

Daily Meditation 11-06-23

Our True Nobility, continued

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we are sharing some of Meister Eckhart's teaching on nobility: Everyone a noble person, everyone an aristocrat.

And he developed a very substantive and quite lengthy talk about that. And he bases his talk on an exegesis of the scriptural passage from Luke 19:12. And it reads like this -- at least in Eckhart's translation:

"A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

So, Eckhart begins his talk this way. He says:

How nobly man is constituted by nature. And how divine is a state to which one can come by grace. A large part of Holy Scripture is affected by these words. In us is the inward person, whom the scriptures call the new person, the heavenly person, the young person, a friend, and the noble person.

He says that "within us is the aristocrat." And then he says,

And this is what our Lord means when he says, 'A noble person went out into a far country and received for himself a kingdom and returned.'

Now again, in a society Eckhart's, where everyone knew who the anointed aristocracy was -- they had "von" before their name, and in France, they had "d'" before their name — this is an imaginative alternative. One historian, Jacques Chears, said,

A characteristic of popular uprisings in Eckhart's period was that even when the people overthrew one aristocracy, another immediately took its place.

So here we have evidence about how imaginative and radical Eckhart was: not to confront aristocracy, head on, but to recreate it entirely by baptizing everyone as an aristocrat. And in the process, he does not put down nobles and aristocrats, but, with an imagination that mystics are good at, he turns the peasants into nobles. Instead of putting down anyone, he elevates everyone.

Of course, this is a democratic vision. He says in this essay, "No one is nobler than you." In other words, no one is over you, there is an equality. And he talks about this, he says:

God has sown the divine image in the divine likeness, and he sows the good seed, the root of all wisdom, all knowledge, all virtue, and all goodness, the seed of divine nature. The seed of divine nature is the Son of God, the Word of God. And the seed of God is in us. If it was cultivated by a good, wise, and industrious laborer, it would thrive all the more, and would grow up to be God, whose seed it is; and the fruit would be like the divine nature. The seed of a pear tree grows into a pear tree, a hazel seed into a hazel tree, a seed of God into God.

What you can see here, that this kind of theology has profound political implications. And Ernst Bloch, a Marxist philosopher and historian, says this about Meister Eckhart:

One thing is certain: Eckhart's sermon does not intend to snuff man out for the sake of an Otherworld beyond him. The revolutionary Anabaptists, those disciples of Eckhart and John Tahler, who was a Dominican student of Eckhart's, showed after words and practice, exactly how hard and how uncomfortably for every tyrant, a subject who thought himself to be in personal union with the Lord of Lords, provided, when things got serious, a very poor example indeed.

So Eckhart was an influence on Karl Marx, that is what Ernst Bloch says.

So there's a lot to ponder here I think, and worth our consideration, even in the 21st century, 800-700 years after Meister Eckhart: Everyone an aristocrat, everyone a noble person, everyone a seed of God, destined to grow into God, meaning an expression of God, and another Christ.

Thank you. We will see you next week.