si were geschaffen."

50 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 3, 4.
St. Thomas, Compendium Theologiae, 11.

A creature possesses good; as we say a good angel, a good man, a good heaven -- all these have good in them, as they also have truth and being; but it is not with them as with God, for they have these as a manner of existence, all in place and measure and all with limitation. God has good because He is essential good.⁵¹

It can be supposed that Tauler here was endeavoring an exposition based upon the Thomistic proofs for the existence of God, especially of the fourth, namely, the proof from the gradation of things.⁵² In another text of St. Thomas the general idea of Tauler's statement can also be seen.

. . . God alone is His own goodness, and He alone is essentially good. All other beings are said to be good as they participate, to some extent, in Him.⁵³

Brief though this exposition on the nature of God is, it contains within itself the important notions. It is evident that Tauler merely wanted to give the basic facts, but no lengthy dissertation on them. His notions are sound, and seem to be in agreement with Scholastic, and most of all, Thomistic doctrine.

51 Tauler, Sermons, 249.

52 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 2, 3.

53 St. Thomas, Compendium Theologiae, 109.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

One final point in regard to God needs to be discussed. This consists of the attributes which Tauler assigns to Him. Here again his mysticism comes to the foreground and it is evident that contemplation of God by the soul is the central theme through which the basic notions must be obtained. By the very nature of this discussion this connection with that on the nature of God will be evident, and additional data on the latter will be found.

We find here a rarity in Tauler's usual method. Almost all of the material on this point is taken up in one specific sermon which begins with an overall view of the problem.

In considering the Divine attributes, one may, as it were, mirror God in his soul, and consider Him as a pure being and the essence of all beings, and yet He is nothing of all things as we understand them. But all that is, and all that is being and has being and is good, in all that God is.⁵⁴

54 Tauler, Sermons, 778-779.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 277.

"Nu mag der mensche in disen eigenscheften sin gemuete erspiegelen in wirklicher wise, das er an sehe das God ist ein luter wesen, das aller wesen ist, und doch enist er aller dinge in keines. Alles das ist und das wesen ist und wesen hat und gut ist, da inne ist Got."

It might have been more fitting to include this description of God under the discussion of His nature, but since Tauler thought it better to include it here, so shall we. The last sentence shows clearly the influence of Eckhart in Tauler's thought. This statement could very well have come from Eckhart himself, for it can be understood to contain typical pantheistic notions. It was because of statements like this that he was branded a heretic. It is our belief, however, that no such implication was in the mind of Tauler but that he simply intended to show that for the creature to have being this can come only as a participation of the Being of God.

The first attribute which Tauler discusses is that of simplicity of which he states that it is

. . . the absolute oneness of being. . . God as the final end of simplicity, in whom all multiplicity is made unity and simplified in unity of essence. Again, God's essence is His action. God's knowledge, love, justice,

mercy, righteousness are all one.⁵⁵

The problem of multiplicity and unity was foremost in the mind of Tauler. In everything unity was for him to be sought and multiplicity to be avoided as much as possible. He saw in God the model and guide of unity, since, in Him there can be no multiplicity as there can be no potentiality. In the soul's quest for God, therefore, unity was the all-important reality which he stressed again and again. It has been said of him that he "lost the balance between unity and variety, for he gave all to one and nothing to the other. Few individuals, even among the greatest saints, have been so ardent in the sentiment, love, pursuit, and conquest of unity."⁵⁶ It is no small wonder, therefore, that the attribute which he discusses first and to which he

55 Ibid., 779

"Die Predigten Taulers," 277.

"Denne sehe der mensche an die eigenschaft der einiger einigkeit des wesens, wan Got ist an dem lesten ende der einvaltikeit und in ime wirt alle manigvaltikeit geeiniget und einvaltig in dem einigen ein wesende. Sin wesen ist sin wuerken, sin bekennen, sin lonen, sin minnen, sin richten alles ein, sin barmherzikeit, sin gerech-tikeit; dar in gang und trage din unbegriffenlichen grosse manigvaltikeit, das er die einvaltige in sinem einvaltigen wesende."

⁵⁶ Ernest Hello, "John Tauler," Catholic World, VII, 39, June, 1868, 422.

attaches greatest importance should be that of simplicity.

