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MEISTER ECKHART'S TEACHING ON THE BIRTH OF THE DIVINE WORD IN THE SOUL

By KARL G. KERTZ, S.J.*

It has been said of Meister Eckhart,¹ the most eloquent proclaimer of German mysticism, its deepest thinker and its only creatively gifted speculative mind,

* In addition to the conventional sigla, abridged references will be used for the following publications.

- Clark James M. Clark, *Meister Eckhart: An Introduction to the Study of his Works with an Anthology of his Sermons* (Edinburgh 1957). — Because of its excellence in rendering accurately the critical Middle High German text (edited by Josef Quint) into good idiomatic English I have used Prof. Clark's translation of Eckhart's sermons throughout, save in a few instances, where the M.H.G. text appeared to justify an exception. I humbly acknowledge too my heavy indebtedness to his scholarly Introduction for my exposition (Part I) of Eckhart's teaching on the eternal eidetic pre-existence of the soul in God.
- Daniels P. Augustinus Daniels, O.S.B., 'Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift des Meister Eckhart,' *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*. 23.5 (1923).
- Denifle, Archiv 2 Heinrich Denifle, O.P., 'Meister Eckeharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre,' *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (1886) 417-615; 'Acten zum Processe Meister Eckeharts,' *ibid.* 627-640.
- Denifle, ZfdA 29 Heinrich Denifle, O.P., 'Aktenstücke zu Meister Eckharts Prozess,' *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 29 (NS 17; 1885) 259-266.
- DW 1 Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke*, herausg. Josef Quint, im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, 1: *Predigten* (Stuttgart 1936).
- Karrer, Das System weisheit Otto Karrer, *Meister Eckhart: Das System seiner religiösen Lehre und Lebens-* (München 1926).
- Lange Hermann Lange, S.J., *De Gratia tractatus dogmaticus* (Freiburg i. Br. 1929).
- LW Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, 6 vol., herausg. Ernst Benz, Joseph Koch et al., im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (Stuttgart 1936-).
- LW 3 *Expositio s. Evang. sec. Iohannem*, herausg. Karl Christ u. Joseph Koch (1936-).
- LW 4 *Sermones*, herausg. Ernst Benz (1937-).
- Pelster Franz Pelster, S.J., 'Ein Gutachten aus dem Eckehart-Prozess in Avignon,' *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, Supplementband 3.2 (1935) 1099-1124.
- Pfeiffer 2 *Meister Eckhart*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (Deutsche Mystiker 2; 3rd ed. Göttingen 1914).
- Quint, ME Meister Eckehart: *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, herausg. und übersetzt von Josef Quint (München, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1955).

¹ Eckhart, O.P., born about 1260 at Hochheim, near Gotha in Thuringia, taught at Paris

that his genius lay in his being imbued with but one single truth, a truth 'monumental in its simplicity, profound in its implications, impressive in its sincerity.' This one central idea, from which all others of the Master are derived and towards which all are orientated, is that of the generation or birth of the Divine Word, or Son, in the soul. Anyone who has not grasped that the generation of the Son through the Father in the 'little spark of the soul' ('daz vüncelîn') constitutes the sole motive, subject-matter and purpose of Eckhart's sermons and gives to them in various formulations, which are merely variants of the one great theme, a certain grand one-sidedness, has failed to understand the Master. To him there is lacking the knowledge of the unitive and orientating centre of Eckhart's intellectual heritage, whose meaning, inaccessible to him, becomes ever more and more entangled in an inextricable medley of contradictions and obscurities, until he is unable to see the wood for the trees. He does not comprehend that all the tracks of this mystic's speculative thought lead toward one predetermined goal: the mystic union

ca. 1300-1303 and again ca. 1311-1314. It is now generally assumed that it was during his second stay in Paris that Eckhart laid the foundation of his great philosophico-theological work in Latin, the *Opus Tripartitum*, which has come down to us only as a fragment.

In 1314 he was lector at the Dominican friary in Strasbourg. Here he won widespread fame as a popular preacher, here German mysticism reached the culminating point of its development. It was undoubtedly during the Strasbourg period that a large number of Eckhart's stirring and provocative sermons were delivered in the many convents for women in the Upper Rhine valley as the centers and nurseries of mystical life and spirit. The German sermons represent the fairest flower that blossomed forth from the blending of Scholasticism and Mysticism. All that the wisdom of the academic chair was in any way able to contribute to religious inspiration and the furtherance of the inner life was here translated by the Master from the Latin of the schools into the living language of edification. He adapted his sermons to the mental capacity of his listeners, thereby simultaneously softening and vitalizing the formalistic rigidity of the scholastic syllogisms.

Eckhart was probably in his sixties when he was appointed lector at the *studium generale* in Cologne, where Albert the Great († 1280) had taught within living memory. In 1326 the Archbishop of Cologne, Henry of Virneburg, opened inquisitorial proceedings against Eckhart on a charge of heresy. After the Master had appealed to Pope John XXII on the 24th of January 1327, the investigation of the case was renewed before a Papal Commission in Avignon. It is known that Eckhart himself was present at Avignon and that he defended his opinions there (William Ockham, *Dialogus*, in Melchior Goldast's *Monarchia S. Romani Imperii* [Francofurti 1668] 2.909). Of the original one hundred and eight propositions cited in the Cologne bill of accusation, twenty-eight were finally embodied in the Bull, *In agro dominico*, of the 27th of March 1329, and condemned as either heretical or dangerous and suspect. Eckhart did not live to see the condemnation of these articles. The Bull refers to him as to one already dead, who had withdrawn everything that he had written or taught, either in the schools or in sermons, that might create in the minds of the faithful an heretical or erroneous impression and one hostile to the true faith. Eckhart died some time between February 1327 and the 27th of March 1329. The place of his death is not recorded.

of the intellect and will of man with the Godhead through the birth of the Divine Logos in the soul.

In the following pages we shall endeavour to set forth a synthesis of this fundamental Eckhartian doctrine, from which the Master's ethical system regarding the righteous man directly flows. We shall often quote Eckhart's own words, as no presentation or interpretation of his teaching, however enthusiastic and empathetic it may be, is capable of conveying an adequate idea of the grandeur of his thought and the power of his language so immediately and convincingly as the suggestive force and noble diction of his own pithy word.

The doctrine in question may be summarized briefly as follows: 1. All things created or merely creatable, and among them the human soul, are *begotten* in the Divine Word from all Eternity. 2. After these eternal 'Ideas' in the mind of God have received a separate created existence through the Divine act of creation, the Father begets His only-begotten Son in the 'little spark of the soul'; nay more: the Father begets 'me' as His only-begotten Son and the *same* Son. 3. In gratitude for this gift, the soul in turn begets the Son again in the Father, and thus itself returns to the eternal source out of which it once flowed. The circle is completed. — We shall restrict the present article to a consideration of only the first two points.

I. THE ETERNAL EIDETIC PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL IN GOD

God is a Spirit, and the first act of a spirit is to know, to understand. Now, God knowing Himself from all eternity, brought forth the full knowledge of Himself. This knowledge of Himself was not a mere passing idea, such as we have, but His own Image, His own very Substance, a Living Person.

In accordance with this common Catholic tradition Eckhart teaches in his famous German sermon, *Intravit Jesus in templum*, that the object of God's knowledge is His own Self, whom He apprehends and contemplates in His Image — the Word, the Logos:

He (Jesus) is the Word of the Father. In this Word the Father expresses Himself and all the Divine Nature and everything that God is, just as He knows it; and He knows it as it is. Being perfect in His knowledge and in His power, He is also perfect in His utterance. When He speaks the Word, He speaks Himself and all things in another Person, and gives Him the same nature as He has Himself. In this Word He expresses all rational spirits, (making them) like the Word, in the form in which It abides in Him, but not like the Word in all respects in the form in which they issue forth,² as each one is by itself.³ They have, however, received the power to become like the Word by grace. And this Word, as it is in

² Literally, 'shine forth,' namely in Creation.

³ That is, with its own separate existence.

Himself, the Father has fully spoken, that is, the Word and everything that is in the Word.⁴

Thus, in His own Image, the Word, God apprehends at the same time the eternal 'forms' or archetypes or, as they have been called since Plato, 'Ideas' of all creatable Being. 'In the Father there are the images of all creatures. This piece of wood has an intellectual image in God. It is not merely intellectual, rather, it is pure reason.'⁵ In a certain sense, then, it may be said that the whole creation exists in the Divine mind, not as a finished product, but as an idea or prototype, just as the artist or architect has in his mind a plan of the picture he is painting or the house he is building.⁶ 'In God the images of all things are alike, but they are the images of unlike things. The highest angel and the soul and a midge have the same image in God.'⁷ 'In God no creature is nobler than another,' in the mind of God all things are of equal value, because *in Him, 'the Prototype, all things are One,'*⁸ — that is, in God, who recognizes His own infinite Essence as outwardly imitable by creatures through participation in some perfection of His Divine Essence,⁹ the eternal 'Ideas,' like all other Divine perfections, are absolutely identified with the One undivided and indivisible Godhead.¹⁰

As one of these Divine 'Ideas' or 'rationes' or prototypes, 'I,' too, dwelt in God from all Eternity before the world was created.

In this Word the Father speaks my and your and every man's spiritual nature as (being) like the same Word. In this utterance *you and I are as this Word, a natural son of God.* For, as I said before, the Father knows nought but this same Word and Himself and the whole Divine Nature and all things in this same Word; *everything that He knows therein is like the Word and is, in truth, by nature the same Word.*¹¹

This passage contributes to an understanding of the following. The thought is orthodox, but typically Eckhartian. Existing in the Logos from all Eternity as the eternal Ideas of God, we are absolutely identified with God and everything in Him, and therefore likewise with the Word, the Son of the Father. In this sense we may be called 'natural sons of God,' 'by nature the same Word.'

In equally daring terminology, but in imagery incomparably more beautiful

⁴ DW 1 15.10-16.11. (Cf. Clark 131.)

⁵ DW 1 377.1-3 (Cf. Clark 212.)

⁶ LW 3.8.1-9; 48.4-10. (Cf. Clark 31.)

⁷ DW 1.148.1-3.

⁸ DW 1.55.3-5. (Cf. Clark 155.)

⁹ St. Thomas, *S. Th.* 1.15.2 corpus.

¹⁰ From all this it can be seen how deeply Eckhart was rooted in the great tradition of Christian Platonic thought.

¹¹ Pfeiffer 2.290.34-40.

Eckhart expresses the same thought in the German sermon, *Ave, gratia plena*, from which we have already quoted:

‘In the beginning.’ This gives us to understand that *we are the only son whom the Father has eternally begotten* out of the hidden darkness of the eternal mystery, remaining in the first beginning of the primal purity, which is the fullness of all purity. Here I rested and slept eternally in the hidden knowledge of the eternal Father, indwelling and unspoken. Out of this purity *He eternally begat me as His only-begotten son in the same Image of His eternal Fatherhood*, that I might be a father and beget Him by whom I was begotten.¹²

In these words we recognize the familiar speculation of classical Scholasticism on the Logos: all things created or merely creatable, and among the former the human soul, were ‘begotten,’ not created, in the Divine Word from all Eternity. It is the doctrine of the eternal eidetic pre-existence of all things created as ‘forms,’ ‘Ideas’ in the mind of God.

In the same sermon Eckhart refers to the moment when all things destined to be created, which have hitherto possessed from all Eternity a purely eidetic form of existence in God, finally, through the Divine act of Creation, receive a separate created existence and nevertheless remain in God as His eternal Ideas or prototypes.

When the Father begat all creatures, He begat me (also), and I flowed out with all creatures and yet remained in the Father. In the same way, the word that I am now speaking (first) springs up in me, then secondly I dwell upon the idea, and thirdly I express it and you all receive it; yet it really remains in me. In the same way, I have remained in the Father.¹³

This view of the double existential form of things and their correlation with one another — the *real*, eternal, imperishable, unchangeable existence of things in the mind of God, with whom they are absolutely identified as Divine Ideas, and the *unreal-like*, shadowy, ever-changing, perishable existence of the things of this world: this view is quite Platonic in the sense in which that term is used by St. Augustine and after him by St. Thomas.¹⁴ It finds eloquent, albeit startlingly bold expression in the sermon, *Beati pauperes spiritu*:

In that Existence of God, where God is above all Being and above al

¹² DW 1.382.3-383.1. (Cf. Clark 214.)

¹³ DW 1.376.7-377.1. (Cf. Clark 212.) — Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 225.3 (PL 38.1097f.).

