

Daily Meditation 08-11-22

Merton & Eckhart on Nothingness, continued

Good morning.

We're continuing our meditations on nothingness, invoking the teachings of Thomas Merton and Meister Eckhart, who were very fast friends even though Eckhart lived in 14th century and Merton in the 20th century.

And you'll notice that this poem from yesterday talked about Eckhart's castle. And I reflect somewhat on the meaning of that archetype. And of course, it relates to the biblical teaching, so strong in Jesus' teaching, when he says, "The kingdom, queendom of God is within you, and among you." The word in Greek can be translated as both "within" and "among." So that means within us as individuals, but within the community...within a community.

So it is about withinness: within the individual, but also within the groups of individuals, a circle of individuals, that we call a community.

Now, it's not only Eckhart who invoked this image of a castle, which is very understandable given the politics and the economics of the Middle Ages, where castles housed and defended the lords, the kingpins of the area, but also Theresa of Avila in the 16th century, 250 years after Eckhart talks at some length about the castle, the interior castle. The most famous book probably goes through the seven mansions within the castle.

So you can see that there's a continuation of this symbol in this metaphor, and there's archetype. But Eckhart is very explicit and powerful about what's going on in the castle. There's a lot going on, in our souls, our castles.

God glows and burns with all of the Divine wealth and all the divine bliss in this castle.

Now we all carry this castle within us, you see, the wealth and the bliss of divinity itself growing and burning. That's the Cosmic Christ burning within us. And he tells us Jesus enters the castle

in his being rather than his acting, giving graciously to the mind the divine and deiform being. This regards the essence of being, according to the words: 'by the grace of God, I am what I am.'

So those words are from Paul, the mystic, very early in the Christian story: "by the grace of God, I am what I am." That too is what's going on in the castle, you see: our divinity is being formed there, we're coming to our truest and deepest selves. But the castle

is free of all names, and bare of all forms, totally free and void, just God is void and free in the Godself. It is totally one and simple, just as God is one and simple, so that we can in no manner gaze into it.

But there's something else going on there in this place, this special place that you really can't look into directly.

The Father begets his only begotten Son, as truly as in himself, and with this part of itself, the soul is equal to God and nothing else.

So there is a birth of the Divine Son happening inside your soul: the Logos is being born there. And all this is possible because there is a nothingness, there is a void, there is a thorough emptying, a kenosis going on there as well.

And this is what suffering can often be part of that emptying, the Dark Night is part of that emptying, and you can call it freedom. You can call it poverty, as Eckhart does.

And so, Merton is basing his poem on that we saw in yesterday's meditation on Eckhart's sermon, and Eckhart says "Christ is finally born in us, in the highest place, highest sense," and "nowhereness, a point of nothingness in the midst of being," is part of this.

And Eckhart also tells us that "everything that is created is in itself, nothing," because it depends on divinity. He says just that

...The color of a wall depends on the wall, and so the existence of creatures depends on the love of God. Separate the color from the wall and it would cease to be. So all creation would cease to exist if separated from the love that God is.

...the love that God is. God's love keeps it all together. It's exactly what Julian of Norwich taught: that in her vision, named in this painting behind me, and on the cover of my book of Julian: the vision that all creation is kept together by love. For Eckhart, for our existence and God's love are the same thing.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.