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(of detachment). When he entered, he was received kindly, and all
welcomed him pleasantly. They hurried to the chief teacher and told
him that someone had come who also wanted to be his disciple and
learn this art. He replied, "First I want to see him for myself,
whether I like him." When he saw him, he smiled very kindly at
him and said, "Let me tell you that this guest can very well become
a capable religious teacher of our exalted art, if he is willing with
patience to betake himself into the confining living quarters where
he must prove himself."

The servant did not yet understand these mysterious words. He
turned to the young man who had brought him there and asked
him, "Tell me, my dear companion, what is this most advanced
school and its teaching of which you have told me?" The young man
said, "The advanced school and the teaching that is lectured on is
nothing other than complete and perfect detachment from oneself,
so that a person becomes so utterly nothing, no matter how God
treats him, either through himself or through other creatures, in joy
or sorrow, that he strives continually to be in the state of going away
from his 'self,' to the extent that human frailty allows, and he aims
alone at God's praise and honor, just as dear Christ did with regard
to his heavenly Father." When the servant heard this, he was
pleased and thought he would live according to this art. Nothing
could be so difficult that it could draw him away from it. He inten-
ted to live there and engage in much serious activity. But the
young man kept him from doing so and said, "This art requires that
one be free for inactivity. The less one does, the more one has really
accomplished." The activity he had in mind was that which in doing
a person becomes an obstacle to his own progress and does not carry
out purely in praise of God.

After these words the servant soon came to himself and sat there
very quietly. He thought very seriously about them and realized
that they were utterly true, as Christ himself taught. He began to
talk to himself inwardly and said, "If you look inward seriously
enough, you discover that your 'self' is actually still there and you
become aware that, in spite of all your external penitential exercises,
which you performed out of your own ground against your 'self,'
you are still not detached enough to accept adversity coming from
outside you. You are still like a scared rabbit that lies hidden in a
bush and is startled by every leaf that falls. In your case you are
startled the whole day by some suffering falling your way. You

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blanch at the sight of your adversary. When you should stand firm,
you run away. When you should boldly show yourself, you hide.
When someone praises you, you are all smiles. When someone finds
fault with you, you are depressed. It can well be that you are in
need of this advanced schooling." And so with an inward sigh he
looked upward to God and said, "O God, I have really been told the
unadorned truth. When shall I ever be a truly detached person?"

CHAPTER 20

A Painful Transition

After God had forbidden the servant to engage in such outward
ergises that endangered his life, his exhausted nature was so elated
that he wept for joy. When he thought back on his severe bonds and
all that he had thus suffered and attained in the struggle, he said to
himself inwardly, "From now on, dear Lord, I will lead an unper-
turbed and free life and be good to myself. I will completely satisfy
my thirst with wine and with water. I will sleep on my sack of straw
without being in bonds, something I frequently in deep sorrow
begged God for—that he grant me this comfort before I should die.
I have been spoiling things for myself long enough. From now on it
is time for me to relax. Such were the presumptuous thoughts and
notions running through his mind and, alas, he had no idea what
God had in store for him!

