

rows and the lilies and the fields white for the harvest were lovable because he saw and loved their beauty. We want to be alive and not tired—half dead, don't we? And that is what prayer does for us. Isn't that worth while? This little mind and heart lifted to the ancient Beauty, he is ours to see with the mind of faith, to love with the heart, but we must clamber up above ourselves and the turmoil of the world if we would hear the gentle wind of his approach, feel the stir of his presence. By our *faith* not *feeling*. His powerful personality overwhelms us.

We shall have constant peace, that peace which is strength, not the listless peace of sitting with our hands in our laps, but strength to walk in stride with God, no longer walking tired but with a swing as the Master walked in the cornfields and the cobbled streets. If we lead a life of prayer in faith we shall be strong, able to meet whatever the day brings.

CONCERNING PRAISE

BY

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RELIGION', says St Thomas, 'denotes properly a relation to God' and 'consists essentially in those acts by which man worships God by subjecting himself to his lordship'. (*Summa*, II-II, 81, 1). Whenever there is a special kind of lordship, there must be a special kind of service, and it is evident that lordship belongs to God in a special and singular way, because he made all things and has supreme dominion over all. Therefore a special kind of service is due to him, called 'religion', 'piety', or 'worship' (*Ibid.* ad 3. Cf. *In Boeth*: 3, 2).

But this worship must be of a fitting nature both as regards its object and as regards the one by whom it is offered. Its object, God, is a spirit, and therefore his worship must consist essentially in acts whereby the mind or soul is directed to him. But the worshipper is man composed of body and soul; wherefore his acts of worship must include a bodily element, both to give God the service of the whole man, and to incite himself to internal acts of religion by external ones—'from things seen to the love of things unseen'.

Thus by acts of religion man bears witness to the excellence of God and to his own subjection to him, his Creator, Conserver and Redeemer; and the proper and immediate interior act of religion is devotion in its theological sense, while the exterior acts are *adoration*,

wherein is offered the service of the body; *sacrifice*, whereby are offered external things, and those acts such as oaths, etc., whereby something divine is assumed. (Cf. II-II, 81, 3; 84).

'Adoration consists chiefly in an interior reverence of God; but secondly in certain bodily signs of humility'. (Ibid. 84, 2 ad 2). In its exterior form, it is only one of the manifestations of the virtue of religion; but in its interior aspect it is '*l'attitude la plus fondamentale en face de Dieu*', and from it springs as its perfect expression, the virtue of humility.

'God is much more perfectly adored by the prostration of the mind than by bodily prostration'. (In *Boeth*: 3, 2.) 'I am who AM; thou art she who is not', as our Lord said to St Catherine. Thus humility, which may be described as the recognition by the intellect, and the acceptance by the will, in all its implications, of the position of the creature in the face of the Creator, plays a profound part in the religion and religious praise of every rational creature. '*Manus tua Domine, fecerunt me et plasmaverunt me totum in circuitu*'. (Job 10, 8).

'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' (1 Cor. 4, 7).

'I believe in God, Creator of all things visible and invisible'.

'I am Who am'.

But God is not only the Creator, but the preserver of the universe. 'The cause of being and of the continuation of being are one and the same. But the knowledge and the will of God are the cause of being in all things. Therefore they also conserve all things in being. Whence it is written, "Upholding all things by the Word of his power"', (Contra *Gent.* 3, 55).

'He spoke and they were made'; but the Word whereby he spoke and whereby they were made, is that Eternal Word which proceeds eternally from the Father, in whom there is no shadow of change or alteration. God is Pure Act, wherefore the Creative and the Conserving Word are both the single act and cause of being.

In addition to Creator and Preserver in being, God is also the author of man's redemption. 'Who for our sakes and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was made man'.

'God so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son that they that believe in him may not perish but may have life everlasting'; (Jn. 3, 16). 'I am he that blots out thine iniquities for mine own sake'; (Isaias 43, 25). 'It is proper to Christ as man to be the redeemer immediately; although the redemption may be ascribed to the whole Trinity as its first Cause'. (III 48, 5).

Thus the creature, recognising that it has nothing either in nature or in grace which does not come from God, realising that he is all and

he is nothing, instinctively prostrates himself before him, 'bearing witness to his excellence and to man's total subjection to him' (II-II 81, 3 ad 2).

