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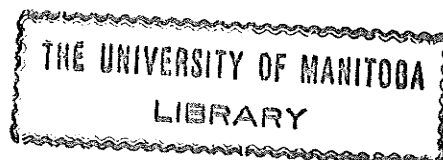
A STUDY AND CRITICISM OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM

by J. WARREN McALPINE, B.A.

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"A STUDY AND CRITICISM OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM"

Statement of Aim:

I propose to examine the three claims of the Religious Mystic. The Mystic claims for his experience;

1. That it is of supernatural origin.
2. That it yields new knowledge.
3. That it's moral and social effects are good.

I shall show that these claims cannot be substantiated, that;

1. It is not of supernatural origin.
2. That it yields no new knowledge.
3. That it's moral and social effects upon the whole are not good.

Order of treatment:

The subject is introduced by a general statement of the Mystic's claim that Mysticism is indispensable to mankind. This is followed by a statement of my purpose to criticize the mystic experience to show that it is not of supernatural origin, and that it's moral and social effects are not good. I next meet the charge of "tough-mindedness" as sometimes applied to non-mystics by showing that most modern worshippers are non-mystics.

In defining the subject, I show by a brief examination of ordinary worship that its effects are incipiently ecstatic and are therefore to be considered along with the more extreme mystic experience.

A general account of Mysticism is then given. Several definitions are considered. I find in these various definitions what I embody in one definition of Mysticism as "An experience of the supernatural which the mystic says yield new knowledge and social good".

In this general description of the mystic experience, I show that it reveals a Presence, it gives inspiration, it reveals truth such as that pertaining to God's nature, His Divinity, His Trinity, etcetra.

This experience has a feeling accompaniment. It's feeling may be of varying degrees of intensity. Feeling may become so intense as to supersede thought almost entirely. At this stage the ecstasy proper occurs. I describe the mystic of this stage in a phrase that would satisfy him as being "Out of the world".

II.

Thus far, the mystic experience is the result of preparation, but sometimes the experience occurs spontaneously. Spontaneous mystic experiences vary as to feeling accompaniment. Examples of mystic experience are then given; 1. Of spontaneous mysticism, Paul, Mr. C., M.E., J. Trevor, 2. Of mystic experience, that is prepared for, Pentecostal Congregation, Santa Theresa,

Having provided illustrations that are representative of the several classes of mystic experience, I undertake a psychological examination of these.

The strictly spontaneous ecstasy, whether mild or extreme, is shown to be organically caused. Many seemingly spontaneous mystic experiences are not really spontaneous. The whole background of the life, which is subject to these visitations, is a preparation. This is illustrated at length in the fields of Science and Art. This investigation of spontaneous ecstasy involves a reference to the sub-conscious mind.

Next, the mystic experience for which preparation is made, is considered. I show that most religious mystics are the prey to suppressed desires in which the true motive arises.

But while this explains the motive, it does not explain what to the mystic is an actual experience of the Divine. This is explained in the milder types as due to the effect of feeling and auto-suggestion upon the thought process. In the more extreme forms, auto-suggestion or self-hypnotism produce the ecstasy. The striking nature of the experience colors the religious thought that has been entertained by the mystic previously and makes it seem true.

Having shown that the mystic experience may be explained psychologically, I proceed to examine it's social and moral effects. Here I show that the mystic condones intellectual sloth, is essentially selfish, irritates men by his over assurance, and hinders progress because he neglects the world in order to be one with God.

In conclusion I show that the rejection of Mysticism does not mean the rejection of feeling from religious experience, but that it gives feeling its rightful place.

III.

Sources of Information:

1. . Personal observations.
2. Underhill, The Essentials of Mysticism.
3. Pratt, The Religious Consciousness.
4. Thouless, The Introduction to the Psychology of Religion.
5. James, Varieties of Religious Experience.
6. Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.
7. Coe, The Psychology of Religion.
8. Bennett, A Philosophical Study of Mysticism.
9. Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience.
10. Ames, The Psychology of Religious Experience.
11. Various criticisms of the above Authors contained in Philosophical Review.

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" A STUDY AND CRITICISM OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM "

1. A few short years ago we heard from no less a personage than Mr. Chesterton, that without Mysticism, men go insane. Miss Underhill, herself a Mystic, and the most skilled apologist for Mysticism, has said that the rationlists and not the Mystics are the morbid persons of this world. Many a sturdy protagonist of the church and religion believes that only the mystic can be religious, and he proclaims his belief in uncompromising terms. To the non-mystic, these affirmations are apt to be disquieting. To him who believes in the adequacy of the rational as opposed to the intuitive or immediate methods of approaching truth, they constitute a challenge to careful consideration and criticism.

2. The rationlist may attach the position of the mystic in either of two ways, first - by a philosophical statement of his own position, or by a psychological criticism of the experience of the Mystic. I adopt the latter method. While I affirm the value of the rational approach to truth, I am chiefly concerned with making a critical analysis of the Mystic experience since my study is to be psychological rather than philosophical. My thesis is, that the mystical ecstasy may be explained psychologically, and that it is without moral and social value, value being used in the broadest sense. Doubtless "Moral and Social Value" should be qualified by "Permanent". In the development of society, Mysticism has doubtless been a useful factor. I am concerned with showing that in the present and from the present Mysticism is and will be

increasingly more incapable of satisfying the needs of men.

3. In supporting this thesis, I shall attempt to show that the source of the mystic experience is not what the Mystic, in all honesty, claims it to be. Besides, the fruits of mysticism will be examined with intent to show their imperfection. Unlike James, I am constrained to examine both the roots and the fruits, for I think that assurance of continuous offerings of fruits, from roots that may be shown to be in the soil of the psycho-physical organism is very precariously founded. If the Mystic's claim that the truth he holds and the life he lives are both the result of union with the supernatural, although the scientist is able to reduce the experience to terms of the natural, the mystic truth and life become exceedingly unsubstantial. We must consider roots as well as fruits.

4. I undertake the support of this view of Mysticism in sensitive awareness that "tough-mindedness" is often used as the characterization of my kind. However, I am assured by the thought that I am but one of a great host for Christianity to-day comprises comparatively few mystics. Among the few professing mystics are many who are mystics in theory rather than in practice. They are devotees of the past when the mystic experience was the sine qua non of Sainthood. Among the broadly thinking, kindly spirited, serving Christians with whom I have had to do, there are very few who have had immediate experience of the divine in the sense in which the mystic claims his experience to be immediate. So one need not shrink before the opprobrium of "tough-mindedness". "Tough-mindedness", cold-heartedness, are not so likely to be the marks of the non-

mystic as the merely casual observer might think. The introduction of feeling into religious experience, thought by some to be the prerogative of the mystic is possible for the non-mystic as well, the difference being, as I think, that the non-mystic effects a more healthful co-ordination of feeling and thought than does the non-mystic.

5. Although my concern is chiefly with the mystical ecstasy proper, it is impossible to isolate the ecstasy from the milder forms of mystical experience, which I think are insipiently ecstatic. I think Coe is nearer right than Thouless on this point. Thouless describes a Mystic as "a person to whom the emotional, religious experiences which occur at times to all religious persons have become stronger and more permanent" (a) . Coe says "From inspirations to religious ecstasy the passage is continuous. The man who is merely inspired keeps up more or less discriminate thought, but the saint who is 'rapt' in God is supposed to let his thought activity cease in order that he may be filled with God only. Extreme Mystics assert that a state is finally reached in which self-consciousness with its distinction of "I" and "thou" lapses and God is all. This, which is ecstasy is obviously just the maximum of 'possession'". (b) The communicant at the Sacrament may be inspired by the 'presence' of his Lord although he is still in conscious touch with the sensuous world. This may seem to be his experience, but I am inclined

(a) Chap. XLV. Pg. 205, INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

(b) Chap. XLV. Pg. 266, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

to think that the actual moments of that inspiration take him "out of self" just as he would be taken in ecstasy. Could these moments of inspiration be isolated and examined they would appear as brief ecstasies, different only in duration and intensity from the ecstasy of grand mysticism. Sense may hold the stage intermittently but is ruled off in the moments of inspiration or feeling. The experience of a series of these moments during the sacramental hour may lead the communicant to think that the time has been one of continuous mystical inspiration. What actually takes place, is probably a series of rapid changes from inspiration or "possession" to consciousness. The repeated interferences of ordinary consciousness prevent the coming of the extreme "possession", a continuous ecstasy. But, to repeat, the moments of inspiration which intermittent consciousness keeps from merging are the same in quality as ecstasy. They are moments of ecstasy. The one who experiences religious inspiration in the sense of feeling the immediate presence of the object of his worship is a mystic, but more, for he is, paradoxically although it may be appear, a mild ecstatic. This being the case it is impossible to consider the religious ecstasy either in its nature or from its fruits as a separate phenomenon. All religious inspiration partakes of the nature of the ecstatic.

