

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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THE WRITINGS OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

The mystical treatises of St. John of the Cross are *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ*, and *The Living Flame of Love*. His other writings include *Spiritual Maxims*, *Instructions*, *Precautions*, and mystical poems. Some of his letters have also been published.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel, which is addressed to the members of his Order, is a description of the journey of the soul to divine union, and deals with the purification of the soul's activities of the senses, mind, and will. The book is based on the same poem as that used in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, and was planned in four parts, the last of which was to have dealt with the higher stage of "passive purgation," but it breaks off in the middle of the third part.

Making use of the principles laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas concerning the nature and activities of the soul's faculties, St. John goes further and, in line with the teachings of St. Dionysius, shows the need for detachment and explains the manner of setting free these soul-powers from temporal interests so that man may fully and perfectly accomplish his true purpose both with regard to mundane life and its duties and to the enlargement of his spiritual life and consciousness.

St. John explains the meaning of the term "night" which is used so frequently in his works. "The journey of the soul to divine union is called night for three reasons. The first is derived from the point from which the soul sets out—the privation of

the desire of all pleasure in all the things of this world, by detachment therefrom. This is as night for every desire and sense of man. The second from the road by which it travels; that is faith, for faith is obscure, like night, to the understanding. The third from the goal to which it tends, God, Incomprehensible, Infinite, Who in this life is as night to the soul. We must pass through these three nights if we are to attain to the divine union with God. . . . The three nights are but one divided into three parts."

The soul is shown how to be actively disposed in order successively to forsake its attachments to sensible objects, to desires, to natural knowledge, to images and visions, to intellectual perceptions and conceptions and all particular knowledge, and to reasonings. In this way the soul will reach real self-renunciation in all that the will esteems.

There is a natural and a supernatural union with God which St. John illustrates by the simile of a window which, if not clean, does not perfectly transmit the light which shines upon it. If the window were clean the sun shining through it would "so transform it as to make it seem identical with the rays and to give forth their light, though in truth the window, while it appears one with the rays of the sun, preserves still its own substance. In this case we might say that the window is a ray, or light, by participation.

"Thus the soul resembles the window; the divine light in the order of nature perpetually strikes upon it, or rather dwells within it. The soul then by resigning itself, in removing every spot or stain of the creature, which is to keep the will perfectly united to the will of God—for to love Him is to labour to detach ourselves from and divest ourselves of everything which is not God, for God's sake—becomes enlightened by and transformed in God."

At each stage of the ascent use must be made of the means necessary at that stage, but there must be no attachment to the means. If the understanding is to be united to God, it must make use of the means that are most like to God. Therefore no created thing, nothing conceived in the imagination, no knowledge, can be a proximate means of union with God. "All that the understanding may comprehend, all that the will may be satisfied with, all that the imagination may conceive is most

unlike to God and most disproportionate to Him. . . . Therefore the understanding, if it is to draw near to God, must do so by not understanding rather than by seeking to understand."

At the same time it must be remembered that knowledge is a means of ascent—as one of St. John's Maxims says: "The perfect love of God cannot subsist without the knowledge of God and of self."

St. John treats fully of the various kinds of visions, locutions, and revelations which the soul must forsake, giving reasons for his statements and illustrating them from the scriptures. He makes it clear that in many cases these phenomena are produced by the soul which, though unaware of this, communicates them to itself.

The Dark Night of the Soul, his most famous work, has been regarded as a classic in the field of mystical science and art, just as the *Summa Theologia* of St. Thomas Aquinas is a classic in the field of theology. *The Dark Night of the Soul* was intended primarily for the instruction of spiritual directors, though it is of great value to those called to the religious life. It is an exposition of one of his poems, two stanzas only of the six being dealt with, the rest of the book being lost. In precise and methodical progression it describes the earlier stages of the soul's journey towards divine union by the way of detachment from its subjection to all ties of the senses, desires, mind, and will. It is incidentally a simple analysis of the soul and its operations, based on sound psychology and theology. From one point of view it is a negative path since its essence lies in letting go the pre-occupation with material and personal concerns so that they no longer rule the soul; but it is also positive, since the soul is led to lay hold of reality by which it becomes filled where before it was empty, and through which it becomes master instead of slave.

The method has been described as passive, but although the soul must be, in one sense, consciously receptive, and thus passive, to the work in it of the Divine Artist, in another sense there is an intensely active work to be done of purification and unfoldment, through exercise, of the powers through which the soul may ascend to conscious union with the Divine.

On entering seriously upon the religious life of prayer, meditation, and service, the soul, filled with devotion and earnest

in service, may experience a great sweetness and spiritual consolation in its devotions—a divine response to the soul's outpourings. It is easy to become attached to such consolations, and this is a very common imperfection. St. John deals with all such imperfections of beginners in the spiritual life in terms of the seven capital sins which accordingly are given as :

1. Spiritual pride, shown in making light of one's own faults, in the desire for praise, in immoderate remorse, in the making of great resolutions with the doing of little, in an empty eagerness in speaking to others of the spiritual life and this rather as teacher than learner.
2. Spiritual avarice, shown in attachments to forms and rituals, and in longings for spiritual comfort.
3. Spiritual luxury, sensual pleasure and a kind of intoxication in the receiving of spiritual communications.
4. Anger or impatience with others or with oneself arising from inability to bear the absence of spiritual consolation.
5. Spiritual gluttony, inordinate longing for spiritual consolation, often followed by self-mortification with the object of gaining spiritual sweetness.
6. Spiritual sloth, unreadiness for self-denial and obedience.
7. Spiritual envy, displeasure at the sight of spiritual qualities in others, shown in deprecation of the virtues of others.

