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The Mystic Vision

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THE MYSTIC VISION.

by

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SOURCES

Ames: "Psychology of Religious Experience".
Bradley: "Appearances and Reality."
Hall: "History of Ethics Within Organized Christianity" pp. 341-364.
Hume: "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion."
Inge: "Christian Mysticism."
James: "Varieties of Religious Experience."
Jones: "Studies in Mystical Religion."
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--- ---Rand's Selections.

Phil. Review: "The Sentiment of Religion in Ecstasy"

Pratt: "The Psychology of Religious Belief."

Recejac: "The Bases of Mystical Knowledge."

Royce: "The World and the Individual."

Tyrrell: "The Faith of the Millions."

Vaughan: "Hours with the Mystics." 2 Vols.


Ward: "Naturalism and Agnosticism" Vol. I.
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I. THE SEARCH FOR GOD: A UNIVERSAL ELEMENT IN THE
NATURE OF MAN.

Pratt opens his work on "The Psychology of Religious Belief" by saying, "that if an atheistic inhabitant of Mars were to visit this planet, greater than the wonder of steam and electricity, would be the fact that we believe in a God—whom we have never seen and cannot see." This universal belief in God is a striking thing and the question at once forces itself upon us, why do men believe as they do and what are the psychological bases underlying that belief?

1. God's revelation to man.

A. Through intuition.

In the first place intuition has had a large part to play in the formation of such a belief. The fact that there is a God—a being more powerful than man, greater than nature—has beaten itself upon the consciousness of men from earliest times. The craving to find Him, to unite ourselves with Him, to be like Him, has often been man's chiefest concern. Men long

have realized that our changing state here is but temporary, that the true seat and home of the soul is with an unchanging and eternal reality; but the conceptions which men have held as to the nature of that reality have been various indeed. Man has conceived it as being embodied in a stone or a tree. Again he has likened it to a group of powerful celestial beings each having their part to perform in directing the world and guiding the destinies of men. It has also been thought of as one being who is infinite and perfect in every respect.

So in the belief and search for God intuition has had a large part to play. God for most men has been a vital rather than a theoretical matter. The heart believes in God because it must; the principle is innate within us. Augustine sums it up beautifully in the famous sentence of his, "Lord Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." "I know" writes Mr. Trine, "an officer on our police force who has told me that many times when off duty, and on his way home in the evening, there comes to him such a vivid and vital realization of his oneness with the "Infinite Power" and this "Spirit
of Infinite Peace so takes hold of him, 'that it seems as if his feet would hardly keep to the pavement, so buoyant and so exhilarated does he become by reason of the inflowing tide.'

In the experiences just mentioned there is a feeling of the infinity of God and of our great part with it. It is more than a dream; it becomes an absorbing passion and the very centre of the life. The will to live is written very deep within us. Deep within us is the instinct for self-preservation and hand in hand with this goes the idea of the impossibility of real annihilation. Linked with this there is the belief that there is in store for us somewhere a larger life where we shall meet and know God who in the object of our search. This belief in its primal state is not the result of discursive thought, but it is innate within us and thus a part of our very nature.

B. Through Nature.

Now intuition is but one of the ways by which God
has manifested himself to men. Nature has had its part to play in guiding us beyond itself and pointing us to the infinite. This part has been no small one. As men have become conscious of its characteristics, they have likened those characteristics to that reality which lies behind. They have seen it's beauty and so have thought of God as "altogether lovely"; they have felt it's power and so have thought of God as mighty; they have realized that in principle it has been constant and so have thought of God as eternal. Yet in simply gazing about us in a general way with the natural eye we fail sometimes to comprehend the greatness of it all. It is only after we have beheld the distant heavenly bodies through the telescope, and have perceived order and harmony as far as our vision can extend, or through the microscope have been permitted to look upon objects far too minute for the natural eye to behold and have perceived that here also is order and beauty, that we can begin to realize the extent of it all. It must have been a feeling akin to this that came so overpoweringly upon Kepler as he looked through
his telescope and gazed upon the universe which it disclosed to him when he exclaimed, "I think Thy thoughts after Thee O God." It must have been some such feeling as this that came to Juliana when she wrote: "that Heaven and Earth and all that is made is great, large, fair and Good; the full-head of joy is to behold God in all" and "truly to enjoy in Our Lord, is a full lovely thanking in His sight." With this brief remark about nature we must pass it by for the present, until we can treat of it in a fuller discussion under the second heading.

C. Through Direct Revelation.

We come now to a third way by which God has manifested himself to men, viz., direct revelation. God has seen best to manifest himself in this way through one nation only with the intention that through this nation he would ultimately be made known to all men. This revelation was given only as men could grasp it and consequently it covered a period of several centuries. Speaking to man through the medium of visions, dreams and prophets, God reserved the perfection of this direct revelation to his son Jesus Christ. In him we see God
manifested through testimony as to his nature, for Jesus claimed to come from the Father. He designates himself as "the way" of salvation or road to God; the revealer of "the (perfect) truth", "the abundant life" for which men have been seeking. His Apostles showed their faith in his mission when they testified that the way to salvation lay through belief in his name; that "neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved"; that "other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ." In him Christians have put their trust as the one power which can help them to find the state of perfect peace and rest.

2. The Value of Belief in God.

But now we come to the question of the value of such a belief in God. Of what use is a God whom we have never seen? I think that people are not so much interested in what God is as what he does. To those who think at all of why they believe in God and try to

7 Acts 4:12. 2 I. Cor. 3:11.
work toward him, there are in the main three underlying motives. In the first place they think of God as a comforter in time of trouble; in the second place they see in him a hope for the future; and thirdly they realize that he gives assistance in their struggle after righteousness. Thus God becomes to many a means and not an end, but to most people he is an indispensable means. In the words of Voltaire: "If there were no God we would have to invent one." To many God is all in all and without him life would be desolate; to many he is a friend, a closer friend than any we know, for our friends about us can never feel as we feel, but we believe God can know us just as we are and this fact comforts us.

3. Man's method in approaching God.

So the fact of God's presence has been continually with men, has given us a capacity, a longing for him and there is a gap remaining if he does not fill it. He has also shown himself in nature, and by directly revealing himself and his plans for man's destiny.
This presence of God has caused a reaction upon the consciousness of men and I wish now to point out briefly what this reaction has been.

The fact that reality is the seat and home of the soul and that truth and life are one, gives to us two systems of philosophy. "The one does not forget the world from which it started and when it finds the explanation of the world in a vision of God, it returns to the world and seeks to give the facts of the world their true interpretation in the light of that vision of God." "The second leaves the world behind, for is not reality different from these appearances? If not why are we dissatisfied with these appearances? Here when we have gained the goal, the world is remembered no more, only as a dream. Reality is that which the world of our experience is not."

Accordingly I wish to divide this discussion into two main divisions: the one dealing with the things of this world, with the rational side of man and with the organism of nature and see if these are capable:

/Blewett pp. 8-9.
of leading us to interpret the reality which lies back of them. The other with Mysticism which dispenses with reason and nature at a stroke and tries to find an immediate path to God. At the conclusion I wish to criticize the two methods indicated and try to see where in lies their shortcomings, and if possible suggest a solution to the difficulties presented by each.
II. THE DISCURSIVE METHOD.

In this second division, which is only meant as an approach to the central theme of this paper, I wish to deal briefly with the Naturalistic and Rationalistic methods and to see if they in any way will aid us in the solution of the attainment of Reality. The first of these that we shall take up will be the mechanical theory of the universe.