6. Before proceeding to describe and evaluate the ecstasy definitions of mysticism must be considered and at least a general account of mysticism given. In the matter of definition, dictionaries, give little help, for the word "mysticism" has become one of divers usages. Coe in his

"Psychology of Religion" provides his reader with a list of seven definitions or descriptions and I think that he has not exhausted the number. (c) The definition given by the mystic differs from the one given by the sympathetic non-mystic, while the contribution of the unsympathetic non-mystic is likely to differ from that of both. Among psychologists, there is a working unanimity of definition at least. Mention is here made of the definitions of some of the more prominent psychologists.

Leuba's definition is as follows "Mysticism is any experience taken by the experiencer to be a contact (not through the senses but 'immediate' 'intuitive') or union of the self with a larger than self, be it called the world-Spirit, God, the Absolute or Otherwise." (d).

Pratt's definition is similar viz: "Mysticism is the sense of the presence of a being or reality through other means than the ordinary perceptive processes of the reason". This sense or feeling, he adds is immediate and intuitive. (e).

Hocking's definition is typically the definition of a sympathizer. "Mysticism is a way of dealing with God, having cognitive and other fruit, affecting first the mystics being and then his thinking, affording him thereby answers to prayer, which he can distinguish from the results of his own reflection." (f)

(c) Chap. XVI. Pg. 263, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

(d) Chap. I. Pg. 1, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

(e) Chap. XVI. Pg. 1, THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS.

(f) Pg. 355, MEANING OF GOD IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

Bennett, also sympathetic to mysticism defines it as "a way of life in which the conspicuous element is the immediate experience of God." (g).

For Miss Underhill the central fact of the mystic experience is "an overwhelming consciousness of God and the mystic's own soul". (h).

Coe describes the phenomena of mysticism rather than attempt to give a definition. His description will be embodied almost in entirety in my own account.

James proposes four marks of the mystic experience. These are Ineffability, Noetic quality, Transiency, Passivity. A fuller description of these marks will also be contained in my own description.(i).

7. I find in the foregoing definitions that which leads me to conclude that Mysticism may be described as "an experience of union with the supernatural which the Mystic claims yields new knowledge and results in social and moral good". I propose to give a brief account of Mysticism that will illustrate this conclusion. Examples will be given which will later be made use of to show that the mystic's claim is not incontrovertible.

8. In the first place it is essential to mysticism that it is an experience of relationship with some extra-personal entity. The mystic describes this entity as the Absolute, the One, the Infinite, the Cosmos, the Nothing (Nirvana) or as God. Since my investigation is particularly of Christian Mysticism, the term "God" will be employed throughout to

(g) Pg. 7, A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF MYSTICISM.

(h) Pg. 2, ESSENTIALS OF MYSTICISM.

(i) Pg. 380, VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

indicate this extra-personal being. Examples of this experience of contact or union with the Divine are as numerous as the mystics. The experience of the Catholic who realizes the Presence in the mass, like that of the Protestant who at the communion table sings "Here Oh My Lord I see Thee Face to Face" and who feels that he is in the presence of some one whose being is not subjective but real, is essentially mystical. Paul leaves the ranks of the legalists and joins forces with the mystics when he hears arresting words and is surrounded by a great light while on the way to Damascus. Joan of Arc hears the voices which bring her into contact with some other world and so we number her among the great mystics. Examples of the mystic experience are on every hand.

9. But the mystic is conscious of more than a presence. The One who is present may speak to him. The mystic experience is almost invariably, to use James' characterization, of noetic quality (j). The mystic is told something in his moments of contact with the Divine. He insists that not only is the experience helpful in that it provides inspiration, but it is informative as well. In the first recorded mystic trance of Paul he was apparently told to change his plan of life. (k). The modern mystic opens his Bible haphazardly, his eyes fall upon certain words and he feels that God is there giving meaning to the words which the subject of the experience may have passed over heretofore. The mystic who concerns himself about religious matters may be a prey to doubt. Suddenly a striking

(j) Pg. 380 VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

(k) Acts, Chap. IX; 4.

intervention occurs and doubt and disquietude give place to assurance and peace. He explains that God visited him to impart the solution of his problem in the great moment described. I recall from many such experiences one which might be considered mystical although childlike. As a small boy I picked berries for my mother and boy-like I ate a good many. Often as I raised a berry to my mouth it would seem very clear to me that it wasn't to be eaten. The warning that it wasn't to be eaten would even be accompanied by the information that it had been stung by a poisonous insect and that the consequences of eating would be disastrous. I, of course, thought that God was speaking to me. With the coming of understanding of the working of mind, I saw the warning was due to imagination but as a child there was complete assurance that God was intervening. Mystics have this assurance which I will not here call childlike, that God speaks and imparts information that has an important bearing upon life. The knowledge of the mystic, it will be seen, is not gained by the ordinary cognitive processes. It is given intuitively or immediately. Its range may be all the way from the above warning to knowledge of God. The mystic may have revealed to him the nature of God, the fact of God's love, the immeasurability of God's love, the meaning of the doctrine of Atonement or any doctrine for that matter, the Divinity of Christ, the explanation of the Trinity. Leuba quotes as follows "Madeleine understood with absolute clearness and certainty a variety of mysteries among them those of the Trinity and

Immaculate Conception". (1). When asked to explain any of these revelations the mystic is singularly incapable of making response that will convey any meaning to the non-mystic but his assurance of the validity of the revelation is impregnable.

10. But at this point we come to know the mystic as a more unusual person. In each of these above mystical experiences the mystic may be said to be "in the world", to use a very ambiguous expression. He does not lose consciousness of the world of sense although, as was pointed out above, in any moment when one has experience of contact with One not discernible by the senses he is really "out of the world". However the mystic as we have known him thus far, except perhaps in the case of Paul, tarries so very briefly there that he appears to be within the world of sense with his thought quite discriminative. Consciousness of world relations returns to him with momentary frequency to displace the incipient ecstatic feeling so that he appears to be full world-conscious throughout. But now we are to know the mystic in what appears a new way in which he loses or almost loses consciousness. ^{This state in which thought} is superseded almost wholly by feeling is called the state of ecstasy. In it the momentary ecstasies merge and consciousness passes. Thought gives place to feeling which is said to be wholly satisfying and not to be likened to any feeling that the world arouses. Coming from this experience the mystic claims that he has been with God. This is as far as he seems to be able to go in giving intelligible description of his experience. It is beyond explanation or description. It is ineffable.

(1) Chap. (X) Pg. 275, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM, quoted from P. Janet's Une Extatique, Pg. 234.

11. It now becomes necessary to give a detailed account of the more extreme forms of mystic experience. In giving this account I will depend largely upon reports from the mystics themselves. Recourse will be had here to the examples provided by eminent psychologists. I am also able to provide some illustration from a rather meagre personal observation of mystics who have known the delights and benefactions of the ecstatic state.

12. The mystic experience may come either spontaneously or after preparation by the mystic. First, I shall consider the spontaneous ecstasy. This form of ecstasy has long been a source of wonderment to the unscientific mind. It has so deeply impressed the unscientific mind of the mystic that when the scientist attempts to explain the ecstasy for which preparation has been made, as the result of auto-suggestion or self-hypnotism, the mystic counters by reminders of the unsought nature of these Divine visitations that have been made him. In these, he says, man has no active part, therefore Divine visitation is the only explanation. Unexpected trances and automatisms, as Coe points out in his admirably comprehensive chart of mysticism have always been attributed to visits from external spiritual power. (m). Early in his development man says spirits have been in possession of his body. Later he comes to attribute the experience to Divine visitation. This has been done in Christianity. The classic instance of Divine visitation as an interruption unsought and unprepared for is that of the Apostle Paul. Paul is the subject of an experience that comes with the suddenness of thought. He comes out (m) Pg. 267, "PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION, A Survey of the Mystical.

of a trance blind, but more remarkable still, with a changed religious consciousness.

13. A further example of spontaneous ecstasy is that of

Mr. C. Mr. C., a religious man, told the writer of walking on one occasion through the woods when a combined experience of semi-trance and vision seized him. At the moment of its appearance he had been thinking of his work on the farm and he afterwards reported that there was seemingly no thought preparation for the visitation. A feeling of dizziness suddenly came upon him. He became unconscious of everything around him and a beautiful woman clothed in flowing white apparel appeared to hover before him. Upon emerging from the trance he had assurance that the vision was of one divine.