After he had gone around for several weeks entertaining these
enjoyable thoughts and being very pleased with himself, he hap-
pened to be sitting in the chair that he used for a bed, and he began
meditating on the words of truth that Job in his suffering had
spoken: "Militia est: Man's life on earth is nothing else but a knightly
contest." Deep in such meditation the world around him faded,
and it seemed that a fine young man looking very virile entered
carrying two elegant knightly boots and other clothing usually worn
by knights. He came up to the servant, clothed him with knightly
garb, and said to him, "Be a knight! Until now you were just a
squire. Now God wants you to be a knight." He looked at himself
in his knightly boots, and with his heart filled with amazement said,
"Help, God! What has happened? What has become of me? Am I
supposed to be a knight now? From now on I was going to devote
myself to quiet repose.” He said to the young man, “If God expects
me to be a knight, I would much prefer to become one in a prais-
worthy manner through a contest.” The young man turned away a
little and smiled. Then he said to him, “Don’t worry. You shall have
enough combat. He who endeavors to lead the life of a spiritual
knight of God with valor will encounter many more dangerous
battles than happened of old to the famous heroes in the bold
knighthly contests the world proclaims in song and tale.” You seem
to think that God has removed your yoke from you and cast off your
fetters, and that you should live a life of ease. This is not how it is
going to be. God is not taking your bonds off you. He just wants to
change them and make them heavier than ever they were.” At this
the servant became deeply frightened and said, “O God, what are
you going to do to me? I thought I was near the goal, but now it
seems to me it turns out that the real struggle is just beginning. Dear
Lord in heaven, what do you want from me? Am I the only sinner
around and is everybody else just, that you use the rod only on poor
me but spare it with regard to so many others? You have been
treating me like this since I was a child when you tormented my
tender nature with long, hard periods of sickness. I thought by now
it was enough?” The youth replied, “No, it is not still enough. You
have to be tried in all things to your very ground if things are to turn
out right for you.” The servant said, “Lord, show me how much
suffering I still have before me.” He answered and said, “Look up to
heaven. If you can count the limitless numbers of the stars, you can
also count the sufferings still in your future. And just as the stars
seem small but are really large, so too will your sufferings seem
small to the undiscerning eyes of men; but as you experience them,
they will be difficult to bear.” The servant said, “Lord, show me the
sufferings beforehand so that I recognize them.” He said, “No, it is
better for you not to know so that you will not lose heart. However,
among the countless sufferings awaiting you, I shall name only
three.

“First, until now you have been punishing yourself with your
own hand and, if you felt pity for yourself, you stopped whenever
you wanted. Now I will take you away from yourself and hand you
over defenseless to be dealt with at the hands of others. Then you
will have to accept the public destruction of your reputation in the
estimation of some blind men. This blow will strike you harder than
the suffering you endured from the pointed cross on the wounds of

your back. Your earlier exercises caused you to be highly esteemed
by people, but now you shall be beaten low and must be utterly
ruined.

“The second suffering is this. However often you have inflicted
bitter and deathly agony upon yourself, by a determination of God
you have kept your tender, loving nature. It is going to happen that
in those places where you especially look for love and loyalty you
shall experience deceit, much suffering, and hardship. The suffer-
ing will be so manifold that those people who have a special loyalty
toward you will have to suffer along with you out of pity.

“The third suffering is this. Until now you have been a baby and
a pampered sissy, and have moved about in divine sweetness like a
fish in the sea. This I shall now take from you and will let you
wither and go to ruin. You shall be abandoned both by God and the
whole world, and shall be persecuted publicly by friends and ene-
mies. In short, everything that you undertake out of joy or to be
consolled will go awry, and whatever is suffering or repulsive to you
will prosper.”

The servant grew so frightened at this that his whole being trem-
bled. Wildly he sprang up and then fell to the ground in the form of
a cross. His heart crying out and his voice wailing, he called out to
God and begged him, if it could be, that in his gentle fatherly
kindness he might spare him this terrible woe; but if this could not
be, that the will of heaven and his eternal plan should be fulfilled
through him. When he had been lying there in distress a good while,
it spoke within him thus: “Pull yourself together! I shall be with you
myself and shall graciously help you to conquer these prodigious
visitations.” He got up and surrendered himself into God’s hands.

When it became light after mass and he was sitting in his cell
disconsolate, pondering these things and freezing because it was
winter, something spoke in him: “Throw open the window of your
cell. Look and learn!” He opened and looked out. There he saw a
dog running around in the cloisters, dragging a tattered doormat
in his mouth. He had a strange way of playing with the mat. He would
throw it into the air and then to the ground, tearing holes in it. Then
the servant looked upward and sighed within himself, and it was
said to him: “Exactly this shall happen to you in the mouths of your
fellow friars!” He thought to himself, “Since it cannot be otherwise,
surrender yourself to it. See how without a word the mat lets itself
be ill-treated. Do the same yourself!” He went down and kept the
doormat for many years as his exquisite jewel. And whenever he
was about to give vent to his impatience, he took it out so that he
might recognize himself in it and remain silent before others.

