

God Is Above All Understanding

by Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart teaches that God is above all understanding, and we should be silent about Him, lest we lie and commit sin.

Scripture: Job 37:5, Psalm 19:7, Psalm 46:10, Luke 7:14, 1 Corinthians 2:11

Topics: "Divine Transcendence", "Spiritual Union"

Description

Meister Eckhart emphasizes the importance of the soul's intelligence and will as the first faculties to emerge, followed by other faculties. He highlights the beauty of God's work in the soul, which surpasses all other creations. Eckhart discusses the secret spark of the soul that apprehends God and the true union between God and the soul in the spirit of the soul. He challenges conventional descriptions of God, stating that God is nameless, transcendent, and beyond human understanding, urging silence rather than speaking falsely about God.

Transcript

The masters say: That is young, which is near its beginning. Intelligence is the youngest faculty in man: the first thing to break out from the soul is intelligence, the next is will, the other faculties follow. Now he saith: Young man, I say unto thee, arise. The soul in itself is a simple work; what God works in the simple light of the soul is more beautiful and more delightful than all the other works which He works in all creatures. But foolish people take evil for good and good for evil. But to him who rightly understands, the one work which God works in the soul is better and nobler and higher than all the world. Through that light comes grace. Grace never comes in the intelligence or in the will.

If it could come in the intelligence or in the will, the intelligence and the will would have to transcend themselves. On this a master says: There is something secret about it; and thereby he means the spark of the soul, which alone can apprehend God. The true union between God and the soul takes place in the little spark, which is called the spirit of the soul. Grace unites not to any work. It is an indwelling and a living together of the soul in God.

God is nameless, for no man can either say or understand aught about Him. If I say, God is good, it is not true; nay more; I am good, God is not good. I may even say, I am better than God; for whatever is good, may become better, and whatever may become better, may become best. Now God is not good, for He cannot become better.

And if He cannot become better, He cannot become best, for these three things, good, better, and best, are far from God, since He is above all. If I also say, God is wise, it is not true; I am wiser than He. If I also say, God is a Being, it is not true; He is transcendent Being and superessential Nothingness. Concerning this St Augustine says: the best thing that man can say about God is to be able to be silent about Him, from the wisdom of his inner judgement. Therefore be silent and prate not about God, for whenever thou dost prate about God, thou liest, and committest sin. If thou wilt be without sin, prate not about God. Thou canst understand nought about God, for He is above all understanding. A master saith: If I had a God whom I could understand, I would never hold Him to be God.

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