

# **Dechthild of Magdeburg**

THE FLOWING LIGHT OF THE GODHEAD

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PREFACE BY  
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## *PROLOGUE TO THE LUX DIVINITATIS<sup>1</sup>*

Prologue of Brother Heinrich, Lector,  
of the Order of Preaching Brothers<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

This writing must be read in a pious spirit, however. It must be understood, as is the case with other holy writings, in a wholesome manner and in good faith. In this way the reader will find nothing scandalous or offensive in it, and the writing itself will not be subjected to any perverse claim of falsehood. Its author is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it treats Christ and the church, as well as Satan and his body.<sup>3</sup> Its manner of proceeding is both historical and mystical<sup>4</sup>; its purpose is the ordering of the present life, the useful calling to mind of things past, and the prophetic disclosure of things to come. The sincere devotion and dove-like simplicity of the woman through whom this writing was made public should completely suffice to guarantee the truth of what the pious faithful are asked to believe. From childhood she led a pure and innocent life. In her youth, at the urging of the Lord, she left everything she stood to gain and became an exile in a foreign land, leading a life of voluntary poverty. Finally, after many tribulations and at an advanced age, she was received into the community of holy sisters at Helfta. She lived there for twelve years and, as is confirmed by their testimony,<sup>5</sup> she flourished in the perfection of all virtues. She especially practiced charity, humility, long-suffering, and meekness. Raised up above all things by contemplation and made a sharer of divine illuminations and revelations, she was worthy to perceive from the Lord through her prophetic spirit numerous intimate divine mysteries concerning things past, present, and to come. Now, having been received by the Bridegroom of virgins, this holy virgin enjoys fully him whom she loved and whose wondrous love adorned his beloved with many marvels.

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

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

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

*LATIN FOREWORD WITH  
TABLE OF CONTENTS AND  
MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN TRANSLATION<sup>1</sup>*

**I**n the year of our Lord 1250 and for almost fifteen years thereafter this book was revealed<sup>2</sup> in German by the Lord through grace to a certain beguine who was a holy virgin in body and spirit. In humble simplicity, in the poverty of exile, weighed down by scorn, and in heavenly contemplation, as is made clear in this writing, she served the Lord with great devotion for more than forty years, following perfectly the footsteps of the brothers of the Order of Preachers. Always progressing day by day, she continually became better. It was compiled<sup>3</sup> by a brother of the aforementioned order and contains many good things, as is noted in these titles:

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

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## LATIN FOREWORD

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

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

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

[Middle High German translation:]

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

# Book I

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**One Should Receive This Book Eagerly, For It Is God Himself  
Who Speaks the Words<sup>1</sup>**

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

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

"Ah, Lord God, who made this book?"

"I made it in my powerlessness, for I cannot restrain myself as to my gifts."<sup>4</sup>

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

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

***I. How Love and the Queen Spoke to Each Other<sup>5</sup>***

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

"God greet you, Lady Love."

"May God reward you, Mistress and Queen."

"Lady Love, you are indeed perfect."

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

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

"Mistress and Queen, that was to your honor and benefit."

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

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

## 2. *Concerning Three Persons and Three Gifts*

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

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

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

Then God in full vigor speaks: "Young Miss, you must go down." She shudders and laments<sup>10</sup> her banishment. She says: "Lord, you have raised me up<sup>11</sup> so high here that I shall not be able to praise you in any fitting degree when in my body. Rather, I shall suffer as an outcast and shall struggle against the body." And he says:

"Oh, dear dove,<sup>12</sup>

Your voice is string music to my ears.

Your words are spices for my mouth.

Your longings are the lavishness of my gift."

She says: "Dear Lord, it has to be as the master of the house<sup>13</sup> commands." And she sighs with all her might, which awakens the body.<sup>14</sup>

Then the body speaks: "Well, woman, just where have you been? You come back so love-struck, lovely, and vibrant, free and witty. Your carrying on has cost me my appetite, sense of smell, color, and all my strength."  
 She says: "Shut up, murderer! Quit your bellyaching. I'll always be on my guard with you around. That my enemy has been wounded—what do we care about that? It makes me glad."