14. The experience of M. E. as described by Leuba is also representative of the unsought ecstasy.(n) M.E. is an educated man, seriously concerned with problems of religion and philosophy. His experience is briefly summarized as follows: One day, while in perfect health he was on a tramping expedition with friends. Not only was his health excellent, but the circumstances surrounding his life at the time were so kindly that he describes his state as one of complete equilibrium. Quite suddenly as he journeyed he felt the presence of God. This feeling was accompanied by a prayer of conventional nature although to the experiencer there was no awareness of the fact that his prayer followed the usual lines of prayers, involving as it did, adoration, thanksgiving, confession and self-abnegation,

(n) Pg. 209, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

consecration of life and possession to furtherance of God's will. M. E. emerges to realize that he has wept. He renews his journey in complete assurance that he has been with God. His experience of God was as of one invisible. In his own words "God was present although invisible. He fell under no one of my senses although my consciousness perceived Him."

15. From a wealth of illustration provided by James in his "Varieties of Religious Experience", I select one which is also fairly representative of the milder type of spontaneous ecstasy. James quotes from the auto-biography of J. Trevor as follows, "One brilliant Sunday morning my wife and boys went to the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield. I felt it impossible to accompany them -- as though to leave the sunshine on the hills and go down there to the chapel would be for the time an act of spiritual suicide. And I felt such need for new inspiration and expansion in my life. So, very reluctantly and sadly, I left my wife and boys to go down into the town while I went further up into the hills with my stick and my dog. In the loveliness of the morning and the beauty of the hills and valley, I soon lost my sense of sadness and regret. For nearly an hour I walked along the road to the "Cat and Fiddle" and then returned. On my way back, suddenly without warning I felt that I was in Heaven -- an inward state of peace and joy and assurance, indescribably intense, accompanied with a sense of being bathed in a warm glow of light as though the external condition had brought about the internal effect -- a feeling of having passed beyond the body, etc." (6).

(6) Pg. 396, VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

16. The foregoing are instances of spontaneous ecstasy. Before giving further account of these with view to explaining them psychologically it will be well to add illustrations of the other type of ecstasy that follows preparation. Then with a fairly comprehensive group of illustrations at hand, I shall examine the whole matter of source and validity of the ecstatic experiences of both kinds.

17. I have had under observation, at various times, the practices of modern mystics whose needs and behaviour are distinctly reminiscent of the lives of the great mystics. Recently my observation has been more or less thorough going whereas before it was casual. Having looked carefully into the whole matter I offer the following account for what it is worth.

18. Frequently, I attended a church in a Canadian city where revival meetings were being held. Large congregations were composed of people who for the most part did not appear to have enjoyed many so-called worldly compensations. Many of the worshippers were poor. Very few of them seem possessed of that natural happiness and buoyancy which characterize youth and which under certain propitious conditions continue in more advanced years. They were a people with very limited sense of humor. As is always the case in such groups, there were many whose faces bore the marks of some form of dissipation. From conversation which I had with several I was led to conclude that they were uneducated. Realizing that my psychological interest might have influenced my estimate of these congregations, at different times I invited friends to accompany me without giving them any inkling as to the conclusions I had reached. These friends, without

exception, concluded as I had, that the members of the congregation upon the whole were ignorant, poor, dissipated, neurotic or at least excitable.

19. The service was obviously of the kind to inhibit thought and arouse feeling. The music was in syncopated tempo, while the words of the hymns were simple and easily rhyming. Their theme was frequently love for Jesus or invitation to him to "come right into our hearts." Choruses were repeated several times to the accompaniment of hand waving or clapping and exclamations of "Glory" or "Praise the Lord" from the evangelist's wife and others throughout the audience. Prayers were offered by any who were led "of the Spirit" to pray. These prayers had little thought content and consisted of repeated adoration of Jesus and the invitation to Him to "come right down into the meeting." To the accompaniment of the prayers were "Hallelujahs", "Amens", "Glorys" from every part of the church. These increased in number and volume according to the exciting quality of the voice and the feeling content of the prayer of the one who prayed. The prayer of a stolid Scot, who for some strange reason had come into the assemblage, was uttered almost without interference or accompaniment from the others.

20. The address was always very simple and emotional. No appeal was made to the audience to think. The members were told to let Jesus come in, to let the Holy Spirit gain possession of their lives. Singularly enough, each address to which I listened contained some reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit of Power. The great occasion of Pentecost was kept in the minds of the worshippers. The gift of the Holy Spirit was stressed as the greatest that could

come to man. This coming of the Holy Spirit was made possible, as the evangelist would repeatedly explain, by the laying on of hands.

21. Following the address which would always end in an outburst of feeling, another hymn was sung which was similar in kind to those described above. Then all who wished to receive the Holy Ghost went into another part of the church. Here, I saw ecstasy which was somewhat crude in its manifestations but which was wholly genuine. All those who were candidates for Holy Spirit possession knelt in an inner circle and prayed. Others knelt in an outer circle and prayed that the quest of these seekers be rewarded. The evangelist, his wife and a few selected workers laid hands upon the heads of the seekers and prayed. The sounds produced by many praying in frenzied fashion at once, while others moaned or indulged in "Oh's" and "Ah's" or gibbered "in tongues" were indescribably weird. Finally, some seeker would begin to act in strange fashion. Some would shriek and fall in a state of apparent unconsciousness. The lower jaws of some would tremble as if palsied. While lying in a state of apparent trance others would wave their arms rhythmically. Some were silent while in the trance; others were intermittently silent and noisy. Frequently the subject continued in the trance-like condition for an hour or more. With others the duration of the condition was much shorter. Attempts to gain the ecstasy were not always successful. Some, it is true, never failed, while others were occasionally successful. Others apparently were never successful in reaching the full climax.

22. Upon being questioned by the writer, those who had felt the ecstasy were unanimous in reporting that the experience had been utterly pleasurable but they were unable to give any particular description as evidenced by their comments. Here are some of their comments: "A" said: "I cannot describe it to you. You have to have it to know." B - said: "Having had this feeling you know that God's Holy Spirit has been in your life." "The state is one of semi-consciousness" said C. D - described it as a state of unconsciousness. Asked what it did for them, they were as one in saying that it brought God to them. One man said that previously he had been "saved" but he had fallen many times but now when he is tempted to sin the influence of this experience makes itself felt and he is able to overcome temptation. For ten years, according to his own word, he has lived without sin. He experiences the ecstasy frequently. Another said that this experience is in some way related to her understanding of Christian truth. If she has doubt about anything, such as the power of Jesus to blot out her sins, the gaining of the Holy Spirit makes it all clear again.

23. The concluding example will be in the form of a brief account of the mystical worship of Santa Theresa, the most typical and successful of the great Christian mystics. This account is taken almost wholly from Professor Leuba's "Psychology of Mysticism". (p). It is not intended to be biographical, but deals chiefly with methods and the culmination of the ecstasy.

(p) Pg. 163, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

Mystical worship, for Theresa was in four stages, Meditation, Orison of Quiet (Contemplation), the Sleep of the Powers (or of the Mental Faculties), and Ecstasy.

Meditation -- Like most of the mystics, Theresa recognizes that the activity of meditation is voluntary. The subject, while helped by God, himself chooses some religious object or theme to think upon. Christ may be summoned to the thought and voluntary effort is made to keep Him at thought's very centre. Instead of thinking upon Christ, thought may engage itself with some doctrinal truth. The psychological value of this concentration was evident to some of the mystics and is readily apparent to the scientific student. A spiritual activity will only be successful if the world of sense is excluded. Meditation upon a spiritual object or truth is exceedingly helpful in excluding the world. The conventional minister who uses extempore prayer employs suggestion to encourage such inward concentration when he asks God to "Call in our wandering thoughts that they may centre upon Thee."

Prayer of Quiet -- This is the second stage recognized by Theresa. At this stage consciously directed thought is more in abeyance. The subject contemplates the Divine but not in the sense of meditation. It would appear that this contemplation allows only the minimum of voluntary thought. It is like the lover's contemplation of his beloved. Such contemplation might last for hours but at the end the lover would need but few words to describe his experience. He does not reason. He does not, for instance, submit his love to introspective

examination. He does not think upon moral values for which his beloved stands, nor ask if she is a part of Absolute Reality. He thinks of one with whom he is felicitously acquainted rather than of one whom he knows about intellectually. In this connection James distinguishes between the uses of verbs, "to be acquainted with" and "to know"; "connaitre" and "savoir". So of the mystic, at the contemplative stage, it is to be said that "Il connaît", rather than that "Il sait". He is the lover and not a theologian. He asks no questions; he raises no problems. This illustrates the second stage of Theresa's mystic worship. The feeling content of the experience is higher at this stage than at the first stage.

Sleep of the Powers -- This is the third stage of the mystic experience. It is marked by further suspension of the activity of the mental faculties. As Leuba points out, there is no clear demarkation of this stage from the one previous. It is likely to be identified with the Prayer of Union described by Thouless.(q) His title suggests more completely than "Sleep of the Powers", the nature of this stage. While in the second stage union with God may be broken in upon by the world and thought extraneous to the Divine object of contemplation, in this stage the worshipper is rapidly passing away from the realm of the conscious and is aware only of God.