1. The mechanical theory of the universe.

I noted in my introductory remarks, that nature is and has been a great factor in the life of mankind. Ever present before him it has continually pressed him to answer the question as to why it is, and how it came to be. Its influence has been various upon him. At times it was the manifestation of the great deity which existed back of it—it was the hand of God moving before us. At other times it became the personification of evil, a barrier to the progress of men, and salvation lay in freeing themselves of it. This note was sounded by Plato and it has had its influence over the lives of men these many centuries.
But men gradually turned from this position to discover that nature was a marvelous organism holding within itself mysteries that were comprehensive enough to require man's most strenous activity to fathom their solution; that nature was an ordered whole where ruthless law held supreme sway. So their hatred of these things material about them first changed into wonder and then into an absorbing passion to search out the principles under which they had evolved. Often they have halted with simple nature itself and have stifled the desire to advance further. They have sought to explain the wonderful organisms which lie all about us in such a perfect ordered whole by pure mechanism alone. "Now this scientific spirit has hitherto since its birth at the Renaissance, ever tended to the ever increasing developments of three main characteristics, which are indeed but several aspects of one single aim and end. There was and is, for one thing, a passion for clearness which finds its expression in the application of Mathematics and of the Quantitative view and standard to each and every subject matter,"
far as the latter is conceived as being truly knowable at all. There was and is, for another, the great concept of Law, of an iron Necessity running through and expressing itself in all things, one great Determinism before which all emotion and volition, all concepts of Spontaneity and Liberty, of Personality and Spirit, either Human or Divine, melt away, as so many petty subjective wilfulnesses of selfish, childish, "provincial" man, bent on fantastically humanizing this great, cold thing, the Universe, into something responsive to his own profoundly unimportant and objectively uninteresting sensations and demands. There was and is, for a third thing, a vigorous Monism, both in the means and in the end of this view. Our sources of information are but one,—the reasoning regoning intellect, backed up by readily repeatible, directly verifiable Experiment. The resultant information is but one,—the Universe within and without, a strict unbroken Mechanism."Such is the swing of the intellectual pendulum. It has swung in the direction of the mechanical explanation so long

"Von Hügel Vol. I, p. 40."
and so far that when its swing approaches the opposite pole, it too may be extreme. But we can have the faith that Time, the great equalizer, will bring these widely divergent positions to a happy golden mean.

In taking up more definitely the matter in hand, viz., the search for God, I wish to examine the extent of this mechanical principle which is so dear to the scientist and see how far it can lead the soul on its journey. The limits of the scientist as such are very fitly summed up in the following quotation: "Physical science never travels beyond the examination of cause and effect. Its object is to resolve the complexity of phenomena into simple elements and principles; but when it has receded to those first principles and laws, its mission is at an end; it keeps within the material system with which it began, and never ventures beyond the 'flamma mentis praenae mundi'. The physicist as such will never ask himself by what influence, external to the universe, the universe is sustained; simply because he is a physicist. If indeed he be a religious man, he will, of course, have a very different view of the subject;
....and this, not because physical science says anything different, but simply because it says nothing at all on the subject, nor can do so by the very undertaking with which it set out."

These quotations in a rather meagre way sum up the principle underlying the mechanical theory and its limits. The physicist depends solely upon natural law to explain to him the various forms of life and activity which he sees all around him. Depending altogether upon physical nature, he cannot rise above it and thus excludes himself from the realms of a reality which may be mental. God to the physicist is an unknown being; his knowledge extends only so far as his experiments lead him. The great longing of the soul to find rest is a perfect being, for him has no meaning. But when we come to the end of physical knowledge, knowledge is far from being complete. We have simply discovered a fragment while the great infinity lies before us. Ward puts the matter forcefully before us when he says that

"it is far truer to say that the universe is a life than to say it is a mechanism, even such a mechanism as Goethe describes is the verses that German men of science are fond of quoting, where the Spirit of the Earth 'Weaves at the rattling loom of the years the garment of Life which the Godhead wears.' 'We can never get to God through a mere Mechanism.'

2. The Rationalistic theory.

Now over against this type of men who by their very premises from which they start can never hope to reveal God to us, we have another type who feel that there is a rational being responsible for the ordered harmony which we see all about us. Men in abundance have been able to see that when once started as an ordered whole, the world could have gone on without intervention from without, but they feel the impossibility of it setting itself by any chance methods whatsoever. To some this rational principle has been an immanent one, living within the confines of nature.

'Ward Vol. I. p. 180.'
To others this principle is transcendent and it is simply God’s consciousness extended which is working upon the world. The first of these finds its logical outcome in Pantheism of which Spinoza is the chief exponent. The second becomes Idealism of which Plato is the founder and Kant its chief exponent. The first does not concern us so much here in our discussion as the second, so we shall confine our remarks principally to Idealism. "Plato has been so comprehensive a founder of Idealism, that he who has attempted to follow at all, any other pathway, has lost thereby. He forever fixed the scientific point of departure of Idealism—the question of how we get our knowledge.

In Plato the fragments seen in other men are combined. He was aesthetic... yet he was sternly formal and classic and in him these things were not at variance but were complements of each other. He gazed upon the supersensible world, but he did not rest there; he brought his ideas from there to earth and sought passionately to apply them for the good of mankind here.

Plato realized that there is something in our lives
greater than experience, which experience cannot explain. So Plato then first finds the form or constitution of the world to be rational—and here is where all Idealism starts. This means that all the things of the world form one rational structure; and the source of this rational structure Plato calls the "Good". Thus in the mind of the founder of Idealism, the world of phenomena has receded from a primary position to a secondary one. The great primary fact to be obtained by man is reality, or in the terminology of Plato, the "Good". The phenomena which we see about us are simply projections of this Good. The Good is the sole reality and phenomena are twice removed from it. The road to the Good is Reason, and Plato strives to follow that road.

Thus we see Idealism reaching a very high standard at the very beginning. It reached its second great high point in Kant. Kant was led to treat of the subject of teleology largely by the part that was played by Hume. The argument for the proof of the existence of God according to design had been the great rock upon

'Blewett pp. 203-217.'
which the Deists had pinned their faith. Briefly this argument is as follows: When we see an organism like a watch all fitly joined together and forming a connected whole, we naturally infer a mind, an artificer that was responsible for the proper joining together of this mechanism. Now when we look out into the outer world we see organisms of this kind, joined accurately together and seemingly working for some desired end. So naturally we infer an artificer, a designer, a mind back of it all and responsible for it all.

Hume was an empiricist, believing that all our knowledge comes from experience. If we are to come to a knowledge of God, it must be through experience. The design argument presupposed this viewpoint in its proof for the existence of God. Hume had struck terror to the hearts of the orthodox followers of the church by demonstrating to them that this argument was not on such a firm footing as they had supposed. He pointed out that the central idea underlying the argument need not necessarily be true; viz., the argument from analogy. He pointed out that there is such a difference:
between a mind that is infinite and one that is finite, that we cannot reason from one to the other. So in his estimation this argument leads us nowhere and we are left in doubt as to the existence of God. This is the empirical side of the problem. It ends with doubt and fails to lead the soul to God.

Rationalism on the other hand, seeks to prove the reality of things through pure reason alone. The premises are given intuitively—Phenomena are not taken into consideration—and the conclusion is reached through pure logical deduction. External authority and revelation are discredited and pure reason is the sole guide. To them the conclusion is reached as the mathematician reaches a conclusion in geometry—given the premises from which to start, there remains only one course to pursue; viz., follow them to their logical goal.

This was the state of things as Kant found them. One of his tasks was to demonstrate the unity of knowledge, and he set out in the first place to find how we get our knowledge. He believed that all our know-
ledge begins with experience, but it by no means follows that it all originates from experience. For it may well be that experience is itself made up of two elements, one received through impressions of sense, and the other supplied from itself by our faculty of knowledge on occasion of those impressions. Such knowledge is said to be a priori knowledge. Thus Kant blends the two: we start with experience as our data, but once given the foundation we can rear a superstructure without the aid of further experience, through pure reason alone. Thus Kant becomes an Idealist.

To Kant there are two worlds, viz., Phenomenal and Noumenal. The nature and relation of these two occupy no small place in Kant's philosophy. As to the Phenomenal world, we have experience to guide us in our interpretation of it, but we have no such experience to aid us in determining the nature of the Noumenal. However we must infer a Noumenal world, for if reason is to be fully developed it must be regulated by the idea of God. When this is done, pure reason (i.e. merely theoretical) can go no further, for as to the nature
of God (or of the Noumenal world) it can say nothing. This is the result of his critical philosophy; but are we satisfied with it? It does away with all knowledge which has been considered most desirable in philosophy. The Noumenal world is in our conception, no more than problematical, - a mere x, - to which no object corresponds. But still, Kant thinks, there is a real gain, - and here he answers Hume - if we cannot prove the existence of God, we have at least shut off all possibility of disproving it.

