

Mechthild of Magdeburg

THE FLOWING LIGHT OF THE GODHEAD

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PROLOGUE TO THE LUX DIVINITATIS¹

Prologue of Brother Heinrich, Lector,
of the Order of Preaching Brothers²

We read in the Book of Judges (4:4-5) that the holy woman Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, full of the spirit of prophecy, was accustomed to set up her tent under a palm tree in the hills of Ephraim, residing there as a solitary to devote herself to God alone. Israel, God's people, would go up to her seeking judgment in all matters. Likewise, the Fourth Book of Kings (2 Kgs 22:14-20) relates that Huldah, a prophetess living in Jerusalem, enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to the hidden judgment of God, informed the holy king Josiah about the coming scourges threatening the people. This just and pious king had sent priests and levites to her so that the holy woman might seek the Lord's guidance and pray on his behalf regarding the imminent misfortunes. Certainly there were at the time high priests of the seed of Aaron and other kinds of priests and levites learned in the law and of high moral integrity; yet, in spite of this, the Holy Spirit did not divulge his secret counsels to them. Rather, for these times he revealed them to these holy women of the weak sex, as he saw fit.

Quite often, in fact, almighty God has chosen what is weak in the world to confound what is stronger for its good. Therefore, let no one wonder or, lacking trust, fall into disbelief if God in the time of grace renews his marvels. He, who in the time of the law of Moses mercifully saw fit to perform similar works, now reveals his mysteries to the fragile sex. Because the people of Israel

believed Deborah's prophecy, they won freedom from oppression and victory over their enemies. Also, a king, a religious man, was found worthy to gain solace and mercy through the prayer and advice of the prophetess Huldah. So, too, shall all who write or read this book, if they approach it with pious intent, attain an increase in solace and spiritual grace, as the Lord promises them in the book itself.

This writing must be read in a pious spirit, however. It must be understood, as is the case with other holy writings, in a wholesome manner and in good faith. In this way the reader will find nothing scandalous or offensive in it, and the writing itself will not be subjected to any perverse claim of falsehood. Its author is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it treats Christ and the church, as well as Satan and his body.³ Its manner of proceeding is both historical and mystical⁴; its purpose is the ordering of the present life, the useful calling to mind of things past, and the prophetic disclosure of things to come. The sincere devotion and dove-like simplicity of the woman through whom this writing was made public should completely suffice to guarantee the truth of what the pious faithful are asked to believe. From childhood she led a pure and innocent life. In her youth, at the urging of the Lord, she left everything she stood to gain and became an exile in a foreign land, leading a life of voluntary poverty. Finally, after many tribulations and at an advanced age, she was received into the community of holy sisters at Helfta. She lived there for twelve years and, as is confirmed by their testimony,⁵ she flourished in the perfection of all virtues. She especially practiced charity, humility, long-suffering, and meekness. Raised up above all things by contemplation and made a sharer of divine illuminations and revelations, she was worthy to perceive from the Lord through her prophetic spirit numerous intimate divine mysteries concerning things past, present, and to come. Now, having been received by the Bridegroom of virgins, this holy virgin enjoys fully him whom she loved and whose wondrous love adorned his beloved with many marvels.

The revelations and visions that almighty God has deigned to disclose to his elect are founded upon and have their origin in

the directness of their faith. Their purity of mind demands and expects them. The holiness of their life authenticates and corroborates them. For celestial secrets lie open to such people, and their testimony is greeted with belief by the hearts of those who hear them.

For this reason, before beginning this book, which is written in a primitive tongue and contains certain marvelous and previously unknown mysteries, I thought it worthwhile to point out beforehand a bit about the holiness of the person to whom these things have been revealed by heaven, so that the marvels mentioned in word might have the support of deeds more marvelous. For who shall describe for us more vividly the perfection of the elect than those very ones in whom and through whom God carries out his works? And who could have made known to the church more beneficially or better the perfection of Paul than Paul himself? In like manner, this holy one made public what the divine Spirit had wrought in her and with her, and proclaims his praise and glory.⁶

*LATIN FOREWORD WITH
TABLE OF CONTENTS AND
MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN TRANSLATION¹*

In the year of our Lord 1250 and for almost fifteen years thereafter this book was revealed² in German by the Lord through grace to a certain beguine who was a holy virgin in body and spirit. In humble simplicity, in the poverty of exile, weighed down by scorn, and in heavenly contemplation, as is made clear in this writing, she served the Lord with great devotion for more than forty years, following perfectly the footsteps of the brothers of the Order of Preachers. Always progressing day by day, she continually became better. It was compiled³ by a brother of the aforementioned order and contains many good things, as is noted in these titles:

- On the Trinity: II 3; III 9; IV 12 and 14; V 26
- On Christ: II 3; IV 14; V 23 and 27
- On Our Lady: I 22; II 3; V 23
- On the Nine Orders of Angels: I 6; III 1; V 1
- On the Special Excellence of Certain Saints: IV 20, 22, and 23
- On the Evilness of Demons: II 24; IV 2 and 17; V 1; V 29
- On the Dignity of a Human Being: I 44; IV 14
- On Rapture and the Separation of the Soul from the Flesh: I 5
- On the Description of Heaven: III 1
- On the Description of Hell: III 21
- On the Many Kinds of Purgatory: II 8; III 15 and 17; V 14 and 15

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On Many Virtues and Vices: I 22 and 25; III 7 and 14; IV 4;
and on Charity Especially: III 13

On the Order of Preachers at the End of the World at the
Time of the Antichrist: IV 27

And on many things unheard of that you shall understand if
you read this book nine times in faith, humility, and devo-
tion.⁴ Here is prophecy about the past, present, and future.
Here also is the Song of the Three Persons: V 26.

[Middle High German translation:]

In the year 1250 after God's birth and for the fifteen years
thereafter this book was revealed in German by God to a sister.
She was a holy virgin both in body and in spirit. She served God
devotedly in humble simplicity, in the poverty of exile, in heav-
enly contemplation, and weighed down by scorn, for more than
forty years, and followed steadfastly and completely the light and
the teaching of the Order of Preachers, and went forward from
day to day and improved herself daily. But a brother of the same
order gathered together and wrote this book; and much good is
contained in this book on many subjects, as is noted in this list.
You should read it through nine times in faith, humility, and
devotion.

Book I

One Should Receive This Book Eagerly, For It Is God Himself
Who Speaks the Words¹

This book I hereby send as a messenger to all religious people,² both the bad and the good; for if the pillars fall,³ the building cannot remain standing; and it signifies me alone and proclaims in praiseworthy fashion my intimacy. All who wish to understand this book should read it nine times.

This Book Is Called a *Flowing Light of the Godhead*

“Ah, Lord God, who made this book?”

“I made it in my powerlessness, for I cannot restrain myself as to my gifts.”⁴

“Well then, Lord, what shall the title of the book be, which is to your glory alone?”

“It shall be called a flowing light of my Godhead into all hearts that live free of hypocrisy.”

1. How Love and the Queen Spoke to Each Other⁵

The soul came to Love, greeted her with great deference, and said:

“God greet you, Lady Love.”

“May God reward you, Mistress and Queen.”

“Lady Love, you are indeed perfect.”

“Mistress and Queen, that is why I am above all things.”

“Lady Love, you struggled many a year before you forced the exalted Trinity to pour itself utterly into the humble virginal womb of Mary.”

“Mistress and Queen, that was to your honor and benefit.”

“Lady Love, you have now come here to me and have taken from me everything I ever gained on earth.”

"Mistress and Queen, you have made a happy exchange."
 "Lady Love, you have taken from me my childhood."
 "Mistress and Queen, in its place I have given you heavenly freedom."
 "Lady Love, you have taken from me all my youth."
 "Mistress and Queen, in its place I have given you many a holy virtue."
 "Lady Love, you have taken from me possessions, friends, and relatives."
 "Come now, Mistress and Queen, that is a petty complaint."
 "Lady Love, you have taken from me the world, worldly honor, and all earthly riches."
 "Mistress and Queen, I shall make that up to you in one hour with the Holy Spirit on earth, just as you wish it."
 "Lady Love, you have brought me to such a pass that my body is racked by a strange weakness."
 "Mistress and Queen, in exchange I have given you much sublime knowledge."
 "Lady Love, you have devoured my flesh and my blood."
 "Mistress and Queen, you have thereby been purified and drawn into God."
 "Lady Love, you are a robber; for this as well shall you make reparation."
 "Mistress and Queen, then take me."
 "Lady Love, now you have recompensed me a hundredfold on earth."
 "Mistress and Queen, in addition you may demand God and all his kingdom."⁶

2. Concerning Three Persons and Three Gifts⁷

God's true greeting, coming from the heavenly flood out of the spring of the flowing Trinity, has such force that it takes away all the body's strength and reveals the soul to herself, so that she sees herself resembling the saints, and she takes on a divine radiance. Then the soul leaves the body, taking all her power, wisdom, love, and longing. Just the tiniest bit of her life force remains with the body as in a sweet sleep.⁸ Then she sees one complete God in three Persons and knows the three Persons in one God undivided.

He greets her in courtly language that one does not hear in this kitchen, clothes her in the garments that one fittingly wears in a palace, and surrenders himself into her power. Then she can

wish for and ask whatever she wants. It is granted her and she is enlightened. What she is not enlightened about is the first cause of the Three Persons.⁹ Then he draws her further to a secret place. There she is not permitted to beg on anyone's behalf or ask, because all alone with her he wants to play a game that the body does not know, nor the peasants at their plows, nor knights at their tournaments, nor his lovely mother, Mary—not even she may play it there. Then she soars further to a blissful place of which I neither will nor can speak. It is too difficult; I do not dare, for I am a very sinful person. Yet when infinite God brings the unfathomable soul to the heights, she loses sight of the earth in her astonishment and is not aware of ever having been on earth. Just when the game is at its best, one has to leave it.

Then God in full vigor speaks: "Young Miss, you must go down." She shudders and laments¹⁰ her banishment. She says: "Lord, you have raised me up¹¹ so high here that I shall not be able to praise you in any fitting degree when in my body. Rather, I shall suffer as an outcast and shall struggle against the body." And he says:

"Oh, dear dove,¹²
 Your voice is string music to my ears.
 Your words are spices for my mouth.
 Your longings are the lavishness of my gift."

She says: "Dear Lord, it has to be as the master of the house¹³ commands." And she sighs with all her might, which awakens the body.¹⁴

Then the body speaks: "Well, woman, just where have you been? You come back so love-struck, lovely, and vibrant, free and witty. Your carrying on has cost me my appetite, sense of smell, color, and all my strength."

She says: "Shut up, murderer! Quit your bellyaching. I'll always be on my guard with you around. That my enemy has been wounded—what do we care about that? It makes me glad."

This is a greeting that has many streams. It pours forth from the flowing God into the poor, parched soul unceasingly with new

knowledge, in new contemplation, and in the special enjoyment of the new presence. O sweet God, inwardly on fire, outwardly blossoming, now that you have given this to the least,¹⁵ I would like to experience the life that you have given to your greatest. For that I would be willing to endure suffering even longer.

No one is able or is permitted to receive this greeting unless one has gone beyond oneself and has become nothing. In this greeting I want to die living.¹⁶ This the blind saints cannot ruin for me. They are the ones who love and do not know.¹⁷

3. The Handmaids of the Soul and the Blow of Love¹⁸

All holy Christian virtues are the handmaids of the soul. The sweet listlessness of the soul complains to Love of her troubles:

"Well then, dearest Maiden, for a long time now you have been my chambermaid. Now tell me, where is all this leading? You have hunted me, trapped me, bound me, and wounded me so deeply that I shall never be healthy again. You have meted out to me many a cudgel blow. Tell me, am I ever going to recover from you? If I were not going to be killed by your hand, it would be better for me never to have known you."¹⁹

Love: "That I hunted you was my fancy.
That I captured you was my desire.
That I bound you made me happy.
When I wounded you, you were joined to me.
When I cudgel you, I take you into my power.
I drove God the almighty from heaven,
Took his human life,
And returned him to his Father in honor.
How do you, vile worm, expect to survive before me?"

The Soul: "Speak, my Empress, I fear a small secret medicine
God has often given to me that I might thrive even in
your presence."

Love: "If one does not want the prisoners dead,
One gives them water and bread.
The medicine that God has often given you

Is nothing other than a brief return to human life.
But when your Easter Day comes
And your body receives the death blow,
Then I'll embrace you tightly
And permeate you utterly,
And I'll steal you from your body
And give you to your Lover."

