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Florian Wöller • Ueli Zahnd (eds.)

Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology

The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215 – ca. 1600)

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Johannes Tauler on Petitionary Prayer
An Attempt at Bridging the Gap Between Ecclesiastical Tradition and Mystical Thought

Andreas Zecherle

1. Introduction

Following the preceding studies on petitionary prayer in the works of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart in the present volume, this article examines the teaching on petitionary prayer in the texts of a third Dominican friar, namely Johannes Tauler. He knew the outlines of Aquinas's theology[1] and was strongly influenced by Eckhart.[2] Unlike them, however, Tauler did not write scholastic works or attend university. Educated within the Order, he was assigned to pastoral and preaching ministry.[3] All his presently known works are vernacular sermons, many of them obviously addressed to (most likely Dominican) sisters.[4] Especially in the monastic context, where one's whole life was centered on prayer,[5] the question arose as to whether the mystical concept of releasement (*gelâzenheit*),[6] which Eck-

1 For the quotations of Thomas Aquinas in the sermons of Tauler, see Müller, Günther: "Scholastikerzitate bei Tauler", in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 1 (1923), pp. 400–418: 405–414; Gnädinger, Louise: *Johannes Tauler. Lebenswelt und mystische Lehre*, Munich 1993, pp. 376–381.

2 See *ibid.*, p. 382; McGinn, Bernard: *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)* (The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism 6), New York 2005, pp. 245–247; Mösch, Caroline F.: *"Daz disiu geburt geschehe". Meister Eckharts Predigtzyklus Von der êwigen geburt und Johannes Taulers Predigten zum Weihnachtsfestkreis* (Dokimion 31), Fribourg 2006; Büchner, Christine: *Die Transformation des Einheitsdenkens Meister Eckharts bei Heinrich Seuse und Johannes Tauler* (Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch. Beihefte 1), Stuttgart 2007, pp. 11–12, 16–17, 76–113. However, the lack of thorough research on Eckhart's influence on Tauler, noted by Ruh in 1996, has not yet been completely remedied. See Ruh, Kurt: *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik, vol. III: Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik*, Munich 1996, pp. 511–512.

3 See Gnädinger 1993, pp. 18–22.

4 See *ibid.*, pp. 27–30, 34, 107. The question of Tauler's audience must be discussed individually for each sermon (see Weigand, Rudolf K.: "Lehrer und Schuster. Johannes Taulers Weg zur Tugend", in *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 8 (2014), pp. 117–143: 127–128).

5 See Langer, Otto: *Mystische Erfahrung und spirituelle Theologie. Zu Meister Eckharts Auseinandersetzung mit der Frauenfrömmigkeit seiner Zeit* (Münchner Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 91), Munich/Zurich 1987, pp. 106–120.

6 For possible English translations of *gelâzenheit* see McGinn, Bernard: "*Gelâzen/Gelâzenheit* from Eckhart to the Radical Reformers", in *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 13 (2019), pp. 89–111: 89–90.

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hart had developed[7] and Tauler himself spread,[8] did not in fact render the traditional practice of petitionary prayer superfluous. Tauler was aware of the problem and took it up in his sermons, most impressively in one of his sermons on the text "Transite ad me omnes qui concupiscitis me et a generacionibus meis adinplemini" (Eccl 24:26), held on the octave day of the feast of the Nativity of Mary.[9] The present study focuses on a passage from this sermon, which has received relatively little attention in scholarship to date,[10] and considers how this passage relates to some of Tauler's other sermons.

2. Petitionary Prayer as a Controversial Tradition

At the beginning of the sermon, Tauler states its liturgical occasion, the octave of the feast of the Nativity of Mary. With this as his starting point, he first deals with the significance of Mary. He notes that St. Bernard and other saints were aware that it was impossible to praise Mary adequately and that therefore they must be silent on the matter.[11] Tauler then quotes verbatim a prayer to Mary that he attributes to St. Bernard. This prayer asks Mary to be mindful of humankind's needs despite her extraordinary closeness to God.[12] Tauler goes on

7 For a summary, see Enders, Markus: *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit: Studien zur Deutschen Mystik* (Boethiana 82), Hamburg 2008, pp. 350–361; McGinn 2019, pp. 90–95 (each with further literature).