However Kant sees a way out of the difficulty by saying that we are able to postulate the existence and nature of God through moral reason. He finds the point of contact between the Phenomenal and Noumenal world, in freedom. For the moral life to reach its highest state of efficiency, it must be free of the influences of the Phenomenal world. It is impossible for us to be free in this Phenomenal world so there must be a Noumenal one in which man can enjoy perfect freedom.

Another thing that the moral will does, is to infer that happiness is the reward for righteous conduct.
And since this is not, and cannot be attained in this present world, an endless life must be postulated for its achievement. And finally in order to safeguard this moral order of the world, and see to it that the end is secured, it is necessary to conclude the existence of a personal God.

Here in Kant's philosophy, nature and freedom are far apart, and this realization is strong upon him. He endeavors to bring them together in his "Kritik of Judgment" through the aesthetic and teleological judgments.

In this manner Kant demonstrates the existence and the nature of God. But we might question, has he truly found him? Can God come no closer to men than to be simply postulated by them? Is it not possible to feel his presence, to live and have our being within him? There are multitudes of men who have testified that it is, and we shall now turn to their experiences for "a reason for the hope that is within them."

Rogers, "Students History of Philosophy" pp. 424-449.
III. MYSTICISM.

The influence of Mysticism upon the life of man has been very great. Its force has been particularly felt in connection with religion, for Mysticism has been a large factor in its development. "The history of the word begins in close connection with the Greek mysteries. A mystic (μυστικός) is one who has been, or is being initiated into some esoteric knowledge of Divine things, about which he must keep his mouth shut (μυστικός); or, possibly, he is one whose eyes are still shut, one who is not yet an ἐκτός μυστήριων. The word was taken over, with other technical terms of the mysteries, by the Neoplatonists, who found in the existing Mysteriosophy a discipline, worship, and rule of life congenial to their speculative views. But as the tendency towards quietism and introspection increased among them, another derivation for "Mysticism" was found,--it was explained to mean deliberately shutting the eyes to all external things......This later Neoplatonism passed almost entire into Christianity, and, while forming the basis of mediaeval Mysticism, caused a
false association to cling to the word even down to the Reformation." 

Thus we have the history of the word, and its transformation into the Christian conception of it. Inge says again that "no word in our Language—not even "Socialism"—has been employed more loosely that "Mysticism". Sometimes it is used as an equivalent for symbolism or allegorism, sometimes for theosophy or occult science; and sometimes it merely suggests the mental states of a dreamer, or vague and fantastic opinions about God and the world." He gives his own opinion that it "may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, as the attempts to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal." Dr. J. R. Illingworth in a much more restricted manner, defines Mysticism as "the belief that the human spirit is capable of an immediate apprehension of absolute being or reality; an apprehension, that is to say,

\[ \text{Inge pp. 3-4.} \] \[ \text{Inge p. 3.} \] \[ \text{Inge p. 5.} \]
which is not inferential but intuitive; without intermediate stages, and therefore incapable of explanation, but for the same reason infallibly sure; or in theological terms, "that the soul is capable of immediate union or communion with God." 2

The mind of the mystic and his mystical experiences are far different from the mind of the physicist or rationalist, or the ordinary forms of experience. "To the mystic the nature of God is altogether beyond the categories of our intelligence, the vision of God which is the light of the soul is altogether above the ways and activities of our understanding; the rest in God, which is the blessedness of the soul, is altogether apart from the ordinary forms of our experience." 3

This in general has been the way that Mysticism has impressed the world; it has often met with rebuffs, but also has had many admirers. During the middle ages when the world was so filled with its spirit, some of its adherents were bitterly opposed by the Church, because the Church saw that in its extreme form, it

2 Pratt p. 27. 3 Blewett p. 11.
was striking at the very foundations upon which the ecclesiastical organization rested. It has been scoffed at by men of intellectual pursuits because it has cared nothing for Law and Authority, and has turned its back upon the intellectual progress of men.

The sources from which the mystics have drawn their philosophy have been the mystical element found in the Bible blended with that found in Greek philosophy. I wish to trace the influence of these sources upon the mystics, in a more definite manner in order to see to what extent they have drawn their Mysticism from them.

1. Sources of Christian Mysticism.

A. Greek.

Royce holds that mysticism began in India and early passed into Europe.¹ However this fact has been disputed by many, and it is at best doubtful. If it was brought from India to Europe at all, it must have been in a meagre way. Wherever he may have discovered them however, we see some traits of mysticism existing in

¹Royce p. 78.
the mind of Plato, although we may not be able to call him a mystic in the proper sense of the term. "Both the great types of mystics may appeal to him,—those who try to rise through the visible to the invisible, through nature to God, who find in earthly beauty the truest symbol of the heavenly and in the imagination a raft whereon we may navigate the shoreless ocean of the Infinite; and those who distrust all sensuous representations as tending to nourish appetites which we ought to starve; who look upon this earth as a place of banishment, upon material things as a veil which hides God's face from us, and who bid us 'flee away from hence as quickly as may be; to seek 'yonder,' in the realm of the ideas, the heart's true home." The mystical spirit of Plato was carried to a much higher point in Plotinus; for some of the most characteristic doctrines of Mysticism, which in Plato are only thrown out tentatively, are in Plotinus welded into a compact whole. For one thing "his theory of the Absolute:
whom he calls the One, or Good: and his theory of the Ideas differ from Plato's: for Plato represents the mind of the World-Artist as immanent in the idea of the Good, while Plotinus makes the Ideas immanent in the Universal mind." The soul is the meeting point of the Absolute and the Phenomenal—the soul is immaterial and immortal—the body is in the soul rather than the soul in the body. The soul is triple in its nature: there is first the sensual soul, secondly the logical, reasoning soul, and thirdly the soul that becomes transferred into the Higher region. The world is an image of the Divine mind and the Universe resembles a vast chain of which every being is a link. It may also be compared to rays of light shed abroad from one centre. Everything flows from this centre; and everything desires to flow back towards it. The whole universe is one vast organism, and if one man suffer, all members suffer with him." Such is Plotinus' conception of the Universe. He is the first philosopher to raise God to the height of all in all, the centre of all.

1Inge p. 91. 2Inge p. 92-94.
B. Dionysius.

The transition from Neoplatonic Mysticism to Christian Mysticism was brought about through Dionysius. Little is known about his life; only that he was a Syrian monk. Either he or others for him forged the name of the Apostle Paul to his writings, and it was undiscovered for several centuries. His philosophy was that of his day—the later Neoplatonism with its strong Oriental affinities. "All things flow out from God, and all will ultimately return to Him. The world is a necessary process of God's being. The outflowing process is appropriated by the mind by the positive method—the downward path through finite existences: its conclusion is, "God is All". The return journey is by the negative road, that of ascent to God by abstractions and analysis: its conclusion is, "All is not God". The soul is bipartite. The higher portion sees the "Divine images" directly, the lower by means of symbols. The latter are not to be despised, for they are "true impressions of the Divine characters", and necessary steps, which enable us to "mount to the one un-
divided truth by analogy'. This is the way in which we should use the Scriptures. They have a symbolic truth and beauty which is intelligible only to those who can free themselves from the "puerile myths" (the language is startling in a saint of the Church! in which they are sometimes embedded."

The mediaeval mystics were steeped in Dionysius although they modified his system somewhat. He is therefore for us a very important figure.

C. The Bible.

A most important source of Christian Mysticism is found in the Hebrew and Christian writings which came to be known as the Bible. However the mystical element in the Old Testament writings is very limited indeed. The Hebrew people thought more of God over and apart from nature instead of God in nature. But we can find traces in a few passages that show a development toward Mysticism. Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant that is to be made with Israel, which is to be written in

<Inge, pp.104-109>
their hearts, in Psalm 24 and Isaiah 33:14-17, there is also a tinge of Mysticism. These writers looked forward to the time when God's relation to his people would be closer than a mere external one; it would be internal for God's covenant would be written upon their hearts, instead of upon tablets of stone.

This same idea is set forth in the Synoptics, only in a more emphatic way. "The Kingdom of God is within you"; Christ's presence with his followers is mystically set forth; and they are given the promise of his companionship and aid "even unto the end of the world".

