

**AN ESSAY IN AID OF THE  
BETTER APPRECIATION OF  
CATHOLIC MYSTICISM**

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An essay in aid of the better appreciation of Catholic mysticism by Algar Thorold

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# CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

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IN AID OF THE BETTER APPRECIATION OF

# CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE WRITINGS OF

BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

BY

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## CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

IN these days, when the methods of democracy not only claim the outer court of a man's social environment, but also threaten the shrine of his thought, many words of ancient descent, accustomed in the past to rule, without question, the peoples of the soul, are fallen, veritable *rois en exil*, on evil times. Faith, for the most part, bereft of her palaces, must dwell in the hiding-holes of superstition, her deadliest foe: reason seems on the way to becoming indistinguishable from the trained use of developed senses. Mysticism, the sublime child of faith and reason, that once led the greatest of our race to heights of now scarcely imaginable intensity of living, hobnobs, in popular esteem, with the patter of the sorcerer and the *tireuse de cartes*.

But the right of words, unlike that of kings, is truly divine, and if the scheme of the world be guided by reason, some day, at length, must surely see these legitimate sovereigns restored to their thrones.

I have elsewhere tried to uphold the 'pretensions' of mysticism in general to be the sole and supreme mood to which a man must needs betake himself as soon as he has outgrown the superstitions of rationalism and sensualism—the mob rule of the senses, and the fallacies of 'education.' Here I shall endeavour to deal with the constituents of Catholic mysticism. In the course of this attempt it will be necessary, incidentally, and by way of illustration, to introduce some elements in a hypothetical process of 'conversion,' and also to suggest the sort of way in which the modern Catholic mystic may be disposed to meet, for the sake of his own peace of mind, some current objections to Catholic faith and practice. I trust I shall not be understood to be, in this, trenching on the ground of apologetics proper. That is an outwork of theology with which I am wholly incompetent to deal. My aim here is much more modest. I wish to be understood as introducing these elements solely by way of illustration, for their psychological rather than for their theological value. It cannot, I think, be doubted that, whether it be right or not to think thus (a question I am not here concerned with), many persons are coming to think in some such manner as that of my hypothetical mystic. And, under these circumstances, it cannot be without psychological, and