Ecstasy -- The Fourth stage is that of Ecstasy or Rapture or Flight of Soul. In the first stages the worshipper is still in the realm of the conscious although decreasingly

(q) Pg. 229, INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

so from stage to stage. In this fourth stage consciousness disappears or is so submerged that the subject does not detect at the time nor remember afterwards, what has taken place. There follows the somewhat vague description of the ecstasy proper given by Theresa herself. She says "The soul is absorbed in enjoyment without understanding that which she enjoys The senses are all so completely occupied by that enjoyment that none of them can pay attention to anything else.....The delights which overcome the soul are incomparably greater (than in the preceding stages).... and the soul and body are equally incapable of communicating them.....The soul seems to leave the organs which she animates. She falls into a sort of swoon. It is only with the greatest effort that she can make the slightest movement with her hands. The eyes close of themselves and if they are kept open they see nothing..... If spoken to the soul hears the sound but no distinct word. Again, "Often my body would become so light that it no longer had any weight; at times I no longer felt my feet touching the ground."

24. The foregoing is an account of the worship of a representative of the greater mystics. The stages from meditation to ecstasy are paralleled in the experience of all mystics who have gained the ecstasy, for although there is not unanimity as to numbers of stages yet upon examination every worship ending in the extreme rapture is found to progress in the same fashion from meditation to contemplation, to ecstasy. As with all mystics, for Theresa the ecstasy yields the greatest height of feeling and while it may not be described and therefore comes under James' characterization of "Ineffable," it is at the same time of

noetic efficacy. It has some mysterious bearing upon truth and serves to stamp religious truth as real.

25. I have now reached the point where I must attempt some explanation of the various forms of the ecstasy, examples of which have been provided. I propose to show that in every case the ecstasy may be explained psychologically, or that the mystics claim to its source as supernatural is invalid.

26. First I shall examine the spontaneous ecstasy, in both its mild and extreme forms. The mystic claims that here at least in the spontaneous ecstasy he has evidence that God speaks to men. A theory of auto-suggestion, he says, will not suffice to explain what man learns when God suddenly, without being sought, arrests his attention. He cites the account of Paul who was converted by a "Bolt from the Blue". To support his case, he refers the critical scientist to the realms of religion, poetry and even science, and says that man in these realms, is being constantly visited by the unsought and the uninvited. God, he says, arrests man's attention and speaks to him. What answer has psychology to give?

27. The ecstatic trance that is spontaneous and therefore in the opinion of the mystic, God-caused, is very probably due to organic causes. Leuba makes some interesting observations on the first stage of the epileptic attack which I think are relevant here. He quotes Dr. Sprattling whose investigation of epilepsy has been very thorough. (r). Dr. Sprattling tells of a priest under his care who experienced a rapturous moment as

(r) Pg. 204, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

the epileptic attack was coming on. While walking on the street he would feel "transported to Heaven". This intense enjoyment would pass and he would come to find that he had fallen in a fit. Dr. Sprattling tells of another epileptic who describes this oncoming of the attack as "the most overwhelming ecstatic state it is possible for the human being to conceive of." (s). The most interesting of all such cases is that quoted by Leuba from Dostoevsky's novel, "The Idiot".(t). The novelist's account of the stage that precedes the epileptic fit may be taken as fairly accurate for he was himself an epileptic. The following is a part of the description, - "The sensation of life, of conscious existence, was multiplied tenfold in these swiftly passing moments. A strange light illumined his heart and mind. All agitation was calmed, all doubt and perplexity resolved themselves into a superior harmony but these radiant moments were only a prelude to that last instant, - that immediately preceeding the attack. That instant was, in truth, ineffable."

28. It will be seen from these illustrations to which many more might be added that the first stages of epileptic attack are conspicuously like the experience of spontaneous ecstasy. The feeling comes suddenly. There is a suspension of conscious mental activity but although the patient is passive, in most cases he is visited by revelation. The experience is beyond definite or specific description. The feeling of pleasure is so pronounced that it is only to be described as "too intense for description". Here we have all the marks of the spontaneous

(s) Pg. 204, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.
 (t) Pg. 205 " " " "

ecstasy such as that experienced by M. E. above or by Paul, although lack of detail precludes the possibility of definite pronouncement on Paul's experience. All the scientist has to go by is the account of the ecstasy given by the mystic and the account of the epileptic aura given by some epileptics. These are singularly alike in many cases. He may feel fairly justified in concluding that the cause may be organic in both cases. The mystic would probably say in answer to this, that there is nothing disquieting in the fact that the early stages of epilepsy are similar to the mystic ecstasy. The similarity fails to prove that the ecstasy is not of supernatural origin, He would urge. But surely in admitting them to be quite similar, as he must, he is placing himself on very secure grounds. Since they are similar he must admit that the effect which he attributes to the supernatural does not exceed that produced by the abnormal organic conditions which cause the epileptic aura. The mystic may be ready to see the intervention of God in strange ways and places, but he surely would be unwilling to attribute the epileptic aura to the supernatural. However, no other admission is logically possible.

29. If the mystic attributes the spontaneous ecstasy which yields such pleasant feeling and valuable revelation to the supernatural what is he to make of the seizure which yields the blackest and most fearful of feeling and revelation. The writer knew of a woman who at the period of menopause became the subject of such an experience. During this period she heard an evangelist set forth the nature of the unpardonable sin. Being in unstable bodily and mental condition, she brooded over the fact of unpardonable sin and was shortly seized with the conviction that

she was guilty of it. This conviction became a strange obsession. Some force that she described as "black and ugly" would rise within her and remind her of her guilt. She could never be sure whether this force was God or devil. When it was active she would beat herself cruelly. Here was a seizure that was spontaneous. Would the mystic rule this experience out of the field and leave other spontaneous ecstasies as the work of God? He likely would do what mental specialists did, namely, attribute the visitations to organic condition. But in doing so he would be merely following his inclination rather than the course that is plainly reasonable. Why reject the bad and retain the pleasurable ecstasy as the work of God? The conclusion to be arrived at regarding the strictly spontaneous ecstasy is that its cause is organic.

30. In making this sweeping statement, I am mindful of the fact, that cases of strictly spontaneous ecstasy are very few. The assertion or the proof of the assertion that all who have such experiences are epileptics or at least subjects of organic disarrangement need not then be disquieting. Many cases that pass as ones of spontaneous ecstasy or visitation are really prepared for although in some instances, subconsciously. There is in mind the example of J. Trevor, a quotation from whose account of visitation is given above. It will be remembered that Trevor was walking along, swinging his stick and whistling "Cat and Fiddle" when he suddenly felt himself transported to Heaven. James cites this as a case of spontaneous visitation. It is more probably that there was preparation for such a visitation. This preparation was neither studied nor organized but the conditions were

evidently right for it. Trevor records that on this morning he felt "Need for new inspiration and expansion in my life". He had felt a greater spiritual longing than could have been satisfied in church so he had betaken himself to the fields. These feelings of need bear every mark of preparation although the subject was perhaps unaware of how adequate and effective the preparation was. The fact that he whistled or sang at the moment of visitation signifies nothing. Whistling even so frivolous a tune as "Cat and Fiddle" does not prevent there being at the back of the mind or even near the centre of consciousness, the thoughts of fuller life here or the thoughts of Heaven which he experienced. As in Trevor's case, so in many cases of professed spontaneity of visitation preparation is made. Visitations of this type come up for consideration in that larger body of mystical experience which is yet to be dealt with.

31. Before passing to this, a word may be said regarding that kind of spontaneous revelation which comes under more moderate mental and physical conditions. Many, perhaps most people, are of the opinion that all inspiration is in its last stage at least, a divine gift. Leuba quotes Goethe as saying "All productivity of the highest kind, every discovery, every great thought, which bears fruit is in no one's control, and is beyond every earthly power. Such things are regarded as unexpected gifts from above, as pure, divine products".(u). A public speaker tells of how in wars previous to the Great World War, many deaths were due to tetanus poisoning. During the last war, few deaths were traceable to that cause because, says the speaker, a scientist was searching

(u) Pg. 240, PSYCHOLOGY OF MYSTICISM.

in his laboratory for some preventive when God spoke to him, telling him what was needed to reward his searching. Poets give evidence to having received verses in complete form without conscious mental effort being made on their part. Webb says of William Blake that he "regarded his Prophetical Books as written at the dictation of his 'friends in eternity' ". (v) Mathematicians tell of solutions of problems, long sought, coming in moments when attempts at solution had been given up. Leuba refers to Henri Poincare's conclusion that an important mathematical solution came to him in a moment when he was unconscious of the problem. (w) . Words come to the orator and he knows not whence they come. These being the conditions under which knowledge sometimes comes to men, it is small wonder that they have long since come to attribute the gifts to the Divine. But before accepting this as the final explanation there are some significant observations to be made.