Other mystical expressions are here found such as: "Whosoever would save his life shall loose it; and whosoever shall loose his life for my sake shall find it"; and "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1Jer. 31:31-34. 2Luke 17:21. 3Mt. 18:20. 4Mt. 28:20. 5Mt. 16:25. 6Mt. 11:28-30.
However it is only when we come to the writings of John and Paul, that we come to the most pronounced mystical expressions in the Bible. "The gospel of John is the charter of Christian Mysticism." Three expressions concerning the character of God stand out prominently in his writings: (1) "God is Love", (2) "God is Light", and (3) "God is Spirit". John emphasizes the pre-existence of Christ; that the world was made through him; and that he is in the same essence as God. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; he is the Door; the Living Bread and the Vine. He is the Light of the world and where he is there can be no sin abiding. He came that he might draw men unto himself, and thus bring them unto the Father. To come to him one must be born anew and have such a faith in him that even the mountains or life itself would be no barrier. When Christ should leave the world the Comforter would come, and be with his followers and would lead them into all truth.

\[\text{Inge p. } 44, \quad \text{Jno. } 14:6, \quad \text{Jno. } 10:7, \quad \text{Jno. } 6:51, \quad \text{Jno. } 15:1, \quad \text{Jno. } 8:12.\]
The inward mystical connection was to John the vital connection with Christ. The formal side of religion was held secondary to this. Religion to him, was a life rather than a dogma and one of his great texts was "I came that ye might have life and that ye might have it abundantly". The connection with God begins when the sinner is "born anew", and when he is thus born "eternal life" is implanted within him. The final victory comes when Christ shall come again and judge the world, but we can do much here in our earthly state to approach toward God.

Paul's Christian experience began with a vision, and his life after that was permeated with visions. A mystical idea which was never absent from Paul's mind was "that the individual Christian must live through and experience personally the redemptive process of Christ. The victory over sin and death was won for us; but it must also be won in us." We are to attain unto the unity of the faith, and of a knowledge of

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1 John 10:10. 2 Acts 9. 3 Inge, p. 64.
the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"; the Spiritual rock was Christ; and man is the image of God. Paul’s profound conviction was that all external evidences, whether of human reasoning and philosophy or of visible miracle, fail to carry conviction without the presence of certain moral and spiritual dispositions in those to whom they are addressed. 'The word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but to us that are being saved the power of God.' The thing vital to Paul was the inner union in sacrifice, service and glory with Christ.

From all these sources mentioned above, Christian Mysticism has drawn. There have been almost as many forms of it as there have been epochs in time, but through it all I believe we can trace a great central tendency which has keep it true in the main and will keep it clear of the more dangerous shoals of the future.

1 Eph. 4:13.  
2 I. Cor. 10:4.  
3 I. Cor. 11:7.  
2. Types of Mysticism.

There is but one great theme in all the various types of Mysticism, viz., union with the Absolute. But the question as how best to reach the Absolute, has divided Mysticism into two main divisions, viz., Positive and Negative Mysticism.

The positive mystic believes, that in his search for God, nature will be of vast aid. He sees nature as God's image, and he sees God working through it to bring his creatures to himself. Charles Kingsley says: "The Great Mysticism is the belief which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical natural objects......are types of some spiritual truth or existence......Everything seems to be full of God's reflex if we could but see it....Oh, to see, if but for a moment, the whole harmony of the great system! to hear once the music which the whole universe makes as it performs His bidding! When I feel that sense of the mystery that is around me, I feel a gush of enthusiasm toward God which seems its inseparable effect."

\[Life, \text{Vol. I. p.55.---Cited by Inge p. 27.}\]
St. Francis of Assisi showed forth the true nature of this type of Mysticism. So strong was his conviction that all living things are children of God, that he would preach to "my little sisters the birds" and even undertook the conversion of "the ferocious wolf of Agobio". Suso says: "O tender God, if Thou art so loving in Thy creatures, how fair and lovely must Thou be in Thyself". We find in Wordsworth, a worthy type of Mysticism. Living with the beautiful scenes of nature, they impressed him wonderfully. He saw in them the image and hand of God, as he revealed himself to us. But he recognizes that the still small voice of God breathes not out of nature alone, but rather from the contact of the soul with nature. However for these positive mystics, nature is only a means to an end. The great outcome of it all is, the union of the soul with God. So after we have communed with nature and have learned that it points to God we are invited to "Look at last upon the sovereign light, from whose pure beams all perfect beauty springs;"
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\textbf{Inge p. 302.}
That kindled love in every Godly spright,
Even the love of God, which loathing brings
Of this vile world and these gay-seeming things;
With those sweet pleasures being so possessed,
Thy straying thoughts henceforth forever rest."

We turn now to negative Mysticism—and of the two types this one seems to have had the greater number of adherents, at least they have stood out in a bolder manner. In their struggle after God, they come to feel that he is above all things. In order to reach him we must concentrate our whole being entirely upon him. In order to do this we must shut everything else out. Nature, reason and everything of this world came to be thought of by them as hindrances in the striving for God. Approaching toward God, came to mean the getting rid of desire, pleasure, and in short everything that would tend to detract in the smallest manner from the one desired goal. To them the world does not exist but is simply an illusion. "When St. John says that

7 Spenser, cited by Inge p. 304.
'God is Spirit' and that He must be worshiped in Spirit, he means that the mind must be cleared of all images. When thou prayest shut thy door—that is the door of thy senses... keep them barred and bolted against all phantasms and images. Leave thy body and fix thy gaze on the uncreated light... Let nothing come between thee and God."

This feeling that the earth, the body and everything connected with them are obstacles in our progress toward God, and the feeling that in order to come to a great amount of self-affliction and suffering upon the part of those who have chosen to follow this pathway, the necessity for suffering was urgently preached by many. Many felt that the only pathway to God lay through suffering. The suffering of Jesus was preached with great vehemence. Henry Suso was one of the chief exponents of this view. "Where I am there shall also my servants be" is his favorite text, which he interprets to mean that only those who have embraced to the full, the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, can hope:

1Words of Albertus Magnus,—cited by Inge p. 174.
to be united with him in Glory. "No Cross no Crown"
is his law of life, and the tortures which he inflicted
upon himself are painful and almost repulsive to read.
For sixteen years he subjected himself to these tortures.

"In one of his visions there came into his soul a flame
of intense fire which made his heart burn with Divine:
love. And as a 'love token' he cut deep in his breast
the name of Jesus, so that the marks of the letters
remained all his life."

Others during this period went through great periods
of fasting; some wore undergarments of hair as a re-
minder that pleasure here below is not the true end of
the soul, while others slept upon beds of protruding
spikes, so great was their fervor to buffet the body
and bring it into subjection.

The sufferings of Christ were fervently pointed to
by these apostles of suffering, and they felt that in
order to win his Divine favor that they must follow
in his footsteps. But they failed to see the great dig-
nity of the sufferings of Christ, and that they were:

//Inge. p. 175
a means and not an end. For "in Him, for the first and last time we find an insight so unique, a personality so strong and supreme, as to teach us, once for all, the true attitude toward suffering. Not one of the philosophers or systems before Him had effectually escaped falling either into Pessimism, seeing the end of life as trouble and weariness, and seeing to escape from it into some aloofness or some Nirvana; or into Optimism, ignoring or explaining away that suffering and trial which, as our first experience and our last, surround us on every side. But with Him and alone with Him and those who still learn and live for and by Him, there is the union of the clearest, keenest sense of all the mysterious depth and breadth and length and height of human sadness, suffering, and sin, and, in spite of this and through this, a note of conquest and of triumphant joy. And here as elsewhere in Christianity, this is achieved not by some artificial, facile juxtaposition; but the soul is allowed to sob itself out and through all this its pain gets fully faced and willed, gets taken up into the conscious life. Suffering thus
becomes the highest form of action, a divinely potent means of satisfaction, recovery and enlargement for the soul, the soul with its mysteriously great consciousness of pettiness and sin, and its immense capacity for joy in self donation."


The simplest and commonest examples of the deeper experiences of the Mystics, are to be found in the prayers that they offer up, and the visions which come to them as a result of these states of emotion into which they work themselves. "Sabatier says: Prayer is religion in act—that is to say real religion. Prayer is usually begun because of habit, but is kept up for other reasons. One says 'I believe I pray because I can't help it'.... The religious consciousness seems to value prayer, not so much for the benefits which it believes God gives in answer, as because it feels assured that by means of it, one comes into an immediate social relationship with God."

