

Meister Eckhart is known for his arresting and enigmatic assertions risking condemnation as a heretic because some of them seem so far-fetched, including this,

*'whoever loves God more than his neighbour loves well, but not yet perfectly' .*

His argumentation is subtle and mystical based perhaps ( I say perhaps because my knowledge in this area is very limited) on the idea of God as One and of us being called to be part of that ' one' or oneness, called to be fully what we already are, made in God's image but more than that, 'in Christ' to be born in God as God is born in us – to share in Christ's first- born status and his sonship, to be children of God and able to call God Father. It's a very noble conception – in both senses – and could also be expressed as being ' holy' as God is ' holy' or being perfect as God is perfect, and then, and rightly so, an impossible task . So let's just go back home, make a cup of tea, and forget all about it, all about this talk of being perfect or holy. And that's not a bad place to start because what Eckhart is also perhaps, saying, is that we can no more escape this call to be perfect or holy than we can escape ourselves and it is indeed an impossible task for us, but not for God. So it may seem that' it's essentially about letting God be God in us, but that doesn't let us off the hook entirely as Eckhart will go on to say, all this in his defence against the Inquisition ,that when

*' we speak of the act of the just person as the birth of the Son in the soul, we speak of the just person in so far as he is just'*

So it's seemingly then not only a matter of love but of justice too, of, to put it crudely, performing good acts such as turning the other cheek, going the second mile, loving ones enemy – we have something to do as well as to be and we seem once again to be back at square one – the impossibility of it all. But if we go back home once again to make that cup of tea '*willing nothing, knowing nothing and having nothing*' we might just find ourselves reinvigorated, remade, ready for action because when we realise that our acts of love are not our own, or rather not a demand on us alone, but the fruit of being' in Christ' and so already in obedience or according to the will of God so loving our neighbour more than loving God makes perfect sense – it's one and the same '. In so far as one is just' or ' in so far as one is loving ' is another way perhaps of saying ' it's all God ' – and we are in God in so far as God is in us, loving and willing and doing. Or as St.Paul puts it:

*'you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.'*

This is perhaps saying something about being fully human and a quote from Thomas Merton might help, writing to James Baldwin in 1963:

*'I am therefore not completely human until I have found myself in my African and Asian and Indonesian brother because he has the part of humanity which I lack'.*

When we love our neighbour more than God we are perfected in love in such a way that God comes to completion in us and our neighbour becomes ' part' of us as we become part of them, a sacred unity

*'because the temple of God is sacred and you are that temple.'*

If this is all too much don't worry – there's tea and coffee available after Mass with our hosts and neighbours from All Saints. You might even get as far as a second cup before the Inquisition arrives.

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