All these imperfections are removed by the "dark night of contemplation." It is called dark because to the soul, gradually being withdrawn from its subjection to temporal interests, life at first appears empty and dark, the soul not yet being conscious of reality.

The first two kinds of night are described in this book—that of sensual purgation and that of the purgation of the mind. By the former, sensible things are made subject to the soul and used in the service of God. By the latter, the soul is "purified and detached in the spirit" and disposed for union with God in love.

"The night of sense may and should be called a certain reformation and bridling of desire rather than purgation, because all the imperfections and disorders of the sensual part having their roots in the mind, the seat of good and evil habits, can

never be wholly purged away until the latter with the rebelliousness and perverseness of the mind are corrected."

The night of sense "is common, and the lot of many. The spiritual night is the portion of very few; and they are those who have made some progress and exercised themselves therein."

The "dryness" experienced in the night of sense is from sins and imperfections, weakness, lukewarmness, or physical indisposition. The effect upon the soul of this purgation is the bestowal of "these four benefits, namely, delight of peace, purity and cleanness of soul, the practice of all the virtues." These correspond to the cathartic virtues. "As the soul is purified from all sensual affections and desires, it attains to liberty of spirit wherein the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit are had."

The state of proficients filled with the virtues imparted in the night of sense is described as that of children. The soul will still be subject at times to troubles, for the "purgation of the spirit" is necessary before full liberty is gained. "As the sensual part of the soul is weak and without any capacity for the strong things of the spirit, they who are in the state of proficients by reason of the spiritual communications made to the sensual part are subject therein to great infirmities . . . hence the communications made to these cannot be very strong, intense, or spiritual, such as they are required to be for the divine union with God, because of the weakness or corruption of the sensual part which has a share in them. Here is the source of ecstasies, raptures, and dislocations of bones, which happen whenever these communications are not purely spiritual; that is, granted to the mind alone, as in the case of the perfect, already purified in the second night of the spirit."

This second night—that of the spirit—may not be experienced for a long period after the first night, for the soul must spend time—perhaps many years—in "exercising itself in the state of proficients in which it occupies itself with divine things and rises at once to the most tranquil and loving contemplation and finds spiritual sweetness without the fatigue of meditation."

"This dark night of the spirit in which proficients grow to manhood is a certain inflowing of God into the soul which cleanses it of its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, or spiritual. Contemplatives call it infused contemplation . . .

and inasmuch as it is the loving wisdom of God, it prepares it by purifying and enlightening it for union with God in love." Thus it corresponds with the "illuminative way." St. John also calls it a dim contemplation.

After the night of spirit "in the state of union, having grown to manhood, they do great things in spirit—all their actions and all their faculties being now rather divine than human, for God is stripping them of the old man and clothing them with the new—"Be re-formed in the newness of your mind."

The reason for the name night in this case is twofold. "As the stronger the sun's rays the more it blinds the visual organs, overcoming them and depriving them of the power of seeing, so the divine light of contemplation when it beats on the soul not yet perfectly enlightened, causes spiritual darkness because it not only surpasses its strength, but deprives it of its natural perceptions. It is for this reason that St. Dionysius and other mystical theologians call infused contemplation 'a ray of darkness' because this light masters the natural power of the reason and takes away its natural power of understanding.

"This dim contemplation is in its beginnings also painful to the soul in which the two contraries—the highest excellences and its own imperfection—meet and resist one another. As eyes, weakened and clouded with disease, suffer pain when the clear light beats upon them, so the impure soul suffers exceedingly when the divine light really shines out—it perceives itself to be so unclean and miserable that it seems as if God had set Himself against it, and itself were set against God. . . . The divine and dim light reveals to it all its weakness, and it sees clearly that of itself it can never be other than it is.

"Another kind of pain is caused by a sense of the majesty and greatness of this dim light, which makes the soul conscious of a profound emptiness and destitution of the three kinds of goods—natural, temporal, and spiritual, which are necessary for its comfort.

"There is nothing in contemplation and the divine inflowing to cause pain, but rather much sweetness and joy, as the soul will find later. The darkness and other miseries of which the soul is conscious proceed not from the divine light but from the soul itself. It is the light which enables it to see them."

An analogy with fire, which consumes and purifies, is worked

out. In the degree of this fiery purification "the soul enters on the fruition of sweet spiritual contemplation, and that so sublime that at times no language can describe it. But highest of all are the spiritual communications which are profound and secret between our Lord Himself and the soul. These are wholly divine and supreme and as it were substantial touches of the divine union between Himself and the soul. In one of these, because it is the highest possible degree of union, the soul receives greater good than in all the rest."

The beautiful treatise *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul* is based on one of the poems written under the influence of the "wonderful operations of the Divine Grace" which St. John experienced during his imprisonment at Toledo. The poem is a poetical paraphrase of The Song of Songs, and the book consists of an explanation of the stanzas written at the request of the Prioress of the Carmelite Convent at Granada. St. John himself says of it "Who can describe that which He shows to loving souls in whom He dwells? Who can set forth in words that which He makes them feel? And lastly, who can explain that for which they long? Assuredly no one can do it, that is the reason why they use figures of special comparisons and similitudes; they hide somewhat of that which they feel, and in the abundance of the spirit utter secret mysteries rather than express themselves in clear words.

"And if these similitudes be not received in the simplicity of a loving mind, and in the sense in which they are uttered, they will seem to be effusions of folly rather than the language of reason; as anyone may see in the divine canticle of Solomon."