¹⁴ St. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* 46 (PL 40.29-31): ‘Sunt namque ideae principales formae quaedam, vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt, ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae in divina intelligentia continentur. Et cum ipsae neque oriantur, neque intereant, secundum eas tamen formari dicitur omne quod oriri et interire potest, et omne quod oritur et interit.’ — Cf. St. Thomas, *S. Th.* 1.15.2.

distinction,¹⁵ there I myself was, there I wanted myself and knew myself, (wishing) to create this man (= myself). And therefore *I am the reason for myself* as regards my *Being*, which is *eternal*, but not as regards my *Coming into the state of createdness* ('Werden'), which is *temporal*. Therefore I am *Begotten* ('ungeboren' = uncreated). According to my *Begottenhood* ('Ungeborenheit' = uncreated state) I can never die. According to my *Begottenhood* I have existed eternally and I exist now and I shall remain in existence for ever. What I am according to my *created state* ('Geborenheit') will die and come to nought, for it is mortal; therefore it must perish in the course of time.¹⁶

The passage is a daring exposition of man's eternal eidetic pre-existence, which is absolutely identified with God Himself, wherefore Eckhart does not hesitate to declare that he, as existing in the mind of God from all Eternity as a Divine Idea and as such absolutely identified with Him, is the reason for his own eternal Existence in God 'according to his Begottenhood.' That the terms 'ungeboren' and 'Ungeborenheit' in this context mean, respectively, 'begotten' (= uncreated) and 'Begottenhood' (= uncreated state), is clearly shown by the opposition indicated between them and 'Geborenheit' (= created state).

The question may here be pertinently raised: What bearing precisely has 'the eternal eidetic pre-existence of the soul in God' upon 'the birth of the Logos in the soul'? Why do we treat of the former at all? Considered in their formal meaning, the two doctrines obviously have no correlation with one another. But it is an entirely different matter when Eckhart declares that *in the soul the Father begets me as His only-begotten Son and the same Son*¹⁷ whom the Father has begotten from all Eternity, and when he thus clearly affirms some kind of identity between the human soul in the state of createdness and the Divine Word. In this latter case the attribution of some certain quality or state of existence to any individual human being as the Only-begotten Son might be heretical, which, ascribed to him in his eternal eidetic existence as a 'form' or 'Idea' in the mind of God, would be perfectly orthodox. Inasmuch as the Master speaks now of the eternal eidetic pre-existence of the soul in God, now of the birth of himself in the soul as the only-begotten Son of God, it behooves us to distinguish sharply between these two essentially different states of being, especially as Eckhart himself does not always take the trouble of informing us of the nature of the birth or generation he is discussing.

¹⁵ That is, in 'the still wilderness' of the undifferentiated Godhead. Eckhart drew a distinction, as did Thomas Aquinas, between the Godhead and God. By the former he understood the undifferentiated Deity, by the latter the Three Persons. Eckhart's view is discussed by Heinrich Denifle, *Archiv* 2.454-5, 481 n.1. — See also Clark 39-40, 183-4.

¹⁶ Cf. Pfeiffer, 2, Sermon 87 (p. 280ff.). — Our text is a translation from Quint, ME 308.8-19.

¹⁷ DW 1.109.5-110.7.

II. THE FATHER BEGETS HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON IN THE SOUL; HE BEGETS 'ME' AS HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON AND THE 'SAME' SON

Since from now on there will be occasion to refer to various propositions condemned by Pope John XXII in the Bull, *In agro dominico*, a few preliminary words may be in order concerning the nature of doctrinal judgments delivered by the Church on teachings detrimental to faith or morals. On formal principle such theological censures are not primarily concerned with or directed against, the *subjective* meaning intended by the author, but against the *objective*, literal, obvious sense of the words, 'prout verba sonant,' as common sense would, or at least might interpret them. Primarily and *per se*, the dogmatic pronouncements of the Church are not aimed at — in fact, they cannot, strictly speaking, penetrate to — the meaning which the author intends to convey in the words he uses, as this intended meaning, being something purely internal and, as such, hidden in the depths of the soul, is of necessity inaccessible to immediate apprehension by an external subject. The dogmatic pronouncements of the Church can *only then* reach the internal meaning intended by the author *when* this coincides and is identical with the objective, obvious sense of the words used by him. This 'objective' sense may — and ordinarily does — coincide with the 'subjective' meaning intended by the author; however, from the very nature of the case, the two need not necessarily be identical with one another. In this study we are mainly concerned with ascertaining, as accurately as possible, the 'subjective' sense of the condemned propositions — that, namely, intended by Eckhart. For the solution of this problem, prime importance attaches to the records of the process containing Eckhart's own authentic interpretation and vindication of the orthodoxy of his teaching, *in so far as* this is faithfully and reliably expressed in the condemned propositions.¹⁸

¹⁸ The *two primary sources* concerning the process against Eckhart are:

1. The so-called *Rechtfertigungsschrift*, i.e., Eckhart's own apology or vindication of his teaching, extant as MS 33b of the municipal library of Soest. It contains the protocol of two sessions of the process conducted in Cologne in 1326. The two principal critical editions of this document are: Augustinus Daniels, O.S.B., 'Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift des Meister Eckhart' (*cit. supra*, introductory note); Gabriel Théry, 'Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le manuscrit 33b de la bibliothèque de Soest,' *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 1 (1926) 129-268. The Théry edition is to be preferred because it presents the contents of the Soest MS in better chronological order and indicates important authorities used in the Articles of indictment.

2. The so-called *Gutachten*, in all probability the official expert opinion drawn up by a committee of competent theologians and presented to the Papal Commission in Avignon. This *Gutachten* is contained in Codex Vaticanus lat. 3899, which is a collection and medley of various MSS dealing with the most heterogeneous subjects. The two principal critical editions of this document are: Franz Pelster, S.J., 'Ein Gutachten aus dem Eckehart-Prozess

It has been correctly stated¹⁹ that Eckhart never made a recantation in the formal sense of that term. He never admitted that he had thought or taught anything that was objectively heretical according to his way of thinking, never conceded that the *objective* sense of the words of the condemned propositions as understood and interpreted by his judges coincided and was identical with the meaning he had intended — that is, with their *subjective* sense. So far as we know, not only he, but likewise his Superiors, maintained this standpoint to the last.

Let us now seek to penetrate into a better understanding of that central truth which is to be found, in one form or other, in almost all of the Master's German sermons.

In his scholarly general survey of Eckhart's philosophical and theological teachings, on a scale not hitherto undertaken in English, Prof. James M. Clark, when speaking of Eckhart's doctrine on the birth or generation of the Divine Word, or Son, in the soul, writes as follows:

For Eckhart it (the idea of a spiritual rebirth or regeneration according to Christ's words to Nicodemus: 'Ye must be born again') is *synonymous with mystic union*. God's birth in the soul is the union of the soul with God, the coming of God to the human soul. It is an *allegory* of human co-operation with God, who by grace enters the human soul. On the human side it is a free act of will, and it means that the human will is merged in the Divine will. It is a union of wills, not of essences.... *The generation of the Son in the soul is therefore the same thing as the soul being born again, in the mystical sense*. 'As often as the soul is born again in God, the Father begets His only-begotten Son in the soul.'²⁰ It is in some sense a reciprocal process, since two wills are concerned. ... *The birth or rebirth is purely figurative language* and may be used of other processes. Other things may be born in the soul, apart from God, even sinful actions, for example.²¹

Although there is much truth in these words (e.g., that God by grace enters the human soul; that thereby the soul is born again in a mystical sense; that in this spiritual rebirth there is a union of wills, not of essences), still we do not think that the passage as a whole presents an adequate and accurate exposition of the true meaning of Eckhart's teaching regarding the birth of the Son in the soul.

The words of Christ, 'Ye must be born anew,'²² taken in conjunction with the Apostolic teaching that, through this spiritual rebirth, we become children

in Avignon' (*cit. supra*, introductory note); M. H. Laurent, 'Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart: Les documents des Archives Vaticanes,' *Divus Thomas*⁹ 13 (1936) 331-48, 430-47.

¹⁹ Wilhelm Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter I: Geschichte der deutschen Mystik bis zum Tode Meister Eckharts* (Leipzig 1874) 361, 365.

²⁰ DW 1.171.10-11. (Clark 203.)

²¹ Clark 84-5 (the italicization has been added).

²² John 3.3, 7.

of God²³ and partakers of the Divine Nature,²⁴ signify not merely a moral, juridical, or mystical relationship between God and ourselves, but, above all, something incomparably loftier and more sublime, to wit, *a real, physical transformation and elevation of our nature* wrought in us through God, whereby it is raised above a purely natural state of being into a truly supernatural sphere of existence, so that God in a true, albeit to us incomprehensible sense, *begets* us²⁵ through 'His seed'²⁶ as His own children by communicating to us, in a mysterious manner, *participation in His Divine Nature* and giving us the power one day to behold Him, not as now, 'in a mirror darkly,' but immediately, 'face to face,' 'even as He is.'²⁷ An impartial study of Eckhart's teaching will lead to the conviction that this Catholic doctrine of Grace is a decisive point for an understanding of Eckhart's mystical teaching and that the birth or generation of the Divine Word in the soul according to Eckhart implies not merely a moral and juridical relationship between ourselves and God, much less a purely mystical, allegorical, or figurative connotation, but, above all, a real, physical elevation of our nature.²⁸

But the holy Word of God teaches that we receive in the spiritual regeneration not only the gift of 'created Grace,' but likewise that of 'the Uncreated Grace,' that is, the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is given unto us, in our hearts;²⁹ He dwells in us as in His temple, so that we are a temple of God;³⁰ we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance;³¹ we have the first-fruits of the Spirit.³² It is inconceivable that Eckhart, who, as a skilled theologian, possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the Inspired Word of God, and as one whose adherence to the teaching and interpretation of the Church is unquestionable, as the following exposition will prove, should not have been imbued with a deep realization of this consoling truth of Divine Revelation.

It is not surprising, however, that the Master should give expression to his settled belief in this truth of the presence of the Uncreated Grace in the soul,

²³ Romans 8.16; 1 John 3.1.

²⁴ 2 Peter 1.4.

²⁵ In connection with our spiritual rebirth St. Paul employs the term *τέκνον*, which in Greek in the strict sense means 'one who is begotten,' at least five times.

²⁶ 1 John 3.9; cf. 1 Peter 1.23.

²⁷ 1 Cor. 13.12; 1 John 3.2. For a thorough treatment of this inspiring doctrine of our Spiritual Regeneration and the physical elevation of our nature into a supernatural sphere of existence, see Lange, paragraphs 254-303, 520-530.

²⁸ Cf. Karrer, *Das System*, esp. Chap. 4 ('Gottessohnschaft') pp. 113-128.

²⁹ Romans 5.5. — Cf. Lange, paragr. 442-455.

³⁰ Romans 8.8-11; 1 Cor. 3.16-17; 1 Cor. 6.19.

³¹ Ephesians 1.13-14. Cf. Lange, paragr. 270a.

³² Romans 8.23. Cf. Lange, paragr. 270b.

in the form of his favorite and distinctive doctrine of the birth or generation of the Word, or Son, in the soul. Thus in his famous sermon, *Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum*, he declares that in the 'little spark' of the soul 'in which God is blossoming and budding in all His Divinity, and the Spirit in God, in this same power the Father begets His only-begotten Son as truly as in Himself, for He truly lives in this power...' ³³ The same truth is again expressed, in more forceful language, in the sermon, *Iusti vivent in aeternum*:

The Father begets His Son like Himself in eternity. 'The Word was with God and God was the Word.' It was the same (as God and) in the same nature. I will say more: *He has begotten Him in my soul*. Not only is it (my soul) with Him and He with it alike, but He is in it. *The Father begets His Son in the soul in the same way as He begets Him in eternity, and not otherwise*. He must do it, whether He will or no. The Father begets His Son *without intermission*.³⁴

On the 26th of September 1326, in the first session of the Cologne process in response to the indictment that he had said: 'The Father begets His Son in me etc.,' Eckhart defended the orthodoxy of his teaching.

Whereever God is, there likewise the unbegotten Father is begetting, and whereever God is, there likewise the Son is begotten. Whenever, therefore, God is in me, God the Father assuredly begets in me the Son, and in me (likewise) the same Son is begotten, One and undivided, since in the Divinity there is no other Son save one and He (is) God.³⁵

This is perfectly sound Catholic doctrine. The Generation of the Son by the Father is a Divine immanent operation and procession in the Godhead and, as such, is absolutely identified with the One Simple Eternal Divine Substance. Hence, wherever God is, there likewise He begets the Son. Because of the limitations of our created human intellect and our consequently imperfect conception of the meaning of 'generation' we are apt to think of the Birth of the Word, or Son, as an action which took place in successive parts and moments once for all at some remote vague time before this world was made. But in God there is no succession, no yesterday, no tomorrow; there is but 'one simple Now of Eternity,' in which all Divine operations take place simultaneously,

³³ DW 1.40.5-41.3. (Clark 137.)