32. In the first place, if the seemingly unsought revelations which are of beauty and value are made by God touching the mind of man, what of the trivial unsought revelations which come in the same way? If these come from the Divine the Divine may be justly accused of wasting a great deal of time and effort. It is common knowledge that the forgotten name that we have sought in vain comes suddenly into the mind when the search has been given up. Would anyone go out of the way to arrive at the conclusion that God has troubled himself to satisfy our wish which is rarely more than a curious one for the forgotten name? Not only does the forgotten word or name stray into our

minds suddenly and apparently unsought, but ideas, plans of

(v) Page 109, DIVINE PERSONALITY AND HUMAN LIFE.

(w) Page 242, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

action which can have no moral value, make the same kind of entrance. While watching a cinema picture the writer has suddenly found himself entertaining a thought of longing to have a pistol that he might shoot at the heads of the actors. He is not able to conclude that God or Satan has any thing to do with the thought. It merely enters his mind by imagination and association although the intricacies of its entrance prevent full description. Obviously, its explanation is in terms of the natural than of the supernatural. A similar explanation of the more original inspirations which are morally or aesthetically valuable seems to be the only one possible.

33. Again, it is significant that the force of inspiration yields effects which are in faithful keeping with the characteristic activities of the mind that is inspired. Poems come to poets; recipes come to good cooks; new combinations come to chemists; pleasing word arrangements come to writers and speakers while prophets receive essentially prophetic messages. Coe says "Each religionist brings back from his contemplation the sort of ideas he took into it. This is the general situation. It tends to refute the theory that the mystic is ever released from his own past." (x). The entire lives of the recipients of inspiration seem to be a preparation for the inspiration. Were we to witness a poet, arrested in the midst of his poetic work that he might receive enlightenment on the cause and removal of static from radio-broadcasting and reception, we might well conclude that the supernatural exists in some real form and speaks to men. But nothing so strange is likely to happen.

The poet will continue to receive poetic inspiration because his mind prepares for that kind of inspiration.

34. The so-called inspiration comes naturally by the way of the mind of the subject. It may come through what is sometimes called the sub-conscious region of the mind, but there is no evidence at hand to show that the sub-conscious region is less natural than the region of full consciousness. When trivial ideas "pop into the mind" we do not explain their coming as divinely caused. Surely there is no need for explaining the loftier messages by a different method. We may be forced to say that in neither case can we trace every step by which the idea comes into full consciousness, but this is by no means an admission that divine interference takes place. The working of the mind is so complicated that we may describe it as a mystery, but we know that in a natural way, it builds up its store of ideas. These are never all in consciousness at one time. While I am writing this thesis, I am not entertaining the solution of a problem in Algebraic permutations. But I am potentially able to deal with such a problem. The mind is a store-house and very few of its ideas can be brought out for use at one moment of time. But when required, the potential ideas may become working ideas. Ideas in this mental store-house are often forgotten, or half forgotten. Those that under organization give the solution of the scientist's problem are potentially present in his mind before the solution is reached. The organization of these into a solution may take place partially below the level of full consciousness, but it need not be explained as supernaturally caused. The

very nature of the case precludes the possibility of saying the last word of explanation regarding the sub-conscious.

We shall never advance beyond the use of some theory in explaining mental activity as a whole. What I offer as an explanation of so-called inspiration, coming naturally through the sub-conscious, is partly theoretical, but it seems more readily conformable to facts than the explanation, both theoretical and dogmatic, which attributes inspiration to supernatural interference with the mental process. Leuba's explanation is very satisfactory. He says "The solutions that come in the form of inspiration refer to problems which have not been finally dismissed, which have remained in the "back of the mind", ready to force themselves upon the attention. A problem in a quiescent stage may flash unexpectedly into the fringe of consciousness and be immediately and almost unconsciously repressed and dismissed unless it should happen - as it occasionally does - that it present itself in a new light. Then interest and attention are aroused, and the problem is again taken up. In the new light, the way to the solution may be discerned. (y).

35. We now leave the criticism of the spontaneous ecstasy in order to consider the ecstasy which comes after preparation. Here we must consider that great wealth of human experience, which is so striking to the experiencer because, as he says, God appears to him in response to his seeking. Is this to be explained psychologically? I refer to that sense of Divine presence, which is the result of what we may call in a very

general sense, worship. Is the mystic who feels God near him as he worships, God revealing truth, affirming doctrine, is he merely under a great delusion? Is his experience explainable by any empirically discovered or discoverable laws of mind? Is the ecstasy of the grand mystic who experiences what no tongue can tell but who knows that he gains union with God, other than it seems? What are we to conclude?

36. We can approach a nearer understanding of this experience of the mystic if we find out what it is that he wants. In one great word, the mystic wants God. But who is God? ^{is} God to the mystic, the supplier of every need. The mystic wants a God who will supply his every need and so he seeks Him. In many cases he is not fully conscious of his needs which are as dynamic forces driving him ever on in his often frantic quest but whether his needs be consciously felt or not, he wants God who will meet them all. If it is possible to demonstrate that the needs which the mystic professes to feel and whose satisfaction he seeks are not his actual needs but that these latter are much more lowly than those he professes, a light will be cast upon one kind of mystic experience that will rob it of much of its glamour and value. And it is possible to show, I think, that some of the needs of mystics who profess to seek the supernatural are very natural ones. Many a mystic has honestly thought that he was seeking and finding God when he was only taking a circuitous way of gratifying needs that were distinctly of the earth, earthy.

37. This may be illustrated by reference to the sex life of some mystics. Leuba has taken great pains to show that

denial of the needs of the sex life have been responsible for the essential tendency of the mystic experience of many of the great saints. He even claims that not one of the great mystics lived a normal married life. (z). Since we are here only considering the sex line in relation to the mystic experience by way of illustration, a detailed account of this relationship need not be undertaken. However, facts from my personal observation may be set down in this connection.

38. In the revival congregation described above I saw that many married women attended the services alone, indicating, it would seem, a want of sympathy and perhaps of attention on the part of their husbands. Detailed questioning of these women in the circumstances, was impossible, but the conclusion that cases of felicitous married life constituted a very low average is, I think by no means a hazardous one. I was further struck by the fact that, for the most part, the evangelist was most successful in inducing the state of Holy Ghost possession in the women seekers while his wife was equally successful with the men. I could not conclude that they had been led to adopt a uniformity of procedure from observing this result but the effects were as stated. On six occasions I observed that one man was unable to gain the ecstasy until the evangelist's wife had placed her hand upon his head. When she was engaged with other seekers he was unable to gain the desired experience. On two nights when the evangelist labored with him with only men helpers, this man failed to receive the "Power". Similar cases might be recorded and although some seekers were amenable to other influences, the sex

(z) Page 119, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS MYSTICISM.

of the one who "laid on hands" conditioned, with complete regularity, the success of others.

(39. Another case that suggests the influence of sex is that of Mr. C., also mentioned above, Mr. C., will be remembered as the man who saw the beautiful women hovering before him as he walked through the woods. No report on the married life of Mr. C. is available but he was known as a man who, although possessed of religious interests, had a marked and apparently irrepressible fondness for surreptitiously embracing lady church organists and Sunday School teachers. There may be significance in the fact that the form of the "Divine" visitor in his case was a woman. Mr. C., was not a Catholic.

40. Nothing need be added to illustrate the bearing that sex has upon the mystic's relationship with his God. The history of the great mystics is replete with instances in which the mystic's relation to the Master was that of beloved to lover. While one cannot, like Leuba, relegate all avowedly religious love to the realm of "profane" love, protestations of which there are so many like that of Mme. Guyon who loved God "more passionately than the most passionate lover ever loved his mistress" (aa) would seem to indicate that not only the language but the feeling of profane love has been characteristic of the experiences of some mystics.

41. Similarly, other needs which the mystic would not call spiritual are often the motivating source of his mystic experience, In undertaking to secure the satisfaction of these the mystic really makes God the compensator for what life has

denied him and given to others. While he is doing this he is convinced, of course, that his needs are purely spiritual and that God who supplies them is spiritual. For instance, many modern mystics are lacking in education and culture. Whether directly aware of this deficiency or not they are indirectly aware of it. They continually depreciate the merits of education as an end or as a means of understanding God. They protest that God reveals himself as fully to the unlearned as to the learned. So persistent is their protestation that one is led to wonder if they do not "protest too much". Are they not possessed of some form of awareness of their lack and is their attempt to gain union with God not to be explained as undertaken that God, the great compensator, compensate for them in this respect.