St. John says of his poem which the treatise explains: "These stanzas describe the career of a soul from its first entrance on the service of God till it comes to the final state of perfection—the spiritual marriage. They refer accordingly to the three states and ways of spiritual training, the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways, some properties and effects of which they explain.

"The first stanzas relate to beginners—the purgative way. The second to the advanced—to the state of spiritual betrothal; that is, the illuminative way. The next to the unitive way—that of the perfect, the spiritual marriage. The last stanzas treat of the beatific state which only the already perfect soul arrives at."

The whole is a wonderful outpouring of the soul's adoring love for the Divine Beloved.

The Living Flame of Love was composed during or directly after his imprisonment at Toledo. It is a poem which speaks of the same love as that poured out in the *Spiritual Canticle*, yet still more perfect and complete in its transformation, for the soul is now entirely transformed in the flame of love. The book which bears the same name is an explanation of the poem.

St. John begins by describing the early stages of the path to God. The state of beginners is one of meditation and acts of reflection. "It is necessary to furnish the soul with matter for meditation, that it may make reflections and interior acts and avail itself of the sensible spiritual heat and fervour, for this is necessary in order to accustom the senses and desires to good things, that being satisfied with the sweetness thereof, they may be detached from the world." But when meditation and detachment have done their work "God begins to introduce the soul into the state of contemplation." In order to receive this gift the recipient must be adapted to it—perfectly detached, calm, peaceful, and serene, as God is. "Thus the soul must be attached to nothing, not even to meditation, nor to sensible or spiritual sweetness, because every act of the soul, even of thought, of liking or disliking, will break that profound silence of sense and spirit necessary for hearing the deep and soft voice of God. . . . The soul's loving attention must be most pure, without a thought of self, in a manner self-forgotten, for thus the soul is free and ready for that which our Lord requires at its hands."

Later St. John describes the effect of this union upon the soul. "In this most blissful union the powers of the soul are enlightened and filled with love. These powers, previous to the state of union, were in darkness and blindness, but are now illumined by the fires of love and respond thereto, offering that very light and love to Him Who has kindled and inspired them by infusing into the soul gifts so divine. For he who truly loves is satisfied then when his whole self, all he is, all he can be, all he has, all he can acquire, is spent in the service of his love; and the greater that service, the greater is his pleasure in giving it. Such is the joy of the soul now, because it can shine in the presence of the Beloved in the splendours with which He has

surrounded it and love Him with that love which He has communicated to it." St. John speaks of the knowledge of God gained through the highest union. Just as the Divine is the Light of the soul, so His Powers and Attributes are realized as Lights—all in each and each in all. These aspects of God perceived by the soul are likened to lamps.

"God in His one and simple essence is all the power and majesty of His attributes. He is omnipotent, wise, good, merciful, just, strong, loving; He is all the other attributes and perfections of which we have no knowledge here below. When the soul is in union with Him and He is pleased to admit it to a special knowledge of Himself, the soul sees in Him all these perfections and majesty together in the one simple essence clearly and distinctly, so far as it is consistent with the faith, and as each one of these attributes is the very being of God Who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—as each attribute is God Himself—and as God is Light and infinite divine Fire, it follows that each attribute gives light and burns as God Himself.

"God therefore, according to this knowledge of Him in unity, is to the soul as many lamps, because it has the knowledge of each of them, and because they minister to it the warmth of love, each in its own way, and yet all of one substance, all one lamp. This lamp is all lamps because it gives light and burns in all ways.

"The soul seeing this, the one lamp is to it as many lamps, for though but one, it can do all things and has all power and comprehends every spirit. And thus it may be said that the one lamp shines and burns many ways in one: it shines and burns as omnipotent, as wise, as good, ministering to the soul knowledge and love and revealing itself unto it according to the measure of the soul's strength for the reception of all. The splendour of the lamp as omnipotent gives to the soul the light and warmth of the love of God as omnipotent, and accordingly God is now the lamp of omnipotence to the soul, shining and burning according to that attribute. And so of the other attributes. Thus God is to the soul in these communications and manifestations of Himself—they are, I think, the highest possible in this life—as innumerable lamps from which light and love proceed.

“The fire here is so sweet that though an infinite fire, it is as the waters of life which satisfy the soul and quench the thirst with that vehemence for which the spirit longs. Thus though they are lamps of fire they are also the living waters of the spirit.

“All language now is ineffectual to express the matter. If we consider that the soul is now transformed in God, we shall in some measure understand how it is true that it is also become a fountain of living waters boiling and bubbling upwards in the fire of love which is God.

“O wonder! the lamps of the divine attributes, though one in substance, are still distinct, each burning as the other, one being substantially the other. O abyss of delights! and the more abundant that their riches are gathered together in infinite simplicity and unity. There each one is so recognized and felt as not to hinder the recognition and feeling of the other; yea, rather everything in Thee is light which does not impede anything; and by reason of Thy pureness, O Divine Wisdom, many things are known in Thee in one, for Thou art the Treasury of the everlasting Father, ‘the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God’s majesty, and the image of His goodness.’”

The powers of the soul—memory, understanding, and will, are compared to deep caverns, “their depth being commensurate with their capacity for great good, because nothing less than the Infinite can fill them.” But until they are cleansed from attachments they are unconscious of their extreme emptiness and are “unable to recognize the infinite good which is wanting, or their own capacity for it. But when they are empty and cleansed the hunger, the thirst, and the anxiety of the spiritual ‘sense’ become intolerable . . . because the food which they need is great, namely God.”