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

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

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

### 3. *The Handmaids of the Soul and the Blow of Love*<sup>18</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Love: “Whoever has succeeded in loving God more than  
self

Knows well where to get the seal.  
It lies between the two of us.”

The Soul speaks:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

#### 5. *The Torment and the Praise of the Soul*<sup>21</sup>

My body is in great torment, my soul is in sublime bliss; for she has both gazed upon and embraced her Lover in her arms. He causes her, poor wretch, torment. When he draws her up, she flows. She cannot hold herself in check until he brings her within himself. She would like to speak but cannot, so utterly has she been enmeshed in sublime union with the awe-inspiring Trinity. Then he leaves her for a short while, that she might feel longing. She desires his praise but does not know how to find it as she would like. She would even want him to send her into hell that he might be praised beyond measure by all creatures.<sup>22</sup> She looks at him and says to him, “Lord, give me your blessing.” He looks at her, draws her up again, and gives her a greeting<sup>23</sup> that the body cannot express.

Then the body speaks to the soul:

“Where have you been?  
I can’t take it anymore.”

And the soul says:

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

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

#### 6. *The Nine Chords: How They Sing*<sup>24</sup>

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

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

#### 7. *God’s Curse in Eight Things*

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

#### 8. *The Most Lowly Praises God in Ten Things*

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

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

### 9. *With Three Things You Duell on the Heights*

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

Explanation: This is about the Seraphim.

### 10. *Who Loves God Triumphs over Three Things*

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

### 11. *Four Battle for God*

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

### 12. *The Soul Praises God for Five Things*<sup>27</sup>

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

### 13. *How God Comes to the Soul*

I come to my beloved as the dew upon the flower.<sup>28</sup>

### 14. *How the Soul Receives and Praises God*

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

### 15. *How God Receives the Soul*

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

### 16. *God Likens the Soul to Four Things*

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

17. *The Soul Praises God About Five Things*

O you pouring God in your gift!  
 O you flowing God in your love!  
 O you burning God in your desire!  
 O you melting God in the union with your beloved!  
 O you resting God on my breasts!<sup>29</sup>  
 Without you I cannot exist.

18. *God Likens the Soul to Five Things*

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

19. *God Cares the Soul in Six Ways*

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

20. *The Soul Praises God in Return in Six Ways*

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

21. *Of Knowledge and Enjoyment*

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

22. *St. Mary's Message and How One Virtue Follows Another. How the Soul Was Made in the Jubilus<sup>33</sup> of the Trinity, and How St. Mary Nursed All the Saints and Nurses Them Still*

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

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

The longer she is dead, the more blissfully she lives.<sup>34</sup>  
 The more blissfully she lives, the more she experiences.<sup>35</sup>  
 The less she becomes, the more flows to her.  
 The more she fears....<sup>36</sup>  
 The richer she becomes, the poorer she is.  
 The deeper she dwells,<sup>37</sup> the more she expands.  
 ... the more forbearing she is.  
 The deeper her wounds become, the more violently she struggles.

The more loving God is to her, the higher she soars.  
 The more radiantly she shines in the reflected effulgence of the God-head, the closer she approaches him.  
 The more she labors, the more contentedly she rests.  
 ... the more she grasps.  
 The more quiet her silence, the louder she calls.  
 ... the greater the marvels she works with his strength in proportion to her power.

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

Tell me, where did our Redeemer become the Bridegroom?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both his wounds and her breasts were open.  
 The wounds poured forth.  
 The breasts flowed.  
 The soul was invigorated and completely restored  
 As he poured the sparkling red wine  
 Into her red mouth.<sup>40</sup>

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

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

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

inner suffering. In this same manner, you shall go on sucking until the last day. Then you shall become dry, for then God's children—and your children—will be weaned and fully grown for eternal life. Ah, then we shall know and see with inexpressible joy the milk and even the breasts themselves<sup>11</sup> that Jesus so often kissed."<sup>12</sup>

*23. You Should Ask That God Love You Passionately, Often, and Long; Then You Shall Become Pure, Beautiful, and Holy*<sup>13</sup>

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

*24. How God Responds to the Soul*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I delight in loving him who loves me, and I long to love him to the death, boundlessly, and without ceasing. Be happy, my soul, for your Life has died for love of you.<sup>14</sup> Love him so fiercely that you could die for him. Thus you burn ever more without ever being extinguished as a living flame in the vast fire of high majesty.