8 On the reception of the concept of 'releasement' in the sermons of Tauler, see Völker, Ludwig: "'Gelassenheit'. Zur Entstehung des Wortes in der Sprache Meister Eckharts und seiner Überlieferung in der nacheckhartischen Mystik bis Jacob Böhme", in eds. Franz Hundsnurscher/Ulrich Müller: *"Getempert und gemischet". Für Wolfgang Mohr zum 65. Geburtstag* (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 65), Göppingen 1972, pp. 281–312: 288–290; Gandlau, Thomas: *Trinität und Kreuz. Die Nachfolge Christi in der Mystagogie Johannes Taulers* (Freiburger theologische Studien 155), Freiburg/Basel/Wien 1993, pp. 232–233, 285–286, 329; Zekorn, Stefan: *Gelassenheit und Einkehr. Zu Grundlage und Gestalt geistlichen Lebens bei Johannes Tauler* (Studien zur systematischen und spirituellen Theologie 10), Würzburg 1993, pp. 83–88; Enders 2008, pp. 361–362; Früh, Imke: "Im Zeichen und im Kontext von *gelossenheit*. Semantisierungsstrategien in den Predigten Johannes Taulers", in eds. Burkhard Hasebrink/Susanne Bernhardt/Imke Früh: *Semantik der Gelassenheit. Generierung, Etablierung, Transformation* (Historische Semantik 17), Göttingen 2012, pp. 143–170; McGinn 2019, pp. 98–100.

9 Iohannes Taulerus: *Die Predigten Taulers aus der Engelberger und der Freiburger Handschrift sowie aus Schmidts Abschriften der ehemaligen Straßburger Handschriften*, ed. Ferdinand Vetter (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 11), Berlin 1910, n. 50, pp. 224–230. There are two other extant sermons by Tauler on the same biblical verse Eccl 24:26 (see *ibid.*, n. 49, pp. 219–224; n. 52, pp. 234–239).

10 Cf. the short remarks in Zekorn 1993, pp. 146–147.

11 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, ll. 9–12. As a probable source cf. Pseudo-Bernardus Claraevallensis: *Ad beatam Mariam deprecatio et laus*, in *Divi Bernardi Clarae Vallensis [...] opera omnia*, Antwerpen 1609, col. 270D = Auctor incertus: *Homilia LII in nativitate beatae Mariae virginis*, in ed. Jacques-Paul Migne: *Patrologia Latina* 95, Paris 1861, col. 1518B; see also Gnädinger, Louise: "Der minnende Bernhardus. Seine Reflexe in den Predigten des Johannes Tauler", in *Cîteaux* 31 (1980), pp. 387–409: 398–399.

12 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, ll. 12–16. The prayer seems to be quoted rather freely. As possible sources cf. Bernardus Claraevallensis: *Dominica infra octavam assumptionis*, n. 6, in ed. Gerhard B. Winkler: *Sämtliche Werke lateinisch/deutsch*,

to mention that other saints have addressed similar prayers to Mary,[13] before rather abruptly pointing out that such piety, in which the invocation of Mary as intercessor plays a major role, is not uncontroversial. The preacher outlines the problem by contrasting two ideal-typical views:

Nu sint zwo wise, die die lúte habent: Die einen enwellent nút betten und sprechent, si enkúnnen niemer nút gebetten, denne si wellen und mů̈ssen sich Gotte lossen, das er mit in und allen iren sachen tů̈ie, was er welle. Nu die andern, die bettent gar flisseklichen unser frǒwen an und die heiligen umbe alle ir sachen.[14]

Now, there are two approaches that people have: Some do not want to ask for anything in prayer and say they cannot ask for anything at all in prayer, because they want and have to leave themselves to God, so that He does what He wants with them and all their affairs. The others pray very fervently to our Lady and the saints for all their affairs.

The latter group practices a piety that was widespread in the late Middle Ages.[15] As shown above, Tauler links this piety in the present sermon primarily to the name of Bernard of Clairvaux, but it was also defended by Thomas Aquinas.[16] The first-mentioned group, by contrast, rejects not only the invocation of the saints, but also supplication in general, referring to the abovementioned mystical concept of releasement (*gelâzenheit*) as developed by Eckhart and propagated by Tauler in many sermons.

3. The Mystical Concept of Releasement as a Questioning of Petitionary Prayer

According to Tauler, heeding the call to releasement entails giving up all attachment to created things and the self in order to surrender oneself to God.[17] Released people "lossent [...] sich Gotte ussen und innan in weler wise er wil"[18] ("leave God both within and without in whatever way he wills"[19]). Like Eckhart,[20]

vol. VIII, Innsbruck 1997, p. 602, ll. 10–13; *id.*: *In adventu sermo 2*, n. 5, in *ibid.*, vol. VII, Innsbruck 1996, p. 84, ll. 15–22; see also Gnädinger 1980, pp. 399–400.

13 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, ll. 16–17. Tauler may be thinking of Anselm of Canterbury (see Gnädinger 1980, p. 399).

14 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, ll. 18–23. Unless specified otherwise, all translations of Tauler's sermon here are mine.

15 See Angenendt, Arnold: *Heilige und Reliquien. Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 1994, pp. 106–108, 207–208.

16 See Thomas de Aquino: *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 83, a. 11, ed. Leonina 7, Rome 1892, pp. 203–204; *ibid.* III suppl., q. 72, ed. Leonina 12, Rome 1906, pp. 159–162.