When consciously united to God “these caverns of the soul, being now in a wonderful way among the marvellous splendours of the lamps that burn within them, being lighted and burning in God, remit back God to God, in addition to their self-surrender to Him, those very splendours which they receive from Him in loving bliss; they also, turning to God in God, being themselves lamps burning in the brightness of the divine lamps, return to the Beloved that very light and warmth of

love which they receive from Him. Now indeed, they give back unto Him in the way they receive them, those very splendours which He communicates, as crystal reflects the rays of the sun, but in a nobler manner, because of the intervention of the will. . . . For the perfection of beauty wherein the soul restores to God what it has received from Him is now in conformity with that perfection wherewith the understanding—made one with that of God—received the divine wisdom.” In like manner the will perfectly gives back God’s goodness because perfectly united to Him, and the soul His love. “And according to the perfection of the other divine attributes communicated to the soul, such as strength, beauty, justice, are those perfections wherewith the spiritual mind, now in enjoyment, gives back to the Beloved in the Beloved the very warmth and light which it is receiving from Him.”

Thus the soul is enabled to give back a worthy gift to the Divine Giver “and in that gift He loves it anew and gives Himself freely to it. The soul also loves Him anew. Thus there is a mutual interchange of love between the soul and God.

“The soul can offer such a gift, though far greater than itself, just as he who possesses kingdoms and nations as his own, though greater than he, can bestow them on whom he will. This is the soul’s great delight, that it sees itself giving to God more than itself is worth, that it gives itself to God so generously.”

St. John describes and explains in beautiful passages the perfections of beauty with which the soul gives to the Divine all that it possesses in Him in love, joy, praise, and gratitude.

Throughout the work he emphasizes the need for detachment and the means to be used for its attainment. It is the will which loves. “The will, in order to direct its act of love unto God, must not direct it to that which is tangible and capable of being reached by desire, but must direct it to that which it cannot comprehend or reach thereby. In this way the will loves that which is certain and true, according to the spirit of the faith in emptiness and darkness as to its own feelings, above all that it can understand by the operations of the understanding; its faith and love transcend all that it can comprehend.

“If this love is to be perfect we must live in perfect detachment and in a special emptiness of all things. Neither are we

to be distressed when the memory is emptied of all forms and figures; for as God is without form and figure, the memory is safe when emptied of them and draws thereby nearer to God. For the more the memory relies on the imagination, the further it departs from God, because God, being above our thoughts, is not cognizable by the imagination."

NON-ATTACHMENT TO THE WORLD

FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

Do not follow the evil law. Do not live on in thoughtlessness. Do not follow false doctrine. Be not a lover of the world.

Rouse thyself! Do not be idle! Follow the law of virtue! The virtuous rests in bliss in this world and the next.

Follow the law of virtue; do not follow that of sin. The virtuous rests in bliss in this world and the next.

Look upon the world as you would on a bubble, look upon it as you would on a mirage: the king of death does not see him who thus looks down upon the world.

Come, look at this world, glittering like a royal chariot; the foolish are immersed in it, but the wise do not grasp it.

He who formerly was reckless and afterwards became sober, brightens up this world, like the moon freed from clouds.

He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds.

This world is dark, few only can see here; a few only go to heaven, like birds escaped from the net.

The swans go on the path of the sun, they go miraculously through the air; the wise are led out of this world, when they have conquered Mâra and his train.

If a man has transgressed the one law, and speaks lies, and scoffs at another world, there is no evil he will not do.

The uncharitable do not go to the world of the Gods; fools only do not praise liberality; a wise man rejoices in liberality, and through it becomes blessed in the other world.

Better than sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all worlds, is the reward of Sotâpatti, the first step in holiness.

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

PROCLUS*

PROPOSITION CXXI

Every Divine nature has for Its hyperxis goodness, but possesses a power which is invincible and unical and a knowledge arcane and incomprehensible by all secondary natures

For if It providentially attends to the whole of things, there is in It a power which has dominion over the subjects of Its providential energy; through which, being invincible, and uncircumscribed by all things, Divine natures fill all things with, and subject all things to, Themselves. For everything of a ruling nature, which is the cause of other things and has dominion over them, rules through abundance of power, and predominates according to its essential nature.

The first power, therefore, is in the Gods, not indeed having dominion over some things but not over others, but equally comprehending in Itself according to cause the powers of all beings, this power neither being essential, nor much less unessential, but being connascent with the hyperxis of the Gods, and superessential.

Moreover, the boundaries of all knowledge pre-exist uniformly in the Gods. For through Divine knowledge, which is exempt from the whole of things, all other knowledge has a subsistence; this knowledge neither being intellectual, nor much less a certain knowledge posterior to Intellect, but being established according to the Divine peculiarity above Intellect.

If, therefore, there is a Divine knowledge, this knowledge is arcane and uniform (or has the form of The One); if there is a power uncircumscribed by all things, this power is in a similar manner comprehensive of all things; and if there is a Divine goodness, this goodness defines the hyperxis of the Gods. For if all things are in the Gods, knowledge, power, and goodness are also in Them. But Their hyperxis is characterized by that which is most excellent, and Their hypostasis also is according to that which is best. But this is goodness.

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 83.

