A Study of Paul's Mystical Experiences

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A STUDY OF PAUL'S MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES

by

CARL FRANKLIN ANDRY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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PART I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introductory.-- Mysticism is the most distinctive characteristic of religion. It is considered by many religious thinkers to be the essential of religion. All religion, in order to be religion, is and must be, at least partly, mystical. Yet in spite of its great importance in religion, mysticism suffers from much confusion. Great mystics eloquently describe their mystical experiences; they write volume upon volume about them. And after reading what they have to say, we are forced to ask ourselves, "What is mysticism?" Why so much confusion? If mysticism has anything of value to contribute to the world, it must be more than confusion.

So here at the very beginning of this study, we face our first problem. What is mysticism? Most people approach this subject with prejudiced minds; they come to it with the idea that they know what

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mysticism is. Preconceived ideas pervert our minds and prevent clear and unbiased thinking. So let us first of all empty our minds of all preconceived ideas or thoughts which we might have about mysticism, and proceed with our thesis.

**Thesis.**—Mysticism is a science dealing with experiences that involve immediate relations. Such a communion between God and men Tennyson rightly encourages in his well-known lines:

"Speak to Him, Thou, for He heareth,  
And spirit with spirit may meet.  
Closer is He than breathing  
And nearer than hands and feet."

When we observe two objects coming into immediate contact with nothing between them, we observe a mystical relation. Religious mysticism may be defined as the organized body of thought about our immediate consciousness of God. Philosophical mysticism treats our immediate conscious relations with any real thing.

To support this thesis we will make a study of the great Apostle Paul's experiences which have long been accepted by Christendom as unquestionably and surely mystical, to demonstrate that in them it was the relation of immediacy that made them mystical. In addition, because of the confusion connected with the word, it is necessary for us first to define
clearly what the word means, and then keep that one clear meaning in mind throughout this whole study.

Outline of this thesis.-- To carry out this plan, we will spend some time both on the definition of mystical experience and upon mysticism; for the two are very much different.\(^1\) To begin with a definition we will, in Chapter II, clear away some misunderstandings by pointing out some erroneous ideas of our subject. Then in Chapter III we will turn to a positive definition of both mystical experience and mysticism or the system of thought about such experiences. To begin that distinction we must go back to the etymology of the word at which point the confusion between mystery and mysticism arises, and from which it has been continued to the confusion of many thinkers on this subject. We will define it, first, by analyzing some typical mystics and their experiences to discover what it is that differentiates them from other ordinary men, or what characteristic it is that makes them mystics. Then, secondly, we will give a formal definition of mysticism by placing it in the class of human activities whose characteristic mark is immediacy, either in the relations of two events observed by us, or else in the mental pro-

cess of observation itself which involves always the relation of body, or brain and consciousness, or mind; so that each and every act of perception and each and every act of will are both clear examples of the immediate relationship of mind and body.¹

Such a definition naturally leads us to our next chapter on the "Varieties and Composition of Mystical Experiences." We divide such human enjoyments into (1) religious and (2) philosophical mystical events. The former kind is so well known that we need not spend much time in elucidating it. The second kind is so simple, clear, indisputable that we need not do more than call attention to its vast importance as a co-ordinate series of events in the real world and our knowledge of them which complements and supplements our scientific knowledge gained by media, or explanation by causes and effects. Between each cause and its effect an immediate relation exists. Otherwise we should be compelled to look for some cause between a cause and its effect, which is a self-contradiction. When electricity turns into light, nothing intervenes between the two at the instant of transformation.

This classification brings us to our thesis

proper. Here we adduce the fully accepted accounts of St. Paul's mystical experiences and from them, by analysis, show what our thesis asserts, viz., that the essence of the mystical experience is the relation of immediacy, and that it always consists of two discernible events, things, or activities, between which nothing whatever intervenes. Such events simply mark the moment at which energy is transformed from one form to another. If we believe, as we may, that all Energy is the power of God, we have no difficulty in thus finding God in all such experiences, religious or secular, and thus instead of removing God from miraculous mystical events, or even reducing the area of his operations usually attributed to his direct and immediate presence, we simply hereby lend support to the Christian doctrine of his omnipresence and his omnipotence. Thus it is, that while our thesis at first may appear to be destructive to faith, it turns out to be a mighty support of faith, a genuine positivistic apprehension of God's Being, Presence and Power everywhere in the world; this apprehension itself being a mystical experience, so that all religion becomes at least penetrated with mysticism defined as the science of the clearest, purest, most certain experience, though further inexplicable knowledge is known to mankind.
Lastly we will sum up our conclusions in a brief chapter at the end.
PART II

DEFINITIONS
CHAPTER II

NEGATIVE DEFINITIONS OF MYSTICISM AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Mysticism is not mystery.--- The word "mystery," which comes from the same root as does "mystical," is often confused with mysticism, but they are not the same. Mystery comes from the Greek "mysterion," and its earliest associations were undoubtedly with the mystery religions of Greece. "The person who was initiated was called a mystes, or myst, that is to say, a person who now possessed the 'secret.' The Greek word **mu**, which in English becomes 'my,' means to shut or close, and in particular for matters that are revealed to the initiate it meant to close or shut the mouth, or as we should say using the same root, 'keep mum,' with finger on lip. When the word came to birth, then, in the sphere of early religion, it implied a person who had entered upon a hidden, secret way to an essential truth for life and salvation, but who must not make the truth public or common property. The way must remain 'hidden' and the truth must be 'secret,' unveiled only
to those on the inside.\textsuperscript{1} From it through the Latin we get our word "mute."

The word therefore came to mean that which was hidden, secret, obscure, unexplained, abstruse, dark, cabalistic, enigmatical; but it could be explained by any one of many who had the information. It also came to mean that which is incomprehensible or unknown in its nature, inscrutable, occult, transcendental, unfathomable, a confused experience, "beyond human comprehension, as the decrees of God or the origin of life."\textsuperscript{2} In this latter sense, mystery and mystical are often popularly used alike, but let us remember that, strictly speaking, they should be discriminated.

The word "mystical" itself also has two main meanings. It is used loosely and popularly to denote what is secret, hidden, obscure, a hidden or recondite meaning which may indeed be cleared up, as the mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse. On the other hand, in religion, mystical refers to the "immediate consciousness of God,"\textsuperscript{3} "immediate conscious relation with the Eter-


\textsuperscript{2}Standard Dictionary.

nal World of Reality. This is mysticism in its highest intention. This is its great and important meaning; the one sense in which all religious mystics use it. This one strain of thought, immediacy with God, runs through all the writings of the Christian mystics; it is the one point of agreement among them.

Thus mysticism is something not surrounded with obscurity and confusion, but something of the utmost simplicity and clarity of knowledge. Mystery, a confused experience, beyond human comprehension, stands opposed to mystical in the religious sense, immediate conscious relation with God.

Mysticism is not obscurantism.—Mysticism has also long been confused with obscurantism. Religious mysticism as we have said treats the immediate consciousness of God, and is not surrounded with obscurity, but is very clear and simple. Obscurantism is a deliberate policy to confuse. It tends to prevent enlightenment and progress by inducing opposition to new knowledge. Obscurantism fights against science and explanation, opposing most of all the open mind and the spirit of inquiry or investigation. "Not infrequently

1Rufus Jones, ibid., p. 25.
it endeavors to prevent the truth from coming to light by means of a studied ambiguity, resorting for this purpose to unmeaning phrases, and undefined issues.\textsuperscript{1}

Obscurantism plays upon mystery in religion, misrepresenting backgrounds of truth which are mysterious to us, in that they are confused in our minds. It justifies the use of certain rites and ceremonies by replying that they are mysteries. It answers objections to contradictions in doctrines by saying that their solution is a mystery, such as trinitarianism, transubstantiation, and the sacraments.

But as we have just seen above, mystery and mystical are opposites. A mystery is a confused, unexplained experience, a problem that may be solved. All that is lacking for the explanation of an unexplained mystery is more information, which it is possible to attain.

A mystical event is one about which there is no mystery because all the information and knowledge possible is given; there is nothing obscure about it. This fact will become more prominent later. So it is readily seen that mysticism and obscurantism are mutually exclusive; mysticism tending to make clear and

obscurantism tending to confuse.

**Mysticism is not emotionalism.**—Mysticism, as it is popularly used, also refers frequently to peculiar states of emotion, or to emotion in general. This connection is both historical and a merely accidental association. Many religious mystics enjoyed such remarkable states of ecstasy that mysticism as a whole became identified, in the popular estimation, with mystical states. Then too, normal emotional states have so long defied accurate psychological analysis, and have also the peculiar power of vaguely suggesting ideas which never do come into clear consciousness, that emotion itself becomes mysterious, and hence, by confused thinking, mystical.¹

The scholastics treated emotion as confused thought. This historic error gave ground later to associate certain emotions, especially melancholy ones, closely with religion. Religion itself, as an experience, has been at first confused with, and later identified with emotion, both by religious people and by some scientists. Lord Balfour speaks of Lyell's willingness to turn over the realm of emotion to

religion, while all intellect remains the domain of science.¹

In the modern revival, many extreme forms of emotion were aroused. They were accepted as manifestations of the direct and special action of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, were mystical. This perversion of both emotion and its evidence, more than any other one factor, led to confusing emotion with mysticism. Many ordinary men, and even many of the clergy and even religious writers, came to classify mysticism under emotion as a peculiar form of it, limited usually to religious associations.