42. It is to be observed in this connection that mystics as a class are likely to be people who have been denied some forms of participation in the abundant life of this world. They do not directly recognize that life has thus denied them blessings but they attempt to gain some other blessing that will compensate for the ones in which they are wanting. As a result there are to be found phenomena like those recorded as well as these others. The one who receives little appreciation and sympathy in the natural life seeks identification with the divine. This makes up for what the natural life is lacking. God sympathizes and God appreciates while the experience of achieving oneness with God is the means of man gaining for himself the self-respect which he wants to feel and which is denied him through the failure of his fellows to understand

and appreciate him. The one who has not the qualities that attract friends, makes God his friend. The one who is not loved finds in God the great lover. One in whom maternal instincts have been repressed finds in Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem. The failure in this life gains success through union with God. The truth thus illustrated need not be labored by further illustration. It seems evident that many mystics are seeking the satisfaction of natural desires that their life in the world has treated coldly and that they are seeking this satisfaction from a supernatural source. They are convinced that their whole pursuit is spiritual whereas in reality it is often material, sometimes grossly material. Feeling natural needs that are to be satisfied in natural ways in this life, they turn to God although they may not know that these needs are prompting their so-called spiritual worship. Thus is the motivation of the mystic in many cases to be explained. Given a fuller and more wholesome life here, many a mystic would never have become an explorer in the far countries of the supernatural.

43. But while this serves to explain the motive force of much mysticism and also to bring some mysticism to a much lower level it does not explain mysticism as a whole. It does not even explain the success of mysticism in bringing God to meet the lowly human needs of men, to say nothing of the higher spiritual needs. That the mystic does experience these higher needs must be granted. We cannot think that the behaviouristic psychologist has said the last word when he has defined God as the power who helps man secure his naturally occurring

personal and social needs. We think that there are, after all, needs that are deeper than these. Were man conceivably to live in perfect relation to his environment with his sensuous life in balanced harmony and his social relationships well-adjusted there would still be a need for God, if only for One who would explain or even embody the mysteries that surround this life. This need we may call spiritual. Let us grant that the needs of some mystics have been so purged of natural tendency that they are spiritual or, at least, more spiritual than natural. Such needs have been supplied to the mystic through his worship. He has found the God whom he has sought just as the mystic whose unconsciously entertained natural needs we have described, finds the God of his desire. How is the wonder to be explained?

44. Can science explain these strange phenomena of the Divine as lover to the unloved, as comforter of the sorrowing, as friend of the lowly, as the presence in worship, as the revealer of truth? Are there laws of the mind of earthly man in accordance with which these strange phenomena occur? Or is science baulked by something that withdraws emphatically from its field?

45. With the reverence for human life and thought which has characterized her wondrous enterprise, science does make claim to explain. She is not even deterred by the mystic's fiery affirmations that he has seen God, that God has been more intimate than breathing, closer than hands or feet. How does science undertake this intrepid enterprise? From the scientist's observation of the workings of the human mind, as revealed in life apart from religion, he has seen certain

phenomena occurring with such regularity that he has been led to conclude that their occurrence was the result of certain laws. He investigates the worship of the mystic and he sees, what is to him, unmistakable evidence that these laws are in operation here as elsewhere. In other words he concludes that the mystic's experience is the result of the operation of natural and not of supernatural laws. With this general method of investigation in mind the further investigation of mysticism is undertaken. It will be borne in mind that the ground has been cleared of the purely spontaneous ecstasy by the explanation of its cause as organic. There remains for consideration that great body of mystic experience in which conscious or sub-conscious preparation is made for the mystic feeling and revelation.

46. To be quite concrete let us first consider the quiet worship of the mild mystic. As he sits in church he feels that God is near him. He is assured not only of God's presence but also of the final validity of what he may call revelations. The experience is attended by feelings of peace and joy. As a result of this experience of religious feeling and revelation he says that he has been touched by the divine. Something has occurred that has aroused a feeling unlike any ordinary feeling that comes to him as a child of this world and he is told something from God. What is the explanation? Does anything happen that may not be understood by the one who has had no such experience? Evidently not. A correct co-ordination of imagination and feeling under the right conditions would give the result that has been described. The worshipper contemplates

God. He brings to mind the thoughts of God who is great and loving. This arouses deep feeling. Thought is never without the accompaniment of feeling and imaginative thought is likely to be accompanied by a great depth of feeling. The feeling aroused by the thought of God's presence may in turn transform the thought from imagination to reality or seeming reality. For people of uncritical tendency feeling has this magic quality of touching the thought that has aroused it to make it objectively real.

47. Or the experience may be like that of the novelist. As the novelist writes, his characters are but the synthèses of several imaginative thoughts. But we think that very often as he writes these characters cease to be mere synthèses of comparatively cold imagination and become real characters to him. He is in their presence. For the moment he is not conscious of imagination creating qualities of character. The characters are real. Characters of fiction, in the same way, take on momentary reality for the reader.

48. So the experience of the worshipper is explainable in two ways. The thought of God may arouse certain feelings which transform the imagined to the real. Relationship with this real is enough to give the further feelings commonly called the feelings of worship which may be peace or joy or sense of harmony. Or, as in the case of the novelist, the creative role may be momentarily dropped so that the imagined becomes the real. When the imagined becomes the real God, the worshipper is of course, in a real presence.

49. So the worshippers' assurance of the presence of God

may be explained in terms of recognized laws of thought and feeling. The transition from the imagined or contemplated to the assurance of the real is made by the worshipper himself. It is to be described in other terms as due to partial self-hypnosis, an effect which is more generally produced than might be thought. The child who believes that the imagined bear is actually around the corner and the worshipper who comes to feel and believe in the presence of the divine who at first he only contemplates, are both the subjects of self-hypnosis. Pratt has undertaken to differentiate between cases where self-hypnosis or auto-suggestion would serve as an explanation of the sense of presence and other cases where the sense of presence is not accounted for so easily. (bb) In some instances, he says, the sense of presence is to be accounted for as a result of social education. The idea of God is readily available and becomes indistinguishable from the real quite in the way we have been describing. But, he says, in other cases, a marked intensity would suggest that more than the idea and resultant feeling are present. So he asks if the mystic experience may not be significant of something "beyond itself". I readily grant that more than the experience of an idea entertained is present to the experiencer for the experience may be so intense as to transform his life. But surely one may conclude from observing the working of feeling and imagination together with the inhibition of the every day methods of cognition that this co-ordination may elevate the idea to the status of the real for the experiencer. Not to everyone but to many the idea

of a thing becomes actually the thing. Let the worshipper forget the world, summon an idea of God, dwell upon it, while feeling attends the exercise and finally nothing seems to stand in the way of an experience of the presence of God that will be real to him. But nonetheless the presence is to be accounted for by the scientific observer as the result of auto-suggestion or self-hypnotism. With the child the creations of auto-suggestion may be entertained indefinitely while with the worshipper of the more moderate type they may continue only momentarily. But is it surely theoretically tenable that they are to be created by the mind in accordance with well-known and generously observable laws. Why resort to Pratt's Theory of "Something beyond" when the theory in naturalistic terms is available? We turn to the supernatural explanation when the natural has failed and thus far we are not convinced of the latter's failure.

50. But what of those amazing experiences in which men have lost themselves in God? As we have described some of these we have seen that here something occurs that challenges the rationalist to marshal his fullest resources if he is to explain. We have seen that the mystic achieves an effect which, to him, is identification with the Divine, an effect that is at least apparently different from any ordinary state of consciousness. He becomes insensible to the world. He may be even unaware of his own body. A feeling of the loftiest kind of pleasure floods his soul. Emerging from the experience he is at loss to find terms in which to describe what he has felt. True, he resorts to the symbols of ordinary thought in his strange effort to make the world see what has happened to him, but

he wastes words and is himself conscious that he does. He is like Coe's example, who said "I feel - I feel - I feel - I feel. I can't tell you how I feel, but oh! I feel! I feel!" (cc) But while mystics of the most successful kind can only say that their experience is ineffable, they protest that it is revelatory besides. Thus does the enigma become more intense. God explains some truth to them. He shows the meaning of some ordinarily puzzling doctrine and the doctrine has meaning for life. The ordinary methods of cognition are as nothing in comparison with these strange ways of intuition and immediacy with which God enables the mystic to see and to know.