JULY

1. Conception of the Lord Buddha.
3. Zenodotus, Neoplatonist in Hermetic Succession (c. 500 A.D.).
4. Hippocrates of Chios, Father of Medicine (c. 460-350 B.C.).
5. D. Homer (s.d. 962-927 B.C.).
Lucius Apuleius, Platonist (s.d. 130-190 A.D.).
6. Sir Thomas More, beheaded 1535 (b. 1480 A.D.).
7. Thomas Traherne, Cambridge Platonist (1637-1674 A.D.).
8. D. Chi-i (B.), Founder of Tendai School in Japan (522-597 A.D.).
9. D. Manetho, "Beloved of Thoth," Priest Initiate and Historian (s.d. 260 B.C.).
10. Hadrian, Roman Emperor, d. 138 (b. 24/1/76 A.D.).
11. Theano, wife of Pythagoras (c. 6th cent. B.C.).
12. To Pallas Athene (G.), Minerva (R.), Goddess of Wisdom.
Jean Charlier de Gerson (C.), Mystic, d. 1429 (b. 14/12/1363 A.D.).
13. Amelius, Neoplatonist (s.d. 246/269 A.D.).
Japanese Buddhist Commemoration of the Departed (13th-15th).
14. D. Bonaventura (C.), "The Seraphic Doctor," d. 1274 (b. 1221 A.D.).
15. Hegira, or Flight of Muhammad, 622 A.D. Beginning of Islamic Era.
16. For Communities.
17. D. Musaeus, Orphist (s.d. 1300 B.C.).
18. Petrarch, Italian Scholar and Poet, d. 1374 (b. 1304 A.D.).
19. D. Kabir (H.), Mystical Poet and Reformer (c. 1440-1518 A.D.).
20. D. Elias, Hebrew Prophet (c. 900 B.C.).
21. D. Damo, daughter and disciple of Pythagoras.
22. D. Mary Magdalene (C.).
23. Sun enters Leo.
24. D. Pythagoras (G.), Trainer of Souls (s.d. 6th cent. B.C.).
25. D. James, the Greater (C.), Apostle and Martyr, d. c. 43 A.D.
Coleridge, d. 1834 A.D.
26. D. Thomas à Kempis (C.), Mystic, d. 1471 (b. 1380 A.D.).
27. D. Hatshepsu, Egyptian Queen-Initiate (s.d. 1500 B.C.).
28. Pythais, Mother of Pythagoras.
29. D. Martha (C.).
Vacherot, French Neoplatonist, b. 1809 A.D. (d. 1897).
30. Euclides, Mathematician and Platonist (c. 322-283 B.C.).
31. To Jupiter (R.), Zeus (G.), Demiurgic Mind.
D. Ignatius Loyola (C.), d. 1556 A.D.
To Sanctus Zadkiel (C.), Archangel.

AUGUST

1. To Ceres (R.), Demeter (G.), Goddess of Fertility.
Lammas Day.
Lunasdal, or Lugnassad, Celtic Autumn Festival (Feast of Lugh).
Cosmo di Medici, the Elder, Florentine Neoplatonist, d. 1464 (b. 1389 A.D.).
Lorenzo Valla, Hermetist, d. 1457 (b. 1406 A.D.).
2. To the World-Teachers.
To Kwan-Yin (B.), Goddess of Mercy.
3. Kanishka (H.), Buddhist King (1st cent. A.D.).
4. D. Dominic (C.), Founder of Dominicans, d. 1221 (b. 1170 A.D.).
5. D. Nanak, Founder of the Sikh Mystics, d. 1539 (b. 1469 A.D.).
6. Transfiguration of Christ on the Mount.
7. John Smith, Cambridge Platonist, d. 1652 (b. 1618 A.D.).
8. Archimedes, Mathematician and Platonist (287-212 B.C.).
9. To all Divi and Divae.
10. D. Yashodhâra, wife of Gautama Sidhârtha, one of first Buddhist nuns (s.d. 600 B.C.).
11. Ossian, Celtic Poet (s.d. 3rd. cent. A.D.).
12. Manu, Great Lawgiver of India.
Jean Boissonade, French Platonist, b. 1774 (d. 8/9/1857 A.D.).
13. D. John Berchmans (C.), d. 1621 A.D.
15. D. Mary, Mother of Jesus (C.), d. Assumption of B.V.M.
16. D. Joachim (C.), Father of B.V.M.
17. D. Amenartus, Great Egyptian Queen Initiate.
18. D. Olympiodorus, Neoplatonist (c. 430-550 A.D.).
20. D. Bernard of Clairvaux (C.), Mystic, "The Mellifluous Doctor," d. 1153 (b. 1090 A.D.).
D. Muhammad, b. 570 A.D.
D. Francis of Sales (C.), b. 1567 (d. 28/12/1622 A.D.).
21. To the Tirthankaras "Ford Makers," Great Jain Saints and Sages (s.d.).
22. D. Aedesia (5th cent. A.D.).
23. To Nemesis.
Sun enters Virgo.
24. To Osiris (E.), The Divine Immanence.
25. To Isis (E.), The Divine Life, the Great Mother.
Hemon de la Fosse of Abbeville, France, Martyr of the Ancient Wisdom, d. 1503 A.D.
26. To Horus (E.), The Divine Light.
27. D. Iamblichus, Neoplatonist (c. 255-330 A.D.).
Ab Ithel (John Williams), Bardic Writer, d. 1862 (b. 1811 A.D.).
28. Goethe, b. 1749 A.D. (d. 1832).
D. Augustine of Hippo (C.), d. 430 (b. 354 A.D.).
29. Egyptian New Year's Day. To Thoth, the Logos.
Beheading of John the Baptist (c. 30 A.D.).
30. Charisteria, Thanksgiving.
31. John Bunyan (C.), d. 1688 (b. 1628 A.D.).
D. Agricola (Rudolphus), Christo-Platonist, b. 1443 (d. 28/10/1485 A.D.).