³⁴ DW 1.109.2-7. (Clark 188.)

³⁵ Daniels 14.15-20: 'unde ubicumque deus est pater est et generans ingenitus est, et ubicumque deus est, et filius genitus est. Unde cum in me est deus, utique in me generat filium deus pater et in me est ipse filius genitus, unus, indivisus, cum non sit alius filius in divinis nisi unus et ipse deus.' — To the first two lines of the text as above cited, Daniels remarks: 'pater... deus est] Corresponding to what follows the probable reading is: ubicumque deus est, et pater generans ingenitus est. By repetition of the *est* the corrector has mistakenly put the words *est et* after *pater*.' — Cf. Eckhart, *Expos. s. Evang. secund. Ioh.* (LW 3.9.3-4): 'Filius in divinis, verbum in principio, semper nascitur, semper natus est.' — (LW 3.33.17-18): '(Filius) sic est a principio natus a patre quod nihilominus semper nascitur.'

without succession, without intermission, since God possesses His whole Life, in all its perfection, at one fixed, unchanging instant.³⁶ For this reason and because God is unchangeable, Eckhart does not hesitate to say that 'the Father *must* beget His Son in the soul *without intermission* in the same way that He begets Him in eternity.'³⁷

Eckhart's doctrine, then, that the Father begets His only-begotten Son in the soul is orthodox³⁸ and for that reason does not appear among the condemned twenty-eight Articles. But in the words which immediately follow those above quoted from the sermon, *Justi vivent in aeternum*, Eckhart's speculation leads him into even deeper waters.

And I will say more: *He (the Father) begets me as His son and the same son.* I will say more: not only does He beget me as His son, but He begets me as Himself, and Himself as me, and me as His Being and His Nature. In the innermost spring I well forth in the Holy Spirit. There is *one* life and *one* being and *one* activity there. *All that God works is one; therefore He begets me as His son without any distinction.* My physical father is not really my father except by one small part of his nature, and I am separated from him: he can be dead and I living. Therefore the heavenly Father is really my Father, for I am His son and all I possess I have from Him, and I am the same son and not another. Since the Father performs one work, He makes me His only-begotten son without any distinction.³⁹

³⁶ Cf. Pelster 1109.31-38; Daniels 29.23-30.1; DW 1.171.5-8. In all these passages Eckhart is speaking of the Divine Act of Creation.

³⁷ In the second session of the Cologne process Eckhart vindicates his doctrine on the same subject in the following words: 'Dicendum quod verum est quia nec alium filium nec aliter generat pater in me quam in eternitate. In deo enim nec cadit aliud nec aliter, nec habet filium in eternitate nisi unum etc. ...'

'Quod autem dicitur "oportet eum facere (sive ei placeat sive displiceat)" verum est, est tamen locutio emphatica commendans dei bonitatem et amorem qui se toto bonus est per essentiam, que bonitas non sinit ipsum sine germine esse ut dicit Dionysius, propter quod et se ipsum dat et omne quod habet secundum illud: "cum illo omnia nobis donavit" (Rom. 8.32) etc.': Daniels 53.6-27. The same thought recurs often in the works of the Scholastics in the form: 'Bonum est diffusivum sui.'

³⁸ Cf. also Daniels 60.35-61.6, where we may clearly observe with what keen psychological penetration the Master recognized the fitness of this sublime truth for kindling the love of God in the hearts of his hearers.

³⁹ DW 1.109.8-110.7: 'und ich spriche mër: er gebirt mich sinen sun und den selben sun. Ich spriche mër: er gebirt mich niht aleine sinen sun, mër: er gebirt mich sich und sich mich und mich sin wesen und sin natüre. In dem innersten quelle dâ quille ich ûz in dem heiligen geiste, dâ ist éin leben und éin wesen und éin werk. Allez, waz got wûrket, daz ist ein; dar umbe gebirt er mich sinen sun âne allen underscheit. Min liplicher vater ist niht eigenliche mîn vater sunder an einem kleinen stuckelîn siner natüre, und ich bin gescheiden von im; er mac tôt sîn und ich leben. Dar umbe ist der himelische vater waerliche mîn vater, wan ich sîn sun bin und allez daz von im hân, daz ich hân, und ich der selbe sun bin und niht ein ander. Wan der vater éin werk wûrket, dar umbe wûrket er mich sinen eingebornen sun âne allen underscheit.' (Clark 188-189.)

From this passage are drawn the words (above underlined) of Article 22 of the Bull: 'Pater generat me suum filium et eundem filium. Quicquid deus operatur, hoc est unum, propter hoc generat ipse me suum filium sine omni distinctione.'⁴⁰

Were one to interpret the words just quoted from the sermon, *Justi vivent in aeternum*, as referring to the *eternal generation of the soul* in the bosom of the Father, that is, to its *eternal eidetic pre-existence in God* — a truth, which, as we have recognized in Part I, is common Christian heritage — there would, apart from the context, hardly exist any valid reason for objecting to them. The historical fact remains, however, that the Papal Commission in Avignon interpreted the passage as referring to the *temporal regeneration of man* through Grace and *his identification with the only-begotten Son of God*. It is in this sense, therefore, that we shall have to examine the words of the sermon and of Article 22 of the Bull, which was condemned as 'evil-sounding, temerarious, and suspect of heresy.'

The Avignon Commission of theologians regarded the Article 'ut sonat' as 'heretical' on the ground that 'it represented God as having begotten the speaker and, according to the preceding Articles 20 and 21, every good man as His son and identically the same (son), without any distinction,' so that 'all sons (of God) by adoption are the same as the only-begotten Son of God and without any distinction,' i.e., are identical with the only-begotten Son.⁴¹ The reason for the condemnation of Article 22 by the committee is, therefore, essentially the same as that for which the preceding Articles 20 and 21 were censured by the same Commission: 'It is heretical to affirm that any good man is the only-begotten Son of God save Him alone of Whom it is said (John 1.18): 'The only-begotten Son of God hath declared (Him) unto you.'⁴²

If, then, we would exonerate Eckhart from the taint of unorthodoxy, we must demonstrate, first, that it was not his intention to affirm a *physical identity*, in the strict sense of the term, between regenerate man and the only-begotten Son of God, i.e., an *identity according to nature* such as exists in the Godhead between the Father and the Son. But this is not enough. We must, secondly, exclude the possibility that Eckhart, while not intending to affirm a strict physical identity according to nature, nevertheless, while admitting the infinite distance between Creator and creature, taught a *physical union*

⁴⁰ Denifle, *Archiv* 2.638.

⁴¹ Pelster 1117.32-35: 'Hunc articulum, ut sonat, hereticum reputamus sicut precedentes quia ponit quod Deus genuit istum loquentem et secundum dictos articulos quemcunque bonum hominem filium suum et eundem cum unitate, absque aliqua distincione.' — 1118.4-7: '... tamen (unigenitus Dei filius) non est idem cum omnibus filiis adoptionis nec omnes filii adoptionis sunt idem cum unigenito Dei filio et absque omni distincione, ut articulus ponit.'

⁴² Pelster 1117.8-10.

of natures in one and the same person, such as exists between the human nature of Christ and the Divine Nature of the Logos in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In other words, we must exclude the possibility of a *hypostatic union* between regenerate man and the only-begotten Son of God.

Our method of procedure will consist, first, in adducing, in free, unconstrained sequence, the main texts wherein the Master vindicates the orthodoxy of his teaching; then, in presenting the same texts in synthetical form as a logical demonstration of Eckhart's authentic interpretation of the Article.

In the *first session of the Cologne process* the Master affirmed that it was wholly false — and he emphatically denied ever having said, thought, written or preached — that man enjoying the state of Divine Love is deified in the sense that he is rendered divine in nature.⁴³

In the Divinity there is, according to Eckhart, *but one true Son in the strict sense*, and He is *the 'only-begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father' (John 1.18), 'who is *the Image of the invisible God*, the firstborn of all creation'

⁴³ Daniels 13.15-21: '...articulus iste plura implicat. Unum est quod homo stans in dei amore et cognitione efficitur nichil aliud quam quod deus ipse est. Hoc dico esse falsum omnino nec hoc dixi, nec sensi, nec scripsi, nec predicavi; et est erroneum et hereticum si temere defendatur sine quo nullus error heresis est.'

Similar protestations that he had never said or written certain statements attributed to him occur several times in Eckhart's vindication of his doctrine.

Scholars have long since recognized that before the interpreter strives to find out what Eckhart meant, he must first be sure what Eckhart actually wrote or said. Far more than four hundred MSS — and the number may well be enlarged by further findings — present to us whatever in sermons, tracts, and smaller compositions passes for or is claimed to be the work of Meister Eckhart. One of the main problems of Eckhartian research is to establish the *genuineness* of these MS texts. The German sermons have come down to us only in *copies* of notes which were taken by listeners from the spoken word of the preacher, and these transcripts are mingled with deliberate or unconscious distortions and corruptions of every kind through omissions, interpolations, misconceptions, and arbitrary alterations of formulation and of meaning. Nevertheless the ineffaceable and unmistakable character of the bold and profound Eckhartian expression still shines forth through the cruellest distortion and the most hopeless misconception. The further the work progresses on the definitive critical edition of the Master's Latin and German productions now being published under the auspices of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft of the Thomas-Institut in Cologne, the stronger and more reliable will become the criteria whereby it may be hoped that the double problem of *authenticity* and *genuineness* of the received texts will be solved. And even in the case of very corrupt tradition the possibility will grow of restoring the texts with relative certitude, if not in their strictly original form, still in a wording that will reproduce the original thought as well as the characteristic formulation of the Master. It is to be noted, moreover, that the *authenticity* of at least twenty-three German sermons of Eckhart is established through the evidence afforded by the *Rechtfertigungsschrift*, the *Gutachten*, and the Bull *In agro Dominico* of John XXII, furthermore through characteristic conformities with the Latin works of Eckhart, especially with the Latin sermons (*Opus Sermonum*), all of which are contained in the *Opus Tripartitum*, the authenticity of which is unquestioned.

(Col. 1.15), who in the beginning was the Word and God (John 1.1). Since He is the Son proper, He is also the heir. *No other save Him is heir except through Him and in Him, as a member of Him through grace and love. We, consequently, are neither sons nor heirs, save in as much as through (the grace of) Sonship in us we are conformed to that only-begotten and first-born Son, as what is imperfect (is conformed) to what is perfect, as the member (is conformed) to the head.*⁴⁴

This train of thought is later more clearly expressed and further deepened. *We are not transformed and converted into God. A man who is holy or good does not become Christ nor the first-born, nor is he 'the Image of God,' but he is 'to the Image of God'; he is not the only-begotten Son of God, but a member of Him who is truly and perfectly the first-born Son and heir. Through the grace of Adoption we are united with the true Son of God as members of the One Head of the Church, which is Christ.*⁴⁵

This is all very clear, but unfortunately, in order to bring out the truth of this intimate union of ourselves with the Son of God as members of the One Head, Eckhart makes use of an analogue which not only obscures the truth he intends to emphasize, but likewise is very apt to create in the minds of his hearers an heretical impression. 'Just as the many particles of bread on different altars are converted into the One true Body of Christ which was conceived and born of the Virgin, (and) suffered under Pilate, while, nevertheless the accidents of each single particle remain, thus, through the grace of Adoption, our souls and we are united with the true Son of God, as members of the One Head of the Church, which is Christ.'⁴⁶ From these words it is not plain what is really intended by Eckhart as the middle term of comparison — whether the idea of *union* or that of *transformation*. The idea of intimate *union* is clearly stated only in the second part of the comparison, but not in the first part, in which rather the idea of *perfect transformation* of one substance into

⁴⁴ Daniels 14.17-15.7: 'Hinc est quod nemo alius preter ipsum est heres nisi per ipsum et in illo membrum ipsius per gratiam et caritatem sit, nec filius. Unde quantumcunque sumus filii non sumus heredes, quia nec filii, nisi in quantum per filiationem in nobis conformamur illi unigenito et primo genito ut imperfectum perfecto, secundum primo, membrum capiti, propter quod et primogenitus dictus est.'