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

You can no longer teach me anything:  
I cannot turn away from love.  
I must be its captive.  
Otherwise, I cannot go on living.  
Where it dwells, there I must remain,  
Both in death and in life.<sup>15</sup>  
This is the folly of fools  
Who live free of anguish.

29. *The Beauty of the Bridegroom and How the Bride Should Follow Him in Twenty-Three Steps of the Cross*<sup>16</sup>

Look at me, my bride,<sup>17</sup> See how beautiful are my eyes, how comely is my mouth, how on fire is my heart, how agile are my hands, and how swift are my feet. So, follow me! You shall be martyred with me, betrayed in jealousy, hunted in ambush, taken prisoner in hate, bound in obedience, your eyes covered so that one will not tell you the truth, slapped by the rage of the world, brought to trial in confession, struck blows by penance, sent to Herod in derision, stripped naked by abandonment, scourged by poverty, crowned with trials, spat upon by disgrace, bearing your cross in the hatred of sin, crucified in voluntary withdrawal from all things, nailed to the cross by the holy virtues, wounded by love, dying on the cross in holy constancy, pierced in your heart by constant union, taken down from the cross in true victory over all your enemies, buried in oblivion, arisen from the dead in a holy end, and drawn up into heaven in God's breath.

30. *The Seven Hours*<sup>18</sup>

Matins: Love in abundance, a sweet delight.<sup>19</sup>  
Prime: Love's longing, a sweet burden.  
Terce: Love's pleasure, a sweet thirst.  
Sext: Love's feeling, a sweet cooling.  
Nones: Love's death, a sweet distress.  
Vespers: Love's flowing, a sweet pouring.  
Compline: Love's rest, a sweet joy.<sup>20</sup>

31. *You Should Ignore Scorn*

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

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

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

33. *Concerning Food, Consolation, and Love*

My soul spoke thus to her Lover:

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

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

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

35. *The Desert Has Twelve Things*

You should love nothingness.  
You should flee somethingness.<sup>21</sup>  
You should stand alone

She has torn apart the jaws of the wolf of lust  
 And, like the hunted stag, comes running to me, the spring.  
 Like an eagle she rises out of the depths to the heights."<sup>34</sup>

39. *God Asks the Soul What She Is Bringing*

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

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

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

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

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

42. *The Precious Stone Is Called Heart's Delight*

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

And should go to no one.  
 You should not be excessively busy.<sup>32</sup>  
 And be free of all things.  
 You should release captives  
 And subdue the free.  
 You should restore the sick  
 And yet should have nothing yourself.  
 You should drink the water of suffering  
 And ignite the fire of love with the kindling of virtue:  
 Then you are living in the true desert.

36. *Concerning Malice, Good Works, and  
 Concerning a Marvel*<sup>33</sup>

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

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

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

38. *God Boasts That the Soul Has Overcome Four Sins*

In heaven God boasts about the soul on earth that loves him  
 and says:  
 "Look, how she who has wounded me comes ascending.  
 She has cast from her the ape of the world.  
 She has overcome the bear of wantonness.  
 She has trod the lion of pride underfoot.

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

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

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

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

She says:

"I cannot dance, Lord, unless you lead me.

If you want me to leap with abandon,

You must intone the song.

Then I shall leap into love,

From love into knowledge,

From knowledge into enjoyment,

And from enjoyment beyond all human sensations.

There I want to remain, yet want also to circle higher still."<sup>56</sup>

And the young man has to sing thus:

"Through me into you

And through you from me."

[The soul:]

"Willingly with you,

Woefully from you."<sup>57</sup>

#### 43. *Put Your Delight into the Trinity*

"The delight of your heart

You shall put nowhere else but into my divine heart

And onto my human breast.