The Soul: "O Love, this letter I have written out of your mouth.
Now give me, Lady, your seal."

Love: "Whoever has succeeded in loving God more than
self
Knows well where to get the seal.
It lies between the two of us."

The Soul speaks:

"Be silent, dear one, and speak no more.
Dearest of all maidens, let all creatures, myself
included,
Bow down before you.
Tell my Lover that his bed is made ready.
And that I am weak with longing for him."

If this letter is too long, this is the reason: I was on the meadow
where I found flowers of all kinds. This is a sweet lament: Who
dies of love shall be buried in God.

4. The Soul's Journey to Court During Which God Reveals Himself

When the needy soul comes to the court, she is judicious and refined. She gazes at her God in high spirits. Oh, how tenderly is she welcomed there! She remains silent, longing boundlessly for his praise. With great longing he reveals to her his divine heart. It resembles red gold burning in a great fire of coals. He places her into his glowing heart. When the exalted Sovereign and the little waif thus embrace and are united as water and wine, she turns to nothing and is transported out of herself.²⁰ When she

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has no strength left, he is as lovesick for her as he always was; for he neither increases nor decreases. Then she says:

"Lord, you are my lover,
My desire,
My flowing fount,
My sun;
And I am your reflection."

This is the journey to court of a loving soul that cannot exist without God.

5. The Torment and the Praise of the Soul²¹

My body is in great torment, my soul is in sublime bliss; for she has both gazed upon and embraced her Lover in her arms. He causes her, poor wretch, torment. When he draws her up, she flows. She cannot hold herself in check until he brings her within himself. She would like to speak but cannot, so utterly has she been enmeshed in sublime union with the awe-inspiring Trinity. Then he leaves her for a short while, that she might feel longing. She desires his praise but does not know how to find it as she would like. She would even want him to send her into hell that he might be praised beyond measure by all creatures.²² She looks at him and says to him, "Lord, give me your blessing." He looks at her, draws her up again, and gives her a greeting²³ that the body cannot express.

Then the body speaks to the soul:

"Where have you been?
I can't take it anymore."

And the soul says:

"Quiet, you are a fool.
I want to be with my Lover,
Even if it means you would perish.
I am his joy, he is my torment."

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This is her torment. May she never recover!
May you take this torment upon yourself as well,
And may you never escape it!

6. The Nine Choirs: How They Sing²⁴

Now hear,²⁵ my Beloved; listen with spiritual ears. Thus do the nine choirs sing:

We praise you, Lord, that you sought us in your humility.
We praise you, Lord, that you have kept us in your mercy.
We praise you, Lord, that you have glorified us in your humiliation.
We praise you, Lord, that you have provided for us in your generosity.
We praise you, Lord, that you have arranged us in rank in your wisdom.
We praise you, Lord, that you have shielded us with your might.
We praise you, Lord, that you have sanctified us with your nobility.
We praise you, Lord, that you have instructed us in your intimacy.
We praise you, Lord, that you have elevated us in your love.

7. God's Curse in Eight Things

I curse you:
May your body die.
May your words perish.
May your eyes close.
May your heart dissolve.
May your soul rise up.
May your body remain.
May your human faculties perish.
May your spirit stand in the presence of the Holy Trinity!

8. The Most Lowly Praises God in Ten Things

O you burning Mountain.
O you chosen Sun.
O you full Moon.
O you bottomless Well.
O you unscalable Height.

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O you Brightness without measure.
O Wisdom without ground.
O Mercy without restraint.
O Might without opposition.
O Crown of all honors!
The most lowly person you ever created praises you.

9. With Three Things You Dwell on the Heights

Those who are on fire in true love and build on the firm ground of truth and bear abundant fruit for a blessed end—they dwell on the heights.

Explanation: This is about the Seraphim.

10. Who Loves God Triumphs over Three Things

Whoever conquers the world,
And takes from his body all useless desires,
And overcomes the devil,
This is the soul that loves God.
If the world gives her a shove,
She does not suffer much.
If the flesh gives her a jolt,
The spirit will not get sick from it.
If the devil gives her a push,
The soul pays no heed.
She loves
And keeps on loving,
And she does not know how to do otherwise.

11. Four Battle for God

O dove free of gall.²⁶
O maiden free of blemish.
O knight free of wounds.
O liegeman free of hesitation.
These are the four whom God can count on in battle.

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12. The Soul Praises God for Five Things²⁷

O Emperor of all honors.
O Crown of all sovereigns.
O Wisdom of all the learned.
O Giver of all gifts.
O Deliverer of all imprisonments.

13. How God Comes to the Soul

I come to my beloved as the dew upon the flower.²⁸

14. How the Soul Receives and Praises God

Ah, joyous sight!
Ah, lovely greeting!
Ah, dear embrace!
Lord, the wonder of you has overwhelmed me.
Your grace has crushed me.
O you lofty Crag.
You are so nicely honeycombed.
In you no one can rest but doves and nightingales.

15. How God Receives the Soul

Welcome, my precious dove.
You have flown so keenly over the earth
That your feathers reach to heaven.

16. God Likens the Soul to Four Things

You taste like a grape.
Your fragrance is like balsam.²⁹
Your radiance is like the sun.
You are an enhancement of my most sublime love.

17. The Soul Praises God About Five Things

O you pouring God in your gift!
 O you flowing God in your love!
 O you burning God in your desire!
 O you melting God in the union with your beloved!
 O you resting God on my breasts!³⁰
 Without you I cannot exist.

18. God Likens the Soul to Five Things

O you beautiful rose among the thorns!
 O you fluttering bee in the honey!
 O you unblemished dove in your being!
 O you beautiful sun in your radiance!
 O you full moon in the firmament!
 I cannot turn away from you.

19. God Caresses the Soul in Six Ways

You are my softest pillow,
 My most lovely bed,
 My most intimate repose,
 My deepest longing,
 My most sublime glory.
 You are an allurement to my Godhead,
 A thirst for my humanity,
 A stream for my burning.

20. The Soul Praises God in Return in Six Ways

You are my resplendent mountain,
 A feast for my eyes,
 A loss of myself,
 A tempest in my heart,
 A defeat and retreat of my power,
 My surest protection.³¹

21. Of Knowledge and Enjoyment

Love without knowledge is as darkness to the wise soul.³²
 Knowledge without its fruition she likens to the pains of hell.
 Fruition short of death she cannot lament enough.

*22. St. Mary's Message and How One Virtue Follows Another.
 How the Soul Was Made in the Jubilus³³ of the Trinity, and
 How St. Mary Nursed All the Saints and Nurses Them Still*

The sweet dew of the eternal Trinity gushed forth from the fountain of the everlasting Godhead into the flower of the chosen maid; and the fruit of this flower is an immortal God and a mortal man and a living hope of eternal life. And our Redeemer became a Bridegroom. The bride became exhilarated at the sight of his noble countenance:

Under this immense force she loses herself.
 In this most dazzling light she becomes blind in herself.
 And in this utter blindness she sees most clearly.
 In this pure clarity she is both dead and living.

The longer she is dead, the more blissfully she lives.³⁴
 The more blissfully she lives, the more she experiences.³⁵
 The less she becomes, the more flows to her.
 The more she fears,...³⁶
 The richer she becomes, the poorer she is.
 The deeper she dwells,³⁷ the more she expands.
 the more forbearing she is.
 The deeper her wounds become, the more violently she struggles.
 The more loving God is to her, the higher she soars.
 The more radiantly she shines in the reflected effulgence of the Godhead, the closer she approaches him.
 The more she labors, the more contentedly she rests.
 the more she grasps.
 The more quiet her silence, the louder she calls.
 the greater the marvels she works with his strength in proportion to her power.

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The more his desire grows, the more extravagant their wedding celebration becomes.
The narrower the bed of love becomes, the more intense are the embraces.
The sweeter the kisses on the mouth become, the more lovingly they gaze at each other.
The greater the distress in which they part, the more he bestows upon her.
The more she consumes, the more she has.
The more humbly she takes her leave, the sooner she returns.
The more ardent she remains, the sooner she bursts into flame.
The more she burns, the more beautifully she glows.
The more God's praise is spread abroad, the greater her desire becomes.

Tell me, where did our Redeemer become the Bridegroom?

In the *jubilus* of the Holy Trinity. When God could no longer contain himself, he created the soul and, in his immense love, gave himself to her as her own.³⁸

"What are you made of, Soul, that you ascend so high above all creatures, mingle with the Holy Trinity, and yet remain whole in yourself?"

"You have brought up the question of my origin. I shall tell you honestly: I was made by love in that very place.³⁹ For that reason no creature is able to give comfort to my noble nature or to open it up except love alone."

"Holy Mary, dear Lady, you are the mother of this wonder. When did this happen to you?"

"When our Father's *jubilus* was saddened by Adam's fall, so that he had to become angry, the Eternal Wisdom of the almighty Godhead intercepted the anger together with me. The Father chose me for his bride—that he might have something to love; for his darling bride, the noble soul, was dead. The Son chose me to be his mother, and the Holy Spirit received me as his beloved. Then I alone was the bride of the Holy Trinity and

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mother of orphans, and I brought them before God's eyes so that they might not all sink down, though some did. When I was thus the mother of many a banished child, my breasts became so full of the pure, spotless milk of true, generous mercy that I suckled the prophets and sages, even before I was born. Afterward, in my childhood, I suckled Jesus; later, in my youth, I suckled God's bride, Holy Christianity, under the cross when I was so desolate and wretched, as the sword of the physical suffering of Jesus cut spiritually into my soul."

Both his wounds and her breasts were open.

The wounds poured forth.

The breasts flowed.

The soul was invigorated and completely restored

As he poured the sparkling red wine

Into her red mouth.⁴⁰

As she was thus born and made healthy out of the open wounds, she was like a child, and very young. If she was going to recover completely after her death and birth, God's mother was going to have to be her mother and her nurse. This was and is as it should be, since God is her rightful father and she is his rightful bride. She resembles him in all parts.

"Lady, in your old age you suckled the holy apostles with your motherly instruction and with your powerful prayer, that God might reveal his honor and your will through them. Lady, thus did you suckle then and suckle still the hearts of martyrs with strong faith, the ears of confessors with holy protection, the virgins with your chastity, widows with constancy, married people with kindness, and sinners with patient hope."

"Lady, us, too, you must suckle, for your breasts are still so full that they are not likely to dry up. If you no longer wanted to suckle, the milk would cause you much pain. For truly, I have seen your breasts so full that seven streams pour out at one time from one breast over my body and over my soul. In that hour you relieve me of a labor that no friend of God can bear without

inner suffering. In this same manner, you shall go on suckling until the last day. Then you shall become dry, for then God's children—and your children—will be weaned and fully grown for eternal life. Ah, then we shall know and see with inexpressible joy the milk and even the breasts themselves⁴¹ that Jesus so often kissed."⁴²

23. You Should Ask That God Love You Passionately, Often, and Long; Then You Shall Become Pure, Beautiful, and Holy⁴³

Ah, Lord, love me passionately, love me often, and love me long. For the more passionately you love me, the purer I shall become. The more often you love me, the more beautiful I shall become. The longer you love me, the holier I shall become here on earth.

24. How God Responds to the Soul

That I love you passionately comes from my nature, for I am love itself. That I love you often comes from my desire, for I desire to be loved passionately. That I love you long comes from my being eternal, for I am without an end and without a beginning.

25. The Way to Suffer Pain Willingly for God's Sake

God guides his chosen children along strange paths. This is a strange path and a noble path and a holy path that God himself trod: that a human being, though free of sin and guilt, suffer pain. Upon this path the soul that aches for God is joyful, for by nature she is joyful to her Lord, who suffered much pain because of his good deeds. Our dear Lord, the heavenly Father, delivered up his most beloved Son to be tormented by the heathens and martyred by the Jews despite his innocence. Now the time has come when some people, who have the appearance of being religious, torment the bodies of God's children and martyr their spirits. For he wants them to resemble his beloved Son who was tormented in body and soul.

26. The Path upon Which the Soul Draws the Senses and Is Free of Suffering of the Heart

It is a rarely traveled and lofty path upon which the devoted soul makes its way and guides the senses as one with sight guides a blind person. On this path the soul is free and lives without inner suffering, for she wants nothing but what her Lord wants, who arranges everything for the best.