⁴⁵ Daniels 15.20-31: 'Quod autem sequitur ultimo in eodem articulo: transformamur et convertimur in deum, error est. Homo enim sanctus sive bonus quicunque non fit ipse Christus nec primogenitus, nec per ipsum salvantur alii nec est ymago dei, filius dei unigenitus sed est ad ymaginem dei, membrum ipsius qui vere et perfecte filius est primogenitus et heres, nos autem coheredes, ut dictum est et hoc sibi vult similitudo que inducitur. Sicut enim panes multi in diversis altaribus convertuntur in ipsum verum unicum corpus Christi conceptum et natum de virgine, passum sub Pilato, remanentibus tamen accidentibus singulorum, sic mens nostra per gratiam adoptionis et nos unimur vero filio dei, membra unius capitis ecclesie qui est Christus.'

⁴⁶ Daniels 15.26-31. See *supra* n. 45 for Latin text.

another is emphasized. In the second session of the Cologne process⁴⁷ Eckhart expresses himself on the same subject in a way that leaves no doubt that he never intended to teach that we are transformed and changed wholly into God in the same way in which, in the Sacrament of the Altar, the bread is changed wholly into the Body of Christ. We shall treat of this matter in detail towards the end of Part II when discussing Article 10 of the Bull.

In the *second session of the Cologne process*, when confronted with the words taken from his sermon, *Qui audit me non confundetur*: 'If a man had emptied himself completely, in such a way that he had become the only-begotten Son, he would possess all that is possessed by the only-begotten Son,'⁴⁸ Eckhart replied: 'In vain should we be sons of God *save through Him who is in truth the Son of God by nature*, seeing that He is the first-born among many brethren and the first-born of all creation.'⁴⁹

Towards the end of his defense in the same session he declared:

*He (the only-begotten Son) is the Image, we are sons (created) to the Image. He is the Likeness, we (are created) to the Likeness. He is Son by nature, we by adoption, transformed into the same Image (2 Cor. 3.18), that He may be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8.29). He is the heir, we coheirs in so far as we are sons and members of Him; He alone, therefore, is the Saviour.*⁵⁰

To the Article that carried the statement that 'he (man in the state of grace) is that only-begotten Son,' Eckhart replied:

If this be understood in the sense that I am God, it is false; but if it be understood as meaning that *I am He as being a member of Him*, then it is true. As Augustine often states, so, too, when commenting on that word: 'For them do I sanctify Myself' (John 17.19), he says: '*They are I.*'⁵¹

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* *

In his endeavour to discover the real mind of the Master, the reader can hardly have failed to mark in Eckhart's apology for his teaching the repeated occurrence of *three constantly stressed antitheses*.

⁴⁷ Daniels 54.9-26.

⁴⁸ DW 193.11-12. (Clark. 223.)

⁴⁹ Daniels 40.21-30: '...frustra essemus filii dei nisi per ipsum qui est vere filius dei naturaliter, cum sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus et primogenitus omnis creature.'

⁵⁰ Daniels 63.1-6: '*Ipse (unigenitus filius) ymago, nos filii ad ymaginem. Ipse similitudo, nos ad similitudinem. Ipse filius naturalis, nos adoptivi, transformati in eandem ymaginem ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus. Ipse heres, nos coheredes in quantum filii et membra ipsius, propter quod ipse unicus salvator est.*'

⁵¹ Daniels 63.20-24: '...2^o dicit quod "ipse sit ille unigenitus filius." Si intelligatur quod ego sim deus falsum est, si vero intelligatur quod *ego sum ille utpote membrum illius* verum est sicut frequenter dicit Augustinus et super illo "ego pro ipsis sanctifico me ipsum" (Ioh. 17.19), dicit quia *ipsi sunt ego*' (*In Ioh. evangelium tractatus* 108.5 [PL 35.1916]).

*First, that the only-begotten Son is the true Son of the Father by nature, we are sons only by adoption: 'Ipse (unigenitus filius) est filius naturalis, nos adoptivi.'*⁵² It is the unbridgeable distance separating the creature from the Creator. Hence, when Eckhart defends the objectively misleading proposition: 'Between the only-begotten Son and the soul there is no distinction,' with the words: 'It must be said that this is true. For how could anything that is white be *distinct* or *separate*⁵³ from the quality of whiteness? Again: matter and form are one in being, life, and operation,' he forthwith distinguishes sharply between the creature and the creator:

⁵² Daniels 63.2-3.

⁵³ Note carefully that Eckhart here uses the words, 'distinctum' and 'divisum' as synonyms in the sense of 'separate.' This is plain from the conjunction 'seu.'

For the sake of clearness it may be well at this point to define the term, 'distinct.' 'Distinct' is that which is 'not identical.' A thing may be identical either absolutely or only according to reality. A thing is *absolutely identical* in the strict sense only with itself. What is *not absolutely identical* can be *distinct in various ways*. Two objects are said to be distinct *according to reality* when the reality of the one is not the reality of the other. Three persons are distinct from one another, because the reality of the one is not the reality of the other. *Whether the distinct realities are likewise separated from one another is irrelevant with regard to the distinction as such.* Whatever is separate or at least separable is likewise always distinct. But this does not hold good of the reverse. Body and soul of man are distinct from each other, but in a living man they are not separate one from the other. The human nature of Christ is distinct in reality from the Divine Word, that is, the former is not identical with the latter, yet both are most intimately united with each other. *To be distinct according to reality and to be separate from one another do not, therefore, signify the same.*

Whatever things are distinct from one another according to reality are always likewise really distinct from one another, as, for example, three persons, body and soul in man, the human nature of Christ and the Second Person of the Godhead. We call those things *really distinct* which are *distinct independently of our comprehension or conception* and also independently of any comprehension or conception — which, therefore, are distinct not merely for the reason that they are conceived by us as distinct. Whatever is distinct according to reality is therefore really, that is, independently of our understanding, distinct, because the distinct realities as such are present independently of our cognition. Three really existing persons exist independently of our cognition, they exist even though we do not think of them. Their distinction from one another is, therefore, independent of our apprehension, that is, it is real.

There can, however, likewise exist real distinctions, which are not distinctions between different realities. For to be real simply means to exist independently of our conception. And accordingly a real distinction, too, simply means that it exists independently of our comprehension. It is not necessary that it be itself a reality, nor that there be two realities, of which one is not the other. When water in a liquid state freezes, then the frozen water is *really distinct* from the water in liquid state, but it is *not distinct according to reality*. It is really distinct from the latter, because, independently of our comprehension, frozen water is not liquid water. On the other hand, it is not distinct from it according to reality, because it is the same water which before was in a liquid state and now is frozen, just as it likewise remains the same water, when it is changed back from the frozen into a liquid state. We encounter similar real distinctions in the case of many real changes and modifications, which are not founded upon any different realities.

But not on this account is matter form nor conversely. Thus in the proposition, although the holy soul is one with God in accordance with the word of St. John (17.21-22): 'that they, too, may be one in us, even as we are one,' *nevertheless the creature is not the creator, nor is the righteous man God*. One must not believe that all who are righteous are sons of God through different Sons of God. Rather, they are such in the same way as all good men are good, in an analogical sense, from the one and same Goodness.⁵⁴

It is the well-known thought which was considered in Part I, namely that all forms of Being exist in an infinitely perfect (eternal, unchangeable) manner in God alone, the Divine Archetype and Exemplar of all things creatable; in creatures they exist only in an unreal-like, imperfect (ever-changing, perishable) manner through participation in God's Infinite Perfection. It is for this reason that Christ rejected the title attributed to Him, considered according to His human nature: 'Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, even God.'⁵⁵ Therefore Eckhart proceeds: 'And just as there exists one God in all things through His Essence, so does there exist (but) one Son, (who is) God, in all sons of adoption, and they, as has often been declared above, through Him and in Him are sons (of God) in an analogical sense.'⁵⁶

From the Pauline conception of the adoption of the Christian as a son of God⁵⁷ it is for Eckhart but a step to the idea of adoption as brothers of Christ, with whom we are identified in the closest unity conceivable. 'God gave us

⁵⁴ Daniels 64.1-11. For the complete Latin text see n. 56 *infra*.

⁵⁵ Mark 10.17-18. — This teaching concerning the essentially analogical manner of existence of the spiritual perfections in the Creator and His creature, the metaphysical relations existing between the righteous man and righteousness, the good man and goodness, etc., is set forth by Eckhart in speculations of extremely subtle, abstract, and abstruse nature in his famous *Book on Divine Comfort*, a treatise he composed to console the bereaved Queen Agnes of Hungary after the assassination of her father, Emperor Albrecht I of Austria, in 1308.

⁵⁶ Daniels 64.1-14: '3^o dicit articulus quod "inter unigenitum filium et animam non est aliqua distinctio." Dicendum quod verum est. Qumodo enim esset quid album *distinctum seu divisum* ab albedine? Rursus, materia et forma sunt unum in esse, vivere, et operari. Nec propter hoc materia est forma nec e converso. Sic in proposito quamvis anima sancta unum sit cum deo secundum illud Ioh. 17.21.-22: "ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint sicut et nos unum sumus," *non tamen creatura est creator, nec homo iustus est deus*. Nec putandum est quod alio et alio filio dei iusti quique sint filii dei sed sicut omnes boni ab una et eadem bonitate analogice boni sunt. *Et sicut unus est deus in omnibus per essentiam sic unus est filius deus in omnibus filiis adoptionis et illi per ipsum et in ipso sunt filii analogice, sicut supra frequenter ostensum est.*' — Cf. also Daniels 65.9-13: 'Non est ergo putandum quod alius sit filius quo Christus eius est filius et alius quo nos nominamur et sumus filii dei, sed id ipsum et is ipse, qui Christus filius est naturaliter genitus, nos filii dei sumus analogice cui coherendo utpote herenti coheredes sumus.'

⁵⁷ Romans 8.16-17; Galat. 4.7.

even in this world the power to become sons of God, even only-begotten sons, or rather *the only-begotten Son*, in order that we may live by Him.⁵⁸ The thought is wholly orthodox, as we shall presently demonstrate, but the phrasology unmistakably Eckhartian.

The *second antithesis* which Eckhart constantly emphasizes in the course of his defence is that *the only-begotten Son is the true 'Image' and 'Likeness' of the Father; we are created only 'to the Image and Likeness': 'Christus primogenitus est ymago et similitudo dei patris genita, nos autem ad ymaginem et similitudinem et creati.'*⁵⁹ In the first session of the Cologne process Eckhart strongly underlined the same idea: *'non quidquam creatum est ymago, sed ad ymaginem creati sunt angelus et homo. Ymago enim proprie et similitudo non est proprie facta nec opus nature.'*⁶⁰

The expression, 'to the Image and Likeness' — 'ad imaginem et similitudinem' — goes back to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, where we read the words of God: 'Let us make man *to our image and likeness*' ... 'And God created man *to His own image; to the image of God* He created him.'⁶¹

In his analysis of the concept, 'Imago,' St. Thomas Aquinas states that an *Image* in the full, strict sense of the term is only then present when the *likeness* is *produced precisely through the activity of bringing forth*. This, however, is the case only when the *likeness* is *produced through birth or generation*. Furthermore, for the verification of this concept in its full perfection it is necessary that the *Image* be found in something of *specifically the same nature* as that of the thing through whose activity the likeness is brought forth. From these premisses St. Thomas concludes: (1) that *in the Godhead* the concept, 'Image,' is *proper only to the Son*, not to the Holy Ghost; (2) that the concept, 'Image of God,' is *verified perfectly only in the Son of God; man is but an imperfect image of God in an analogous sense*, and is therefore called '*to the image of God.*'⁶²

⁵⁸ LW 4.58.3-5: 'Deus etiam in hoc mundo concessit nobis potestatem filios dei fieri, etiam unigenitos sive *potius unigenitum, sic ut vivamus per eum.*'

⁵⁹ Daniels 54.24-26. — Here we again meet with the antithesis between 'genita' (begotten) and 'creati' (created), to which attention was called in Part I. There we observed that all things created or merely creatable were 'begotten,' not 'created,' in the Divine Word from all Eternity, that is, in their eternal eidetic pre-existence in the mind of God. As soon, however, as they enter into a state of separate created existence, then they are no longer 'geniti,' but 'creati,' for the concept 'Image' is then verified in them only in an imperfect and analogous sense, as we shall presently explain. One must distinguish carefully in what sense these two terms are used in the concrete text, as Eckhart often uses the term 'geniti' as synonymous with 'creati,' but *never vice versa when he is referring to the eternal eidetic pre-existence of things in the mind of God.*

⁶⁰ Daniels 18.22-24.

⁶¹ Genesis 1.26-27.

