

Enough will have been said to show how the 'would-be apostle' must attempt to correct himself if he is successfully to preach the word of God. His theology and his prayer will not be sufficient unless linked with the nature of things by means of a true and creative imagination. His supernatural world will be an unreal and unproductive world if he regards it as set apart from nature, as being only in the heavens. He must discover it everywhere and he can only find the redemptive grace of God shining from every atom of reality if he has trained himself in a true awareness and practised the art of poetry.



## ON REFLECTING GOD

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**M**ANY Catholics feel increasingly disturbed in their faith nowadays by the anthropological approach to religion. Anthropologists currently look upon religion as just one of the aspects of 'culture', as a psychological objectivation of man's subjective emotions, imaginations and explanations of reality. Gods, spirits, myths are therefore just as man-made, as are human institutions, customs, morals, say they.

May I suggest that in this, as in all other cases of disbelief and misbelief, it is quite wrong on our part (and not only tactically inexpedient) to throw the offered opinion into the waste-paper basket as totally unacceptable. We used to do so with Paganism and have only of late come to see that Pagan beliefs are partial truths that need straightening out and being put in the proper perspective—truths which, when thus treated, enrich our own understanding by an emphasis on facts that often have hitherto escaped us.

When therefore we are told that man makes his god, I would accept this statement as quite true, as far as it goes, but add that unfortunately it does not go far enough. Does every puddle in the road make its own sun? Yes and no—poetically yes, scientifically no. Water reflects light, man reflects God: but there is of course a difference. For light does not reside in water, but God does reside in man. Man reflects God, because man was made in the likeness

of God: that likeness, that image, man unconsciously projects, 'externalizes' out of his own being. As a sheet of water will reflect the sun in accordance with the degree of muddiness or disturbance of the water, so also man reflects God's image in himself in accordance with his consciousness, which may be vitiated by his pride, his concupiscence and all the other passions, that obscure the light within him. Man may thus externalize his own lasciviousness as an Astarte or his own bloodthirstiness as a Bellona. He could not do so if there was not to begin with the urge in him to reflect the true God in him—which urge does not operate automatically, but through his free will nature, which has been wounded by the Fall.

Everything reflects God, because everything is an effect of God. Indeed, *God is* means that he is Being itself, that there can be no being except by participation in his being—to that extent Pantheism and Theopantism are true: every pool of being mirrors God. When the Indian contemplative smiles on the tiger about to devour him, with a 'Thou also art he'; when the Upanishads declare *Tat tuam asi* ('That art thou') and *etad tat* ('this is that'), they have only come to realize that man's knowledge of God is his knowledge of God's image within his own self.

We whose faith balances so perfectly God's immanence by his transcendence are at first shocked at the Hindu's identification of *Brahman* (God) and *atman* (self)—but only because we always approach such expressions as razor-sharp theological definitions, when they really are nothing more (or less) than stammering approximations of a mystical experience. Our being is a participation in Being; our very nature has God's signature. The Creator shines out of all creatures—where can man see God more intimately than in the image in which he created him?

Man's nature is an image of God's analogically, inasmuch as in God too there is an imaging forth of himself, a Light of Lights, very God of very God; a reflection of God himself; that can not be an externalization of himself, because there can be nothing external with him. . . an Image which therefore is a Person, a Son of the Father of lights, *apud quem non est transmutatio nec vicissitudinis obumbratio* (. . . with whom there is no variability, neither shadow of turning') (James I, 17).

The creature can only know *ex parte*, indirectly, as if looking through a glass darkly (*per speculum in aenigmate*): the glory of that

revelation made in Christ, which surpasses all possibilities of pagan guesses and ratiocinations, consists however just in this, that the eternally blessed will then know directly, as God knows them even now—face to face (*tunc autem facie ad faciem*) (I Cor. 13, 12).



## MYSTICISM

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**I**F we presume to think that perhaps few of those who use the word 'Mysticism' know its meaning it is because in their simplicity they think it stands for one thing like the word 'oak'; whereas it stands for such things as activities of the intellect and the will, things as different as the ear and the eye, and the oak and the ash.

We may group the meanings of Mysticism thus: Mysticism of the mind or head, and Mysticism of the will or heart. Intellectual mysticism seeks its philosophy, or unity of thought, not in any process of deliberate or formal reasoning but in an unbidden and spontaneous intuition. Mysticism of the heart, with perhaps higher flight, seeks a unity, not of thought or not only of thought, but of life; and seeks it not in intuition or not in intuition alone, but in love.

Like ethics, therefore, mysticism is neither a science nor a philosophy but a life. There is a science of ethics, yet ethics is not a science; just as there is a science of rocks yet rocks are not a science. So too there is a science of mysticism although mysticism is not a science. Moreover, though there is a literature as there is a science both of ethics and of mysticism, yet mysticism is not a literature.

All this goes to show that a man may be a mystical writer or a writer on mysticism without being himself a mystic; even as one man might write a treatise on the Trinity yet remain an atheist, and another might accept all the mysteries of faith on a basis of rationalism.

The real mystics are known to God alone. Only Omniscience can see into the human heart where alone dwells that true love of God which accredits the true mystic.

<sup>1</sup> From the Preface to *The Mistress of Vision*, by Francis Thompson, with a Commentary by John O'Connor (Ditchling, 1918).