17 See, e.g., Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 55, p. 255, ll. 4–9; see also Völker 1972, pp. 289–290; Gandlau 1993, pp. 232–233, 285–286, 329; Zekorn 1993, pp. 83–86; Enders 2008, pp. 361–362; McGinn 2019, p. 98.

18 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 36, p. 138, ll. 33–34.

19 Translation by McGinn 2019, p. 98, note 44.

20 See, e.g., Echardus de Hochheim: *Die rede der underscheidunge*, ed. Josef Quint: *Meister Eckharts Traktate* (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 5), Stuttgart 1963, cap. 11, p. 225, l. 6–p. 227, l. 10; cap. 21, p. 281, ll. 3–12, p. 282, l. 11–p. 283, l. 4.

Tauler teaches that every kind of self-will must be abandoned[21] and points out that true *gelâzenheit* includes even the willingness to be consigned to hell if that is God's wish.[22] He thus takes up the traditional motif of *resignatio ad infernum*.[23] In a sermon on the second Sunday of Lent, Tauler illustrates this motif with the example of a contemporary young woman,[24] whose story he recounts in far greater detail than other such examples in his extant sermons.[25] Parallels between his account and a passage in an individual *vita* of an anonymous female fifteen-year-old—who probably lived as a Beguine in Strasbourg in the second quarter of the fourteenth century—suggest that Tauler is speaking of this person here.[26] According to his description, the young woman, after being raptured, felt an inexpressible distance from God. In her great distress, she asked Mary and the saints for help, but they were in such heavenly joy that they did not hear her. Then she turned to the sufferings of Christ, but received the answer that she should not call upon them because she had never given them honor.[27] Finally, she turned to God Himself and prayed:

> O herre, sit daz mir nieman enhilffet, so sich, minneclicher Got, daz ich din arme creature bin und du min Got bist, und valle rechte in din urteil noch dime liebesten willen, ob du mich in diser grundeloser helscher pine eweklichen wellest haben, daz lan ich, lieber herre, alzůmole an dinen wolgevallenden willen.[28]
>
> O Lord, since no one helps me, see, dear God, that I am Your poor creature and You are my God. Pass Your judgment according to Your dearest will, on whether You want to leave me eternally in this abysmal hellish torment. I leave this, dear Lord, altogether to Your good pleasure.

By behaving this way, the young woman was immediately drawn into the abyss of God, she "wart rehte von der wunderlichen gotheit ingeslunden"[29] ("she was virtually swallowed up by the wondrous deity"). According to Tauler's sermon, such true *gelâzenheit* thus leads to union with God. In the corresponding passage in the *vita*, the fifteen-year-old does not ask Mary and the saints for help, nor does she turn to the sufferings of Christ. Having realized that she deserves hell, she desires to stay there. She plaintively turns to God, but still wants His mercy to

21 See, e.g., Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 14, p. 65, ll. 27–29; n. 19, p. 79, ll. 5–10; n. 64, p. 348, ll. 27–34; n. 76, p. 409, ll. 29–33.

22 See *ibid.*, n. 9, p. 45, l. 11–p. 46, l. 17; n. 26, p. 108, ll. 12–28; n. 46, p. 205, l. 13–p. 206, l. 5; n. 67, p. 367, l. 32–p. 368, l. 12; cf. also Gnädinger 1993, pp. 281–285; Langer, Otto: *Christliche Mystik im Mittelalter. Mystik und Rationalisierung–Stationen eines Konflikts*, Darmstadt 2004, pp. 383–385; Schiewer, Regina D.: "Der *zagel* Luzifers und das Paradies in der Hölle. Abstiegs- und Aufstiegsmystik von Mechthild von Magdeburg über Johannes Tauler und Meister Eckhart zu Martin Luther", in *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 13 (2019), pp. 221–244: pp. 226–228, 230–233, 235–236.

23 For the history of the motif's tradition, see the summary *ibid.*, pp. 226–230, 233–234, 239–243.

24 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 9, p. 45, l. 11–p. 46, l. 10.

25 See Schiewer 2019, pp. 230–231.

26 See *ibid.*, pp. 233–236.

27 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 9, p. 45, ll. 11–27.

28 *Ibid.*, ll. 29–33.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 46, l. 3.

disregard her. Thereupon, God speaks to her and lifts her up to Himself.[30] As in other cases, Tauler seems to adapt the example of the young woman rather freely in order to convey his own theological concerns.[31] He obviously makes it congruent with his concept of mystical releasement and with his theology of the abyss. Tauler's presentation of the example particularly points out that supplication is problematic. One might conclude that, in his opinion, petitionary prayer to the saints is useless[32] and all supplication, even that directed to God, is to be refrained from because it is a sign of sinful self-centeredness.

