

**LIFE OF DR. JOHN TAULER,  
OF STRAUSBURG. (TEMP.  
1340.) TRANSLATED FROM  
THE GERMAN**

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**JOHANNES TAULER**

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LIFE OF  
DR. JOHN TAULER,  
OF STRASBURG.

(Temp. 1840.)

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY  
SUSANNA WINKWORTH.

PHILADELPHIA :  
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1887.

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**NOTE.**—John Tauler, who appears as “the Master” in the following history, was born in Strasburg in the year 1290. He belonged to a wealthy family, and might have lived on his patrimony, but in early years devoted himself to a clerical life, and entered the Dominican Order, probably in the year 1308. The account which follows has reference only to his deeper experiences in the spiritual life, which began in the year 1340, when he was about fifty years of age.

LIFE OF  
DOCTOR JOHN TAULER, OF STRASBURG.

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CHAPTER I.

In the year of our Lord 1340, it came to pass, that a Master in Holy Scripture preached oftentimes in a certain city, and the people loved to hear him, and his teachings were the talk of the country for leagues round. Now this came to the ears of a layman who was rich in God's grace, and he was warned three times in his sleep that he should go to the city where the Master dwelt, and hear him preach. Now that city was in another country, more than thirty leagues distant. Then the man thought within himself, "I will go thither and wait to see what God is purposed to do or bring to pass there." So he came to that city and heard the

Master preach five times. Then God gave this man to perceive that the Master was a very loving, gentle, good-hearted man by nature, and had a good understanding of the Holy Scripture, but was dark as to the light of grace; and the man's heart did yearn over him, and he went to the Master and said, "Dear and honored sir, I have travelled a good thirty leagues on your account, to hear your teaching. Now I have heard you preach five times, and I pray you in God's name to let me make my confession to you." The Master answered, "With all my heart." Then the man confessed to the Master in all simplicity, and when he desired to receive the Sacrament the Master gave it him. When this had lasted twelve weeks, the man said to the Master, "Dear sir, I beg you for God's sake to preach us a sermon showing us how a man may attain to the highest and utmost point it is given to us to reach in this present time." The Master answered, "Ah! dear son, what dost



thou ask for? how shall I tell thee of such high things? for I ween thou wouldst understand but little thereof." But the man said, "Ah! dear Master, even though I should understand little or nothing thereof, yet I cannot but thirst after it. Multitudes flock to hear you; if there were only one among them all who could understand you, your labor were well bestowed." Then said the Master, "Dear son, if I am to do as thou sayest, I must needs give some study and labor to the matter before I can put such a sermon together." But the man would not cease from his prayers and entreaties till the Master promised him that he should have his desire.

So, when the Master had finished his sermon, he announced to the people that in three days they should come together again, for he had been requested to teach "how a man could attain to the highest and best and nearest to God that might be reached in this present time." And when the day was come,

much people came to the church, and the man sat down in a place where he could hear well, and the Master came, and thus began his discourse, and said :

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CHAPTER II.

In the following gracious sermon, twenty-four articles are rehearsed whereby a man may perceive who are the proper, true, reasonable, enlightened, contemplative men; and what sort of man it is to whom Christ may well speak these words: "Lo! see a true beholder of God, in whom is no guile" (JOHN i. 47).

Dear children, I have much to say to you in this sermon concerning those things of which I have promised to speak; wherefore, I cannot for this time expound the gospel of the day to you as is my wont, neither shall I speak much Latin in this sermon; for what I have to say, I will prove with Holy Scripture [and he said]:

"Dear children, I would have you to know that there be many men, who indeed attain to a clear understanding

and reasonable judgment, but who do this by means of images and forms through the help of other men, and without the Scriptures. Further, there be found many who when they mark that something is known to them through the Scriptures, are not therewith content. Such a man is still far from his highest and greatest good.

Dear children, if a man had broken through these things, and was become dead to them, and had got above forty stages of contemplation, and above the conceptions of our reason, whether they come to us through images or forms of speech—if there were a man who had come to this, he would be dearer and more precious in God's sight than a hundred thousand men who never get out of their own choosing; for to such God cannot find entrance, nor work in their souls. This all comes of their own will, and their self-glorying folly, which takes delight in the dexterity of their own reason, in framing and handling conceptions. But those men who while