Simplicity, however, is not the only attribute which is assigned to God. In partial mystical terms Tauler discusses the attributes of hiddenness, solitude, and darkness, all of which must be contemplated by the soul in its incessant search for God.

Let a man contemplate God's unspeakable hiddenness. He is hidden in all things. . . . To everything He is nearer than it is to itself. He is in the depths of the soul, hidden there from all sense and unknown. . . . Hide thyself away in this hiddenness of God, away from all creatures and all that is alien to essential being. But this does not take place by the way of images and forms in the mind; no, nor by the use of the understanding, but in an essential way, all the soul's powers and aspirations being lifted above the life of sense into the way of perception.⁵⁷

Then let a man contemplate the solitude of God, in which never a word in the essence or in the essential way is spoken. All in God is

57 Tauler, Sermons, 779.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 277.

"Und er ist verborglichen in allen dingen verre me wan dehein ding im selber si in dem grunde der selen, verborgen allen sinnen und unbekant ze mole inne in dem frunde. Dar in tring mit allen kreften verre ueber den gedank dine usserliche uswendikeit, die so verre, so froemde ir selber ist und aller innerlicher inwendikeit als ein vich . . . verbirg dich in der verborgenheit vor allen creaturen und vor allem dem das dem wesende froemde und ungelich ist. Dis alles ensol nut sin in biltlicher oder allein in

silent, secret, and solitary --- nothing but simply God, and never has entered there anything alien to God, whether it be creature, or form, or image.⁵⁸

Then contemplate the Divine darkness; for by reason of His unspeakable brilliancy, God is darkness to all created understanding, whether of men or angels. . . . The created light of the mind of man or angel compared to God's mind is as the eyes of the little bird compared to the sun in the sky. When any created spirit looks full upon God, it must instantly close its eyes and rest in blindness and, as it were, unknowingness. . . . Give over thy darkness to the abyss of the Divine darkness, which alone knows Itself, and in the degree it knows Itself, is unknown to all else. But this abyss, this unknown and unnamed, is divinely blissful, and it ravishes the soul's love more than all that it can know else in the eternal beatitude of the Divine essence.⁵⁹

gedenklicher wise, sunder in weselicher, wuerklicher wise mit allen kreften und begerungen ueber die sinne in bevintlicher wise."

58 Ibid., 779-780.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 277-278.

"Denne mag der mensche an sehen die eigenschaft der goetlichen wuestenunge in der stillen einsamkeit, do nie wort in dem wesende nach weselicher wise inne gesprochen enwart noch werk gewuerkt enwart; denne do ist es so stille, so heimelich und so wuest. Do enist nut denne luter Got. Dar in kam nie nut froemdes, nie creature, bilde noch wise."

59 Ibid., 780

"Die Predigten Taulers," 278.

"Denne sich an das goetliche vinsternisse, das von unsprechlicher klorheit vinsten ist allen verstantnissen, engelen und menschen, . . . Wan alle geschaffen verstantnisse haltent sich engegen der klarheit von naturen als der swalwen oge sich haltet engegen der klornen

The terms which Tauler uses here cannot in reality be said to be philosophic, but the ideas behind them are. In the first he brings out the fact again that God cannot be seen by the human intellect in Himself, but that He is hidden from man in this life and can be known only through contemplation in the depth of the soul. In the second we find that in God there is nothing of anything created but only God in His essence. The same ideas permeate all the attributes which he discusses, namely, that God can be truly known only by Himself. This is brought out at length in the third attribute, where we find Tauler discussing the brilliancy of God as compared to the darkness of the soul's knowledge of Him. In all this can be seen the love of God as the all-important reality for the mystic.

