

Hier beghinnen die oeffeninghen VANDEN TEMPEL ONSER SIELEN

CAPITTEL I

HOE GOD DIE SIELE TOT SINEN TEMPEL GHEMAECT HEEFT, ENDE MET MENIGHERLEY GRACIEN ENDE GAVEN VERCIERT HEEFT

Die eeuwige Wijsheyt heeft hem selven een huys ghemaect ende utgehouden seven calommen. Dit huys is die redelike siel, die daer van den meester der ewigher Wijsheyt ghehouden is uutten berch der ewicheyt, uut die almachtighe afgrondicheyt des Vaders, uut die eeuwige voorzienighe wijsheyt des Soons, uut dat weeldige rijckdom des heyligen Geest. So heeft hi hem selven een alte bequamen woninghe zijre edelre Godheyt ghemaect, als die propheet spreekt: O Israël, hoe groot is dyns Gods huys, ende hoe wijt is die stede dijre besittinge! Haer hoocheyt is onghemet, ende haer eynde is ewich.

Al yst datmen hier-bi verstaet den hemel, nochtans machmen hier wel rechtelijc bi verstaen die siel, die daer is een hemel der heyligher Drievuldicheyt, als daer gescreven staet: 'Die hemel is mijn setel, ende die aerde een voetschemel mijnre voeten.' Ende 'die de hemelen niet begripen en mochten, woude in Salomons tempel aenghebedet wesen.' En is die siel des rechtveerdigen niet een stoel der Wijsheyt? Hier-om, so waer een reyn consciencie is, daer is die setel Gods.

Die colommen des huys zijn die drie crachten der sielen, die daer zijn een camer der heyligher Drievuldicheyt, daer die heylige Drievuldicheyt met al zijn lieflike genade in woont, ende is der sielen leven, voetsel ende onthoudinghe, ende werct daer-in zijn verborgen heymelicheyt. Die ander zijn die vier elementen, daer dat lichaem af te samen gheset is, ende zijn hem gheoorlooft te ghebruycken, als die gheest met God vereenicht is. Daer die calommen mede onderhouden werden, dat zijn die drie godlike duechden ende die vier principael duechden. Welc zijn gheloove, hoope ende liefde, die daer-om godlike duechden heeten, om-dat si den geest met God vereenigen ende godformich maken, die daer is een eenich, ewich,

Here commence the exercises of
THE TEMPLE OF OUR SOUL

CHAPTER I

HOW GOD HAS MADE THE SOUL HIS TEMPLE,
AND HAS ADORNED IT WITH MANY GRACES
AND GIFTS

‘The eternal Wisdom has made a house for himself and has carved seven pillars’ (Prov. 9:1). This house is the rational soul, which the Master of eternal Wisdom has carved out of the mountain of eternity, out of the almighty abyss of the Father, out of the eternal providential wisdom of the Son, out of the abundant riches of the Holy Spirit. Thus, he has made for himself a most fitting mansion for his noble divinity, just as the Prophet says: ‘O Israel, how vast is the house of your God, how broad the scope of your dominion. Its height is immeasurable, its end is eternal’ (Bar. 3:24).

Even though this is to be understood as referring to heaven, nevertheless one can reasonably understand it also as the soul, which is a heaven of the Holy Trinity, just as it is written: ‘heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool’ (Is. 66:1) and ‘the One whom the heavens cannot contain wanted to be worshipped in Solomon’s temple’ (2 Chron. 6:18). Is not the soul of the righteous a seat of Wisdom? Therefore, where there is a pure conscience, there is the seat of God.

The pillars of the house are the three faculties of the soul, which are each a room for the Holy Trinity, where the Holy Trinity dwells with all its sweet grace – which is life, nourishment, and support for the soul, in which it works its hidden mystery (Is. 45:3). The other four pillars are the four elements that comprise the body, and which the body may use when the spirit is united with God. The pillars are supported by the three divine virtues and the four cardinal virtues. Faith, hope, and love are called divine virtues because they unite the spirit with God – who dwells in it as one, eternal, almighty, supremely good – and make it deiform in so far as he has made the soul similar to himself, so that by these virtues