When he sometimes rudely turned his face a little away from
people who irritated him, he would be inwardly punished for it and
a voice would say, “Remember that I, your Lord, did not turn my
fair face away from those who spit at me.” He would then be very
sorry and would turn toward them again in a friendly manner.

In the beginning, when some suffering would befall him, he
would think, “O God, when is this suffering going to end? If only I
had escaped it!” Then the Child Jesus came to him in a vision on the
feast of the Purification of our Lady and scolded him saying, “You
have not yet learned to suffer well. I shall teach it to you. Look,
when you are suffering you should not be looking to find out when
the present suffering will end on the assumption that you shall then
have peace. While one bit of suffering is going on, you should be
preparing yourself in patience to receive another. This is part of it
all. You should do as a young girl does who is picking roses. When
she breaks off one rose from the bush, she is not satisfied, but takes
it into her head to pick more of them. You should do the same.
Prepare yourself beforehand. When the present suffering comes to
an end, you will soon encounter another one.”

Among the various friends of God who foretold to him his future
sufferings there came to him a respected and holy woman who told
him that after mass on the feast of the Angels 59 she had prayed to
God very earnestly about him. Then it seemed to her in a vision that
she was led to a place where the servant was. And she saw that
above him a beautiful rosebush had begun to bloom. It was full on
all sides; it was beautifully formed and covered with fair red roses.
She looked toward heaven and it seemed to her that the sun was
rising in splendor against a cloudless sky. In the brightness of the
sun stood a beautiful child in the form of a cross. And she saw
radiance coming out of the sun toward the heart of the servant, so
brilliant that all his veins and limbs glowed. But the rosebush bent
down in between and was trying with its thick branches to block the
rays of the sun from reaching his heart, but it was unable to do this
because the rays bursting forth were so powerful that they shot
right through the branches and shone into his heart. Then she saw
the Child coming forth out of the sun and she said to it, “Dear
Child, where are you going?” It said, “I want to go to my beloved

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servant.” She said, “Gentle Child, what is the significance of the
sun’s radiance in the heart of your beloved?” It said, “I have illumin-
ated his loving heart so brightly that the reflection of this radiance
shall emanate from his heart and shall draw the hearts of men to me
in love. The thriving rosebush signifies the numerous sufferings
that are yet to come for him. It cannot hinder this from being nobly
accomplished in him.”

Because it is very profitable for a beginner to be closed off from
everything, he resolved to remain shut off from the whole world in
his friary for more than ten years. When he left the refectory, he
would shut himself up in his chapel and stay there. He did not wish
to engage in long conversations or even see either men or women at
the door of the friary or anywhere else. He put a tight rein on his
eyes and would not look at anything more than five feet away. He
always remained at home not wanting to go into town or into the
country, and wanting only to preserve his solitude. All this watch-
fulness was of no help because during these same years sufferings
befell him in full view of all around him, and he was so hard pressed
by them that he was the object of his own and other people’s pity.