27. How You Become Worthy of This Path and Keep to It and Become Perfect

Three things make a person worthy of this path—that one recognize it and enter upon it: first, that one submit to God relinquishing all human control, and that one piously hold on to God's grace and willingly keep it by being forgiving in all things as far as is possible for a human will. The second thing keeping a person on this path is that one welcome all things except for sin alone. The third thing keeping a person on this path is that one do all things equally for God's honor. Thus I think relieving my most basic need counts as much in God's sight as if I were in the highest state of contemplation that a human being can attain. Why? If I do it out of love in order to give honor to God, it is all one and the same. But when I sin, I am not on this path.

28. Love Shall Be Deadly, Boundless, and Unceasing; This Is the Folly of Fools

I delight in loving him who loves me, and I long to love him to the death, boundlessly, and without ceasing. Be happy, my soul, for your Life has died for love of you.⁴⁴ Love him so fiercely that you could die for him. Thus you burn ever more without ever being extinguished as a living flame in the vast fire of high majesty.

Thus you become full of the fire of love.
This makes you here utterly happy.

You can no longer teach me anything.
 I cannot turn away from love.
 I must be its captive.
 Otherwise, I cannot go on living.
 Where it dwells, there I must remain,
 Both in death and in life.⁴⁵
 This is the folly of fools
 Who live free of anguish.

29. The Beauty of the Bridegroom and How the Bride Should Follow Him in Twenty-Three Steps of the Cross⁴⁶

Look at me, my bride.⁴⁷ See how beautiful are my eyes, how comely is my mouth, how on fire is my heart, how agile are my hands, and how swift are my feet. So, follow me! You shall be martyred with me, betrayed in jealousy, hunted in ambush, taken prisoner in hate, bound in obedience, your eyes covered so that one will not tell you the truth, slapped by the rage of the world, brought to trial in confession, struck blows by penance, sent to Herod in derision, stripped naked by abandonment, scourged by poverty, crowned with trials, spat upon by disgrace, bearing your cross in the hatred of sin, crucified in voluntary withdrawal from all things, nailed to the cross by the holy virtues, wounded by love, dying on the cross in holy constancy, pierced in your heart by constant union, taken down from the cross in true victory over all your enemies, buried in oblivion, arisen from the dead in a holy end, and drawn up into heaven in God's breath.

30. The Seven Hours⁴⁸

Matins:	Love in abundance, a sweet delight. ⁴⁹
Prime:	Love's longing, a sweet burden.
Terce:	Love's pleasure, a sweet thirst.
Sext:	Love's feeling, a sweet cooling.
Nones:	Love's death, a sweet distress.
Vespers:	Love's flowing, a sweet pouring.
Compline:	Love's rest, a sweet joy. ⁵⁰

31. You Should Ignore Scorn

I was deeply scorned, and our Lord said: "Do not be much surprised. Since the precious unguent jar was utterly rejected and spat upon, what is going to happen to the vinegar jar, which has nothing of value about it?"

32. You Should Ignore Honors, Suffering, and Possessions. Be Sad After Sinning

If someone offers you honor, you should be ashamed.
 If someone makes you suffer, you should be glad.
 If someone does you a favor, you should be afraid.
 If you commit a sin against me, you should be sad in your heart.
 If you cannot feel sadness, then consider how greatly and how long I was saddened for your sake.

33. Concerning Food, Consolation, and Love

My soul spoke thus to her Lover:

"Lord, your generosity is food for my body wonderfully.
 Your mercy is consolation for my soul especially.
 Your love is repose for my being eternally."

34. In Suffering You Should Be a Lamb, a Turtledove, and a Bride

You are my lamb in your suffering;
 You are my turtledove in your sighing;
 You are my bride in your waiting.

35. The Desert Has Twelve Things

You should love nothingness.
 You should flee somethingness.⁵¹
 You should stand alone

And should go to no one.
 You should not be excessively busy⁵²
 And be free of all things.
 You should release captives
 And subdue the free.
 You should restore the sick
 And yet should have nothing yourself.
 You should drink the water of suffering
 And ignite the fire of love with the kindling of virtue:
 Then you are living in the true desert.

36. Concerning Malice, Good Works, and Concerning a Marvel⁵³

With the malice of your enemies shall you be adorned.
 With the virtues of your heart shall you be glorified.
 With your good works shall you be crowned.
 With our mutual love shall you be raised on high.
 With my delightful marvel shall you be made holy.

37. The Soul Responds to God Saying She Is Unworthy of These Favors

O dearly Loved One, in undeserved humiliation I take delight.
 Virtues of the heart are my desire.
 Good works, alas, I do not have.
 Our mutual love I sully.
 Of your beautiful marvel I am utterly unworthy.

38. God Boasts That the Soul Has Overcome Four Sins

In heaven God boasts about the soul on earth that loves him and says:

"Look, how she who has wounded me comes ascending.
 She has cast from her the ape of the world.
 She has overcome the bear of wantonness.
 She has trod the lion of pride underfoot.

She has torn apart the jaws of the wolf of lust
 And, like the hunted stag, comes running to me, the spring.
 Like an eagle she rises out of the depths to the heights."⁵⁴

39. God Asks the Soul What She Is Bringing

"You rush restlessly about in your love.
 What do you bring me, my queen?"

40. She Replies: Something That Is Better than Seven Things

"Lord, I am bringing you my precious stone.
 It is greater than the mountains.
 It is wider than the world,
 Deeper than the sea,
 Higher than the clouds,
 Brighter than the sun,
 More numerous than the stars.
 It weighs more than the whole earth."

41. God Asks in Praise What the Precious Stone Is Called

"O image of my divinity,
 Glorified by my humanity,
 Adorned with the Holy Spirit:
 Tell me, what is your precious stone called?"

42. The Precious Stone Is Called Heart's Delight

"Lord, it is called my heart's delight,
 Which I have taken back from the world,
 Retained for myself,
 And denied to all creatures.
 But now I can carry it no further.
 Lord, where shall I put it?"

43. Put Your Delight into the Trinity

"The delight of your heart
 You shall put nowhere else but into my divine heart
 And onto my human breast.
 There alone shall you be consoled
 And kissed by my Spirit."

44. The Sevenfold Path of Love, the Three Garments of the Bride, and the Dance

"Ah, loving Soul, do you wish to know what your path shall be?"
 "Yes, dear Holy Spirit, instruct me."

"When you have passed beyond the need of sorrow
 and beyond the pain of confession
 and beyond the travail of penance
 and beyond the love of the world
 and beyond the temptations of the devil
 and beyond the influences of the flesh
 and beyond cursed self-will

that thrusts many a soul backward with such force that she never achieves genuine love; and when you have struck down all your many foes, then you are so weary that you say: 'Fair youth, I long for you. Where shall I find you?' And the youth says:

'I hear a voice;
 It speaks its piece on love.
 I have courted her many a day,
 But the voice never addressed me.
 Now I am moved;
 I must hurry to her!
 She is the one who bears anguish
 And love joined together.'

In the sweet dew of the morning—this is the cloistered inwardness that first enters the soul—her chamberlains, the five senses, speak thus:

"Lady, you should dress yourself."

"Dear ones, where am I supposed to be going?"

"We have definitely heard it whispered about that the prince intends to come to you in the dew and in the delightful song of the birds. Alas, lady, do not tarry!"

Then she puts on the slip of soft humility, so humble that it cannot bear anything underneath it. Over it comes a white dress of spotless chastity, so pure that it cannot bear anything in thought, word, or touch that might soil it. Then she puts on the cloak of her good name, which she has gilded with all the virtues. She enters into the woods, the company of holy people. There sings day and night the sweetest of the nightingales, the well-modulated union with God; and she hears many a sweet voice of birds, holy knowledge.⁵⁵ And still the young man did not come. So she sends out messengers because she is eager to dance. She sent for the faith of Abraham and the longing of the prophets and the chaste humility of our Lady, St. Mary, and all the holy virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ and all the excellence of his chosen ones. Then a splendid dance of praise takes place.

The young man finally comes and says to her: "Young lady, my chosen ones have shown off their dancing to you. Just as artfully should you now follow their lead."

She says:

"I cannot dance, Lord, unless you lead me.
 If you want me to leap with abandon,
 You must intone the song.
 Then I shall leap into love,
 From love into knowledge,
 From knowledge into enjoyment,
 And from enjoyment beyond all human sensations.
 There I want to remain, yet want also to circle higher still."⁵⁶

And the young man has to sing thus:

"Through me into you
 And through you from me."

[The soul:] "Willingly with you,
 Woefully from you."⁵⁷

BOOK I

The young man speaks: "Young lady, you have done very well in this dance of praise. You shall have your way with the Son of the virgin, for you are delightfully weary. Come at noontime to the shade of the spring, into the bed of love. There in the coolness you shall refresh yourself with him."

The young lady says:

"Oh, Lord, that is too much
That she be your partner in love
Who has no love in her,
Unless she is moved by you."

Then the soul speaks to the senses, who are her chamberlains: "Now for a while I am weary of the dance. Leave me; I must go and refresh myself."

And the senses say to the soul: "Lady, if you wish to find refreshing coolness in the love tears of Mary Magdalene, they would certainly soothe you."

[Soul:] "Be still, my lords, you do not understand at all what I mean. Let me be on my own. For a time I want to drink undiluted wine."

[Senses:] "Lady, in the chastity of virgins great love is ready."
"That may be, but it isn't the noblest thing about me."
"In the blood of the martyrs you can cool yourself very well."
"I have been martyred so many times that I can't go there now."
"In the counsel of confessors the pure happily dwell."
"I shall always need counsel about what to do and what not to do; and yet I can't go there just now."
"In the wisdom of the apostles you will find much security."
"I have wisdom with me here. This shall always guide me to choose for the best."
"Lady, the angels are radiant and of love's color. If you wish to refresh yourself, rise up to them."
"The angels' bliss pains me in my love if I am not gazing upon their Lord and my Bridegroom."
"Then refresh yourself in the holy austere life that God granted to John the Baptist."

BOOK I

"The suffering I'm ready to bear, and yet the force of love transcends all austerity."

"Lady, if you want to refresh yourself in love, bow down to the small Child in the lap of the eternal virgin; and taste and see how the Joy of the angels sucked the unnatural milk."⁵⁸

"That is child's love, that one suckle and rock a baby. I am a full-grown bride. I want to go to my Lover."

[Senses:] "Oh, Lady, if you go there,
We shall go completely blind.
The Godhead is so blazing hot,
As you well know,
That all the fire and all the glowing embers
That make the heavens and all the saints glow and burn
Have flowed out from his divine breath
And from his human mouth
According to the plan of the Holy Spirit.
How can you stay there even for an hour?"

[Soul:] "A fish in water does not drown.
A bird in the air does not plummet.
Gold in fire does not perish.
Rather, it gets its purity and its radiant color there.
God has created all creatures to live according to their nature.
How, then, am I to resist my nature?
I must go from all things to God,
Who is my Father by nature,
My Brother by his humanity,
My Bridegroom by love,
And I his bride from all eternity.
Don't you believe I feel him intensely?⁵⁹
He can both burn powerfully and cool consolingly.
Now do not be overly sad.
You shall yet instruct me.
When I return, I shall certainly need your advice;
For the earth is full of snares."

Then the bride of all delights goes to the Fairest of lovers in the

the secret chamber of the invisible Godhead. There she finds the bed and the abode of love prepared by God in a manner beyond what is human. Our Lord speaks:

“Stay, Lady Soul.”
 “What do you bid me, Lord?”
 “Take off your clothes.”
 “Lord, what will happen to me then?”
 “Lady Soul, you are so utterly formed to my nature⁶⁰
 That not the slightest thing can be between you and me.
 Never was an angel so glorious
 That to him was granted for one hour
 What is given to you for eternity.
 And so you must cast off from you
 Both fear and shame and all external virtues.
 Rather, those alone that you carry within yourself
 Shall you foster forever.
 These are your noble longing
 And your boundless desire.
 These I shall fulfill forever
 With my limitless lavishness.”

“Lord, now I am a naked soul
 And you in yourself are a well-adorned God.
 Our shared lot is eternal life
 Without death.”

Then a blessed stillness
 That both desire comes over them.
 He surrenders himself to her,
 And she surrenders herself to him.
 What happens to her then—she knows—
 And that is fine with me.⁶¹
 But this cannot last long.
 When two lovers meet secretly,
 They must often part from one another inseparably.⁶²

Dear friend of God, I have written for you this path of love.
 May God infuse it into your heart! Amen.

