

Hadewijch

...then once again, I was confined to my old paltry state.

Early one morning at Pentecost I received a vision while I was singing matins in church. My heart, my blood-vessels and all my body shivered and shooled with desire. I was, as so often, deeply affected and I was filled with fear that my Love would not find me worthy of Him, but my Love would not permit me to die, to die painfully. Gradually, I became so exhausted by the terrible depth of my passion, that it seemed as though my bones were breaking one by one, and that my blood was flowing faster and faster. My desire is indescribable ; there are no words to express what I felt, nor people to understand them. What I have to say about it would not be comprehensible to anyone who has not experienced the effects of love or whom love has passed by. This much I can say: I longed to receive my Love deeply to know Him through and through, uniting his humanity with mine, and surrendering mine in him. I hoped that I would be strong enough to be able to fall into the perfection, so that I would appear to him in my turn sufficient, pure, alone, I alone, universal in every virtue and complete and satisfactory. Thus in silence I wished that He would raise me as a spirit with his Godhead, with everything He is, and that he would withhold nothing from me. For this gift I choose above all other gifts, that I may be worthy of Him in his meekness. For this is perfection: to be worthy to grow in order to become God with God – for this is suffering and pain, misery and untold sorrow; and all this you must allow to come and pass over you without yielding to it, without feeling anything else than magnificent love, embracing and kisses. Thus did I wish God to be for me, and I for Him.

While it was becoming unbearable for me, a large eagle came flying towards me from the altar. He said to me: 'If thou desirest to be one with God, then prepare thyself.' I kneeled, and my heart flowed over with worship of his greatness. I know full well that I was not ready, and God knows it as well, to my grief and sorrow. The eagle flew back to the altar and cried: 'Righteous Almighty Lord, display Thy power in the unity with Thee, in Thy joy.' He came back and said to me: 'He that is come, will return, but He that has never come, cometh not now.'

Then He himself came from the altar in the form of a child, such as He was in the first three years of His life. He turned

to me and took His body out of the Chalice with His right hand, and with His left hand He took a goblet which seemed to come from the altar, though I am not certain. Then He approached me, now the form of the man that He was when He offered us for the first time His body, handsome and charming, with a countenance of rare beauty, and with the submissive demeanor of one who belongs totally to another. Then He gave himself to me in the customary manner of the sacrament, and then gave me to drink from the goblet: that tasted and seemed extraordinary. Then he approached close to me, took me completely in His arms, and pressed me to Him. All my limbs felt His to their total satisfaction, as my human heart desired. Likewise, I had just the strength to bear this, but all too soon I began to lose sight of the so wonderfully handsome man, and I saw Him fading and melting away till I could no longer perceive Him near me, and with me I could not distinguish Him from myself. At that moment I had the feeling we were one together, without distinction. All this was real, visible, palpable and testable – just as one really tastes the sacrament and visible and palpable as lovers who are lost in each other in the pleasure of seeing and hearing. After this I stayed united with my Love, I fused with him till there was naught of me left, I left my body far behind, and was taken up in the spirit, and there I was shown many different Times.