It becomes then, our task in this section to examine and try to find just what the mystic conception of God is; to examine the nature of the soul according to their viewpoint, and look into the relationship that exists between the two, according to their mode of thought.

A. Relation of God to the Soul.

(1). God.

To every mystic, God is transcendent. His real nature is apart from the world, and what we see about us is, even to the positive mystic, but God's mind extended, and is not a part of his real self. We cannot describe God, because he is above description. If we try to say what he is, we limit him and he cannot be limited. Augustine says "God is above all that can be said of him, and is best adored in silence—best described by negatives." Eckhart holds that "the Godhead is the ground from which all relation springs and cannot be known because it is the ground. At the same time it is the consumation of all reality; but it is above all contrasts and distinc—

'Cited by Inge p. 128.'
tions, for it is one. . . . God utterly transcends knowledge and everything one says of him is untrue.” Some of Eckhart’s expressions are: “The wordless Godhead; “The nameless nothing”, “The Immoveable Rest” and so on.

The Hindu Mystics carry this conception to its logical conclusion. In describing the ascent of the soul to the Absolute, and of the nature of that Absolute, they say “that in looking about us we see the many. But these are simply illusions. In truth the illusory universe sleeps in one central soul and you as far as you are real are identical with the One Being”. But when do we finite beings come nearest to this One Being? “On the borderlands of unconsciousness when we are closest to dreamless slumber.....If this is so wherein does the Absolute Being differ from pure nothing? The Hindoos are alive to this problem and answer it by saying that "the Absolute is the opposite of mere Nothing”. Why then we might ask does it stubbornly appear as nothing? They answer by saying that that is a part of our very illusion itself.  

¹ Cited by Jones p. 226.  
² Royce pp. 163-171.
Most of the Christian Mystics however do not carry their reasonings so far as this, and still give to God some positive content. One of the qualities that is often ascribed to him is beauty. We use again the words of Suso: "O tender God, if Thou art so loving in Thy creatures, how fair and lovely must Thou be in Thyself". Another characteristic they give him is changelessness,—that he is the same in all times—that he is above change. This feeling of the changelessness of God, is no doubt closely allied to the seemingly changeless state experienced during ecstasy.

God is again characterized as action, from whom everything flows out and to some all desires to flow back again. Everyone whether consciously or unconsciously ascribed personality to God, in as far as they ascribed qualities to him at all. By this I do not mean that he necessarily has the outward form in which man is physically made, but that all of his activity toward men springs from a source that is not blind but is supremely conscious of all it does for us.

*Cited by Inge p. 302.*
(2). The Soul.

To the mystic the soul was the dwelling place of God within the individual. The Hindu philosophers hold that true reality lies within the heart, smaller than a mustard seed yet greater than the world. The conception of the Christian Mystic is not far different from this. To him there is a Divine "Spark" within the soul that is the sole cause for the possible relation between man and God. To Eckhart, the soul is a microcosm, which in a manner contains all things in itself. At the "apex of the mind" there is a Divine "Spark", which is so closely akin to God that it is one with him and not merely united to him. William Law was also a believer in the Divine "Spark" within the soul, but in a more definite and Christian form that that held by Eckhart: "If Christ was to raise a new life like his own in every man, then every man must have had originally in the innermost spirit of his life a seed of Christ, or Christ as a seed of heaven, lying there in a state of insensibility, out of which it could no rise but by the mediatorial power

\[\text{Inge pp. 155-156.}\]
This Divine: "Spark" is a portion of the Absolute within the soul and it is in it that we find the connection between God and man. Without it man would be hopelessly seperated from the Divine. The pathway to God lies in its development. The power of the soul to bridge this yawning chasm between man and God has been beautifully described by Walt Whitman, in his "Passage to India"

"Ah more than any priest, O Soul, we too believe in God, but with the mystery of God we dare not dally. O Soul, thou pleasest me, I thee, sailing these seas or on the hills, or walking in the night, thoughts, silent thoughts of time and space and death, like water flowing, bear me indeed as through the regions infinite, whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over, bathe me, O God, in Thee, mounting to Thee, and I and my soul to range in range of Thee.

*Cited by Inge pp. 282-283.*
O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the Light, shedding forth universes,
Thou centre of them,
The mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affections source—
Thou reservoir
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—
Waitest not here?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there? the Comrade perfect?)
Thou pulse—heart of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious
Athwart the shapeless vastness of space,
How shall I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if out of myself,
I could not launch, to these superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning call to thee, O Soul, thou actual
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou makest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swell'est full the vastness of Space."

(3). The Pathway to God.

In the mind of the Mystic, the necessary steps that it takes to reach God are usually the same. "The way to ascend to God" says Hugo: "is to descend into oneself." "The ascent is through and above oneself," says Richard; we are to rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things."2 The way outlined by most Cystics contain three steps or stages, which are in the main the same. To John of Ruysbrock the three stages are: (1) active life, (2) internal or affective life, and (3) contemplative life.3 These steps are similar if not almost identical with those of all the Mystics. The desire of everyone is to be transformed from this earthly limited state, into the unlimited likeness

3 Cited by Inge p. 141. 4 Ibid. p.163.
of God Himself. It is this third stage that all the Mystics are striving to attain, for it is not until at it that the union with God is effected. For it is not until the soul arrives at this state, that the limitations of the world are fully cast aside, and as long as these hang about us, the union with God, who is entirely pure and holy, is impossible. And there: "in touch and union with the One, the soul begets Beauty, Justice, and Virtue; and that place and life is, for it, its principle and end; end, because the Good is there, and because, once arrived there, the soul becomes what it was at first." 1.


In concluding this section of the discussion, I wish to point out briefly the Mystical proof for the existence of God. "The Mystic in the search for God and is the proof of his existence, is guided wholly by feeling, and when he feels a thing to be true at matters not to him how the world may criticize; it is for him

1 Plotinus' Enneads, VI Ch. 9--cited by Von Hügel Vol. II p. 91.
a certain. Mere (internal) suggestion is no proof
to the outside world that God exists, but the Mystic
when filled with the light, cares no more for it proving
this, than the artist does when at the point of ecstasy,
for the proof of color, or the lover for the rewards
of love."1 What he is concerned with is that through
feeling that "there are states of insight into depths
of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect, and
as a rule they carry with them a certain sense of au-
thority for after time."2 "I am as certain as I live"
says Eckhart, "that nothing is so near me as God. God
is nearer to me than I am to myself."3 To such as these
the standards of the world are discredited and the
man lives in the light of his mystical experience.
To such as have once gained this vision heaven and
earth melt away and are as nothing.

1Jones p. 28.
2James p. 326.
3Pratt p. 173.
B. The Mystic Vision.

From these foregoing facts, we can readily conclude: that in the mind of the Mystic, the thing which makes the connection between man and God possible, is the Divine "Spark" within us, and without it, it would be impossible for us to rise above the things of earth. To him the way to nourish this "Spark" and make it come into closer union with the Absolute, is by prayer, which is seen in its most extreme form in ecstasy, because ecstasy is the outcome of an overwrought temperament centered in a longing desire for an immediate communion with the infinite. "The Mystic loves the simple fact, just so far as it is simple and unmediated, the Absolute datum with no questions to be asked. If it takes a trance to find such a fact, that is the fault of our human ignorance and baseness. The fact is always in you and it is your blindness if you refuse to look at it."1

1Royce p. 83.
(1). Its Goal.

The great goal of the Mystic, is complete union with God, and the great mystic achievement is the overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and God. To use the words of Inge: "The Mystic... makes it his life's aim to be transformed into the likeness of Him in whose image he was created. He loves to figure his path a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, which must be climbed step by step. This scala perfectionis is generally divided into three stages. The first is called the purgative life, the second the illuminative, while the third, which is really the goal rather than a part of the journey, is called the unitive life, or state of perfect contemplation." When he comes to "the last stage of the journey... man beholds God face to face, and is joined to him. Complete union with God is the ideal limit of religion", and "it is in the continual but unending approximation to it that the life of religion subsists."