45. The Eight Days in Which What the Prophets Longed For Was Accomplished⁶³

This is a day of longing and blessed joy
 in the Annunciation of Christ.
 This is a day of peace and dear tenderness
 in the Birth of Christ.
 This is a day of charity and blessed communion,
 Maundy Thursday.
 This is a day of generosity and heartfelt love,
 Good Friday.
 This is a day of might and happy joy,
 the Resurrection.
 This is a day of faith and the pain of separation,
 the Ascension.
 This is a day of truth and burning consolation,
 Pentecost.
 This is a day of justice and the hour of truth,
 the Last Judgment.
 This is a week whose seven days we should celebrate with constancy.
 The eighth day our Lord wants to celebrate on the last day with us all.

46. The Diverse Adornments of the Bride; How She Comes to Her Bridegroom; and How the Retinue Is Composed, Which Is Ninefold

The bride is clothed with the sun and has trodden the moon underfoot, and she is crowned with union.⁶⁴ She has a chaplain; this is fear. He has in his hand a golden rod; this is wisdom. The chaplain is clothed with the blood of the lamb and is crowned with honor; and wisdom is clothed with contentment and crowned with eternity. The bride has four bridesmaids. The first is love, who leads the bride. She is clothed with chasteness and is crowned with dignity. The second is humility, who holds the bride. She is clothed with lowliness and is crowned with eminence. The third bridesmaid is sorrow. She is clothed with small grapes⁶⁵ and is crowned with joy. The fourth bridesmaid is mercy. She is clothed

with unguents⁶⁶ and is crowned with bliss. These two carry the coat of the bride, which is her holy reputation.

She has a bishop, which is faith. He brings the bride before the bridegroom. The bishop is clothed in precious stones and is crowned with the Holy Spirit. The bishop has two knights. The one is might and is clothed with battle and is crowned with victory. The other is daring and is clothed with boldness and crowned with all blessedness.

She has a chamberlain. That is watchfulness. He is clothed with constancy and is crowned with persistence. He carries a light before the bride and from behind her train. The light is understanding. It is clothed with insight and is crowned with generosity. The train is a holy conscience. It is clothed with good intention and is crowned with God's approval. She has a cup-bearer, which is longing. He is clothed with desire and is crowned with peace. She has a minstrel who is amiability. His harp is intimacy. He is clothed with favor and crowned with help.

The bride has five kingdoms. The first are her eyes. They are founded in tears and adorned with restraint. The second are thoughts. They are founded in struggle and are adorned with good counsel. The third is speaking. It is founded in usefulness and is adorned with trust. The fourth is hearing. It is founded in the word of God and is adorned with consolation. The fifth is touch. It is founded in strength and is adorned with noble habit. These five kingdoms have an overseer. This is guilt. He is clothed with confession and crowned with penance. She has a judge. He is clothed with discipline and crowned with patience.

The bride has a beast of burden. This is the body. It is bridled with worthlessness: contempt is its fodder and its stable is confession. The pack it carries is innocence. The bride has a crimson silk cloth, which is hope. It is clothed with truth and crowned with song. She has a palm in her hand, which is victory over sin. In her other hand she has a canister that is full of longing and love. This she wants to bring to her Lover. She is wearing a hat of peacock feathers, which are her good name on earth and high honor in heaven. She follows a path, which is meekness. This is clothed with honey and crowned with safety.

And she sings:
 "Chosen Lover, I long for you.
 You take and give me many a heartache.
 I have from you, besides, invisible suffering.
 If you, Lord, command,
 I shall be freed from myself."

And he speaks:
 "Dearest love, think of the hour
 When you may grasp the full treasure.
 Do not let the time seem too long.
 After all, I hold you constantly
 Embraced in my arms."

Then our Lord says to his chosen bride:
 "Come, my beloved, come. You shall be crowned."⁶⁷

And he gives her a crown of truth that no one may wear but religious people.⁶⁸ On the crown one sees four virtues: wisdom and sorrow, longing and perseverance. May God give us all this crown! Amen.

Book IV

1. Pure Virgins Should Have Five Things

If you want to enhance virginity, which God has so glorified that for love of you he became the Son of a virgin—just think what that means!—then you should be humbly silent and lovingly suffer distress and throughout all your days and in all situations practice virginal modesty. This will make your chastity thrive. O virgin, what God wants to give you then! He wants to be your handsome young man and wants to lead you in the heavenly dance. O wretched lame dog that I am, I would also shuffle along with you. Consider how I mean that: The number of pure virgins is small.

2. This Book Has Come from God; the Soul Praises Herself for Many Things; She Is Given Two Angels and Two Evil Devils. With Twelve Virtues She Does Battle Against the Flesh

All the days of my life before I began this book and before a single word of it had come into my soul, I was one of the most naive persons ever to be in religious life. I knew nothing about the devil's malice; I was unaware of the frailty of the world; the duplicity of people in religious life was also unknown to me. I have to speak to God's honor and for the sake of the book's teaching: I, unworthy sinner, was greeted by the Holy Spirit in my twelfth year, while I was alone, with such an outpouring that I could never, ever after that endure letting myself be led into a clear venial sin. This precious greeting occurred every day and lovingly spoiled for me all worldly sweetness, and it is still increasing day by day. This happened over thirty-one years. About God I knew nothing more than what the Christian faith teaches and I strove with constancy to keep my heart pure. God himself is my witness that I never in will or desire asked him to give me these things that are written in this book. Also, I never imagined that such things could happen to a human being. As

long as I was with my relatives and my friends, to whom I was always the favorite, I had no knowledge of these things. Long before this I had had the desire to be despised through no fault of my own. Then for the sake of God's love I moved to a town where no one was my friend except for one person. I was afraid that because of him holy contempt and God's pure love would be withdrawn from me. But God nowhere abandoned me and let me experience such delightful sweetness, such holy knowledge, and such incomprehensible wonders that I found little enjoyment in earthly things.

Then for the first time my spirit was brought up through prayer between heaven and the air. I saw with the eyes of my soul in heavenly bliss the beautiful humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I recognized in his sublime countenance the Holy Trinity—the eternity of the Father, the suffering of the Son, the sweetness of the Holy Spirit. Then I saw an angel, to whom I was entrusted through baptism, and my devil. Our Lord said:

“I shall take this angel from you
And shall give you two others instead.
They shall take care of you in these wonders.”

When the soul looked at the two angels, oh, how completely was she unnerved in humble impotence, and she prostrated herself at the feet of our Lord, thanking him and urgently protesting that she was quite unworthy that princes such as this should be her chamberlains. One of the angels was from the Seraphim, and he is an igniter of love and a holy beacon for tender souls. The other angel was from the Cherubim; he is a keeper of the gifts and orders wisdom in the loving soul.

Then our Lord allowed two devils to come forth.
They were exalted masters, taken from Lucifer's school,
And had seldom come out.

When the soul looked upon the terribly hideous devils, she shivered a little, commended herself to our Lord, and quite freely accepted them. The one devil is a deceiver with beautiful angelic garments. Oh, what a lot of false cunning he presented to me at

first! Once during mass he came down from on high and said: “I am so beautiful; don't you want to worship me?”

The soul replied: “God alone shall one worship in all good things and in all distress!”

He said: “Don't you want to look up and see who I am?” Then in the lower air he displayed a beautiful sham radiance, which has seduced many a heretic, and said: “In the throne room upon this seat you alone shall be the most exalted virgin, with me the fairest youth next to you.”

But she replied: “A person would not be wise to take the worst when he could easily achieve the best.”

He said: “Since you do not want to surrender yourself to me—you are so holy and so humble—then I shall worship you.”

She said: “No grace shall be given to you because you worship a foul cesspool.”

Then he showed her the five wounds painted on his feet and hands and said: “Now you well see who I am. If you will live according to my advice, I shall give you great honor. You should tell people about this special favor; then much good would come of it.”

She said—and his idle talk annoyed her greatly; nevertheless, she listened to it freely so that she might become more shrewd—“You are telling me that you are God. Well then, tell me, who is that who is the Son of the living God now here in the true priest's hands?” He then wanted to depart, and she said: “By the almighty God, I admonish you that you now listen to me: I well know your intentions. If I were to tell everyone the secrets of my heart, things would be quite nice for me in the short term. But then you would intently strive to make the fun end badly. You would do this so that I might fall into doubt, sadness, unbelief, impurity, and thereafter into everlasting anguish. Another reason you are doing this is so that I might imagine that you come to me thus because I am so holy. Ha! You old archdeceiver, as long as God stands by me, all your efforts are for naught.”

Then he cried out: “A plague on your magic; just let me get away from you. I'll never bother you again!”

The second devil who was assigned to me was a troublemaker

and a master of concealed lewdness. However, God forbade him ever to come to me himself. Instead, he sent perverted evil people to me as his messengers who spoil good things for me and take what they can of my honor by their words. He also strives for this: where good people are together and are talking idly in a lewd manner, this cannot help but trouble poor me. Up to then that had never happened to me.

One night I was at prayer before my first sleep. This same devil came passing through the air and took a close look at the sinful earth. He was huge like a giant. He had a short tail and a crooked nose. His head was large like a tub. Out of his mouth fiery sparks came flying covered with black flame. He laughed with cunning malice and a horrible raucous voice. The soul asked him why he was laughing, what he was looking for, and what he was up to.

He answered and said: "I am glad, indeed, since I may not torment you myself, that I find so many who look like angels and are happy to torment you for me." Then he continued: "I am the chamberlain of religious persons and I look for two kinds of weakness in them that will separate them from God in an instant. One is concealed or secret impurity. Whenever a person in religious life seeks the comfort of the flesh without real necessity and in all his five senses, they become impure; that is, crass and lazy; and true love of God grows cold. The other is hidden hatred in open discord. This is a very useful sin for me. Wherever I find it unrepented overnight, there is a win for me, for it is the foundation of long-lasting malice and the loss of all holiness."

Then the soul said: "Since by your nature you have absolutely nothing good about you, how can it be that you can give a morally profitable explanation of your evil?"

And he replied: "Wherever I turn, God has me so firmly in his hands that I cannot do anything except what he directs me."

I, unhappy person, in my early childhood committed such a great sin that, if I had remained without repentance and without confession, I would have to have stayed in purgatory for ten years. But now, dear Lord, when I die, I shall cheerfully suffer torment there for love of you. I am saying this not from reason;

love bids me say it.¹ When I entered religious life and took leave of the world, I looked at my body. It was fully armed against my poor soul with great fullness of strong power and with the energy of a complete nature. I saw full well that it was my enemy, and I also saw if I were going to escape eternal death, I would have to strike it down; conflict was inevitable. I also looked at my soul's weapon. This was the glorious passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. With this I defended myself. I had to remain constantly in great fear and throughout my youth had to deliver great defensive blows against my body. These were sighing, weeping, confessing, fasting, keeping vigils, scourging with rods, and constant adoration. These were the weapons of my soul by means of which I so completely conquered the body that in twenty years the time never came that I was not weary, weak, and sick—mostly from repentance and suffering, but also from holy longing and spiritual toil and, in addition, many a difficult day of sickness from my nature. There was also the violent force of love, which pressed me so intensely with these marvels that I did not dare remain silent about it. Still, because of my naiveté, I had much to suffer. I said: "Ah, kind God, what do you see in me? You know quite well that I am a fool, a human being sinful and needy in body and soul. You should be giving these things to wise people; then you would be able to receive praise."

Then our Lord got very angry with little me and asked me for my judgment:

"Now tell me, are you mine or not?"

"Certainly, Lord, that is what I long for from you."

"Shall I then not do with you what I want?"

"Yes, Dearest to my heart, gladly; even if I should thus become nothing."

Then our Lord said: "You shall obey and trust me in these matters, and you shall also become sick for a long time, and I shall take care of you myself; and everything that you need for body and soul I shall give you."

Then, a wretch trembling in humble confusion, I went to my confessor, told him the whole story, and begged for his advice.

He said I should boldly go forward with a light heart; God, who had been leading me, would certainly preserve me. Then he gave me a command that often makes me ashamed and causes me to weep because my utter unworthiness is obvious to my eyes; that is, he commanded me, a frail woman, to write this book out of God's heart and mouth. And so this book has come lovingly from God and does not have its origins in human thought.

3. Sinners Fall Away from God; of Three Gifts of Wisdom; of the Stone; of the Praise of the Virgin Who Is Christianity²

Just as one soothes a dear child, so does one spank a nasty one. Just so does our Lord act, saying: "Whoever has nothing good about him shall never enter my kingdom; and whoever cannot be made full by transitory things shall be satisfied with hunger for eternity. And woe to him who has goods that stick to his heart and who wants to set himself above other people. He shall slip away from me into the bottomless valley."

To this, holy knowledge replies that God has given us three different gifts in true wisdom from which we should take our fill and by which we should preserve ourselves from all injury.