almachtich, opperste goet, in welke hi die siele hem selven gelijk ghemact heeft, dat si overmidts dese duechden verwinnen soude al dat inder werelt is ende wesen mede een eewich, eenich, almachtich, opperste goet, dat si overmits den geloove een bloot opsien in God heeft, die de eerste voorwerp ende ghebruycken des gheest is, ende so overmits dat eewige goet alle begeerlicheyt deser werelt verontweerdet, ende onder die voet treet, ende overmidts den gheloove vast in God woont, in den onbewegeliken berch, daer dit huys in gefundeert is, in welc God selver woont: 'Sijn fundamenten zijn in die heylige bergen'. Aldus is dit huys gefundeert in God ende God int huys, ende dat overmits den geloove. 'Wie in mi gelooft, sprac Iesus, uut sinen buyc (dat is: in dat binnenste zijns geests) sullen vloeyen vloedden des levendigen waters'. Want dat hoort den huys Gods toe, dat die fonteyn in hem heeft.

Overmidts den hope so wort verwonnen alle hoveerdie des levens, indien datmen vast betrouwet alle datmen metten geloove in die eenicheyt heeft bevonden. 'So wie in my betrouwet, die heeft in hem dat eewige leven'.

Overmits die liefde tot God so verwintmen alle wellust ende sinnelicheyt des vleeschs ende der natueren, want 'die liefde is sterc als die doot'; ende 'so wie inder liefden blivet, die blivet in God ende God in hem'. Ende aldus wortmen godlic overmits dese drie duechden. Dese drie godlike duechden zijn als drie colommen, die den geest, dat overste deel des tempels, in God vereenigen ende vast maken, ende van alle nederste dingen vervreemden ende in God eenighen. Die ander vier calommen zijn die vier cardinael duechden, die de siel onderhoude, dat si haer niet en neyghet totten vleescheliken begheerlicheneden, mer tot godliker onderdanicheyt. Die eerste duecht is gherechticheyt. Dese is der sielen ingestort, ende onthoutse in haren oorspronc ende in haer eerste beghinne, op-dat si gerechtelic wander voor haren God: in heylige ghedachten, in ghelatenheyt des willen, in reyn begheerte, in een puer meyninge des herten. Hier-van staet ghescreven inden boec der Wijsheyt: 'Die Heer sal den gherechtighe leyden door die rechte wegen ende toonen hem dat rijcke Gods, dat in ons is. Die sielen der rechtveerdiger zijn inden handen Gods, ende die pine der doot en salse niet roeren. Ende die benedixie des Heren is op dat hooft des gherechtighen.'

Die ander duecht is wijsheyt, ende is een licht ende een wetenheyt inder sielen, daerse God ende haer selven mede sal leeren kennen, ende alle dingen wijselijc doorsien ende onderscheyden ende omhelsen dat goet is, ende haten dat quaet is. Daer-om heeft die eewige Wijsheyt dat licht zijns aensichts in der sielen gestort, ende heeft een eewich verbont met haer gemaect, ende een grote claarheyt in haer gestort opdat si in

the spirit can overcome all that is in the world, and also be one, almighty, supremely good. Thus, by faith the soul has a pure gaze on God, who is the first object and enjoyment of the spirit: by this eternal good she disparages everything that the world desires and tramples on it. By faith she lives steadfast in God, in the immovable mountain, on which the house is founded, and where God himself lives: 'Its foundations are in the holy mountains' (Ps. 87:1). Thus, this house is founded in God and, through faith, God is founded in this house. 'Whoever believes in me,' Jesus said, 'out of his belly (that is, the inner part of his spirit) rivers of living water will flow' (Jn. 7:38). And that, because it is becoming to God's house that it has its fountain in itself.

By hope all pride of life is overcome, insofar as we trust firmly all that we have found, with faith, in that unity. 'Whoever trusts in me has eternal life in him' (Jn. 7:38).

