

human needs and frailties. We may congratulate ourselves on the swing towards Catholicism in the government of so many European countries, but if we regard it as anything but a challenge to us here and now to make full use of present opportunities, it will lead once again to political Catholicism and so to disaster. If we think we can discern in this a divine reward for listening to fifty years of papal encyclicals or the divine foundations for a great victory for the Church we shall be committing the sacrilege of identifying the ways of God with human fancies. We must approach the present events in the fear of the Lord, in awe and wonderment at his mysterious way, ready to take his direction when he manifests his will, but all the time searching with prudence for the particular virtues implied in that way.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and we cannot judge wisely about our own lives or the life of nations without that fear.

THE EDITOR.

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## THE HUSBANDMAN OF THE VISIBLE UNIVERSE

### RESPONSIBILITY—IV

**H**USBANDMAN' is the word; for, if not wholly adequate, as one word could hardly be, it does, better than any other, express man's status and function in the universe, and especially in the visible universe, so that its immediate concrete sense and the analogies to which it gives rise are verified essentially and verified to the full. Whatever is verified essentially of mankind is verified in Adam, the head of this family, and in Christ in whom this headship is restored. We should beware of any kind of mere generalisation—even the generalisation, 'All men are sinners,' is made at a level quite different from that of such an essential judgment—and emphatically we must not be understood to mean 'in fact men are most commonly tillers of the soil'. Man has the cosmic function of husbandman whether this last statement is verified or not. But then it follows that our meaning is deeper than the level of fact and of generalisations of fact.

We should note that the whole of the sub-human creation is ordained in and through man in the cosmic unity. The sub-human world is not fully a world and not fully a cosmos *by itself*. From it may be drawn suggestions of unity but not really a unity of its own. In man as part (head) of the visible creation, the visible world has

a unity of which man is the guarantee and 'sacrament' (in the same sense in which it may be said the Pope is 'sacrament' of the Church's unity).

This unity obtains in virtue not of any absolute or arbitrary headship exercised by man as the lord by conquest of the visible creation. He is indeed the lord of all he can see, but precisely and only in virtue of those faculties by which he acknowledges his own subjection to the higher powers. This lord of the world, 'girdled with the moon', whose footstool is the earth,<sup>(1)</sup> is the husbandman of the visible creation. His lordship is husbandry as God's is: for he is made in the image of the Supernal Wisdom, the Husbandman of all beings.

The Husbandman, then, is the bringer to perfection, the cherisher and the sustainer. These three attributes are at once analogies of the divine power in the world and the essential elements in the definition of man's husbandry in it. Thus the name of Husbandman belongs to God as lord of creation; to man as bearing his image and carrying out his stewardship. As God's lordship is rooted in his divine nature, so is man's husbandry rooted in the image of God.

As the principle of God's husbandry of the universe is contained and expressed in him as exemplary cause, so the principle of man's husbandry is expressed in the divine image. We can complete the parallel if we wish by saying this principle of his husbandry is contained in man as bearer of the image of God: that it is contained in wisdom as the intelligible pattern of man's stewardship: that it is expressed precisely as economy.<sup>(2)</sup> All these things are true, but *who* is man? whose is this wisdom? what this economy? At each stage of such a simple yet intricate statement we must make the necessary identifications or be guilty of a misleading vagueness. These identifications involve a perhaps surprising preamble.

At the threshold of the great modern development of social doctrine in the Church lies the definition by the father of Christendom—a definition seemingly irrelevant in the minds of many who are vocal in defence of 'Catholic Social Principles'—of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The definition is confirmed from the mouth of the Virgin of Lourdes. The Virgin of La Salette speaks of potato

(1) Such phrases are verified without embarrassment of man, understood absolutely, as he is to be encountered in the unfallen first parents of the race in the integrity of their nature as also in that restored integrity in Christ (where they apply by virtue *not* precisely of his Godhead, *not* precisely of the hypostatic union, but of the integrity of our nature restored in him). So also, by a special appropriateness due to her Immaculate Conception they apply to Mary.

(2) We are here a hundred miles from the intellectual barbarism of modern 'economics'. Economy is the ordering of the household: of man's microcosm of a domestic, physical and spiritual, personal and social household within the divine economy (cf. Irenaeus) of God's redemptive working in the world which is 'cosmic' as well as being 'personal' to man in the sense of modern spirituality.

crops which will rot in the earth, and of what corn looks like when it is blighted. Throughout the century the development of the great explanatory and defensive volume of Papal utterances on social matters goes side by side with a steady and luminous development of the theology of Mary.

Consider the liturgy of Mary. In praise of her the Church sings the praise of the Heavenly Wisdom. *Quando praeeparabat coelos, aderam: quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos: quando aethera firmabat sursum et librabat fontes aquarum: quando circumdabat mari terminum suum, et legem ponebat aquis, ne transirent fines suos: quando appendebat fundamenta terrae, cum eo eram cuncta componens: et delectabar per singulos dies, ludens coram eo omni tempore: ludens in orbe terrarum: et deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum.*

Consider the recorded miracle of Mary's intercession. People turn to the wonder working of the saints expecting to find faith inflated to an explosion of thaumaturgic will-power. Nothing is more alien to Mary than this kind of intrusion of a bombastic creatureliness. Her creatureliness is a transparently intelligent preparedness for his will and his manifestation. That is why his, 'My time is not yet come', could be denied so soon after it was uttered.

