

the symbol itself (the truth, supernaturally far beyond our analysis) into a form that acknowledges its limits, and in acknowledging them so far transcends them.



THE MYSTERY REVEALED

AN ANTHOLOGY

What we look for beyond seeing
 And call the unseen,
 Listen for beyond hearing
 And call the unheard,
 Grasp for beyond reaching
 And call the withheld,
 Merge beyond understanding
 In oneness
 Which does not merely rise and give light
 Does not merely set and leave darkness,
 But forever sends forth a succession of living things as mysterious
 As the begotten existence to which they return.

Laotzu *Book of Tao*

(Translated by Witter Bynner, n. 14).

The great wastes to be found in this divine ground have neither image nor form nor condition, for they are neither here nor there. They are like unto a fathomless Abyss, bottomless and floating in itself. Even as water ebbs and flows, up and down, now sinking into a hollow so that it looks as if there were no water there, and then again in a little while rushing forth as if it would engulf everything, so does it come to pass in this Abyss. This truly is much more God's dwelling-place than heaven or man. A man who verily desires to enter will surely find God here and himself simply in God; for God never separates himself from this ground. God will be present with him, and he will find and enjoy Eternity here. There is no past nor present here, and no created light can reach unto or shine into this divine Ground; for here only is the dwelling-place of God and his sanctuary.

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Now this divine Abyss can be fathomed by no creatures; it can be filled by none and it satisfies none; God only can fill it in his infinity. For this abyss belongs only to the divine Abyss of which it is written: '*Abyssus abyssum invocat*'. He who is truly conscious of this ground which shone into the powers of his soul and lighted and inclined its lowest and highest powers to turn to their pure Source and true Origin, must diligently examine himself and remain alone, listening to the voice which cries in the wilderness of this ground. This ground is so desert and bare that no thought has ever entered there. None of the thoughts of man which, with the help of reason, have been devoted to meditation on the Holy Trinity, (and some men have occupied themselves much with these thoughts) have ever entered this ground. For it is so close and yet so far off, and so far beyond all things that it has neither time nor place. It is a simple and unchanging condition. A man who really and truly enters, feels as though he had been here throughout eternity, and as though he were one therewith.

John Tauler, O.P.: *Sermon on St John Baptist.*

For thou hast brought me with thy question into that same darkness and cloud of unknowing that I would thou wert in thyself. For of all creatures and their works and of God himself a man may have fulhead of knowledge and well of them think; but of God himself can no man think, and therefore I will leave all that I can think upon and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. And why? Because he may well be loved but not thought on. By love he may be gotten and holden, but by thought never. Go up towards that thick Cloud of Unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love and go not thence for anything that befall.

The Cloud of Unknowing.

There is in God some say,
 A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here
 Say it is late and dusky because they
 See not all clear.
 O for that Night where I in him
 Might live invisible and dim.

Vaughan.

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The glory of God is to conceal the word, but the glory of the King is to find it out.
—Proverbs, 25, 2.

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the Knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?
—Romans 11, 33.

The mystery of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.—Colossians 2, 2.

But you ask whether the mind is filled by the knowledge of Christ; and I reply emphatically that the mind is filled, for in him are all the treasures of wisdom. God has the knowledge of all things, and this knowledge is compared to a treasure: 'For she is an infinite treasure to men' (Wisdom 7, 14). A treasure means riches gathered; riches poured out are not called treasure, but those that are all together in one place. God however pours out his wisdom upon all his works (cf. Ecclesiasticus 1, 10); and from this point of view it is not a question of treasure; but on the other hand in that the realities of these things are united in one, namely in the divine wisdom, so are all their treasures in Christ. For wisdom is the knowledge of divine things; 'science' is the knowledge of creatures. Whatever, indeed, can be known about God in wisdom, altogether is known by God abundantly in himself; and whatever can be known about creatures he knows in a supreme way in himself. Now whatever is in the wisdom of God is in his one and only Word because he knows all things in one simple act of his intellect, since there is nothing potential or habitual in his knowledge. And therefore in this Word are all the treasures.

But St Paul adds that these treasures are 'hidden', because it happens that things are hidden from me in two ways—either on account of the weakness of my own intellectual powers, or by reason of some veil hanging in the way. A man may be unable to see a candle either because he is blind or because it is covered. Thus it is that in the Word of God are all the treasures of wisdom and understanding, but hidden from us because our eyes are not clear but cloudy. 'As yet there is only a little light in you' (cf. John 12, 35). And also it is hidden by the double veil of creatures, since our mind now can only come to that knowledge through creaturely

similitudes. 'For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made' (Rom. 1, 20). Veiled it is too by the flesh; for 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1). And so we may see something of God, but not all. 'Truly thou art a hidden God' (Isaias 45). 'Open to them thy treasure' (Numbers 20, 6). We would say that if anyone possessed a covered candle, he would not search elsewhere for a light, but rather seek to uncover the candle in his hand. And similarly, we should not seek for wisdom except in Christ. 'I judged not myself to know anything but Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 2, 2). And 'we know that when he shall appear', i.e., when he shall be revealed, 'we shall be like to him' (1 John 3, 2), for we shall know all things. If a man possessed a book wherein was to be found all knowledge, he would not wish for anything but to know that book. And so we should seek for nothing else than Christ himself.

St Thomas: *Commentary on Colossians*, 2.

Wherefore he that would now enquire of God or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, but would be committing an offence against God, by not setting his eyes altogether on Christ, and seeking no new thing or aught beside. And God might answer him after this manner, saying: If I have spoken all things to thee in my Word, which is my Son, and I have no other Word, what answer can I now make to thee which is greater than this? . . . Thou askest locutions and revelations which are the part; but if thou set thine eyes upon him thou shalt find the whole; for he is my complete locution and answer, and he is all my vision and all my revelation; so that I have spoken to thee, answered thee, declared to thee and revealed to thee, in giving him to thee as thy brother, companion and master, as ransom and reward. . . . If thou desirest me to expound to thee secret things, or happenings, set thine eyes on him alone, and thou shalt find the most secret mysterious and the wisdom and the wondrous things of God, which are hidden in him, even as my Apostle says: 'In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'.

John of the Cross,

Ascent of Mt Carmel ii, 22.

(Allison Peers trans. i, 174-5)