By love of God we overcome voluptuousness, sensuality of the flesh and of nature, because 'strong as death is love' (Sg. 8:6) and 'whoever abides in love, abides in God and God in him' (1 Jn. 4:16). Thus, we become divine by these three virtues. They are like the pillars that unite the spirit – the higher part of the temple – in God and fix it, and detach it from all lowly things and make it one in God. The other four pillars are the four cardinal virtues that support the soul so that she does not incline to fleshly desires, but rather to divine obedience. The first virtue is justice. This is poured in the soul and sustains her at its origin and first beginning, so that she walks rightly before her God: in holy thoughts, in surrendering her will, in pure desire, in pure intention of the heart. The book of Wisdom says: 'The Lord will guide the just man in righteous ways, and will show him the kingdom of God that is in us. The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. The blessing of the Lord rests on the heads of the just' (Wis. 10:10 and 3:1).

The second virtue is wisdom. It is a light and discernment in the soul whereby she comes to know God and herself, has wise insight in all things, discerns and embraces all that is good, and hates all that is evil. That is why the eternal Wisdom has poured the light of his countenance into the soul, and has made an eternal covenant with her, and poured great clarity in her, so that she lives in that wisdom and walks in that

die wijsheyt soude woonen, ende in zijn licht soude wandelen, als die Propheet seyt: 'O Here, in dyn licht sullen wi dat licht sien. Salich is hi, die inder wijsheyt wonen sal, ende inder gerechticheyt dencken sal. God die Here sal hem spisen metten broode des levens ende der verstandnisse, ende vanden water der saliger wijsheyt sal hi hem drincken geven. Hi sal hem onthouden ende niet ghebuyget werden. Des wisen menschen ooghe staet altoos in zijn hooft, dat is in God'. Die Wise Man seyt: 'O Wijsheyt, ic heb u gemint boven gout ende boven alle rijcdom deser werelt; ende van u is mi alle goet ghecomen.

Die derde duecht is maticheyt. Dese hout dat middel tusschen die duechden ende onduechden, ende is sorchfuldich te bewaren, dat God gheboden heeft, ende niet te overtreden, dat verboden is.

Die vierde duecht is stercheyt, daer dat huys mede ghesterct wort in vercrighinghe ende vaste bewaringhe der duechden. Want si van alle siden van die onduechden belegen is ende so dicwils besprongen ende aenghevochten wort, so ist noot dat si van den edelen inwoonder Gods ghesterct ende ontset wort. Want die Propheet seyt: 'Die Heere is myn stercheyt ende mijn hulp. Ic en sal dat quaet niet vreesen, want ghi, Heere, met mi zijt. Die Heere is een beschermer mijns levens; wien sal ic ontsien? Die daer woont in die hulpe des alder-oversten, die woont in die beschermenisse Gods des hemels'.

Dit zijn die seven calomnen, daer die siel ende woninge Gods mede onderset is, ende zijn als silveren pileernen inden tempel der sielen, daer alle dat geestelike timmer in hoocheyt der duechden op onthouden wort, ende maect blinckende van binnen voor God ende van buyten voor den menschen, ende werden ooc gulden overmits die soete gaven des heylighen Gheest, so wat dat hi doet, dat hi dat met verstant ende wijsheyt, met wetenheyt ende met beraet, met vresen, met vreden, met goedertierenheyt doet.

In desen tempel is ooc een gulden thron ghevesticht op die seven calomnen der duechden. Desen thron is dat godformich ghemoede, dat met godliker clærheyt doorlucht is. 'Die stoel is elpen-beenen, die lenen gulden'. Dese stoel is dat puer ghedacht, stille barnende in godliker liefden, daer die vredsamige coninc der eewigher Wijsheyt in rust als in een conincklike thron, die dat ghemoede vestiget in een eenvuldich licht boven alle zijn invallen ende doet dat sincken in stilder minnen ende vryheyt des geests, ende vernieuwet alle dinc inder sielen, ende door-vloeyt alle die crachten ende sinnen, ende maectse God ghebruykelic.

light, just as the prophet says: 'O Lord, in your light we see the light (Ps. 36:10). Happy is the person who will dwell in wisdom, and meditate in justice. God the Lord will nourish him with the bread of life and understanding, and give him the water of learning to drink. He will sustain him so that he will not bend down. The eyes of the wise are always in his head, that is: in God.' (Cf. Sir. 14:20 and 15:3-4, and Eccl. 2:14.) The wise man says: 'O Wisdom, I love you above gold and the riches of this world; from you all good things came to me' (Wis. 7:9-11).