Thus ends Tauler's treatise on God. In it are embodied not only the mystical tendencies which he possesses,

sunnen, und muessen da wider slagen werden in ir unbekentnisse und blintheit, als verre als si geschaffen und creaturen sint. Dar engegen trag din abgruendig vinsternisse berobet von allem worem liechte und darbende alles liechtes und da das abgruende des goetlichen vinsternisses im selber allein bekant und allen dingen unbekant. Das bgruende, das unbekant und ungenannt, das selig, ist me gemeint und reisset me die selen denne alles das si beken--nen muegen in der ewigen selikeit, an dem goetlichem wese--sende."

but the philosophical ones as well. It has shown us God not only as the created mind can know and understand Him but also as He is in Himself. In the words of Tauler, "in God there is the image of all things created . . . an image not like that in the creature, but the living image as God is in God, without beginning and without end."⁶⁰

TREATMENT OF MAN

It now remains for us to show Tauler's treatment of man, in which his Platonic leanings are immediately evident. He rarely speaks of man as a composite, but occupies himself almost exclusively with the soul, which he terms more noble than the body,⁶¹ and "the single indispensable form and the actual life."⁶² Plato displayed the same notions in the Laws, where he states:

. . . the soul is prior to the body . . . the body is second and comes afterwards, and is born to obey the soul, which is the ruler.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., 512-513.

⁶¹ Ibid., 97

"Due Predigten Taulers," 13.

" . . . der geist edelre ist wanne das fleisch."

⁶² Ibid., 89

⁶³ Plato, Laws, X, 896, The Dialogues of Plato, translated by B. Jowett, New York, 1937.

. . . the soul is the first origin and moving power of all that is, or has become, or will be . . . ⁶⁴

The reason for Tauler's constant emphasis on the soul is immediately evident if we analyze it in the context of his whole thought. For him only the most noble part of man is important, for only through it is man capable of knowing and loving God. Here Tauler's Platonism is replaced by his adherence to the ideas of St. Augustine. In the latter, too, can be found this idea of only that part of man being of prime importance in which he can find God, his chief good.

What then do we call man? Is he soul and body, as in a double harness, or like a centaur? Or do we mean the body only, as being in the service of the soul which rules it . . . or do we mean only the mind, and that on account of the body which it rules . . . whether the name man belongs to both, or only to the soul, the chief good of man is not the chief good of the body; but what is the chief good either of both soul and body, or of the soul only, that is man's chief good.⁶⁵

In his general division of the powers or faculties of the soul Tauler distinguishes memory, understanding

64 Ibid.,

65 St. Augustine, "De Moribus Catholicae Ecclesiae," IV, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Whitney J. Oates, New York, 1948.

and free will, wherein he sees the image of the blessed Trinity,⁶⁶ and wherein we can again see a definite Augustinian leaning. St. Augustine distinguishes the powers of the soul, which he calls the powers of the mind, as memory, understanding, and free will,⁶⁷ and it is obvious that Tauler's division could only have come from this. The notion of an image of the blessed Trinity also came from St. Augustine, and is shown in the following:

And we indeed recognize in ourselves the image of God, that is of the supreme Trinity, an image which, though it be not equal to God, or rather though it be very far removed from Him -- being neither co-eternal, nor to say all in a word, co-substantial with Him -- is yet nearer to Him in nature than any other of His works, and is destined to be yet restored, that it may bear a still closer resemblance.⁶⁸

Here, as elsewhere in his treatment of the soul, Tauler remains with this likeness to God, in that he always holds to a three-fold division.

66 Tauler, Sermons, 67.

67 St. Augustine, "De Trinitate," X, 11, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Whitney J. Oates, New York, 1948.

68 St. Augustine, "De Civitate Dei," XXVI; See also "De Trinitate," X, 12, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Whitney J. Oates, New York, 1948.

Many authors treating of Tauler understand him to show man as possessing a three-fold nature: animal nature, as he is with regard to the senses; intellectual nature; and the highest, or God-forming nature.⁶⁹ Although Plato also posited a three-fold nature in the soul, which he called the tripartite nature, and in which he distinguishes appetitive, spirited, and rational parts,⁷⁰ we believe that Tauler was here more in conformity with the Thomistic division than with the Platonic. St. Thomas uses the three-fold division of vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual;⁷¹ but Tauler, in his deviation from St. Thomas, combines the first two, admits the second, and adds the God-forming as the highest in man.

In speaking of the soul itself, Tauler points out that

Everything the soul does it does by its faculties. If it thinks, it is with its reason; if it recalls the past, it is with the memory, and if it loves, it is with the will. Thus, it is

69 Gottlob Siedel, Die Mystic Taulers, 52.

"Der Mensch ist recht, als ob er drei Menschen sei. Sein tierischer Mensch, wie er nach den Sinnen ist, sein vernuenftiger und sein oberster Gottfoermiger, Gottgebildeter Mensch."