To make his prison easier for himself to bear during the ten years
he kept himself shut up in the chapel—staying there of his own
accord without fetters—he got a painter to sketch for him the holy
ancient fathers and their sayings, as well as much other devotional
material that motivates a person in suffering to be patient in adver-
sity. 61 But God did not want him to become too enamored of this.
After the painter had sketched the ancient fathers in the chapel in
charcoal, his eyes became diseased, so that he did not see well
enough to do the actual painting. He took a temporary leave and
said the work would have to remain as it was until he got better.
The servant turned to the painter and asked him how long it would
take him to recover. He said, “Twelve weeks.” The servant asked
that the ladder, that had been taken down, be put up again where
the sketches of the ancient fathers were. He climbed the ladder,
rubbed his hands on the pictures, and stroked the aching eyes of the
painter saying, “By the power of God and the sanctity of these
ancient fathers I command you, master, to come back here tomor-
row with your eyes completely well again.” When it was morning,
he came happy and hardy, and thanked God and the servant that he
had recovered. But the servant attributed this to the ancient fathers
on whose images he had rubbed his hands.
During this period God treated him as though he had allowed the evil spirits and all mankind to torment him. He suffered immeasurably from the evil spirits who inflicted terrible pain and sorrow on him, taking on horrible forms in wild excesses. This happened both day and night, whether he was awake or asleep, and it caused him much distress.

Once he was beset by a temptation: the strong desire to eat meat, which he had done without for many years. After he had eaten the meat and satisfied his appetite, in a vision there came and stood before him a monstrous creature from hell who spoke the verse: "Adhuc esae eorum erant." With a bellowing voice he said to those standing about, "This monk deserves to die and I am going to oblige him." When they would not let him do this, he pulled out a hideously-looking auger and said to him, "Since I cannot do anything else to you now, I am going to torture you with this auger, driving it into your mouth. This will cause you pain equal to your pleasure in eating the meat." And he went at his mouth with the auger. Immediately his chin and gums swelled up, and his mouth swelled shut so that he could not open it or eat meat or anything else for three days except what he could suck in through his teeth.

CHAPTER 21
Interior Sufferings

Among his other sufferings then there were three interior sufferings that caused him much torment. The first of them was unorthodox ideas against faith. Something like this would occur to him: How could God become a man? He had many such thoughts. The more he resisted them, the more confused he became. God left him in this sorry condition for a good nine years, with his eyes weeping and with his heart crying out to God and to all the saints for help. Finally, at some point, it seemed to God that it was time, and God freed him completely from this, and he received from God great firmness and enlightenment in faith.

The second interior suffering was immoderate sadness. He was constantly so depressed in heart and mind as though a mountain were weighing down his heart. Part of the reason for this was that his sudden conversion was so uncompromising that his lively nature suffered very serious depressions because of it. This wretched condition lasted about eight years.

The third interior suffering was that he fell into the state of thinking that there was no hope for his soul and that he would be damned forever, no matter how good his actions or how much penance he performed. All this would not help him in the least to become one of the saved; all was already lost. These thoughts tormented him day and night. Whenever he was supposed to go to choir or perform some other good action, thoughts of despair would rise up in him and say accusingly, "What good does it do you to serve God? You are cursed; there is no hope for you. Give it up now. You are lost no matter what you do." Then he would think, "Wretched man that I am, where shall I turn? If I leave the order, hell will be my fate. If I remain, it is hopeless anyway. Dear God, was ever anyone worse off than I am?" He would sometimes stand lost in thought emitting many a deep sigh with tears streaming down. He would strike his breast and say, "Dear God, is there no help for me? What a wretched situation this is! Must I be here and hereafter miserable? Oh, why did my mother ever bear me!"

This trial had its origin in excessive fear. He had been told that his reception into the order had been the result of temporal goods changing hands. This is where the sin called simony comes from—when one buys something spiritual with something material. He buried this in his heart until he finally worked through his suffering. When this horrible suffering had been going on for about ten years, during which he considered himself simply as a damned person, he went to the saintly Meister Eckhart and lamented to him his suffering. He helped him get free of it, and thus he was released from the hell in which he had existed for so long a time.