SEPTEMBER

1. To Sri Krishna.
2. The Greater Eleusinian Mysteries, 1st day (lasting until the 10th).
3. D. Archytas, Pythagorean and Initiator of Plato (c. 400-365 B.C.).
4. Pindar, b. c. 518 (d. 422 B.C.).
5. D. Hillel, Jewish Rabbi and Teacher (30 B.C.-10 A.D.).
6. D. Nāgārjuna (B.), Founder of Madhyamika School (2nd cent. A.D.).
7. D. Eumolpus, reputed Founder of Eleusinian Mysteries (c. 14th cent. B.C.).
8. D. Robert Fludd, Hermetist, d. 1637 (b. 1574 A.D.).
9. D. Asclepigenia, Eleusinian Priestess, s.c.
10. Last day of Greater Eleusinian Mysteries, Day of the Vision of the Shining One.
D. Psellus, the Younger, Neoplatonist (c. 1020-1105 A.D.).
11. To the King- and Queen-Initiates of Ancient Egypt.
12. Holy Cross Day, Exaltation of the Cross.
Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Hermetist, b. 1486 (d. 1535 A.D.).
13. D. Catherine of Genoa (C.), Mystic, d. 1510 (b. 23/3/1447 A.D.).
14. D. Hildegarda (C.), German Mystic, d. 1179 A.D.
15. Anaxagoras, Pythagorean (s.d. 500/428 B.C.).
16. Sacred Festival of Thoth, the Logos (E.).
D. Antoninus Pius, Emperor of Rome, b. 86 (d. 7/3/161 A.D.).
17. Alexander the Great, b. 356 (d. 21/4/324 B.C.).
Romulus, Founder of Rome (753 B.C.).
18. D. Matthew (C.), Apostle and Martyr, d. c. 62 A.D.
19. D. Fo-hi, Great Emperor-Patriarch of Ancient China (s.d. 2850-2730 B.C.).
D. Virgil (R.), d. 19 (b. 15/10/70 B.C.).
20. Sun enters Libra.
Autumn Festival, The Equinox.
To Karpo (G.), Goddess of Autumn.
21. Poliziano, Florentine Neoplatonist, d. 1494 (b. 1454 A.D.).
22. Day of Atonement, Jewish.
23. First day of Thesmophoria, lasting until 30th, the Mysteries next in importance to Eleusinian; for women only.
Day of Duties, "Stenia," to home, parents, and State.
D. Eusebius of Cæsarea (C.), Father of Church History, b. 260 A.D.
24. D. Solomon (s.d. b. 1033, d. 970 B.C.).
25. To Ptah (E.), Divine Creative Fire.
26. To the Archons or Archangels.
Michaelmas. Sanctus Michael, Archangel.
27. D. Rūmi, Sūfi Poet and Mystic, b. 1207 (d. 17/12/1273 A.D.).
Euripides (G.) (c. 480-407 B.C.).
28. D. Jerome (C.), d. 420 (b. c. 340 A.D.). Revised the Vulgate.

PLOTINUS ON PROVIDENCE*

(TRANSLATED BY THOMAS TAYLOR)

If then, Reason, applying itself to matter, produced all things, consisting, as they appear, of dissimilar parts, from the omniform nature of Reason, the Artificer, certainly that which is generated can have nothing so formed more beautiful than Itself: and since it is not fit that Reason should be composed from all things perfectly conformable and similar, it cannot be blamed, because, though all things, it is in every part different.

But, if it is said, after what manner can Reason act rightly if It introduces souls external to Itself into the world, and compels them, contrary to their nature, to co-operate with the mundane fabrication, and many of them to pass into an inferior condition? We reply that it is proper to believe that souls themselves are, as it were, members of this universal Reason, and that Reason does not harmonize things in the world by subordinating those previously produced, but, when it is convenient and proper, disposes them according to the dignity of their nature. Besides, that argument in favour of Providence is not to be despised which teaches us not always to regard the present appearance of things, but to respect their past and future circulation; for by this means a just retribution subsists.

And this is the meaning of the oracle of Adrastia, or the inevitable power of Divine Law; for an institution of this kind is doubtless Adrastia, true judgement and justice, and admirable wisdom.

Indeed it is lawful to conjecture, from the daily appearances in the world, that such an order always subsists, where doubtless a certain order of this kind runs through all things, even such as are least and most inconsiderable; and a wonderful art is everywhere evinced, not alone in things Divine, but even in such as from their diminutive nature may be deemed unworthy the notice of Providence. For in the most abject of animals there is a stupendous variety, and the skill of Divinity expresses

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 82 and 83.

itself even to the very leaves and fruit of plants; where the beauty of the forms, and the aptness and facility with which they flourish, may properly excite our admiration, since, without any labour of nature, they germinate in such variety in an unceasing circle of generation and decay; while things superior are not conducted in an order entirely similar to these. Whatever therefore exists by alternate changes of condition is not rashly transmuted, nor does it assume a variety of forms from the arbitrary power of chance, but in such a manner as it is proper for the power of Divinity to act; for every thing Divine energizes in such a manner as the peculiar nature of Divinity requires, which is ever according to Its own exalted essence. But Its essence unfolds in Its operations the beautiful and just, for unless these abide in a Divine essence they cannot anywhere subsist.

