

not, it is obvious enough that the unwary might find it leading them into esoteric practices. And so we can only pray that she and that resolute opponent of the esoteric, St Thérèse of Lisieux, are collaborating in Heaven to shield us all from the danger. It must be remembered that Sister Benedicta's training was a thorough-going philosophical one. Before her baptism she had been for years a leading philosopher herself. It was therefore inevitable that something of that philosophy which had been acquired without the safeguards of the faith to protect it should have later been used in her mind to elucidate the marvellous mysteries of the faith she had subsequently received. She knew of the 'mystical marriage' as a fact in the spiritual life. That was the important thing. That it was of a different nature from the union of grace was her own explanation. She knew by experience the fact of contemplation; her explanation of its relation to faith was perhaps coloured by a confusion of terms. But these points do not substantially detract from the power and beauty and profundity of her meditations set down in these two books.



## THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS RELIGION

### An Examination of Professor Allport's psychological interpretation<sup>1</sup>

AUGUSTIN LÉONARD, O.P.

In Newman's beautiful words: 'two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator', the believer recognises these as the real terms united by religion. Religion is the sacred, unutterable intercourse between a limited, sinful creature and Being and Holiness. Between the living God, as the Scriptures so often call him, and his living image, there is a personal and dramatic relationship, in which dread and tenderness, awe and love, hope and anxiety are mingled.

The ideas of the psychologist on a mysterious experience of this sort are very often perplexing to the theologian or the lay christian. To do justice to psychological works on religion, one must bear in mind the various levels at which religious phenomena can be viewed. Empirical methods of psychology cannot alter a metaphysical truth, still less supernatural faith. They are unable to prove or disprove the validity

1. Gordon W. Allport: *The Individual and his Religion. A Psychological Interpretation.* (Constable; 12s. 6d.)

of religious belief.<sup>2</sup> But morality, religion, faith are lived by means of human acts which are partially subjected to psychology.<sup>3</sup> There must be a psychology underlying morality or faith, provided psychological theories do not destroy the possibility of a metaphysical or supernatural content, and do not assume, as Boutroux said, that scientific peculiarity of explaining away the very phenomena they pretend to explain; for often the psychologists will eliminate step by step precisely that religious quality which they are setting out to elucidate. Many books on the psychology of religion belong to the latter type. Freudians and Jungians of all shades have often distinguished themselves in this entertaining form of nonsense by means of the sense of guilt (original sin), anxiety symptoms (sins), super-ego (moral and religious laws), image of the father (God), and so on. Professor Allport, on the contrary, is fully aware that a psychological interpretation is not a metaphysical or theological one. This quality, among others, makes his book most interesting. It deserves to become a classic. It is certainly, comparatively speaking, one of the best syntheses of the psychological explanation of religion that has been published for some years.

The six chapters on the origins of the religious quest, the religion of youth and maturity, conscience and mental health, doubt and faith, cannot of course cover the whole religious field. The author is mainly preoccupied by the function of religious sentiment in the personality of the individual. And by 'religious sentiment' he does not mean the celebrated 'feeling', but an 'organised motive' both volitional and intellectual. According to his individualistic point of view, Professor Allport strongly emphasises, like James, the variety of the forms assumed by religion. Unlike Wobbermin or Otto, he refuses to accept a standard form of religious experience, at least in respect of origins. Many elements give rise to the religious *Weltanschauung*: organic desires, temperament, psychogenic desires of spiritual values, pursuit of meaning, influence of cultural environment. All these sources are collected in a personal 'uniqueness of organisation'. This is a precious truth, but in what way does this uniqueness possess a religious quality? The key-chapter on the religion of maturity brings us nearer to the answer. The successful establishment of a specific religious attitude is made possible by the reintroduction, remarkable in modern psychology, of the ideas of intention and finality and the interaction of motivation and organisation. The author has discussed the characters of maturity and his own personal discovery of the 'functional autonomy' of the

2. The possibility of building up a complete psychological interpretation of religion, which neither admits nor denies the real objectivity of religion is very doubtful. In most cases the philosophy, explicit, underlying 'scientific neutrality' is easily detected.