51. Is this wonder to be explained as are the quieter experiences of the worshipper whom we have considered? The scientist claims it can be explained and in similar fashion. The difference is only one of degree in achieving the effects of hypnosis or auto-suggestion. The explanation will be more varied since the methods employed are more varied. Recourse will be had to the example of the more extreme forms of ecstasy. The method followed by the Pentecostal leader and his congregation will be remembered. From the psychologist's point of view it will be seen that both were concerned first of all with excluding the world of sense that they might dwell upon the thought of Christ. Attempt was made at the same time to arouse feeling to the greatest height. Everything that would remove mental inhibitions was employed. Shoutings, moanings, excited prayers, senseless hymns were used. Finally, the seekers for the mystic trance or Holy Ghost were reduced to that state where there was not suffic-

ient mental coherence left to enable them to do the very simplest problem in mathematics had that been required. Mental effort was in almost complete abeyance and feeling was at its height. Not only had the concentration on the desired effect helped to secure this condition of passivity but the suggestion of the crowd was also contributory. Those who prayed for the seekers and the seekers who prayed for themselves combined toward one end. So distracting to coherent thought was the behaviour of the crowd that the writer, who was trying to observe as a psychologist, had difficulty in keeping his purpose in view and experienced momentary lapses when he could do nothing but submit to the strangeness of the situation. If he had gone into the prayer circle even as a scientific observer he fears that the effect upon him would have been one, the retrospective contemplation of which would have been damaging to his assurance of immunity to such influences. He was readily able to understand how impossible it was for those who were seeking the strange goal to be turned aside. Self-hypnotism and crowd hypnotism combined to push consciousness to the very outside of experience leaving little else but pure feeling. This state of pure feeling is ecstasy. In it the mystic says he feels God. But it is conceivable that the experience is no more of God than of Jack Spratt. It is merely an experience of intense feeling without ideational content. If one could retain indefinitely, the thrill which the orator induces by the means of suggestion one would be in ecstasy of the kind described. That thrill has no ideational content. It follows or results from the idea. The mystic may start with the idea of God which arouses feeling

and by well recognized methods he eliminates the idea, leaving the feeling almost in its purity. Pure feeling cannot be feeling of God or devil. It is simply feeling. The experience of it is so striking that when he emerges from it to fuller consciousness the experiencer does what he wants to do. He associates it with the idea of God with which he started. But the ecstasy proper is devoid of ideas.

52. On the other hand it is conceivable that religious idea and feeling may both be lacking. The state induced may finally be purely hypnotic. The subject who submits to the professional hypnotist may go upon the stage without any specific thought in mind. His mental control which is not usually strong, is broken and he falls in the trance condition. In similar fashion the mystic may be really hypnotized and the actual condition of hypnotism may be quite like that induced by the professional hypnotist. It may be as free from religious content of thought or feeling as that of the latter case. Religious thought and feeling may precede and follow it immediately but the trance may be pure trance. The subject of the professional hypnotist may go to the stage thinking about the crowd in the theatre, come under the trance and come out of it to realize that something strange has occurred. The mystic may think of God and feel in certain way, come under the trance and come out of it to realize that something strange has happened. But in both cases the trance stands alone as pure trance, the difference being that in one case the professional is the hypnotist while in the other the self, employing the thought of God and aided

by the crowd, is the hypnotist. I have been led to conclude that the ecstasy may be merely a hypnotic state in some cases, through observing that quite small children reach it. While adults were engaging in seeking the Holy Ghost children were apparently similarly engaged and with quite marked success. One was a child of five or six years of age. A child of this age and mental development could not practise the concentration which is necessary as preparation for the characteristic effects of worship. The obvious explanation is that the child was a subject of crowd hypnotism.

53. So two explanations of the ecstasy are possible, or perhaps more correctly, two types of ecstasy are experienced. By a method of auto-suggestion, the ideational content is all or nearly eliminated from the thought-feeling combination of the preparatory stages of the ecstasy, so that a state of almost pure feeling is reached. In other cases the ecstasy may be similar to the hypnotic trance and devoid of religious thought or feeling while it lasts, but preceded and followed by both.

54. But it is to be noted by a critic of mysticism that the mystic experiences yield more than feeling, more even than the feeling that the mystic has been with God. He claims for his experience that it yields him intuitive knowledge of the Divine or about the Divine and His truth. How is this assurance that is characteristic by all mystics to be explained? The experience is to be accounted for in two ways. First, it is to be observed that very significantly, the mystic revelation is never one of original truth. Just as we found that the poet receives poetic inspiration, and the mathematician, mathematical

formulae, so we find the mystic receives revelations that are in keeping with his religious thought. The Christian mystic never receives knowledge of any other than the Christian gospel or the Christian doctrine. Apparently the doctrine that may be explained in worship was in his mind before the mystic ecstasy. Qualities of the Divine that he has said to have perceived immediately were also in his mind before. He can lay no claim to discovery. All he can claim from the evidence is surety regarding what his education and environment have made available to him. Whether or not it gives him this surety, his supposed contact with the Divine gives him no specific knowledge that is not in the possession of men who make no claims to mystic experience. In the milder cases of ecstasy such as the ordinary church worshipper experiences, the revelations may be similar to revelations whether, poetic, scientific or religious, which we have already described as quite in the order of natural thinking. Even in the cases in which feeling predominates thought may be present, as it were, dimly at the back of the mind, only to rise into fuller consciousness with the return to normal condition. As Cole points out, while no voluntary control of such thinking may be exercised, yet what seems to be immediately or intuitively present, may have been present in moments of voluntary control. (dd) In both cases of the mild and the extreme form, the revelation is explainable by reference to the sub-conscious.

(dd) Page 273, PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

54. A further explanation introduces a comment on the influence of feeling and trance upon truth discovery. In cases of ecstasy, whether the ecstasy be of the state of consciousness reduced to feeling or pure hypnotic trance, the mystic comes out of the experience convinced that something strange, even catastrophic, in his experience has happened. His first thought relates this strange happening to the thought of God which he experienced prior to the ecstasy proper. If, in the midst of his contemplation of God, an experience so strange as that of the summit of ecstasy comes upon him what is more natural than for him to think that God caused the ecstasy? In other words God will be real to him for God has done strange things with him. This conviction of the reality of God will color his every thought of God and his truth and so the mystic affirms the truth of thoughts he perhaps formally only entertained. Not only has the awareness of a strange happening, this effect but the marked feeling of many mystic states has similar effect. The glow of feeling surrounds this scriptural teaching or the doctrinal statement and their truth is established. The mystic achieves that height of feeling which even after it has passed will not permit him to be any longer analytical. Then he sees and believes. His revelation is not immediate but the height of feeling makes him think that it is.

55. So it is my conclusion that the naturally explainable forces are at work in the mystic's life. If he be inspired inspiration comes, not from supernatural sources, but as it comes to natural man. If he feels in strange ways

he brings himself to that feeling of strangeness. If he apprehends God's truth in these strange moments in a way that he could not before it is because of the natural influence of the sub-conscious or probably because the intensity of his feeling precludes all else but acceptance. The mystic's claim that he has been touched by the Divine force must disappear to be replaced by the scientist's explanation that unusual co-ordinations of natural forces have created the illusion. My conclusion may be expressed in the words of Coe, "The mystic acquires his religious convictions precisely as his non-mystical neighbour does, namely, through tradition and instruction, auto-suggestion grown habitual and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it." (ee).

56. There remains the task of evaluating mysticism.

Should it continue to hold a place in the life of man?

Obviously there is but one conclusion for the writer to arrive at which will be consistent with the foregoing conclusion that the source of mysticism is not the one claimed by the mystic. I am mindful of the view of a great psychologist who advised that the fruits alone and not the roots, are to be called into consideration. But I must conclude that the roots which help produce the mystic fruits "are in the soil" of the psycho-physical organism, which is a most precarious place for roots. While granting for the moment that mysticism has been a source of blessing to

many lives in the past, upon finding it out to be submissive (ee) Quoted from Coe, Hibbert Journal by Leuba, pg. 318

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to psychological explanation in accordance with natural laws, one could not conscientiously commend it to others. In these days when increase of knowledge brings the means of enlightenment and therefore of disillusionment near even to the mystic, it would be perilous and unkind to urge upon man the mystic's erstwhile approach to God.

57. But are we obliged to grant that the fruits of the mystic experience are good to-day or that they have been characterized by a preponderance of goodness even in the past when they flourished? No attempt will be made to deal with the philosophical problems which arise out of mysticism. Rather am I concerned here with facts of practical, social and personal bearing.

58. We have found that upon the whole mystics are often subject to repressions and that they are lacking in blessings and attainments that are procurable by natural means. True they confuse these wants with spiritual needs, but the fact seems to remain that their needs bear a specific relation to natural and not supernatural life. Having gained God they are content. Compensation is gained although no effort is really put forth to round out life in the way that man has within his control. The uneducated mystic, mediaeval or modern finds God. What need then to equip the intellect? Mysticism has gained for him that which being gained condones sloth and indolence in relation to many of those pursuits which men may undertake to gain the blessedness of a full life in this world. I question for instance if gaining God compensates for or justifies the starving of the intellect,

or the cheating of natural social affection, in the way that many mystics have. Mystics have taken fullness of life to mean life filled with God rather than with those interests which one cannot well call evil but which seems wholesome and natural. Might it not be that the progress of mankind would have been more rapid if the mysticism of churches had not persisted in the subordination of so called natural achievements and blessings to the supernatural blessing of union with the Divine?