The first is priestly wisdom and Christian teaching, as God revealed them to me in great glory. With the true eyes of my knowledge, effortlessly and in sweet bliss, I saw a stone that was like a well-shaped mountain and that had grown out of itself and had taken on the beauty of all kinds of colors and gave off the strong fragrance of precious heavenly spices. I asked the very delightful stone who it was, and it spoke thus: "I am Jesus."³ Then I went out of myself in love⁴ and leaned my head on it. I saw that outside it was shut off from all darkness and was filled inside with eternal light.

Upon the stone there stood the most beautiful of virgins that was ever seen aside from our dear Lady St. Mary, but she is her playmate. Her feet are adorned with a stone called jasper. This stone has such great power that it drives out base cupidity from the feet of its desire.⁵ It also bestows pure fragrance and stimulates holy hunger. It drives all darkness from one's eyes. This pre-

cious stone is Christian faith. The virgin stood on two feet. The one is the bond, the other is the loosening of holy power.⁶ All Christian believing priests have these. She carries in her right hand a chalice filled with red wine, which she drinks alone in untold bliss. The angels never get a taste of it. The wine is the blood of the eternal Son, which fills her spirit so full that she gives us many a sweet teaching. In her left hand she wields a fiery sword that is full of golden cymbals hanging from it that sound so sweet that everyone must approach her who strives toward the Holy Trinity. I asked the virgin why it was that she carried the sword in her left hand and the chalice in her right hand. She said: "I am supposed to threaten because on the last day of each human being God shall strike his blow. I am also supposed to give away his blood with my right hand, just as Christ is turned to his Father in glory."⁷

She also has great strength in her hands with which she draws all to herself who choose God and casts off from herself as well all who deliver themselves over to the devil. Ah, she has such a fair countenance. I look at her with ever increasing joy. Unguent flows from her throat; this is mercy, salve for sin. In her mouth she has golden teeth with which she chews the celestial junipers. These are the sayings of the prophets. From her tongue drips honey that the bustling bees, the holy apostles, have sucked from the sweetest wild flowers. She wears on her mouth blossoming roses and her nose is adorned with sweet violets.⁸ She wears on her brow verdant white lilies.⁹ This means she is a mother to widows, a dear friend to married people and a glory to all virgins. Her eyes sparkle full of delight, just as the sparkling sun prods on before it the pale green dawn. And just as her eyes are threefold and yet one, so it is with the Holy Trinity. The white refers to the Father, the green to the Son, the radiant sun to the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ When they gaze at one another from their hearts, no greater joy can ever come about. This virgin also wears on her head a crown that is wrought from red gold. That is lofty counsel and holy action which one has from holy teachers. This crown is like a fortress with battlements before which lies a great pitiful army, and they have a terribly disloyal lord—that is the devil and his fol-

lowers—who is a treasonous wretch. Within the crown resides a praiseworthy army in full power with abundant defenses. They have a loyal Lord; that is Jesus our Redeemer. He constantly directs the defense of those under attack and leads the exhausted to the wine cellar.

In the crown there is a threefold horn¹¹; in it the hardy shall dwell who are devoted to great love. They have to be the archers and sentries if the weakest are to survive. In the crown there is also a tower. The blessed who shall live there do not often need to enter the fray, but no one can climb up to it unless his complete earthly will has been taken from him by love. The crown has on the top of its battlements a great number of costly precious stones. These are those who have now gone from here to heaven. Inside in the heart of the virgin I saw a living spring flowing forth. Heathen children, all leprous and blind, were being brought there. Above this spring stood a deeply spiritual man. No one but him could reach into it. This was John the Baptist. He bathed the children in the spring that they might become seeing and radiantly healthy. I asked the virgin who she was. She said: "I am she whom you love so well, and I am your playmate. I am Holy Christianity and we both have the same Bridegroom." This is the virgin of blessed priests who so often gaze upon her with love.

The second wisdom comes from our natural faculties by means of which one can do both: lose and win. In this wisdom resides a throng of perverse lay persons and false priests and cunning religious.¹² Never does a person become so holy that he learns how to guard against these three completely. So vicious are they that they pervert everything that is good. No one becomes spiritual from this gift¹³ unless he also is a fool for the sake of God's love. For pure holy simplicity is the mother of true divine wisdom. What good does it do that a refined gentleman has a lot of money and yet buys nothing but hunger, thirst, long-lasting disgrace, and eternal interior torment as well?

The third wisdom comes from grace and orders all of God's gifts. It never becomes so abundant that it dare compare itself to the lowest creatures. Their distress never saddens it; rather, it

rejoices only in God's will. Also, it cannot bear that a single virtue remain locked outside its door.

4. Two Dissimilar Paths: the First Descends into Hell; the Second Ascends to Heaven¹⁴

Abundance of transitory things is a capricious guest;
Holy poverty offers before God a precious burden.

Vanity reflects not on its destructiveness;
Constancy is fully laden with all virtues.

Folly is comfortable only with itself;
Wisdom is never satisfied with what it learns.

Anger brings utter darkness into the soul;
Holy meekness is assured of every grace.

Pride always wants to be the best;
Humility can never rest, but must offer its service to all creatures.

Empty honor is before God deaf and blind;
Undeserved disgrace sanctifies all children of God.

Deceit has a most fair appearance;
Perfection is despised by the high and mighty.

Cupidity always has a loud mouth;
Blessed moderation has a delightful foundation.

Sloth misses abundant treasure;
Holy diligence does not overly seek out its own comfort.

Disloyalty always gives bad advice;
Full loyalty never omits a good deed.

True spirituality never avenges itself on anyone;
The uncultivated heart always seeks to break the peace.

Genuine devotion cannot do evil;
Evil will is subordinate to no one.

Malice by nature is grounded in evil;
Divine grace has a lovely countenance and a sweet mouth.

Worldly hearts like to be honored;
A spiritual soul always wants to go elsewhere.

Hidden cruelty has a plain mouth;
Open kindness discovers God's treasure.

Deceitful concern is hate's neighbor;
Holy mercy alone shall stand with God.

A lie appears outwardly beautiful and inwardly hideous;
This is why it receives a friendly welcome from its companions.

Truth is rejected because it is little esteemed;
Hence all who love it must suffer many a humiliation with Jesus.

Hate rages unceasingly;
Love burns without injuring; it is free of all torment.

Evil disfavor hates God's generosity;
A pure heart full of love rejoices at everyone's happiness.

Malicious gossip feels shame neither before people nor God,
Who, after all, hears and sees all things.

Despair is a horrible fall;
True hope preserves it all.

False consolation will never be happy;
True guilt saddens it¹⁵ so.

After our dear Lord had revealed this to me, he then said: "He who considers how good I am always holds himself fast on me." To that end help us, Lord, for the sake of your own honor!

5. Our Sin, Future Fall, Earthly Being, the Kingdom of Heaven. God's Gifts Should Be Clearly Before Our Eyes

Lord, my guilt through which I have lost you stands before my eyes like an immense mountain and has created an extensive

darkness between you and me, and an eternal distance of you, alas, from me! Ah, Love above all loves, draw me back into you!

But, Lord, a future fall¹⁶ stands before my eyes like a fiery dragon mouth that at any time would like to devour me. Ah, my only Good, now help me that I might flow spotless into you!

Lord, my earthly being stands before my eyes like a parched field on which little of value has grown. O dear Jesus Christ, send me the sweet rain of your humanity and the warm sun of your living Godhead and the gentle dew of your Holy Spirit, that I might lament my heart's suffering.

Lord, your eternal kingdom stands open before my eyes like the most splendid wedding feast and the greatest celebration and the longest banquet. Alas, my Darling, there you shall forever draw your love-craving bride to your embrace.

Lord, your whole gift that I have received from you appears to my eyes like a wretched box on the ears, because your most sublime gift here makes me seem so worthless. Thus does God who gives it all speak:

"Your mountain shall dissolve in love;
Your enemies shall gain no part of you;
Your field has been penetrated by the warm sun;
And your fruit has nevertheless remained unspoiled;
And in my kingdom you shall be a new bride;
And there I shall give you a delicious kiss on the mouth,
That my entire Godhead shall soar through your soul;
And my threefold eyes shall forever sparkle unceasingly in your twofold heart.
So where is your grieving now?
Even if you pray for a thousand years,
I would not grant you a single sigh."

6. Being Chosen by God Cannot Hurt Anyone; True Repentance Earns Remission and God's Grace, and Frees from Purgatory

A despondent person asked me to pray for him, which I did with fear and special concern. God heard me with his gaze, with

his words, and with his true voice, saying: "There is no lamb so white or so pure that it cannot be vanquished by wolves; yet no one can deter my determinations. I have made this clear to him in three ways. First, I was merciful in regard to his guilt. Second, I have given him my grace. Third, I have never allowed untrustworthy people to exercise any power over him."

Then I lamented for him thus: "Lord, he still has great fears that you have not completely forgiven him his guilt."

Thus did God reply: "That would be impossible. Whoever is sorry for his sins I forgive. Those who repent with deep compunction I grant my grace; and whoever so repents them that he would sacrifice his life before he would ever do it again and remains constant in this shall not be condemned to any punishment after this life because of his guilt, unless he commits real venial sins and is found unrepentant of them.

7. How a Free Soul Speaks to God in Total Love

Lord, because I was subservient to all creatures, you have drawn me up above all things to yourself; and, Lord, because I have no earthly treasure, I do not have an earthly heart either. For you, Lord, are my treasure, just as you are also my heart; and you alone are my good, but I am capricious in all things.

8. Concerning God's Body, Which a Sick Person Vomits Up, and Concerning Power

That a sick person who is vomiting may not receive the Body of God—I was so naive about this that I did not know how to figure it out completely by my own powers of thinking and my own faith, because one can lose God only by sinning. So my soul asked our Lord in the union of love what the truth of the matter was. Our Lord gave this reply: "You are right. One can only lose me by sinning, but one's body can lose my body through sickness." In these words I saw in the Holy Trinity this explanation: Whenever we receive God's Body, the Godhead unites itself to

our innocent soul and God's humanity mixes itself with our hideous body, and thus does the Holy Spirit make his dwelling in our faith. This blessed union we should preserve with great care.

9. Four Kinds of Offerings to Priests

Then our Lord said to me that priests should receive offerings from four things and from nothing else: from the altar; from bringing God's Body to the sick—but the sick person should give an offering for the last anointing according to his means and according to what he thinks is good; from the field¹⁷ he should take what one wants to give him. A priest should not determine and should not demand, because what a sick person has given he should receive only as a favor and not as something rightfully his.¹⁸

10. Concerning the Offerings of Laypersons According to Their Means

Laypersons who give an offering should keep themselves from evil parsimony when giving, as much as the priest should preserve himself from greedy cupidity. This is very important for both of us because the layperson should give his offering with great love and a cheerful soul into God's generous hand. The priest should take it in humble fear and quaking heart from God's hands and should in all his actions return it to God in a praiseworthy manner; for earthly goods are like slaves when one receives them, but they are like the freeborn when one gives them away.

11. Four Things Concerning How Christians Should Conduct Themselves in Dealing with Jews

Then God taught me how Christians should conduct themselves toward Jews. One should not observe their law. One should not reside with them. One should not even spend the night in

their dwelling. One should buy and sell from them without acting too friendly and without cunning or greed.

12. How a Bride Who Is United with God Rejects Consolation from All Creatures Except for That from God Alone, and How She Sinks into Pain

So speaks God's bride who has taken her rest in the sealed treasury of the holy complete Trinity: "Oh, get up and depart from me, all you creatures! You cause me pain and you are not able to console me."

The creatures say: "Why?"

The bride says: "My Love left me as I slept, as I was resting in oneness with him."¹⁹

"Can't this beautiful world and all the good it contains console you?"

"No, I see the snake of deceit and how treacherous cunning slithers into all the pleasures of this world. I also see the hook of lust in the carcass of base sweetness with which she catches many."

"Can the kingdom of heaven console you at all?"

"No, in itself it would be dead if the living God were not there."

"Well then, Lady Bride, can't the saints console you?"

"No, if they were to be separated from the living God flowing through them, they would weep more bitterly than I; for they have ascended above me and dwell deeper in God."

"Can God's Son ever console you?"

"Yes, I certainly ask him when we stroll through the flowers of holy knowledge, and I beg him full of longing that he open up for me the playful flood flowing in the Holy Trinity from which alone the soul lives.