Order is so instituted according to Intellect, as to abide unindigent of the discursive power of reason, and so abides, that if any one were able to exercise his reason in the most perfect manner, he would be beyond measure astonished to find the whole so constituted that his reason could not conceive any other disposition of things more orderly than that evinced continually by particular natures; which always possess more of an intellectual form than the order of our reason can either conceive or produce.

In respect therefore to every kind of things which exist, it is not lawful to accuse Reason, the great efficient cause, unless some one should think it necessary that every thing should be produced eternal, like intelligible natures, requiring an abundant accumulation of good, and thinking that the form attributed to every thing is of itself not sufficient; just as if he should blame nature in the formation of man because he did not give him horns for his defence, not considering that reason is necessarily diffused through all things, but in such a manner that lesser things are contained in such as are greater, and parts in the whole, which consequently must be unequal to the whole, or they would no longer be parts.

Every thing primary is all things, but this is not the case with particulars which are inferior and subordinate; so that man, considered as a part, cannot be all that is perfect and fair. And if at any time something is associated with certain parts

which is not itself a part, through this it likewise participates in a wholeness. Nor is it requisite that every particular considered as an individual should possess the highest degree of virtue, or it could no longer be called with propriety a part. Nor must it be said that a part adorned with a high degree of dignity and excellence detracts, as it were, through envy from the whole, for it produces a more beautiful whole in proportion to its superior dignity of excellence, since it becomes beautiful so far as it is similar to the whole, and is at the same time so ordained, that in man, considered according to his present situation, something beams forth to view, like stars which glitter in the divine heaven. So that we must conceive that daemons and men resemble large and beautiful statues, whether we suppose them animated or fashioned by Vulcanian art, decorated in the face and breast with splendid stars, and so disposed as properly to contribute to the gracefulness of the whole.

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If all things are administered according to perfect rectitude and order, can those who act, act unjustly and deviate from what is right? and how can those be unhappy who neither act unjustly nor wander from truth? Besides, why are some things said to be according to nature and others contrary to nature? Since whatever is produced or operates passes through existence in a certain natural order. Again, is it possible on this supposition that there can be any impiety against Divinity? since the Artificer and His work may be compared to a poet inserting among his fables a mimic reviling and mocking the poet himself?

In order to a solution of these doubts, we shall endeavour to explain what Reason is in a more explicit manner, and to prove the perfect rectitude of its nature. Reason, therefore, is as follows; for we should dare to declare its nature, since we may, perhaps, by this means, obtain the end of our investigation. Reason, then, I say, is neither Intellect Itself, nor the genus of pure soul; but depends from this, and is like a splendour beaming from Intellect and soul; from a soul affected according to Intellect; so that reason is generated from these two as a life, as it were, ever possessing in itself thought perfectly tranquil. But all life is energy, even such as is the most abject

and vile; an energy not like that of fire, but an energy of such a nature that even where no sense is present, the motion is far from being rash and fortuitous. But whatever participates of Reason ever present, is on a sudden rationally affected, that is, becomes formed, as far as energy according to life is able to form, and moves in a manner correspondent to its participation of form. Hence its energy is like the art of one who is moved in a dance; for the dance is thus similar to artificial life; and he is moved by art, and thus moves in the dance because life itself is in a manner art of such a kind. And these things we have advanced, that we may more plainly understand the nature of every kind of life.

This Reason, proceeding from one Intellect and one Life, and possessing plenitude from both, is neither one life nor one certain intellect, nor is it everywhere full, nor does it impart itself to its participants wholly and universally: but since it possesses in itself parts mutually opposed, which are on this account indigent, it certainly unfolds in them the origin of war and sedition, thus Reason is a plural unity, not a simple unity; for being made an enemy to itself through its parts, it is one and a friend, in the same manner as in a tragic or a comic play, there is one reason of the whole, in itself containing many battles; the fable in the meantime reducing all the dissonant parts into one consent, and forming a regular disposition of all the battles.

So with respect to the world, from one universal Reason the strife of things distant and disagreeing is deduced. Hence whoever assimilates the world to harmony resulting from opposing sounds, should inquire why in the proportions themselves things repugnant are contained: if then in musical modulation the harmonic reasons or proportions produce sounds acute and grave and harmonize into one (since the reasons of harmony are contained in harmony itself, as parts in a greater reason); in a similar manner we may behold contraries amicably blended in the universe; the white and the black; the hot and the cold; likewise animals winged and without wings; with or without feet; rational and irrational; while, in the meantime, all are parts of one universal organism; and the universe is homologous to itself, and is composed from parts at strife with each other, but, according to reason, forming

an harmonious whole. It is therefore necessary that this one Reason should be one from the conjunction of reasons contrary and not similar; so that such an opposition conduces to its constitution of every essence; for unless It were many and various It could not be all things, and It could not be Reason: but Reason considered in respect to Itself contains the different, and the greatest difference appears to be contrariety. If Reason contains that which is different, and that which is different is productive of something, Its productions must certainly be more different than Itself; and consequently whatever is the extremity of Its productions must necessarily be of a contrary nature; and Reason will be perfect if It causes Itself to be not only a certain difference but a multitude of contrary natures.