Emotion is a complex condition of consciousness, in which one or more forms of excited sensibility are expanded, made sensuous, and strengthened, by admixture of various peripheral or organic sensations that are aroused by some primary feeling, and are directly or indirectly connected with its expression or satisfaction.² Or we may say that emotions are combinations of feelings with movements or acts of will, and that they may have either a transitory or a lasting


²Standard Dictionary.
character, according as they are immediate reactions upon a definite object, or upon habitual states of the soul which rest upon a more or less persistent combination of feeling and volition.\footnote{A. Dorner, "Emotionalism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Edited by James Hastings. Vol. V, 1912, p. 289.} Emotion, because it often comes uncalled and without apparent cause, because it seems to have no natural cause, because it is unclear, confused, moving to thought and action without intimating what thought or action is suitable, is therefore called mystical.

Ordinary emotion, arising from whatever source whatever, may be turned into religious emotion in the sense that the subject associates his emotion in his own mind with some idea of religion or of God. This mental association immediately stirs up other and deeper emotions, and the new complex constitutes the numinous, the awe, the reverence, which is religious emotion.

The process is mystical merely in that the connection between the idea and the emotion is immediately made by the self. Mysticism, as we defined it, is immediacy; and here we have that relationship.

\textit{Mysticism is not abnormal experience}.-- Further, a mystical experience is not abnormal. The idea of
abnormal is most difficult to define. At the very outset it suggests a norm, or standard, or what ought to be, and compares the experience under scrutiny with that standard. But, in religion as with other forms of human activity, there is no such standard. All we can say is that "This is the usual, or average" and "This is the unusual, or deviates from the average."¹

It startles one out of his usual somnolent thinking to discover that we cannot accurately define health and disease; for they are correlative with viewpoints. The typhoid fever, for example, is a healthy body of germs lodged in the glands (Peyer's patches) of the small intestine. A whole field of growing wheat is a germ-infected area of soil. Possibly Napoleon's hydro-cephaly made him a genius and gave him his intuitive insights into military strategy; possibly all genius is pathological. It is futile, therefore, to condemn mystical experiences by labelling it abnormal, or pathological, as if such a term rendered the whole product of this experience useless or evil. All of Auguste Comte's positivism, and J. J. Rousseau's work would thus be invalidated because the first was for a time a raving maniac and the second

was epileptic, and the same applies to the brilliant writings of the famous Pole, Frederich W. Nietzsche who wrote some of them after he became insane. Here it is that the test is the fruits, not the roots, of the product. The only and real test of normal actions in the long run is their value to men.

A mystic may be abnormal, and without doubt many Christian mystics were mentally defective. His general abnormality may also infect those experiences which he calls mystical, as Dr. James Leuba insists.¹ But that does not prove that all mystics are abnormal, nor that all their experiences are pathological, and worth nothing. From such moments of divine afflatus as Dr. Rufus Jones² has shown, has come the inspiration to men like Loyola, and to women like Katherine of Sienna, to undertake and to carry to completion great works benefiting not only the Church but also mankind through many centuries. So here we find, as we also find in most, if not literally in each and every human action, both the good and the evil, mingled and mixed in ways hard to delineate. But that difficulty does not justify the seeker after truth to cast out the whole life-work, or indeed even the whole of any sig-


nificant human act under the suspicion that part of it may not be true or helpful to men.

In his book, Rufus Jones treats "Mystical Religion and the Abnormal." He does not treat it as abnormal, but rather as normal religion. After describing some experiences, he says, "The experience, as such, betokens no sign of abnormality." "It is only in the biographies of mystics that we find the trail of abnormality."3

To reject or to accept the whole of any mystic's message without scrutiny and without analysis because he asserts that it comes directly from God works injury to the whole situation. Such an act of wholesale and uncritical credulity reflects disastrously upon mysticism. For the work of the student of these experiences consists in just that scientific analysis, that weighing of evidence, that discrimination between the true and false, valuable and worthless, which goes to making an organized knowledge. Out of this mass and mixture of sound insight and hopelessly self-contradictory babbling, of general and eternal truth and mere personal fancy, of mixed theology due to pre-conceived dogmas

2 Ibid., p. 48.
3 Ibid., p. 51.
and genuine truth for all men, of clear propaganda for some certain movement and unbiased pronouncements based on human experience, the serious student of mysticism must separate the chaff from the wheat, and reserve the truths that harmonize with each other and with other soundly established bodies of truth.

Ill health seems characteristic of the lives of many mystics, and pathologists have always been ready to discount the spiritual value of mysticism by showing that it is a near neighbor to hysteria and to a great variety of emotional diseases. Some mystics of history have shown peculiar traits of constitution. Nobody can read the lives of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Genoa, Jacob Boehme, George Fox, Madame Guyon, or St. Teresa without feeling that these extraordinary persons had crisis of illness which threatened to shatter both their physical and mental states; and there are many other less famous persons of the mystical type who have at least run close up to the boundary of normality.

Much mystical experience appears to be inspiring, full of insight into life, giving new evaluations of human endeavor and of the world. Such portions are likewise to be tested by the ordinary rules of right reason, and accepted when they thus prove themselves worthy of a place in human knowledge.
As we have seen, the mystic's experience may be abnormal, normal, or it may be a mixture of the two. The mystical experience itself is not abnormal. The fruits, not the roots, determine the value of the experience.
CHAPTER III

MYSTICISM AND THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Introductory.-- By our determination of what mysticism is not, we have already freed our subject from much of its confusion by separating it from what frequently passes for the true mystical experience. We are now ready to begin a positive statement of what mysticism and the mystical experience and the mystic are. To begin that difficult but interesting search for the essential meaning of this bewildering human activity, we may find some reward in studying the etymology of the word and tracing it to its origin.

Derivation of the word.-- It is here that we discover the origin of that very common confusion of mysticism, the perfect knowledge of a relation, with mystery, a bafflement and bewilderment due to a dearth of knowledge. The earliest associations of the word were, as we said above, with the mystery religions of Greece. The person initiated was called a "mystes," or "myst," that is to say, a person who now possessed
the secret. Muein is the Greek root of both mystery and mysticism; mustees, one initiated into the mysteries.¹ Mystery in the plural means "the sacred rites."² Further, "The root-verb muuo is formed by the act of closing the lips, which it primarily signifies....and appears alike in the Latin mutus, and our colloquial 'mum'."³ With this the Encyclopedic Britannica agrees, giving "shut the mouth" as the root meaning of the verb.⁴

From the same root, meaning to remain mute under questioning as the initiates into the Greek mystery religions were vowed to remain, both our word mystery and mystic come to us. They spring from the same root. Naturally we expect them to retain some of their common origin in their present day significance. Consequently we are not surprised to find them somewhat confused, as they now pass from lip to lip. This confusion we have already cleared away above.

¹Standard Dictionary.


³Ibid.

Next the word springs from a religious practice, and has always retained its religious associations and connotations. But in the process of time, it has broadened its original scope, and today the word mystery is applied to innumerable problems far beyond the field of religion, and the word mystical has likewise, though in a lesser degree, expanded its meaning so as to include philosophical relationships of a certain kind.

An interesting association that mystery has made during the centuries of its usage, is with the word "mummery," which indeed comes from another root meaning "mask," but which came to express false and showy forms of worship as "mummeries" probably through the passion plays of the Middle Ages, of which plays Oberammergau remains the most notable surviving example.¹ The connection between acting religion and actual religion, between true worship and mummeries, thus stands revealed at its source.

Thus we gain an insight into the cause that still operates to make "mysticism" a cult, and to separate the mystics as a class from the great masses of people, religious and non-religious. Mystics form a

group of peculiar people, who by some happy chance, according to their own affirmation, have entered into the innermost meaning of things, especially things religious. This connotation the word has carried with it from its birth and dedication to Graeco-Roman mystery religions.

Positive definition.-- Having now gained what information we can from the etymology of the word "mystic," and finding that some of its present-day obscurity of meaning comes from its early associations with mystery and also with mystery religions, we will now turn to the formation of a definition of this most difficult term. To formulate such a definition that places this historic experience in a class, and then name its distinguishing mark, we might proceed in either, or both of two ways; first, we might describe a person or persons who are mystics, and then seek to discover the peculiar characteristic in them, or in their mystical state, that marks them off from other people; or secondly, proceeding in the same general way, but abstractly, we might place this so-called mystical experience in its class, and then analyze and give name to the peculiar mark that distinguishes the state from all other human conditions. Both methods, like all replacement of loose description with
accurate definition, presents innumerable difficulties; and knowing this, we offer our definition in the spirit of the modern inductionist who sees in his definition, not a finality, but merely a direction for more reflection, analysis, discrimination and experimentation. So difficult is the task that some writers despair of giving any definition to this most complex, and bewildering experience.

The unsatisfactoriness of such definition is well voiced by Rufus Jones, who says: "Of course it is at one's peril that one uses such a debased word to signify the deepest and richest stage of religious experience—direct correspondence with God."¹

"No definition of religious mysticism in general abstract terms is ever satisfactory. At its best it misses the vivid reality of a genuine mystical experience, somewhat as one misses the reality of motion when one stops a spinning top to see what motion is like! In one instance we are examining an arrested object in order to find out what motion is like, and in the other instance we are putting an abstract theory in the place of a palpitating human experience which flow- ers or may flower into an almost endless variety of forms and types. It involves the fallacy of substitu-

tion—putting dry, congealed words for the live pluckings of the heart.  

Here Jones is telling us that a mystical experience cannot be described. Yet all through the book he gives the life stories of great mystics of the past, and tells of their experiences. He also says that it is immediacy with God.

(1) Examination and analysis of mystics.—Instead, then, of beginning with a general definition so thin and colorless that it would be only an empty universal phrase, we shall begin our account with a presentation of a few specimen instances of mystical experiences, which bear the marks of as genuine an ascent into realms of reality as do the reports of the men who have made the assualts on Mount Everest. It is indubitable that many persons of character and veracity, whose lives back their solemn words, have felt themselves invaded by the Life, the Spirit of God, or have been enwrapped and environed by a Divine Presence, or have been flooded with light, or have been raised as on wings into contact with a sphere of Reality of another order than that of time and space, or have been united in one bundle of Life with God.