There alone shall you be consoled

And kissed by my Spirit."

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

"Ah, loving Soul, do you wish to know what your path shall be?"

"Yes, dear Holy Spirit, instruct me."

"When you have passed beyond the need of sorrow

and beyond the pain of confession

and beyond the travail of penance

and beyond the love of the world

and beyond the temptations of the devil

and beyond the influences of the flesh

and beyond cursed self-will

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

"I hear a voice;

It speaks its piece on love.

I have courted her many a day,

But the voice never addressed me.

Now I am moved;

I must hurry to her!

She is the one who bears anguish

And love joined together."

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

"Lady, you should dress yourself."



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

The young lady says:

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

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

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

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

[Senses:] "Lady, in the chastity of virgins great love is ready."  
"That may be, but it isn't the noblest thing about me."  
"In the blood of the martyrs you can cool yourself very well."  
"I have been martyred so many times that I can't go there now."

"In the counsel of confessors the pure happily dwell."  
"I shall always need counsel about what to do and what not to do; and yet I can't go there just now."  
"In the wisdom of the apostles you will find much security."  
"I have wisdom with me here. This shall always guide me to choose for the best."

"Lady, the angels are radiant and of love's color. If you wish to refresh yourself, rise up to them."  
"The angels' bliss pains me in my love if I am not gazing upon their Lord and my Bridegroom."  
"Then refresh yourself in the holy austere life that God granted to John the Baptist."

"The suffering I'm ready to bear, and yet the force of love transcends all austerity."  
"Lady, if you want to refresh yourself in love, bow down to the small Child in the lap of the eternal virgin; and taste and see how the Joy of the angels sucked the unnatural milk."<sup>38</sup>

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

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

[Soul:] "A fish in water does not drown.  
A bird in the air does not plummet.  
Gold in fire does not perish.  
Rather, it gets its purity and its radiant color there.  
God has created all creatures to live according to their nature.

How, then, am I to resist my nature?  
I must go from all things to God,  
Who is my Father by nature,  
My Brother by his humanity,  
My Bridegroom by love,  
And I his bride from all eternity.  
Don't you believe I feel him intensely?<sup>39</sup>  
He can both burn powerfully and cool consolingly.  
Now do not be overly sad.  
You shall yet instruct me.  
When I return, I shall certainly need your advice;  
For the earth is full of snares."

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

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

“Stay, Lady Soul.”  
 “What do you bid me, Lord?”  
 “Take off your clothes.”  
 “Lord, what will happen to me then?”  
 “Lady Soul, you are so utterly formed to my nature<sup>60</sup>  
 That not the slightest thing can be between you and me.  
 Never was an angel so glorious  
 That to him was granted for one hour  
 What is given to you for eternity.  
 And so you must cast off from you  
 Both fear and shame and all external virtues.  
 Rather, those alone that you carry within yourself  
 Shall you foster forever.  
 These are your noble longing  
 And your boundless desire.  
 These I shall fulfill forever  
 With my limitless lavishness.”

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

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

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

45. *The Eight Days in Which What the Prophets Longed For Was Accomplished*<sup>63</sup>

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

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

The bride is clothed with the sun and has trodden the moon underfoot, and she is crowned with union.<sup>64</sup> She has a chaplain; this is fear. He has in his hand a golden rod; this is wisdom. The chaplain is clothed with the blood of the lamb and is crowned with honor; and wisdom is clothed with contentment and crowned with eternity. The bride has four bridesmaids. The first is love, who leads the bride. She is clothed with chasteness and is crowned with dignity. The second is humility, who holds the bride. She is clothed with lowliness and is crowned with eminence. The third bridesmaid is sorrow. She is clothed with small grapes<sup>65</sup> and is crowned with joy. The fourth bridesmaid is mercy. She is clothed

with unguents<sup>66</sup> and is crowned with bliss. These two carry the coat of the bride, which is her holy reputation.

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

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

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

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

And she sings:

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

And he speaks:

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

Then our Lord says to his chosen bride:

"Come, my beloved, come. You shall be crowned."<sup>67</sup>

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