Moreover, in Tauler's view, true releasement requires not only giving up self-centered supplication, but also any activity of one's own. Following Christ sometimes means for man "ein inwendige gantz gelossen stilles swigen in einem in gekerten gemůte und Got luterlichen ze wartende was er in im wúrken welle"[33] ("an inner, entirely released, quiet silence within an inward turned essential inclination where he waits simply upon what God wishes to work in him"[34]). Inner silence, a metaphor for the verbally elusive cessation of all mental activity,[35] creates space for God's work. Whereas, according to Thomas Aquinas, the human will should desire what God wants man to desire,[36] Tauler (like Eckhart[37]) demands that the divine will entirely supersede the human one.[38] Human passivity is the precondition for God's activity, a principle which Tauler expresses, in terms similar to those used by Eckhart,[39] in the following exhortation: "Sol Got werlichen sprechen, alle die krefte můssent swigen; es sol hie nút sin ein tůn, es můs sin ein entůn"[40] ("if God should truly speak, all powers must be silent;

30 See MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. qu. 165, ff. 228r–230v, edited in excerpts in Schiewer 2019, pp. 233–234.

31 See *ibid.*, pp. 235–236.

32 Cf. also Gnädinger 1993, p. 329.

33 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 55, p. 254, ll. 20–22; see also *ibid.*, n. 52, p. 238, ll. 19–23; *id.*: "Zwei Predigten J. Taulers nach der Abschrift Carl Schmidts der ehemaligen Strassburger Handschriften. In Strassburg, Cod. Nr. 3885", ed. Dick Helander: *Johann Tauler als Prediger. Studien*, Lund 1923, pp. 346–361, here n. 2, pp. 360–361.

34 Slightly modified version of the translation by McGinn 2019, p. 99, note 50.

35 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 52, p. 238, ll. 20–23; n. 75, p. 406, ll. 11–12. On the topic of inner silence in Tauler's sermons, see also Zekorn 1993, pp. 137, 139; Otto, Henrik: "Schweigen als Weg und Ziel. Meditation in der Stille bei Johannes Tauler", in *Geist und Leben* 92 (2019), pp. 356–362: 359–361; Zecherle, Andreas: "Schweigen und Stille in der Mystik Johannes Taulers", in *Das Mittelalter* 27/1 (2022), pp. 183–199: 188–194.

36 See Thomas de Aquino *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 19, a. 10, ed. Leonina 6, Rome 1891, p. 151; cf. also Matsuda, Mika: "*Gehôrsame.* Die Erfurter 'Reden' Meister Eckharts in der Auseinandersetzung mit Thomas von Aquin", in *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 6 (2013), pp. 223–242: 227–229.

37 See Echardus de Hochheim *Rede*, cap. 1, ed. Quint, p. 187, l. 1–p. 188, l. 8; see also Matsuda 2013, pp. 236–241, and Anja Bork's contribution to the present volume.

38 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 36, p. 141, ll. 15–19; n. 38, p. 153, ll. 25–28; n. 64, p. 348, ll. 27–34; n. 65, p. 357, ll. 9–12, 15–16.

39 See Echardus de Hochheim: *Predigten IV.1*, n. 101, ed. Georg Steer: *Meister Eckharts Predigten, vol. IV.1* (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 4,1), Stuttgart 2003, p. 355, ll. 116–117: "dû solt swîgen und lâz got würken und sprechen" ("You should be silent and let God work and speak").

40 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 60–61, p. 314, ll. 21–22; see also *ibid.*, n. 1, p. 10, ll. 11–14, p. 12, l. 1; n. 43, p. 181, l. 27–p. 182, l. 3. Whether sermon n. 1 originates

there should be no doing here, it must be a non-doing"). The act of praying thus seems to disturb the God-desired silence and to hinder God's work.

Finally, Tauler's idea of union with God[41] seemingly renders prayer superfluous. As mentioned, true releasement according to Tauler leads to union with God. Tauler emphasizes that God and man are then "nút vereiniget, sunder zůmole eins"[42] ("not united, but truly one"). Taking up Eckhart's terminology of unity,[43] Tauler says that the human and divine abysses, respectively man and God, become "ein einig ein"[44] ("a single one"). He speaks of "ein luter stille heimliche einekeit sunder alle underscheit"[45] ("a bare, silent, mysterious unity without any distinction"[46]). In view of this strong emphasis on the unity of God and man—of the conception of the two as truly one—any kind of mediation, whether in terms of asking the saints for intercession or through prayer directly addressed to God, seems to fall away.