When we have experienced this complete union, with

Inge pp. 9-12.
God, we have completely emerged from the shackles, to which we are subjected while in our imperfect state, and true freedom is then ours to enjoy. The freedom which comes to the one who has reached this state of union, is the opposite of licence,—it consists in our nature being one with the nature of the Absolute, and being of the same nature, it will naturally do all things in conformity with his will. Eckhart grasped the distinction between true and false liberty when he said: "The perfect spirit cannot will anything except what God wills, and that is not slavery but true freedom. There are people who say, if I have God and His love, I may do what I like. That is a false idea of liberty. When thou wishest a thing contrary to God and His Law thou hast not the love of God in thee."  

The question of freedom has been a great question in religion. "Love God and then do what thou wilt" is Augustine's famous declaration of spiritual emancipation. This is all well enough if strong enough emphasis is placed upon the words "Love God." The true:  

freedom that goes with complete love of God is a freedom that has been won through the discipline of the spirit by habitual conformity to the will of God, as revealed in Christ; in the moral message of the scriptures; and in the socially tested morality of the race. It is no empty willlessness that is to be sought, no capricious freedom "to do anything we like", but the "liberty of the sons of God" who have been made free by the perfect Son, — "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" and if "the Son shall make you free, ye shall be freeindeed".

The question of freedom is closely allied to that of love. Without perfectly loving the will of God it is impossible to be free, and on the other side, if we are held down by the shackles of the world, we cannot love God in the same way that we could if we were free of them. Fénelon says that "the very perfection of Christianity is pure Love." 7

But how do we know when we have attained this pure Love? It is when we can love in the same way that God

loves,—in a whole-hearted, unselfish manner. "Love is not love," says the Mystic: "when it asks for reward. So long as a man seeketh his own highest good because it is his, he will never find it." 7

(2). Its Immediacy.

An important characteristic of the Mystics experience is its immediacy. When they begin to give the primal place to feeling, the ordinary ways of approaching reality begin to be discredited more and more, until they finally become relegated far into the background, while the soul becomes more and more closely related to God in a direct and immediate manner. God becomes to them "closer...than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." "We need not search for his footprints in nature, when we can behold His face in ourselves," is their answer to St. Augustine's fine expression that all things bright and beautiful in the world are 'footprints of the uncreated wisdom.' "Grace works from within outward," says Ruysbrock. 9

7 Inge p. 8.  
8 Ibid. p. 27.
The fact that they submitted their lives to be guided principally by these visions that came to them, caused them to relegate the Bible to a secondary position. They did not disbelieve the Bible, but simply emphasized the immediate revelations which came to them, over and above the Bible. They believed that if they could only bring their mind and body into subjection so that they would receive these visions, that in these truths would be revealed to them in a far more marvelous and significant form than when they came through a secondary source. John Tauler said that "in one short hour you can learn more from the inward voice, than you could learn from men in a thousand years.' 4

Similarly "Saint Ignatius confessed one day to Father Laynez that a single hour of meditation at Mauresa had taught him more truths about heavenly things than all the teachings of the doctors put together could have taught him." In a like manner with St. Teresa: "One day being in Orison" she writes "it was granted me to perceive in one instant how all things are seen

7 Jones p. 265.
and contained in God."1.

To such as these the learning of the world, the traditions of the Church and even the authority of the Scriptures were placed below this inward eye which looks directly upon the beauties of heaven and the countenance of God Himself. They did not for the most part disbelieve in the Sacraments of the Church, in fact they had their part to perform, viz., aiding us (as children) in the performance of duty. But many felt that they must rid themselves of these symbols—to rise above them—and go straight to God by way of abstractions.2 The Mystic has nothing to do with faith; his religion is a religion of experience, of knowledge, and the knowledge is autonomous.3

(3). Its Ineffability.

The subjects of these mystical experiences say that they defy expression. And so they must be experienced and cannot be imparted or transferred to others. I think we can realize the truth of this statement, when we:

1 James p.346. 2 Inge p.260. 3 Rocaieac p.190.
have been seized by a great flood of emotion and have seen how difficult and how fragmentary were our best efforts to impart it to others. Vernazza, the biographer of St. Catherine of Genoa, tells of one of her experiences, when the feeling of the Divine presence was with her. "This blessed soul," he writes, "all surrounded though she was by the deep peaceful ocean of her love, God, desired nevertheless to express in words, to her spiritual children, the sentiments that were within her. And many a time she would say to them: 'Oh would that I could tell what my heart feels!' And her children would say: 'Oh Mother, tell us something of it.' And she would answer: 'I cannot find words appropriate to so great a love. But this I can say with truth, that if of what my heart feels but one drop were to fall into Hell, Hell itself would altogether turn into eternal life.'"

(4) Its Passivity.

The Mystic is seemingly passive in spirit—like the:

\[ \text{Vita, p. 94c. Cited by Von Hügel Vol. I, p. 159.} \]
tool waiting to be used—and they think if they do anything of themselves it will hinder God's plans. But I believe the seeming passivity both in the approach to, and in the vision itself is one of rigorous activity. Cases have been frequent where the Mystics by rigorous training have worked themselves into these visionary states. Murisier gives his opinion that the genesis of these states of ecstasy are caused first by the lack of sufficient nourishment—prolonged insomnia, or any condition which will cause depression. And these do have a powerful influence on them. Their first prayers are, to be delivered from the tortures of the body. The second great cause for ecstasy, is "the desire for guidance or the desire to be rid of the responsibility of self." And this desire for guidance has been no small factor in all the religions that men have striven to follow.

When it comes to the vision itself, the mind sinks seemingly into complete passivity, but in reality it is intensely active. Von Hügel says: "The whole moral

and spiritual expands and rests, yes: but this very
rest is produced by action 'unperceived because so fleet',
so, near, so all fulfilling; or rather by a tissue of
single acts, mental, emotional, volitional, so finely
interwoven, so exceptionally stimulative and of the
soul's deepest aspirations, that these acts are not
perceived as so many single acts, indeed that their
very collective pressure is apt to remain unnoticed
by the soul itself. At such moments we altogether
cease to be directly conscious of ourselves, of time:
or of the body's whereabouts; and when we return to our
ordinary psychical and mental condition, we do so with
an undeniable sense of strength and youthfulness."

Such is the opinion of Von Hügel and such must be the:
the opinion of everyone, it seems to me, who investi-
gates the psychological changes that the mind is
forced to undergo through these brief but intensive
moments. This forces us to the conclusion also that
the immediacy of the Mystic's experiences is only a
seeming immediacy. Truths dawn upon one suddenly but

"Von Hügel Vol. II. pp. 132-133."
this is no proof that nothing was known of them before. A fragmentary thought may have been gathered here and another there; but not until the last one had been found to unite them into a perfect whole, did they spring together and shape themselves before our eyes. So with the visions of the Mystic; back of them lay oftines many years of preparation and the visions, though coming suddenly and in their entirety little resembling the many fragmentary experiences undergone before, yet are but simply an outcome of those experiences.

(5). Its effect on the Individual.

The effect of these visions upon the one undergoing them, has been on the whole, wholesome. Its power has been strengthening rather than otherwise over the one whom it influenced. "The great Spanish Mystics, who carried the habit of ecstasy as far as it has often been carried, appear for the most part to have shone indomitable spirit and energy and all the more so for the trances in which they indulged. St. Ignatius was a Mystic, but his mysticism made him assuradly
one of the most powerfully practical human energies that ever lived. St John of the Cross says that these touches of God enriches the soul marvelously, and a single one is reward for all the labors the soul has undergone in life.¹

The Mystic besides being thus exhilarated is usually greatly rested because of his experience and this is the reason why he feels that his mind has been inactive through it all. Von Hügel brings this very clearly before us: "For one thing the soul... in looking back, braced and rested as it now is, it cannot but think that it either did not act at all, or that its action was reduced to a minimum. For how otherwise could it feel so rested, when, after its ordinary activities it feels so tired and dissatisfied?... Yet it is on the contrary, the very fullness of the action which has rested, by expanding, the soul; and which has made the soul, returned to its ordinary distractedness, incapable of clearly explaining that, now past, concentration."²

¹ James Ch. XVI. p. 362.
(6). Its Genuineness.