70 Plato, "Republic," IV, The Dialogues of Plato, translated by B. Jowett, New York, 1937.

71 St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I, 78, 1.

ever with the soul's faculties and not with its essential being that it acts; all its activity depends on some intermediary.⁷²

In regard to the operation of these faculties, and in particular that of reason, he teaches that the soul has for its basis of action not the accidentals of being, but being itself, and that until it finds the essence and can say precisely that this is such a being, and nothing else, it will not rest but continue seeking until it has separated the essential from the non-essential.⁷³

How this is accomplished is seen in his theory of knowledge, where he shows that "the senses of man take from material things their images. . . . Then the understanding in turn strips these images of their sensible grossness, and retains only the heavenly forms that are in them . . ." ⁷⁴ It

72 Tauler, Sermons, 76.

73 Ibid., 92

74 Ibid., 102

"Die Predigten Taulers," 21.

"Die sinne nement die bilde von den natuerlichen dingen. . . . die vernunft kummet do in ueber und enkleit die sinnelichen bilde von ire sinnelicheit und machet sue vernuenftig . . ."

is true that the exact operation of the intellect in knowledge is not given, but it can in part be surmised from the division of the intellect which Tauler gives:

Man is endowed with active intelligence, passive intelligence, and that which is only possible intelligence. The first is always at work upon something present to it; the second works by accepting the action of another; the third remains in readiness to act and holds possession of what it may act upon.⁷⁵

Whether this division was meant to correspond to that of St. Thomas⁷⁶ is difficult to say, for Tauler does not carry it any further in explanation.

It is our opinion, nevertheless, that Tauler did intend to conform to Thomistic teaching for he shows how both the active and passive intelligence enter into the knowledge process. The only drawback here is that he prefaces this explanation with "Doctors, as I have already stated, tell us,"⁷⁷ and it is therefore difficult to as-

75 Ibid., 89.

76 St. Thomas, III De Anima, lectio X.
 , De Anima, IV, also ad 6
 , Summa Contra Gentiles, II, 77.
 , De Trinitate, I.
 , De Unitate Intellectus, II-III,
 V -- VII.
 , Summa Theologica, I, 79, 2 - 4.

77 Tauler, Sermons, 91.

certain whether he was merely giving someone else's opinion, or whether he himself held it. It seems probable, however, that had he disagreed with it he would have stated his objections. We feel free, therefore, to assume that he held that:

The active intelligence observes the forms of outward things and strips them of what is material and accidental; these images are then deposited in the passive intelligence as spiritual images. When the passive intelligence has thus become fertilized and impregnated, it knows outward things in these their images; but after this has happened the mind can only recall them with the further cooperation of the active intelligence, shedding new light upon the passive intelligence.⁷⁸

The exact function of the possible intellect is not given by Tauler, but it seems that he was here defining the intellectual process in true Thomistic terms.

Although our treatment of the soul thus far has been confined to philosophic speculation exclusively, it is not to be surmised that Tauler here does not have his mystical moments also. He tells us that "in the depth of its being the soul is by its very nature incapable of receiving anything but God's own essence,"⁷⁹ and that because of that there is "nothing so little known to the soul as its own

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 76

real self."⁸⁰ His contention here seems to be that in the essence of the soul there can be no images, and thus it is impossible for it to know itself, and God, except through the act of God in mystical union.

We have seen that in Tauler's treatment of man, and in particular of the soul of man, he is at times Thomistic, at times Augustinian, and at others he is mystic. These three form the integral thought of the man and make him the model of his time.

80 Ibid., 77

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

We have shown some of the philosophical ideas which John Tauler held. In summary we can say that in his treatment on the knowledge of God by man he holds to Thomistic concepts, admitting and showing the possibility of a natural knowledge of God in this present life. But he is quick to point out that it is impossible for man to have a complete knowledge of God, a knowledge of His essence, as He is in Himself, for the natural powers of man are inadequate in this respect. The closest to any such knowledge is the mystical union of the soul with God, in which the former must remain passive while God is acting within it.