4. Tauler's Attempt to Bridge the Gap Between Ecclesiastical Tradition and Mystical Thought

Given Tauler's mystical thought as outlined here, one might expect him to agree with those who reject the practice of petitionary prayer. In the sermon at the center of the present study, however, Tauler sets out to find a middle way between the two positions he has introduced. He states: "Disen allen beiden mag sere gebresten"[47] ("both of these may have great defects") and then first specifies his criticism of the first group:

> Den ersten, den gebrist, das si nút wol enhant durch sehen, das die heilige kilche geordenet hat, das man betten súlle. Und unser herre hat uns selber gelert betten, und das bilde dis gebetz hat er uns selber gegeben, und bettet sinen vatter an.[48]

with Tauler is disputed (see in summary Zekorn 1993, pp. 19–20 with note 76; Gabriel, Jörg: *Rückkehr zu Gott. Die Predigten Johannes Taulers in ihrem zeit- und geistesgeschichtlichen Kontext. Zugleich eine Geschichte hochmittelalterlicher Spiritualität und Theologie* (Studien zur systematischen und spirituellen Theologie 49), Würzburg 2013, p. 37 with note 251), but given the numerous parallels of this sermon to other sermons by Tauler, his authorship is probable (see Mösch 2006, pp. 211–244).

41 See, in summary, Gandlau 1993, pp. 336–348; Gnädinger 1993, pp. 356–370; Zekorn 1993, pp. 173–183; Ruh 1996, pp. 507–512; McGinn 2005, pp. 289–295.

42 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 10, p. 47, ll. 19–20; cf. John 17: 22–23.

43 See Echardus de Hochheim: *Predigten II*, ed. Vetter, n. 25, ed. Josef Quint: *Meister Eckharts Predigten, vol. II* (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 2), Stuttgart 1971, p. 11, ll. 1–2; see also McGinn 2005, p. 121 with note 180 (p. 534), p. 290.

44 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 41, p. 176, l. 9; n. 45, p. 201, l. 6; n. 53, p. 245, l. 17; see *ibid.*, n. 41, p. 176, ll. 6–11; n. 45, p. 201, ll. 1–7; n. 53, p. 245, ll. 13–18. On Tauler's doctrine of the unity of the divine and human abysses, see also Gnädinger 1993, pp. 181–191; on his use of the formula "ein einig ein", see also *ibid.*, pp. 367–368.

45 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 7, p. 33, l. 28; see also *ibid.*, ll. 20–28; n. 11, p. 54, ll. 30–34; n. 75, p. 406, ll. 13–15.

46 Translation by McGinn 2005, p. 290.

47 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, l. 23.

48 *Ibid.*, ll. 24–27.

The first ones have the defect that they have not realized that the Holy Church has determined that one should pray. And our Lord Himself taught us to pray and He Himself gave us the example of this prayer and prayed to His Father.

In Tauler's view, ecclesiastical tradition and the example of Christ thus speak against a complete rejection of petitionary prayer. Remarkably, he mentions the order of the church before the example of Christ, presumably because, in his opinion, the widespread ecclesiastical practice is the most obvious and evident argument for supplication to his audience. In citing the example of Christ, Tauler refers specifically to the Lord's Prayer, which he holds in high esteem and which he addresses in several sermons.[49] After the two arguments of authority, the preacher presents two other arguments for supplication. First, Tauler posits that God only wants to do many things when He is asked to do them. As proof of this, he quotes from Pseudo-Gregory the Great: "Got wil gebetten sin"[50] ("God wishes to be asked in prayer"). Second, according to Tauler, God uses the interplay between human petition and divine fulfillment to awaken people's love for God and to comfort them.[51] Petitionary prayer thus has a pedagogical function.

Although Tauler offers numerous arguments against the view that one should not supplicate God, he explicitly excuses all adherents of this view and states:

Dise menschen entschuldiget ir einvaltige meinunge, das si nút enbettent; das entschuldiget si und werdent doch erhȯrt, wan si nút úbel enmeinent.[52]

These people are excused by their simple opinion that they do not ask for anything in prayer; this excuses them and yet they are heard because they mean no harm by it.

Tauler thus assumes that all members of this group have good intentions. Therefore, he does not condemn them, even if their opinion is not correct in his view.

After Tauler has presented the arguments against the opinion of the first group, he turns to the second:

Den andern mag ȯch gebresten, die do bettent, das si sint ungelossen, und wellent iemer das ir ding fúr ge, do si fúr bittent. Si solten wol bitten, und das in rechter gelossenheit, wie es Gotte geviele, das in das liep were in aller wise und in allen dingen.[53]

The others who ask in prayer may also have the defect that they are unreleased and always want their request to be fulfilled. They should certainly ask in prayer, but in right releasement, that it would be dear to them in every way and in all things, as it pleases God.

[49] See, e.g., *ibid.*, n. 15, p. 69, ll. 3–8; n. 24, p. 101, ll. 22–25; n. 66, p. 361, l. 29–p. 362, l. 8; cf. also Gnädinger 1993, pp. 269–271.