CHAPTER 22
How He Undertook to Bring Spiritual Help to His Fellowmen

After he had spent many years fostering his own interior life, he was impelled by God through many kinds of revelations to work for the salvation of his fellowmen, that he also might fulfill this (task). The sufferings that befell him because of these good works were numer-
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of grace, ‘Are you firmly prepared to remain forsaken?’ One no longer hears the plaintive sorry call that you uttered, ‘O Lord, why have you deserted me?’ I hear rather the lovely words in your ears, ‘Come to me, my beloved; take possession of the eternal kingdom that has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world.’ Where is all the suffering, sorrow and distress that you experienced on earth? O God, it has all vanished as quickly as a dream, as though you never had any sorrow. O gentle God, how completely mysterious are your judgments to the world! O you elect, it is no longer a question of slipping into a corner and hiding from the senseless raging of others. If all hearts were but one heart, they still could not comprehend the great honor, the enormous dignity, the praise, the glory that you shall have forever and ever. O princes of heaven, you noble kings and emperors, you eternal children of God, your faces are so fair, your hearts so joyous; you feel exhilaration and your voices sing so joyfully this song: ‘Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor be given to him from eternity to eternity from the depths of our hearts.’ From his grace we have possessed all this eternally! This is the fatherland, this is complete rest, great jubilation and boundless everlasting praise!”

The servant: O wonder of wonders! O unfathomable Good, what are you? Truly, gentle dear Lord, it is very good to be here. Oh, my only Love, let us stay here always!

Response of eternal Wisdom: You cannot remain here yet. You still have to struggle through many an encounter. This sight was only shown you so that you might learn to turn quickly (to it) in all your suffering—then you can never lose heart—and might forget all your sorrow and have an answer to the complaint of those senseless people who say that I let things go badly for my friends. Consider the difference between friendship with me and with the world and how differently I order things for my friends, if the truth be known. I shall not mention the great worry, the toil and the suffering in which they are immersed and guard against day and night. They are so blinded that they do not realize this. It is, after all, my eternal order that a disordered spirit is a torment and a severe punishment to itself. My friends experience physical distress but have peace of heart. The friends of the world, however, seek physical comfort and attain distress of heart, soul and spirit.

The servant: Lord, those people are without sense and insane who compare your true friendship with the false friendship of the world

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on the basis of your having few friends. This is due to their utter blindness. They are always complaining about some suffering. Oh, how fatherly and loving is your rod! Happy is he on whom you did not spare! Lord, I now see clearly that suffering does not come from your severity. It comes from your loving tenderness. Let no one ever say that you have forgotten your friends. You forget those—because you lose hope with them—for whom you have omitted suffering here on earth. Lord, those should by rights never have a good day, never gain pleasure or comfort, whom you hereafter shall keep from eternal affliction and to whom you intend to give everlasting joy. O Lord, grant that these two visions may never depart from the eyes of my heart so that I may never lose your friendship.

CHAPTER 13

The Incomparable Nobility of Earthly Suffering

Gentle Lord, tell me, which suffering do you think is extremely useful and good? And I beg you from my heart that you also tell me if you are sending it to me, so that I might accept it with love and good cheer as coming from your fatherly hand.

Response of eternal Wisdom: I consider every suffering good, whether it be willingly taken on or befalls one unexpectedly when a person then makes a virtue of necessity, as long as he would not want to be free of it against my will and with loving and humble patience directs it to my eternal praise. The more he does this willingly, the more noble it is and the more pleasing to me. I hear now more about such suffering and include it into the ground of your heart and keep it as a sign for the spiritual eyes of your soul.

I dwell in the pure soul as in a paradise of all pleasures. This is why I cannot bear that in love or pleasure it turn to any (other) thing. By nature the soul is inclined toward harmful pleasure. And so I cover its path with thorns. I fill all the gaps with adversity, whether it likes it or not, so that it not escape me. I strew all its paths with suffering so that it cannot take one step to pursue its heart’s desire except in the heights of my divine nature. If all hearts were but one heart, they could not bear on this earth the smallest reward that I intend to give in eternity for the slightest suffering
that a person suffers for my sake. This is my eternal decree, which I
never depart from in all of nature: Whatever is noble and good must
be earned through hardship. Whoever wants to stay behind, let him
do so. Many are called and few are chosen.63

The servant: Lord, it may well be that suffering is an immeasurable
good as long as it is not without moderation, not cruel and
terrible. Lord, you alone know all things hidden and have created all
things in their number and size.64 You know that my suffering is
beyond all measure, that it is beyond my strength. Lord, if there is
anyone in this whole world who has more intense and constant
sufferings than I, it would be hard for me to believe. How shall I
bear them? Lord, if you were to give me ordinary sufferings, I could
endure them. I do not see how I can ever bear the extraordinary
sufferings, which you alone really see, that secretly oppress my soul
and my spirit.