⁶² St. Thomas, *S. Th.* 1.35.1.2; cf. also 1.27.2.

When, then, Eckhart, as a faithful disciple of St. Thomas, whose philosophico-theological system was obligatory throughout the entire Dominican Order since the General Chapters of 1278-9 and 1286, in defence of his doctrine stated: 'Christus primogenitus est ymago et similitudo dei patris genita, nos autem ad ymaginem et similitudinem et creati,' he emphasized a truth which, in the Scholastic terminology of the period, could hardly have been more sharply formulated — the truth of the infinite, unbridgeable distance which separates the creature from His Creator.

In order to bring home to his hearers the extreme importance of the antithesis, 'Imago' — 'ad imaginem,' 'Similitudo' — 'ad similitudinem,' Eckhart made use of the homely *analogy of a mirror*. When a person stands before a number of mirrors, his image is reflected simultaneously in all of them. All the reflections produced in the various mirrors, in so far as they are merely reflections, are caused by and depend for their existence and duration wholly upon the one object reflected. Nor is there more than one object reflected, even though there be many reflections of the one person standing in front of the mirrors. Whether, however, he be reflected in one or several mirrors or in none at all, he continues existing so long as his nature continues to exist, in complete independence of the existence of all mirrors possibly present.⁶³ Through this simple example Eckhart would again bring home to his listeners the momentous fundamental truth of the essentially analogical manner of existence in the Creator and in the creature.

In the *Gutachten* the Avignon Commission of theologians rejected this example of the mirror as contributing nothing towards the verification of the orthodoxy of the eventual Article 22 of the Bull. It was justified in so doing, as it based its argumentation upon the *objective, obvious sense* of the Article, that is to say, upon the assumption that the words, 'Pater generat me suum filium et eundem filium,' expressed the *physical identity and unity* of the only-begotten Son of the Father with the speaker of these words or with any righteous man.⁶⁴ But, as we shall presently demonstrate, these words were clearly intended by Eckhart to express, not a physical, but a *moral identity and unity* of the only-begotten Son with all His redeemed brethren. When the words are understood in this (*subjective*) sense it must be admitted that the analogy of the mirror used by Eckhart is quite appropriate and valid for establishing the orthodoxy of the Article.

In yet another way the Master uses the analogy of a mirror in which the sun shines, to emphasize the truth of the unbridgeable abyss yawning between Creator and creature. The reflection of the sun is seen in the mirror and the

⁶³ Cf. Daniels 64.14-65.4. — Cf. LW 3.19.5-6: 'Imago enim, in quantum imago est, nihil sui accipit a subiecto in quo est, sed totum suum esse accipit ab obiecto, cuius est imago.'

⁶⁴ Pelster 1117.28-1118.13.

mirror sends back the light to the sun, but they remain distinct and separate. 'So it is with God. God is in the soul, with His Nature, with His Being, and with His Divinity, *and yet He is not the soul*.⁶⁵ The reflection of the soul, this is in God God (Himself), and yet the soul remains what *it* is.'⁶⁶

The *third antithesis* constantly stressed by Eckhart is that *we are not the only-begotten Son of God, but members of Him who is the Head*.

No other save Him is heir nor son except through Him and in Him, as a *member of Him* through grace and love. We, consequently, are neither sons nor heirs, *save in so far as through (the grace of) Sonship in us we are conformed to that only-begotten and first-born Son*, as what is imperfect (is conformed) to what is perfect..., *as the member (is conformed) to the head*.⁶⁷ ... a man who is holy or good... *is not the only-begotten Son of God, but a member of Him* who is truly and perfectly the first-born Son and heir *Through the grace of Adoption we are united with the true Son of God as members of the One Head of the Church, which is Christ*.⁶⁸ ... He is Son by nature, we by adoption, transformed into the same Image, that He may be the First-born among many brethren. He is the Heir, *we coheirs in so far as we are sons and members of Him*.⁶⁹... (The article) says that 'he (man in the state of grace) is that only-begotten Son' ... if this be understood as meaning that *I am He as being a member of Him, then it is true*. As Augustine often states, so, too, when commenting on that word: '*For them do I sanctify Myself*' (John, 17.19), he says: '*They are I*.'⁷⁰

It is in the light of these constantly recurring texts, which repeatedly emphasize the truth that we are not the only-begotten Son of God but *members of Him who is the Head*, that we must search for the real meaning, intended by Eckhart, of the words of Article 22 of the Bull, *in so far as* these exhibit in any appreciably approximative degree the precise words uttered by him in any of his sermons or writings on the subject in question.

As we have seen, Eckhart denied ever having said, thought, written, or preached that a man in the state of Divine Love is deified in the sense that he is rendered divine in nature.⁷¹ He expressly rejected the heretical interpretation of a strictly *physical identity of nature* which had been ascribed to him, by declaring: 'If the words ("I am that only-begotten Son") be understood in the sense that I am God, they are false.'⁷² He explicitly disowned the

⁶⁵ This definitively rules out a pantheistic interpretation.

⁶⁶ Cf. Pfeiffer 2, Sermon. 56 (p. 180.34-181.1). — Our text is a translation from Quint, ME Sermon. 26 (273.1-9). Cf. Clark 184.)

⁶⁷ Daniels 14.26, 15.5. — For Latin text see n. 44 *supra*.

⁶⁸ Daniels 15.20-31. — For Latin text see n. 45 *supra*.

⁶⁹ Daniels 63.1-6. — For Latin text see n. 50 *supra*.

⁷⁰ Daniels 63.20-24. — For Latin text see n. 51 *supra*.

⁷¹ Daniels 13.17-21. — For Latin text see n. 43 *supra*.

⁷² Daniels 63.20-21. — For Latin text see n. 51 *supra*.

same heretical interpretation in the words: 'A man who is holy or good does *not* become Christ nor the first-born, nor is he the Image of God, the only-begotten Son of God.'⁷³

It is to be observed that in the last two passages just cited Eckhart not only repudiated the heretical interpretation of a strictly physical identity of nature, but *implicitly* likewise that of a *hypostatic union* of our nature with the Divine Word. For had he held the latter hypothesis, he might truthfully have said, by the communication of idioms, that he *was* the only-begotten Son, just as the Man Christ bore witness before the high priest that He was the Son of God.⁷⁴ To suppose, however, that Eckhart rendered mere lip service to orthodoxy by making these statements with mental reservations, excluding tacitly either the one or the other heretical meaning, is unfair to his honesty of purpose and his known unimpeachable integrity of character. In his defence he could proudly affirm that he had never incurred the censure of heresy or infamy and, in witness thereof, could appeal to his whole life and teaching as well as the acclaiming judgment both of his brethren in religion in the whole order and of the people of both sexes throughout the kingdom.⁷⁵ In a letter addressed to Pope John XXII, his religious superiors, through the Vicar-General Procurator of the order, upheld the honor of the accused by affirming that no one who had a knowledge of his life could doubt the orthodoxy of his faith and the holiness of his life.⁷⁶

After thus clearly, in unequivocal terms, disassociating himself wholly, in a *negative* way, from any heretical intention or meaning, the Master now propounds, in *positive* terms, the orthodox sense — his own authentic interpretation — of the words, 'The Father begets me as His Son and the same son.' And this he does in the three antithetical propositions just set forth, which emphasize the three prerogatives that constitute the distinctive marks of every man, woman, and child who, in the widest sense, through the Indwelling Spirit and sanctifying grace, belong to the Church founded by Christ: every one of these countless millions is a child of the Heavenly Father by adoption; he is created to the (supernatural) Image and Likeness of God; he is a member of the only-begotten Son, who is the Head of the Church. A study of Eckhart's self-vindication will reveal that each group or concatenation of these three antitheses stressed by the Master always culminates in the one monumental thought: man in the state of Divine Love, through the grace of Adoption, is an integral '*member of Him who is truly and perfectly the Only-begotten Son,*' he is a '*member of the one Head of the Church, who is Christ.*' Though not naming

⁷³ Daniels 15.21-24. — For Latin text see n. 45 *supra*.

⁷⁴ Matthew 26.63-64.

⁷⁵ Daniels 1.12-15.

⁷⁶ Denifle, ZfdA 29.264.

it as such, Eckhart here clearly enunciates, in unmistakable terms, the *doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ*. And what he here clearly expresses he declares in his sermon, in characteristically bold, Eckhartian formulation, with words that are to be understood in a mystical sense: 'The Father begets me as His Son and the same Son.'

It would seem to be of decisive importance for the determination of Eckhart's own interpretation of these words of Article 22, that he not only set forth, as clearly as St. Thomas himself, the Catholic doctrine of immanent supernatural *gratia gratum faciens* in its significance for the individual;⁷⁷ he likewise assimilated the Pauline-Augustinian concept of our membership in Christ through the grace of Adoption in its dogmatic and ethical aspects. The Pauline idea of the mysterious union existing between the Faithful as members and Christ as the Head⁷⁸ was most fruitful for the devotion of the early Christians in the first centuries. This thought is often to be found in the works of the early Church Fathers, especially in the sermons of St. Augustine.⁷⁹ But in the same measure as the idea of the Mystical Body of Christ is prominent in the works of the Fathers, it occurs less frequently in the writings of the Scholastics, until in more recent times theologians of the mould of Johann Adam Mohler (1796-1838) and Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888) once more endued it with strong attractive power. On the basis of the *Rechtfertigungsschrift*, Father Augustine Daniels, O.S.B., the first editor of that valuable document, was likewise the first to point out the significance of the doctrine of the Corpus Christi Mysticum for an understanding of Eckhart.⁸⁰ To be sure, so long as the MSS of the Master's Scriptural commentaries were not known, one might have been inclined to believe that Eckhart's vindication of his teaching through his frequent appeal to this thoroughly Catholic doctrine was somewhat strained and artificial, and might have suspected that possibly it had been invoked by him as a final resource in a desperate last-ditch stand rather than based upon a strong, personal conviction. The Latin works of the Master — and among them especially the Scriptural commentaries — irrefutably demonstrate the untenableness of such an opinion. When we remember how much Augustine, who speaks so often of the doctrine of Christ's Mystical Body, meant to Eckhart and how akin both writers were intellectually and spiritually — witness Eckhart's Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, the Master's most important work, which may be regarded as his favorite intellectual offspring — it would not be unreasonable to assume *a priori* that a doctrine,

⁷⁷ Cf. Karrer, *Das System* 113-128.

⁷⁸ Rom. 12.4-5; Cor. 12.12ff.; Ephes. 4.11-16; 5.23, 29-30.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Serm.* 341.11 (PL 39.1500-1), 361.14 (PL 39.1606-7), 224 (PL 38.1093-95), 227 (PL 38.1099-1101); also other quotations from Augustine cited elsewhere in this study.

⁸⁰ Daniels xviii.

so genuinely Catholic as well as dear to the heart of the great bishop of Hippo, was likewise congenial to the spirituality of the Master. As evidence that such was in fact the case, that the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ was one with which Eckhart was quite familiar, we cite two passages taken from different Latin works of his.

In a sermon on the words of St. John 6.50: 'Hic est panis de caelo descendens,' he says: 'Hoc est sacramentum corporis Christi. Corpus autem Christi est ecclesia, quae consurgit in unitatem corporis ex multis fidelibus. Unde istud est sacramentum unitatis ecclesiae (Rom. 12.5): "omnes unum corpus" etc.'⁸¹ It will be observed that Eckhart's approach to the doctrine of the Corpus Christi Mysticum is here the same as that to be found so frequently in St. Augustine, namely from the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.⁸²

In his Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, commenting upon John 3.13,⁸³ 'Et nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo, Filius hominis, qui est in caelo,' Eckhart states that these words are interpreted, 'sexto, de Christo capite et membris suis. Unde *Gregorius*⁸⁴ dicit: "quia nos unum cum illo iam facti sumus," "is qui in caelo semper est, in nobis ad caelum cotidie ascendit."' Then follow three quotations from *Augustine*. In the first passage quoted Augustine interprets the same words of St. John in the sense of the Mystical Body of Christ:

Si divina substantia longe distantior potuit suscipere humanam naturam, ut una persona fieret, quanto credibilis alii sancti fiunt cum homine Christo unus Christus, ut omnibus ascendentibus ipse unus ascendat in caelum, qui de caelo descendit? Fit ergo credibilior fides ex incredibilioribus creditis.⁸⁵

After citing Augustine's words from the passage just quoted, 'Non aliud deputat (esteem, consider, regard) Christus corpus suum, id est ecclesiam suam, quam se ipsum,' Eckhart gives the words of Augustine's *Expositio* of Psalm 85:

(Christus) secum nos faciens unum hominem, caput et corpus. Oramus per illum, ad illum, et in illo. Dicimus cum illo et dicit nobiscum; cum dicimus in illo, dicit in nobis. Nemo dicat: 'non Christus hoc (sc. verba Psalmi 85) dicit' aut 'non ego dico'; si se in Christi corpore cognoscit, utrumque dicat: 'et Christus dicit,' 'et ego dico.' Noli aliquid dicere sine illo, et non dicit aliquid sine te.⁸⁶

⁸¹ LW 4, *Sermo* 5.2.46 (p. 45.1-3).