In regard to God Himself, Tauler teaches that He is pure act, without any admixture of potency. He holds that God is the self-existent Being, although not taking the problem of the identity of existence and essence in God into consideration. As to the transcendental attributes, Tauler shows that God is essential Good, and that from Him all creatures possess good. It can be surmised that he also held that God is Truth and Being, for in the exposition on

the Divine attributes we find him expressing the idea of the participation of creatures in the Being, Truth and Goodness of God. The attributes which he discusses are those of simplicity, where he brings out one of the chief tenets of his doctrine, namely the importance of unity; hiddenness, solitude, and darkness, in which in mystical terms he again shows that man is incapable of knowing God as He is in Himself.

In the treatise on man Tauler is Platonic in the general description of the importance of the soul over the body. He is Augustinian in the division of the faculties of the soul into memory, understanding and free will. In regard to the general nature of man Tauler adheres in part to the three-fold division of St. Thomas into vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual, but deviates therefrom in that he combines the first two, admits the second, and adds a third, the highest or God-forming nature of man. Concerning the intellect in general we can say that Tauler has the Thomistic notion of the division of the intellect in his own, though not always clearly expressing this. His theory of knowledge though not complete in detail, can be said to be also Thomistic.

The general tenets of Tauler's philosophic doctrine

can be said to agree with those of his times, especially in his partial eclecticism. It is this which we feel make him a model for the thought of his times. He was not, however, important only during the fourteenth century, but his teachings were again brought to prominence by Martin Luther in the years 1515-1518.

Luther read Tauler with enthusiasm, for he believed that he here found a kindred spirit and support of his own doctrines. It is, of course, quite evident from a thorough study of Tauler, that Luther used only those ideas which were suitable to support his own, the rest he ignored or minimized.

Four aspects of Tauler's doctrines attracted him above all: the idea of complete resignation to the divine will; the attacks on outer works as useless in themselves; the description of the suffering of the devout soul, its sense of being forsaken by God; and finally the attitude to Scholasticism.⁸¹

When Tauler speaks of the suffering of the soul, he speaks of it as a mystic, that is, the moment of apparent absence of God in the interval between mystical union; but for Luther this sense of isolation was a permanent thing. Tauler attacks outer works only if they seem to bar the way to complete union with God in contemplation, whereas it is evident

81 Clark, The Great German Mystics, 48.

that Luther taught that faith alone is sufficient. In regard to the attitude toward Scholasticism, Luther on the one hand detested it and sought to liberate religion from its bonds, whereas Tauler, as we have shown, although at times deviating from strict Thomistic doctrine, does not do so on fundamental questions. It certainly cannot be said that Tauler in any manner had an anti-Scholastic attitude.

With Luther it seems to have been the case of trying to find an acceptable Catholic basis for his views, and as Tauler, surnamed 'The Illuminated Doctor,' had prominence in his own time, his were the likely doctrines to aid in the establishment of that basis. It is, however, clear that Luther did not really attempt to understand Tauler's mystical tendencies, or it would have been impossible for him to feel that "Tauler stood for 'evangelical Christianity' without any admixture of 'popery',"⁸² for it is evident from Tauler's life as well as his teachings, that he held firm to the Catholic faith and to the authority of the Pope.

This can perhaps be best shown in Tauler's own words: "Hold fast by the faith, the true and simple faith;

82 Ibid., 48.

believe in one God and three Divine persons without a multiplicity of fine distinctions."⁸³ This was his constant admonition to his flock, for this did he preach, and in this manner try to overcome the tendencies of his times.

There is one final point in the thought and the teaching of Tauler which we wish to bring out. We have in the previous chapter discussed his constant search after unity in all things. This, we feel, is the central theme of his entire work. It is through the search and conquest of unity that man will finally attain that for which he was made. It is this idea which Tauler brings out in the following, and which characterizes his whole preaching.

All creatures seek after this unity; all multiplicity struggles toward it -- the universal aim of all life is always this unity. Every creature comes forth from this unity by an immediate creative act, and each one tends again to be absorbed in its entire existence into indivisible unity, according to each one's capability. All activity of mind and body, and all love, as well as all unrest, has an end and purpose; it all tends toward entire rest; and this rest is to be found nowhere but in the one, indivisible unity that is God.⁸⁴

83 Tauler, Sermons, 280.

"Die Predigten Taulers," 74.