'*Venite adoremus et procidamus ante Deum qui fecit nos*'. (Ps. 94, 6). So does the Church, at the very beginning of the Office of each day, summon us to adore God, pointing out how it is to be done, *et procidamus ante Deum*; and, moreover, adding the motive—*Deum qui fecit nos quia ipse est Dominus Deus noster*. This adoration must be principally internal, but accompanied even by bodily gestures. 'Thus when we genuflect we signify our weakness in comparison with God, and when we prostrate ourselves we profess that we are nothing of ourselves'. (Ibid. 84, 2 ad 2).

Nor does it stop at bodily gestures, at reverence of the person only. The creature, recognising that not only what he is but also what he has comes from God—'What hast thou that thou hast not received?'—seeks to return that, too, to his Maker—he offers sacrifice. 'Sacrifice is the offering to God of certain sensible things in sign of the subjection and honour due to him' (Ibid. 85, 1), but 'the exterior sacrifice is only representative of the interior and true sacrifice, whereby the human mind offers itself to God'. (*Contra Gent.* 3, 99).

Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus; cor contritum et humilitatum Deus non despiciet. (Ps. 50, 11). 'So, too, a vow is the directing of a thing to the worship or service of God'. (II-II 85, 5).

The humble soul which knows God and therefore knows itself, is unable to find adequate expression for the spirit of adoration which possesses it. Prostration, self-sacrifice, vows, all are inadequate. Only one Creature has ever succeeded in giving adequate expression to its adoration, the God-man who by giving up all that he was, offered to God the most perfect and precious thing the world ever had seen or could see or possess—the life of God Incarnate. As God he was himself the object of the worship and adoration of the whole of creation; but as man he led that creation in its liturgy by a ceaseless homage of intense adoration which commenced at the first moment of his conception and continued uninterruptedly until it reached its consummation in his final surrender into his Father's hands of all he was and had received from him.

Ecce Venio. 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me'. (Jn. 4, 34). 'Not my will but thine be done'. 'Father, it is consummated. Into thy hands I commend my spirit'. (Jn. 19,30; Lk. 23, 46).

The fundamental attitude of the soul of Christ was a spirit of profound adoration having expression in sacrifice. He, with the knowledge of both God and man, realised the full implications of 'the two abysses'. 'I am who am—thou art she who is not'. Even as God it

could with all reverence be said to him, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' (1 Cor. 4, 7), since it is his Personal attribute within the Trinity to proceed, to receive his being from the Father—eternally, it is true, and without any inequality, but nevertheless to receive. Thus while his adoration remained a human act, for God cannot adore himself—adoration and religion imply subjection—it was still the act of the Person of the Word and therefore of infinite value. Beginning with the Annunciation, reaching its consummation and most perfect expression on Calvary, it continues in the glorified life—in heaven, in the Holy Eucharist, in our souls when he has visited us in his Sacramental Presence, and in the *sacrificium laudis*, the Mass.

But 'Christ's works are referred to himself and to his members in the same way as the works of any other man in a state of grace are referred to himself; as the whole Church, Christ's Mystical Body is reckoned as one person with its head, which is Christ' (III 48, 1). Consequently it is not surprising to find that the homage of adoration, due to God from the whole of Creation simply because it is his creation—*Omnis terra adoret te, Deus*—is especially required from those who are the chosen friends of God, in whom Christ lives, who are 'other Christs'.

'It is written', said our Lord, presumably quoting from Deuteronomy, 'the Lord thy God thou shalt adore'. (Mt. 4, 10). 'Adore God', commanded the angel in the Apocalypse (22, 9); 'Adore the Lord, all ye his holy ones', sang the Psalmist, 'adore him in his holy temple'. 'Come let us adore the Lord our God who made us'. (Ps. 95, 9; 94, 6). 'Adore ye him that made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'. (Apoc. 14, 7). 'Adore the Lord all ye his angels'. (Ps. 96, 7).

And the holy ones of the Lord have always given him the service of their adoration. 'Abraham', we read in the Breviary, '*tres vidit et unum adoravit*'. The children of Israel, we are told on more than one occasion, falling down with their faces to the ground, 'adored and praised the Lord'. (2 Paral. 7, 3). When God became man and dwelt among us almost his first visitors were those three kings who, fulfilling the prophecy of the Psalmist that 'all the kings of the earth shall adore him', 'falling down adored him', seeing under the visible form of the tiny Babe the invisible Creator of all things visible and invisible.