⁸² Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 229 (PL 38.1103).

⁸³ LW 3.298.16, 301.9.

⁸⁴ *Moral.* 27.15.30 (PL 76.416).

⁸⁵ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1.31.60 (PL 44.144-5).

⁸⁶ *Enarratio in Ps.* 85.4, 1 (PL 37.1084, 1082; CCL 39.1179, 1177).

The third quotation is likewise taken from Augustine on Psalm 85.⁸⁷ Eckhart first gives a free rendering of a part of Augustine's explanation: 'Verba Christi in forma servi vel verba omnis fidelis, unum corpus cum Christo (constituentis), qui est sanctus, fideles, corpus suum, sanctificans, secundum illud: "sancti estote, quoniam ego sanctus sum"' (Lev. 19.2); then he cites verbatim from Augustine: 'qui "membra facti sunt corporis Christi et dicunt se sanctos non esse, iniuriam faciunt ipsi capiti cuius membra facti sunt."' ⁸⁸ Eckhart concludes this section of his exposition of John 3.13, interpreted in the sense of the Corpus Christi Mysticum:

Hinc est quod calcato pede lingua usualiter et veraciter dicit calcanti pedem: tu me calcas. Quamvis enim lingua non sit pes, sed multum differant loco, figura et officio, *propter unitatem tamen qua membra sunt unius corporis, unum esse et unum vivere et ab una anima habentia*, calcato pede lingua vere dicit se calcari. *Maiores autem est unio iustae animae, in quantum iusta, cum deo iustitia quam membrorum corporalium in uno corpore.*

'The union of the righteous soul as such with God who is Righteousness (or: with God as Righteousness) is greater than that between the physical members in *one* body.' From this section of Eckhart's Commentary on St. John's Gospel it is evident how intimately he had assimilated the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, how deeply he was imbued with *the Pauline-Augustinian concept of the moral identity and unity of Christ the Head with His redeemed brethren as members of His One Body, through the grace of Adoption.*

The validity of the interpretation of the words, 'The Father begets me as His Son and the same Son,' in the sense of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is, however, not only based upon the weighty witness of Eckhart's Latin works; it is likewise upheld by strong intrinsic evidence. For it is only in accordance with this interpretation that the second part of Article 22 ('Whatever God works is one: therefore He begets me as His Son without any distinction') has its full logical demonstrative force — that intended by Eckhart — which it would lack were it to be understood in the sense assumed in the Bull. This latter consequence was clearly perceived by the Avignon Commission of theologians.

Sentencia vera est in se scilicet quod idem Dei filius a patre naturaliter genitus et per quem in filios Dei adoptamur. Nichil tamen facit ad propositum, quia licet idem sit unigenitus Dei filius in se et sit omnia (*sic*) indistinctus in se et a se, tamen non est idem cum omnibus filiis adoptionis

⁸⁷ *Enarratio in Ps.* 85.4 (PL 37.1084; CCL 39.1179f.).

⁸⁸ At this point the codices and editions diverge. The *editio Lovaniensium* reads 'sancta sunt'; the *editio Maurinorum* (reprinted in PL and CCL) has 'sancta non sunt.' However Eckhart likewise further on, in his *Expositio s. evang. sec. Ioh.* 381 (LW 3, the critical edition of Eckhart's work, from which all texts of Augustine referred to above in Notes 85-88 have been taken), writes: 'facti sunt.'

nec omnes filii adopcionis sunt idem cum unigenito Dei filio et absque omni distincione, ut articulus ponit.⁸⁹

The Commission's argumentation is evidently based upon the assumption of the affirmation by Eckhart of a *physical identity* between the only-begotten Son and the adopted sons of the Father. We have already demonstrated above that this assumption is without any solid foundation. If, on the other hand, the words of the second part of Article 22 be interpreted in the light of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, since the only-begotten Son of God by nature is the same as He through whom we become sons of God by Adoption and *members of His Mystical Body*, it may be said truly that 'God begets me as His Son without any distinction.'

Now what did Eckhart really mean by these words, 'sine omni distincione?'

In the first session of the Cologne process, while conceding that the words, 'God begets me as His Son without any distinction,' are at first sight evil-sounding, Eckhart nevertheless defended the orthodoxy of the article:

(This proposition) is, notwithstanding, true, because the Son who is begotten in me is that very Son who, without any distinction of nature, is with the Father. He is One (and) identical (= *indistinctus*)⁹⁰, without any distinction, not one in me and somebody else in another man (not different in me than in any other man). (He is,) likewise, identical with me (*indistinctus a me*) and not divided or separate (from me), as though He were not in me; for He is in all things and everywhere, inasmuch as He is God.

For convenient comparison we here cite the Latin text:

Verum est tamen quia filius in me genitus ipse est filius sine omni distincione nature cum patre, ipse unus, sine omni distincione *indistinctus*, non alius in me et alius in alio homine. Item *indistinctus a me* et indivisus sive non separatus, quasi non sit in me; ipse enim in omnibus et ubique est utpote deus. Hanc poto (= puto) esse veram et sanam fidem christianam, et hoc est dare honorem deo et filio eius unico per quem nos pater regeneravit et sua ineffabili caritate in filios adoptavit.⁹¹

The term 'indistinctus,' as used by Eckhart, may have two completely different meanings. First of all, it may be synonymous with 'identical' either by *perfect (adequate) identity*, as when a thing is identical absolutely, wholly and entirely, in all respects (it is plain that a thing is absolutely identical, in the strict sense, only with itself), or by *imperfect (inadequate) identity*, as when a thing is identical only in part with something else, of which it constitutes not the whole, but only a part (e.g., my hand is imperfectly identified with my body). In the text just quoted the Son is said to be identical in nature

⁸⁹ Pelster 1118.1-8.

⁹⁰ We refer the reader to n. 53 *supra*.

⁹¹ Daniels 15.10-17.

with the Father, by perfect (adequate) identity — ‘sine omni distinctione naturae indistinctus.’ If the words, ‘indistinctus a me,’ be taken as expressing a *relation of identity*, it is plain that they can only then have a logical and *orthodox sense* (which, we must remember, Eckhart is here trying to demonstrate, as the context unmistakably shows), if these words be interpreted as referring to ‘me’ as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, of which He is the Head. Then, and only then, may I be said, in any true sense, to be identical with the Son, just as any member of the body is said to be identical with the body — not in the full sense, by perfect, adequate identity, as when we say the Son is identical in nature with the Father, but in the limited sense that I, as a member of His Mystical Body and an integral part of that Body as a whole, am identical, by imperfect, inadequate identity, with the One, Indivisible only-begotten Son of the Father.⁹² Had Eckhart intended to defend the words of Article 22 in the sense of a *perfect, adequate physical identity* of the supernaturally reborn man with the Divine Word, *he would have been upholding precisely that which repeatedly he so emphatically repudiated.*

But the term, ‘indistinctus,’ may be interpreted in another sense. For, as we have already seen, Eckhart also uses the terms, ‘distinctum’ and ‘divisum’ or ‘separatum’ as synonyms in the sense of ‘separate.’ This usage of the term by Eckhart is not uncommon. Thus, in the passage we considered earlier, in which Eckhart defended the orthodoxy of the proposition, ‘inter unigenitum filium et animam non est aliqua distinctio,’⁹³ he said immediately after these words:

Dicendum quod verum est. Quomodo enim esset quid album *distinctum seu divisum* (separated) ab albedine? Rursus, materia et forma sunt *unum* in esse, vivere et operari. (They are *one*, i.e. *united, not separate* in being, life and operation; they are *united, but not identical*, for he immediately adds:) Nec propter hoc materia est forma nec e converso. Sic in proposito quamvis anima sancta *unum* sit cum deo secundum illud Joh. 17.21-22: ‘ut et ipsi in nobis *unum* sint sicut et nos *unum* sumus,’ non tamen creatura est creator, nec homo iustus est deus.

For this reason the old glossator noted on the top of the page above the column the words: ‘inter unigenitum filium et animam non est *distinctio id est divisio*,’ and again in the margin beside the line containing the word, ‘distinctio,’ the words, ‘id est divisio.’ In the text we are now considering (Daniels 15.10-17; for Latin text see *supra* at n. 91), according to this latter interpre-

⁹² This idea of a real, though imperfect, inadequate identity is elucidated by Matthias Joseph Scheeben: ‘Auch am menschlichen Leibe sind ja die Glieder vom Haupte und die Seele vom Leibe der Substanz nach verschieden, und doch sind sie wahrhaft eins, weil sie ein Ganzes bilden und nicht getrennt für sich bestehen’ (*Die Herrlichkeiten der göttlichen Gnade* [17th ed. Freiburg im Breisgau 1949] 126).

⁹³ Daniels 64.1-9. Cf. *supra* n. 56.

tation of the term, 'distinctum' = 'separate,' taken together with the words, 'indistinctus a me' = 'not separate from me,' 'united with me,' which are pleonastically strengthened by the words, 'et indivisus sive non separatus,' and then still more stressed by the words: 'quasi non sit in me; ipse enim in omnibus et ubique est utpote deus,' Eckhart would appear to be affirming emphatically, not so much the idea of our moral identity with the Mystical Body of Christ (inasmuch as we are members thereof and an integral part of the whole), as rather *our intimate union with and inseparability from Christ, our Head*. This Son, who is one and identical with the Father in nature; this Son, who, through His power and essence, is in every part of the universe, in every part of every creature, far more perfectly than the soul is in every part of the body, and who communicates to every creature being, life, and activity; this selfsame Son is, in like manner, most intimately and inseparably united ('indistinctus a me et indivisus sive non separatus') with each and every one of us His adopted children and members of His Mystical Body, so long as we, the branches (to use our Lord's own beautiful metaphor), abide in Him, the Vine, and from Him receive the quickening sap of His Sanctifying Grace.⁹⁴

To sum up: both the clearly recognizable general trend of Eckhart's argumentation as well as the two-fold sense in which he uses the term, 'distinctum,' would seem to demand that the final words, 'sine omni distinctione,' in the last part of Article 22 'Pater generat me suum filium sine omni distinctione,' be interpreted as signifying *either our moral identity with the Mystical Body of Christ or* — that which comes to the same thing — *our intimate and inseparable union with Him, our Head, through Sanctifying Grace or, as Eckhart expresses it, through the 'grace of Adoption.'* Unless, therefore, we would assume that Eckhart first affirmed a *physical identity secundum naturam* of the spiritually reborn man with the only-begotten Son — an identity such as exists in the Godhead between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — and then subsequently affirmed the contradictorily opposite, we must accept as the most probable alternative that it was his intention to teach the moral identity existing between the spiritually reborn man, as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, and its Head, the only-begotten Son of God.

In corroboration of this interpretation we cite the following passage from Eckhart's self-vindication:⁹⁵

Planum est quod in eterna vita erit deus omne et omnia in omnibus
(1 Cor. 15.28). Adhuc autem *omnes fideles cum Christo primogenito unum*

⁹⁴ Cf. Daniels 65.14-18: 'Nec est putandum quasi ipse filius dei deus sit aliquid extrinsecum sive distans a nobis ad quod analogemur sicut est ymago obiecta speculis, sed ipse utpote deus indivisus et unicus per essentiam intimus est et proximus unicuique nostrum, *in ipso vivimus, movemur et sumus*' (Acts 17.28).'

⁹⁵ Daniels 54.32-55.5.

corpus sumus (1 Cor. 12.12 seq. et 27). *Totius autem et partium unum est esse et unum operari.* Si unum patitur conpatiuntur omnia, si unum gaudet gaudent omnia, quinyimo *Augustinus* super illo: 'Ego pro eis sanctifico me ipsum' (Ioh. 17.19) sic ait: 'quia *ipsi sunt ego* in presenti.'⁹⁶ Perfectus homo citra et sub deo non quiescit, non est servus. (Ioh. 15.15:) 'iam non dicam vos servos sed amicos.' Amor ordinem nescit, ut ait *Bernardus*,⁹⁷ aut enim pares invenit aut pares facit.