Response of eternal Wisdom: Every sick person imagines that he is
the worst off of all, and every needy person thinks that he is the
poorest. If I had given you other sufferings, the same thing would
happen. Surrender yourself freely to my will in all suffering that I
want from you, without excepting this or that suffering. Don’t you
know that I only want the best for you as much as you yourself do?
But I am eternal Wisdom and know better what is best of all for
you. You may have felt this—that for a person handling them well,
sufferings from me are more penetrating and go deeper, driving one
on more vigorously than any other suffering one accepts. Why,
then, are you complaining? Say rather to me: “My very devoted
Father, treat me in all things as you want!”65

The servant: O Lord, this is quite easy to say, but the reality of
suffering is very hard to bear. It is painful indeed.

Response of eternal Wisdom: If suffering were not painful, it would
not be called suffering. Nothing is more painful than suffering, and
nothing is more of a joy than to have suffered. Suffering is a short
affliction and a long joy. What causes suffering to suffer is that for
suffering there is no suffering.66 If you had so much spiritual sweet-
ness, divine consolation and pleasure that you constantly over-
flowed with dew from heaven, this would not in itself be as worthy
of reward (as suffering). I would not have as much reason to be
grateful to you for all of this taken together, and it would not put me
in your debt as much as suffering out of love or being forsaken in
hardship when you suffer this for love of me. For every person who

vacillates (about undertaking a truly religious life) because of con-
stant suffering and adversity there are ten who do so because of (a
life) of great enjoyment and pleasant sweetness. If you had as much
knowledge as all astronomers, and if you could speak as eloquently
of God as the angelic tongues of all men and had the wealth of
learning of all the professors, this could not help you progress to-
ward a good life as much as if you knew how to surrender and
abandon yourself to God in all suffering. The former things are
common to good and bad alike,67 but the latter is a characteristic of
my chosen ones alone. Whoever could rightly weigh time and etern-
ity would rather be for a hundred years in a fiery furnace than do
without the smallest reward in eternity for the slightest suffering.
The time in the furnace has an end; this never has any end.

The servant: O sweet, loving Lord, this is like the music of sweet
strings to a suffering person. Lord, if only you would play such
songs for me in my suffering, I would gladly suffer. Then I would
feel better with suffering than without it.

Response of eternal Wisdom: Now, listen to the music from the
taut strings of a person suffering for God (and see) how rich it
sounds and how sweet the tones are:

In the eyes of the world suffering is repugnant, but in my sight it
is something immeasurably valuable. Suffering quenches my anger
and wins my favor. Suffering makes a person worthy of my love
because a person in suffering resembles me. Suffering is a hidden
good that no one can buy. If someone knelt before me for a hundred
years asking to suffer well, he would not deserve it. It turns an
earthly man into a heavenly man. Suffering estranges one from the
world, but it affords constant intimacy with me. It decreases (the
number of one’s) friends, but it increases grace. If I am to become
someone’s friend, he must be completely rejected and forsaken by
the whole world. This is the safest and shortest path, and the most
perfect. Look, the person who really knows how advantageous suf-
ferring is should accept it from God as a valuable gift. Indeed, how
many there are who were children of eternal death and who had
fallen into a deep torpor, and suffering revived them and encour-
gaged them to a good life! How many wild beasts and untamed birds
there are who are held in check by constant suffering, as though it
were a cage. And if they were given time and room enough, they
would run away from their eternal happiness. Suffering preserves
one from serious falls. It forces a person to know himself, to be self-
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reliant and to believe his neighbor. Suffering keeps the soul humble and teaches it patience. It is a guardian of purity and brings the crown of eternal happiness. There is hardly anyone who does not receive something good from suffering, whether he is in sin, or a beginner, or one progressing or perfect. For it cleanses iron, purifies gold and is an adornment to precious jewelry. Suffering removes sin, shortens purgatory, repels temptations, causes faults to vanish and renews the spirit. It brings true confidence, a pure conscience and a constant positive feeling. Know that it is a healthful potion and a healing herb above all the herbs of paradise. It chastens the body, which after all will rot, and it feeds the noble soul, which shall remain forever.