So does all the earth adore the Lord. But when St John the Seer was vouchsafed his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem he seems to have been specially struck by the liturgy which he describes, metaphorically, of course, in great detail: 'The four and twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne and adored him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying:

"Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. Because thou hast *created* all things; and for thy will they were and have been created". (Apoc. 4, 10.) Here we have all the elements of the adoration described by the Psalmist to which the Church summons us at the beginning of each day's Office. Adoration, prostration, self-offering before the Lord whom they worship as the Creator of all things. They cast their crowns before him, viz., their most precious adornment, their glory. But in the Hebrew *gloria mea* as rendered in the Psalms signifies 'the soul'—*Exsurge gloria mea* (Ps. 107, 3). Thus the heavenly worshippers cast their souls, their very beings before their God, surrender themselves completely to him; just as on earth the chosen soul annihilates herself before her Lord by the three vows and especially by the vow of obedience whereby she offers the worship of her most precious and intimate possession—the will. 'In a special way those are religious, i.e., directed to God, who consecrate their whole life to the divine worship. . . . It is clear that to take a vow is properly an act of latria or religion'. (II-II 88, 5.)

Every act of obedience is an act of self-sacrifice in the fullest sense, an act of adoration in union with him who on Calvary cast before his Father the crown of his human life, and in union with those four and twenty ancients who in the heavenly Jerusalem 'cast their crowns before the throne'.

Not only is the Lord adored as Creator, but also as Governor of the Universe. . . . 'I saw them that had overcome the beast and his image . . . having the harps of God and singing the Canticle of Moses the servant of God and the Canticle of the Lamb, saying: "Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God almighty, just and true are thy ways, O King of Ages . . . all nations shall come and adore in thy sight, because thy judgments are manifest . . . for just and true are his judgments. Thou hast taken to thee great power, thou hast reigned' (Apoc. 15 and 11). And not only Creation and Government, but also Redemption are singled out as motives for adoration. 'When he had opened the book, the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb . . . and they sang a new Canticle, saying: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and open the seals thereof, because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God. . . . The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity . . . glory and benediction . . .' (Ibid. 5, 8-12).

Thus does the whole of creation fulfil its duty of religion, worshipping the God who made it, preserves and redeems it, worshipping him with an adoration which expresses itself in the sacrifice of all it has received and which is offered in heaven and on earth, by and in and with him who, having received all that a creature could receive from

God in the hypostatic union, gave back to his Father all that a creature who was also God could give. The acts of the Head are those of the members, and those of the members equally belong to the Head. In him all that the love of the Trinity has created returns whence it came by the same way of love.

And yet there is more. 'Religion worships God by bearing witness to the excellence of God and to the subjection of the creature', (*In Boeth*, 3, 2) and although we do find the Israelites praising the Lord 'because he is good', (Ps. 135), yet the goodness in mind is chiefly that towards men: it is what God does, the excellence of his works with which religion as such is chiefly concerned, and with the subjection due to him from those works. Only a creature can offer the worship of subjection and sacrifice, but there is one who can bear witness even more adequately to the divine excellence—God himself. All adoration contains an element of praise, and it may contain a great deal, but the perfect praise of God is God himself: 'Thy praise is thy very self, O Lord', says St Augustine. And it is the praise of what he is, which would not have been the least whit diminished had no creature ever existed, had the divine operation terminated in the *ad intra* processions of the blessed Trinity. 'The Holy Trinity is the temple, wherein by his eternal generation the Word is the perfect praise of the Father, the brightness of his glory and the Image of his substance'.¹ He is *le cantique que Dieu se chante intérieurement, le cantique qui jaillit des profondeurs de la divinité, le cantique vivant dans lequel Dieu se complait éternellement, parcequ'il est 'l'expression infinie de ses perfections'*.²

We read in Ecclesiasticus: *Deus est major omni laude* (43, 33), wherefore the Psalmist declares, *Tibi silentium laus*. The divine essence is ineffable, inexpressible, to all save God; he expresses it once in that eternal Word, which is none the less uttered in silence—the silence of eternity, of infinity.

'The Father uttered one Word, and that Word is his Son; he uttered him in eternal silence' (St John of the Cross.)

Had the Word of God remained in the bosom of the Father, this praise would have been heard by the Father alone; but the Word was made flesh, he clothed himself with our flesh as a word is clothed with sound, and so was manifest to men and was known by them. Henceforward the works of God were the works of man and man thus raised by grace could himself do the works of God. The praise of God

¹ Dom Delatte, *Commentary on the Rule of St Benedict*, c.8.

² Dom Marmion, *Christ l'Idéal du Moine*, c.14.

for himself, in himself, by himself, now could be the praise of man for his God—*Laus mea tu es* (Jeremias 17, 14).

