

“ONE CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT TO SO MUCH BEAUTY!”



by Father Leander VAN RENTERGHEM

There is an acknowledgment that is common to most of the great wise men of humanity, namely, that all of creation is marked with the stamp of the divine. In this regard, Raoul Auclair wrote:

“Since the whole of creation celebrates the Creator, the stamp of God is imprinted on all things, and His mysteries know a blossoming under the form of beauty in all of nature.” (Les Épiphanies de Marie, p. 40)

As we begin the summer season, when earth is bedecking itself in its finest greenery and all its colors, it seemed fitting that we explore this reflection further by paying special attention to the “stamp of God” present in nature.

First of all, we will draw our inspiration from the words Jesus addressed to Maria Valtorta as well as Marie-Paule’s words reproduced in *Life of Love* and other writings of hers, before stopping for a moment to consider the “how” of the encounter between man and God which occurs through nature.

“FOR WHOM WOULD HE HAVE MADE...?”

There are a great many references to the marvels of creation in Maria Valtorta’s writings. Sometimes, she is the one who describes the beauty of a natural landscape in which an event in Jesus’ life is taking place; at other times, it is Jesus Himself, or one of the other “Visitors”, who draws her attention to the beauty of creation.

Thus, in the first volume, there is, among others, a marvelous passage which takes up no less than five pages and in which Jesus explains the “whys” of the marvels of nature. Here are a few excerpts from it.

“For whom would He have created the stars and the planets that fly like thunderbolts and arrows, furrowing the vault of Heaven, or dash majestically in their rush of meteors, and yet seem slow, presenting you with light and seasons, eternally immutable and yet always mutable. They give you a new page to read on the sky, every evening, every month, every year, as if they wished to say:... “Read the word we say, the one on which we modulate our singing, our brightness, our smile: God!”

“For whom would He have made the blue sea, the mirror of the sky, the way to the land, the smile of waters, the voice of waves? The sea itself is a word that with the rustling of silk, with the smiles of happy girls, with the sighs of old people who remember and weep, with the clamour of violence, with clashes and roars, always speaks and says: ‘God’.

“For whom would He have made the countless families of animals...?”

“For whom would He have created the countless families of plants and flowers...?”

“For whom would He have made the minerals in the bowels

of the earth... unless one should enjoy them, one who was not God, but the son of God? One: man.

“It is worthwhile living to see such a work of God and to be grateful to His power that gives you that opportunity. And you must be grateful to be alive.” (*The Poem of the Man-God*, vol. 1, pp. 27-31)

Creation – all of creation – is the work of God. And even if, on the level of the states of matter, we are in its lowest dimension (the physical world), all that is contained between the microcosm and the macrocosm reveals the Divinity and encourages us to reach it. With all its strength, the universe sings: *“God is Love! And you, man, can become Love!”*

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In fact, the beauty and the order present in nature spontaneously arouse, in the profoundly religious soul, a sort of mysterious admiration which renders it silent and even filled with love...

On a beautiful summer afternoon, the young Marie-Paule, then 14 years old, was sitting on the shores of Etchemin Lake, and the beauty of the natural scenery delighted her. Here is how, in the first volume of *Life of Love*, she recalled those moments of relaxation in the middle of nature.

“My thoughts wander in a marvelous world far above the clouds which here and there pad the beautiful blue sky. The immensity of it all is like a magnet to me and my soul is uplifted in this divinely ordered spectacle; the mountains, displaying their green valleys, stretch off to the horizon. Everything, in the end, manifests the power of the Creator and His great goodness for His creatures. One cannot remain indifferent to so much beauty.

“The flowers whose scented petals royally diadem their fragile stems, evoke in me a profound admiration for the Almighty King. For hours I talk with the Master...” (*Life of Love*, vol. 1, p. 49)

Marie-Paule, having been made sensitive to “all the good things of life [all that is beautiful]” by Mama Laura (*id.*, p. 31), would rapidly grasp the invitation made by her Beloved through the natural brightness of the country landscape of her home town. “One cannot stay indifferent...,” she thought to herself.

Life of Love abounds with short lyrical passages in which Marie-Paule expressed her emotion when looking at the charms of nature. In a short sentence fragment in the fifteenth volume which, in its context, goes almost unnoticed, she revealed her admiration for sunrises and sunsets: “I have seen so many sunrises and sunsets.” (p. 50)

In a more direct manner, she has also always sought to make the faithful in the Work sensitive to the fact that one can establish a contact with the divine through nature.

“All of us, just as we are – contemplatives and those active,

religious or laity –, can contemplate God in the splendor of nature, during moments of adoration, or under the simple impulsion of love, all of which can elevate the soul and reach the heart of God.” (*Le Royaume*, no. 107, Sept.-Oct. 1995, p. 2)

KNOWING WITH ONE’S HEART

But what do we need in order to find God in nature?