These types of experience are as old as smiling

\[^{1}\text{Ibid.}, \, \text{pp. 250-251.}\]
and weeping, as old as love-making and grave-digging. They have occurred in all branches of the human family, in all cultures and religions, in both primitive and scientific ages, in Roman Catholic circles and in Protestant communions. They are very differently explained and interpreted at different epochs and in different communions, but the experiences themselves have striking marks of similarity and tower above the explanations. The experiences range all the way from mild and gentle heightening of life to the intensest degree of ecstatic absorption in God. But the fact to note is that many more persons have had such, or similar, experiences of God than there are persons in the world who have seen the moons of Jupiter or the rings of Saturn; more persons than have found themselves at home in the realms of higher mathematics or at least highest mathematics, or than have been creators of supremely great music. Among these mystics are some of the greatest minds that have ever lived, some of the sanest and best balanced persons that have walked the earth as well as some of the simplest and most ordinary, and--it must be said--some of the least tightly organized men and women. We will pass in review a few of the witnesses of this great fellowship, and we will present a few samples of their testimonies, so that we may see
in some sense what happened to them on the heights and what they were talking about when they came back to us.

"There are a few sublime words in the 'Blessing' attributed to Moses in Deuteronomy 33:27, which have plainly come out of a great experience: 'The eternal God is our home and underneath us are the everlasting Arms.' It makes an especial appeal to me because on a momentous occasion in my life, when all unexpectedly I was to receive at sea in a few hours a cable that would affect forever the rest of my life, I suddenly felt myself held by invisible arms that came up underneath me as real as though tangible, and brought me into a dwelling place of love, which prepared me for bearing the sad news that was to come. The Ninetieth Psalm opens with a similar experience of being brought into the eternal dwelling and of a companionship with One who was and is before the mountains were brought to birth, or the world was framed. In both psalms there is probably a tacit reference to the nation and something more is implied than a personal experience such as mine was, but there is nevertheless an authentic note in the ancient words which spring out of a personal consciousness of God as an eternal home, with environing arms underneath."1

1Ibid., p. 253.
"The experience of Sarah Pierrepont, the wife of Jonathan Edwards, is one of the most notable in the biographies of American mystics. Edwards wrote of her when he was twenty and she was thirteen: 'There are certain seasons when the Great Being, in some way or other, invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, so that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him.' In her later life she herself wrote of her experience, 'I seemed to myself to perceive a glow of divine love come down from the heart of Christ into my heart in a constant stream, or pencil of light. What I felt each minute of this time was worth more than all the outward comforts or pleasures which I had enjoyed in my whole life put together.' 1

"One of the most significant effects of experiences of this sort is the resulting deepening of life and a marked increase of joy. One feels as though his specific gravity were suddenly lightened by an incursion from Beyond the usual margins. The person concerned goes down to deeper foundations for the structure of life, somewhat as modern builders have learned to do for the stability of the present-day higher climbing type of steel and concrete structure, or those that may be tested by the force of earthquakes. The opening

1Ibid., pp. 257, 258."
out of the depth-life of the soul is almost always in evidence in persons who gained the conviction of direct contact with God. 1

Mystics always declare that they were in immediate contact with God. Regardless of their experiences, what they saw or how they attained, immediacy with God is the core of their experience. Underhill declares that a mystic is one who has definitely surrendered himself to the embrace of Reality. 2 All the way through her book is the pronounced strain of mysticism as being union with or immediacy with Ultimate Reality or God. 3

Religious "mysticism 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 attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal." 4 "The mystic makes it his life's aim to be transformed into the likeness of Him in whose image he was created." 5 "I am here concerned

1 Ibid., pp. 258-259.
3 Ibid., pp. 51, 65, 84, 86, 41, 46, 97, 481, 499, etc.
5 Ibid., p. 9.
for the moment with mystical religion which I here define as an overbrimming experience of contact, fellowship, or even union with a larger Life which impinges on our own life. If we are seriously to claim that there is a type of religion which thus reveals God and man as conterminous or conjunct, we must show some ground for thinking that God is a God who breaks through the veils and framework of the world and manifests Himself here; and at the same time we must have some evidence that there are valid human experiences of correspondence and fellowship with the divine.¹

Further references could be given from this book defining mysticism as immediacy; but it is not necessary. This one strain of immediacy is sounded all through the book.

Now let us turn to James and see what he has to say about mysticism. First let us study an experience recorded by him from a manuscript communication by a clergyman, from Starbuck's manuscript collection.

"I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep,—the deep that my own

¹Ibid., p. 36.
struggle had opened up within being answered by the unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. I stood alone with Him who had made me, and all the beauty of the world, and love, and sorrow, and even temptation. I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect unison of my spirit with His. The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards and almost bursting with its own emotion. The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence; the darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that He was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two.

"My highest faith in God and truest idea of him were born in me then. I have stood upon the Mount of Vision since, and felt the Eternal round about me. But never since has there come quite the same stirring of the heart. Then, if ever, I believe, I stood face to face with God, and was born anew of his spirit. There was, as I recall it, no sudden change of thought or of
belief, except that my early crude conception had, as it were, burst into flower. There was no destruction of the old, but a rapid, wonderful unfolding. Since that time no discussion that I have heard of the proofs of God's existence has been able to shake my faith. Having once felt the presence of God's spirit, I have never lost it again for long. My most assuring evidence of his existence is deeply rooted in that hour of vision, in the memory of that supreme experience, and in the conviction, gained from reading and reflection, that something the same has come to all who have found God. I am aware that it may justly be called mystical. I am not enough acquainted with philosophy to defend it from that or any other charge. I feel that in writing of it I have overlaid it with words rather than put it clearly to your thought. But, such as it is, I have described it as carefully as I now am able to do.  

The center of this experience is immediate union with God. This note is sounded throughout all the other mystical experiences which James describes in this book. He characterises religious mysticism with the adjective "ineffable," which means that it cannot be described; but, what could be more clear than the


2Ibid., p. 330.
description given by him above? Mysticism he says again and again is the immediate presence, or immediate union with God, or the Unseen, or Ultimate Reality.  

Otto also dignifies mysticism by the adjective "ineffable," and then writes a whole book describing mystical experiences. "Even if mysticism...the ineffable, does not really mean to imply that absolutely nothing can be asserted of the object of the religious consciousness; otherwise, mysticism would exist only in unbroken silence, where as what has generally been characteristic of mystics is their copious eloquence."  

The clear thinking mind can easily see the weakness of such statements.

(2) Definition derived: immediacy.—Mystics as described above are persons who enjoy (or suffer) such experiences. He is indeed a peculiar sort of person if he enjoys such experiences as described by the conventional mystic, unless during his experience, he is less than a person.

From these manifold quotations from various authors, we may now draw our definition of mysticism. But, first, let us make clear the distinction between what Jones calls "Mystik," and what he calls "Mystiz-
ismus." By the former word, we shall mean "a mystical experience;" and by the latter word, "mysticism," we shall mean that organized body of knowledge consisting of the briefest possible descriptions of those mental processes of feeling, thinking, and willing found in so-called mystical experiences and their consequences, --omitting all reference to the theological implications proclaimed by mystics,—such descriptions being derived by observation and by introspection, and used for the purpose of both giving us more knowledge about these experiences, and also suggesting modes for enjoying them, for avoiding their evils and gaining their benefits for both the individual and his fellowmen. This distinction, resting upon a very clear and important difference in the ideas treated, will be carried throughout all our discussion, and it alone, we believe, will do much to clear up many confusions regarding all mystical experiences, and especially those of St. Paul which we treat primarily in this dissertation.

From the illustrations given above, we see that mystics are people who enjoy certain experiences. We may then classify them together by the kind of experience they enjoy. When we further examine each religious mystic and his peculiar experience, we find that the core and kernel, the mark and characteristic of it is
his assertion that he is or was "in contact with God;" or "one with God;" or, in general, that he enjoyed a relationship with God, for long or short, that was immediate, or with nothing whatever between his soul and God. Between two beings, God and himself, there was nothing. Such relationship, in contradistinction from mediate relations, we will call "immediate."

Immediacy, then, to be abstract, is the heart and sole, the characteristic and defining mark of this experience called "mystical," about which the science, or organized body of knowledge called "mysticism" is built up.

A mystic, then, is a person who enjoys experiences, or awareness of relation between things and experiences which are immediate. This includes those who enjoy such experiences either as so-called religious experiences of being in contact with God, or with Being, or with Nothingness, or as so-called ordinary, natural awareness of relations between things in contact, or with no media between them, like any cause and its effect, between an idea and a brain-cell, between electricity and its change into magnetism. Out of such experiences the mystic elaborates a system of thought which is rightly called mysticism.

This definition, mysticism as immediacy, illuminated by contrasting it with the mediacy of mechanistic science. -- This definition may be illuminated by con-
trasting such immediate relations with those that are mediate, or mediated; or those which present two things, activities, or events anywhere, between which there are apparent certain links, or media. The world, as we note immediately, is full of such relations. In fact, we may possibly divide all relationships into mediate and immediate. The former furnishes the subject matter of our so-called inductive science which "explains" each and every event by a chain of events, or media, called "causes." In that kind of mediate explanation, the scientist, as it were crosses his stream by leaping from stepping-stone to stepping-stone, from effect to cause, from effect to cause, ad infinitum, without end. What he overlooks and ignores, is obviously, the relation between any one of his causes and its immediate effect. Between any cause and its effect nothing intervenes, or, if something did intervene, then that something must be taken into consideration as a cause. It is this oversight of the efficient causal explainer that makes him imperious to immediate relationships, and impels him to condemn mysticism as an uncalled for and confusing injection of some supernatural, or some non-material "cause" in his series of natural, physical causes and their effects.