Now comes the question as to the genuineness of these visions. There is a tendency for us in this practical age to brush such experiences as these aside as mere fancy, having no ground whatever. But that all of us are more or less subjects of visionary tendencies in a greater or less degree, is a thing we will have to admit. There have been sane men of all times who were more or less guided in their great work of life by visions. Paul had visions, his Christianity began with a trance; and it was because he was guided by this real power from above that he was able to accomplish the great work which he did. The great poets have been men of visions and we have profited by them. Wordsworth beautifully describes:

"That serene and blessed Mood,
In which......the breath of this corporal frame;
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep.
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power..."
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the life of things." 4.


The Mystics have done a great social work. To them God is love; and to many of them his love shines primarily through his creatures. The approach to God; for many lay through the love and service to their fellow men. "If thou wilt, carry another thyself," is a great saying of Thos. A' Kempis. John Tauler even asserts that "Works of love are more acceptable to God than lofty contemplation." We have many examples of Mystics entering into active social service. St. Catherine of Genoa entered a hospital and spent the best part of her life there in caring for the afflicted; St. Francis gave his life to social service; Peter Waldo, a successful business man, had a religious experience which transformed his life; and made of him a great social worker; besides hosts of others who spent their very life in the bettering of the conditions of humanity.

Inge, p. 188.
about them.

But, much as the Mystic emphasized the social work, Mysticism itself is predominately individualistic. The love of God shines through his creatures, but it is after all God, and not his creatures in whom they are primarily interested. Plotinus says that the journey of the Mystic is a "flight of the alone to the Alone."

5. Attitude toward the Church.

The attitude of the Mystic toward the Church was largely determined by the fervor to which his mystical tendencies led him. We have many noble examples of Mystics during the Middle Ages, who never questioned the rule of the Church, while we have others who fought it bitterly. However their attitude toward the Church was largely the same as their attitude toward all external things. Many believed the Church necessary as an early guide, but that the true Mystic could rise above the necessity of it, and hold direct communion with God, which was much the better. As to when the

\[1\] Cited by Von Hügel Vol. II. p. 323.
Divine illumination would come; when the Church would no longer be of service, the Mystics are not agreed. Some think it can come in this life, while others believe that throughout this life we must be guided by the Church, and it is only when we have entered the realms of the beyond that we can see God face to face. Walter Hilton (or Hylton) says that, "we must first fix our affections on the humanity of Christ, since our eyes cannot bear the unclouded light of the Godhead. We must live under the shadow of his manhood as long as we are here below." Religion to them is an internal thing and the things external are of but secondary importance.

The Mystic believes that Christianity is at heart a mystical religion. The direct impact and power of the life of Christ upon his followers is due to the fact that men have found through him a direct way to God. The entire teaching of the kingdom of God has its mystical aspect. Its capital is not in some foreign land, its king is not a distant sovereign, for any member of the kingdom at any spot of the earth.
can see him if his heart is pure.¹

The more extreme Mystics held that the higher form of revelation was from God directly to the soul and to them historical revelation was of secondary importance. There were many others however, who believed just as firmly a religion of inner experience; ut felt that God revealed himself to the soul through the Church.

6. The Mystic Conception of Evil.

The question as to the nature of evil, is one that commands no little attention from the Mystic. Most of them however look upon it as a negation,—as a thing that does not exist. With this simple conception, he generally sweeps the whole question behind him and presses on toward his goal. One reason for this is due to the subjective character of his religion. "The rough shocks, the bitter tonics, the expansive birth pangs of the spirit's deeper life, in and by means of the flux of time and sense; of the conflict with hostile fellow-creatures, and of the chimefulness of the lower self, are known by it only in their result, not in

¹Jones pp. 7-8.
their process, or rather only as this process ebbs and fades away, in such recollective moments, into the distance. No wonder then, that Mysticism, as such, has ever tended to deny all positive character of evil."

This tendency is strongly emphasized by Plotinus, the "Prince of the Mystic philosophers". "But even St. Augustine, with his massive experience, and (in his other mood) even excessive realization, of the destructive force of Evil and of the corrupt inclinations of man's heart, has one whole large current of teaching expressive of the purely negative character of Evil..... Ten years after his conversion, he can write: 'all things that are corrupted, are deprived of Good. But, if they are deprived of all good, they will cease to exist.....In so far, then, as they exist, they are good.....Evil is no substance.' Erigena also believed that "Evil has no substance and is destined to disappear."

As to the origin of evil, the Mystics generally trace its advent into the world to the transgression of Adam.

1 Von Hügel Vol II. p. 293. 2 Ibid. 3 Inge p. 137.
Before this transgression, the soul would have been, as it were, a mirror of a particular fixed size and lustre; its usiness here below, under present conditions consists in removing the impurities adhering to this mirrors surface, and in guarding it against stains.¹

Some Mystics however, believe Evil to be too large a thing to be defined by negatives; to them it has positive quality also. And most of the Mystics while they define it in a negative way, nevertheless treat it as a positive reality. John Tauler is one among others who gives to Evil a positive content. He believes it to be entirely too great to be negative.²

To the Mystic, sin is the great obstacle that stands between man and God. When he feels that nature and even his body, stands in his way in his striving to attain the Absolute, the negative Mystics have reduced them to things that are evil in their nature. The positive Mystic is just as strong in his belief as the Mystic of negative temperment, that sin is the great gulf that separates us from God, but he differs from the negative:

Mystic in that he does not believe nature to be sinful and therefore it does not impede our progress, but on the other hand, is an aid to the realization of our goal. "The world as God sees it is the world as it is; not as we see it; our vision is distorted, not so much by the limitations of finitude, as by sin and ignorance."

So the approach to God means the getting away of sin and ignorance.

7. The Future Life.

The nature of the Future Life was another problem that commanded passing attention from several Mystics. From Greek philosophy they had the conception of Plato. Plato was firm in the belief of a future abode of the spirits of men. The happiness of that abode was in proportion to the righteousness lived here. From the teachings of Jesus, and the Apostles as set forth by the Church, the Mystics received a more definite instruction as to the nature of the future life.

The Mystics generally believe in a future life, but
to many of them Heaven is a state or condition and not a place. Augustine in giving his view as to the future life concludes: "If it be asked whether the soul, when it goes forth from the body, is borne to some corporeal places, or to such as, though incorporeal, are like to bodies, or to what is more excellent than either: I readily answer that, unless it have some kind of a body, it is not borne to bodily places at all, or, at least, that it is not borne to them by bodily motion. But I myself do not think that it possesses any body when it goes forth from this earthly body. It gets borne, according to its deserts, to spiritual conditions, or to penal places having a similitude to bodies." While Augustine could not be classed as a Mystic in the proper sense of that term, yet he had many mystical tendencies and the expressions and the expressions above sets before us very clearly the belief with which all Mystics would agree.

"De Genesi ad litt., Lib. VIII n. 39.—Cited by Von Hügel Vol. II. p. 213."
8. Comparison of Pantheism with Mysticism.

There are many who have felt that Mysticism carried to its logical conclusion, would lead us in Pantheism. Consequently because of this belief on the part of men, we wish to compare the two and try to ascertain the truth or falsity of the position.

In the first place, let us note in what ways they may be similar. For one thing Pantheism like Mysticism has a great, indeed an excessive, thirst for unity, for a unity less and less possessed of Multiplicity. Then again Pantheist and Mystic alike dwell much upon the strict call to abandon all self-centredness, upon the death to self, the loss of self; and in proportion as they dwell upon this self to be thus rejected, and as they enlarge the range of this petty self, do they approach other more and more. These two points of similarity may not cover the whole ground, but they do show us in what ways they tend to approximate each other.

It remains to note some points of difference. To

Spinoza, "God—Deus sive Nature", in conceived as an immanent principle of the universe, or rather the universe is conceived as immanent in God. If for him the world is nothing apart from God, God is nothing apart from his realization in the world. 'This is true Pantheism. But in Plotinus the via negativa involves a negation of the finite and determinate in all its forms; hence it is here impossible to find the finite again in the infinite. The Absolute One is here not immanent but transcendent."

This great point of difference is a chasm that no Mystic can cross and still hold to the chief underlying principle of his Mysticism; yet the Mystic can almost approximate Pantheism and not be harmed by it, if he does not allow himself to be limited by the approximation. Pantheism is much narrower in its outlook than Mysticism, for God to the Pantheist is confined to the limits of phenomena, while to the Mystic, God stands far above phenomena. He is as much responsible for the phenomenal world as is the God of the Pantheist.