[50] Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 224, l. 30; cf. Pseudo-Gregorius Magnus: *Expositio in Septem Psalmos Poenitentiales*, VI, v. 1, n. 2, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne: *Patrologia Latina* 79, Paris 1862, col. 633C: "Vult Deus rogari [...]." In this passage, Pseudo-Gregorius encourages persistent petitioning, which he calls "bona violentia" (good violence).

[51] See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p. 225, ll. 1–4.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 224, ll. 27–29.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 225, ll. 5–8.

Tauler's argument here is noticeably briefer than his handling of the debate with the opinion of the first group. He does not name any authorities at all, as he obviously assumes that his audience is familiar with the concept of releasement and its justification. Wanting God to always fulfill one's own requests is an indication of sinful self-centeredness and thus of *ungelâzenheit* (unreleasement). Such people, unlike those who refrain from supplication, therefore have no good intentions that would excuse them.

At the end of his discussion of supplication (cited above), Tauler briefly outlines his attempt at a solution: one should certainly ask in prayer, but "in rechter gelossenheit" ("in true releasement"), which means accepting God's will in all matters. Remarkably, in his solution he uses the verb "to ask" without an object. He does not speak of the saints at all—even though the invocation of Mary was the starting point for his treatment of supplication and even though he characterized the followers of the second view as those who pray fervently to Mary and the saints in all their affairs.[54] Tauler does not explicitly reject the invocation of the saints, but it is obvious that such supplication ultimately has no place in his mystical theology.

An examination of the structure of Tauler's explanations on petitionary prayer in this sermon reveals clear similarities with the scholastic *quaestio*, which is very unusual for his style of preaching.[55] In this case, however, he resorts to the dialectical method to bridge the gap between mystical thought and ecclesiastical tradition: he starts by presenting two opposing positions and then proceeds to outline arguments against each of them in an attempt to reach a solution. While the structure of the discussion is certainly far less strict than in a university *quaestio*,[56] the parallels are nevertheless striking. The most noticeable difference is the absence of structuring language common to scholastic *quaestiones*. After presenting the two opposing positions, Tauler only notes that they both have defects and then immediately begins to argue with them. The solution he advocates is merely touched upon at the end of his discussion of the second position. In this modified form, Tauler transfers the *quaestio* into a non-academic context and presents it to lay people, presumably nuns.[57] He introduces them to a complex theological discussion, relying on their intellectual abilities and judgment.

In other sermons, Tauler explains in more concrete terms how to supplicate God with an attitude of true releasement. His understanding of prayer in gen-

[54] See *ibid.*, p. 224, ll. 22–23.

[55] Gnädinger notes that Tauler does not discuss the topics of his sermons in the manner of the scholastic *quaestio* (see Gnädinger 1993, p. 107).

[56] On the structure of the scholastic *quaestio*, see Leinsle, Ulrich G.: *Einführung in die scholastische Theologie* (UTB 1865), Paderborn et al. 1995, pp. 40–41.

[57] In the sermon analyzed, Tauler repeatedly addresses his listeners as "kinder" ("children") (see, e.g., Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 50, p.226, ll. 1, 25; p. 227, ll. 9, 13, 18, 31). This could possibly indicate an audience composed of nuns (see Gnädinger 1993, p. 107; Ruh 1996, p. 490), but is not clear evidence for this (see Weigand 2014, p. 128).

eral is of fundamental importance here. Like Thomas Aquinas[58] and Eckhart,[59] Tauler adopts a definition of prayer taken from John of Damascus,[60] namely that prayer is an ascent of the intellect to God.[61] Starting from this definition, he states: "[I]n eime nehern sinne so ist gebet ein vereinender inker des geschaffenen geistes in den ungeschaffenen geist Gottes"[62] ("in a deeper sense, prayer is a unifying turning in of the created mind into the uncreated mind of God"). In Tauler's view, then, prayer is meant to lead to union with God and is ideally identical with such a union.[63] This is applicable also to petitionary prayer.

On the way to union with God, supplication is meant to serve the attainment of an attitude of releasement by asking God that His will be done, just as the young woman did in the *resignatio ad infernum* in the sermon mentioned above.[64] Like Eckhart,[65] Tauler understands the Lord's Prayer as a model for a prayer of petition in this sense. In his interpretation of this prayer, he closely links the first three petitions:

Kinder, das pater noster ist ein al ze hoch kreftig gebet. [...] Das ist das rich, das wir bittent Got selber in allem sime richtům. In dem riche wirt Got unser vatter und bewiset sich do die vetterlich trúwe und die vetterlich kraft. Und in dem so er stat in uns vindet ze wúrkende, do wirt der name Gotz geheiliget und gegrősset und bekant: das ist sin heiligen in uns, das er in uns richsen múge und sin recht werk in uns gewúrken múge; do wirt sin wille hie in der erden als do in dem himel, das ist: in uns als in im selber, in dem himel der er selb selber ist. Och wie git man sich in disem so dicke uf in sinen willen und nimet sich so snelklichen wider und enpfehlt dem![66]

Children, the Lord's Prayer is an extremely high, powerful prayer! [...] This is the kingdom we ask for: God Himself in all His abundance. In this kingdom God becomes our father and there His fatherly faithfulness and His fatherly power are shown. And when He finds in us a place for His work, then the name of God is sanctified, elevated, and recognized in it. This is His sanctification in us, that He may reign in us and that He may accomplish His good work in

58 See Thomas de Aquino *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 83, a. 1, ad 2, and a. 13, arg. 2, ed. Leonina 9, Rome 1897, pp. 193 and 205.