For example, an event occurs. It has no
visible cause; the scientist explains its advent by saying that it must be traced to some yet unknown physical antecedant, and that in turn, to others which eventually explain the perceived present event by a series of causes. The mystic, on the other hand, explains the event by saying God does it immediately without the intermediation of any cause, or any means, or any medium.

Thus it comes about that the mystic, forgetting that he sees or intuits only the event, asserts with all his vehement faith, that he thus meets God, face to face, thus knows God, thus comes into contact with God.

The scientific dogmatist, on the other hand, persistently re-affirms his faith in the fundamental assumption of all science that everything has a physical cause, and continues to search for some antecedant event which will connect this strange happening with the ordinary phenomena of the world. He may believe that God does indeed ultimately perform the wonder, but he does it mediately.

Let us analyze that relationship of cause and effect upon which all science, as David Hume so clearly showed, rests for its validity. We will take a single, concrete, but typical example of that causation found in the collision of two billiard balls by
which one is set in motion by the other.

A billiard ball A strikes another B. A stands still; B moves on. A is said to cause B's motion. But not A as a whole is the cause, but merely A's motion. Now how does A's motion cause B's motion? By collision? No! Mud- or dough-balls might collide and motion ceases. A or B or both must be elastic; it is shown by experiment that both flatten and then spring back. It is the back-spring that moves B. What is that? Elasticity. What is that? Not matter. But the fact that atoms, or electrons, jarred out of their orbits within the balls, rush back again to regain their former orbits of motion. Why? What does that? Here we stop. We have come to the factor that immediately causes and explains the motion of colliding balls. The factor is not matter. It may be mechanical in the sense that it works nearly the same under the same circumstances, but what it is is a mystery yet, and it seems to work immediately upon electrons, and so works mystically.

From this we gain the insight that mysticism as the science of immediacy walks everywhere hand in hand with physics as the science of mediacy whose method is to move by springing from stepping-stone of effect to stepping stone of cause, ignoring the
water that immediately laps both stepping-stones, in order to explain our mental passage from consequent to antecedent by a law, or chain of causes, or mental stepping-stones. A mystic does not fear to wet his feet by coming into direct contact with the all-enveloping ocean of spirit in which events appear.

Conclusions from this chapter.-- In conclusion we may summarize this chapter in a few brief words. First we traced the origin of the words mystery and mysticism.

Secondly, we defined mystical experience and mysticism by an examination of various mystics and their experiences; and next by giving a formal definition of the term with the characteristic of immediacy.

Thirdly, we then distinguished between a mystical experience and mysticism as the system of thought about such experiences, or the science of mysticism, omitting from our psychological study all speculative reflections about the supernatural, or theological aspects of the experience,—aspects that rest not upon immediate introspection but upon later assertions of mystics who sincerely assert that they are or were one with God.

Fourthly, we then illustrated our definition by first contrasting it with scientific mediacy exemplified in efficient causation by analyzing the colli-
sion we discovered that in the ultimate analysis, the motion imparted to the struck ball by the moving ball was due to "elasticity," defined as the sudden return of electrons to their former orbits in the two colliding balls. For such return no physical cause appears. In fact, no antecedent of any kind is discernible. Beyond the electron itself selecting its former orbit from which the collision dislodged it, nothing appears to observation. Its motion seems to be, according to the Compton-Heisenberg equations, directed by itself.¹

Fifthly, from this we conclude that mystical experiences, or experiences which we observe of two events with no mediating thing or circumstance, is not at all limited to religious people, or to religion. They appear in everyday life by the millions, and the basic principle of science, stated in efficient causation, necessarily entails such an immediate relationship between a cause and its effect.

Lastly, we extend the area of these immediate relationships, and find them not only in all causal relations of material objects, but also in all relationships between mind and body, and within consciousness, between sensations and idea, emotions and ideas, ideas and volitions, and emotions and volitions.

Seeing a common chair ultimately involves a step from brain-cell agitation to a color, say, in consciousness, between which two events no medium appears. Between a decision of the human spirit to act and the agitation of brain-cells, nothing can be found, and so such an event, by our definition derived from a study of mystics and their experiences, is a mystical event. Such a necessary conclusion enormously widens the scope of mysticism, and places it, not in some remote, supernatural and inconsequential realm of human experience, but along side of all mediate experiences, found in all "science," common in nature, necessary for forming any conception of the natural world made up of things related both immediately and mediately, both usually according to approximate laws, and unusually, in those wonders, signs and miracles which occur irregularly, and which theologians explain by the immediate interposition of God.
CHAPTER IV

VARIETIES AND COMPOSITION OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES

Introductory.— As we have defined it in the preceding chapter, there can be only one kind of a mystical experience. That is one in which the relation between any two discernible events is immediate.

But as this is an abstraction from the whole mystic, we may re-invest, and build up either (a) such experiences themselves, or (b) our immediate perception of them, with all the rapturous emotion of ecstasy or peaceful emotion of the blank-trance, and add thereto all the irrepressible loquacity of mystics determined to give full accounts of the ineffable, indescribable, and unspeakable experiences which they enjoy. It is these trappings and embroideries of the immediacy which has claimed the attention and has held the breathless interest of self-judged, less fortunate people who have been too stable to experience such high, or low, moments. Moreover, the simple, single, kernel and essence of mysticism defined as immediate relationship has been not
over-laid with cumulus, cloud-like structure of emotion, but by lively and unrestrained imagination, under the spur of suggestion, this entirely simple fact has been made the basis of vast claims to oneness with God, with passages into another world, with fallings and flyings, floatings and swimmings in bysses and abysses of nothingness more void than Hegel's nothingnesses which are somethings. These draperies, these fanciful phantasms, added to the one single clear idea of mysticism, are what has made the whole matter most tempting, as the "play ground of whimsies," and covered this uniquely clear experience with all the mysteries of hallucinatory religion and the most unrestrained of theological vagaries.

**Two kinds of mystical experiences.**-- The truth is that there have always been two kinds of mystical experiences in the world psychologically alike.

(1) **Religious.**-- People have connected one kind with religion, so that we may call them religious mystical experiences.

(2) **Philosophical.**-- But calmer and clearer thinkers have also discerned the same basis for such experiences in everyday life, or in common psychological experiences, and without connecting them with religion, have called them philosophical. So we have
"Nobody can understand a large part of human nature without understanding Mysticism. The true historical importance of Mysticism lies not in the subject to which it applied the predicate real, but in the view it holds of the fundamental meaning of that very ontological predicate itself. No matter what subject the mystic seems to call real. That might be from your point of view any subject you please; yourself, or God, or the wall. The interest of Mysticism lies wholly in the predicate. Mysticism consists in asserting that to be means, simply and wholly, to be immediate, as what we call pure color, pure sound, pure emotion, are already in us partly and imperfectly immediate. Mysticism asserts that this aspect of Being, which common sense already, as we have seen, recognizes and names in the popular ontological vocabulary, must be kept quite pure, must be wholly and abstractly isolated from all other aspects, must be exclusively emphasized. And the mystic further holds that your eternal salvation depends on just such an abstract purifying of your ontological predicate. Purer than color or than music or the purest love must the absolute immediate be. Now why the mystic

says this, is a matter for further study. But this is what he says. He certainly does not assert, if you are an ordinary realist, that his Absolute is real in your sense, say real as money is real. The true issue for him is whether the fundamental ontological predicate, reality, ought not itself to be altered, altered namely by a certain purification, so as to be another predicate than what ordinary metaphysic confusedly takes it to be. That the mystic is dealing with experience, and trying to get experience quite pure and then to make it the means of defining the real, is what we need to observe. That meanwhile the mystic is a very abstract sort of person, I well admit. But he is usually a keen thinker. Only he uses his thinking sceptically, to make naught of other thinkers. He gets his reality not by thinking, but by consulting the data of experience. He is not stupid. And he is trying, very skilfully, to be a pure empiricist. Indeed, I should maintain that the mystics are the only thoroughgoing empiricists in the history of philosophy.1

Kagawa was quite in agreement with Royce and James on Mysticism. He said, "I am a scientific mystic."2 He saw clearly that the relation between a cause and

1 Josiah Royce, ibid., pp. 80-81.
its effect was one of immediacy; therefore a mystical event. "The more scientific I am the more I feel I am penetrating deeply into God's world. Especially within the domain of biology do I feel as though I am talking with God face to face...Science is the mystery of mysteries. It is the divine revelation of revelations." \(^1\)

**Further subdivisions of mystical experiences.**-- We can, however, make further significant subdivisions and classify mystical experiences enjoyed by people into three classes:

1. **Intellectual, or revelations received immediately.**-- The Old Testament is filled with examples of immediate revelations, and it was especially common among the prophets.\(^2\) In philosophy, we know through intuitions which do not mention the source of the truth.\(^3\) An idea flops into our mind; there is no mediator. Such is immediate, therefore a mystical event.

The whole English philosophical development, from Locke to present day empiricists, revolved around the idea of the "intuitive," or "immediate," or given truth.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Hos. 1:2; Zech. 4:6; Heb. 1:1; etc.

(2) Emotional.-- This is the play-ground of the mystic. They delight in ecstasy and rapture. Once experienced, it is a state ever after desired.

Ecstasy is a state of consciousness which is arrived at by subtraction. All sensations leave; all ideas, memories, images are gone. One in ecstasy has no volition, but is utterly passive. Time is no more; space is gone, void. He enjoys an endless emptiness. Nothing is left but emotion, and that is placid as death; the sweetest peace ever experienced. To the fretted, anxious, worried, tired, weak, driven, fatigued soul, such an escape to such an asylum, or elysium, was the most desirable feeling in the world. For a further discussion of trance and ecstasy, see pp. 69-72.

(3) Volitional.-- Volitional mystical experiences are perceived miracles wherein God works without means; or usual acts of his everywhere that his will is working immediately.