Since Reason therefore is primarily what Its effects are secondarily, Its productions will be more or less contrary to each other in proportion to their distance from their source. Indeed this sensible world is less one than is Reason, its Artificer, and is, on this account, endued with a nature more various, and replete with contraries. Besides, the desire of life is more vehement, and the love more ardent, by which particulars are wrapped into one. But lovers often destroy the objects of love through the avidity of peculiar good, when such objects are subject to corruption; besides, the natural love of a part to the whole draws everything within the sphere of its attraction to the whole. Hence both good and evil are led through contraries in a beautiful order, by an art, as it were, similar to that of one leaping in a dance, of which we affirm the one part to be good and the other to be evil, and yet the whole to be beautifully disposed. But they will no longer appear to any one to be evil, and perhaps nothing hinders, on this hypothesis, that some particulars may be evil; though it will follow from hence that they are not evil from themselves. Perhaps also, pardon is to be granted to the evil, unless Reason Itself determines to whom pardon is to be granted, and to whom not. But Reason so operates that It is not ignorant of such as are evil, and consequently determines that the wicked, as such, are not to be pardoned. And if one manifestation of Reason is a good man, and another an evil one, the evil appears to form the greater part. So that the constitution of the universe resembles that of a play, where the poet appoints some parts for the actors, but

uses others according to their peculiar nature: for the poet is not the cause that one is first in ability in the play, another second, and again that another ranks as the third; but distributing the reasons pertaining to each, he afterwards assigns an order perfectly accommodated to every one. Hence a place is determined to each, as well good as evil, in a manner most becoming and fit.

Each therefore proceeds according to nature and reason in the part assigned to them, in a becoming manner, obtaining the place which he chose; afterwards he pronounces and acts, at one time, works and words which are profane, and at another such as are contrary; for the players were affected in some particular mode previous to the drama into which they insert their peculiar manners. In the dramatic scenes of men the poet distributes his reasons to every act, while the power of performing well or ill entirely depends on the actors; for this province belongs to them independent of the words of the poet.

But in that true poem, the world, that which men repeat according to their part, is adorned with soul possessing a forming nature: and as the players are decorated by the poet with peculiar characters, and are clothed either with saffron-coloured or ragged garments, so, under the direction of Reason, the great mundane poet, personated soul is not left to blind chance; for souls are introduced on the stage of the world according to Reason, and are allotted characters accommodated to each in such a manner that the mundane tragedy or comedy may be beautifully performed. Soul likewise introduces itself into the drama in such a manner as accords with universal Reason, and afterwards pronounces certain actions, and whatever else the soul performs from its natural disposition, after the manner of some particular song. And as the voice or figure of the actors is of itself beautiful or base, and is either the source of gracefulness to the poem, or mingles with it some defect of voice, and yet does not make the play different from what it was before, though it appears by this means defective, but the poet, who is the author of the drama, performing the office of a good judge, rejects one of the performers, blaming him according to his demerit, but promotes another to greater honours, and, if he has it in his power, to a more excellent act, but another to one that is inferior: in the same manner soul,

entering into this universal poem, the world, becomes a part of its playful scenes, and brings with itself the ability of performing its part properly or amiss. In its entrance, too, it is annexed to the order of the rest, and since every other nature is allotted a part distinct from soul and its peculiar duties, it is deservedly rewarded with honour, or punished with disgrace. Besides, to the actors in this mundane play there is allotted a much greater scope for exertion, as constituted in a place more ample than the measure of a scene: especially since the Author of the universe gave them authority, and a greater power, for the purpose of procuring many species of manners, gestures, and places.

Souls therefore define the measure of ignominy and honour from the variety of manners which they exhibit; where the habitations of each are accommodated to their particular manners, so as to harmonize with the reason of the universe, accommodating to every one his station according to the decisions of justice: just as every chord in a harp is stretched in a proper and convenient place, and in an order best adapted for the reason of sounding, and in such a manner as the power of each supplies. For thus the beautiful and becoming flourishes in the whole when every part is disposed where it is proper, sounding indeed dissonant in darkness and in Tartarus: since among these it is appropriate thus to sound. Hence the whole is at last beautiful, not if every thing is as a stone, but if every part contributing a proper tone rightly conduces to one entire harmony; that which is but a part indeed sounding life, yet more debile, inferior, and remote from perfection; as in a pipe one note alone is not sufficient, but besides this a lesser and more debile one is required, to the perfect consonance of the pipe; because the melody is divided into unequal parts, and the single tones are unequal amongst themselves, yet one perfect harmony results from the union of all. For universal Reason is one, but is distributed into things not equal; from whence arises the diversity of situations, some better and others worse, and the agreement of souls unequal with places that are unequal; corresponding to the dissimilitude of a pipe or some other musical instrument.

Souls likewise reside in places corresponding to their variety, framing indeed peculiar notes in every situation, but harmon-

izing as well with particular places as in the universe; so that even the tune which a soul sings discordant to herself is melodious to the whole; and what happens to particular souls contrary to nature, happens according to nature to the universe: nor does the lesser tone harmonize less with the whole than the greater; nor does he who sings more unaptly by himself render the whole on this account more dissonant. . . .

JEWELS

Men would live exceedingly quiet if those two words, mine and thine, were taken away.

—*Anaxagoras.*

He is truly rich who desires nothing; and he is truly poor who covets all.

—*Solon.*

If you pursue good with labour, the labour passes away, but the good remains; if you pursue evil with pleasure, the pleasure passes away, but the evil remains.

—*Cicero.*

And let not men's sin dishearten thee; love a man even in his sin, for that love is the likeness of the divine love, and is the summit of love on earth. Love all God's creation, both the whole and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the animals, love the plants, love each separate thing. If thou love each thing thou wilt perceive the mystery of God in all; and when once thou perceive this, thou wilt thenceforward grow every day to a fuller understanding of it: until thou come at last to love the whole world with a love that will then be all-embracing and universal.

—*Dostoeffsky.*