"Wir sullent halten einen einvaltigen waren gantzen glouben an einen God in drivalentikeit der personen, mut manigvalteklich, sunder einvalteklich und luterlichen."

84 Ibid., 242

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APPENDIX

COMPARISON OF THE SERMONS OF TAULER AS
THEY ARE IN THE EDITIONS OF
ELLIOTT AND VETTER

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
First Sermon for the Feast of Christmas	66	1	7
First Sermon for the Vigil of the Epiphany	96	2	12
Second Sermon for the Vigil of the Epiphany	101	4	20
First Sermon for the Feast of the Epiphany	103	3	16
Third Sermon for the Feast of the Epiphany	113	5	22
Sermon for the Second Sunday after Epiphany	124	11	50
Sermon for the Third Sunday after Epiphany	131	8	34
Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	144	6	25
Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday	152	7	28
Second Sermon for the Second Sun- day of Lent	194	9	40

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
First Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Lent	206	10	47
Second Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Lent	211	12	56
First Sermon for Palm Sunday	225	14	65
Second Sermon for Low Sunday	268	15	67
Sermon for the Second Sunday after Easter	271	13	60
First Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Easter	277	16	71
Sermon for the Rogation Days	287	17(60a)	278
First Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension	293	18(60b)	285
Second Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension	299	19	76
Third Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension	304	20	80
Fourth Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension	309	21	85
Fifth Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension	314	22	88
Sermon for the Sunday after the Ascension	317	24	97
First Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost	322	23	91

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
Second Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost	328	25(60e)	304
Third Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost	334	26	103
Fourth Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost	342	27	110
First Sermon for Trinity Sunday	357	28	114
Second Sermon for Trinity Sunday	362	29(60d)	298
First Sermon for the Feast of Corpus Christi	368	30(60c)	292
Second Sermon for the Feast of Corpus Christi	374	31(60f)	310
Third Sermon for the Feast of Corpus Christi	383	32	118
Fourth Sermon for the Feast of Corpus Christi	390	33	125
Sermon for the Second Sunday after Trinity	397	34(60g)	317
First Sermon for the Third Sunday after Trinity	401	35(60h)	321
Second Sermon for the Third Sunday after Trinity	410	36	131
Third Sermon for the Third Sunday after Trinity	417	37	142
First Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity	422	38	147

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
Second Sermon for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity	428	62	336
First Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity	434	39	154
Second Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity	442	41	170
Third Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity	448	63	341
Sermon for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity	464	43	181
First Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity	472	42	176
Second Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity	477	72	391
Sermon for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity	482	57	266
First Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity	490	73	395
Second Sermon for the Twelfth Sun- day after Trinity	494	44	190
First Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity	498	45	194
Second Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity	504	64	346
First Sermon for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	514	47	207
Second Sermon for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	521	66	358

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
Third Sermon for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	527	67	364
First Sermon for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity	535	53	240
Second Sermon for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity	540	70	380
Sermon for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity	544	54	246
Sermon for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity	552	56	259
First Sermon for the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	559	81	431
Second Sermon for the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	564	74	398
Sermon for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity	570	75	403
Sermon for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity	575	76	407
Sermon for the Feast of St. Barbara, or for that of any Virgin	600	80	424
Sermon for the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity	620	49	219
Sermon for the Feast of Our Lady's Visitation, or for the Octave of her Nativity	625	50	224

SERMON	ELLIOTT	VETTER	
	PAGE	NUMBER	PAGE
First Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Bap- tist	646	40	162
Second Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Bap-- tist	654	61	328
Sermon for the Feast of St. Lawrence Martyr	676	77	412
Sermon for the Feast of St. Augus- tine	683	48	214
First Sermon for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross	689	51	230
Second Sermon for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross	693	65	353
Sermon for the Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist	705	55	253
Sermon for the Feast of St. Michael and all Holy Angels	711	68	372
First Sermon for the Anniversary of the Dedication of a church	768	69	377
Second Sermon for the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church	772	78	418
First Useful Instruction about Con- fession	776	58	274
Second Useful Instruction about Con- fession	778	59	275
On the Attributes of God	778	60	276

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Hannah L. Klein has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 2, 1953
Date

J. O. Callaghan, S. J.
Signature of Adviser