A miracle may be defined as God's immediate and unusual operations in the world, in nature, or in men. More generally, it is an unusual event which causes wonder in its beholders; who accept it as a sign of some power not visible to the senses; and so they declare it is effected by God, who works thusly either through media, or means, or immediately, by his direct will upon things and men.
If God works immediately in unusual and wonderful events, it is a mystical event; if not, then it is not mystical, though it may be mysterious, so far as its exact mode of accomplishment is concerned. If God works by natural means, some day men may find out how to use those same means to effect the same results. If God fired Elijah's sacrifice at Mt. Carmel by using electricity, it is possible that now men might do it. If by magnetism he raised the axe-head, now men could raise steel bars magnetized in the air by electromagnets.
CHAPTER V

THE THEORY OF MYSTICISM APPLIED TO SOME OF
ST. PAUL'S EXPERIENCES

Introductory.-- Because of the confusion attached to the word "mysticism" we have had to digress in this study. In so doing we have cleared away all confusion. Having learned that immediacy is the essential mark of a mystical experience, we will now apply this touchstone to the episodes in Paul's life that are generally accepted as mystical experiences, and see exactly wherein they are mystical.

The conversion of Saul.-- The experience which Saul of Tarsus had while on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus is usually cited as one of the great mystical experiences of his life. For Saul of Tarsus himself this was a radical, vital conversion; and for the world still full of consequences. This journey to Damascus was the occasion to which he often referred afterward as the revelation of Christ to him,¹ and the final

¹I Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:15 f.; Acts 22:9-11; 26:14-19; II Cor. 12.
event was so important to the author of Acts that he offers three separate accounts of it. Two of them were occasions on which Paul himself tells the story.

If we make a composite account from the three narrations, we find that Saul and his party were marching along the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. Saul was empowered by the Jerusalem authorities to extend the persecution of Christians to the Damascus synagogues, and was on his way to execute his plan. As they drew nigh unto Damascus about noon there shone round about him a light out of heaven, above the brightness of the sun. He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To which he asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" He received the answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Saul arose from the earth, and when he opened his eyes he saw nothing. He was led into Damascus, and was there for three days without sight, neither eating nor drinking.

Now let us apply our definition of mystical experience to this event, and see wherein it was mystical. The circumstances in which Paul found himself

1 Acts 9:1 ff.
were most complex. In it were both mediate and immediate relations. We are interested in the immediate, which we shall proceed to examine. What parts of this whole can we call mystical or immediate experiences? or, experiences of two related distinguishable and separate events with nothing between them?

Saul first saw a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about him and them that journeyed with him. This was a mystical experience. The mystical experience comes in the transformation of the physical activity into the mental activity. The last step in the change from the physical to the mental was immediate: just as when we see color, which is in the mind, coming from physical light-waves, and cortical-cell action. When the physical actions are transformed immediately into light in our minds in the operation, that change is mystical. It presents to us an immediate relationship between cell action and consciousness of color, with nothing between the brain and mind.¹

Then it seems that Saul heard a sound that gave him a definite meaning. Here again is a double mystical experience. The airwaves, acting in the ear, were carried to his brain, as is the case when we hear

a sound. From the brain these waves were transformed into conscious sound. This getting a sound is the first mystical experience. The next step of the transformation of the physical cell vibrations into conscious meaning, the change from sound to meaning, is also a mystical experience. There is nothing between the sound in the mind and the message from the sound. Saul understood a message from the sound; it meant something to him. He said that it told him to go to Damascus. Getting a meaning from a sound is always mystical experience.

What is the religious significance of this analysis of physical, or philosophical mystical experience? This leads us to the final step in this event in Paul's life. That is the study of the religious mystical experience involved. Did God work immediately and without means upon the mind or spirit of Paul? This question leads us then into the not uncommon one of the nature of the light and of the sound. Ordinarily men ask: Were they objective or subjective? Exactly what these words mean is hard to say for they have had so many meanings in philosophy. But the Bible student ordinarily means to ask whether the voice was indeed a message from God, or Christ; or merely a hallucination, originating in his own harried and sickened mind, or aroused by his own disordered and agitated brain cells.
"The questions about the reality of the light and voice Saul saw and heard derive their importance from the conventional conclusions based upon them, and which concern both St. Paul personally, and also the whole of Christendom. For, it is assumed, if Saul was called by a voice that existed, not in the skies, but only in his own being, then his commission could not possibly come from God, but from his own subterranean self. Consequently, it was not authentic and valid for him nor anyone else. Moreover, if he thought it came from a source outside his own personality, when it did not, he was deluded. Being deluded in this respect, he may have been deluded in many or all of his other doctrines. Therefore, his whole system of thought, pretending to be revelations from God, is unauthentic and untrustworthy. The eternal significance of his experience, therefore, hangs upon the reality of the celestial signs.

"These are the contentions of that science which explains everything by physical causation. Its refusal to allow any objective, material reality to the signs Saul beheld has been the source of some anxiety to faithful disciples who have longed to see in such special miracles a sure proof of God's existence and his immanence in the world. Against this primitive desire of all religion which springs from the perception
of and reflection upon the strange events of life, science, moved alone by the instinct of curiosity, finding ample satisfaction in busying itself with the usual, has set itself with a rigid, but partly legitimate and not wholly unprofitable intolerance. Its opposition to miracles, however, has not sprung from a single-eyed desire for human welfare, but from the necessities of its own purpose to predict coming physical events, which compels it to postulate a universal material connection between all events. In taking this vow of voluntary poverty it has cut itself off from some of the richest and realest values of life reached by religious faith."

It makes no difference whether the sound came from some material object, vocal cords, some vibrations of ear-drum, agitation of brain cells or from mere hallucination. None of these is significant, or in themselves gave Saul any message whatever. "The difference between so-called events, or genuine facts, and illusions and hallucinations, must be discoverable, not in their psychic constitution nor in their origin, but in their function, or their power and efficiency in serving some end or purpose. Such a view entirely revolutionizes mechanistic science and its modes of explain-

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ing by physical causes, and puts an entirely new face upon all biologic, psychologic, moral, esthetic and religious phenomena. Skeptical eyes are opened to the fact that dreams, illusions, hallucinations may reveal some of the most precious truths men can ever discover and possess. In this light, St. Paul's vision becomes vastly rich and new; excites entirely novel questions and yields most suggestive results. For, first denying that the vision itself confers any validity whatever upon the message, we ask what its worth, value, truth is for humankind? What did it do? What good was it? These questions must be answered in the light of the injunction, "By their fruits ye shall know them", and St. Paul's own word, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." Science judges by roots; but the roots of a pear tree have no visible effect upon the apples growing on one of its engrafted branches.\(^1\)

The significant question lies not in any material object from whence the sound came, but is this: How did Paul get the message? Did he himself unconsciously make it up? Or, did it come from some source (1) not Saul himself, and (2) from no other human being, (3) or source, as he declares in Galatians 1:11, 12?

The declaration that it did indeed come from God, and immediately to Saul's mind, rests for its validity, not upon any facts in the situation, but

\(^1\text{Ibid.}\)
upon the VALUE of the message, upon what grew out of it, upon the assurance of men that this GOSPEL which Saul thus received did indeed come from God. "The moment we attempt to evaluate St. Paul's vision we must ask the purpose for which it was given. Its purpose plainly lay in the message he received. The message, then, was primary and all-important. The means, method and medium through which the message came were all secondary and altogether unimportant for that end; as indifferent to an heir as the telegraph, telephone, wireless, radio, or word-of-mouth which announces his inheritance. What difference does it make in St. Paul's Gospel whether his call came via the air, through his ears, by way of his brain cells, or immediately from God's mind?

"Next, since it was a message for St. Paul alone, it is entirely immaterial to its value whether it was given by subjective or objective means. It makes no difference whatever to its validity and worth whether anybody else in heaven or on earth heard it, perceived it, or had the slightest inkling of it. If the mind of St. Paul understood the message, God's purpose was fulfilled.

"Moreover, since the essence of the vision lay not in its external trappings of light or voice, but only in its meaning to St. Paul, that meaning needed to be clear to him alone. To be clear to him,
and to be valid for him, it must fit itself into his character, into his vocabulary and language, into his total background or apperceptive mass. For God's message must come from the skies, be accompanied with light, be spoken in a human voice, as to prophets of old. Suppose that, instead of a light, the earth had suddenly yawned, a chasm opened, and from it smoke and fire had rolled up and in the midst thereof a gloomy figure all in raven black had emerged, what would Saul of Tarsus have done? Fallen prostrate, covered his head, stopped his ears, refused to hear or see. In order that the message with its meaning might reach the mind of St. Paul, it had to come with some such manifestations of the divine as his education and training expected. Likewise, it must come to him in the fullness of time, when his mind was prepared, when his temper was ripe, when the message answered the deep and insoluble problems of his intellect and gave promises of peace and joy to the agonizing cries of his yearning heart. Such demands make the message individual, personal and subjective.

"The value of any revelation, whatever its source or the nature of its medium, finally depends upon the use its receiver makes of it. In a dream a solution of a problem, long considered, comes to a mathematician, and he enlightens the world with it.
In another dream the shape of a bent pin comes to Eli Whitney, and he invents the cotton gin and founds a huge industry of incalculable value to the race. Through a dangling string the vision of a suspension bridge comes to Roebling, and he builds it. In the streets of Jerusalem, in broad daylight, a startling vision, in full color, of Jesus before Pilate comes to Tissot, and he spreads it upon canvas famous forever after. A man hears a voice from space and rushes to a neurologist to be examined for approaching insanity. Saul hears a voice from the skies and revolutionizes the world. In the final analysis, then, many other conditions being fulfilled, the test of a vision or a revelation of new truth depends upon the will of the person who receives. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" marks the apex of St. Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus Way. From that moment onward, the world has been stamping the truth, worth, value and validity upon it, as in ever-widening and deepening spheres of influence it radiates from that single figure, fallen and forlorn on the sands of an eastern desert.1

This experience which Saul had while on his way to Damascus is commonly referred to as his conversion. But this, in fact, was not his conversion. It

1Ibid.
was for an entirely different purpose. "To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." Paul saw the risen Lord in order to be qualified as an Apostle. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" Be that as it may, Paul regarded himself as having seen the Lord; Christ appeared unto him. "He appeared to me also," Paul tells the Corinthians. Ananias recognized that the Lord appeared to Paul. When he came in to him at Damascus, he addressed him saying, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me."