If I am to be consoled in proportion to my nobility,
God's breath must draw me effortlessly into itself,
For the sparkling sun of the living Godhead
Shines through the bright water of cheerful humanity,

And the sweet pleasure of the Holy Spirit
Who proceeds from them both
Has taken from me everything
That dwells beneath the Godhead.
Nothing tastes good to me but God alone;
I am wondrously dead.
I am freely willing to give up this taste
So that he be wonderfully praised.
For when I, a worthless human being, cannot praise God with my powers,
I send all creatures to court
And bid them that they praise God for me
With all their wisdom,
With all their love,
With all their beauty,
And with all their longing,
Just as they were created by God in innocence,
And also with all their voices
As they now sing.
When I look upon this great praising,
I feel no pain.

"I cannot endure that a single consolation touch me except my Lover. I love my earthly friends in the company of heaven and I love my enemies in holy aching for their happiness. God has enough of everything; caressing souls is the only thing he cannot get enough of."

After this marvel and this consolation had been going on for eight years, God wanted to console me way beyond what was due to my soul's nobility. "No, dear Lord, do not elevate me so much," said the unworthy soul. "It's much too good for me in the lowest part; for your honor's sake I am quite happy always to remain there."

Then the poor wretch sank down among those suspended²⁰ and among the damned souls, and she thought this was too good. After that our Lord pursued her as he does those who experience the lowest kind of joy,²¹ for God shines beautifully into all according to the degree of holiness they achieved here in love and according to how noble in virtues they became. St. John says: "We shall see God as he is."²² This is true. But the sun shines

according to the weather. There are different kinds of weather on earth under the sun, and in like manner there are different kinds of dwellings in heaven. Hence, he is to me as I can bear him and see him.

Then our Lord said: "How long do you want to be here?"

The bride said: "Oh, leave me, dear Lord, and let me sink further for your honor."

After this both soul and body entered into such a great darkness that I lost knowledge and light, and I knew nothing of God's intimacies. Even blessed love went off on its own. The soul said: "Where are you now, Lady Trust? I now want to entrust to you the duties of love, and you must preserve God's honor in me."

Then this chambermaid took charge of her lady in such a holy spirit of suffering and cheerful patience that I was living without a care. But then disbelief came and enveloped me completely in such great darkness and screamed at me in such great rage that I shuddered at its voice. It said: "If this favor had been from God, he would not have so utterly forsaken you."

The soul said: "Where are you now, Lady Constancy? Command true faith to come to me!"

Then the Father of heaven said to the soul: "Remember what you experienced and what you saw while there was nothing between me and you."

And the Son said: "Remember what your body suffered from my pain."

This is what the Holy Spirit said: "Remember what you wrote."

Then both body and soul answered with the constancy of true faith: "As I have believed, loved, enjoyed, and known, so shall I go forth from here unshaken."

After this came constant estrangement from God and enveloped the soul so completely that the blessed soul said: "Welcome, very blessed Estrangement. Fortunate I am that I was born—that you, Lady, shall now be my chambermaid, for you bring me unusual joy and incomprehensible marvels and unbearable delight as well. But, Lord, you should take delight from me and let me have estrangement from you. Ah, how good I feel, darling God, that I may bear it because love is changeable.

How it comes to me I dare not say; only that gall has become honey for the palate of my soul."

Then I desired that all creatures might praise our Lord with the *Te deum laudamus*.²³ But they did not want to do this and turned their backs on me. Then the soul became happy beyond all bounds, and herself said: "That you now despise me and turn your backs on me—look, I'm glad. This praises our Lord immeasurably. Now his honor is accomplished through me, for now God is strangely with me, now his estrangement from me is more welcome to me than he is himself." The soul knew full well that God would console her even in great estrangement. She said: "Remember, Lord, who I am and avoid me."

Our Lord said to her: "Grant me this: that I might cool the heat of my Godhead, the longing of my humanity, and the pleasure of my Holy Spirit in you."

To this she replied: "Yes, Lord, but in such a way that it is only good for you and not for me."

After this the bride entered such a great darkness that her body sweated and writhed in painful cramping. The pain was asked by someone²⁴ to be a messenger to God for her. She said: "Lady Pain, this I bid you: that you release me now, for you are now the most important thing about me."

Then pain arose from the soul and the body like a gloomy shine and ascended to God with judicious intent and called out in a loud voice: "Lord, you know well what I want."

Our Lord went to meet her before the door of the kingdom, saying: "Welcome, Lady Pain, you are the garment I wore next to my skin on earth and the whole world's contempt was my finest mantle. Despite how much I loved you there, you are not entering here. Rather, to the virgin who is willing to do two things I shall give two things. She should constantly prove herself well-bred and prudent. Then shall she help you be her messenger, and then shall I give her my embrace and union with my heart."

Then pain said this: "Lord, I make many blessed and yet am not blessed myself, and I consume many a holy body and yet myself am evil, and I lead many to heaven and yet do not enter it myself."

To this our Lord responded: "Pain, you were not born from the kingdom of heaven; therefore, you may not enter it. Rather, you were born from Lucifer's heart; there you shall return and shall dwell with him eternally."

Ah, blessed Estrangement from God, how bound I am to you in love! You strengthen my will in pain and make pleasant for me the difficult long wait in this miserable body. By whatever means I make myself more your companion, the more intensely and wondrously God falls over me. O Lord, in the depths of pure humility I cannot sink away from you; alas, in pride I easily stray away from you!

But the deeper I sink,
The sweeter I drink.

13. The Text of This Book Is Seen, Heard, and Felt in All Members

I do not know how to write, nor can I, unless I see with the eyes of my soul and hear with the ears of my eternal spirit and feel in all the parts of my body the power of the Holy Spirit.

14. Of the Holy Trinity, of the Birth and the Name of Jesus Christ, and of Human Nobility

I saw and still see three Persons in the eternal heights before God's Son was conceived in the body of St. Mary. They were then known and seen by all the holy angels in their distinctness, in their completeness, in their name, and in how the Three were one God. No matter how good the angels' eyes were, they saw neither bone nor flesh nor color nor the glorious name Jesus. This was miraculously hidden from them in the breast of the eternal Father. They called the Father the uncreated eternal God, the Son wisdom with no beginning, the Spirit of them both they called right knowledge of truth. The fiery angels of the highest order, who are suspended opposite the loving Godhead in the breath of the whole Trinity, served and were witness to the

blissful decision when God became man. Gabriel brought only the name down at the Annunciation. He was entrusted with neither bone nor flesh nor blood. The Second Person—that was always the eternal Son. Although he had not yet assumed human nature, he had always been ours but had not been given to us before Gabriel brought the message. If this same Second Person had been flesh, for the sake of redeeming us, before the Annunciation, then it would have to be a beginning; but this never took place.²⁵ This same Second Person had become one nature with Adam's humanity before he debased himself in sin. Although Adam's nature was broken and changed and his inheritance lost forever, God never gave up on him. Hence we were and still are able to return. God has kept his noble loving nature intact. Hence he cannot withhold himself. God immediately cast Lucifer from himself into the eternal prison, but he pursued Adam, asked him where he was, and brought him back to the path. Lucifer had only a single nature in God. When he destroyed it, he could not return.

Man has a complete nature in the Holy Trinity, and God saw fit to fashion it with his own divine hands. When his holy efforts on our behalf went for naught, he was forced back within himself by a threefold delight. For this reason he wanted to restore us with his own feet and his own hands so that we would have great oneness with him. If man had remained in paradise, God would have been immediately visible to him, would have greeted his soul and refreshed his body. Thus did I see God come from heaven to paradise, like a great angel.

Also, this same nature forces God to greet us with knowledge and with holy intimacy to the extent that we are prepared through holy virtues and true innocence. When I reflect that divine nature now includes bone and flesh, body and soul, then I become elated in great joy, far beyond what I am worth. But angels are to some degree formed according to the Holy Trinity, but they are pure spirits. The soul alone with its flesh is mistress of the house in heaven, sits next to the eternal Master of the house, and is most like him. There eye reflects in eye, there spirit flows in spirit, there hand touches hand, there mouth speaks to

mouth, and there heart greets heart. Thus does the Lord and Master honor the mistress at his side. But the princes and the vassals—these are the holy angels—these the Master keeps in full view. All service and all praise the angels engage in are offered totally to the mistress as well as to the Master. Our vassals rank in nobility according to how rich in holy virtues we are on earth.²⁶

15. Genuine Pure Love Has Four Things; If You Surrender Yourself to God, God Will Also Surrender Himself to You

Genuine pure love of God has four things about it that never rest. The first is growing desire, the second is flowing suffering, the third: burning sensation in soul and body, the fourth: constant union bound to great vigilance. No one can achieve this unless one enters into a full exchange with God, such that you give God everything that is yours, both inwardly and outwardly, and he truly gives you everything that is his inwardly and outwardly.

When the hour of bliss has passed when God gave his most sublime consolation to the loving soul, ah, then the beloved is so content that she considers everything good that estranged souls feel as pain. If you are then cross, you might well fear that the devil has anointed you.

16. Great Love Has More than Ten Parts and of Two Kinds of Complaint

Great love gets its nature from this: It does not flow with tears; rather, it burns in the great fire of heaven. Within this it flows forth most lavishly and yet remains within itself in utter calm. It climbs up closest to God yet remains utterly interior to itself. It grasps the most and keeps the least.

“O most blessed love, where are those who know you?”

“They are totally consumed in the fire of the Holy Trinity; they do not dwell in themselves. These blessed ones can never fall into mortal sin.”

“Why?”

“They are so completely permeated with and absorbed in God; the more they are tempted, the stronger they become.”

“Why?”

“The longer they are here in the struggle and keep on loving, the more noble does God seem to them and the more frail and wretched they seem to themselves.”

“Why?”

“The holier the love, the greater the fear; and the more consolation, the more constant the fear. But the loving soul cannot cravenly fear; she fears nobly.”

There are two things that I cannot condemn enough: the first, that God’s kindness is so forgotten in the world; the second, that those in religious life are so imperfect. Because of this many a fall must occur, for the perfect have never fallen.

17. Concerning a Lady Who Liked Being at Court; Concerning Her Devil Who Recommended to Her Seven Kinds of Evil

A lady had retreated from the world²⁷ and yet still wanted to serve at court. I prayed for her with all my might, both day and night, for I saw that the damage to her was so great that, if she remained there, she would woefully become the devil’s companion upon her death. Why? Because she loved her importance there to excess and did not strive for God’s honor. Rather, she gave herself over to idle courtly manners and kept her eyes focused on the prestige of her lord and lady.

After this a huge devil came—fiery, bloody, black, with claws, with horns,²⁸ and with glassy eyes. It came and stood before me. But I was not afraid of it. I just blessed myself and went to sleep. Then it trundled over me like a sack full of water and tormented me so much that I sought relief from our Lord. A white angel came to my aid. It was from the fourth choir of angels and was the guardian angel of this same lady. I asked him who this enemy was and why he was assailing me.

Ah, then the lovely angel said in a heavenly voice: “He is one of the most malicious devils that hell can muster. His task is to bind up with ruinous love the hearts of the pure who really do want to

be good, and he is tormenting you because you are trying to push him away from this lady."

"Alas, is he going to torment me for a long time?"

"No, God shall soon show his mercy."

After this the devil came again and shot fiery rays at me that inflicted hellish pain on me in body and soul.

I said: "Do everything to me that God allows you."

At this the devil was weakened and said: "Since you humbly submit yourself to this suffering, I am losing all my power."

The soul said: "By the living God, I admonish you to tell me your name and what your business with this lady is."

"My name—ha! That I shall not tell you because that would do me too much harm."

"You must, by the last judgment!"

"I am fostering in her fierce arrogance, deceitful cunning, and powerful lust; and I fend off from her all mercy. My name is Raging Anger that destroys spiritual hearts."

18. A Spiritual Person Resembles an Animal in Thirty Things as to His Nature²⁹

Thus does a despondent soul lament and speak forlornly to her Lover: "Ah, Lord, for a long time I have desired two things that have not yet been granted me. The first is a faithful spiritual life. Alas, Dearest to my heart, that has all been left undone. The second is a holy end. I am so looking forward to it that I am losing my doleful earnestness."

To this our Lord replied by showing me a frail, insignificant little animal and saying: "Look, you are like this tiny animal."

Then I saw how the animal was brought forth on an island in the sea out of the slime that had separated from the sea between the hot sun and the water in such a way that the sun was the animal's father, the sea its mother, and the slime its matter.

Thus was Adam created by God's power on earth out of weak matter. The animal signifies true spiritual people. When a person receives a spiritual spirit, he is begotten by the burning Godhead and is conceived in his mother, God's humanity. The matter he is

made of is the Holy Spirit, who rubs out his sinful nature in all respects. The animal grows toward the warm sun. So does a spiritual person who has received³⁰ God's Spirit. This is such noble seed; it sprouts and grows till the blessed person's end.