First of all, in order to find God, it suffices to look for Him. “Seek and you shall find.” (Mt 7:7) And such a seeking is done with one’s heart and not with one’s head, two images Raoul used in order to make the distinction between the spiritual body and the psychic body.

“Become little children in order to understand with your heart, you who know so many things with your head.” (*Les Épiphanies de Marie*, p. 296)

Here, the head can be understood to be the psychic organ of knowledge of which the direct object is the created world and the beings peopling it. The brain, Raoul said, “is our capacity of man”. (*Id.*, p. 293)

Then, in the heart, we can see the spiritual organ of knowledge of which the direct object is the Immaterial or God Himself. It is in the heart, Raoul said, that “we are in God and where He is in us.” (*Id.*)

Thus, physical nature can be used to develop our psychic knowledge (we need only think of the science of botany, for example), but it can also put us into contact with the divine: “Everything, in the end, manifests the power of the Creator,” Marie-Paule told us.

The difference lies at the level of the “intention”, that is to say, in the manner in which we receive the information perceived by the psychic senses. The psychic body sees in it an opportunity to broaden its knowledge of the world around it, and the spiritual body sees in it a manifestation of the divine which deeply touches it.¹

In both cases, one finds what one is looking for through the intermediacy of the same reality: nature.

WONDERMENT

In the philosophy of ancient Greece, this encounter with the divine by means of the created has a name which can be translated by “wonderment”. It is the spontaneous reaction of the profoundly religious soul when it perceives in natural phenomena the “signature of the Absolute”² which immediately plunges it into “a profound admiration”, according to Marie-Paule’s expression.

Maurice Zundel, a Catholic priest and theologian from Switzerland, quoted a few times in the paper *Le Royaume*, wrote the following on the subject of wonderment:

“Wonderment is precisely the moment when a new dimension emerges in us. It is the privileged moment when we are suddenly healed of ourselves for an instant and thrust into a Presence we do not have to name, a Presence that both fulfills us and frees us from ourself.”³

Thanks to the key which the knowledge of the psychic and spiritual bodies just mentioned provides for us, this passage adds to our understanding. Thus, when mention is made of “a new dimension emerging”, we are able to understand that this can be the spiritual body which temporarily has the upper hand over the psychic body.

Marie-Paule told us that the psychic body is, in fact, “the an-

imal-soul body with its concupiscence, hereditary traits, all our tendencies towards evil, that innate evil that begets in us so many problems and struggles.” (*Vie d’Amour*, Appendice IV, p. 329)

To take up again the terms used by Father Zundel, the “ourself” is what makes us suffer and is what we hope will be “healed” and “freed”.

Thus, since it is in the spiritual body that there is receptiveness to God, it is then at that level that we experience being “thrust into a Presence we do not have to name”, that is, God.

That is why a simple walk in nature can take on a profoundly spiritual characteristic.

THE DESIRE TO FIND FULFILLMENT

In the great harmony of nature, all the elements mutually stimulate one another to perfect themselves, each one in accordance with its species and its foreseen outcome. For man who is also of Earth, the message left by nature is that of his transformation with a view to his divinization.

In fact, observing the miracle of nature arouses in man the desire to find fulfillment in the same way that nature, in its own measure, has been fulfilled. Seeing the beauty of nature awakens in man the first questioning he has about his own vocation.

In the East, it is said: “If we could clearly perceive the miracle represented by a simple flower, our entire life would change.” (Saying attributed to Gautama Siddhartha, also called “the Buddha”.)

Nature presents a reflection of the Eternal Beauty, giving it a Face, a Form, a Fragrance, a Voice, and the more man comes into contact with such traces of the divine, the more he desires to know its source, so as to be able to contemplate it face to face. And, in order to be able to do this, he must imitate what he observes.

In order to see God, one needs a pure heart (cf. Mt. 5:8), because only that which is pure can see Purity. We will see God when we will be like Him. (cf. 1 Jn 3:2) For man, knowing God is only possible to the extent that he becomes like God, in the same way that an object, on earth here below, cannot grasp fire or be grasped by fire without itself becoming fire, without “being lost in it”.

And, let us say it once again, this is what, in God’s name, the birds sing, the streams and rivers murmur and the strong winds howl: “If you want to be with Me, you must become like Me.”



Jesus Christ and Paul-Marie preceded us along the royal way shown us by Creation. In their likeness and strengthened by their help, may our surrender to the flame of Love be intensified at every contact with the beauty of the “divinely ordered spectacle” of the landscape, so as to lead us beyond the heights of the created and introduce us in God.

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1. Of course, one does not exclude the other. In fact, this knowledge does not hinder contemplation, on the contrary, and all learning can and must lead us to God. To remain in the world of botany, the great scientist Carl von Linné (1707-1778) – who itemized, named and systematically classified a large part of the living species known in his time – wrote the following: “In creation, I saw the eternal, infinite God passing close by, and I fell to my knees in adoration.”
2. Frithjof Schuon, *Avoir un centre*, p. 105.
3. Maurice Zundel, *Je est un Autre*, pp. 18-19.