From all that has been said it is evident that the concept of our moral identity with the Mystical Body of Christ was for Eckhart no mere abstraction or lifeless doctrine such as it is for so many Christians. In his spiritual life this metaphysical truth was experienced by him as immediately and with the same overpowering impact as though it pertained to the physical order. He apprehended clearly that the words of St. Paul: 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being,'⁹⁸ have their validity not only in the physical order of being but likewise, and far more, in the supernatural sphere of existence. He realized that it is Christ who communicates to His redeemed brethren all '*being, life, and activity*'⁹⁹ in the supernatural order, so that we may in all truth say with the Apostle, 'I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.'¹⁰⁰ With this consciousness and in this sense, namely, that we, through the grace of Adoption, receive *all supernatural 'being, life, and activity' from, in, and through Christ, who is the only-begotten Son of the Father and of whose Mystical Body we are integral members*, he could truly declare: 'The Father begets me as His son and the same Son.'

If one, however, were to assert that by these words, Eckhart, while admitting the infinite distance between Creator and creature, intended to affirm, not a physical identity according to nature, but a *physical union of natures in one and the same Divine Person*, that is, a *hypostatic union* between ourselves and God, so that we, losing our individual hypostases, would be taken up into the higher unity of the Divine Personality, — were one, I say, to assert this, he would be overlooking the clear statements of the Master: 'If the words, "I am that only-begotten Son," be understood in the sense that I am God, they are false,'¹⁰¹ and: 'A man who is holy or good does not become Christ... nor is he the Image of God, the only-begotten Son of God.'¹⁰² Elsewhere Eckhart

⁹⁶ In his *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus* 108.5 (PL 35.1916; CCL 36.618) Augustine asks: 'Quid est enim, *Et pro eis ego sanctifico me ipsum* nisi, eos in me ipso sanctifico, cum et ipsi sint ego?'

⁹⁷ From an anonymous *Tractatus de charitate* 2.9 (PL 184.588).

⁹⁸ Acts 17.28.

⁹⁹ Cf. Daniels 54.33-36, 64.11-13, 65.14-18.

¹⁰⁰ Galat. 2.20.

¹⁰¹ Daniels 63.20-21.

¹⁰² Daniels 15.21-24.

denies that 'we are God (in the same way) as man is God in Christ the First-born, who is the begotten Image and Likeness of God the Father, while we are (made) to the Image and Likeness and (are) created.'¹⁰³ These pronouncements definitively rule out any interpretation in the sense of a physical union of natures in one Divine Hypostasis. For precisely in that case Eckhart might have affirmed, by the communication of idioms, in all truth: '*I am* the only-begotten Son,' just as it is correct to say: '*The Man Jesus (not: Jesus as man) is the Son of God.*'

*
* * *

From Eckhart's doctrine on the Corpus Christi Mysticum new light falls upon many dark passages in his sermons and, not least, upon a number of the condemned propositions. We shall consider briefly three of these.

Article 20. *Quod bonus homo est unigenitus Filius Dei.*¹⁰⁴ Condemned as evil-sounding, temerarious, and suspect of heresy.

As the words sound, they might easily be interpreted as affirming either a physical identity of nature or a hypostatical union between 'the good man' and the only-begotten Son of God. As we have demonstrated above, Eckhart nowhere interprets these words in either of these two senses, but more than once explicitly excludes the former interpretation and both implicitly and explicitly rules out the latter. Since this is so and since, on the other hand, he often explains similar texts in the sense of the Mystical Body of Christ, as we have seen, this is the most natural and probable interpretation of the proposition. In another context Eckhart *clearly interprets these same words* in the sense of the Mystical Body of Christ: '*... a man who is holy or good.. . is not the only-begotten Son of God, but a member of Him who is truly and perfectly the first-born Son and heir. ... Through the grace of Adoption we are united with the true Son of God as members of the One Head of the Church, which is Christ.*'^{104a}

The early Fathers themselves frequently use similar pointed expressions in the same sense of the Corpus Christi Mysticum. Thus St. Augustine, *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus* 21.8:

¹⁰³ Daniels 54.22-26: 'In sacramento enim altaris convertitur totum in totum, non sic in nobis. Unde non sequitur quod nos simus deus sicut in Christo primogenito homo est deus' etc. For the context in which these words occur, see the quotation in full *infra* at n. 116 of Article 10 of the Bull.

¹⁰⁴ Denifle, *Archiv* 2.638. It is to be noted that, while hitherto almost all the articles of the Bull could be found in the original in the various works of Eckhart, Article 20 forms an exception in that up to the present no one has been able to identify it.

^{104a} See *supra* n. 45.

Ergo gratulemur et agamus gratias, non solum *nos christianos factos esse, sed Christum*. Intelligitis, fratres, gratiam *Dei super nos capitis?* Admiramini, gaudete, *Christus facti sumus*. *Si enim caput ille, nos membra; totus homo, ille et nos*. [After citing the words of St. Paul, Ephes, 4.14, 13, he continues:] *Plenitudo ergo Christi, caput et membra*. Quid est, caput et membra? *Christus et Ecclesia*. Arrogaremus enim nobis hoc superbe, nisi ipse dignaretur hoc promittere, qui per apostolum eundem dicit: '*Vos autem estis corpus Christi et membra* (de membro)' (1 Cor. 12.27).¹⁰⁵

So again in his treatise, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1.31:

Si enim divina substantia longe distantior atque incomparabili diversitate sublimior, potuit propter nos ita suscipere humanam substantiam, ut una persona fieret, ac sic filius hominis qui erat in terra per carnis infirmitatem, idem ipse esset in coelo per participatam carni divinitatem: quanto credibilis alii *homines sancti et fideles eius fiunt cum homine Christo unus Christus, ut omnibus per eius hanc gratiam societatemque ascendentibus, ipse unus Christus ascendat in coelum*, qui de coelo descendit? Sic et Apostolus ait: '*Sicut in uno corpore multa membra habemus, omnia autem membra corporis cum sint multa, unum est corpus; ita et Christus*' (1 Cor. 12.12). *Non dixit, Ita et Christi, id est, corpus Christi, vel membra Christi: sed, ita et Christus; unum Christum appellans caput et corpus*.¹⁰⁶

Any professional theologian will have no hesitation in admitting that the proposition, 'A good man is the only-begotten Son of God,' interpreted in Eckhart's above established sense of the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*, is just as orthodox in meaning as Augustine's declarations, 'Nos Christus facti sumus,' and 'homines sancti et fideles eius fiunt cum homine Christo unus Christus.' Christ, with whom, according to Augustine, we are become one is, in truth, none other than the only-begotten Son of God, and the only begotten Son of God, with whom Eckhart identifies (by moral, imperfect identity) every 'good man,' is the same Christ, of whose Body, according to St. Paul, we are members. Unfortunately, in Articles 20, 21, and 22 of the Bull, Eckhart does not take the trouble to express as clearly as St. Augustine the distinction between the two dogmas of the Hypostatical Union in Christ and the Mystical Body of Christ, and thus incurs the danger of begetting heretical conceptions in the minds of his hearers. The difficulty of understanding the intended meaning of these propositions is further aggravated in that Eckhart does not formally therein affirm the moral identity existing between us and *Christ*, but rather that existing between us and *the only-begotten Son of God*, which is the one characteristically Eckhartian conception with which he is ever preoccupied -- the conception, namely, of the only-begotten Son as the Eternal Image and Word of the Father, with whom he knows himself to be identified, not only by

¹⁰⁵ PL 35.1568-69; CCL 36.216f.

¹⁰⁶ PL 44.144-5.

moral identity as an integral member of His Mystical Body, but likewise by physical and absolute identity as a Divine Idea and Prototype in the mind of God from all Eternity.

Article 21. *Homo nobilis est ille unigenitus Filius Dei, quem Pater aeternaliter genuit.*¹⁰⁷ — Condemned as evil-sounding, temerarious, and suspect of heresy.

Article 21 of the Bull refers to the German sermon, *Surge, illuminare, Jerusalem.* The passage, in which the words of the Article occur, reads, in its full context, as follows:

David said: 'This day have I begotten Thee.'¹⁰⁸ What is today? Eternity. I have begotten myself as Thee, and Thee as myself, eternally. Nevertheless, *the noble, humble, man does not content himself with being that only-begotten Son, whom the Father has eternally begotten*; he wants also to be a father and to assume the same likeness of eternal fatherhood, and to beget Him by whom I am eternally begotten.¹⁰⁹

The whole context in which the words of the condemned Article occur would seem to suggest that they be should interpreted in the sense of a *physical and absolute identification from all Eternity* of the 'homo nobilis' with the only-begotten Son as the Eternal Image and Word of the Father. They would then refer to our eternal eidetic pre-existence as 'forms,' 'ideas' in the mind of God. The words of the preceding Article 20, regarded absolutely, likewise admit of the same explanation. It is plain that such an interpretation of both Articles would be wholly orthodox.

The official document drawn up by the Avignon Commission of theologians states: 'Istos duos articulos (20 and 21) dictus magister (Eckhart), ut sonant, dicit erroneos, sed eas (*sic*) verificat dicens quod idem est Dei filius unigenitus in trinitate et *quo omnes fideles filii Dei sunt per adopcionem.*'¹¹⁰ In the light of all that has been said another solidly probable interpretation of these undoubtedly daring and captious words of Article 21 is that which we have suggested for the preceding Article 20: As members of the Mystical Body of Christ we are identified (by imperfect, inadequate, *moral* identity) with that only-begotten Son, whom the Father begot eternally.

Notwithstanding the reason just cited which *the Avignon Commission of theologians* attributed to Eckhart in verification of the orthodoxy of Articles 20 and 21 and which undoubtedly favours our interpretation, truth

¹⁰⁷ Denifle, *Archiv* 2.638.

¹⁰⁸ Psalm 2.7.

¹⁰⁹ DW 1.239.2-7: 'Dauit sprach: "hoede hayn ich dich geboren." wat is hoede? ewicheit. ich hayn mych dich inde dich mych eweclichen geboren. nochtant in genoeget *den edelen oitmoedegen mynschen* da myt neit, *dat hey der eynege geboren sun is, den der vader ewenclichen geboren hail*, hey in wylt och vader syn inde treden in de selue gelicheit der eweger vaderschafft inde geberen den, van dem ich ewenclichen geboren byn.' (Cf. Clark 248-249.)

¹¹⁰ Pelster 1117.19-21. — Cf. Eckhart, *Expositio s. evang. secundum Ioh.* (LW 3.104.4-8.)

demands that attention be called to another reason of highly speculative nature set forth by Eckhart in *both sessions of the Cologne process* in defence of the passage quoted above from the German sermon, *Surge, illuminare, Jerusalem*, in which the words of Article 21 occur:

Solutio: dixi hoc quod Augustinus dicit libro De trinitate capitulo 12¹¹¹ quod inter rem cognitam et cognoscentem generatur proles communis utrique, similiter inter cogitatum et cogitantem, inter amantem et amatum, propter quod debet homo esse sollicitus deum cognoscere et frequenter saltem de deo cogitare et ipsum amare.^{111a}

Article 10. *Nos transformamur totaliter in Deum et convertimur in eum; simili modo, sicut in sacramento panis convertitur in corpus Christi: sic ego convertor in eum, quod ipse me operatur suum esse unum, non simile; per viventem Deum verum est, quod ibi nulla est distinctio.*¹¹²

It cannot be denied that these words are, in their objective, obvious sense, heretical. They were, therefore, condemned as such in the Bull.

Earlier in Part II we quoted an analogue used by Eckhart in the first session of the Cologne process, which, as we observed, in the context not only obscured the truth he intended to emphasize but likewise was very apt to create in the minds of his hearers an heretical impression.

Sicut enim panes multi in diversis altaribus convertuntur in ipsum verum unicum corpus Christi conceptum et natum de virgine, passum sub Pilato, remanentibus tamen accidentibus singulorum, sic mens nostra per gratiam adoptionis et nos unimur vero filio dei, membra unius capitis ecclesie qui est Christus.¹¹³

In the second session of the Cologne process Eckhart expressed himself on the same subject in a way that leaves no doubt as to what he really meant. After citing the words of the bill of indictment from which in part the words of Article 10 were ultimately taken,¹¹⁴ he answered as follows:

Solutio: *totum quod dictum est falsum et absurdum secundum ymaginationem adversantium, verum est tamen secundum verum intellectum* quod idem filius est deus ipse in singulis nobis et quod omnia nobis dat cum illo et in illo. Ipse est per quem operatur omnia et sine ipso nichil.

Eckhart then repudiated unequivocally the heretical sense attributed to him:

¹¹¹ PL 42.970.