3. *Quia igitur ad beatitudinem per actus aliquos necesse est pervenire, oportet consequenter de humanis actibus considerare*, (S.T., I-II, 6.)

motives, i.e. their independence of their organic bases, in a previous work,<sup>4</sup> and are applied here to religion. Maturity develops along three avenues: 'the avenue of widening interests (the expanding self), the avenue of detachment and insight (self-objectification), and the avenue of integration (self-unification)' (p. 59-60.) Consequently the nature of a mature religion, free from infantile impulses, magic fears, self-centredness, will differentiate it entirely from other motives, from its own dynamic power and its consistent morality. There is a discussion of comprehensiveness and the integral and heuristic qualities at the end of this section from which valuable practical inferences may be drawn.

The theory of functional autonomy is in welcome opposition to the sexual or unconscious genetic systems, and thanks to this the emergence of the religious attitude above the elements of which it may be composed can be determined. 'The energy that sustains such a sentiment may be said to pertain to it alone.' (p. 70.) Without this conclusion, religion can never stand in its own right and remains for ever the child of whatever parents the psychologists are pleased to provide for it: fear or imagination, sexuality or sociability, following their own particular bias. One of the good points of this book is the way it stresses the fact that only normal religious people can reveal what religion is, and in this way it leads religion out of the mists of psychopathology and psychiatry into the light of normal psychology.

It is evident that this book aims at reaching that unique quality in religion which is proper to itself and distinct from other human activities. But does it achieve its aim? The strictly individual, and therefore subjective, point of view has intervened, all too soon, to put an end to the quest.

Religion, writes Professor Allport, is not philosophy; religious faith is unlike any other faith, since the unity it bestows on the personality is at once the deepest and the most far-reaching, depending on what is 'permanent or central in the nature of things'. That is to say, religion can be anything the individual chooses to make it, for earth, water and wind are also permanent and central in the nature of things. Chemistry or poetry could be described in the same terms. We have fallen back into the vaguest relativism.

Psychology can lead us further than that. An intention is unintelligible without its object. It is possible to show that this object must be sacred, not profane; unworldly, not mundane; personal, because it is impossible to entertain an I-Thou relationship with an impersonal force. It is doubtful to say that Buddhism and Jainism are moral philosophies rather than religions. At least they possess a sacred value, distinct from their scientific or philosophical truths, or their aesthetic beauty.

4. G. W. Allport: *Personality. A Psychological Interpretation*. (New York, London, 1937.)

The chapters on doubt and faith will be most read by the believer and the unbeliever respectively, each of the two being curious about the other's inmost self. It would be interesting to discuss at length some points about faith. Faith, it is true, is heuristic in character, as Professor Allport points out. It tends endlessly to integrate all the data of the invisible and visible worlds in a more complete, if obscure, vision: *Fides quaerens intellectum*. Furthermore, being neither a science nor an intellectual evidence, faith has in its psychological nature something of the essence of doubt, i.e. lack of evidence. St Thomas calls it: *cum assensu cogitare*. The assent is an act of the intelligence, but insufficiently determined, and thus requiring the command of the will (and the grace of God). Nevertheless faith is more than a 'working hypothesis', it has a certitude of its own. It is not only a 'practical absolutism' combined with 'theoretical scepticism', as the pragmatic tendency in modern thinking so often suggests. Doubt and probability may have a rôle to play before the act of faith has taken place. Within the faith there are difficulties, but, as Newman said, a thousand difficulties do not make a doubt. Probability might concern the introduction to faith, not faith itself.

The fact that these and other discussions arise out of Professor Allport's book is proof of its excellence. Not only does it convince one of the psychological value of religion in the development of a mature personality, but it makes some suggestions as to what should constitute a true religious outlook.

*La Sarte (Belgium)*

## REVIEWS

**THE GREAT MANTLE.** The Life of Giuseppe Melchior Sarto, Blessed Pius X. By Katherine Burton. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 16s.)

Here is a life beautifully told, making no claim to be a spiritual biography as in the fashion of past times, but content to be a plain, straightforward narrative of the working life of a man of singular charm and kindness allied to remarkable sanctity and unflagging pastoral zeal. The outlines of the story are too generally known to be stressed here, but it is difficult to pass over without a special word of praise the author's account of Giuseppe Sarto's boyhood in his saintly home, wherein all the Christian virtues were so admirably practised without rendering the children in any way priggish or artificial. Giuseppe was a boy as other boys, devoted to his parents and deeply attached to his younger brother Angelo and his sisters, and, despite a certain gravity and thoughtfulness, full of spirits, loving to drive the family donkey to school and unwilling to allow so responsible though