We should fly with horror from any attempt to sentimentalise the mother of Jesus, for it is from her we have to learn not *affection*, which belongs to every warm-blooded animal according to its kind, but wisdom. This wisdom of hers is utterly without pretensions. On our part, we almost lend it pretensions in saying it is hers. Infinitely more precise it is to say, 'Wisdom: that is Mary the mother of God'. Whether or no we can understand what we say, we at least follow the Church's anagogic attribution.

Note too how 'objective', how completely free from the trammels of sentimentality and self-consciousness is her compassion for the hosts of the wedding feast. She says nothing of their embarrassment, nothing whatever of their feelings or hers. In her the heavenly wisdom understands their hospitable desire and she says, 'They have no wine.'<sup>(3)</sup> Only so, as we of an excruciatingly sentimental and self-conscious age may remark, are their feelings wholly and adequately respected.

In this wisdom, so perfectly unobtrusive, unpretentious, unself-conscious, there is nothing at all that is negative. We use negative words because positive ones are so difficult to find. Nowhere will you find anything so direct in its transparency to reality as that mind

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(3) 'C'était la plus délicate des prières', comments Père Lagrange, 'à peine une suggestion, pas même l'expression d'un désir'.

of hers so unobtrusively revealed in the way she speaks here at the wedding feast. This remark of hers, so 'matter-of-fact' as we should say, still shows a perfect tact in the presence of the unbegotten Godhead of her son. She is *transparent* both to the Godhead of the Word and to the convivial thirst of her fellow guests.

Her wisdom is wholly positive and wholly feminine. That is why she is the perfect *transparent atmosphere of created intelligence*, in whom shines without cloud or dimming the solar radiance of God.

With this prelude we may resume what is said of man's husbandry of the universe. The principle of man's husbandry is expressed in the divine image. We can see now that this expression is twofold in a way which tends to identify these two as one: as radiant and reflected light are twofold, though the perfect reflection from untroubled waters will give back the very 'sheen of shining'.<sup>(4)</sup>

This twofold is firstly the lordship and mastery of the divine intelligence which shines from the face of man, as husbandman, disposing to order a subject creation beneath him. This, though as master he is also pupil, and as lord, steward. Secondly it is the total subjection and transparency of this created intelligence to the uncreated truth, the total obedience of this lordly will to God's uncreated purpose. You cannot separate these two. You can have it both ways, and only so. If your choice is of one only then effectually it is of neither.

If, for instance, your version of Man's lordship over the visible creation is only an inflated secular idealism full of the boast of force, then you will find no place in your universe for the limpid intelligence of Mary. No, in that case, your kind of masculine conceitedness wants a sentimental virgin, an affectionate and worshipping doll. *Mutatis mutandis* the same is true whatever type of one-sided masculine boastfulness you favour.

And suppose you choose the feminine part, falling victim to the power of mutability to fascinate and enthrall: supposing you yield to the flattery of that secret promise of power, the power of flexibility and silence and emptiness: a power, if you have the sense of it, with which to control the destinies of empires and pull men to ruin by their own force, not yours: I do not think that you will want obedience to another, and hardly the total subjection of yourself to the positive lordship of the Word.

Again, the principle of man's husbandry is expressed as economy. After what has been said, this economy could hardly be taken to

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(4)Cfr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in a Wisdom parallel translated from Brhadaran-yaka Upanisad I, 2, 1. 'He, *Self*, manifested Light. Of Him as he shone were the Waters born. Verily whilst I shone, there was Delight', said He. 'This is the Sheen of Shining. Verily there is delight for him who knoweth thus the sheen of shining'. (*A New Approach to the Vedas*. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, London 1933).

mean commercial economics. But we must insist with the most uncompromising definiteness that God's husbandry and man's extends to the very roots of the bodily and material life. It is not a spiritual pattern situated only in the clouds of heaven. It is a spiritual pattern making whole our flesh and its work in the world of which we are stewards. For Christ, our exemplar, is united to us by that created, that lowly wisdom, which is his and also ours through the receptive transparency of Mary's motherhood. Through this transparency the Word made Flesh works to make all flesh luminous. Without it, this work comes to nothing.

For this 'luminous' is not any bloom put on things by our swelling emotions while we shut our eyes and do not dare to look in case the reality should upset the persuasion of our feelings. The door to it is an eye to the reality of things, looking clearly and without either the fear born of self-consciousness or the repugnances born of sentiment. This being granted, the economy we speak of does not need many words.

To sustain, to cherish, to bring to perfection: these are the abiding principles. The teeming world of agriculture imposes also a selective ordering which, in the struggle to fill the belly, but more often to line the pocket or pay the money-lender, too often obliterates the first principles of husbandry from the mind of the farmer—in fact have so obliterated these first principles that hardly anyone can be said to have any sound principles of judgment left about, e.g. what bringing to perfection may mean with regard to livestock. The commercial farmer knows what *he* means. He wants the cow's distended udders, the even layer of fat on the back of the bacon-hog, that spell maximum figures on his cheque from the marketing board. He looks at pigs and hears the money jingle, and if God intended anything else in creating these animals the thought of it takes second place to sales.

Mary's wisdom is other than this. It is clear in any case that sound human economy can only be in principle a cosmic economy. If we can get that right, the knowledge of what farming should do for cows and soil and plants will surely follow. But the art even of the good farmer in the conditions in which he finds himself is so to sustain life in the current season that his farming for eternity and to an eternal pattern is not thwarted thereby. The positive eternal patterning in dependence on the Word is not the kind of objective secular idealism sets itself. It is conditioned by the lowly wisdom of compassion which prompts the words, 'They have no wine'.

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