This animal does not eat. Rather, it has a large tail that is full of honey. This it sucks on every day. It also has a golden beard that rings so delightfully when it is sucking that its sweet voice and cheerful sound echo playfully in its heart; and its body is nourished by drinking the sweet honey. This tail is the death of holy people, which they cheerfully and prudently keep before their eyes in their good works and constant practice of virtue, and they joyfully practice faithfulness in patient waiting. The golden beard is God's noble love that chimes through the loving heart into the noble soul. Fortunate is he to have become a human being who ever really experiences this!

This animal has at times a natural desire to drink from the sea because of a misguided sense of thirst. It cannot regain its health unless it voids and gives back the bitter seawater. Thus it is with us sinners: when we drink of the foul puddle of the world and make use of the baseness of our flesh according to the counsels of the evil spirit, we poison ourselves with our selves. If we ever want to survive, we have to leave ourselves and give back what we owe to the world.

This animal has big ears. They are exposed to the heavens, and it listens for the song of birds. It flees vicious animals and fears the snakes of the earth. This, indeed, is also what the loving soul does. It constantly flees evil company and detests false wisdom, and its ears are wide open to hear God's wisdom.

This animal has a noble temperament. It cannot remain in the sea when animals do their mating dance and the water is raging. It loves chastity and hurries up the highest mountain that it knows, and it picks out the most beautiful tree and climbs it with cheerful effort and clasps the lofty trunk; and so does it rest with great pleasure in lofty freedom. This is what the loving soul does. She finds vanity bitter and flees urgently what is merely passing that flows onward like water. She also knows how to work with great virtues and holy efforts on the highest mountain in the beautiful kingdom

of heaven. Effortlessly, she climbs further into grace upon the fairest tree of the Holy Godhead. There she embraces the loftiest trunk and is herself embraced by the Holy Trinity.

This animal has two sharp horns with which it defends its body with such intelligence that it goes free among all the animals. O loving Soul, this you well understand. You drive the devil away from you through God's intelligence and you live in holy purity, free of all sin.

This animal has two beautiful human eyes that pour forth tears toward the beautiful mountain where it would like to be again. Ah, loving Soul, how fair are the eyes of your knowledge, for you have gazed into the eternal mirror and your sweet tears are ready to fall from love. And yet you willingly endure the bitterness of the sea of sin.

This animal has a soft mouth and a pure tongue, but it does not have teeth. It can neither snarl nor bite. The loving person also has a useful mouth; he eagerly teaches and instructs at all times. His tongue is far from and closed to all harmful words. He, too, has no teeth for biting. He willingly consoles those who are sad. There is also no viciousness in him except against sin and derision of God. Indeed, nothing hurts him as much as this. The mouth of this animal is wide open on top and small at the bottom. The large part of our mouth is the unrestrained praise that we should offer to God in the company of all creatures in all our actions and in all things at all times. The lower part of our mouth is all too ready to speak about the sinful earth. Woe to all empty phrases! What shall become of the impostor saints who fraudulently nourish their sinful bodies with gifts meant for holy people and comport themselves as though they gained complete knowledge of God's holy truth? May God in his trustworthiness, who alone has loved the truth, preserve his innocent friends from them!

This animal is swift of foot and has no voice. It is quiet by nature. The soul in rapture has this same nature: at the height of love she is both swift and at rest.

This animal's skin and hair are of a common color, and is faded and ugly to behold. No one hunts it for its present beauty. But

after its death, when other animals rot, its skin becomes so ennobled and its hair so richly beautiful that all the most prominent people that can get it wear its coat rather than the finest sable. The peace, useful habits, and holy teachings of people striving for perfection receive, alas, little notice during their lifetime; but after their death, whenever we sinners come into need and we then remember how holy their lives were and how solicitously they warned us, as sinners we feel shame that we kept our distance from them. And so their life becomes a beautiful sable that in its full beauty we sinners keep before our eyes and in our hearts. And yet during their life, we always fear for our worthless copper, so that we willfully neglect reaching out for refined gold.

This animal's flesh is eaten on Friday. It does not die unless it is beaten to death by the waves of the sea. The lives of holy people consist only of Fridays, for they constantly fast because of sin and do not eat forbidden foods; rather, they live in a godlike manner. The great stormy swells of tempestuous love make them die to all things and live in God alone. Indeed, all things are not really theirs except as shared with God in love. Thus does their love have the valuable power of praising God in all things.

This animal's bones are the skeleton of a noble fish.³¹ From it one can fashion beautiful jewels that noble persons wear in honor. What a precious jewel is a holy body full of love and free from sin! God shows us this through the example of his dearest friends when we discover the true signs in them. In his holy friends God has given us many a valuable jewel. If we do not praise him for this, we cannot become one with the saints, whom one here elevates from the earth.³²

This animal's name is, in German: Valuable for Everything.³³ Fortunate is he that he ever became man who has this name before God.

19. The Task of Blessed Love Is Manifold

O blessed Love,
This has always been your task, and still is:

To bind together God and the human soul.
That shall be your task forever.

Greetings, my Lady, and take care
That I do not complain about you to my Lord.
If he intends to be away from me too long,
I would freeze too much.
Keep that from happening, Lady of my heart and Queen.
You have seduced me in God
So that I am blissfully bound.

O Love, Lady, help me
That I may die in his arms which now embrace me.
But still, willingly shall I suffer the pain of death
In my sinful body.

Love, you have ever more the greatest power of all the virtues;
For this I shall ever thank God. You free me from many a heartache.
I no longer have any virtue;
He serves me with his virtues.
That I ever could do anything good separated from my Lord:

That would be more difficult for me than death.
I dare not, alas, claim credit
For everything that I say about love.
It is God, rather, who is thereby reaching out
To all those chosen in his heart.

Those to whom this is addressed shall indeed know:
Love makes empty hearts full.
But when we are full of wrangling and discontent,
The game of love is completely closed to us.

Good night, Love. I'm off to bed, alleluia!

20. The Six Virtues of St. Dominic

On the feast of St. Dominic I prayed to our Lord for the whole Order of Preachers. Our dear Lord deigned to come to me himself and he brought along St. Dominic whom, if I dare say it, I love above all the saints.

Our Lord said: "My son Dominic had four things about him while on earth that all priors should have about them. He loved his fellow Dominicans so much that he could never bear to trouble them with things arising from some whim of his own. The second is that he often improved the food to help and show affection for his brethren, so that the young brothers might not think back on the world and so that the older ones might not succumb on the way. The third is that in holy wisdom he provided for them the model for being moderate, for the sake of God, in their whole being, in all their customs, and in all their wants. The fourth is that he was so merciful that he never wanted to burden his dear brethren with any kind of penance that the order did not require for wrongdoing."

And our Lord continued: "I shall mention two more things. Whenever Dominic laughed, he did so with true delight of the Holy Spirit. But when he wept, he wept with such sincerity that first and foremost among his desires he always put his brethren before my eyes and, in addition, with all his strength, Holy Christianity." Before this I did not know that any laughing could be free of frivolity and not wrong.

21. Sixteen Reasons Why the Order of Preachers Is Dear to God³⁴

After this our dear Lord said: "I love two things in the Order of Preachers so much that my divine heart unceasingly smiles upon it. The first is the holiness of their life; the second is their great value for the church. In addition, they greet my Holy Trinity with seven things. These are: deep sighs, sincere weeping, intense longing, strict discipline, distressful exile, genuine humility, and joyous love."

Our Lord spoke again: "They also glorify my three names externally in seven ways: with hymns of praise, with sincere preaching, with correct remission,³⁵ by lovingly consoling, with friendly help, by being models of holiness. They are also a wholesome bond of Christian faith."

In addition, our darling Lord said: "The alms they give to the poor for love of me are so holy that the sins of the poor people who receive them are reduced and, then too, the devil is not able

to remain where their gifts are being eaten. This is because of the holiness of their pleasing poverty."

Ah, eternal spring of the Godhead, out of which I and all things flowed, I, unworthy creature, praise you with everything that is below you that, in spite of everything, Lord, I have been consoled by you. Amen.

22. Brother Heinrich's Fourfold Crown and of the Dignity of St. Dominic³⁶

In the Order of Preachers a brother died on the solemn feast of Easter after he had preached, sung mass, and had given people the holy body of our Lord. And when he had taken care of all his duties, he had himself anointed and departed toward nightfall. After he was buried, a certain person³⁷ went to where his dead body was and greeted both soul and body. She did this regularly upon the death of religious people. There God celebrated in her soul a divine feast, and his soul was shown to her in God's embrace in great glory. She saw clearly that his glory was not yet complete, and she asked our Lord how long he was going to remain like that and whether he had suffered at all in purgatory. Our Lord said: "He shall remain like this for a week."³⁸ That is, seven days and seven nights. He had rested himself on God's breast in untold bliss of spiritual fervor that he had not experienced on earth. Very quickly had he come there without suffering, just as a mother takes up her dear child out of the ashes onto her lap. He said: "Tell my sister³⁹ I shall console her with God in fourteen days." It happened. She died fourteen nights later.

Then he invited me to his feast, where he was going to receive his glory. The whole heavenly army prepared for it and joined together in a beautiful procession. St. Dominic came with a whole throng. They were all preachers, and they all wore the golden crowns of those who died in the order, crowns that differed in value according to how holy they had been in the order. St. Dominic brought a shining crown toward Brother Heinrich that sparkled as beautifully as the sun at its brightest. He gave it

to him as a reward from God, because he had followed his holy example in the Dominican order.

St. Dominic is indescribably more beautiful than the others because he receives a special honor from each brother as a reward. I saw him especially well clothed because of three qualities. He wears a white garment of innate purity; in addition, a green garment of growing wisdom of God, and also a red garment decorated with clasps because he had suffered spiritual martyrdom. They carry a military standard displaying the order's honor, one that no one else carries. A fine banner precedes them that all follow who on earth have lived according to their teaching.

Our Lord sat in his omnipotence and crowned this brother with three kinds of honors. They were: simple obedience, voluntary poverty, constant humiliation. Brother Heinrich thanked our Lord thus: "I thank you, Lord, that you found me, preserved me, and received me." He then bowed to our Lord and turned to his brothers. St. Dominic said: "Welcome, dear son, now enter into the glory of your Lord, alleluia!"

That I might experience this favor and might see this was especially due to my being lonely for the love of God and to being constantly treated with malicious contempt by the friends of God.

23. About the Burial of St. John the Evangelist⁴⁰

I actually saw the body of St. John the Evangelist with the eyes of my unworthy soul. He lies unburied in great bliss above all corruptible things beneath the creation of the eternal kingdom.⁴¹ His body has now taken on so much of divine eternity that it glows like a fiery crystal. He lies there so lovely in his human form, as though his spirit had fallen asleep in the midst of a heavenly rapture. His eyebrows are still brown; his eyes are closed and he is lying on his back. Beneath, above, and all around him everything is bright, and every seven hours the holy angels come to his body with a song of praise that goes like this: "Holy, pure, simple, wise, and dear to God's heart." The song has a sweeter melody than the sound of a thousand strings or harps. Between his body and the creation of the kingdom of heaven exists only a thin wall, like the

membrane of an egg, and yet it is forever tough, so that no body is able to pass through it until the last day.

24. How God Receives the Souls in Heaven; How He Crowns Three Kinds of People; How He Greets, Adorns, Praises, and Thanks Them

The kingdom of heaven has many beautiful gates and yet it has none. The many doors are the glorious different rewards with which God receives each soul, and all of heaven opens up for God's lovely bride. God descends through all the choirs toward the soul, and the whole heavenly host follows him with everything beautiful in proportion to what she may receive as her reward. Thus does the soul joyfully leave purgatory or her exile on earth. Many a fair angel follows her as well. At the gates of heaven the two lovers meet—God and the soul. The noble look with which he receives her and the holy reflection of his splendor that she receives from him have such power in her that she can never again think of what has caused her harm or interior sorrow.

The usual crown of the kingdom is placed upon her head at the gate; that is God's will. With it he leads her in with honor. That is why it is called the crown of the kingdom. That sinner who was evil to the end and to whom God then sends sorrow receives no other honor as his reward. God crowns three kinds of people with his fatherly hands: virgins, widows, and married people. Just as he receives them with all praise, so does he then crown them. Widows and married people are crowned by our Lord as he sits in almighty glory. But for the virgins he rises and crowns them, standing like the son of an emperor. He greets them inwardly with his living Godhead; he honors them outwardly with his almighty humanity; he adorns them with the generosity of the Holy Spirit; he also rewards them everlastingly according to rank with the whole Trinity in his kingdom for all that which they bring along. He thanks them all individually for coming, and they praise God fervently that he saved them from eternal death.