That the impartation of the Gospel to Paul was mystical in the truest sense of that word, we will show later.

What was mystical about "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision?" The "I", spirit, worked upon brain-cells, these upon nerves, these upon bones and muscles, and Paul's body went places and did things. Paul did see light; he heard a sound, perceived words.

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1 Acts 26:16.
2 I Cor. 9:1.
3 I Cor. 15:8.
5 See pages 64-69.
in the Hebrew, understood a message "Go to Damascus," and he voluntarily obeyed. Paul lived the rest of his life actualizing the meaning of that message. The realizing of that message resulted in untold good for mankind. Such an experience is fully validated by its results.

Now, having analyzed the concrete situation which Saul met on the road to Damascus, let us ask: What part of it was mystical? What discernible events were immediately related? Which are the immediate, and which were mediated? Obviously, the auditory experience was mediated by a "voice" which he heard, speaking words in a language he understood. In that much of the experience nothing mystical appears, and indeed, nothing so stupendously remarkable that we must call it miraculous. Likewise, the visual sensation of a "light" showing around him and the others, was not wholly mystical, though by its superior brightness it was wonderful, and by its nature as light, a sign of the glory of God in the Jewish mind. But as far as Saul's own perception of it was concerned, there seems to be nothing miraculous in much of that, and only a part of that was immediate, and therefore mystical. Our test here purifies this episode of much accretion, and begins immediately to reduce it to two constituents; one mediate, the other immediate.
But it must be recalled, that in previous chapters, we have shown that any human perception by ear or eye, or any other senses, that any comprehension of meaning, that any voluntary response to such a meaning, each and all such everyday experiences involve immediate relationships between two or more discernible events. Therefore, there is ample room left for the mystical in this conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus. Mysticism must be called in to describe his hearing, that is, the transformation of certain sound waves, if any; of certain brain-cell vibrations, vibrations of Christ's vocal cords? waves of air? actions of Saul's own ears, nerves, brain-cells, and then finally, the sensation of sound in his consciousness which is in no wise similar to, nor reducible to the previous physical activities. All these media themselves reveal a chain of causes and effects between which causes and effects nothing intervened. Then the final leap from agitated brain-cells to sensation of sound eliminated the need of any bridge between brain and mind. So mystical experience ran like a chain along this whole route from the voice of the heavenly visitant to the consciousness of Saul.

Finally, the sound itself in Saul's mind had to be interpreted by him. From those vocal and verbal
Hebrew signs he took a meaning, which was the vital, ultimate, all-important and absolute act of the whole bewildering phenomenon. Exactly what that was, how much of his whole Christian doctrine he received then and there, is a problem of purely speculative theology. Perhaps, as some thinkers are inclined to believe, the whole Christian religion, not in its eternal entirety, but as a universal and eternal religion, did flash upon his mind then and there. If so, that came without media, and by God's own mind becoming immediately Saul's mind, in clear revelation. For, as far as the record goes, the word spoke to him, giving this non-mystical message, and merely told him to go to Jerusalem where it would be told him what he must do; which in a way, seemed to be anti-climax to this earth-and heaven-shaking miracle. But possibly it was a test of the man. At any rate, Saul decided to go; and in that decision there entered also the decision of his spirit working immediately upon his brain cells, and these upon nerves, bones and muscles, so that he obeyed, and continued to obey the message the rest of his life. The validity of that message is proved beyond doubt his ability to work it out; by its effects upon him; and by its every growing consequence for the good of mankind in all the earth. Our summary, therefore, of this climacteric world-event
points out that just at those points, and all of them, which reveal immediate relationships between two events different from each other, mystical procedures enter in, and mysticism is the science that describes them.

In our analysis given above, we have, as a matter of fact, left, as it were, interstices, between visible, tangible material things, or parts of things. As, for example, the vibration of the ear's tympanum and the nerve impulse which that vibration excites,--a transformation as mysterious to men as the transformation of electricity into magnetism, or light, or heat. At those junctures of transfiguration or metamorphosis of energy no visible, physical means appears to work the miracle. The faithful will have no difficulty in finding God at such critical and necessary junctures in the activities of the world.

Some readers may feel that we have by our means pared down this miraculous vision to practically nothing. A moment's reflection will show the unfairness of that feeling. What excites that opposition is our contradiction of long-established but wholly erroneous views of mystical experiences and mysticism, which we are laboring here to clear away. For, while we are indeed examining with rigid scientific exactness this whole advent of Christ again into our world, we are not at
all considering the miraculousness of it. For mysticism and miracle are not at all the same. The elimination of the first, far from annihilating the second, may leave the miracle standing on even firmer ground. Nor are we for a moment solving mysteries involved in this appearance of the risen Lord. There are myraids of them. Mysticism does not touch them. For mysticism and mystery, like mysticism and miracles, are entirely different and completely divorced from each other. All the mysteries in the world heaped together do not constitute a single mystery, but form exactly the opposite, --relations so simple, and immediate that we know all of this relation that there is to know. Not a speck of mystery remains in such connections. The soul that is in "contact" with God, that is one with Him, has nothing to explain. So in this appearance, in this audition, all the mystery and all the miraculous elements remain untouched by our analysis. All we have done is to point out exactly those moments in the total series of marvels when two items come together with nothing intervening between them. This is mystical. It may be also marvelous, wonderful, unusual, extraordinary, a sign or miracle, but it cannot be a mystery or an obscure moment waiting to be cleared up by further investigation. There is no more to be investigated. There is nothing more to be discovered. Between the two there is nothing.
This is a mystical event. When we perceive that fact, we perceive a mystical experience, and in experiencing such a fact, we ourselves enjoy a mystical experience in that our brains immediately affect our minds.

Gospel by revelation. Paul lost no time in beginning to preach after the Damascus episode. If he started preaching right away, what did he preach? "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." How did he get this Gospel which he preached? "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."

According to Paul's own statement, the Gospel came to him through revelation "in" Jesus Christ. "For not did I myself (any more than the other apostles) receive it from man, nor was I taught it by man." Receiving it implies the absence of labour in acquiring it. "Taught it" by ideas and words implies the mediacy of learning, and of a teacher. But Paul said "by revelation of or in Jesus Christ" I received the Gospel. He revealed it to him. The twelve were Apostles of Christ in the flesh; Paul was an Apostle of the risen Christ.

Paul received his gospel not from men, but immediately in Christ. He could not have received it.

\(^1\) Galatians 1:12.
before his conversion because he was not in Christ for he persecuted and wasted the church by being a Jew. Paul was zealous for the traditions of his fathers, and tried to destroy the name "Christian" because he thought it would destroy his nation. When he was converted he did not confer with any human being, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to the Apostles before him. But he went away into Arabia, and then returned to Damascus. Then three years after his conversion he went to Jerusalem and stayed with Peter for fifteen days, seeing none of the Apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Then he went into Syria and Cilicia, still unknown to the churches there. Fourteen years later he went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with him. But he did not get any Gospel from them; he told them what he had been preaching. He then learned that they were in perfect agreement; they were preaching the same thing.

The fact is that Paul received his gospel immediately from the Lord by revelation.¹ A vision of the Lord Jesus is mentioned² at his first visit to Jerusalem;³ but this seems to have been subsequent to the

¹I Cor. 11:23; 15:3; I Thess. 4:15.
³Gal. 1:18.
revelation here meant, and to have been confined to giving a particular command. The vision "fourteen years before" was in A.D. 43, still later, six years after his conversion. Though he had received no instruction from the Apostles, but from the Holy Spirit, yet when he met them his Gospel agreed exactly with theirs.

How did the Lord reveal himself to Paul? Did he speak words to him? Paul did not receive the Gospel through a mediator, but he received it directly from the Lord. The means by which the message came to Paul confers no validity whatever upon the message. What was its worth, or value? What truth did it bring to mankind? What did it do? What good was it? We can readily see that it is the fruits, not the roots, that are important. Did Paul make the message himself which he preached, or did he get it from some other or outside source?

The declaration that it did indeed come from God, and immediately to Paul's mind, rests for its validity, not upon any facts in the situation, but upon the VALUE of the message, upon what grew out of it, upon the assurance of men that this Gospel which he thus received did indeed come from God. If we are going to

1Gal. 1:15-18.

2II Cor. 12:1.
evaluate this revelation of the Gospel, we must ask the purpose for which it was given. Its purpose lay in the message he received. The message, not the means, was primary and all important. The method and medium through which the revelation came were all secondary and altogether unimportant for the end. What difference does it make if this revelation came via the air, through the ears, by way of his brain cells, or immediately from God's mind?

Paul received the Gospel directly from the Lord. This element of immediacy in which we are interested is vital. No mediator was involved. Revelation is immediacy, and therefore a mystical experience. It was a spirit to spirit relationship, the mind of the Lord becoming the mind of Paul, with nothing between them. Paul was in contact with God. Why? Because the message which he received meant something. Meaning affects conduct. With this revelation of the Gospel, Paul went forth and changed world history. It changed Paul's life and conduct. The fruits which it bore proved that it was from God.