59. Then, the mystic's way is to be criticized because it is not to be commonly followed. I have witnessed disappointment that was truly devastating, aroused by the inability of seekers to secure the mystic feeling and revelation. They had been impressed by the mystic's confident affirmations of the reality and spiritual indispensability of his experience. Owing to the condition imposed by a different temperament they were unable to enter into the experience and they concluded that they were not called of God, that they were damned or that they were unable to find the right way of approach to the divine. In many cases, one finds that young people are led to doubt their fitness to become church members because they have had no personal experience of Christ. They have listened to the church's traditional account of mystical experience and failing to understand it or participate in it they have concluded that they are unworthy to become church members. The result is disquieting and likely to keep them separate from religion until their views are corrected, which never

takes place in many cases. Others, not so strong in will, have doubtless pretended that they have gained the mystic experience. The effect of hollowness and unreality which has kept many honest souls out of churches has doubtless been the result of the attitude of those countless weak persons who have been so awed by the mystic's experience and his claims that they have thrown honesty to the winds and joined the chorus of those that have "been with God" although they were fully aware that the profession was merely one of words.

60. Miss Underhill (ff) claims for the mystic that he comes out of his experience into the world to work. One inclines toward doubt of the assertion that the mystic experience makes the mystic a better member of society than the non-mystic. Now is one led to this position of doubt by merely taking into account the all but scandalous inability of the grand mystics to even look after themselves for it is to be remembered that these were extremists and that their social usefulness was impaired because they were. Recognition of the tendencies even of the more moderate mystic induces this doubt. Although the mystic unconsciously seeks the satisfaction of natural needs when he thinks he is seeking God, his actual belief is that the natural world is a kind of useful purgatory. He achieves salvation by overcoming the world rather than by making the world better. Since this is his attitude he does not believe in social development and progress. This is but one mark of his anti-

(ff) Page 26, THE ESSENTIALS OF MYSTICISM.

social behaviour. The whole tendency of the mystic's life is to make him anti-social. He is really more a recluse than if he retired to the hermit's cave. True, he may come into society and give his life for society but his motive for doing so is such as will handicap his entire service. His life is really self-centred and the self-centred life can do but little for society. In the beginning of his mystic life he shuts man out of his thought entirely. He contemplates God and God alone. If he comes from the experience and begins to love men or at least to serve them it is because he counts upon this service as the purgation and preparation that will once more secure for him the mystic union with God. An extreme case illustrates this fact. Mystics have kissed lepers which might seem to be an act of love but which is without social usefulness and only for the purpose of making the mystic a better mystic. Many a mystic becomes an evangelist that he may save his life and insure the continuance of his mystic experience. Nothing else could be the case for the summit of his experience is the union with God into which nothing enters but God and his own soul. This is illustrated by the confession, if we may call it such, of Brother Lawrence who said: "We ought to love our friends but without encroaching upon the love of God which must be the chief". The mystic's goal is not men saved but rather personal union with God. There is evidence of the truth of this in the mystic's subversion of natural affections. Truly social behaviour begins in the smaller groups yet mystic in families have been singularly cruel. The writer witnessed a baby interfering

with its mother who was seeking Holy Ghost possession. In sudden anger the mother picked up the child and slapped and shook it. It is said that Angela of Foligno was greatly pleased at the death of her mother, husband and all her children because their deaths removed distractions and enabled her to become a better mystic. This anti-social tendency, although here illustrated by extreme cases is in keeping with the mystic's life and purpose. At all costs he must have union with the divine. To gain this he will subdue natural affection and sacrifice his fellows. He tries to get to the experience of God by disregarding man and then plans to return to the world to love man. But his love will neither "bless nor burn". It is cold, artificial and unsocial. It is unlike the love of Jesus who in contemplation yearns over "Jerusalem that stoneth the prophets". It is merely a means and not an end. The result is that while the mystic may crawl in the gutter or ascend a cross he does not move mankind for mankind senses that he is all the time planning for a greater good, that of union with God from which mankind is altogether excluded. The religion and worship that bear the marks of being truly social begin with the love of man and emerge to the love of God.

61. The service of the mystic is further impaired by the air of assurance and wisdom which he wears. The nature of his experience is such as to give him this attitude. He has been with the divine and however humbly he has walked with his God in union the humility gives place to dogmatic assurance when he walks once more with men. Who are they to

doubt or question or analyse? He affirms, he condescends and by a complete lack of that humility which is said to be a Christian grace he irritates his hearers and very often precludes the possibility of doing them any good.

62. This same assurance makes the mystic the confident agent of dogmatism. Having received revelation as to the certainty of the scripture or doctrine which he has brought to the ecstasy he will not change his view and the advancing tide of thought leaves him unmoved. Mystics are usually the last to give credence to newly discovered truths and their happy home is in those churches that place strict emphasis upon doctrine and the infallibility of the Bible.

63. A similar effect of intellectual stagnation is due to the excess of feeling which characterizes the mystic's pursuit. Mysticism must subdue the intellect and exalt feeling. Otherwise it would die. According to the mystic, the intellect is the way by which evil enters. The result of thus exalting feeling will be readily foreseen. Thought is prevented. The mystic does not originate. He chooses and more primitive way of feeling and is the last to emerge from intellectual darkness to light if he ever emerges.

64. The mystic way, then, it would appear, has its very serious defects. Its hindrance to progress and the fact that upon the whole it is prejudicial to social and intellectual progress would seem to indicate that man would do well to place lower value upon it than he has in the past. Its services are overshadowed by the hindrances which it places in

his way. Lest this iconoclastic suggestion be unduly disquieting we may well bring to mind the fact that mysticism has largely disappeared as an element of worship while the so-called inspiration that was once thought to have its source in another world is recognized to-day as due to that happy co-ordination of thought and feeling which has ever been the means of man's highest exaltation. The writer who has had experience with worship and churches concludes that very few worshippers in the great Protestant churches at least have immediate experience of the divine. Yet never has the church as a whole had loftier ideals of service to individual man and to the world and never were man's ideals toward the world so well supported by practical zeal and vigor as in the present. The passing of mysticism does not mean the loss of religion but more likely the finding of God through reverence and service for man.

65. But says the mystic, mysticism has been the way of life that has exalted feeling and so has kept men warm hearted and kind. Without mysticism the world of men becomes "tough-minded" and the cold breath of reason withers the whole of life. But the non-mystic does not recognize this to be the case. He, too, would exalt and laud the beauty and value of feeling. In certain of life's relationships he would bow before her true supremacy. In other relationships he would recognize her rightful place which, if not the highest place, is at least more secure than that which mysticism gives her.

66. Whatever be the nature of man's approach to God, feeling will ever hold some honored place there. In all

relationships of the great human family feeling will continue to be ^a prominent element. And with the thought of man feeling will ever conspire to partner. The difference between the rational and the mystical view is that in the former feeling is accorded its rightful place, that of rewarder and inspirer rather than that of discoverer. The mystic's claim is that feeling discovers truth and his success in supporting the claim has impressed the world. In the moment of highest feeling he knows God, but, stranger still, he knows God's truth. We have tried to show the illusory nature of his belief. The non-mystic says that feeling is the laurel wreath but not the victor. It comes as a reward of thought and it inspires to further thought but its very nature would prevent it appropriating thought's prerogative. All thought is attended by feeling as is every activity of life. Kantian categories are not deduced without feeling being aroused in the philosopher's heart. The philosopher has a heart. The crude and immature conclusions of this thesis have aroused feeling in the writer as he has attempted progress from stage to stage. Every thought activity is aided by feeling. Feeling sends us in pursuit; it warms and energizes us as we go; it stimulates our jaded thought when it languishes; it makes us be up and doing when discovery has been made and inclination is for rest; it sends us on to reach thought's very goal. This is the work of feeling but the view that accords it such important work is not that of mysticism. With feeling in such honored role life could not be hard.

67. But, says the mystic, take away our mystic worship and we cannot be sure of God and the way to God. Is there no way to God except by the ecstasy? Surely there must be. The non-mystic may find God. He reads the life story of the Christ and he comes to know the Christ. There is even deep feeling in attendance upon his knowing. He reads the story of God in the great work of unfolding life and he comes to know, to feel, to love. True, he does not bridge the gap as the mystic does but he does not run the ever present risk of disillusionment. The non-mystic does not know in the sense in which the mystic knows. The mystic would say he does not know at all. But the difference between knowing and not knowing is not so great after all. A reverent agnosticism approaches very near to faith. In the final analysis it is faith. One wonders if the world would not be better off in the long run for the reverent agnosticism of the non-mystic who may have faith that "God's in his Heaven and all's right with the world" than for the uncritical affirmations of the overwrought which are the output of most mysticism. After all, this muddling in ineffability seems to result only in very hazy revelations to men who yearn to know the mind and heart of the Eternal.