^{111a} Daniels 51.19-29. Cf. *ibid.* 15.32-16.10.

¹¹² Denifle, *Archiv* 2.638.

¹¹³ Daniels 15.26-31.

¹¹⁴ Daniels 54.9-15. — But note that two important words contained in Article 10, sc. 'totaliter' et 'unum,' in the clause, 'quod ipse me operatur suum esse unum,' do not occur in this passage, but are to be found in the bill of indictment presented in the first session of the Cologne process (Daniels 31.14-19). Both these passages will be cited later on in the body of this article — at nn. 125 and 126.

Exemplum supra positum est in natura. Patet etiam hic exemplum in sacramento altaris, nisi quod omne sicut est sicutissimum.¹¹⁵ *In sacramento enim altaris convertitur totum in totum, non sic in nobis.* Unde non sequitur quod nos simus deus sicut in Christo primogenito homo est deus qui est ymago et similitudo dei patris genita, nos autem ad ymaginem et similitudinem et creati.¹¹⁶

In these words Eckhart not only implicitly disavowed, in unmistakable terms, the idea of a *physical identity of nature* between ourselves and Christ: '*In sacramento altaris convertitur totum in totum, non sic in nobis...* Christus est ymago et similitudo dei patris genita, nos autem ad ymaginem et similitudinem et creati'; he likewise explicitly ruled out the idea of a *hypostatic union* between ourselves and God: '*Unde non sequitur quod nos simus deus sicut in Christo primogenito homo est deus*' etc. We say 'explicitly ruled out,' because the words just quoted, taken in conjunction with the introductory words of Eckhart's self-vindication: '*totum quod dictum est falsum et absurdum secundum ymaginationem adversantium,*' are tantamount to a flat and unqualified repudiation of the idea of a hypostatic union.

The words of the condemned Article admit of a quite orthodox meaning when interpreted in the sense of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. If one reads carefully *the complete passage of the critically edited sermon from which were taken the words of the excerpt thereof cited by the Cologne Commission in the bill of indictment*¹¹⁷ and ultimately embodied in Article 10 of the Bull, he cannot fail to observe how clearly *the idea of the intimate union between the faithful and Christ as members and Head*, that is, *of His Mystical Body*, is expressed. The passage occurs in the German sermon entitled, *Iusti vivent in aeternum*, and, in the present critically established text, reads as follows:

'We shall be transformed completely into God and changed.'¹¹⁸ Note a parable: just as, *when* in the Sacrament bread is transformed into the Body of our Lord, howsoever many particles of bread there were, nevertheless they become only *one* Body, similarly, if all the particles were transformed into my finger, there would not be more than *one* finger. Moreover, if my finger were transformed into bread, there would be as much of the latter as of the former. *Whatever is transformed into something else becomes one with it.* Precisely in like manner am I transformed into Him (in such a way) that *He makes me one with His Being*¹¹⁹ and not as something (just) similar (to it): by the living God it is true that there is no distinction.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ The sense of these words is very obscure. In a footnote Daniels places (?) after 'sicutissimum,' indicating the obscurity of meaning or uncertainty as to authenticity.

¹¹⁶ Daniels 54.16-26.

¹¹⁷ Daniels 54, 9-15 and 31.14-19. See n. 114 *supra*.

¹¹⁸ Cf. 2 Cor. 3.18: 'Nos vero omnes... in eandem imaginem transformamur.'

¹¹⁹ Literally, 'makes me as His Being, (and that) as one.'

¹²⁰ DW 1.110.8-111.7: '"Wir werden alzemåle transformieret im got und verwandelt." Merke ein glichnisse. Ze glicher wise, als an dem sacramente verwandelt wirt brôt in unsers

A careful and unbiased study of this passage must result in the conclusion that, while these words, considered absolutely, admit of an interpretation in the sense of a physical identity between ourselves and Christ (a sense which, as we have just seen, Eckhart clearly repudiated),¹²¹ it is much more probable that Eckhart was here emphasizing the *moral identity* existing between Christ the Head and us the members of His Mystical Body — an identity based upon the intimate union existing between Him and us, as exemplified by the many particles of bread which become but the one Body of Christ or, hypothetically, only one finger.

This is the more probable interpretation, since in the long, complicated compound introductory sentence the *idea of the transformation* of the bread into the Body of Christ is *expressed not in the main comparative statement* consisting of the two complementary parts — ‘Just as... similarly...,’ *but in a subordinate clause* — ‘when in the Sacrament bread is transformed into the Body of our Lord,’ whereas the *main comparative sentence*, consisting of the two complementary parts — ‘Just as... similarly...,’ *emphasizes in both parts the idea of moral unity and identity*. According to this interpretation the words of the sermon, *daz er wûrket mich sîn wesen ein unglîch*, which are rendered in the Article by *ipse me operatur suum esse unum, non simile*, present no real difficulty. Eckhart would exclude any mere similarity between Christ and us, because he is here stressing precisely the unity and *moral identity* of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ with its Head: ‘howsoever many particles of bread there were, nevertheless they become only *one Body*.’ When he solemnly declares: *quod ibi nulla est distinctio*, we know that he often uses the term, ‘distinctio’ as *synonymous with* ‘divisio’ or ‘separatio.’ There is *no distinction*, that is, *no division or separation*, but *perfect unity* between the members and the Head of the Mystical Body of Christ. He elsewhere expresses the same idea as follows:

In deo enim nec cadit aliud nec aliter, nec habet (pater) filium in eternitate nisi unum qui est *primogenitus in multis fratribus* (Rom. 8.29) in eandem ymaginem transformatis,¹²² *qui non dividitur in multis, sed multos in se unit*, nimirum cum ipse sit deus qui utique unus est in omnibus etiam per essentiam.¹²³

herren lichamen, swie vil der brôte waere, sô wirt doch éin lichame. Ze glicher wise, waeren alliu diu brôt verwandelt in minen vinger, sô waere doch niht mêr dan éin vinger. Mêr: wûrde mîn vinger verwandelt in daz brôt, sô waere diz als vil als jenez waere. Waz in daz ander verwandelt wirt, daz wirt ein mit im. Alsô wirde ich gewandelt in in, daz er wûrket mich sîn wesen ein unglîch; bi dem lebenden got sô ist daz wâr, daz kein underscheit enist.’

¹²¹ Daniels 54.16-26.

¹²² Cf. 2 Cor. 3.18.

¹²³ Daniels 53.11-16.

Let us now compare these words, as they appear in their full context in the sermon, *Iusti vivent in aeternum*, with the same words as they appear in the extract cited in the Cologne bill of indictment and afterwards embodied in Article 10 of the Bull:

Nos transformamur et convertimur *in eum*¹²⁴ simili modo sicut in sacramento convertitur panis in corpus Christi, quotquot panes essent tamen fit unum corpus Christi. Quidquid in alterum convertitur hoc fit unum cum eo, sic ego convertor in eum quod ipse operatur me suum esse, non simile, per viventem deum. Verum est hec (*sic*) quod ibi nulla est distinctio.¹²⁵

The collation of this version with the critically established text of the sermon reveals that, *with the omission of the warning 'Note a parable,' the opening words, 'We shall be transformed completely into God and changed,' (which were quoted as a citation) are forthwith linked to the words, 'in the same way as in the Sacrament bread is transformed into the Body of our Lord.' The conjunction, 'when' of the critical text of the sermon, which syntactically, and therefore likewise in order of stress and importance, emphatically subordinates the idea of the conversion of bread into the Body of Christ, is omitted, and thus in the excerpt the main idea stressed becomes that of the physical identity between us and God. The same syntactically misleading verbal combination and sequence occurs in the other version cited by the Cologne inquisitional Commission in the bill of indictment:*

Sequitur: nos transformamur et convertimur in deum *totaliter* eodem modo quo in sacramento panis convertitur in corpus Christi. Quicunque sint multi panes tamen non fit nisi unum corpus omnium. Quidquid convertitur in aliud fit unum cum eo. Sic ego convertor quod ipse operatur me suum esse *unum*, non simile.¹²⁶

It is further noteworthy that the definitive formulation in Article 10 omits the one sentence appearing in both versions of the Cologne bill of indictment which clearly expresses the *idea of unity*: 'Quotquot panes essent tamen fit unum corpus Christi' (Daniels 54.11f.); 'Quicunque sint multi panes tamen non fit nisi unum corpus omnium' (Daniels 31.16f).

Finally: In the *German text*, after the words, 'Note a parable,' we have: '*Just as, when in the Sacrament bread is transformed into the Body of our Lord, howsoever many particles of bread there were, nevertheless they become only one Body, in like manner, if all the particles were trans-*

¹²⁴ In the MS there follows after 'in' a deleted 'deum'.

¹²⁵ Daniels 54.9-15. *The punctuation of our text is that of the MS.*

¹²⁶ Daniels 31.14-19. — It is to be observed that the underlined words 'totaliter' and 'unum', which are contained in Article 10, do not occur in the version cited in the second session of the Cologne process: Daniels 54.9-15. Cf. n. 114 *supra*.

formed into my finger, there would not be more than one finger.'¹²⁷ Here, the principal idea stressed is not that of physical identity between the particles of bread and the one Body, but the idea of *unity* resulting from the conversion of many particles into the one Body of Christ. This, taken together with all that follows in the passage from the sermon which we have quoted in full above, clearly emphasizes the idea of the intimate *moral unity and identity* existing between the Faithful and Christ as the members and Head of His Mystical Body.

One would not be justified in assuming, simply because of the significant and by no means negligible discrepancy existing between the critically established text of the German source and the two versions cited in the Cologne bill of indictment,¹²⁸ that the Cologne inquisitional Commission deliberately garbled the text of the passage from the sermon by quoting parts thereof out of their context with the intention of misrepresenting Eckhart's real meaning. In the light of what we have said above¹²⁹ with regard to the problem of the authenticity and genuineness of the Eckhartian MS-texts, it is quite probable that the version or versions used by the Commission may already have exhibited the defective mutilated transcript of Eckhart's words which were hastily written down while the sermon was being delivered or, perhaps, afterwards from memory.

We have dwelt upon Article 10 at some length principally in order to demonstrate how careful and painstaking must be any search for the subjective sense intended by Eckhart in his teaching. It is by no means enough to be sure of the *authenticity* of a text, that is, that Eckhart is really the author thereof. There must also be relative historical certitude of its *genuineness*, not merely in the sense that his words have been faithfully transmitted to us without error, alteration, or interpolation, but likewise in the sense that the meaning intended by him has not been distorted or corrupted, either deliberately or unconsciously (e.g., through homoeoteleuton), by the fact that his words have been separated from their native context.

*
* *

Hitherto we have endeavored to demonstrate in what orthodox sense Eckhart so boldly affirmed that the Father begets us as His only-begotten Son. We came to the conclusion that this truly startling expression is, in its full signification, verifiable only in the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

¹²⁷ DW 1. 111.1-4. For the German text of the sermon, *Justi vivent in aeternum*, see *supra* n. 120.

¹²⁸ Daniels 31.14-19, 54.9-15.

¹²⁹ Cf. n. 43.

But in one passage of the vindication of his teaching the Master would seem to intimate that the daring assertion may be interpreted in yet another mystical sense. When speaking of the higher powers of the soul, which, he declares, have nothing in common with anything in time and space, from which they are separated, he goes on to say that in these powers man exists 'to the Image of God' and is of the stock of God and of the same kinship with Him. Nevertheless, since these spiritual powers in man are not God, seeing that they were created in and with the soul, *they, and man together with them, must be stripped and despoiled of their own image and that of every creature and be transformed into God through the Image*; they must be begotten in God and of God, that God alone may there be Father, because *thus are they sons of God and the only-begotten Son of God. Then our whole Being and Life is of God and in God and is God.*¹³⁰ These words would seem to indicate that we become the only-begotten Son of God by divesting ourselves of our 'own image,' that is, renouncing self, and by detaching ourselves from all creatures — in other words, by a *moral regeneration*. This brings us to Part III — which, however, as mentioned in the introduction, lies outside the scope of the present study.

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¹³⁰ Daniels 22.26-23.15: '... Et tamen quia (illae potentiae et vires superiores animae) non sunt deus, quia in anima et cum ea create sunt, oportet eas propria ymagine denudari et in deum per ymaginem transformari et in deo et ex deo generari, quod solus deus ibi sit pater quia sic sunt filii dei et unigenitus dei filius'... 'homo debet esse multum diligens ut spoliaret vel denudet se ipsum a propria ymagine et cuiusque creature ... tunc ... totum suum esse, vivere, nosse, scire et amare est ex deo et in deo et deus.'