This reception of the Gospel by St. Paul involves the whole problem of genuine revelation. All revelation is not necessarily wholly mystical. God may reveal his mind, his emotion, or his will to men by
means of words or other signs. If these signs are wonders and interpreted as signs of God's message, by the people, they constitute miracles. God may reveal himself (1) by means, or media, or (2) without means or media. In the latter case the communication between God and man is mystical. He may also reveal himself either by (a) usual, or (b) unusual means and methods. In the latter case the revelation is called a miracle.

A revelation came to a prophet from God either mediatally by natural means, or mystically by immediate telepathy, or thought-transference, or clair-voyance. But when the prophet turns and gives his revelation from God to the people in words or signs they understand, then that is not a revelation, and of course, is not mystical. One kind of mystical experience, then, is the reception of a revelation from God, of God's immediate transference of his mind to the mind of some chosen recipient. This is what happened to St. Paul. He received the Gospel, with all its necessary essentials included, directly and immediately from God when St. Paul was in Christ. In such a transfer there was no possibility of misunderstanding, no doubt about the meaning of words; no age-long theological discussions over terms, over what God or Christ meant. Instantly, there in Paul's own mind, was the Gospel. No visible, no auditory, no perceptual means appeared to account
for its arrival. It was there, and St. Paul knew it was there, and he knew what it was.

Paul's trance in the temple.-- Our next analysis deals with an event that followed by about three years Paul's conversion. It is significant for many things. One of them concerns its bearing upon the doctrine of deism that presents God as transcendent, and pantheism, which teaches he is altogether immanent, and upon theism that teaches he is at once transcendent and immanent, the doctrine now generally accepted by Christians. In Paul's time, and especially amongst the Jews, transcendency of God reigned. Later on, some of the Fathers of the Church thought of God as being absolutely perfect, and consequently as being utterly transcendent. Whether they were intellectually influenced by Plato, or by Aristotle, or by Philo, or, at a later period, by Plotinus and the later Neoplatonists, God was throughout this period conceived by them as absolutely above and beyond the finite sphere. He belonged in a purely supersensuous realm. They hoped by imputing to God absolute transcendency of nature to free Him from any contact with the world of "mutability," and from all responsibility for the existence of evil. The difficulty, however, involved in this scheme of transcendency was that it logically made God forever unknowable and unrevealable. Being, as they maintained, absolutely super-
finite and above all the distinctions of quality and character which are known here below, God cannot be like anything we know, and He could consequently never be apprehended or expressed in any terms familiar to the "finite" mind. No matter how far up the mind may climb by the ladder of human intellect, God is bound to be beyond the highest rung of that ladder. He is above the topmost peak, which we can never reach. He is still "yonder" in a sphere where all finites are "transcended."

This logical situation determined for the thinkers of that time the form in which a mystical experience might be expected. Only one "way" was open, only one "approach" was conceivable. It must be by a "mysterious" way beyond the rounds of the ladder of man's mind. In other words we must have a supra-rational way of passing beyond the upper end of the highest round of our mental ladder. We must leave the ladder and use "wings of flight." Plotinus used exactly that word "flight" for the last stage of the passage, "the flight of the alone to the Alone." "We came," he says, speaking of himself and his mother, "to our minds," by which he means the utmost reach of our minds, "and we passed beyond them with the utmost leap of our hearts." "In one trembling flash, without intermediary, we touched the Eternal Wisdom."
"Plotinus consistently called this last "flight" or "leap" which takes one beyond the range of mind, "ecstasy." It is a fused, unfocussed, undifferentiated state. It is in many respects like the hypnotic state. A conscious subject aware of a specific object is no longer present. The mind is blank as to definite content and yet may be, and often is unified, concentrated, intense and filled to overbrimming with energy and rapture.\(^1\)

A trance is a state of profound abstraction of mind or spirit, as in religious contemplation; rapture that destroys one's consciousness of surroundings; ecstasy. Trance and ecstasy are the same thing. Ecstasy is a psychological state in which intense mental absorption in divine things is accompanied by loss of sense perception and voluntary control.\(^2\)

Following is a good description of ecstasy:

"When the attention of the mind is wholly turned away and withdrawn from the bodily senses, it is called an ecstasy. Then whatever objects may be present are seen not with the open eyes, nor any voices heard at all. It is a state midway between sleep and death: The soul is rapt in such wise as to be withdrawn from the bodily senses more than in sleep but less than in death."\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Standard Dictionary.

Ecstasy is the mark of the conventional mystic. It is a state of consciousness arrived at by subtraction. All sensations, ideas, memories, images leave. One in such a state has no volition, but is utterly passive. Time is no more; space is gone, void. He enjoys an endless emptiness. Nothing is left but a peculiar kind of consciousness. It is a feeling of emptiness, void, passiveness, peacefulness. Once one enjoys such ecstasy he always longs for it afterwards. It is a most desirable and agreeable state of consciousness. In that state men lose their human characteristics. We might compare this highly agreeable state of consciousness to that of a dog lying before a fireplace. It has no ideas, no senses, no will. The only state that it has is a blissful state of consciousness, highly desired. Everything is blank to it except feeling. Ecstasy is like that; one who has enjoyed ecstasy remembers a feeling that he desires, wanting it after it is over.

The same state of consciousness can be produced in an individual by the use of drugs, alcohol, stramonium, mescal, hasheesh, etc.¹ Yet drugs have nothing to do with religion. Both states leave; both are highly desired afterwards.

Rufus Jones tries to prove the goodness of mystics by playing up to their goodness and showing how they have effected the past. But they have not contributed to the goodness of humanity. They have never proved anything, rather tended only to confuse. The only way to prove their goodness is to take ten mystics, or any other number of conventional mystics, and place beside them the same number of scientists, historians, or men of other fields. Wherein do they differ from mystics? Which has given more to the world? Mystics have not given a thing.

The English word ecstasy is a translation of the Greek "ekstasis," which means "standing out" of oneself, or outside of one's ordinary consciousness. It is used very loosely to describe the sleep-like state which is obviously different from that of ordinary sleep. A state in which the soul seems to have passed out of the body into another condition; an ecstasy. While Paul was praying in the Temple at Jerusalem, after his return from Damascus, he "fell into a trance, and saw the Lord saying unto him, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them
that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{1}

The thing experienced here by Paul seems to be on a much different level from the thing that is played up by mystics as trance or ecstasy. The trance is not the important thing, and Paul does not tell much about it; he does not go into detail and describe it. He merely mentions the state in which he was, and says nothing further about it.

This experience that Paul records about his trance and message from the Lord coming to him while he was in the Jerusalem Temple, while it contains elements of enormous importance both to theologians and students of religious experience, has very little definite to offer the student of true mysticism. When we analyze this complex seizure, and separate the trance, which may or may not be connected with religion at all, and which may or may not be an ecstasy or rapture, from the message that St. Paul reports later he received, we are ready to study each part separately.

The trance, of course, was not mystical. Trances are not uncommon at all; the psychic research annals report many cases. At times great Christian mystics fell regularly into trances, and from these cases the habit received its sanctification and has been connected with

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1}Acts 22:17-22.}
religion. But such association is purely historical, accidental, designed, and not necessary. Millions of splendid religious people, of the highest order, have gone through good lives, and never once fell into any trances. On the other hand, many have fallen into trances, and into ecstasies, who were not Christian, and not even religious. On the other hand, those who did or do suffer trance-like attacks, often accept them as evidences of supernatural powers working in themselves, often receive visions, dreams and auditions, and sometimes these are worthy and sometimes of no account to mankind. Lucy Walker, for example, while praying for a couple nights for an answer to her prayer for guidance, suggested by Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader, saw, as she reported, a great flash of light in her room, which she immediately accepted as God's approval upon her becoming the thirteenth wife of the polygamous Mormon elder. Such reported messages, whether coming to trance-subject or not, are not reliable. It is of common occurrence to find that spiritualistic mediums fall into trances, and while in such states, give reports of trans-earthly affairs which are often acted upon by others, and often turn out disastrously for them. Marjorie, probably the greatest of present day mediums, performs marvels while in a trance-state. Certain hypnotic subjects, while in similar states, exhibit
rare and wonderful gifts, like clairvoyance or seeing at a distance, without any connection with any religion. As we have said above, the inducement of trance, ecstasy, rapture, etc. is very commonly accomplished by drugs, and the same emotional states often occurred under the mass-suggestion and excitement of such as the Cane Ridge revival in Kentucky, about the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Our concern as mystics, lies with the message Paul received; and especially with its mode of transmission. There is no statement that allows us to make a decision about its immediacy. Paul "saw the Lord saying," a peculiar description. We cannot even guess what the vision, if any, was; in what form it appeared, what figure it revealed, where it was located. Nor can we say much more about the auditory media. In fact, all we can say about this purported mystical experience is negative. It does not seem to fulfill our definition of mystical as immediate. Whatever mystical elements were contained in it, were the common, every day usual ones that accompany all our perception and all our understanding of any signs, heard or seen. That it was miraculous we cannot say; no one witnessed it except Paul. That it was beneficial we cannot say surely, if we judge by the usual standards of good consequences. It plunged the great Apostle for perhaps ten or twelve
years into an obscurity unrelieved by any ray of light, from which Barnabas finally rescued him in Tarsus, and brought him to Antioch where his immortal career began in earnest. As it seemed to affect his conduct alone, and as he alone seemed to know about it, we can hardly say anything about its veridicalness or about its social value. We subjoin our study of it to show how our rigid definition, derived from religious mystical states and mystics, purifies our studies of such incidents from much possible dross, and yet leaves us with a surer sense of the physically inexplicable, and consequent feeling of God's work in men.

Third heaven.-- Because of the Corinthian situation Paul is forced to glory and boast. But he does not boast in the revelations which he has received from God, but rather in infirmities. He illustrates the "glorying in infirmities." Then he tells of another experience, this one connected with a glorious revelation of which it was the sequel: but he dwells not on the glory done to himself, but on the infirmity which followed it, as displaying Christ's power.