The third virtue is temperance. It keeps a mean between too much and too little, carefully keeping God's commandments, and not transgressing into what is forbidden.

The fourth virtue is strength, with which the house is strengthened by acquiring and keeping the virtues. Because the house is besieged on all sides by vices and often assaulted and contested, it must be strengthened by the noble indwelling of God, and be relieved. Because the prophet says: 'The Lord is my strength and my help (Ps. 18:2-3). I will fear no harm, for you, Lord, are with me (Ps. 23:4). The Lord is my life's refuge, of whom will I be afraid? (Ps. 27:1). The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, abides in the protection of the God of heaven' (Ps. 91:1).

These then are the seven pillars with which the soul, as dwelling place of God, is supported. They are silver pillars in the soul, where the whole spiritual building is supported in the loftiness of the virtues, and they make it interiorly shining for God and exteriorly for us. They become gold by the sweet gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that whatever this person does, he does with insight and wisdom, with knowledge and deliberation, with fear, grace, peace, and benevolence.

In this temple is established a golden throne on the seven pillars of the virtues. This throne is the deiform mind, irradiated with divine clarity. 'The seat is ivory, the arms gold' (2 Chron. 9:17-18). This chair is the pure mind, silently burning in divine love, where the peaceful king of eternal Wisdom rests as on a royal throne, establishing the mind in an eternal light beyond all thought, and immersing it in silent love and freedom of spirit. He renews all things in the soul, and permeates the faculties and senses and makes them ready for the enjoyment of God.

Dat sanctuarium in desen tempel is die eenicheyt des geests, daer die heylige Drievuldicheyt sonder onderlaet in gheëert ende aenghebeden wort. Dat altaer is dat verborghen rijcdom des godliken wesens, daer dat onghebeelde godlike afgront in aenghebedet wort, daer dat eewige Woort, dat uut en vaderliken herte eewelic sonder onderlaet ende inder tijt gheboren wort, opghedraghen wort, ende opgheoffert, daer die innighe siel haer selven ende alle ghenade, die si uut God ontfangen heeft, weder op-draget totten love Gods in dat heymlike sancta sanctorum, dat met allen enghelen ende heylighen ombeset is, die dat sanctuarium ende den conincliken throon, ende den tempel Gods om-staen, ende nacht ende dach bewaren, ende God daer-in eeren ende loven met blischappen, dat God sulcken woninge inder aerden heeft, mer nochtans meer inden hemel, als daer meer hemelsche dinghen gheoeffent werden.

Vervruecht ende verblijft u, ghi, inwoonders der aerden, dat ghi Gods tempel zijt gheworden, want God verblijft hem selven in u. Hi seyt door den Prophete: 'Ic sal bewaren mijn sanctuarium, ende ic ben een behouder mijns rijcx, ende ic en wil niet dat minen tempel sullen besmetten eenige beelden, ende dat minen tabernakel sal ghenaken eenighe gheesselinghe'.

Dit is dat nieu Iherusalem, dat Johannes sach nederdalen vanden hemel, bereyt van God als een vercierde bruyt haren man: 'Siet, dat tabernakel Gods is metten menschen, ende hi sal met hem woonen. Ic sal haer God zijn, ende si sullen mijn volc wesen. Vervruecht u, Syon: die grote ende heylige God van Israël is int middel van u. Die gheweldicheyt des strooms heeft verblijft die stadt Gods, ende die alder-overste heeft geheylicht zijn tabernakel'.

Dit is Salomons tempel, die ghebenedide acker, die hemel der weelden, dat paradijs der wellusten, die gulden stoel, die blischap der enghelen, een coninclike stadt ende een wooninge Gods, een huys der heyliger Drievuldicheyt, die arck des testaments, daer die siel die tafel is, daer die .x. gheboden in ghescreven staen (want si die dierbaer steen is, daer dat hemelsche Jherusalem mede wort ghetimmert) ende die gulden eemer des pueren herten, daer dat hemelsche broot in is (dat is: dat broot der enghelen, die eenicheyt des godliken wesens, daer si af ghevoet wort) ende Aarons roede, dat is: dat levendige Woort Gods, dat die siel vruchtbaer maect, daer die heylige Gheest met zijn seven-vuldighe gaven op rust. Aldus veel verborghen heylicheden zijn in desen tempel der sielen, ende is als een vruchtbaer wijngaert Gods.