Man could now adore God, not only for what he did, but for what he was; he could prostrate himself now, not only before the God who made him, but before the God eternal and infinite in perfection, the Beginning and the End, the Triune God. Now *l'âme contemple Dieu, en lui-même, dans l'excellence incréée de son essence et de ses Personnes. Elle oublie tout devant la gloire de Dieu. L'adoration, c'est l'extase d'amour écrasé par la beauté, la force, la grandeur immense de l'objet aimé*. (Sr Elizabeth of the Trinity.)

Adorate Dominum quoniam sanctus est (Ps. 98).

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, cried the seraphim of Isaias' vision (6, 3).

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come', sang the four living creatures who in their praise 'rested not day or night', while the mysterious four and twenty ancients, here as always, 'fell down before him that sitteth on the throne and adored him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast down their crowns before the throne'. (Apoc. 4).

Quis ut Deus, cried St Michael in an ecstasy of wondering adoration. *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas. . . . Tibi se cor meum totum subicit. Quia te contemplanis totum deficit* sang St Thomas inspired by a similar sentiment.

Such, surely, are the 'true adorers', such as the Father seeketh to adore him, they are those who adore in Spirit and in Truth.

They adore in Truth since they adore *Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso, per quem majestatem tuam laudant angeli, adorant Dominaciones, tremunt potestates, celi calorunque Virtutes ac beata Seraphim, socia exultatione, concelebrant. Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*.

And he is the Praise, the Word of the Father, and he declares 'Thy Word is truth. Abide in me . . . no one cometh to the Father but by me. . . . I have glorified thee on earth, o Father, and the glory which thou has given me, I have given them' (John 17, 22).

They adore in the Spirit, firstly because the Holy Spirit is the Unity, the kiss, the embrace of all that is common to Father and Son in the Unity of Truth and Truth of Unity, and because by their adoration they enter as it were and associate themselves with the intimate life of the Trinity; and secondly, because it is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, working through the gift of piety in its most perfect form, that they are enabled to praise God for what he is, to sing with the Church in the *Gloria: Aioramus te propter magnam gloriam tuam*.

Pietas, says St Thomas, *quæ est donum accipit in hoc aliquid divinum pro mensura, ut scilicet Deo honorem impendat, non quia sit ei debitus, sed quia Deus honore dignus est, per quem modum ipse Deus sibi honori est.* (Sent. IV, 34, 3, 2) and John of St Thomas, commenting on the above passage, remarks:

At vero, donum pietatis relicta hac mensura retributionis et largitionis bonorum, honorat et magnificat Dominum ratione sui . . . solum attendit ad magnitudinem divinam in se. (q. 70. Disp. 18, 6, 1.)

Adoramus Te . . . propter magnam gloriam tuam—Tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus Altissimus—Pater—Filius—Spiritus Sanctus—Increatus—Immensus—Aeternus—Omnipotens — Deus — Dominus—Ut in confessione veræ sempiternæque Deitatis, et in personis proprietates, et in essentia unitas, et in majestate adoretur aequalitas. . . . Adoremus Te per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso . . . per quem est tibi Deo Patri in Unitate Spiritus Sancti omnis honor et gloria per omnia sæcula sæculorum—

Sit nomen Domini benedictum—

Sanctificetur nomen Tuum.

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who is, who was, and who is to come'.

'Benediction and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen'. (Apoc. 4 and 7).

'Blessed art thou, O Lord the God of our Fathers, and worthy to be praised and glorified and exalted above all for ever: and blessed is the holy name of thy glory . . .

'Blessed art thou in the holy temple of thy glory . . .

'Blessed art thou on the throne of thy Kingdom . . .

'Blessed art thou that beholdest the depths and sitteth upon the cherubim . . .

'Blessed art thou in the firmament of heaven, and worthy of praise and glorious for ever'. (Daniel 3, 52-56).

'The Lord is great and exceeding to be praised . . . praise and magnificence are before him . . . give to the Lord glory to his name; bring up sacrifices and come ye in his sight, and adore the Lord in holy becomingness. . . . Save us, O God our Saviour, that we may give glory to thy holy name, and may rejoice in singing thy praise (1 Par. 16) . . . who hast predestined us unto the praise of the glory of [thy] grace, in which [thou] hast graced us in the Beloved Son, through whom and with whom and in whom we adore thee—on account of thy great glory; for by him and in him and with him is all honour and glory to thee, o Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen'. (Eph. 1, 5-6).