"I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a

\[\text{II Cor. 11:30.}\]
one caught up even to the third heaven." Paul does not say that this was himself, but it evidently was he. He purposely thus distinguishes between the rapt and glorified person of v. 2, 4, and himself the infirmity-laden victim of the "thorn in the flesh" (v. 7). Such glory belonged not to him, but the weakness did. He did not even know whether he was in or out of the body when the glory was put upon him, so far was the glory from being his.

"Fourteen years ago" this event took place. If we accept Lightfoot, Lewin, and Wieseler, the date of writing II Corinthians was 57. Fourteen years less places it in 43 A.D. What was happening in Paul's life in 43? 30 A.D. is generally accepted as the date of his conversion. After a lapse of 14 years, he tells us in Galatians, he went to Jerusalem. This was after his first missionary journey, and his return to Antioch. In 43 he was probably traveling through Galatia as a missionary. Luke tells us of his work in that area.

Paul's work at Lystra began with a miracle, not with a synagogue service. A cripple sat in some open public place, perhaps at the city gate, or in a market-place, where the unfortunate begged for a living. No plea was made by the lame man, except the signs of wistful faith which Paul perceived. Paul healed the
man, and the people immediately proclaimed them as Gods. Some Jews then came from Antioch and Iconium, orthodox Jews, who were among the opponents of Paul and Barnabas. At Lystra, as at Iconium, these antagonists sought to stone the two missionaries, and succeeded in stoning Paul. After his well-nigh miraculous return to life, Paul, with Barnabas, left for Derbe the next day.

It is quite probable that Paul experienced the third heaven on this occasion. During his sufferings, he was lifted up to the third heaven. Paul did not know whether it was in the body, or out of the body. If in the body, he must have been caught up bodily; if out of the body, as seems to be Paul's opinion, his spirit must have been caught up out of the body. At all events he recognizes consciousness.

"And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Paul was permitted not only to "hear the things of Paradise, but also to see in some degree the things of the third heaven. Paul did not say that he could not describe the things he saw, but rather he heard unspeakable words, and things not lawful for a man to utter."
"On behalf of such a one will I glory: but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in my weakness. For if I should desire to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I shall speak the truth: but I forbear, lest any man should account of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me." Ignorance of the mode does not set aside the certain knowledge of the fact. The Apostles were ignorant of many things. The things which Paul heard were not unspeakable in themselves, otherwise Paul could not have heard them; but as the explanation states, "which it is not lawful...to utter." They were designed for Paul's own consolation, and not for communication to others. Some heavenly words are communicable; these were not so. Paul did not have the power adequately to utter; nor if he had, would he have been permitted; nor would earthly men comprehend them. A man may hear and know more than he can speak. Paul puts himself in the background, except in respect to his infirmities; his glorying in his other self, to which the revelations were vouchsafed, was not in order to give glory to his fleshly self, but to bring out in contrast the infirmities of the latter, that Christ might have all the glory. "Not but that I might glory as to myself; for if I should desire to glory, I shall not be a fool;" for I have things to glory, or boast of which

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1Exodus 34:6; Isaiah 6:3.
2John 3:12; I Cor. 2:9.
are good matter for glorying of (not merely external fleshly advantages which when he gloried in he termed such glorying "folly." "Lest any man should form his estimate respecting me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth aught from me." Whatever haply he heareth from me in person. If on account of healing a cripple\footnote{Acts 14:12, 13.} and shaking off a viper\footnote{Acts 28.} the people thought him a god, what would they have not done, if he had disclosed these revelations? I wish each of you to estimate me by "what he sees" my present acts and "hears" my teaching to be; not by my boasting of past revelations. They who allow themselves to be thought of more highly than is lawful, defraud themselves of the honor which is at God's disposal.\footnote{Jn. 5:44; 12:43.}

"And by reason of exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted over-much." The receiving of revelation, as we have seen above, is a mystical experience. How dangerous must self-exaltation be, when even the Apostle required so much restraint! What was the thorn in the flesh? Perhaps the same bodily affliction as in Galatians 4: 13, 14. It certainly was something personal, affecting
him individually, and not as an Apostle: causing at once acute pain (as "thorn" implies) and shame. After experiencing the state of the blissful angels, he is now exposed to the influence of an evil angel.

This third heaven event is considered as one of the great mystical experiences of Paul. Compare this to the mystic who rejoices in ecstasies and visions, and the difference speaks loudly for itself. Ineffability is one of the marks of the experiences of the conventional mystic. It means that the experience is incapable of being expressed in words; inexpressible. Religious mystics say that they have experiences an ineffable experience, that they can't describe it; and then write volume upon volume describing it. As soon as Paul told us he had an unspeakable experience (not ineffable), he shut up. If he had gone into a long and detailed discussion of it, we probably would not accept his experience as one from God.

Fourteen years ago he was in Christ. "I know a man in Christ." Whether in the body or out of the body he does not know. But the fact that he was in Christ was a mystical experience. The relation was immediate. He was caught up into the third heaven and Paradise, and saw things, and heard things, immediately. He received revelations immediately in this condition,
about which he is not glorying. Because of the greatness of his revelations, he was given a "thorn in the flesh" to buffet him. Three times had he prayed that it be removed, but the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness." The Lord speaking to him (whether by words, signs, etc. makes no difference) was a mystical experience. Paul received the message, and the relation between Paul and the Lord was immediate; therefore a mystical experience.

"I know him whom I have believed."-- Paul is convinced that he knows Jesus Christ; that is the dynamic secret of his ministry; his whole Christian life has been built on the conviction that he has not been alone; that Jesus has been with him; his passion has been not so much devotion to a cause as to a great personality. Jesus is an abiding reality.

This knowledge of Paul is personal in its object. Evidently he intended to emphasize the actual personality of the object of his faith. Christianity is not creed, not document, not church, not sacrament; Christianity is Christ, Christ is Christianity. But you ask "Is it possible for me to know Christ in this positive manner? He is no longer on earth. How, then, may I know Him?" Probably the Apostle Paul had never seen
Christ in the flesh; he had seen him in vision only. True knowledge of persons is never obtained through the organs of outward sense. (1) Paul knew Christ through trusting him. The margin reads, "I know him whom I have trusted." (2) By love. Paul loved Christ. Love excites all mental processes. (3) By obedience. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge; we learn by experimenting. He who will do the will of God shall know. (4) By suffering. Evermore there is a knowledge of Christ sweeter, deeper, more blessed than all other which comes to the believer when he suffers with Christ and for Christ.

Wherein is this knowledge of Christ mystical for Paul? Paul knew Christ immediately; he revealed himself to Paul. There was no mediator between the two. The mind of Christ was in Paul; "it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Paul's knowledge of Christ inspired at once a noble character and life. The secret of that wonderful character was, according to his own testimony, his faith in Jesus Christ. Thus to know Christ in this positive manner is to have life cut off from all that is sordid, earthly, and selfish, and transfigured with the glory of the Lord.

1John 7:17; I Thes. 5:21.
2Phil. 4:7 ff.
3I Cor. 2:6-16.
"Christ liveth in me."— "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is a mystery to the world. The Apostle is dead and is yet alive. Christ lives in him. Is Paul's individuality destroyed, and the peculiarities which distinguish him as the man Paul changed to the likeness of Christ? No. Paul was regenerated by the Spirit of God. Such regeneration does not destroy individuality, nor does it change the peculiarities by which one is distinguished. Regeneration is the purification and consecration of these particular characteristics, and of the man himself as a whole, to a new service. Paul was thoroughly saturated with the characteristics of Christ; he was almost as perfect as Christ. The mind of Christ became his mind; the spirit of Christ his spirit. It was a relationship of immediacy, nothing between them, but the two become one; therefore mystical. It is a mystical union whereby he feels himself a sharer in the experiences of Christ in his attitude to God and to sin. His life in the "flesh" perished with the other powers that Christ vanquished on the cross. When Christ rose there took place a fresh creative act; a new power began to animate his personality, and that power was Christ. Thus Christ lives in him. Exercising flesh to Paul is the seat of sin, the poisoning of the constitution of man,
not the body only, but the whole human organization of thought, will etc.\(^1\) Paul has fellowship with Christ in his life, a mystical union of immediacy.

\(^1\text{Rom. 7:14-25; cf. Mk. 8:33.}\)
PART IV

CONCLUSIONS
Conclusions drawn from the foregoing study.—Mysticism is not a questionable branch of human knowledge akin to myths, or accounts of morbid psychological processes, or morbid people. It is a perfectly common, everyday, necessary part of human activities, and world processes, treated both by philosophy and science as well as by religions.

Thus conceived, it is an essential part of every religion. In fact, if we define religion as God's immediate part in the development of every religious person then all religion is necessarily mystical. In the Christian Church the Holy Ghost, or Spirit, works in every man, and it is impossible to support that doctrine that he works by media alone. That God works in every normal, adult person seems to be assured. But not every man is religious; for religion is the conscious recognition of God by men.

Mysticism itself is a science, an organized body of knowledge about a vast, but very real set of

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1Cf. Phil. 2:12, 13; II Cor. 3:18; I Cor. 3:9.
relations in nature and in man, and between God and men. It is co-ordinate with our descriptive, observational science that explains by media called causes, but omits the immediate connection of each cause with its effect. This relationship is as necessary as the mediate. All of them are the subjects of consideration by the science or philosophy of mysticism.

Our dissertation aims to rescue this world-wide science from the corruptions and entanglements into which it has fallen, by clarifying its concepts, by seeking to discover instances of it in all the world, and thus raise it to the dignity to which it rightfully belongs. For religious mysticism our thesis aims to disengage the truth of mysticism from its grave-clothes of vaporings, delusions, illusions, and hallucinations, and make it honorable and revered, incidentally persuading men to believe that God does indeed work ceaselessly and immediately in the world of nature and in the lives of men.
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