59 See Echardus de Hochheim: *Predigten I*, n. 19, ed. Josef Quint: *Meister Eckharts Predigten, vol. I* (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 1), Stuttgart 1958, p. 318, l. 12–p. 319, l. 1; *id.*: Sermones XXIV.2, n. 247, eds. Ernst Benz/Bruno Decker/Joseph Koch (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die lateinischen Werke 4), Stuttgart 1956, p. 225, l. 13–p.226, l. 1; see also Anja Bork's contribution to the present volume.

60 See Ioannes Damascenus: *De fide orthodoxa/Expositio fidei* cap. 68 (lib. III, cap. 24), ed. Bonifatius Kotter (Patristische Texte und Studien 12), Berlin/New York 1973, p. 167, l. 2; Versions of Burgundio and Cerbanus, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (Franciscan Institute publications. Text series 8), Leuven/Paderborn 1955, p. 267, l. 3.

61 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 3, p. 20, ll. 6–7; n. 15, p. 67, ll. 23–24; n. 24, p. 101, ll. 12–14; n. 39, p. 154, ll. 16–17; n. 78, p. 421, ll. 19–20. Tauler's references vary.

62 *Ibid.*, ll. 20–21; see also *ibid.*, n. 24, p. 101, ll. 25–32.

63 Cf. also Gnädinger 1993, p. 267.

64 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 9, p. 45, ll. 29–33.

65 See Echardus de Hochheim *Predigten II*, ed. Quint, n. 27, p. 54, ll. 3–6; n. 30, p. 99, ll. 1–3; see also Anja Bork's contribution to the present volume.

66 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 66, p. 361, l. 32–p. 362, l. 8.

us. Then His will is done here on earth as it is there in heaven, that is, in us as in Himself, in the heaven that He Himself is. Oh, how often one surrenders oneself to His will and so quickly withdraws and refrains from it!

Thus, according to Tauler, to supplicate God in true releasement means not to ask for the realization of one's own requests, but to surrender oneself to the divine will and to ask for its realization. In other passages, Tauler explicitly points out that the divine will, which one should ask to be realized, is the eternal will.[67] The problem discussed at length by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa contra gentiles* as to how the immutability of divine providence can be reconciled with the efficacy of supplication[68] thus does not arise for Tauler, because in his view, one should only pray on the way to union with God that the eternal divine will come to pass.

In union with God, then, unity with the eternal divine will is beyond question. Tauler asserts that in these circumstances the highest form of supplication is realized. He describes how supplication and the idea of union with God can be reconciled with each other:

[V]ersenke dinen geist in Gottes geist, in wore gelossenheit aller diner obersten und nidersten kreften, úber alle sinne und verstentnisse, in einer woren vereinungen mit Gotte innerlichen in dem grunde; mit diseme úberkummest du alle wise und alle wort und ůbunge, und do bitte Got fúr alles das do er wil fúr gebetten han und des du und alle menschen von dir begerent [...]."[69]

Sink your spirit into God's spirit in true releasement of all your highest and lowest powers, beyond all senses and knowledge, in true union with God inwardly in the ground. Thereby you overcome all ways, all words, and exercises. And then ask God for all that He wants to be asked for and for what you desire and all people through you.

Humans should thus take their requests with them into union with God in releasement. This form of supplication, like unification itself, lies beyond inner-worldly speech and action, as Tauler emphasizes. He explains that people united to God do indeed make petition in prayer,

[...] doch nút also daz sú bittent fúr ver Metzen und Cůntzen, sunder in einer einvaltigen wislichen wisen; also ich úch all hie vor mir sehe sitzen mit eime angesicht, also zúhent sú als mit in in, in daz selbe abgrunde [...].[70]

[...] but not in such a way that they ask for each individuals (Mrs. Metz and Kunz), but in a simple, wise form. As I see you sitting here with one look before me, so they draw everything with them into the same abyss.

67 See *ibid.*, n. 9, p. 46, ll. 15–17; n. 15, p. 69, ll. 4–7; n. 76, p. 409, ll. 33–38.

68 See Thomas de Aquino: *Summa contra gentiles* III, cap. 95–96, ed. Leonina 14, Rome 1926, p. 294–296; see also Jonathan Reinert's contribution to the present volume.