Look, a noble soul thrives in suffering as beautiful roses do in the sweet dew of May. Suffering gives one wisdom and makes one a tested person. A person who has not suffered—what does he know? Suffering is a (punishing) rod of love, a fatherly chastening for my chosen ones. Suffering draws a person up and forces him to God, whether he likes it or not. One who stays cheerful in suffering is served by joy and sorrow, friend and foe. How often you have smashed in the iron teeth of your snarling enemies and rendered them powerless with your joyous praise and meek suffering! I would prefer to create unnecessary suffering rather than let my friends go without suffering, because in suffering all virtues prove themselves, a person is adorned, one's neighbor is improved, and God is praised. Patience in suffering is a living sacrifice. It is a sweet fragrance of precious balsam before my divine countenance. It is a marvel springing up in front of the whole heavenly army. Never was there as great astonishment at a knight performing well in a tournament as the astonishment of the whole heavenly host at a person suffering well. All the saints are the cupbearers of a person suffering because they have tasted it already and call out with one voice that it is free of any poison and is a health-bringing potion. Patience in suffering is greater than raising the dead or performing other marvelous signs. It is the narrow path that gloriously reaches the gates of heaven. Suffering makes one the equal of the martyrs. It brings praise, and victory over all enemies. Suffering clothes the soul in a rose-colored garment, in purple. It wears a garland of red roses and a scepter of green palm branches. It is the sparkling ruby on the clasp (on the robe) of a virgin. In eternity it leads the singing of a new dance song with a sweet voice and free spirit, a song that the angelic hosts could never sing because they never experienced suffering. Put briefly: In the world those who suffer are called poor, but by me they are called the blessed because they are my elect.

The servant: Truly, it becomes very apparent that you are eternal Wisdom because you know how to bring truth out into the open so vividly that no one is able to have the slightest doubt about it. No wonder that the person for whom you make suffering such a joy can endure suffering. Lord, by your sweet words you have brought about not just that I shall find all suffering much more bearable and shall endure it joy, my Lord and devoted Father; but also, I kneel before you today and praise you earnestly for my present suffering and for severe past suffering as well, which seemed so immense to me because it appeared so menacing.

Eternal Wisdom: What, then, is your opinion now?

The servant: Lord, this is what I really think: When with loving eyes I look at you, a joy for my heart to gaze upon, all the severe sufferings, with which you, like a father, have tried me, and at the sight of which your saintly friends shuddered, were like the sweet dew of springtime.

When this same Dominican father began to write about suffering, it seemed to him in the same manner as mentioned above that these same two persons who had been caught up in suffering and despondency were sitting in front of him, and one of them asked that he play a tune on the psaltery. This he felt was undignified, considering it not something religious. He was told that their desire for this music was not irreverent. And immediately a young man appeared who got a psaltery ready and, this done, stretched two threads crossways over the strings and put it into the friar's hands. Then he (the friar) began to speak of suffering:

CHAPTER 14

The Inexpressible Good Arising From the Contemplation of God's Suffering

The servant: Lord, the unfathomable benefit that a person finds in your suffering, if he takes the opportunity, is truly hidden from all hearts. Indeed, the path of your suffering is a sure path through the