25. How We Are Now Present in Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell

We are now present in heaven. Just as we are now on earth clothed with virtues and adorned and permeated with holy love of God, so are we now visible to all the blessed, and they praise God and rejoice because of us, as though we were now with them there. They do not see in advance what is happening to us, but they do see that we are growing in nobility, increasing in splendor, and ascending to the heights. This is what is happening hour after hour to the blessed who are still on earth. Because of it the joy of the saints and angels increases. Alas! If we sink into great venial sins, our fair heavenly radiance is extinguished. Then the angels beseech and the saints beg our dear Lord that we turn back and become pure again.

We are also present in purgatory as soon as we have earned it on earth. This pains all those who are there, but they cannot help us because they are themselves burning in such torment. There are many poor souls in this purgatory with such guilt that they cannot know whether they are ever going to be redeemed.⁴² Why? Because they never wanted to confess with their fleshly mouth. We have seen how they may be saved in a different chapter.⁴³

The sinner's presence is also manifest in hell. God's mercy follows him. Hence they are there today, and tomorrow they are the angels' companions.

Thus does our presence go in and out of heaven, purgatory, and wretched hell according to where our own free will seeks to align itself.

26. God Consoles the Depressed Brother Baldwin⁴⁴

A brother in the Order of Preachers was so weighed down by an important office accepted under obedience—as happens to many—that his youthful vigor was drained from him and he lost his natural strength; yet he still carried on with good intentions. So I begged our Lord that he might turn his favor in that direction. Our Lord instructed me and said: "I have heard and seen all the distress he is suffering, and what he reads and writes. All this shall become the following song of love praising me before my eternal

court: Great God, eternal, mighty, marvelous, alleluia. And I shall lift up his head and increase all his might, just as I have done for you—not just by nature, but rather even more by grace."

27. Concerning the End of the Order of Preachers and the Antichrist; Concerning Enoch and Elias

The Order of Preachers was under severe attack from false teachers and, in addition, from many greedy sinners. So I prayed to our dear Lord that he might protect in them his own honor. God said: "As long as I want to keep them, no one can destroy them."

I asked: "O dear Lord, will the order exist until the end of the world?"

Our Lord said: "Yes, they shall continue until the end of the world. But another kind of people shall come.⁴⁵ They shall then instruct these people who then come so that they shall be wiser, mightier, and poorer in earthly needs, and made more fervent by the Holy Spirit because of the wretched ill fortune that is approaching for Holy Christianity."

Then I saw these people, their garb, their manner of life, and that there were a great number of them. They had no more than two garments; the undergarment is white and the outer garment red, signifying the pure humanity of our Lord and his holy death. Their hair and their beards were let grow as long as they would. Their belt is fashioned of woven material from an olive tree signifying holy mercy, which they bring to misguided Christianity. They all go barefoot, but in regions where it freezes they wear red shoes with white laces but no stockings. They wash their faces in summer with water, even in the woods, but not in winter, for they have no dwellings of their own. They are strangers in all places and suffer much distress. They have neither house nor home, and neither silver nor gold stored anywhere. Each of them walks with a white staff colored red. The staff has a curved upper part that is a span long and made of ivory. The ivory means they should be chaste and pure in all things. The staff is white and red; thereby they call to mind Christ's death. Into one side of the

staff is carved the passion of our Lord; on the other side his ascension into heaven. They must keep this staff with them in all places, when eating or sleeping, praying or preaching, celebrating mass or hearing confessions. And when they put the staff aside, they must stick it into the ground before their eyes, so that they might constantly behold the passion of Christ.

When their journey is thirty leagues long and they must go to be of help or out of necessity, so may the two of them⁴⁶ take along a donkey they may sometimes ride. In such cases they may not carry their staff at their side but must carry it upright in front of them in their hand as God's cross. They must ride this lowly animal so that they might resemble God in humility. Also, their feet shall cause them such pain that they cannot complete the whole distance. But they may not wear shoes any longer than from All Saints until the day on which St. Peter became pope.⁴⁷ They shall ask no one for breeches or other clothing, but when no one offers them bread, they should humbly ask for it and should eat and drink with the common people all the food that is given them with the exception of meat. Also, they should not fast any more than Christian law already commands, and they should find such shelter that they might pray and sleep under a separate roof away from other people.

As people come to recognize and acknowledge their holy way of life, they will be so improved because of it that they shall give them willingly what they need in great love. They should also not dwell under the same roof with any widow. People should wash their calloused feet with great tenderness, and they should thank God profusely that they go forth and anoint misguided Christianity, just as Mary Magdalene did for our Lord.⁴⁸ They anoint them also, but only men should do it because they are not God.⁴⁹ When people notice that their clothing is worn out, they should give them new clothing. If someone freely wants to give them much, they should not accept it. Rather, they should advise people to give with compassion wherever it does some good.

Their general chapter meeting takes place twice a year for the good and benefit of Christianity: in summer in the woods, in winter in the town hall. Whoever wants to enter this order should

himself have two books at hand. He shall preach from the larger book. The first thing that is written in this book is the *Credo in deum*,⁵⁰ and thereafter it is filled with learned sermons all ordered according to the articles of Christian faith. From the smaller book he shall recite to our Lord the hours of the Holy Office. The first master⁵¹ who will take up this way of life will be the son of the king of Rome. His name before God in German is Alleluia. The pope shall invest him with his immediate power. After that he shall himself choose and shall receive this way of life from the pope.⁵²

Then many important masters shall join him. They should not be younger than twenty-four years of age. They shall accept no one except those who are healthy and have had advanced studies. They must all be priests, confessors, and sound, well-qualified masters. The first master shall be called their prince and should be accompanied by three brothers, because the Christian faith shall undergo trials most frequently in his case. There should be one master for every thirteen of them. They shall call him their protector, and he should be accompanied by two brothers. Their power is very great, for no bishop is their equal. Wherever they go, they shall be authorized to preach, hear confessions, and sing and say mass. In each diocese there shall be seven of them, signifying the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In an archdiocese there shall be thirteen of them, signifying the holy convent of our Lord.⁵³ At Rome there shall be thirty of them, signifying the blessed selling that took place with Christ.⁵⁴ The greatest number of them shall be in Jerusalem where Jesus suffered death for our sake. Their small chapter meeting shall be held every three weeks, signifying the complete union with the Holy Trinity; by five brothers, signifying the five wounds; or by seven, signifying the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; and thereafter by as many as can gather together. Wherever they eat or drink, the oldest in the order shall speak for a while about Christ's deeds and his holy life, and the others should be silent.

I also saw their bed—how they should lie on straw between two white woolen blankets with a pillow under their head. This should be placed under the bottom blanket on the straw. Their

loins shall never sit nor lie comfortably, for they shall be hardy all their days until their holy martyrdom, as was the case with Christ. However, if an old master who has served well, and because of age cannot practice austerity up until the end of the order, should become sick or weak, he should be bedded in comfort and lovingly cared for, because they are still capable of giving much holy advice. And they should also be given the best nourishment. This holy life shall continue in great tranquility for thirty years. During that time they shall so greatly illumine and instruct Christians that no one shall turn away from the Christian faith because of untutored simplicity.

Woe, thereafter calamity shall strike! The Antichrist shall come⁵⁵ and assume power over the secular princes by means of gold, precious stones, and unimaginable deceptive cunning, to which they are now so drawn. Hence they follow him quite happily and say that he is their god and lord, and they follow him in solemn procession, presenting him with their seal and proclamations. Alas, then he comes to the spiritual powers. There he also discovers greed and brings such great perverse wisdom that very few bishops, priors, and priests withstand him. But these blessed brothers shall put their life on the line and preach fervently the Christian faith. And they shall give true indulgence for all sins to all those who die in the Christian faith with true sorrow, so that they will be saved without purgatory. Because these pious brothers dealt with people in such a pious manner earlier, many a holy martyr among them shall triumph. Many Jews and some wise heathens shall receive holy baptism and the Christian faith from these brothers. This shall so enrage the Antichrist that he shall impose his stern prohibition and intense severe oppression upon all those who go to their sermons. Whoever then goes there and stands by them is certainly a blessed person.

Then tribulation begins. The good separate from the evil and risk their bodies and all that they have. The Antichrist's messengers arrive there and, first of all, stab the holy preacher with an iron pole because of his Christian faith. God's dear friend must hang there writhing in front of the children of God. Thus do they carry the holy man impaled between them for all the world to see.

The evil ones laugh, the good weep. And he sings with the voice of the Holy Spirit: "Credo in deum," and he consoles and calls out: "Follow me, ye holy children of God!" All who then follow him are captured, have their eyes bound, are struck with scourges, and are driven like sheep being stolen to a place where a flood of water is passing by. There, their blessed heads are all chopped off and hurled into the water. Where there is no water, they are driven onto a field and martyred. God gives the evil ones the idea to bind the eyes of the good so that in their prison they may not see the great splendor, the enormous power and honor that the accursed ones have from their lord, the Antichrist. So may they the better persevere; for they, too, are just human, as are these. They take the dead blessed preacher and put him high up on the same place from which he spoke God's word and was martyred. Those who wish to preach there according to the Christian faith have to be living martyrs and great saints.

The Antichrist's power is so great that no one is his equal. When the pope can no longer do battle against him, he turns to the holy brothers and suffers what they suffer. Then Enoch and Elijah come to their aid.⁵⁶ They are now in sweet paradise, living there in both soul and body in the same bliss and eating the same food that had been given to Adam if he had remained there. They, too, in obedience to God, must avoid the same tree from which Eve and Adam ate the apple when they broke God's commandment. I have seen this tree. It is not large, and its fruit is outwardly quite lovely and desirable like a rose; but under the surface it is by nature very sour. That signifies the bitter harm of sin, which God never intended for man. Because this fruit is so detrimental for a noble person that it is still poison for us, God has put his prohibition on it, for he never wanted to cause human beings distress.

In this final agony, after these blessed brothers have consoled the simple folk until no good person is left who has not suffered a martyr's death, most of these brothers will be still alive. Though innocent, their suffering is so great and their prayers so holy, that God then sends Enoch and Elijah to them, who console them and lead them out of the woods so that they might go

preach again and prepare for death. These two lords, who then come from paradise, are so wise in divine truth that by their might they turn the Antichrist around and drive him off. They tell him clearly who he is, from what power his emblems derive, how he has gotten where he is, and what sort of end he shall have. When the perverted ones hear what a pitiful god had been given them because of their great greed and because of their lust for the many kinds of evil that God sees in their hearts, then many a noble man and many a fair woman among Christians who had followed the Antichrist are converted. And so these blessed must be martyred, for then the Antichrist is given supreme power on earth. He commands that all the men be rounded up so that he can test their Christian faith. On the streets red-hot griddles are made ready to which they are then driven all together. Their wives and fair children are summoned. Then they are commanded to choose: whether, by denying their faith, they prefer to keep their lovely wives and dear children, their riches and honor or, by keeping their Christian faith, they are willing to cook on the griddles and lose their lives. The men say: "Oh, dear wives and children, do not think about me; remember rather that you are Christians and offer your bodies to God. Then we shall not be separated."

Then the men are bound hand and foot and are thrown onto the griddles. The women and children say: "Lord Jesus, Child of Mary, for love of you we gladly want to suffer the same torment."

Then a pit filled with fire is made ready. The children and the mothers are hurled into it, and firewood and straw are heaped upon them. Thus are they burned to death.

An angel accompanies Enoch and Elijah from paradise. The radiance and bliss that show on their bodies shall always be preserved. When they behold the earth, they shudder, as men do who look upon the sea and wonder in fear how they are going to get across it. Then they⁵⁷ receive earthly appearances and, as a result, become human beings who are mortal. They eat honey and figs and drink water mixed with wine, and their spirits also receive sustenance from God.

BOOK IV

28. The Fivefold Power of Love. Because of the Weakness of People and the Treachery of the World One Must Remain Silent About the Truth

This book was begun in love, it shall also end in love; for nothing is as wise or as holy or as beautiful or as strong or as perfect as love. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "Speak, Father; I shall now be silent as you are silent in the mouth of your Son, angered because of the weakness of people. Just so did my humanity speak trembling at the treachery of the world; for it rewarded me with bitter death."

Book V