69 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 15, p. 67, l. 31–p. 68, l. 4; cf. *ibid.*, n. 39, p. 155, ll. 31–33; n. 60d, p. 302, ll. 9–10.

70 *Ibid.*, n. 24, p.102, ll. 14–16.

In the unity with God as the absolute One in the Neoplatonic sense,[71] the prayer of petition also loses all distinction: no specific individual requests are made. Tauler illustrates this by speaking of "Mrs. Metz and Kunz" ("ver Metzen und Cůntzen"), who exemplify single individuals. Here he echoes Eckhart, who argues that one should ask "noch vür Heinrich noch vür Kuonrât"[72] ("neither for Konrad nor for Heinrich"). Whereas Eckhart provocatively asserts that one should ask for nothing and for no one,[73] however, Tauler emphasizes that in unity with God all requests are indeed put forward, but in a form corresponding to unity with God as the absolute One, which exceeds the power of imagination. Along with losing diversity, supplication also loses all temporal structure; as though it were at a glance, all petitions were being simultaneously brought into unity with God.

Tauler points out that such an inner prayer of supplication is to be valued far more highly than outer prayers.[74] If outer prayer hinders inner prayer (which Tauler calls true, essential prayer[75]), one should confidently refrain from it.[76] This does not apply to the obligatory hourly prayers laid down by the church,[77] but certainly to the quantified external prayer obligations that a convent has taken on in return for monetary payment.[78] Tauler's ideal, however, is that outer prayer be added to inner prayer without hindering the latter, because in man, as in God, action and enjoyment become one and thus do not hinder each other. In this case, external prayer obligations should also be fulfilled:[79] as Tauler argues: "zwei sind besser denne eins"[80] ("two are better than one").

71 See, e.g., *ibid.*, n. 60, p. 277, ll. 14–20; cf. also Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: *De divinis nominibus* XIII, 2–3, ed. Beate R. Suchla (Corpus Dionysiacum 1; Patristische Texte und Studien 33), Berlin/New York 1990, p. 226, l. 6–p. 229, l. 14; Latin translation by Ioannes Sarracenus: *Super Dionysium de divinis nominibus*, in ed. Paulus Simon: *Alberti Magni Opera omnia* 37.1, Münster 1972, p. 432, l. 65–p. 446, l. 62. On Tauler's reception of Proclus, see Sturlese, Loris: "Tauler im Kontext. Die philosophischen Voraussetzungen des 'Seelengrundes' in der Lehre des deutschen Neuplatonikers Berthold von Moosburg", in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 109 (1987), pp. 390–426; Ruh 1996, pp. 503–507.

72 Echardus de Hochheim: *Predigten III*, n. 67, ed. Josef Quint: *Meister Eckharts Predigten, vol. III* (Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Die deutschen Werke 3), Stuttgart 1976, p. 131, l. 7; cf. also *ibid.*, n. 64, p. 90, ll. 3–4; n. 65, p. 102, ll. 4–5, 7–9 and Anja Bork's contribution to the present volume.

73 See Echardus de Hochheim *Predigten III*, ed. Quint, n. 65, p. 102, ll. 1–2, 8–10; n. 67, p. 131, ll. 3–7.

74 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 15, p. 68, ll. 5–6; n. 39, p. 155, l. 34–p. 156, l. 2; n. 60d, p. 302, ll. 9–11.

75 See *ibid.*, n. 39, p. 155, ll. 13–14, 20–21; Zekorn 1993, p. 107.

76 See Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 15, p. 68, ll. 14–15; n. 39, p. 155, ll. 16–18, 20–21.

77 See *ibid.*, n. 15, p. 68, ll. 15–16; n. 39, p. 155, ll. 18–20.

78 See *ibid.*, n. 15, p. 67, l. 24–p. 68, l. 18; n. 39, p. 155, l. 22–p. 156, l. 4.

79 See *ibid.*, n. 15, p. 68, ll. 8–14; n. 39, p. 156, ll. 13–21; Zekorn 1993, pp. 107–109.

80 Iohannes Taulerus *Predigten*, ed. Vetter, n. 15, p. 68, l. 10.

5. Conclusion

In summary, we see that with regard to the mystical concept of *gelâzenheit* (releasement), one should abandon one's own will so that the divine will can take its place. This concept, which Tauler adopted from Eckhart, calls the widespread practice of supplication into question. Like Eckhart, Tauler rejects the conventional form of supplication. However, unlike Eckhart, he explicitly strives to bridge the gap between mystical thought and ecclesiastical tradition. In doing so, he adapts the scholastic method of dialectics to a non-academic context, with his goal being a fundamental reform of the practice of supplication that reinterprets the ecclesiastical tradition without completely calling it into question.