In desen tempel woonen die rechte oeffenaers ende aenbeders Gods, dat zijn: inwendige heylige menschen. In desen inwendigen tempel der sielen woonde stadelijck onse lieve Vrouwe ende keerde al haer crachten

The sanctuary of this temple is the unity of the spirit, where the Holy Trinity is ever honoured and worshipped. The altar is the hidden treasure of the divine being, where the imageless divine abyss is worshipped. On that altar, the eternal Word, continuously born in time out of the paternal heart, is offered as a sacrifice. There the inner soul dedicates herself, and all graces that she has received from God, to his praise in the hidden *sancta sanctorum* which is surrounded by all the angels and saints. They stand around the sanctuary and the royal throne and the temple of God, and watch over it day and night, and honour and praise God there with joy because God has such a dwelling place on earth – though there is more praise and joy in heaven because the heavenly things are more often performed there.

Rejoice, you inhabitants of earth: you have become God's temple; rejoice, because God rejoices in you. He says through his prophet: 'I will keep my sanctuary. I am a defender of my realm. I do not want my temple desecrated by any image, or any pestilence to come near my tabernacle' (Ps. 90:10).

This is the New Jerusalem that John saw coming down from heaven, prepared by God as a bride adorned for her husband: 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with the human race; he will dwell with them. I will be their God, and they will be my people (Rev. 21:2–3). Rejoice, O Sion, the great and holy God of Israel is in your midst (Is. 12:6). The stream of the river makes the city of God joyful and the Most High has sanctified his tabernacle' (Ps 45:5).

This is the temple of Solomon, the blessed field, the garden of delights, the golden chair, the joy of the angels, a royal city and a dwelling place of God, a house for the Holy Trinity, the Ark of the Testament where the soul is the table on which the Ten Commandments are written. For she is the precious stone with which the heavenly Jerusalem is built and the golden jar of the pure heart wherein is the heavenly bread – that is, the bread of angels, the unity of the divine essence, with which the soul is fed – and the staff of Aaron: the living Word of God that makes the soul fertile, on whom the Holy Spirit rests with his sevenfold gifts. So many hidden holy things are in the temple of the soul, and it is a fruitful vineyard of God.

In this temple live those who truly worship God, namely inward, holy people. In this inner temple of the soul, Our Lady lived continually, and she drew all her faculties therein, and there she adored her only Son in

daer-in, ende daer aenbadt si haren eenighen Sone inden gheest ende inder waerheyt. Si bekenden, dat si hem niet weerdelic loven en conde. Daer-om begheerde si, dat hi hem selven in haer weerdichde ende loefde. Ende die in haer ioncfroulijc herte ghesien had, die had daer God ghescouwet in weseliker wisen.

‘Salich zijn si, Heere, die daer wonen in dinen huys: in eewicheyt der eewicheden sullen si di loven’. Nochtans sidi dijns selfs alderhoogste lof, daer ghi u selven antwoordt in dat weder-op-dragen al uwer gaven. ‘O Heere, ic minne die ciergeyt dijns huys, ende die stadt uwer besittinge’.

O siel, die overmidts ciergeyt der duechden een tempel Gods ghe worden zijt, wat gaet ghi buyten u soecken den-ghenen, die ghi altemael in u hebt, ende draget den-ghenen in u, die alle dinghen gheschapen heeft?

spirit and truth. She acknowledged to him that she could not honour him worthily. Therefore, she desired that he honour himself in her. And whoever could look into her virgin heart would have contemplated God there, in essential mode.

‘Happy those, O Lord, who dwell in your house, they will praise you forever’ (cf. Ps. 84, 5). Nevertheless, you are yourself your highest praise, where you respond to yourself in the rededication of all your gifts. ‘O Lord, I love the splendour of your house and the place of your possession’ (cf. Ps. 26:8; Ba. 3:24).

O soul, which has become a temple for God through the adornment of virtues, why do you search outside for the One whom you have fully in yourself? You carry in yourself the One who has created all things!