(Von Hügel, Vol. II. p. 326.)
but that world is only the external expression of his personality.

9. Comparison of Mysticism and Idealism.

Mysticism is also closely allied with Idealism. The absorbing passion of the Idealist, is to find the reality, and this is also the passion of the Mystic. The likenesses and differences between Mysticism and Idealism are very clearly summed up by Blewett when he compares the belief of Plato with that of a thorough-going Mystic: "Both believe that there is a reality untroubled by change or evil or decay. Both believe that in union with that reality lies the welfare and blessedness of the soul. Both believe that it is beyond all reach of sense-perception. But the Mystic goes on to add that it lies just as much beyond all forms of reason as it does beyond sense-perception, so that if you would apprehend it and make it your own, and become at one with it, it must be an immediacy of experience which transcends reason, transcends all ordinary forms of cognitive and moral experience. While Plato urges,
on the contrary, that the truly real is the very perfection of reason, the very perfection of all rational forms and rational energy, and that it is by perfecting the reason within you—reason in the greater sense of the word, not the mere logical intellect—that you draw near to it. With the Mystic, to put it in a word, the negative directed against the present world, and against the life that men live if they walk in its ways, are uttered in the name of a reality above reason; with Plato these same negatives are uttered in the name of a reality which is the completeness of reason.¹

Plato is nearer the truth than the Mystic. By the kind of reason understood here in meant that which includes feeling, but a feeling directed by reason. And this is the only safe experience. Pure emotion is no criterion for truth, it is only when it is judged in the light of reason that it can be pronounced true or false.

¹Blewett, p. 224.
IV. CONCLUSION.

It is not our purpose in this closing chapter, to recount fully the many diverse elements that have entered into Mysticism, and weigh them to obtain their true worth and the right of the claims which have been made for them, but simply to take up a few of the more salient ones. We have criticized somewhat briefly the weaknesses of both the Naturalistic and Rationalistic methods, so in dealing with them here we wish to speak of them in their relation to Mysticism.

1. The Function of Reason in Religion.

Men either consciously or unconsciously have depended much upon the reasoning side of their nature. Even the Mystic when elevated to the great heights to which his visions will lead him, is in duty bound to return to the level from which he started and to view the heights to which he has flown through the clear unemotional eye of reason, if he does not wish his highest and most vital experiences to sink to the level of mere fancy. Pratt says that, "religion will always
need thought: (1) to help it find an authority; (2) to defend it against purely intellectual ideas which are destructive to it; and (3) to guard against traditional and stagnant creeds from within.\(^1\) Reason alone as we tried to show in the discussion of the Rationalistic method cannot approximate God in the way that is at all satisfactory to the soul,--reason alone is cold and formal; but reason can be of vital service in our reaching the goal for which we have set out, viz., God, if used as only one of the aids to finding him, and used in its natural logical place. Abstract reason such as the Rationalists employ cannot take the place of concrete experience in religious life; but it can regulate and guide and pronounce judgment upon, that experience as to whether it be true or false. This is ever its function in aiding us to approach God: to temper our emotions that they become not abnormally developed; to keep our faces turned toward the light; and to judge as to the truth or falsity of the experience undergone.

\(^1\)Pratt, p. 126.
2. The Function of the natural Sciences in regard to Religion.

The negative Mystics have been very bitter in their attacks upon nature, believing it to be essentially evil, and that the attaining of God lay in ridding ourselves of it. But the world of manifoldness has stubbornly refused to be driven out. Whether as real or illusory it demands to be accounted for. Science must be taken by us in a double way. "In the first instance, science is self-sufficing, its own end and its own law. In the second instance, which alone is ever final, Science is but a part of a whole, but a function, a necessary yet preliminary function of the whole man; and it is but a part, a necessary yet preliminary part, of his outlook."¹ Now the question comes what is that function of Science?

Von Hügel sums up the part which Science plays in directing us to God by saying that, when Science is taken in the sense quoted above, that it "will help

to discipline, humble:purify the natural eagerness
and wilfulness, the cruder forms of anthropomorphism,
of the human mind and heart. Such a Science again
will help to stimulate those other deeper, activities
of human nature, which have made possible, and have all
along preceded and accompanied these more superficial
ones. And finally such a Science will correspondingly help
to give depth and mystery, drama and pathos, a rich spirituality, to the whole experience
and conception of the soul and life, of the world and
God. The more we know about nature—provided we study
it with right reverence toward its maker, the better
will we know God. Science then is indispensable in our
search for God and if we cast it aside as an illusion,
as something lacking positive reality, and even virtue,
we are greatly retarded in our progress toward our
goal.


The points of weakness and strength of Mysticism

now demand attention. One of the great weaknesses of Mysticism is that its logical outcome is not a positive God, but a mere Nothing. Even the positive Mystics say that God is above definition. So the true end for the Mystic is annihilation. Many Mystics have seen this difficulty in their scheme, and have given some positive content to God such as beauty, changelessness and action.

Another weakness of the Mystics is that they tend to over-minimize the absolutely necessary contact of the mind with the things of sense. Feeling becomes their chief source of strength. They will often write as though they could completely shut themselves off from the sense world and would not be loser thereby, when in reality they draw their most vivid imagery from this very nature which they brush aside.

The Mystic also tends to sever his relation to the past and to keep himself free from all authority. There are however many Mystics to whom this statement can hardly be said to apply. There were during the Middle Ages many many Mystics who lived within the Church
and her loyal supporters, believing in the right of her authority, and in the authority of past revelation. However, after this is said, the logical end of the mystical tendency is to cast aside the authority of the past, and to dwell in the ever living present, and to be guided by direct manifestations from God to the Mystic's own soul.

I do not think that we can blame the Mystic of the Middle Ages, who went to the extreme end of this tendency. To be sure they went far too far, but we must take into consideration that they had extremists on the other side with whom to battle. The Church had carried its authority to almost tyrannical control, and naturally the men who fought it the most bitterly would go to the opposite extreme.

These are some of the shortcomings of Mysticism, yet on the other hand it had its positive merits also. One thing that Mysticism has done, is that it has made God real to us. To both the Rationalist and Naturalist, if there be a God at all, he exists outside of us, at least we cannot feel him. But to the Mystic,
while God is transcendent, he is also within us and we not only know him, in the intellectual sense of that word, but also we can feel him and abide with him.

One of the things that appeals to me most in connection with the Mystic's experiences, is his power to get really at the centre of things. The vital things to him are, God, the soul, and the connection between the two, enabling the soul to rise to a union with God, which he feels is the rightful goal. I believe that all men regard this the centre of life, but the Mystic starts from the right place in his philosophy, viz., feeling. Rob us of this faculty and it would be impossible for us to start on our journey. But when the tendency is once implanted, reason steps in to control, to guide it to its lofty termination.

3. The unity of the Soul.

Within the heart of man when he is attuned to the highest things of life, there is a craving for the joining of the manifold of experience into a united whole. It this desire for unity, and the seeming hopelessness
of the task of unifying nature, that has caused many Mystics to put it aside altogether and strive to attain the Absolute by the negative road. Yet in every experience the soul calls in not one but many things. There is a mingling of feeling, intelligence, tradition and many other elements to make it what it is. This presupposes a unity underlying all of our experience. It is not a bundle of sensations entirely exclusive of one another, but they are all bound together with our consciousness. The Mystic longs for this unity, and he feels that the basis for it lies primarily within himself. In this he is right, but where he is wrong is, when he feels that nature and reason lie outside of this pale of unity.

What is needed then, is a broader outlook on behalf of each of the three, the Mystic, the Rationalist, and the Physicist: the Mystic, to have a broader conception of the things of the world; the Rationalist, a glow of feeling to warm up his cold and formal theories, and feel that reason is empty without concrete experience; and the Physicist, a feeling that his Science is not
sufficient within itself, but is only a part of a larger whole and that his is only a step along the pathway toward God. The trouble in the case of each of these has often been that each have thought their respective field was an exclusive whole and was not dependent upon any other. The fact is that each is a fragment and needs all the others to make it a complete whole. When the Physicist joins hands with the Rationalist, and these two join hands with the Mystic, hand in hand in hand they will be able to approximate that reality for which they have so long been seeking.

The end.